



Asian Literature and Translation

ISSN 2051-5863

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Ryūshin Genshō (Richard Jones), Graham Healey.

[doi: 10.18573/alt.60](https://doi.org/10.18573/alt.60)

Vol. 11, No. 1, 2024

Item accepted May 2024

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Cardiff University Press

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Translation and Commentary on the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* Text

Ryūshin Genshō (Richard Jones),¹ Graham Healey.²

Abstract

This paper presents an original translation of the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* (寶鏡三昧歌; Jp. 宝鏡三昧歌, *Hōkyō Zanmai Ka*; Eng. Precious-Mirror Samadhi Song). It improves on previous translations in terms of logic and continuity of meaning and demonstrates that the text can be read in a general sense for the purposes of directing students towards awakening, or 'enlightenment', and in the specific sense for the purposes of transmission within branching Zen lineages. The song's poetic text indirectly refers to a 'Five Ranks' system, for both 'general' and 'specific' situations. This Five Ranks system has been labelled further, because the song intimates the degree of awakening and relationships within each of the individual Ranks. It has become apparent that there is a link between the intimated use of the Five Ranks in the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* and the pre *Linji/Cáodòng* division, *Chán* master Shítóu Xīqiān's³ *Cāntóngqì*.⁴ Both of these texts seem to have a group of five couplets indirectly relating to the Five Ranks system of enlightened gradation.

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- 1 Ryūshin (Shindō) Genshō Rinzai-Rōshi (Richard Jones), Sheffield UK., began studying Zen Buddhism in 1984, during PhD studies in Photo-chemistry/biochemistry, becoming simultaneously a Zen student of Daidō (Yamahata) Hōgen Rōshi (*Sōtō* Abbot of Chogenji, Kannami, Shizuoka, Japan; founder of the 'Open Way Association'). He eventually took *Jukai* (precepts) with Hōgen Rōshi (1998). Ryūshin later studied with Daisetsu (Harada) Tangen Rōshi, (*Sōtō* Abbot of Bukkokuji, Obama-shi, Japan), receiving *Tokudo* (monk) ordination there in 2009. Tangen Rōshi became ill, retired and eventually passed on in 2018. Without a teacher, Ryūshin met Daizan (Skinner) Rōshi, who introduced him to *Rinzai* Zen with Shinzan (Miyamae) Rōshi (*Rinzai* Abbot of Gyokuryuji, Kamino, Seki, Japan). Shinzan passed Ryūshin on the koan *Mū*, however, loyal to *Sōtō*, Ryūshin continued his studies with Tenshin (Fletcher) Rōshi (*Sōtō* Abbot of Yokoji, Mountain Centre, California). On returning to the UK, Ryūshin, realizing that *Rinza'i's* structured approach was more appropriate and so reinitiating koan study with Daizan Rōshi, then later transferred to 'ZenSpace', becoming Junior *Rinzai* Zen-teacher (2017), Senior *Rinzai* Zen-teacher (2019), and received *Inka Shomei* transmission (2021) in the Hakuin-Inzan line of *Rinzai* Zen from Ryūsen (Gabrys) Jikai Rōshi (Rinzai), Oxford, UK.
 - 2 Graham Healey read Chinese at the University of Oxford (1964), continuing to Waseda University as a Monbushō Scholar to study Japanese language and literature. He joined the Centre for Japanese Studies at the University of Sheffield as a research student (1966) and became an assistant Lecturer there (1967). At Sheffield, he taught Japanese language, modern history and politics for over four decades, was instrumental in the development and expansion of the School of East Asian Studies (SEAS), significantly helped to established Korean Studies (1979) and the highly successful SEAS Distance Learning Programme in Japanese Studies (1995). He has been a visiting lecturer/research fellow at Kyoto, Hosei, Waseda and Hitotsubashi Universities, and was joint editor-in-chief and translator of two of the five volumes of the Iwakura Embassy (1871-1873), which won the Japan Society of Translators Prize for the best translation (2002).
 - 3 石頭希遷 禪師, Jp. Sekitō Kisen Zenji, 700-790 CE

Introduction

The *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* is a *Tang* era, Zen Buddhist, poetic-song that remains important to both the *Cáodòng/Sōtō* and the *Linji/Rinzai* schools to this day. It has, in the past, been attributed to *Chán*-master Dòngshān Liángjiè⁵ (Ferguson, 2011, pp 200–207), of *Dòngshān* mountain, who was the initiating master of the *Cáodòng* (曹洞宗, Jp. *Sōtō*) school of *Chán* (禪, Jp. Zen),⁶ partly because he was a proponent of ‘Silent Illumination’ practice,⁷ which the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* appears to endorse (Schlutter M., 2008b, pp 158 -159). It is said in Dòngshān’s recorded sayings (Schlutter M., 2008b, pp 158 -159), that Dòngshān received the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* secretly from his pre-*Cáodòng Chán*-master, Yúnyán Tánshèng.⁸

The text was first found and textually quoted in *Linji Chán*-master Juéfàn Huihóng’s⁹ *Sēngbǎo Zuàn*, which includes it under his citation of *Cáodòng Chán* master Cáoshàn Benji¹⁰ (Ferguson A., 2011d, pp 242–246), and in a note Juéfàn also corroborates that the *Bǎojing Sānmèi*’s was originally given to Dòngshān by Yúnyáng, but suspected it to come from Yunyang’s pre-*Cáodòng* ancestral *Chán* master Yàoshān Wéiyǎn¹¹ (Schlutter M., 2008b, pp 158 -159). Juéfàn further states that the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* was ‘kept hidden by the earlier worthies’, which concurs with our conclusion (below) that the Five Ranks were not originally meant for general dissemination, being a code for masters to choose successors. Schlutter agrees that the lack of written statements on such protocols, e.g. ‘Silent Illumination’, in Chinese literature, does not prove that they were not used by

4 參同契, Jp. *Sandōkai*; Eng. Inequality-Equality [in] Harmony/bonded, (Ferguson, 2011, pp 79-83).

5 洞山良价, Jp: Tōzan Ryōkai, 807–869 CE

6 Zen evolved from *Chán* when it entered Japan from China, *Linji* and *Cáodòng* becoming *Rinzai* and *Sōtō*, respectively. The Japanese schools are distinctly separate from the Chinese schools, although there is occasional interaction.

7 只管打坐 *Zhǐguǎn dǎzuò*, Jp. *Shikantaza*, Eng. ‘Silent Illumination’: is the single-minded practice of sitting without solving koan questions or trying to attain awakening.

8 雲巖曇晟, Jp. Ugan Donjō, 742-841 CE (Tanahashi K., 1985)

9 覺範慧洪, Jp. Kakuhan Ekō, 1071-1128 CE, (Terebess, no date, d; Ferguson, 2011, p.441)

10 曹山本寂, Jp. Sōzan Honjaku, 840-901 CE

11 751-834 CE (Ferguson, 2011, pp 122–126)

earlier masters (Schlutter M., 2008b, pp 158 -159). It is not our intention here to get involved in disputes over ‘Silent Illumination’, because they were often politically pertinent to the history they occurred in. It could be said that something similar does exist within Japanese *Rinzai* Zen, with *Rinzai* Zen-master Bankei Yōtaku’s¹² ‘Unborn’ (不生, *Fushō*), which is still practised today (Waddell N., 2000).¹³

It is also said that *Dòngshān*, in apparent custom, passed the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* to his disciple and heir, Cáoshàn Benji, as the latter was taking his leave (Luk, 1993; Wanderling, n.d.; Ferguson A., 2011, pp.242–246). *Dòngshān* together with Cáoshàn then became known as the founding patriarchs of the of the *Cáodòng Chán* sect. The *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē*, as a sutra,¹⁴ was from then considered to be *Dòngshān*’s final instructions for keeping the sect’s Dharma safe.

As is usual with Chinese Buddhist texts there are manifold layers of meaning. In particular the sutra can be read as a guide to true enlightenment, for all followers of the Way, as well as the more personal patriarchal instructions for the conditions of inheritance and interview techniques thereto. In this text, the ‘Five Ranks’ are of particular relevance. The Five Ranks are stages of enlightenment, or awakening, as seen from a *Chán/Zen* Buddhist perspective and can be denoted as follows; (1) the Host (or ‘Real’) Containing the ‘Seeming’ (known as Shift), (2) the Guest (or ‘Seeming’) Containing the ‘Real’ (Submission), (3) the Host Coming to Light, the Resurgence of the ‘Real’, (Achievement), (4) the Guest Returning to the Host, or ‘Seeming’ uniting with ‘Real’, (Coexistence), and finally (5) the Host in the Host, or the Integration of Real and Seeming, (Absolute Achievement). They can only be encountered experientially and no amount of

12 盤珪永琢, 1622-1693 CE

13 The difference between the practices of ‘Silent Illumination’ and the ‘Unborn’ is a basic belief in pure, original, enlightened-nature (*Bodhi*, or *Budhha*-nature) in the latter case.

14 In the West, the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* is usually referred to as a sutra in modern times. *Sūtra* (Skt.) is literally a thread, string, line, cord; In Indian literary traditions it was used to refer a collection of aphorisms in the form of a manual, or more broadly, a condensed manual, or text (www.wisdomlib.org, 2023). Generally, in Buddhism any historically-classic text, which conveys Dharma, even those written long after the Buddha’s time e.g. ‘The Sutra of Dàjiàn Huinéng’, are referred to as Sutras.

intellectual discourse can pin them down. They cannot be intellectually dichotomised, because they operate from within a global-brain perspective, in immediacy, unhindered by sub-dividing thought processes and are dynamic, changing. Hence, attempts to describe them in the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* and other writings are done in a poetic manner, which encourages imaginative, pictorial perception, beyond simple thought processes. For example, ‘The Five Positions of Prince and Minister (Five Ranks)’ as given by *Cáodòng Chán*-master Dòngshān Liángjiè (Luke C. 1993, pp. 135–138), and his successor, Cáoshàn Benji, (Luke C. 1993, pp 160-161).

The Five Ranks are given titled headings, which vary in imagery from author to author, in an effort to map them out sequentially. This was handed down by the patriarchs as a way of discerning where students were on the path to enlightenment and their readiness for different degrees of teaching. Unfortunately, because people have heard so much about the beauty of enlightened perception, they want to grasp on to it, and can be prone to imagining they have reached a particular rank before they really have. Hence, only one who has passed each of the Five Ranks in turn can discern others who have also. Thus, the system of verified-certification (印可, Ch. *Yinkě*, Jp. *Inka*) arose, which is a licence granted by a master to a disciple who has mastered the teachings. Importantly, the disciple must also have had *kenshō-satori* and gone beyond to other ranks.

