

THE ROLE OF REPENTANCE -- OR LACK OF IT -- IN ZEN MONASTICISM

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MYSTICISM AND MORALITY

I will begin with some general comments about mysticism and morality before moving on to a specific case study involving Zen Buddhism. The premise of this conference is to celebrate and reflect on the centennial anniversary of the William James' assertion that mysticism is not an abstract ideal realm of pure consciousness unaffected by the vicissitudes of time but a matter of lived experience. The intention of the conference is to interpret the ethical implications and moral accountability of mystical traditions, which must take responsibility, for better or worse, for the impact of their teachings and practices on the social world.

Interestingly enough it was Henry James, Sr. who provided the classic rationale for detachment from ethical concerns. Of James it was said that "As a Platonist and follower of Swedenborgian doctrine, he believed that there are two realms: a visible and an invisible, named Divine Love, the real one." According to Louis Menand, "James therefore claimed to have no use for morality, a concept he regarded as bound up with the pernicious belief that people are responsible for the good or evil of their actions. People who believe this are people who think they can make themselves worthier than other people by their own exertions. But this is to worship the false god of selfhood. 'All conscious virtue is spurious,' James insisted..." (MENAND, pp. 85-86).

The relation between mysticism and morality has been a challenging issue for traditional Zen figures such as S_t_ master D_gen and Rinzai master Ikky_, who approached it from nearly opposite angles, with the former stressing strict regulations and the latter the need for a creative

spirit to bend the rules. This also applies to modern thinkers in the Kyoto school such as Nishida and Nishitani, among others, who have been called to task for prewar nationalism in their writings. However, the scrutiny of the moral implications of mysticism has transpired with regard to Zen Buddhism in Japan with a kind of ferocity in the past couple of decades, stemming especially from two opposite but intersecting forces. One force is increasing pressure from within Japanese society to recognize hidden forms of social discrimination and oppression, and the other force consists of external factors that seek to diagnose ailments underlying diverse historical phenomenon ranging from the arising of tenacious nationalism/imperialism in the prewar period to deficient social tendencies underlying the recent bursting of the economic bubble. Both forces point the need to reevaluate authoritarianism and inflexibility that contribute to a decline of moral commitment within the Zen institution.

To retrace briefly the steps connecting the premise and intention, first, James' point is to link mysticism and the world. The next step is to recognize that the world of concrete, everyday experience and how it is conditioned by historical circumstances, and then to understand that there is a dynamic interaction and reciprocity between thought and impact. The following stage is to acknowledge, or challenge the mystics to realize they cannot escape from, an awareness of the influences their traditions do and do not have in a social-historical context. In one or two more steps, we get to the point of scrutiny of each and every aspect of the moral implications of mystical teaching in order to rid mysticism of its possible antinomian tendencies.

In that context, I will explore what I consider at once great strengths and considerable deficiencies in the relation between the mystical ideas and concrete ethical effects of Buddhism, particularly concerning the role of "repentance" in the setting of Zen monastic practice.

THE MEANINGS OF REPENTANCE IN ZEN

My main argument is that the Zen approach to the practice of repentance, which has been a key element of Buddhist rituals and self-regulating monastic rules since the time of Sakyamuni, at once contains the seeds of deficiency and social decay when used in a mechanical fashion stripped of genuine spirituality and the seeds of an uplifting and reform-minded social religiosity when used in an authentic and transcendent fashion. In critically examining the role of repentance or confession in Zen monastic theory and practice, let us consider an assortment of criticisms leveled at the social and political implications of Buddhism, especially Zen, which have come from both within and outside of the tradition, including Zen scholars Ichikawa Hakugen and Hakamaya Noriaki and Pure Land philosopher Tanabe Hajime, Japanese writers Mishima Yukio and Oe Kenzaburo, as well as several modern Western philosophers and historians. These critics have focused on the passivity and complacency or status quo-ism of the social aspect of Zen, its complicity in nationalism and tacit endorsement of Japanese imperialism before and during World War II, and its apparent misuse or twisting of the traditional notions of emptiness and naturalism to support *nihonjinron* (cultural exceptionalism) theory and the "myth of Japanese uniqueness" (DALE). Despite these criticisms, it is possible to show, rather optimistically in following Tanabe's work, that the notion of repentance as the sense of regret for and correction of wrongdoing could serve as a synthetic and dynamic conceptual and practical model for overcoming some of these problems and integrating Zen and Pure Land Buddhism with Western religious approaches toward social responsibility.

