Notes on the Circulation of Chan Knowledge: A New Manuscript by Xūtáng Zhìyú 虛堂智愚 (1185-1269) and its Zen Afterlife

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In March 2025, a manuscript signed by the Chan master Xūtáng Zhìyú 虛堂智愚 (1185-1269) addressed to a monk known as "Librarian Yuán" was sold at Christie's auction house. Although opening bids began less than $10,000, in the final minutes Xūtáng's calligraphy reached a price of $151,200 USD.[1] The autographed manuscript was previously unknown to modern scholars. Today, Xūtáng is best known as the Chinese teacher of several Japanese Zen students, and thus a key figure in Japanese Rinzai Zen history. This connection to Rinzai Zen is the most likely reason that his calligraphy was well-preserved among Japanese aficionados. The contents of this new manuscript correspond closely to a poem also found in a late Song dynasty (960-1279) Chinese woodblock

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1 Christie's Auction no. 23494, "Arts of Asia Online" (亞洲藝術網上拍賣), part of Asian Art Week, New York, 2025. Accessed March 27, 2025, and currently archived at https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/arts-asia-online/Xutang-zhiyu-1185-1269-1/251580. Additional information published on the Chinese language version of this page, including a complete transcription; see https://onlineonly.christies.com/s/arts-asia-online/Xutang-zhiyu-1185-1269-1/251580?sc_lang=zh

print of *The Recorded Sayings of Venerable Xūtáng* 虛堂和尚語錄 (hereafter *Xūtáng's Record* 虛堂錄), which was created circa 1274, as well as in early Japanese Gozan reprints dated 1313.[2] This same poem found in *Xūtáng's Record* was the subject of Japanese exegesis during the Edo period (1603–1868). Those later Japanese commentaries identify the recipient of that poem in *Xūtáng's Record* as Wúxué Zǔyuán 無學祖元 (1226–1286). Zǔyuán was a renowned abbot during the late Song, however, he is best remembered for his emigration to Japan and direct influence on the early development of Rinzai Zen in Japan. If this identification were true, and if *Xūtáng's Record* and the manuscript are connected, it would make this priceless manuscript associated with not just one giant in Chan–Zen history, it would be tangible evidence connecting these two towering figures whose encounter has been the stuff of legend until now.

The auctioned calligraphy is an example of parting poetry presented to monks as they prepared to embark on itinerant wandering. During itinerant wandering, early- to mid-career aspirants to Chan Buddhism would visit the abbots of great monasteries to seek instruction and guidance towards a liberating insight—and a future career as a teacher. Among the many types of poetry a Chan master would compose, usually the parting poem was the most frequently employed.[3] In cases like the manuscript addressed to Librarian Yuán, a physical manuscript itself typically was gifted to the monk who was departing. It served as a

2 Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄 made direct observations to compare the Song and Gozan editions, and concluded they are identical for the first three fascicles; whereafter the Gozan edition of 1313 includes additional material compiled in Japan and placed in a section marked "newly added" (*shinten* 新添). Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄 , *Sō Gen ban Zenseki no bunkenshiteki kenkyū dai ni kan* 宋元版禅籍の文献史的研究 第2巻 (Rinsen shoten, 2024), 770-775.

3 See Protass, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), Chapter Five, for a review of parting poetry.

memento of time spent practicing Chan and studying with the master. Individuals like a young Wúxué Zǔyuán might stay at one temple for a period of months or years. The poems often give encouragement for further spiritual cultivation, may reference some event from the student's tenure at the monastery (such as being a librarian), and may contain subtle messages about the recipient's depth of attainment.