Since this Sutra was said to be so importantly used by the founders of the *Cáodòng* sect, it is chanted daily, or at least on alternate days, and at important *Sōtō* ceremonies in Japan. In fact, because of this, the Five Ranks referred to within it are often regarded as a *Cáodòng/Sōtō* formulae. However, we are not alone in reasoning that the Five Ranks were known to the *Cáodòng* sect’s predecessors, even prior to Yáoshān, because *Chán* master Shítóu Xīqiān,¹⁵ who was considered to be the author of the *Cāntóngqì* (參同契, Jp. *Sandokai*, Wikipedia, 2021), appears to have been inspired in that Sutra by the Five Ranks (Wikipedia, 2023b; See Sec.2, below). Additionally, Shítóu became a student of the great Sixth *Chán* patriarch Dàjiàn Huìnéng,¹⁶ for a short time at a young age,

15 石頭希遷, Jp. Sekitō Kisen, 700-790 CE

16 大鑿惠能, Jp. Daikan Enō, 638–713 CE (Ferguson, 2011, pp 43–48)

prior to the latter's death and before receiving transmission from Dàjiàn's successor, *Chán*-master Qīngyuán Xíngsī.¹⁷ So it quite possible that the Five Ranks were known to, or originated from, Dàjiàn Huìnéng. One thing is certain, *Chán*-master Línjì Yìxuán,¹⁸ who lived within the life-time of the two *Cáodòng/Sōtō* founders, but descended through a different lineage branch from Dàjiàn Huìnéng, also used the 'guest' and 'host' relationship terminology, which is quoted in the Five Ranks (Watson B., 1993, pp.47-62).

Following down to the more modern history of the Japanese *Rinzai* Zen line, Zen-master Gasan Jitō¹⁹ and his student heir Zen-master Inzan Ien²⁰ helped to developed a 'Fivefold' Koan classification system, which was obviously influenced by Zen-master Hakuin Ekaku²¹ and based on the Five Ranks. The Fifth Rank (Jp. *Go*) koans within this system, is in fact a complete summation of the Five Ranks system (Hakuin Ekaku, n.d.). The *Hokyozanmai koans*, and the Five Ranks, are still given today in Japanese *Rinzai* Zen, towards the end of student training, both as koans and parallel-poetry tests.

In the spring of 2005, Ryūshin Genshō became slightly perturbed by some of the English interpretations of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* and engaged the help of Graham Healey,² a respected scholar of Chinese texts. We temporarily ceased working on the incomplete translation, whilst Ryūshin, then known as Shindō Genshō, underwent deeper Zen training and discussions. Since that time and before, many translations of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* have appeared in various sources, some of which will be discussed below. However, we feel that none of them present an accurate, clear and flowing translation, in the manner the text was later intended for distribution in China. Hence, we have now upgraded our original translation, coupled with further research and fresh insight since Ryūshin Genshō has completed training as a *Rinzai* Zen-master.

Firstly, it should be acknowledged that there is a list of some twelve translations at the *Terebess* web-page (see the bibliography). Many of these interpreters

17 青原行思; Jp. Seigen Gyōshi (Ferguson, 2011, pp.56 – 58).

18 臨濟義玄, Jp. Rinzai Gigen, died 866 CE, (Ferguson, 2011, pp.173-177)

19 峨山慈棹, 1727–1797 CE

20 隱山惟琰, 1751–1814 CE

21 白隱慧鶴, 1686 – 1769 CE

attribute statements that the *Bǎojing Sānmèi*'s original 'author/s' clearly did not say, or intend to be put in such a manner, by altering the Chinese grammar through reading their own minds into the text.

One of the texts in the *Terebess* listing is a review of translations by other authors, compiled by Pokorny (09/2023). Many of the cited authors are not used for every line of the *Bǎojing Sānmèi*, just those that suit Pokorny, and therefore, lack complete translation.²² The approach by Pokorny, though to be applauded for its scope of literature review at that time, is unnecessarily complicated and often incorrect. The translations are generally incomplete, using only part of each work and without a complete translation of his own, leaving the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* clouded. This is a shame, considering that the Chinese form, which we have today, appears to have stated matters very simply. By way of example, Pokorny cites a classical study, denoted 'AV', (Verdu A., 1974), which as the title says, is an intellectual discussion of 'Buddhist Thought' from 'studies in Sino-Japanese Mahayana Idealism' referring to the '*Pao-ching san-mei*' (Wade-Giles for: *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē*) numerous times within his 'The Five Degrees Dialectic of the *Cáodòng/Sōtō* Zen School' (Verdu A., 1974, pp 115-178), but nowhere does it give a full flowing translative-interpretation by that author.²³ By way of further examples cited at the *Terebess* listing, the translation by Thomas Cleary (1949-2021) (Cleary, T., n.d.), who was a highly respected translator, frequently deviates from the *hànzì/kanji* (characters) and violates Chinese grammar, using statements such as 'Now you have gotten it', and 'There is tendency to create clichés'. We will visit this translation and others occasionally within our

22 The initial draft of our translation was initially put on an early amateur website, 'Geocities' (Jones R., Graham Healey, 2005), which was really designed for local communication only and never advertised. The 'Geocities' web-site was closed in 2009. Pokorny's review uses this initial draft, with the initials 'HJ', completely without permission, before we had published it for global communication. The misuse of our work has happened before and a retraction has been obtained from Academia Edu., where we were not even credited for our exact words.

23 Another translation cited by Pokorny, denoted 'WL', could not initially be sourced due to a misprint, but was later obtained just prior to publication of this paper (Lai, 1983). Initial reading of Lai's work, indicates that it does not fundamentally alter our view of the previously existing translations, or our own, and that it agrees with Luk (1993)'s interpretations of the Five Rank symbols (see Table 1 and notes 32-35, 37)

commentary. However, since there are so many misinterpretations in these translations we can't comment on them all.

We feel that these and many other western translations of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* made in the seventies and before, when Western understanding of *Chán* and Zen was at an early stage of development, are inadequate and too clouded with intellectual-grappling to understand, and often written by lay-practitioners who have not had a traditional monastic training. Since the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* obviously, by style, was written in a flow state, probably a relative-*Samadhi* (a state of self-less, concentrative absorption, in which relative action is still possible), then it should be passed on in the manner it was intended. In keeping with this and coupling it with our own more recent improvements, it is evident to us that a modern, flowing translative-interpretation is now absolutely necessary.

Translation and interpretation are difficult processes, which necessitate keeping to the original language as far as possible. In the spirit of Zen, we need to keep texts simple, pertinent, and with the original author's imagery remaining alive. Zen is a personal experience of immediacy that can only be partially described using images. Laborious intellectual dichotomy clouds Zen-awakening and all feeling of the truth within such texts is lost. Adding to that is like 'putting legs on a snake' and considered to be a stench in Zen. We either experience a point directly, or we don't, and in the latter case, it is best left until we are ready for our own joy of realization without robbery.

In the current translation and interpretation, we have tried to remain faithful to the original Chinese *hànzì* where possible. However, it is hard not to be influenced by the Japanese grammar and the generations of Zen connection that have existed between China and Japan. Further, since Ryūshin Genshō was trained for long periods of time in Japanese temples, the insights to this much improved translation of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* were influenced by that training. Most of the translation and syntax of the Chinese *hànzì* were mainly made by Graham Healey, who was a student of classical Chinese, but again influenced by Japanese and Korean studies. Hence, many of the Chinese words have additionally been given in Japanese and the translation itself has the added value of being made from a modern Japanese Zen standpoint.

Prior to a deeper commentary of the text we feel it is a good idea to read through the complete translation that we have made and to this end the unhindered translation is given at the end (Appendix 1). Both there and in the commentary below, square brackets indicate additions, without which the English translation would be grammatically poorer.

1. Discussion of the Text: Overview of General and Specific Usage.

Typical of Chinese scriptures of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* Buddhist sutra is composed of lines of four characters. This compressed form was often used for imparting wise moral concepts and admonishments; however, the lines in this text are not the ancient idiomatic phrases (Ch. 成語, *Chéngyǔ*; Jp. 四字熟語, *Yojjukugo*), used in classical Chinese. Rather, the lines of four characters generally run together in couplets. In its current form, the poem was given as a song (歌, Ch. *Gē*; Jp. *Ka*), which means it was used for singing, reciting, or more probably chanting, as described in the text itself (see line 42 below). This may, or may not, be how the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* was originally intended to be used, considering its somewhat indefinite origin and alluded secrecy.

In the translation of the first couplet

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1 如是之法。 | The Suchness [Tathātā] of [the] Law [Dharma], |
| 2 仏祖密附。 | Buddha ancestors intimately handed [it] down. |

the first line states that thusness (如是, Ch. *rúshi*) is the Law. Thusness, or suchness, is the Chinese Tang and modern Japanese Zen Buddhist interpretation of *Tathātā* (Sanskrit), which denotes the way things function, or are, from a Buddhist perspective. The term 'Law' here is synonymous with Buddha-Dharma, because it is seen as the correct perspective of universal phenomena.²⁴

24 'Buddha-Dharma', refers to the teachings attributed to *Shakyamuni* Buddha. In Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) Buddhism, of which Zen is a branch, the term Dharma is used for both the singular and also the entire set of natural cosmic laws of cause and effect, which the Buddha expounded upon.

‘Buddha ancestors’ (line 2) refers to the branching patriarchal lineages of masters, who, by correction and approval, ‘intimately handed down’ this correct view, in a one-to-one passage of succession, within the branching lineages. Hence, this couplet implies that this view of thusness, reached by awakening to universal karmic laws,²⁵ is passed along the Zen lineages.

The Sutra text continues in this form, using couplets throughout. The couplets are grouped together, sometimes into larger aggregations, but with no obvious continuous repeat of aggregate numbers. For example, the previous two lines combine with the next couplet:

3 汝今得之。 You have now received it,
4 宜能保護。 Protect [and] guard [it] carefully, well.

so that the a four line aggregate runs together in logical meaning: The way things are, operate by natural laws, full awakening to them is successively passed down, you are receiving it as next in succession, protect and guard it carefully, well.