In addition to Tanabe's Pure Land view, Zen advocates and critics alike put a strong emphasis on the role of individual repentance (*zange*), change of heart, spiritual "turning," or

transformation in the religious quest that could be considered, if appropriately interpreted, to provide a key to an active, positive method of adjusting endless conflicts. The notion of repentance stems from early Buddhist Vinaya practice and is also highlighted in Tendai meditation as well as popular medieval Japanese *setsuwa* literature. The Zen meditative, self-power path may not be particularly known for stressing the idea of repentance, which seems to be primarily associated with the devotional, other-power path. However, repentance does emerge as an important theme among Zen thinkers. Understood in its authentic self-reflective sense rather than as a facile, automatic confession, repentance can become the basis of a synthesis of the Zen and Pure Land, as well as the Mahayana and Theravada, and Buddhist and Christian world-views.

The present paper takes a closer look at the historical context of repentance in Zen monasticism based on traditional and modern textual and social sources to better determine the viability and applicability of the notion for understanding the issue of the moral implications of mysticism. It focuses on two distinct but interconnected tendencies. First, except for a couple of prominent exceptions such as the *Platform Sutra* and the S_t sect's "Shush_gi" -- and perhaps due in part to the *Platform's* emphasis on "formless (*muso*) repentance" and the non-production of evil -- there tends to be a lack of evidence in traditional monastic codes or recorded sayings texts for Zen's involvement in *zange*. The apparent disinterest is further highlighted by the absence of any sustained refutation of the practice that was so prevalent in many other kinds of medieval East Asian Buddhism. Although the *Platform Sutra*, as well as some passages by D_gen, could be seen as providing a justification for this disinterest, it is interesting to note that there is so systematic critique in Zen comparable to Luther's criticism of the sacrament of penitence. The second tendency I wish to highlight is that there has been a prevalence of references to the notion of *zange* in recent discussions by Zen writers of contemporary social issues such as the problem of social

discrimination (*sabetsu mondai*) against former outcaste (*hinin*) and untouchable (*burakumin*) communities.

The first tendency may indicate an indifference or neglect of repentance based on the priority of spiritual transcendence over the need for ritual confession, but the second tendency supports the view that *zange* can, if appropriately interpreted, reflect an approach to conflict-resolution that may be considered applicable to peace. These tendencies appear to refer to two different, even conflicting, yet overlapping meanings of repentance. The first tendency refers to a ceremonial performance, which is used in Zen practice though not emphasized in its classical texts, in which *repentance is ritually made toward Buddhism*, as in the case of correcting oneself or suffering punishment after the violation of Buddhist precepts. The second tendency refers to a more general, *socially-oriented sense of repenting for Buddhism*, especially due to its lack of having corrected or taken full responsibility for its contribution to social discrimination and prewar imperialism (HEISIG and MARALDO). Whereas the first kind of repentance operates within the closed circle of the monastic institution, the second kind open-endedly extends traditional monastic ritual into the realm of social responsibility and commitment to reform.

CLARIFICATION OF THE TWO TENDENCIES

Therefore, this paper starts from the observation that although Zen monasticism does employ traditional Buddhist repentance rituals on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis, when compared to some other sects of East Asian Buddhism (as well as non-Buddhist religions), it appears that Zen literature and ritual have placed a relative lack of emphasis on this practice. There may be valid reasons for such a de-emphasis, and the notion of "formless repentance" in the *Platform Sutra* could be interpreted as offering a rationale for maintaining consistency with other aspects of Zen's self-power ideology and skeptical view of the efficacy of formal, external ritual.

Yet the Sung Zen texts which generally do not speak of the need for repentance also do not provide a follow-up to the *Platform Sutra's* critique or a further explanation for the de-emphasis even when they endorse other forms of ceremonialism.