Although it is a rare occasion for Xūtáng's calligraphy to be on the market, it is not surprising to occasionally see a Song or Yuan dynasty Chan master's calligraphy at auction. Like other Chan masters associated with Rinzai Zen, Xūtáng's writing was collected and celebrated in Japan as *bokuseki*.[4] Most extant examples of monks' calligraphy from the Song dynasty have survived thanks to historical *bokuseki* collectors in Japan. Other examples of Xūtáng's calligraphy are well-known. For example, seven pieces appeared in Tayama Hōnan's 田山方南 (1903-1980) landmark 1955 publication *Zenrin bokuseki* 禅林墨跡; and five pieces appeared in the follow-up *Zoku Zenrin bokuseki* 続禅林墨蹟. A total of 36 examples of Xūtáng's calligraphy are known to exist, according to the *Bokuseki shiryōshū* 墨蹟資料集 published together with the 2006 exhibition catalog *Sho no kokuhō Bokuseki* 書の国宝 墨蹟.[5] Of these, two are registered with the Japanese government as "national treasures" 国宝 and eleven as "important cultural properties" 重要文化財. That 2006 list does not include the manuscript sold at Christie's, which appears to be newly known to scholars.[6] The author of this essay watched the online auction

4 On the premodern Japanese preference for collection calligraphy associated with Rinzai Zen, see Gregory Levine, *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery* (University of Washington Press, 2005).

5 *Bokuseki shiryōshū* 墨蹟資料集, ed. Osaka shiritsu bijutsukan (Yomiuri shimbun, 2006), 8-10.

6 It is possible that an early photograph of this manuscript appeared in an auction catalogue from the Meiji, Taishō, or Shōwa period. *Bokuseki shiryōshū* lists 10

at Christie's and shared live observations on a social media platform; this essay builds on that social media discussion and develops suggestions by fellow scholars.[7]

The goal of this essay is to examine all surviving evidence and to either corroborate or disprove the hypothesis put forth roughly six centuries ago by premodern Japanese Zen scholars that Librarian Yuán is Wúxué Zǔyuán. I will first provide a translation and interpretation of the text of the manuscript. I will show that it has an extremely close connection to the earliest available woodblock editions of *Xūtáng's Record*, and contributes to our growing knowledge of how printed recorded sayings were compiled from manuscripts. Then, I will examine what evidence was available to early Edo period readers and show that traditional Japanese scholars misconstrued the available facts. Their facts place Wúxué Zǔyuán over 150 kilometers away from Xūtáng Zhìyú at the time this manuscript was created—making it impossible for him to be the recipient. I observe that this knowledge created in a commentary circulated to other readers, including the great Zen scholar-monk Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653-1745), and show how this knowledge changed as it circulated in marginalia and later printed editions. Finally, I recalculate the dates for certain events in Wúxué Zǔyuán's life and conclude that he

pieces of calligraphy by Xūtáng that appeared in these early auction catalogues, two of which are described simply as "parting poems." In February 2026, I examined all 10 old photographs in the catalogs at 東京文化財研究所, and this manuscript is not among them.

7 Didier Davin (National Institute of Japanese Literature) found that at least one Edo period commentary, the *Recorded Sayings of Venerable Xūtáng, Corrected Edition with Headnotes* 頭書校正虛堂和尚語録 of 1669, identifies the recipient of the poem as Wúxué Zǔyuán. He noted that the Edo commentary cited the *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釋書. Our shared suspicion about that identification led to this paper. The discussion is archived at https://bsky.app/profile/protass.bsky.social/post/3ll5ziv7njk2a

is the most likely recipient of Xūtáng's original poem and manuscript. In the end, the premodern Zen readers were right, even though they were wrong.

The Text of Xūtáng's Calligraphy

To my knowledge, no photographs nor transcriptions had been published before the Christie's auction in March 2025, and the manuscript has not been previously studied. According to Christie's bilingual website, the manuscript was sold from a "Private West Coast Collection" (西岸私人收藏). My study is based on the photographs published on Christie's website, and the accompanying formal description. I have not observed the specimen directly, and it is likely that additional information about the provenance can be discerned from a wrapper, writing on a box, and any historical notes added by previous owners and sold together with the mounted calligraphy. Here, I correct the transcription given by Christie's and give an annotated English translation of the full text of the manuscript, followed by several observations about its historical significance.

