

To all but a tiny and bespectacled cohort of linguists and Khmer specialists, these will be imperceptible blemishes on the surface of an extraordinary book: a sort of google-earth view of Buddhism in Cambodia, from the smallest details to the biggest picture. Ian Harris is a new star in the Khmer studies constellation whose next contribution is eagerly awaited.

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*Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism*,  
eds Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),  
viii + 283 pp, £14.99, ISBN 0-19-517525-5

In the words of the editors, *Zen Classics*, a sequel to *The Zen Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), invited 'scholars doing original research on China, Korea and Japanese Zen literature to survey a single work or genre of works that, because of its power and influence, has helped shape the Zen tradition and caused it to be what it is today' (p. 3). Inclusion was driven by the interests of individual authors rather than an attempt to survey all the most important Zen works: Zen classics rather than the Zen classics. There are, for instance, no chapters here on the *Platform Sūtra* or the *Shōbōgenzō*, while works of less importance to the tradition are covered. But if *Zen Classics* does not serve as a concise survey of the major works of the tradition or as a comprehensive reference work, it does reflect the fruits of recent decades of research by leading scholars in the field.

While the sequel volume, *The Zen Canon*, gives greater weight to the Chinese (Chan) tradition, *Zen Classics* focuses on Japan, with only one article – Mario Poceski's piece on the *Guishan jingce* 為山警策 – specifically about a Chinese text. There is only one entry on Korea – Charles Muller's chapter on Sōn commentaries to the Diamond Sutra – and none on Vietnam, reflecting the relative weakness of Sōn and Thien studies. Other texts and genres covered include Eisai's *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論, *Eihei Dōgen Zenji Goroku* 永平道元禪師語錄, the 'Rules of Purity' in Japanese Zen, koan 'capping phrase books', Tōrei's 東嶺 commentary on the *Damoduolo chanjing* 達摩多羅禪經 and Menzan's 面山 *Jijuyū Zanmai*.

More than brief summaries of the contents of these works, the chapters include extensive discussion of their historical and literary background. The essays are particularly strong in placing works under discussion in the context of other Zen writings and Buddhist literature more generally, illustrating both the distinguishing characteristics of different traditions and the ways in which they interacted. Korean commentaries on the *Diamond Sūtra*, for instance, reflect the greater prominence given to the scholastic analysis of scripture in Sōn than in Chan or Zen (p. 44); 'rules of purity' in Japanese Zen periodically drew on a similar genre in China as it developed from the Song through the Ming dynasties (p. 138); capping phrase books were inspired on the one hand by Zen practices and writings, and on the other by Chinese literary games (p. 173). Once we understand the origin and development of these genres we better appreciate the diverse forces that shaped the Zen tradition.

Taken as a whole, *Zen Classics* illustrates both the variety and the importance of genre in Zen writings. Zen writers tackled different issues from different perspectives depending on whether they were writing hagiography, 'recorded sayings', koan collections, monastic rules or commentaries. When compiling 'recorded sayings' a monk might criticize medita-

tion and the study of scripture, but the same monk would insist on both when compiling a commentary or a set of monastic rules. Genre shaped philosophy and doctrine at least as much as individual insight.

I wished at times for a stronger editorial hand. Both *pinyin* and Wade–Giles Romanization of Chinese are used (confusingly, sometimes both at different points in the same essay). And in what is essentially a work for specialists, it is surprising that no *kanji* are given. The utility of the book as a reference work is hindered by a minimal index that does not help to link themes – meditation, philosophy of language, textual history and so on – that are treated in various places through the volume (readers at subscribing institutions can in part overcome this shortcoming by accessing the handy online version of the book available through Oxford University Press). Without a full scholarly apparatus and without a strong unifying structure to the volume or principles of coverage, one wonders if the essays might just have effectively appeared as independent journal articles rather than as ‘chapters’ in a book.

These complaints aside, the essays, informed by the latest in Zen scholarship, admirably contextualize the works under discussion both in the Zen tradition and in the local settings in which they were composed, providing both general introductions to problems presented by the texts and technical information on editions and relevant scholarship. Together with its companion volume, *The Zen Canon, Zen Classics* contributes to a solid foundation for future study of Zen literature, rendering it more accessible and ultimately more interesting.

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