Having made this statement, the author wastes no time and immediately begins to explain the conditions for awakening and patriarchal inheritance. This is true Zen immediacy. The author is unable to imprison these conditions within mere words, hence, the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* uses carefully chosen imagery in the next couplet:

5 銀椀盛雪。 Fill [a] silver bowl [with] snow,
6 明月藏鷺。 Conceal [an] egret [in] bright moonlight.

which is a pair of similes representing the prime condition – ‘The ‘Treasure Mirror Samadhi’, the title of this song, i.e. the awakened person will experience ‘Treasure Mirror Samadhi’ just before or during awakening, and thereafter when necessary.

This couplet’s similes also represents form, or the ‘Seeming’, (the bowl, or egret), and absoluteness, or the ‘Real’, (snow, bright-moonlight). The Seeming is the

25 Karmic activity is action which adds to one’s *karma* (repository of intended memorized solutions to situations).

way things appear to be and the Real is the way they truly are, which is increasingly perceived as awakening is deepened. The similes also demonstrate two criteria, which are necessary for awakening. In the first, with the silver bowl, the person, realizes that it contains the snow. In the second, with the egret, as the person, who now complies with the conditions that produced the bright-moonlight like silver-samadhi so that it is not lost, is awakened and fully absorbed by it. Hence, one must first realize what is happening and then also be compliant with it. This cannot be simply explained. It has to be experienced, but it does involve complying with karmic laws, cutting off everything without any further grasping. It must be said that a person having a simple *Samadhi* and not realizing what it was, would not be awakened.²⁶ The next couplet continues by stating they, the egret and bright-moonlight, are ‘alike, but not the same;

| | |
|---------|---|
| 7 類而不齊。 | [They are] alike, yet not [the] same, |
| 8 混則知処。 | [When] they are together, only then [you] know [the] place. |

meaning that the container is not the contained (form is not reality), but when they are truly together, in tune, then you know where you are, you ‘know [the] place’, know the connection and relationship. Explaining these four lines further, the Tang *Chán* masters often used another method of describing this relationship: ‘Guest’ and ‘Host’. This method was applied to both the student-master and the greater relative-absolute relationships, depending on the situation, particularly when describing the Five Ranks of awakening and the testing of the student’s degree of realization (Watson B., 1993, pp.47-62). So in the ‘Guest-Host’ analogy, the silver bowl and the egret represent the Guest and the snow and the moonlight represent the Host. Hence, line 6 of the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* depicts the Real, or Host, containing the Seeming, or Guest. This is the First Rank, described as the ‘Absolute seen from the Relative’. Moving to this rank involves a shift in perception, hence the label Shift, resulting in deep insight, initially prior to first awakening. This First Rank corresponds with the phrase

26 Awakening here is 見性 (Ch. *Jiàn xìng*, Jp. *kenshō*) or 悟 (Ch. 參悟 *cānwù*, Jp. *satori*), (Wikipedia, 2023e; Wikipedia, 2023g). *Jiàn xìng* and *kenshō* are used in Zen as; *Jiàn*, or *Ken* meaning ‘seeing’; with *xìng* and *shō* meaning ‘nature, or essence’, thus translated as; ‘seeing into one’s own true nature’.

'Form is emptiness' in the '*Prajnaparamitahrdayasutram*' (known in English as the Heart Sutra).

Line 7 of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi*, depicts the Seeming, or Guest, contained within the Real, or Host. This latter symbolism, now represents achieved awakening (*kenshō-satori*),²⁷ the Second Rank (or 'the Relative seen to contain the Absolute'), corresponding with 'Emptiness is form' in the Heart Sutra. To achieved this rank involves submission of the practitioner, hence it is labelled Submission. The text is intimating that both conditions of the First and Second Ranks, or realizations, are required to have occurred before awakening commences in the Second Rank. The First and Second Ranks are not merely a reversal of one another. In the Second Rank the former dissolves upon submission within the latter; it is non-returnable and cannot be faked. It has to genuinely occur.

The lines of the next couplet;

| | |
|---------|--|
| 9 意不在言。 | Because mind is not in words, |
| 10 来機亦赴 | Come [to the] point of change [and you] move [in its] direction. |

seem to join the previous couplet to make a quadruplet as the previous quadruplet did, but also cleverly it is a bridge to further lines that contain descriptions of mistakes that can be made. The author is saying that mind-experience cannot be imprisoned within words and that when you come to the point of change of the Second Rank, sudden realization (*kenshō*) takes place, and you move in its direction (Submission). The text continues by impressing upon us, that the change produced in you following *kenshō*, feels like a strong home (line 11), and that if you try to leave, or diverge, from it, you fall into a state of vacillation (line 12). Hence, *kenshō* is like arriving at your familiar, strong, home and leaving it causes confusion and loss of clarity. This becomes a set-

27 See note 25 above, the first time one has *satori* it is called *kenshō*, subsequent *satoris* are called *satori*.

pattern, of trying to leave, by using old pre-*kenshō* habits, and then returning 'home' to the real post-*kenshō* state:²⁸

11 動成窠臼。 [The] change becomes [like a] mortared-nest
(home),

12 差落顧佇。 When [you] diverge [you] fall into vacillation.

Many other translators imply that these lines mean 'when you move you fall into a trap', but concur with idea of vacillation following divergence. We have to ask ourselves, 'did the ancient Zen masters never move?', 'did they never do walking and moving Zen?' Of course, whilst internal stillness is paramount in Zen, they still had to physically move. The interpretation arrived at in this paper fits the *hànzi* better and follows the previous couplet (lines 9, 10) more fluidly.

The following two couplets (lines 13, 14, 15, 16) describe three of the dire, divergent mistakes that can be made and backs them up with apt similes.

13 背觸共非。 [Turning your] back [and] touching [are] both wrong,

14 如大火聚。 Like [with] a great fire-mass.

Firstly, it says 'Turning your back and touching [it – the Real/Absolute] are both wrong'. This is because if you turn your back on it, you lose sight, concentration, and develop carelessness, and if you touch it, you have grasped an attachment and lose it that way. Quite clearly a non-*karmic* middle-way is required at this point, that does not produce, or add to, one's *karma*. This is because the Real perceived through the awakened mind is ever-flowing and, once present, cannot be rejected, or imprisoned. The simile is of a great fire-mass. You would be a fool to turn your back on it, allowing it to rage uncontrolled and also to directly touch it would result in severe burns. Previous interpretations have tended to

28 The Chinese *hànzi* of line 11, 動成窠臼, literally says; move/change, becomes nest, mortar/bone, which we interpret as; '[The] change becomes [like a] mortared-nest (home).' Thus giving an impression of strength and homeliness. The last two *hànzi* can also be read as; 'set-pattern' in modern Chinese. For lines 11 and 12, other translators have: 'Move and you are trapped, miss and you fall into doubt and vacillation. (Sacred Texts, no date); 'Tremble and you're lost in a trap, miss and there's always regrets.' (Neatrou et al, no date); 'Move and you are trapped, miss and you fall into doubt and vacillation.' (San Francisco Zen Center, no date); 'To stray from it produces pitfalls, To deviate leads to false thinking (Luk. 1993).

leave one with the impression that the Real or Absolute is like a massive fire,²⁹ but Chinese poetry of this style typically uses statements followed by vivid similes. The *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* here, with the exception of the earlier initial similes, also uses this style. It is much more likely that the intention was to compare the situation emphatically with a vivid analogy. It is difficult to believe that the author would be reducing the Absolute, even to the form of a great fire-mass, because that is a characteristic phenomena.

Continuing the theme of possible mistakes, the succeeding couplet attacks unnecessarily pretentious descriptions of awakening to the Second Rank of being with the Real or Absolute;

15 但形文彩。 When you put [it] merely [in the] form [of] literary
 elegance,

16 即属染污。 That is the same as consigning [it] to stain and dirt.

By stating that in so doing, it is consigned to stain and dirt. It cannot be imprisoned in mere words and any attempt to do so, using intellectually flowery language, loses the directness of it, resulting in departure and sullied interpretation.

Having previously said that the Second Rank cannot be fully described in words, the author begins to sketch what happens to the recipient using imagery:

17 夜半正明。 [The] middle [of the] night [is] truly bright.

18 天晓不露。 Day dawns [but there is] no dew.

This couplet has been variously interpreted in the past to indicate that the Second Rank of sudden awakening only occurs at night and is not seen in the morning light.³⁰ The misunderstanding arises because some ancient student-

29 'For it is like a mass of fire', (Luk. 1993); 'for it is like a massive fire', (Sacred Texts, no date); 'like a ball of fire,' (Neatrou et al, no date); 'It is like a ball of fire.' (Cleary, T., no date); 'for it is like a massive fire. (San Francisco Zen Center, no date).

30 It shines in the dead of night, But it does not appear at dawn. (Luk, 1993); The night encloses brightness, and at dawn no light shines. (*Sōtō Shu Shumicho*, 1986, pp. 17–19); In darkest night it is perfectly clear; in the light of dawn it is hidden. (Sacred Texts, no date); At midnight truly it's most bright, by daylight it cannot still be seen. (Neatrou et al, no date); 'In the middle of night is just when it's bright, At dawn it does not appear.' (Cleary, T., no date); 'It is bright just at midnight, it doesn't appear

masters had their initial enlightenment experience (*kenshō*) at night, during, or following, an interview with their teaching-master, probably because the night-time provides a back-drop of emptiness and silence. However the author has placed a simile, with the literal translation of ‘day/sky dawns no dew’, which is apt here, because dawning is associated with dramatic realization and if he was referring to a physical dawn, then it would not be describing the unusual situation of *kenshō*. Importantly, it does not mean that *kenshō*-awakening can only occur at night, or that it will disappear, like Cinderella’s carriage at dawn.