An important implication of this apparent indifference is that the failure to view repentance as a sustained mechanism for self-reproach, self-criticism, and self-correction -- not that it always functions in such a positive way -- may have hindered the development of a cogent Zen moral code (as opposed to monastic rules of etiquette which are highly developed). This statement is not meant to imply the converse, that is, that an emphasis on repentance necessarily leads to ethical responsibility; it is true the J_ do Shinsh_ sect has shown more interest and commitment than Zen in rectifying the discrimination problem beginning in 1920s *sueheisha* (equality) movements, but this may reflect the fact that the overwhelming number of untouchables were assigned to this sect, especially the Nishi Honganji branch, in the Tokugawa era *danka* system rather than an authentic commitment to *zange*. The implications of the ritual for other forms of Buddhism must be examined on a case-by-case basis. The point is that the de-emphasis in Zen has perhaps helped promote some antinomian tendencies, or at least tendencies that are non-ethical in the sense that they reflect a turning away from a direct confrontation with ethical responsibility and decision-making. Perhaps Zen has cultivated this attitude deliberately, at least on a rhetorical level, in the name of a "trans-ethical" perspective that transcends conventional standards of good and evil in a quasi-Nietzschean sense, but this rationale has a hollow ring in light of Zen's now acknowledged participation in discrimination, nationalism, imperialism, and corporatism (VICTORIA 1988, 2000).

On the other hand, in recent years *zange* has been evoked by some Zen thinkers as a means of coming to terms with the issue of Buddhism's contribution to social discrimination against

former outcastes and untouchables who have traditionally been defined as impure by religion and persecuted and denied basic rights by society. The notion of repentance, which seeks to eradicate the roots of defilement and sinfulness, is closely linked to the way that the notion of karma as an explanation of the origin and consequences of evil and defilement as well as to methods for accruing merit is applied to the social structure. In the past, Buddhism had a tendency of defining outcastes as being burdened with evil karma because of their occupations which involve working with animal flesh, such as butchers, leather-workers, etc. Therefore -- perhaps as an unintended and unexpected result of this identification -- outcastes were perceived by society as worthy of victimization. Now, the tendency is to reverse the errors of the past by assigning to Buddhism itself the problematic karma, if any, as well as the need for repentance for having helped propagate attitudes which have, even if unintentionally, violated the rights of outcastes. Because the issue of discrimination is often interconnected with the issues of nationalism and militarism in modern Japanese society, which similarly reflect a suppression of minority or stigmatized groups, the development of a self-reflective and self-critical attitude towards the former problem may well offer some clues as to how to apply Zen repentance-based ethics to social issues.

In this paper I am using the term *zange* in a generic sense to refer to a cluster of related ideas and terms stemming from early Buddhist monastic texts, a number of which are sometimes translated into Sino-Japanese in other ways, but all of which are closely affiliated with the way that *zange* refers to "remorse, regret, lamenting, repenting for deeds done or omission...[making] clear the idea that repentance had rewards and the lack of it, punishments" (LANCASTER, p. 55). These terms include two main rituals followed by Buddhist monastics. The first is the ritual of *uposatha* (or *fusatsu*), or fortnightly (at the middle and end of the lunar month) confession in front of the assembly of monks during the recitation of the *pratimoksa* list of 250 precepts, a "monastic process

of examination, confession and rectification for restoring those who had broken the rules [which] function[s] within a finite context of present human activity involving the mutual agreement of a group of practitioners" (CHAPPELL, p. 254). During the *uposatha* the monks and nuns confess the wrongdoings in their external behavior and receive standard, prescribed punishments, although confession is also encouraged between the occasions of the ceremony.