According to the auction house, the manuscript is 24.6 cm tall and 48.5 cm wide. The manuscript begins immediately with a poem from the right-side, without any title or preface. The verse closely follows the poetic quatrain form of a *juéjù* 絕句[8]. Although it adheres to poetic

8 The verse employs end rhyme in lines 1, 2, and 4. There is an imperfect rhyme between 悰 in line 2 (冬 rhyme family) and 空 and 蟲 in lines 1 and 4 (東 rhyme family). This kind of imperfection is extremely common. It is possible it represents either a local vernacular or slant rhyme. In addition, the quatrain adheres to tonal meter 平仄 throughout:
仄仄平平仄仄平
平平仄仄仄平平

form its contents are that of a religious *gāthā*, and we might refer to it as a "parting *gāthā*" or *sòngbiéjì* 送别偈. In typical fashion, the poem occupies the full height of the paper, while the colophon is written in the lower registers only. The left-side colophon has two sections: a personal message addressed to the poem's original recipient; then the date and signature of its author. This is a common format that can be seen in numerous other examples of Song and Yuan parting poetry.[9]

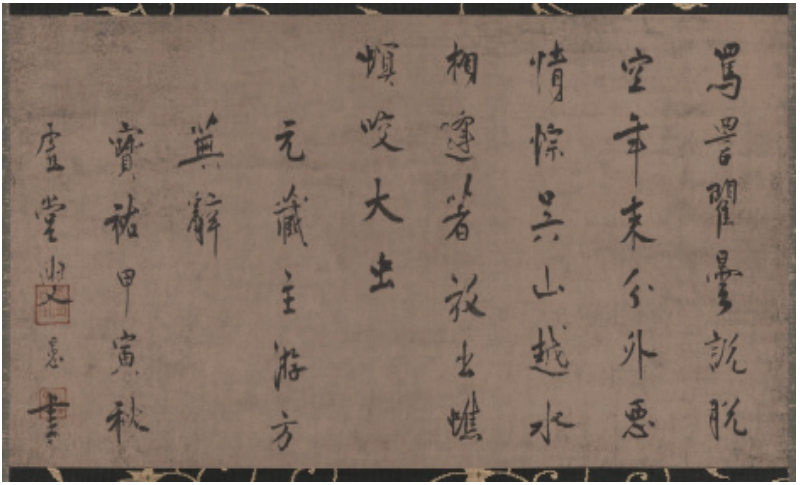

Fig. 1 Manuscript of calligraphy, signed 1254 by Xūtáng Zhìyú (1185–1269).

罵詈瞿曇說脫空，年來分外惡情悰。吳山越水相逢著，放出蟭螟咬大虫。
元藏主游方，蕪辭。
寶佑甲寅秋，虛堂叟愚書。
鈐印：虛堂、智愚

平平仄仄平平仄
仄仄平平仄仄平

9 Examples may be found in the three volumes of the *Zenrin bokuseki* series.

You damn Gautama Buddha for preaching nothing,
More and more, you are in a profoundly bad mood.
Whoever you meet in the mountains of Wú and waters of Yuè Let loose the gnats to eat that tiger.

Idle words for Librarian Yuán as he sets off to wander the realm,
Signed by the Old Fool of Empty Hall,
Autumn of the Jiǎyín Year, Bǎoyòu Reign [1254]
[Seal: Xūtáng][Seal: Zhìyú]

NOTES

L1/ *Qùtán* 瞿曇 is a transliteration of the Buddha's family name "Gautama."
Zen dictionaries gloss "preaching nothing" as a Chan expression that referred to giving explanations of the ineffable. It is a pun that turns on different valences of the word 'emptiness.' This same phrase *tuōkōng* 脫空 also was a vernacular expression used in the Song, to refer to fabrication or lying explained in detail below.[10]

L2/ *èqíngcóng* 惡情悰 is an uncommon phrase. It earlier appeared as the closing words of a medieval love song: the lover is gut-wrenched to be parting.[11] Koga and Iriya, *Zengo jiten* (5), gloss it as "a sickening

10 A simple gloss is given in Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高 and Koga Hidehiko 古賀英彦, *Zengo jiten* 禅語辞典 (Shibunkaku shuppan, 1991), 296; *Zengaku daijiten* 禪學大辭典 (Taishūkan Shoten, 1985), 826c; and Léi Hànqīng 雷漢卿, *Chánjí fāngsúcí yánjiū* 禪籍方俗詞研究 (Bāshǔ shūshè, 2010), 480.