The *Bǎojing Sānmèi* goes on to state that this vision of the absolute becomes a guiding code, which eradicates the suffering of beings.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 19 為物作則。 | For things/beings it becomes a rule [code], |
| 20 用拔諸苦。 | [Its] function to eradicate [the] various sufferings. |

It does this by only being visible to those who are in tune with it, because, for a time at least, they have ceased karmic behaviour. To try to return to tampering, karmic behaviour, causes partial, or temporary loss of this vision. Since this vision is so beautifully clear, an awakened person soon learns to remain with it, leaving it only for the purposes of helping others to find their way there too. The *Bǎojing Sānmèi* next intimates that absoluteness cannot be summed up in phenomenological minutiae and hence, language, but nevertheless is not divorced from the world of words given by the right hands:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 21 雖非有為。 | Although [it] is not [of the] world [of] phenomena [Samsara], |
| 22 不是無語。 | [It is] not [a matter] of wordlessness. |

thus suggesting, that although absoluteness can’t be contained in words, they can be used by a skilled master to elucidate the Way. It could be argued that this couplet together with the previous one both relate to a code and teaching, forming a quadruplet.

at dawn.’ (San Francisco Zen Center, no date); ‘At midnight it is truly bright, By daylight it no longer shows.’ (Sheng Yen et al, no date).

The following couplet introduces the analogy of a person in front of a mirror, where the person represents Form/Seeming/Guest and the mirror represents Absolute/Real/Host:

- 23 如臨宝鏡。 [It is] like looking in [a] precious mirror,
 24 形影相觀。 [in which] form [and] reflection look [at] each other.

The mirror is precious, because it is beautifully clear and is a vision of absoluteness, revealing the 'code-rules/laws', or treasures. This couplet goes together with the next couplet:

- 25 汝是非渠。 You are not the other-side [the reflection],
 26 渠正是汝。 But the other-side [the reflection] is truly you.

which states that although you are not the other side (absoluteness), the other side (absoluteness) certainly comprises you. This is a wonderful statement. It is our saving grace, saving us from the tragic mistake of identifying ourselves as absoluteness. As a Buddhist scripture, with no God, it is saying you are not apparently *Śunyata* (Emptiness), but *Śunyata* (Emptiness) is certainly within you. You are made of it.

In the next couplet:

- 27 如世嬰兒。 Like a new-born baby in the world,
 28 五相完具。 fully endowed with the five aspects [*Skandhas*].

we are presented with the analogy of a new-born baby, which further describes the effect of this *kenshō*-vision of absoluteness, being like a new born baby endowed with five aspects. The five aspects refer to 'Five *Skandhas*' (Sanskrit, often translated as heaps, aggregates, collections, or groupings, Wikipedia, 2023h). The five aggregates, said to be inherent in all sentient beings, are: form (*rūpa*), feelings (received via *vedana*), perceptions (cognizance, *samjna*), impulses (mental activity, *sankhara*) and consciousness (*vijnana*). The image of a new-born baby is in keeping with the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist ideology, that this vision was incorporated into us at birth (Buddha-nature) i.e. it is a product of life. Elaboration of the analogy continues in the following three couplets, indicating that the recipient of the vision has no apparent control of what they are seeing;

- 29 不去不来。 [It does] not go, [it does] not come,

30 不起不住。 [It does] not arise, [it does] not stay.

it just happens right in front of them like a gift and they are speechless.

31 婆婆和和。 [It says] “pópó hé hé”. (Jp. “ba-ba wa-wa”)

32 有句無句。 Are words there? Are words not there?

33 終不得物。 In the end [it does] not gain [any]thing,

34 語未正故。 Because the words [are] not yet correct.

To emphasise the speechlessness of this state, the baby is given onomatopoeic *hànzì* utterances,³¹ and we are told that they make no sense, because they are incompletely formed. Similarly, *kenshō*-awakening unfolds so suddenly that the recipient is experientially dumbfounded and, at the time, unable to put it into words. Nothing of this magnitude has happened to them since they were born. This is also why, prior to *kenshō*, students often reject it, fearing they will lose everything and be as helpless as a baby.

The next four lines, two couplets, begin to explain the symbolic evolution of the Five Ranks using analogies from the *I Ching* (Book of Changes) system of divination (Wilhelm et al., 1975).³² The first pair of these couplets;

35 重離六爻。 [The] double-fire [Li hexagram] six [lines] intertwine,

36 偏正回互。 Tilted [broken/yin] and straight [yang] mutually rotate.

poetically describes this evolution, beginning with the symbolic double fire hexagram (Ch. *Chung-Li*, 離離, hexagram 30), which has all the lines intertwined,

31 Line 31 (婆婆和和) sounds as: ‘pó-pó hé hé’ (Ch.), or ‘ba-ba wa wa’ (Jp.), and is grammatically meaningless otherwise, since pó-pó literally means; ‘husband’s-mother/mother-in-law/grandmother’ and hé means; together/sum/union/peace/harmony.

32 At various times Buddhism had undergone suppression in China and unapproved monasteries were at risk of being purged (Schlutter, 2008a, 27-35). Perhaps the *I Ching* was used in order to justify Zen, as being related to the old moral discipline of Confucianism, which had become corrupt. This may have happened before Chan-master Dòngshān, or it may perhaps, have been added by him. During the period of Dòngshān’s patriarchy, Buddhism had undergone the Huichang suppression (ca. 841 – 847) (Schlutter, 2008a, 27-35). The *I Ching* uses yarrow stalks to represent strong (*yang*) and yielding (*yin*) lines, which come together to form layered trigrams and, hexagrams.

or evenly displaced, as built from the two symbolic trigrams of fire (離, Ch., *Li*) one on top of the other (Luk, 1993); (Wilhelm et al, 1975).³³ This hexagram represents the Fifth Rank - ‘Host in Host’ or ‘Real in Real’ (Luk, 1993). We are told that the hexagram lines are then manipulated and in the second couplet folding to become three.

37 疊而成三。 Fold and [they] become three,

38 變盡為五。 Transforming finally [to] make five.

The three are *Li*, *Xùn* and *Dui*.³⁴ *Li* is already used, so the remaining two, *Xùn* and *Dui*, are taken to represent the First and Second Ranks of Host and Guest, respectively (Luk, 1993). The final transformation making five,³⁵ yields two further hexagrams *Ta-Kuo* (大過, hex.28), and *Chung-Fu* (中孚, hex.61), which are taken to represent the Third and Fourth Ranks of ‘Host coming to Light’ and ‘Guest returning to Host’, respectively (Luk, 1993). Summing, to clarify, the Five Ranks are depicted in Table 1, below:


Table 1 Table of ‘The Five Ranks’

| Rank No. | Symbol | Name | Definition | Effect |
|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 st Rank | | Host | Real contains Seeming | Shift |
| 2 nd Rank | | Guest | Seeming contains Real | Submission |
| 3 rd Rank | | Host comes to Light | Resurgence of the Real | Achievement |
| 4 th Rank | | Guest returns to Host | Seeming unites with Real | Mutual coexistence |

33 The double *Chung-Li* hex.30 = is composed of two single *Li* trigrams.

34 The double ‘Li’ hexagram lines (from top to bottom 1 – 6), yield two inner nuclear-trigrams (lines 3,4,5 and 2,3,4), which correspond to *Xùn* = , the wind/gentle/penetrating and *Dui* = , the joyous/lake. So the ‘three’ in line 37 would be *Xùn* (wind, 巽), *Li* (fire, 離) and *Dui* (兌).

35 Rebuilding new hexagrams from the new nuclear trigrams *Xùn* and *Dui*, yields by *Ta-Kuo* (大過, , hex.28, Greatness) and *Chung-Fu* (中孚, , hex.61, Faith/Inner-truth, as Luk (1993) suggested.

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 5 th Rank |  | Host-in-Host | Integration of Real & Seeming | Absolute achievement |
|----------------------|---|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|

Continuing the poem, the next couplet presents a pair of similes for this ranking system, saying it is like the ‘stem-herb’ (荃草味, Ch. *jīng-cǎo-wèi*),³⁶ and the [symbols] of the diamond-pounder:³⁷






- 39 如荃草味。 Like the [five] stem-herb-flavours,
 40 如金剛杵。 as [symbolized in the] diamond-pounder [*vajra*-
 sceptre].

At this point, the poem returns to describing the relationship of the Seeming and the Real:

- 41 正中妙挾。 Precise [form] and middle [Absolute] are
 marvellously embraced,
 42 敲唱双举。 Drumming and singing arise together.

with ‘precise’ and ‘middle’ representing them, respectively. It says they are marvellously embraced, meaning coexistent and interactive. However, no other translations appear to make this interpretation.³⁸ This is coupled with a perfect simile, in which the Seeming is represented by drumming, and the Real is represented by singing/chanting, relating to the how the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* itself

36 The stem-herb (荃草味, Ch. *jīng-cǎo-wèi*) refers to *Perilla frutescens* (紫蘇, Ch. *Zisū*, Jp. *Chiso/Shiso*, Eng. ‘Beefsteak plant’, or ‘Japanese Basil’; Alfaro, 2023), which has five flavours; bitter, sweet, salty, acidic/sour, and acrid/pungent. These are also the five flavours used in Chinese medicine (The five flavors in traditional Chinese medicine, no date) and they are all found in *Perilla frutescens* to some degree.

37 The diamond pounder refers to the Buddhist ‘Vajra’-sceptre, which also applied as an alternative set of symbols, to expound and the five ranks as follows:  and  as the 1st and 2nd Ranks, respectively, at one end of the *Vajra*;  and  as the 3rd and 4th Ranks, respectively, at the other end of the *Vajra*; and  as the 5th Rank placed at the centre (Luk, 1993). These symbols are still used today sometimes, but not usually inscribed on the *Vajra*-sceptre.

38 e.g. The Real is wonderfully inclusive, Both it and the seeming should be brought out. (Luk, 1993); ‘The subtle is contained within the absolute; Inquiry and response arise together,’ (Cleary, T., no date); ‘Subtly included within the true, inquiry and response come up together’ (San Francisco Zen Center, no date); and the gloss: the Absolute ‘upright’ holds, as it is, Many phenomena within its own balance. (*Sōtō Shu Shumucho*, 1986), which loses the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi*’s wonderful imagery.

was performed in temples. The precise [form] drums, the many [formless] chant, their voices become one and integrated with the beat. Perhaps this couplet represents the Fourth Rank, ‘Seeming unites with the Real’, ‘Guest returns to Host’.