The second ritual is the *pravarana* or mutual, public confessing at the end of the rainy season (*varsa*), a time for monastics who have spent months together to clear the air before making contact with the lay community. Both of these ceremonies are generally followed in Zen practice though the timing of the *pravarana* cycle may vary from the schedule listed in the early canon. *Zange* also refers to the act of penance or contrition (*ksama, ksamayati*), implying a sense of patience and confession, and to the determination to make reforms (*desana*). It is also important to recognize that East Asian Buddhist views on repentance were no doubt influenced by and assimilated with indigenous approaches to eliminating evil and wrongdoing, such as Confucian ideas about shame and ritual, and the purification rites, exorcisms, faith healings, and memorial ceremonies practiced in Taoism, Shinto, and folk religions (WU). In modern times, the Zen institution may have been influenced by *zange* practices in some Buddhist-derivative New Religions, such as Ittoen, which has, for example, a communal toilet-cleaning rite (DAVIS, pp. 189-225).

In light of the various meanings mentioned above, as well as an intriguing typology of Buddhist repentance rituals developed by David Chappell,¹ I suggest that *zange* can be understood by making several basic distinctions. One distinction is between *zange* in the general sense encompassing a remorse and punishment for wrongdoing and *zange* in an explicitly ceremonial, liturgical sense, as in the *uposatha* and *pravarana* rituals, which in turn also include distinctions

between voluntary and required, and individual and communal aspects of repentance. Another distinction is between *zange metsuzai*, to borrow the term featured in numerous scriptures as well as the S_t_Zen "Shush_gi" text, which implies the purification of evil karma through the power of forgiveness of compassionate buddhas, bodhisattvas, and patriarchs, and *Zanged_*, to borrow the term which forms the center of Tanabe Hajime's postwar philosophy which implies a personal, existential struggle with one's sense of wrongdoing. *Zanged_* can also be referred to as self-reflection and self-criticism (*jigo hihan*).

Ironically, the "Shush_gi," which was created in the Meiji era by the S_t_ sect's lay and clerical leaders' culling and editing of D_gen's sayings, seems to suggest a mechanical and devotional model of repentance, whereas Tanabe's Pure Land approach appears more individualistic and intuitive, keeping in mind that his message was directed to the nation as well as his fellow philosophers whose prewar writings contributed to a militarist ideology which suffered defeat and humiliation in the war. The distinction between *zange metsuzai* and *Zanged_* can also be used to encompass the distinction mentioned above between repentance toward Buddhism due to preceptual transgressions and repentance for Buddhism because of its wrongdoings vis-a-vis society at large.

USES, ABUSES, AND NON-USES

As indicated above, Zen monasteries generally observe the basic Buddhist repentance rites on a monthly and annual cycle, and also include remorseful reflection as part of daily sutra-reading or meditative walking exercises (*kinhin*). Yet, except for some famous exceptions, Sung Chinese and Kamakura Zen texts, including transmission of the lamp histories of lineal succession, recorded sayings of individual masters' sermons and lectures, and k_an collection prose and verse commentaries, do not speak extensively of the need for or benefits -- or lack of same -- of

repentance in depicting Zen hagiography, practice, or philosophy. Even the main monastic code, the *Zen'en shingi* contains only brief references (KAGAMISHIMA 1972, pp. 169, 307), and the plans of the typical monastic compound contain no repentance hall (FOULK; COLLCUTT).

Among the exceptions to this absence or de-emphasis on *zange* are Northern school texts such as the *Ta-sheng wu-sheng fang-p'ien men* and *Leng-ch'ieh shih-tzū chi*; two *Sh_b_genz_* fascicles, the "Keisei-sanshoku" and "Sanjigo"; Ming dynasty monastic revival texts by Chu-hung (YU); and anecdotal, *monogatari*-like writings referring to social leaders, such as samurai in Tokugawa Japan, who saw the error of their ways and repented before converting to Buddhism.² Nevertheless, Zen stands in contrast with several other medieval Buddhist traditions that did strongly emphasize repentance: T'ien-t'ai in China, which, integrated repentance involving ritual ablutions in sacred chambers into the practice of the Four Samadhi meditations based on Chih-i's distinction in the *Fa-hua san-mei ch'an-i* (Taish_ 46:949a-955c) between formless repentance in the realm of principle (*ri*) and form repentance in the realm of phenomena (*ji*) (STEVENSON); repentance practices based on a variety of mythological sutras dedicated to the supernatural powers of bodhisattvas who have the capacity to grant mercy, as followed in devotional and esoteric Buddhism (DE VISSER, pp. 249-409); and folk Buddhist *setsuwa* tales of religious awakening (CHILDS).