11 To the tune of *Gèng lòuzǐ* 更漏子 by Sūn Guāngxiàn 孫光憲 (d. 968), *Quán Tángshī*

feeling in one's chest" (胸糞が悪くなる). Depending on context, one might gloss this in English as "feel like shit."

L3/ "Mountains of Wú and waters of Yuè" 吳山越水 refers to the ancient neighboring kingdoms of Wú (roughly Jiāngsū and Sūzhōu area) and Yuè (roughly Zhèjiāng and Hángzhōu Bay area).

L4/ "Tiger" is a literary reading of *dàchóng* 大蟲, which more literally reads as "large critter." The word *chóng* (modern Chinese: "bugs") was used for a wider variety of animals in early Chinese texts. In Tang and Song literature, *dàchóng* refers to a tiger.

Colophon/ "idle words" *wúcí* 蕪辭 is a common phrase at the end of a letter or poem to express humility. The Christie's auction house transcription is wrong: "I have no words" *wúcí* 無辭. Perhaps they misinterpreted this phrase to be some vaguely Zen-like expression, such as "with words of nothingness."

This poem offers subtle praise for the aspirant, Librarian Yuán. It

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全唐詩, *juǎn* 897.

Tonight we meet, tomorrow we part, face-to-face enduring this utter sorrow.
I press against your rouged face, twirl your jade hairpin, silent tears wet our sleeves.
The silver needle of time falls, beads of frost thin, beyond these walls a rooster crows the dawn.
I heed her final words, sick to my stomach, guts wrenched as I head west and then east.
今夜期，來日別，相對只堪愁絕。偎粉面，撚瑤簪，無言淚滿襟。
銀箭落，霜華薄，牆外曉雞咿喔。聽付屬，惡情悰，斷腸西複東。

does not directly celebrate his awakening or insight. To the contrary, Xūtáng's poem is a warning for Chan students focused on performing Chan rhetoric without real understanding. One can try mimicking the great masters who criticized the Buddha, but without insight of one's own, one will end up in a bad mood, and one's behavior will be as meaningless and ineffective as that of a small bug. However, I would argue that the insult here disguises a compliment: Librarian Yuán is so bad, he is good. The impossible victory of small critters is a metaphor for the rise of a younger generation of teachers who are somehow capable of meeting the old tigers of the Chan world.

The opening line of the poem echoes a more common Chan expression: "scold the Buddha and curse the ancestors" (*hēfó màzǔ* 訶佛罵祖). This expression is associated positively with Déshān Xuānjiàn 德山宣鑑 (782-865). It was a way to praise his profound expression of wisdom that was not attached to the sayings of buddhas, Chan ancestors, or even his own teacher.[12] Although the phrase "scold the Buddha and curse the ancestors" originally had this positive valence, it also was associated with pale imitations of this style of Chan mastery.

A Song dynasty example of the phrase being used as critique is found in the following address to a young student written by Juéfàn Huìhóng 覺範惠洪 (1071-1128). Huìhóng claims the student suffers from too much talent and not enough wisdom.[13]

Yǎn Shèngyuǎn of Lúlíng, who reached the wonder years of

12 In the *Jīngdé Transmission of the Flame* 景德傳燈錄 (T51, no. 2076, p. 317c2-3) and later *Blue Cliff Record* case 4, it is Wéishān 潙山 who praises him thus.

13 "An Expression of Parting with Yǎn Shèngyuǎn" 送演勝遠序, in Zhōu Yùkǎi 周裕鍇 ed., *Shímén wénzì chán jiàozhù* 石門文字禪校注 (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2021), vol. 8, 3671–75.