Looking at the next couplet;

43 通宗通途。 [To] pass through [this] essence/religion [is to] pass
along the way,

44 挾帶挾路。 [to] hold [it] in [the] girdle [is to] hold in [the] path.

the sect’s religion is referred to as being the most effective, and synonymous with old Daoist idea of the ‘Way’, which it sought to incorporate, or perhaps replace. Also that the use of *Dāntián* breathing was absolutely necessary to achieve this.³⁹ Interpretations of this couplet by other researchers seem to vary considerably from what the *hànzì* actually say and none of them have taken the hint at ‘*Dāntián*’ breathing.⁴⁰

39 The second *hànzì*, 宗 (Ch. *Zōng*, Jp. *Shu*) in line 43, originally meant essence or origin, it was used to describe the main-point of something and later became used to symbolise ‘religion’ (code). In this context it could be taken to embrace both parts of the meaning, including the religious side. In lines (41-42) and those succeeding lines 43 and 44, we feel the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* is referring to the ‘origin/essence’ meaning, as opposed to religion. Line 44 literally says, ‘Hold belt/girdle, hold path’ and whilst being similes for ‘religion’ and ‘Way’, are also most likely a reference to holding oneself in *Dāntián* (丹田, Jp. *Tanden*), during breathing. Many Japanese monks have a large band/girdle (Jp. *Obi*). Particularly a monk determined to reach awakening (雲水, Ch. *Yúnshuǐ*, Jp. *Unsuī*), would wear a thick belt (Jp. *Shiken*) over the *hara*. One of the functions is to help breath from *Dāntián*.

40 Other interpretations include: ‘For guest and host are inter-mutable, By (direct) pointing and (expedient) teachings’ (Luk, 1993); ‘Penetrate the source and travel the pathways, embrace the territory and treasure the roads’ (Sacred Texts, no date); ‘Penetrate the root and you fathom the branches, grasping connections, one then finds the road’ (Neatrou et al, no date); ‘When a trainee asks a question, matching answer always come from the Zen master’ (*Sōtō Shu Shumuchō*, 1986, pp. 17–19); ‘Conveying the source as well as the process, Including integration as well as the way’ (Cleary, T., no date); ‘Communing with the source, travel the pathways, embrace the territory, and treasure the road’ (San Francisco Zen Center, no date); ‘Penetrate the goal and you will fathom the way. In order to lead there must be a road’ (Sheng Yen et al, no date).

The next ten lines (five couplets), continue the theme of the perceived qualities of the Real/Absolute and one's conduct towards it, when it's power is recognised. The meanings of these lines are quite clear needing no further explanation:

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|----------|--|
| 45 錯然則吉。 | [When] respectful and restrained [towards it], then good fortune, |
| 46 不可犯忤。 | [And you] cannot commit an offence. |
| 47 天真而妙。 | [When you are] natural and unaffected [it is] marvellous, |
| 48 不屬迷悟。 | [For it] does not belong to erroneous-enlightenment. |
| 49 因緣時節。 | Causes and [karma-]relations, times and seasons, |
| 50 寂然昭著。 | In stillness [it is] clearly revealed. |
| 51 細入無間。 | So fine [it] enters [where there is] no gap, |
| 52 大絕方所。 | So great [it] transcends dimensions. |
| 53 毫忽之差。 | The tiniest moment's divergence [straying], |
| 54 不忝律呂。 | [And you are] not in-tune [with it]. |

However, again other researchers seem to vary their interpretations considerably from what the *hànzì* actually say.⁴¹ Often translators see the esoteric in a poem of this nature and become obsessed with that angle of interpretation (e.g. in the lines cited (see note 38) for Cleary, T. (n.d.) and San Francisco Zen Center (n.d.)). This is particularly true of western translators, who, even unknowingly, impose their own cultural religious background onto the text. Whilst Zen certainly is esoteric at times, it is also grounded with equal proportions of balancing *Yogācāra* (Sanskrit),⁴² and thus often focuses on personal relative conduct.

41 Other interpretations: 'Devotion to it will earn blessings; On no account should it be offended. Wonderful is the eternal reality, Beyond delusion and enlightenment; With concurrent cause and time prevailing, It will appear both bright and still. Reduced in size it is all pervasive; If extended it is beyond location and direction. A slight deviation from it, Destroys the perfect harmony' (Luk, 1993); Lines 45-46, 'To be wrong is auspicious; Do not oppose it' (Sheng Yen et al, no date). The *Sōtō Shu Shumucho* (1986) gloss (not shown), merges the *Bǎojing Sānmèi*'s lines, and so changes them that it is impossible to compare. Sacred Texts (no date) interprets line 48 as 'Natural and wondrous, it is not a matter of delusion or enlightenment'.

42 *Yogācāra* (Sanskrit): 'Is an influential tradition of Buddhist philosophy and psychology emphasizing the study of cognition, perception, and consciousness'

The following six lines (3 couplets) refer to ‘sudden’ and ‘gradual’ conditioned states, which we take to be those students who are near readiness for sudden awakening and those who are still convinced they need additional intellectual dichotomy, or Buddhist theory:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 55 今有頓漸。 | Now there are sudden and gradual [conditioned-states], |
| 56 緣立宗趣。 | [And] by connection [there] arise teachings and approaches. |
| 57 宗趣分矣。 | [The] teachings and approaches become distinguished, |
| 58 即是規矩。 | Specifically [within] this standard-template [of the Five Ranks]. |
| 59 宗通趣極。 | Teachings [when] passed out approach culmination, |
| 60 真常流注。 | [In which] Truth [perceived] endlessly flows into [you]. |

The ‘teachings’ and ‘approaches’, refer to the methods applied to these types of students, respectively. ‘Sudden-students’ are given teaching by immediacy, e.g. *Katsu shouts* (喝, Ch. *hè*; Jp. *katsu*), *Keisaku strokes* (警策, Ch. *jǐng-cè*, Jp. *keisaku/kyōsaku*), blown-out-candle, stone/water sounds, mime-acts etc. in order for them to meet the sudden tipping-point to awakening. ‘Gradual-students’ are given sutra-chanting, rule-literature, lengthy discourses, intellectual argument etc., before they are ready to become ‘sudden-students.’ The application of these teachings and approaches is used within the ‘standard-template’ of the Five Ranks of training given in Table 1. In the last of these couplets, we are told that at the culmination of these teachings, Truth appears to ‘endlessly flow’ through you’, which further describes the resulting awakening experience. Other researchers roughly agree with our interpretation of ‘sudden’ and ‘gradual’ [conditioned-states], but miss out the directive of ‘teaching and approaches’ going with them and with exception of Luk (1993) fail to implicate the Five Ranks and their associated satoris. The San Francisco Zen Center’s (SFC), Cleary’s and Sheng interpretations, all similarly implicate the ‘sudden’ and ‘gradual’, but

(Wikipedia, 2023i). It also redresses the imbalance that can be caused by viewing reality in terms of absoluteness only, resulting in neglect of personal minutiae.

do not effectively imply the separation of teachings and approaches for the differing aptitudes. They also imply guiding rules, but not the ‘five stages’ (Ranks) (San Francisco Zen Center, n.d.; Cleary, T., n.d.; Sheng Yen et al, n.d.). Cleary and SFC say that upon reaching awakening ‘true-eternity flows’. However, the *hànzi* is implying a seemingly ‘endlessly flow’, because in Buddhism, importantly, there is no ‘eternity’, everything is in a constant flux and even emptiness is impermanent.

The *Bǎojing Sānmèi* continues with two analogies for inferior conditioned states and their method of correction:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 61 外寂內搖。 | Outside still, inside trembling. |
| 62 繫駒伏鼠。 | Tethered pony, crouching mouse. |
| 63 先聖悲之。 | Ancient sages were grieved by this, |
| 64 為法檀度。 | Resulting [in the] ‘law-staff’. |
| 65 隨其顛倒。 | In accordance with the inversion of it, |
| 66 以緇為素。 | [They] took black [and] made it white. |
| 67 顛倒想滅。 | [When] the overturning, collapsing, idea [was] destroyed, |
| 68 肯心自許。 | [with] consenting-mind [they] personally approved. |

The first state is the student who looks perfectly composed and still to external view, but has a mind that is running around in the outside world. This is the ‘Tethered pony’. The second is the student who is uncomfortable with their degree of awakening in the presence of a master, or some other officiant, and has inner uncertainty, sometimes even to the point of trembling with fear. This is the ‘crouching mouse’. The masters were saddened to see students in these unawakened conditions and hence produced the method of correction ‘law-staff’, which became known as the *jǐng-cè* (警策, Jp. *keisaku*),⁴³ thus eliminating these

43 We translate 法檀度 (Ch. *Fǎ tándù*) where *Fǎ* is law, here representing Buddhist Law, or Dharma, and *Tándù* (Jp. *Dandō*) phonetically refers to a staff, or rod, because it represents the Sanskrit word *Danda*, meaning stick, staff, or rod (www.wisdomlib.org, no date; Nanamoli, et al, 2001, p 1257, note 579). Hence, law-staff, or *jǐng-cè* (警策, Jp. *Keisaku*). Sometimes the latter *hànzi/kanji* (檀度, *tándù*) are understood to be a transliteration of *dānapāramitā*, the practice of generosity, but that interpretation would not in any way fit with the passage it lies in (lines 61 – 68).

conditions with shock and allowing for an opportunity to see the mistaken world-view that produced them afresh. When the false notions were destroyed, the masters approvingly moved them on to the next teaching. Diverging from the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi's hànzi*, other translators interpret these lines somewhat differently.⁴⁴

The next three couplets:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 69 要合古轍。 | [If you] aim to follow [the] ancient track, |
| 70 請觀前古。 | Please look [to] ancient times. |
| 71 佛道垂成。 | [When the] Buddha about to accomplish [the] way [to Enlightenment], |
| 72 十劫觀樹。 | Contemplated [beneath the Bodhi]-tree for ten aeons [<i>kalpas</i>]. |
| 73 如虎之缺。 | Like a tiger with something lacking, |
| 74 如馬之鼻。 | Like a horse with a left hind leg that is white. |

describe what we have to do in order to accomplish the Way, that is; just like the Buddha, contemplate, or practice, for a very long time. The degree of contemplation required, is given in two similes in the third of these couplets. The first simile is of a 'tiger with something lacking', while the second simile is of a 'horse with a left hind leg that is white'.⁴⁵

44 Luk (1993) sees line 61 as a continuation of line 60, as referring to the Real or Absolute; 'Still without, it moves within,' but this would break the couplet rule of the text. Otherwise both he and Sacred Texts (no date) agree that the old masters were saddened by inferior conditions, such as the 'tethered colt' and the 'crouching mouse', but differed in translation of how such false ideas were to be inverted, or approved as being destroyed. Neither, Cleary, SFC, nor Sheng Yen et al, make a distinction between the 'tethered pony' and the 'crouching mouse' conditions (Cleary, T., no date; San Francisco Zen Center, no date; Sheng Yen et al, no date).