What is the reason for the de-emphasis in Zen? It is possible to see two of the texts, which put an emphasis on repentance at the same time providing a rationale to turn away from the need for confession, particularly in the phenomenal sense of *zange*. This is especially the case in the *Platform Sutra's* focus on formless repentance. At first, this text's view, which stresses that evil karma must be seen as originally empty and thus part of the purity of self-nature (*jish_*), seems to coincide with the Tendai distinction between *ji-zange*, or repentance for misdeeds committed in the

realm of phenomenal reality, and *ri-zange*, or recognition of the absolute nature of reality, which is that all things are empty of own-being, including sin. The main difference, however, is that whereas Tendai acknowledges the role of *ji-zange* while advocating its transcendence, the *Platform Sutra* denies *ji-zange* as part of delusion that prohibits a realization of transcendence.

The main sections dealing with the theme of formless repentance in the *Platform Sutra* are nos. 22 and 33. Section no. 22 "explains the formless repentance that eradicates the sins of the triple world." According to this passage:

If your past, present, or future thoughts as well as moment-to-moment thoughts are not stained by delusion, and if in a single instant you cast aside previous evil actions by virtue of self-nature, this itself is confession (*zan*, seeking forgiveness)...What is repentance [made up of two kanji, *zan* and *ge*, regret]? Confession (*zan*) is the non-production [of evil] throughout your life. Regret (*ge*) is to realize your previous evil karma and never let this slip from your mind. There is no reason to make a verbal confession before buddhas. In my teachings, forever to engage in non-production is the meaning of repentance (in YAMPOLSKY, pp. 144-45, Chinese version, p. 10; trans. altered).

This passage emphasizes the need to discard any trace of form repentance as so much distraction and delusion; that is, verbal confession is counter-productive because the key is to realize the non-production of evil based on the original purity of self-nature. The view that self-nature is inherently free from defilement is further highlighted in Lewis Lancaster's translation of several important lines in the above passage:

Remorse [*ge*] is being free of purposeful action (Skt. *apranihita*) for the whole of your life. Repentance is knowing that with regard to the past there is no evil action and never let this slip from your mind (LANCASTER, P. 58, a revision of both Yampolsky and Wing-tsit

Chan; emphasis added).

Section no. 33, "a verse of formlessness that will eradicate the sins of deluded people," continues this theme:

Though [the ignorant person] hopes that making offerings and attending memorial services
will bring boundless happiness,

This only perpetuates the three karmas (of past, present, and future) in his mind.

If you seek to eradicate sins by practices based on the pursuit of happiness,

Then even if happiness is attained in the future the sins will not be eliminated.

If the mind is liberated from the very causes of sin,

This is the true meaning of repentance within each self-nature.

If you awaken to the great vehicle and truly repent,

Then you will surely attain a state of sinlessness.

Contemplation of the self by those who are studying the Way

Is the same as the awakening of those already enlightened

(in YAMPOLSKY, p. 153, Chinese version, p. 15; trans. altered).

Here, the *Platform Sutra* argues that true repentance is to awaken to a state of sinlessness, resembling the notion of innate enlightenment (*hongaku shis*), prior to the production of evil karma. According to Chappell's insightful analysis, the *Platform Sutra* creates a reversal from earlier notions of external, ceremonial repentance by stressing the priority of the internal, mental world, from which vantage point offerings and memorials appear trapped in the pursuit of worldly benefits, which only perpetuates karma in the name of terminating it. In addition, Chappell sums up the differences between the *uposatha/pravarana* ceremonies and the *Platform Sutra*: the former are based on rectifying wrongs in the sense of incorrect external behavior with regard to the

Buddhist precepts in the immediate present through penance, exclusion, probation, restitution, or confession, whereas the *Platform Sutra* is based on casting aside wrong thoughts and attitudes throughout the past, present, and future by realizing the purity of self-nature and that the true precepts stem from the threefold buddha-body within each person. (CHAPPELL, p. 255)

Furthermore, the *Platform Sutra* points to the identification and equalization of those still practicing and the already enlightened, or of the unity of practice-attainment (*shush_itt_*) in D_gen's terminology.