> adolescence, has set his mind on the Way. However, he suffers from an excess of talent, not knowing how to rein it in. When he learned that studying the classics can enrich the mind, he thought he would "snatch others' seats."[14] When he saw the brilliance of literary writing, he thought he would pour himself into brush and ink. When he learned about the spread of the orthodox Chan lineage, he thought he would scold the Buddha and curse the ancestors. This is the problem of excess talent.
>
> 廬陵演勝遠，方妙年，志於為道，然患其才多，不知收拾。聞經論之可以游心，則思奪席；見文章之雄偉光秀，則思倒志筆硯；聽開拓正宗，則思呵佛罵祖。才多之過也。

In this address to a young monk, Huìhóng explicitly describes an ambitious young aspirant to Chan mastery as naively imitating the irreverent and iconoclastic behavior found in Chan literature. Is it necessarily good Chan practice to curse at buddhas and ancestors? Or, does simple mimicry misconstrue the deeper meaning of Déshān's teachings? Xūtáng needs to navigate this question in his poem, so it is important what he says next.

Xūtáng tells Librarian Yuán that he has started to appear very ill-tempered. On the surface, this appears to be negative. Is Zǔyuán in a bad mood because of an unhealthy obsession with pointing out the emptiness of language? To the contrary, Xūtáng is using this phrase to compliment Librarian Yuán for the depth of his insight. Librarian Yuán has become stern and foul-tempered, which is a way of saying he is starting to resemble great worthies of the past. Zǔyuán has thoroughly understood

14 An allusion to the biography of Dài Píng 戴憑 in *Hòu Hànshū* 後漢書. The emperor took away the mat from each imperial scholar who could not interpret the classics and gave it to the scholar with a superior interpretation. Dài Píng ended up with over fifty other scholars' mats.

when and how a Chan master might need “to kill the buddhas and patriarchs.” As a result, to an ordinary person he would seem to have a foul temperament. This is a compliment. It is particularly apt that Xūtáng describes Librarian Yuán's ability to scold the Buddha this way .

Other Song dynasty records also use this phrase as a warning against excessive reverence for sacred language, and mimicking old Chan argot instead of saying something meaningful in ordinary language. (Ironically, this vernacular saying ends up becoming Chan argot.) Here is the earliest record of this phrase, found in Dàhuì Zōnggǎo’s anthology *The Chan Arsenal* 宗門武庫 (T47, no. 1998B, p. 956c7-11):

> When Yuánwù Kèqín (1063–1135) was studying with Wǔzǔ Fǎyǎn (1018–1104), Wǔzǔ said: “You are quite talented, and have just a few flaws.” Yuánwù asked him twice, and then a third time: “I don’t get it, what flaws do I have?” Wǔzǔ said: “Always ‘Chan’ just far too much!” Yuánwù said: “I thought one should practice Chan, why are you suspicious of people who talk about Chan?” Wǔzǔ said: “If you do it like normal conversation, it is so much better.” Sometime later another monk asked: “Why be suspicious of people who talk about Chan?” Wǔzǔ said, “I feel like shit.”

> 圓悟在五祖時，祖云：「爾也儘好，只是有些病。」悟再三請問：「不知，某有什麼病？」祖云：「只是禪忒多。」悟云：「本為參禪，因什麼却嫌人說禪？」祖云：「只似尋常說話時多少好。」時有僧便問。「因甚嫌人說禪。」祖云。「惡情悰。」

Xūtáng’s poem turns this expression into a compliment, and says that Librarian Yuán has likewise understood the problem of excessive

reverance for sacred language. This is why Librarian Yuán has grown more and more foul. Librarian Yuán has come to embody the profound bad mood of a great teacher like Wǔzǔ Fǎyǎn. According to the above texts, this refers to someone free to discuss Chan insight with their own ordinary language.

The poem is also laden with double entendre. Xūtáng's joke turns on two meanings of *kōng* 空 as (i) vapid and as (ii) profound "emptiness." This word appears within Xūtáng's expression *tuōkōng* 脫空 . Although in Chinese Buddhist scripture the word *tuōkōng* is more or less a synonym for "emptiness," in Chan texts *tuōkōng* has a negative connotation closer to its vernacular meaning. This is clear from the more common phrase *tuōkōng wàngyǔ* 脫空妄語 ("lies and deluded speech").