45 We take the 'something lacking' to be a portion of the tiger's prey, or a mate. Luk (1993) is in agreement with the former idea, except he says: 'tigers never eat the ears of their prey'. Sacred Texts, (no date) has it as; 'Like a battle-scarred tiger' and *Sōtō Shu Shumucho* (1986, pp. 17–19) has it as; 'Like a tiger that has tattered ears'. There is no mention of ears, or tattering in the four kanji of line 73. They simply say; like-tiger-possessing-deficiency. A tiger returning for a portion of its prey, would have a high degree of concentration, because it would be hungry, having to remember exactly where the portion of prey was and be guarded about the presence of other animals. The simile of line 74, is probably of a horse that has remained largely stationary in poor conditions, giving rise to a disease, like 'Cannon Keratosis', which

The following four couplet lines appear to go together as a sub group. In them, the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* states that people can be thought of as being either; materialistic with inferior capabilities, who are attached to worldly-value; or those having ‘amazing uncommon capabilities’, ‘seers’, who see beyond the material and have insight into *Dharma*-laws:⁴⁶

- 75 以有下劣。 Since there exist [those of] extremely-inferior
[capabilities],
- 76 宝几珍御。 [with] treasure tables, rare-esteemed.
- 77 以有驚異。 And there exist [those of] amazing uncommon
[capabilities],
- 78 狸奴白牯。 [Like] raccoon-dogs (fox-like) chaps, [and] white-
oxen.

although not white, can look greyish from a distance (Ranvet, 2023). This would agree with Sacred Texts (no date), which has; ‘like a horse with shanks gone grey’; and Luk (1993) who has it as; ‘(And) a horse (indifferent to) a left hind leg that’s white’. It is difficult to see how *Sōtō Shu Shumucho* (1986, pp. 17–19) interprets this as; ‘Or like a hobbled horse.’ Both Cleary and *Sheng Yen* have the contemplation as directed at an indefinite persons rather than the example of the Buddha, which the passage clearly mentions. (Cleary, T., no date); (*Sheng Yen* et al, no date). *Sheng Yen* has also incorporated the incorrect ‘tiger’ and ‘horse’ imagery (lines 73, 74) as preceding similes for lines 75, 76, which would violate the couple rule and the Chinese use of ‘quality/fault’ followed by simile seen largely in this *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē*.

46 Other translations use ideas of ‘ornate robes’ (*Sōtō Shu Shumucho*, 1986, pp. 17–19); (Sacred Texts, no date), which are not scripted as in the *hànzì* here, but all agree materialism is not productive for awakening to the Real. Similes used for the ‘amazing-[capabilities]’ (line 78), are:(1) the quick-witted Linū (Ch. 狸奴, Jp. *Rinu*, or *tanuki-yatsu*) raccoon-dog (fox-like) animal-fellows; and (2) the *Báigǔ* (Ch. 白牯, Jp. *Byakku*, or white-oxen). Since this poem was given in mainland China, (1) refers to the Chinese, or common, raccoon-dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) indigenous to East Asia and north Vietnam. The Japanese tankui is a slightly different subspecies (*Nyctereutes viverrinus*) and these are the only two extant species of the genus. Despite the name, raccoon-dog, their closest relatives are true foxes and not American raccoons (Wikipedia, 2023a; Wikipedia, 2023d). There are no indigenous ‘raccoon-dogs’ in Europe (Suárez, 2022). (2) After training, the white-ox is solid and reliable. Other translators agree with these images in essence, but use ‘cats’ instead of ‘raccoon-dogs’ (Luk, 1993), (Sacred Texts, no date). Luk (1993), in particular, misses the point in his notes, by suggesting the two images represent those who have attachment to saintly pretensions. The pursuit of sainthood has never been encouraged in Zen. *Sheng Yen* et al, also miss the point of the unusual capabilities and throws it back at the reader, saying ‘you are astonished’ (*Sheng Yen* et al, no date).

- 79 藝以巧力。 Art by means of skill [and] strength,
 80 射中百步。 Shoots and hits the middle [of a target] from one
 hundred paces.
 81 箭鋒相值。 [But when two] arrow-heads meet together,
 82 巧力何預。 Skill and strength, what [does it] give [further]?

Clearly, the author saw that quick-witted and reliable students were best able to respond to ‘sudden teachings’, enter the flow of immediacy and gain awakening. The remaining two couplets of this group continue the theme of a student’s readiness for the routs of ‘teachings’ and ‘approaches’. The students of ‘inferior [capabilities]’, after developing some ‘skill and strength’, by analogy, ‘shoot and hit the middle [of a target] from one hundred paces’. The students of ‘amazing uncommon [capabilities]’ have the ability to meet the master’s arrow in ‘mid-air’. The arrows are the master’s and students’ *sanzen* (one to one, personal interview) tests and repartee. Meeting in ‘mid-air’ occurs when the student has received *kenshō*, or *satori*. When this condition is finally met, the students’ answers are natural and speedily responded and further training in this respect is not necessary. Again, other translators have gained a similar feel, but not by using the *hànzì* of the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi*.⁴⁷

Looking at the next four couplets (eight lines), they also appear to go together. The first two couplets describe the situation, where the student reveals his/her *kenshō*-awakening to the master in *sanzen*.

47 Luk (1993) interprets these last two couplets as saying one should use skill and not strength, which is an over simplification and misses the point; ‘You should like bowman ‘I’, use skill, To hit the target a hundred feet away; It is the arrow’s head that flies straight, And not the bowman’s skill.’ However, he does tell us that the analogy is based on the famous story of bowman I, who in the reign of emperor Yao (2357 – 2257 BC) had a very jealous student. The student tried to kill I by shooting an arrow directly at him. Anticipating the move, I shot an arrow at the same time and the two arrows met in mid-air (*Hyoenjin*, no date). Other translators also allude to the story of bowman I and bring out the necessity for being beyond skill-training to reach ‘sudden-awakening’, but, unfortunately change the meaning of the couplet (Sacred Texts, no date), (Neatrour et al, no date). Cleary mistranslates lines 81, 82 and suggest the ‘meeting of arrow points, Has nothing to do with skill’; and Sheng Yen et al say: ‘As soon as the arrow hits the mark, ‘Of what further use is his skill?’, which misses the point of two separate conditions. (Cleary, T., no date; Sheng Yen et al, no date).

- 83 木人方歌。 [When the] wooden man sings,
 84 石女起舞。 And the] stone woman gets up to dance.
 85 非情識到。 [It is] beyond feelings and knowledge,
 86 寧容思慮。 Rather permit [this] realisation and consider
 87 臣奉於君。 A subject serves its ruler,
 88 子順於父。 [As] a child obeys its father.
 89 不順不孝。 Not to obey [is] not filial,
 90 不奉非輔。 Not serving [is] not helping.

The ‘wooden man’ singing represents the student, or Guest. He is described as ‘wooden’, because, up to the point of *kenshō* he was not ‘alive’, or awakened. The ‘stone woman’ is the Roshi, or Host, who represents the embodiment of *Avalokiteśvara*, the Mahayana Buddhist Bodhisattva of compassion. Here Guest and Host are used in the relative context. The Roshi sees the student’s undeniable change resulting from *kenshō* and is overjoyed, because all the training that he/she gave the student has come to fruition and the student is now worthy of the Sect’s *Dharma* seal of transmission. Other authors translate the first of these couplets similarly, but miss the vital point of the Guest and Host union.⁴⁸ The second of these two couplets simply states that the thus received *kenshō* experience is ‘beyond feelings and knowledge’ in the ‘seeming’, or materialistic world-sense, and instructs the awakening student to ‘permit [this] realisation’ and consider the following two couplets. Other translators do impart approximately the same interpretation concerning the experience to be beyond subjective explanation, but don’t link the point (line 86) that the *Bǎojing Sānmèi* is asking us, when confronted with this situation, to consider the instructions in the following two couplets (lines 87-90).⁴⁹ In the those couplets, we are

48 Luk (1993) says the ‘wooden man’ and ‘stone woman’ are similes for the awakened mind of Buddhahood, but miss the context. He and Sacred Texts (no date), Sheng Yen et al, (no date), Cleary, T. (no date) and Neatrou et al, (no date), similarly, miss the point of the student-master’s first meeting after the student’s *kenshō*. Perhaps they even failed to grasp who the ‘wooden man’ and ‘stone women represented’.

49 The *hànzì* actually translates as 寧 (rather) 容 (allow/permit) 思慮 (consider). Some the misinterpretations include: ‘There is no room to feel and know, To think or consider.’ (Luk, 1993); ‘It is not reached by feelings or consciousness, how could it involve deliberation?’ (Sacred Texts, no date); ‘They can’t be known by mere thought

instructed to continue to observe the manners of the student-master relationship, which can also be taken in the absolute sense, that we should be respectful of our awakening-nature, for otherwise it will disappear from our view.⁵⁰ This respectful rule-code is a prerequisite for Zen behaviour and true successive transmission and in the last of these couplets (lines 89, 90), the author cleverly aligns the Zen student-master relationship with the national idea of 'Filial piety' and additionally says 'not serving is not helping.'⁵¹ The remaining two couplets of the poem, which seem to go together as group of four lines, tells us that we should not advertise our actions and function, but continuously work for this succession.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 91 潜行密用。 | Hide [your] actions, conceal [your] function, |
| 92 如愚如鲁。 | like an idiot, like a fool. |
| 93 只能相续。 | [But] just skilfully [working] continuously [in- succession], |
| 94 名主中主。 | [For this then is] called main-principle within main- principle [Host-in-Host]. |

Again, in part, this was probably because Buddhism had been, or was, undergoing a suppression,⁴³ perhaps also, to protect ourselves and the *Dharma*, when confronted with people who have little vision that do not understand the

or feelings, so how can they be analyzed?' (Neatrou et al, no date); 'Since this cannot be understood by reasoning, How can it be analyzed?' (Sheng Yen et al, no date); 'This cannot be reached by subjective perception, How could it be thought about?' (Cleary, T., no date).