D_gen similarly stresses that the realization of authentic spiritual attainment requires going beyond the ritualization of repentance when he cites his mentor Ju-ching's utterance: "To study Zen is to cast off body-mind. It is not burning incense, worship, recitation of Amida's name, repentant practice (*sh_zan*), or reading sutras, but the singleminded practice of zazen-only." (D_GEN I, 217, "Gy_ji" fascicle; also cited in the "Bend_wa" fascicle, *Eihei K_roku*, and *H_ky_ki*). However, the message of "Shush_gi," a short text compiled from D_gen's writings by Meiji era S_t_ leaders, is somewhat different. The aim of this text is to provide an accessible theological framework in modern times for monastics and laypersons alike. Although the content of "Shush_gi" does not necessarily correspond to the intentionality of the source materials, it is very important for understanding contemporary S_t_ thought. Section no. 2 titled "*zange metsuzai*" seems to stand in contrast, or even opposition, with the *Platform Sutra* in that it supports repentance in the conventional ritualistic sense, yet its message can also be seen as converging with the T'ang text in providing a rationale that vitiates the need for a systematic approach to *ji-zange* confession (HEINE 1999).

Although karmic retribution for evil actions must come in the past, present, or future, to make repentance transforms things and accrues merit, and it results in the destruction of

wrongdoing (or sin, *metsuzai*) and the realization of purity....If you repent in the manner described, you will invariably receive the invisible assistance of the buddhas and patriarchs. Keeping this in your mind and following the rules for your bodily behavior, you must repent before the buddhas whose power will lead to the elimination of the causes of wrongdoing at their roots (in AZUMA, pp. 147-49).

This passage emphasizes the virtue of repentance in transforming evil deeds based on the power of forgiveness and the compassion of buddhas. It appears close to a mythological, supernatural perspective yet still requires self-discipline and meditative training. Yet, like the *Platform Sutra*, "Shush_gi" suggests that wrongdoing can be fully eliminated and a state of sinlessness attained. In other words, both the *Platform Sutra's* notion of non-production of karma and the "Shush_gi" notion of the destruction of karma (*metsuzai*) imply that ultimate human nature (Buddha-nature or *busssh_*, original enlightenment or *hongaku*) remains untainted and unaffected by the effects of evil actions. The underlying ethical problem is that by giving priority to transcendence these approaches may overlook some of the unintended consequences that arise from a de-emphasis on recognizing and feeling remorse and repentance for actual wrongdoings in the phenomenal realm of karmic causality (STONE).

THE ROOTS OF SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

The Vnaya rituals of *uposatha* and *pravarana* function within a closed circle in the sense that they refer to repentance for transgressions committed against the Buddhist sangha and its *pratimoksha* rules. Correction of behavior is based on confession and punishments that encourage a return to strict adherence to the rules. Both the *Platform Sutra* and "Shush_gi" seek to move beyond the ritual circle by highlighting the transformative capacity of self-nature or Buddha-nature. As indicated above, the strength of these approaches lies in their clarification of the soteriological

significance of formless repentance, but the weakness lies in their neglect of the ethical implications of de-emphasizing form repentance based on the *zange metsuzai* approach. Recent reflections by concerned Buddhists on the issue of discrimination, however, suggest the emergence of another view of repentance that transcends the ritual circle by virtue of a broader awareness of ethics, that is, it transmutes the notion of *ji-zange* repentance into an open-ended commitment to social rectification and responsibility based on the enactment of *Zanged_* (literally, the "way" of repentance).

For example, a report on discrimination commissioned by Eiheiiji temple, titled "Sendara mondai senmon i'inkai hokoku," speaks of the need for Zen to undertake an intensely profound repentance (*fukaku-kibishii zange*) for the mistreatment of the burakumin community ("Sendara mondai," p. 31). This report and other analyses of the impact of discrimination generally begin with a specific focus on abuses in the practice of *kaimy_*, the practice of bestowing posthumous ordination names at the time of a funeral. The next step is an investigation of the roots of discrimination in basic Buddhist doctrines and attitudes that gave rise to a wide range of abuses.