Unlike my translation of Xūtáng's poem, to best capture the double entendre of *kōng*, and given the vernacular story that I translate below, we might translate *tuōkōng* as "empty promises." On the surface, the Chan master is teasing his student about wrongly critiquing the Buddha for lies and idle talk—for how can any words capture the ineffable? But the insightful Buddhist reader would also re-interpret this line as instead referring to "promises of emptiness," a profound insight into *śūnyatā*, one of the bedrock concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

This is an example of Chan masters adapting vernacular language into profound Chan discourse. A roughly contemporaneous record of *tuōkōng* used as a vernacular expression appears in *Uncultivated Talk from East of Qí* 齊東野語 by Zhōu Mì 周密 (1232-1298). In a story entitled "Song of the Courtesan from Shǔ" 蜀娼詞 , Zhōu writes about a retainer who lived with Lù Yóu 陸游 (1125–1210). The retainer brought home a courtesan with promises of affection, but proceeded to ignore her for several days while feigning illness. She spontaneously composed a lyric poem (*cí* 詞) to the pattern of *Quèqiáoxiān* 鵲橋仙 . Relevant to our study,

note where she remarks she should have known better, because all his idle talk had come straight from a book she humorously refers to as the *Classic of Empty Promises*.[15]

> Entertainers from Sìchuān possess literary talents, and seem to have inherited the style of Xuē Tāo 薛濤. A retainer of Lù Yóu coerced a courtesan from Sìchuān to come back with him. He then stored her away in a detached room, and over the course of several days visited her only once. He would feign illness to avoid her, and the courtesan grew rather suspicious. The retainer composed a lyric poem to explain himself, and the courtesan responded with a lyric using the same rhymes:
>
> > "You spoke of oaths, you spoke of promises, you spoke of feelings, you spoke of intentions—and so springtime melancholy filled pages of writing. Perhaps I should have remembered the *Classic of Empty Promises*, for is that what my fellow teaches? You do not share tea, do not share a meal, do not share a word with me, and for you I am emaciated. I think of you without a moment's pause; when would I have had time to cast a spell on you?"
>
> Some people have wrongly slandered Lù Yóu for coercing a Sìchuān nun to come live with him, when in fact it was this retainer and courtesan.

蜀娼類能文，蓋薛濤之遺風也。放翁客自蜀挾一妓歸，蓄之別室，率數

15 *Quán Sòng bǐjì* 全宋筆記, ser. 7, vol. 10, 182.

> 日一往。偶以病少疏, 妓頗疑之。客作詞自解, 妓即韻答之云:「說盟說誓, 說情說意, 動便春愁滿紙。多應念得脫空經, 是那個先生教底？不茶不飯, 不言不語, 一味供他憔悴。相思已是不曾閑, 又那得工夫咒你？」或謗翁嘗挾蜀尼以歸, 即此也。

This vernacular phrase "empty promises" must have been somewhat common in broader society. It was not a term invented by Chan masters. Moreover, Xūtáng was not the first to use this term in this way.

Xūtáng's expression "preaching empty promises" closely echoes other Chan texts. Xūtáng may have known that Dàhuì Zōnggǎo 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) once concluded a New Year's Day sermon by humbly describing his attempts to convey what is beyond words:

> "When I took the high seat, and someone asked about the buddhadharma at the very start of the year, why would I go on with all these somersaults in midair, preaching promises of emptiness to deceive people?"
> 杲上座, 他問新年頭佛法, 為甚麼一向虛空裏打筋斗, 說脫空謾人？[16]

Dàhuì Zōnggǎo describes his sermons as a lie in order to underscore that his words can merely gesture towards the dharma, and the latter is more important than any particular words. The same phrase also appeared in a popular Chan primer, "Songs to Educate Postulants" 訓童行頌 , authored by Císhòu Huáishēn 慈受懷深 (1077–1132).[17]

16 *Dàhuì pǔjué chánshī yǔlù* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (T47, no. 1998A, p. 847b29-c2)

17 I follow the text given in *Zīmén jǐngxùn* 緇門警訓 (T48, no. 2023, p. 1081a8-9). A variant text (reading 有時窮) in *Císhòu Huáishēn chánshī guǎnglù* 慈受懷深禪師廣錄 (X73, no. 1451, p. 115a24-b1) likely derives ultimately from a manuscript copy of a lost Song text, held at Ryōsokuin 両足院 , and may be a copyist's error.