50 Line 87 literally says, 'subject serves its ruler'. The *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* leaves us able to use the analogy of Subject/Ruler to represent the Guest/Host in both the seeming, or relative sense, and the real, or absolute sense. Luk (1993) suggests that this line represents the Fourth Rank, 'Guest returning to Host' or 'Seeming uniting with Real', which it does in the sense of the Guest 'serving', but it doesn't necessarily indicate 'mutual coexistence'. It is mainly an instruction for Filial piety.

51 Filial piety can be traced back to ca. 400 BC as is found in the Confucian classic 'The Great Learning' (Chen, 2010/1908). As noted earlier, Buddhism had been, or was undergoing a suppression [when the text was written?], so it is highly likely that the author was trying to justify *Chán* as being related to the moral discipline of Confucianism (Schlutter, 2008a, pp 27-35). In any case it is likely that abbots had to be careful about how they disseminated their teachings into the community. Other translators agree with the images of Filial piety and the need for upholding the code of conduct (Sacred Texts, no date; Neatrou et al, no date; Sheng Yen et al, no date) but don't imply that there are two levels that this can be taken on.

Bǎojing Sānmèi's teachings, and additionally, possibly because, advertising behaviour destroys Zen-awakening. For this purpose, the poem provides us with the similes of an 'idiot', or 'fool' (line 92), which, with the exception of Cleary (Cleary, T., n.d.),⁵² most other translators, agree with in essence. The 'action' and 'function' (line 91), also represent the Seeming and Real, which become completely integrated here. By then skilfully working for the continuation of the lineage-succession (line 93), one achieves the totality of the Fifth Rank, 'Host in Host' (line 94), a place of truly embodied-realization. This is important because, if one identifies personally as being in possession of the Real, that is grasping onto it, then by default our vision of it, becomes lost, tarnished, or diminished. Again with the exception of Cleary, who misses the point completely, most other translations agree with the ending of this last couplet, at least in principle, if not in word.⁵³

2. Discussion of Text: The Five Ranks and Specific Usage within Transmission.

In the earlier discussion we concentrated on the dual nature of the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* with respect to general and specific usage, where general described progress towards awakening for all students, and specific described progress

52 Cleary has 27 lines for this two couplets: 'Practice unknown, work in secret; Being like one who is ignorant. If you can achieve continuity, This is called mastery of mastery. Secret of the Mind Elixir, have a medicine called elixir of mind; For years it's been refined in the oven of afflictions, Till I recognized its unchanging colour in the matrix Shining with radiance illuminating the universe. It opens the eye of reality to see with minute precision; It can change the ordinary mortal into a sage instantly. To discern the real and the false to complete the work, See to refinement at all times. It has no shape or form; it is not square or round. There are no things in words; there are no words in things. Deliberate exploitation is contrary to true function; When meditating with no intention, everything is Zen. It neither goes dead nor gets aroused; Everything is at its command. Even the land, wherever the place, When put in this oven is It. My idea is to have no particular idea; My knowledge is to have no particular knowledge. There is no uniformity, no indifference; When the appearance does not change, it's harder to discern. When nothing more appears within, Don't use anything to stabilize it' (Cleary, T., no date).

53 'host within the host, (Sacred Texts, no date); 'lord within the lord', (Neatrou et al, no date); 'Lord of lords', (*Sōtō Shu Shumucho*, 1986, pp. 17–19); 'Experiential merging with real emptiness is not cultivation, (Cleary, T., no date).

towards becoming a transmitted successor-master. The successor-master must reach awakening (*kenshō*, Second Rank) and then go beyond, through the remaining three Ranks, to complete the five, before receiving transmission. Although these two usages are inextricably interlinked, we will concentrate on the specific transmission usage in this section, as we believe this was the original purpose of the song. An exhaustive discussion of the usage of the Five Ranks within, or towards the end of, Koan training is given by Fuller-Sasaki et al, (1965).

In the introduction we stated that the Five Ranks were thought to be known to one of the *Cáodòng/Sōtō* Sect's predecessors Shítóu Xīqiān. We believe this is so because *Chán* master Shítóu Xīqiān, was considered to be the author of the *Cāntóngqì* (參同契, Jp. *Sandokai*, Eng. Inequality-Equality [in] Harmony/bonded), which appears to have been inspired by the Five Ranks (Wikipedia, 2023d). Further evidence in support of this comes from a translation of the *Cāntóngqì* made previously by one of the authors of this paper (Jones R., 2011). It appears in this latter paper that the Five Ranks are cleverly woven into the general instructions of the *Cāntóngqì*, via five consecutive couplets, being lines (27–36) of that sutra. The Five Ranks are given within the conditions of the first line of each couplet as :

First Rank: Host, Real Containing the Seeming, Shift.

- (27) 當明中有暗, During brightness, within there is darkness,
 (28) 勿以暗相遇. [then] do not [try], by means [of the] darkness to receive.

Second Rank: Guest, Seeming Containing the Real, Submission.

- (29) 當暗中有明, During darkness, within there is brightness,
 (30) 勿以明相觀. [then] do not [try], by means [of the] brightness to see.

Third Rank: Host Coming to Light, Resurgence of the Real, Achievement.

- (31) 明暗各相對, Brightness [and] darkness [complement] each other
 [as] counterparts,
 (32) 比如前後步. like [the] front [and] back [limbs] [in] walking.

Fourth Rank: Guest Returning to Host, Seeming Uniting with Real, Coexistence.

(33) 萬物自有功, [Each of the] myriad things, of themselves possess merit,

(34) 當言用及處. appropriately expressed [in] function and place.

Fifth Rank: Host in Host, Integration Real and Seeming, Absolute Achievement.

(35) 事存函蓋合, Matters exist [as] box and lid fittings,

(36) 理應箭鋒啣. [in] ordered responses; [like] arrow points drawn-artfully [to meet].

A text having five consecutive couplets which fulfil this criteria, constructed three generations before *Chán* master Dòngshān, in the same patriarchal lineage of the *Cáodòng* sect, appears to be more than a coincidence. There is no direct mention of the Five Ranks in the *Cāntóngqì* sutra otherwise. So it appears the Five Ranks were originally kept secret, or were simply for masters to ascertain their successors, without bothering students about them. It has to be said that knowledge of the Five Ranks which comes too early in training can cause problems and stumbling blocks for students. Worrying about ranks of enlightenment, before being ready to receive them naturally, inhibits their occurrence. In the face of not knowing that underneath we are all the same thing, there is also the possibility of inducing jealousy amongst *Sangha* members. On the other hand, at the right time, they help students to realize that valid changes in perception are not incorrect.

Turning our attention back to the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē*, we have interpreted indirect reference to the ‘code’, which ‘functions to eradicate [the] various sufferings’ (lines 19, 20), and the ‘standard-template’ (line 58), given as ‘[five]’ (line 38, 39), and designated lines (35-40) as pointers referring to the symbols, which were known to be used by Dòngshān, when talking about the Five Ranks (Luk, 1993). This latter point was also indirectly intimated by other translators, by attributing the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* to Dòngshān, (Cleary, T., n.d.; Sheng Yen et al, n.d.; Sacred Texts, n.d.; Neatrou et al, n.d.). We have commented that certain lines here could also be taken to represent the individual ranks. In looking for a link between the *Cāntóngqì* and the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē* texts, it became apparent to us that there were a group of five consecutive couplets (lines 73-82)

in the latter text, which could also be viewed as interlaced-pointers to the Five Ranks, just as in the former text cited above. These are as follows:

First Rank: Host, Real Containing the Seeming, Shift.

73 如虎之缺。 Like a tiger with something lacking,

74 如馬之鼻。 Like a horse with a left hind leg that is white.

Both of these images could be taken to represent a 'shift' towards the Host/Real. The tiger towards what it is lacking and the horse in old age lacking youthful vitality and perhaps, without assistance approaching death.

Second Rank: Guest, Seeming Containing the Real, Submission.

75 以有下劣。 Since there exist [those of] extremely-inferior [capabilities],

76 宝几珍御。 [with] treasure tables, rare-esteemed.

Of all of the five couplets implicated, this one is the one which is most difficult to see a fit, because of the context within its use to describe persons of inferior character earlier. It certainly does represent the Seeming in terms of physical characteristics. However, the Seeming is always comprised of the Real: Form is emptiness. In terms of the 'minister and prince' analogy, the last two kanji of line (76) can also mean 'valued-highly/imperial' and line (75) can be read as the 'inferior lowering', or bowing down. Hence, taken together there is an interlaced image of Submission: Minister (Seeming) submitting to Prince (Real).

Third Rank: Host Coming to Light, Resurgence of the Real, Achievement.

77 以有驚異。 And there exist [those of] amazing uncommon [capabilities],

78 狸奴白牯。 [Like] raccoon-dogs (fox-like) chaps, [and] white-oxen.

Here both images are of necessary skills, which could also be taken to represent Host coming to Light, or resurgence of the Real, that being a considerable Achievement.

Fourth Rank: Guest Returning to Host, Seeming Uniting with Real, Coexistence.

79 藝以巧力。 Art by means of skill [and] strength,

80 射中百步。 Shoots and hits the middle [of a target] from one hundred paces.

In this couplet, again, in contrast to its practical meaning discussed earlier, the ‘Art’ and ‘skill and strength’ could be taken to represent the bowman-Guest returning his arrow to the Host-target, as an interlace. Perhaps it does not have the image of Coexistence, other than the bowman fully uniting, at one, with his bow and arrow.

Fifth Rank: Host in Host, Integration of Real and Seeming, Absolute Achievement.

81 箭鋒相值。 [But when two] arrow-heads meet together,
82 巧力何預。 Skill and strength, what [does it] give [further]?

Here ‘two arrow-heads meet together’, can be taken as an interlaced representation of Host in Host. The skill and strength of the previous rank is no longer necessary. It all happens without any effort and completely in harmony. The new Host is in complete harmony with the old Host. They are one and the same in a long lineage of transmission.

The above arguments being the case, then the five couplets in the current text would appear to be an indirect reference and flattery to Shítóu Xīqiān’s – *Cāntóngqì*, which came three generations before Dòngshān Liángjiè in the latter’s lineage.