Most sects of Japanese Buddhism, which is often referred to by the general populace as "funeral Buddhism" (*s_shiki bukky_*), are now involved in examining the hypocrisy of the *kaimy_* practices. The *kaimy_* system is an important part of funerals in which laypersons are treated once they have died as if they were monks through the use of external symbols (shaved heads, robes, ablutions, etc.). Although *kaimy_* do not identify social status directly, they have a built-in hierarchical approach in that different kinds of names are given to advanced and junior monks, monastics and laypersons, males and females, as well as to a variety of ranks and roles in society, from nobility to poverty (SHIMADA, 67-71). In some cases the more prestigious *kaimy_* can be purchased or obtained through political influence. The naming of burakumin people further

corrupts the hierarchical process by deliberately identifying their untouchable status in a disguised way during a ceremony that purports to guarantee their salvation in democratic fashion.³ The following illustration dramatically demonstrates this point:



戒名に「畜」の文字が刻まれた墓石（小林大二『差別戒名の歴史』より）

The third character on the gravestone literally means “beast” but can also be read as two separate characters meaning “dark field,” as a way of coding in outcaste status.

Buddhist commentators have begun to consider what has given rise to such a hypocritical application of Buddhist ceremony. There have been several important accounts of the historical and ideological roots of discrimination. For example, in *Sei to sen* (Sacred and Profane) Noma Hiroshi, a renowned modern novelist and follower of Shinran who befriended and supported several prominent writers from the burakumin community, stresses two main points: the impact of the caste system and practices of untouchability in India and other countries on Japanese Buddhist conceptions of karmic defilement and social stratification; and the influence of Shinto views on ritual contamination (*kegare*, the kanji for which is also pronounced as e in the derogatory term,

eta) and an abhorrence of death. Zen scholar/thinkers such as Ichikawa Hakugen (in Rinzai) and Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shiro (in S_t_) have focused on the notions of original enlightenment and nonduality in traditional Mahayana and Zen texts which can ironically foster social discrimination in the name of pointing to the attainment of liberation through epistemological non-discrimination.

Matsumoto, for example, shows how the rhetoric of equality and universality in the doctrine of Buddha-nature is undercut by the category of *icchantikas*, exceptions to the rule who are said to be incapable of spiritual attainment. Another key topic has been an analysis of the transition from the ambiguous role played by outcasts in medieval times, when they were often given comfort by Buddhism, especially in Eizon's Ritsu sect, to the institutionalized and rigidified discrimination in the Tokugawa era. At this point Buddhism tended to become a source of rather than a possible release from oppression, in part because of the role the religion was assigned in the *danka* system for which functioned as an administrative arm of the shogunate (NAGAHARA).

In addition, the question of repentance, or lack of it, has become an important focal point. Much of this discussion is related to the topic of *sendara* (Skt. *candala*), a term for untouchables in the Indian caste system that was appropriated in Buddhist texts as a designation for those whose evil karma prohibits them from being receptive to the Buddha's teachings. This category is discussed in the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 14 ("Peaceful Practices"), and in the *Sh_b_genz_* "Sanjigo" fascicle as well as in Dogen's *Eihei k_roku* (3.66, 6.24, 7.47). The term may have been initially intended as a way of evaluating the evil karma of murderers and mercenaries. But eventually in Japan the term became a tool to identify and discriminate against those who perform legitimate social functions in killing or handling dead animals even if these activities are not necessarily sanctioned by the sangha. This issue is further complicated by the historical situation that many

untouchables were further "tainted" by being forced by the Tokugawa shogunate into the role of torturers, executioners, or disposers of corpses.

An interesting example of how the traditional terminology has been used on behalf of discrimination is a koan cited in the *Eihei k_roku* (9.67) in which a butcher, asked for the best slice of meat, responds that all slices are equally valuable. The conventional interpretation highlights the notion of nonduality and the innate equality of each portion of the whole object. Yet in Japan the koan anecdote has been extracted out of its original philosophical context and used – even though the term may not have fully carried the same stigma in the original Chinese setting – in an insidious fashion to label burakumin as "butchers" ("Sendara mondai," 14).

Thus, the Buddhist approach to personal liberation has been somewhat subverted and reduced to a "you get what you deserve" or a "blame the victim" justification for social oppression, providing a pseudo-historical mythology that rationalizes the devaluation of "vile occupations." (According to the writings of B. R. Ambedkar, untouchables in India were long reluctant to convert to Buddhism because of this tendency). As recent critics note, "Although from the Kamakura period on one could find Buddhist writings on the idea of spiritual equality among people, Tokugawa Buddhism in no way opposed the official status structure of feudal society, including the segregation of its outcaste segments." (DE VOS AND WAGATSUMA, p. 88) Repentance for these deep-seated trends requires a wholehearted and open-ended investigation of the roots of discrimination, and a willingness to challenge and change, rather than merely apologize for, the problematic Buddhist doctrines and institutions. Yet the continued existence of so-called "eta-dera (outcaste temples) and "eta-za" (outcaste seats) in many areas, well over a hundred years after burakumin were legally "liberated" in 1871, testifies to the great difficulties involved in weeding out centuries of ingrained behavior.

The issue of discrimination is very much related to the problem of nationalism/imperialism in Japan. In both cases, Zen has had a tendency to comply tacitly and at times overtly, or at least to fail to resist and protest, the manipulation and exploitation of minority and stigmatized groups imposed by a hierarchical, authoritarian order. In a similar vein, in the 1920s the J_ do Shinsh_ made an appeal for egalitarianism based on a notion that conflated Buddha-nature theory with the imperial ideology that all followers of the Emperor are indistinguishable. It appears that through much of the twentieth century, with some exceptions, Zen has preferred to cloak itself in the ideology of the "great (imperial) family" (*dai-kazoku*) (ICHIKAWA 1970), and it now needs to exercise confession and self-criticism by examining and correcting the abuse of its ideals.

Overturing these social problems at their roots involves a sustained examination that can learn from Tanabe's postwar *Zanged_*, which in contrast to the *Platform Sutra* stresses the inseparability of form and principle repentance. According to Tanabe's call, genuine repentance covering both of these realms may not only liberate Buddhism but it will enable Buddhism to help liberate the society through a genuine moral call to action: "The turning point for a new beginning lies in *zange*. Without it, we have no way to rebuild [society]" (TANABE, p. 296). Therefore, the transformation of *zange metsuzai* into *Zanged_* requires an authentic encountering of social problems in a way that demands an abandonment of the traditional Zen de-emphasis on form repentance.

This in turn responds to the demand of William James, which is not only to passively acknowledge but also to dynamically foster and cultivate the profound connection between mysticism and morality. In that sense the ahistorical view with its antinomian implications as proposed by Henry James, Sr. would be overcome and the commitment to social responsibility would be fulfilled.

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NOTES

¹ According to David Chappell, five kinds of repentance are: (1) communal repentance to the sangha to ensure monastic conformity; (2) personal repentance of karmic history; (3) mythological repentance to a supermundane Buddha; (4) meditation repentance of incorrect perceptions and attachments; and (5) philosophical repentance of wrong concepts and discrimination (CHAPPELL, p. 253).

² An example of the last category is the case of Kume Heinai, enshrined at a sub-temple of Sensūji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo, who repented for his life of killing people by converting to Zen and practicing meditation. At his death he donated his zazen-image made by a sculptor for burial at the temple so that people could tread upon it before it was properly set up. Eventually, Heinai became a folk deity that people pray to in search of a future spouse by writing down their wish, based on a pun as both "treading upon" and "writing upon" are pronounced *fumi-tsukeru*.

³ As show, a prime example is using two kanji, *gen* and *da*, which, when written as a single kanji becomes *chiku*, beasts. Also, the *kaimyū* is not the only aspect of discrimination; other rituals, such as *nanoka-gyū*, which memorializes the deceased for forty-nine days after death, are similarly affected.