Conclusions

In this paper we have presented our translation of *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē* (Jp. *Hōkyō Zanmai Ka*), which incorporates deeper insights gained by one of the authors, who has trained through the Five Ranks system. This translation improves on previous translations in terms of knowledge of *hànzi* and Chinese grammar, logic and continuity of meaning. It has been demonstrated that the text has many layers of meanings, but particularly it can be read in a general sense for the purposes of directing students towards awakening, or enlightenment, and in the specific sense for the purposes of transmission within branching Zen

lineages. It has been shown that the text indirectly refers to the Five Ranks, both in the general and the specific senses. The individual Ranks have further been labelled, because the poem intimates the degree of awakening and relationships within each of the individual Ranks.

In the first part of this discussion we have centred for the most part on the general meaning, where the Host and Guest terms represents the Real/Absolute and Seeming/Form relationships of the student's perceptive progress towards awakening. In the second part of the discussion we have centred mainly on the 'specific' meaning, where Host and Guest terms represent the Prince/Master and Minister/Student, respectively, as the student progresses through the Five Ranks of awakening, to becoming a transmitted successor-master. By nature of the inseparability of Guest-Host and Master-Student, there is some overlap between the general and relative discussions. With respect to the latter relative discussion, it has become apparent that there is a link between the intimated use of the Five Ranks in the *Bǎojīng Sānmèi* and Shítóu Xīqiān's *Cāntóngqì*. Both seem to have a group of five couplets relating to the Five Ranks.

An exhaustive discussion of the usage of the Five Ranks within, or towards the end of, *Koan* training is given by Fuller-Sasaki et al (1965). Ultimately, at least in the early stages, it does not matter to a student what the Five Ranks are. In fact knowledge of them becomes a hindrance. The student only needs to realize awakening (*kenshō-satori*, Second Rank) and then move on as directed. The Five Ranks are more important for masters in ascertaining student development and readiness for transmission. For this reason, it is highly likely that the ancient masters, before Dòngshān Liángjiè, did not talk of the Five Ranks in direct language, leaving only pointers. In this respect, *Chán*-master Juefan Huihong suspected the '*Bǎojīng Sānmèi Gē*' was 'kept hidden by the earlier worthies' (Schlutter M., 2008b, pp 158 -159). We reason here, that the Five Ranks may have even been used as a template from *Chán*-master Dàjiàn Huìnéng onwards, because Shítóu Xīqiān was a student with Dàjiàn Huìnéng (Wikipedia 2023e, Ferguson, 2011, pp.43–48) for sometime, before being passed on to his master Qingyuan Xingsi (Wikipedia, 2023i).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank ALT for publishing this work, particularly the editor, Dr. Ian Rapley, who was very helpful with clarifying suggestions and interfacing the work for publication. We would also like to thank the referees, who gave us the opportunity to expand the scope of this paper, with respect to important issues within previous related publications.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_raccoon_dog

(2023g) Kenshō. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kensh%C5%8D>.

(2023h) Linji Yixuan. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linji_Yixuan.

(2023i) Qingyuan Xingsi. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qingyuan_Xingsi.

(2023j) Satori. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satori>.

(2023k) Skandha. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha>.

(2023l), Yogachara. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yogachara>.

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Appendix. Translation of the *Bǎojing Sānmèi Gē*

(Ch. 寶鏡三昧歌; Jp. 宝鏡三昧歌, *Hōkyō Zanmai Ka*, Eng. Treasure-Mirror Samadhi Song)

Ryūshin Genshō (Richard Jones), Graham Healey.

The Sutra text follows here as; line number – *hànzì* (Jp.kanji, Eng. Character) – English translation, with added square brackets to indicate interpretation, without which the English translation would be grammatically poor. This translation may be found in digital form (Jones R., Healey G., 2012):

宝鏡三昧。 Treasure-Mirror Samadhi Song

1 如是之法。 The Suchness [*Tathātā*] of [the] Law [*Dharma*],

2 仏祖密附。 Buddha ancestors intimately handed [it] down.

3 汝今得之。 You have now received it,

4 宜能保護。 Protect [and] guard [it] carefully, well.

5 銀椀盛雪。 Fill [a] silver bowl [with] snow,

6 明月藏鷺。 Conceal [an] egret [in] bright moonlight.

7 類而不齊。 [They are] alike, yet not [the] same,

8 混則知処。 [When] they are together, only then [you] know [the] place.

9 意不在言。 Because mind is not in words,

10 来機亦赴。 Come [to the] point of change [and you] move [in its] direction,

11 動成窠臼。 [The] change becomes [like a] mortared-nest (home).

12 差落顧佇。 When [you] diverge [you] fall into vacillation,

- 13 背触共非。 [Turning your] back [and] touching [are] both wrong,
- 14 如大火聚。 Like [with] a great fire-mass.
- 15 但形文彩。 When you put [it] merely [in the] form [of] literary elegance,
- 16 即属染污。 That is the same as consigning [it] to stain and dirt.
- 17 夜半正明。 [The] middle [of the] night [is] truly bright.
- 18 天晓不露。 Day dawns [but there is] no dew.
- 19 為物作則。 For things/beings it becomes a rule [code],
- 20 用拔諸苦。 [Its] function to eradicate [the] various sufferings.
- 21 雖非有為。 Although [it] is not [of the] world [of] phenomena [Samsara],
- 22 不是無語。 [It is] not [a matter] of wordlessness.
- 23 如臨宝鏡。 [It is] like looking in [a] precious mirror,
- 24 形影相覩。 [in which] form [and] reflection look [at] each other.
- 25 汝是非渠。 You are not the other-side [the reflection],
- 26 渠正是汝。 But the other-side [the reflection] is truly you.
- 27 如世嬰兒。 Like a new-born baby in the world,
- 28 五相完具。 fully endowed with the five aspects [Skandhas].
- 29 不去不來。 [It does] not go, [it does] not come,
- 30 不起不住。 [It does] not arise, [it does] not stay.
- 31 婆婆和和。 [It says] “pópo hé hé”. (or Jp. “ba-ba wa-wa”)
- 32 有句無句。 Are words there? Are words not there?

- 33 終不得物。 In the end [it does] not gain [any]thing,
- 34 語未正故。 Because the words [are] not yet correct.
- 35 重離六爻。 [The] double-fire [Li hexagram] six [lines] intertwine,
- 36 偏正回互。 Tilted [broken/yin] and straight [yang] mutually rotate.
- 37 疊而成三。 Fold and [they] become three,
- 38 變盡為五。 Transforming finally [to]make five.
- 39 如荃草味。 Like the [five] stem-herb-flavours,
- 40 如金剛杵。 as [symbolized in the] diamond-pounder [*vajra*-sceptre].
- 41 正中妙挾。 Precise [form] and middle [Absoluteness] are marvellously embraced,
- 42 敲唱双举。 Drumming and singing arise together.
- 43 通宗通途。 [To] pass through [this] essence/religion [is to] pass along the way,
- 44 挾帶挾路。 [to] hold [it] in [the] girdle [is to] hold in [the] path.
- 45 錯然則吉。 [When] respectful and restrained [towards it], then good fortune,
- 46 不可犯忤。 [And you] cannot commit an offence.
- 47 天真而妙。 [When you are] natural and unaffected [it is] marvellous,
- 48 不屬迷悟。 [For it] does not belong to erroneous-enlightenment.
- 49 因緣時節。 Causes and [karma-] relations, times and seasons,
- 50 寂然昭著。 In stillness [it is] clearly revealed.
- 51 細入無間。 So fine [it] enters [where there is] no gap,
- 52 大絕方所。 So great [it] transcends dimensions.

- 53 毫忽之差。 The tiniest moment's divergence [straying],
- 54 不応律呂。 [And you are] not in-tune [with it].
- 55 今有頓漸。 Now there are sudden and gradual [conditioned-states],
- 56 緣立宗趣。 [And] by connection [there] arise 'teachings' and 'approaches'.
- 57 宗趣分矣。 [The] 'teachings' and 'approaches' become distinguished,
- 58 即是規矩。 Specifically [within] this standard-template [of the Five Ranks].
- 59 宗通趣極。 Teachings [when] passed out approach culmination,
- 60 真常流注。 In which] Truth [perceived] endlessly flows into [you].
- 61 外寂內搖。 Outside still, inside trembling.
- 62 繫駒伏鼠。 Tethered pony, crouching mouse.
- 63 先聖悲之。 Ancient sages were grieved by this,
- 64 為法檀度。 Resulting [in the] 'law-staff'.
- 65 隨其顛倒。 In accordance with the inversion of it,
- 66 以緇為素。 [They] took black [and] made it white.
- 67 顛倒想滅。 [When] the overturning, collapsing, idea [was] destroyed,
- 68 肯心自許。 [with] consenting-mind [they] personally approved.
- 69 要合古轍。 [If you] aim to follow [the] ancient track,
- 70 請觀前古。 Please look [to] ancient times.
- 71 佛道垂成。 [When the] Buddha about to accomplish [the] way [to
Enlightenment],
- 72 十劫觀樹。 Contemplated [beneath the Bodhi]-tree for ten aeons [kalpas].

- 73 如虎之缺。 Like a tiger with something lacking,
- 74 如馬之鼻。 Like a horse with a left hind leg that is white.
- 75 以有下劣。 Since there exist [those of] extremely-inferior [capabilities],
- 76 宝几珍御。 [with] treasure tables, rare-esteemed.
- 77 以有驚異。 And there exist [those of] amazing uncommon [capabilities],
- 78 狸奴白牯。 [Like] raccoon-dogs (fox-like) chaps, [and] white-oxen.
- 79 藝以巧力。 Art by means of skill [and] strength,
- 80 射中百步。 Shoots and hits the middle [of a target] from one hundred paces.
- 81 箭鋒相值。 [But when two] arrow-heads meet together,
- 82 巧力何預。 Skill and strength, what [does it] give [further]?
- 83 木人方歌。 [When the] wooden man sings,
- 84 石女起舞。 And the] stone woman gets up to dance.
- 85 非情識到。 [It is] beyond feelings and knowledge,
- 86 寧容思慮。 Rather permit [this] realisation and consider
- 87 臣奉於君。 A subject serves it's ruler,
- 88 子順於父。 [As] a child obeys its father.
- 89 不順不孝。 Not to obey [is] not filial,
- 90 不奉非輔。 Not serving [is] not helping.
- 91 潛行密用。 Hide [your] actions, conceal [your] function,
- 92 如愚如魯。 like an idiot, like a fool.

93 只能相續。 [But] just skilfully [working] continuously [in-succession],

94 名主中主。 [For this then is] called main-principle within main-principle [Host-in-Host].