Do not learn from foolish people who preach promises of emptiness,
With empty promises, what comes from talking?
Even in darkness do not say that no one sees,
You will find it hard to deceive Lord Ma.
莫學愚人說脫空,
脫空說得有何窮,
暗中莫道無人見,
只恐難瞞馬相公。

Above is one of Císhòu's verses later included in *Zīmén jǐngxùn* 緇門警訓 and taught to young monks. This verse cautions young students against the dangers of false speech. If this phrase appears in a song for children, it shows that Xūtáng repeated a common vernacular phrase. Although it was not the exclusive purview of Chan masters, Xūtáng nonetheless used the saying in a sophisticated manner.

The vernacular language found in this manuscript is far from the only such example of a vernacular expression put to creative use by Xūtáng. Indeed, Xūtáng was closely following the example of generations of Chan teachers in doing so.[18] Other examples from *Xūtáng's Record* could further demonstrate Xūtáng's familiarity with Chan adaptations of vernacular sayings.[19] However, due to considerations of space, I will

18 Numerous other examples of vernacular language in Chan texts can be found, for example, in Léi Hànqīng 雷漢卿 and Wáng Chánglín 王長林, *Chánzōng wénxiàn yǔyán lùnkǎo* 禪宗文獻語言論考 (Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2018).

19 To give just one example, see the expression "Zhìzàng was Tóu White, Bǎizhàng was Tóu Black" 藏頭白、海頭黑. This is a phrase attributed to the great Tang master Mǎzǔ Dàoyī 馬祖道一 that was frequently commented upon in Song Chan literature, including in *Xūtáng héshàng yǔlù* 虛堂和尚語錄 (T47, no.

2000, p. 1047b15-23). The story is first recorded in *Zǔtángjí* 祖堂集, is found in *Jīngdé chuándēnglù*, and would later become *Blue Cliff Record* case no. 73. Many commentators have failed to grasp that it was a reference to a folk parable from Fújiàn. Instead, Zen commentaries often focus on the contrast of "black and white" as denoting binary thinking, suggesting Mǎzǔ's comment is meant to urge the monk to transcend discursive thinking and ordinary judgment. However, the opposite is the real meaning of this saying—as Xūtáng also knew. In this story, Mǎzǔ adapted a vernacular saying and thereby judged that his disciple Xītáng Zhìzàng 西堂智藏 at first appeared to have the upper hand, but in the end his other disciple Bǎizhàng Huáihǎi 百丈懷海 had the final word. Due to limits of space, it is not possible to include my full translation of the Fújiàn story or Xūtáng's commentary on it.

To my knowledge, the first person to correctly identify the origins in a Fújiàn tale was the scholar and Zen priest Inoue Shūten 井上秀天 (1880-1945). Having identified the passage, Inoue suspected that "white-headed" and "black-headed" referred to the headgear the two thieves would wear. R. D. M. Shaw's English translation of *Blue Cliff Record* includes a note that summarizes Inoue's explanation. More recently, Lǐ Zhuàngyīng 李壯鷹 presented a novel argument. Lǐ proposed that when Mǎzǔ Dàoyī served as an abbot in Fújiàn, he was exposed to the Mǐn accent. In medieval Mǐn dialect, the words *tóu* 頭 and *hóu* 侯 had similar pronunciations. Lǐ also speculates *tóu* may have been used as a local orthographic variant for *hóu*. Later, when Mǎzǔ said "Hóu White," due to the influence of the Fújiàn accent, it was either heard as or written as "Tóu [head] White." Indeed, we can see many Chan texts have other orthographic variants in this story, and together they demonstrate the oral nature of its origins. One can find "white ape" 猴白 and "black ape" 猴黑 in Chan texts, clearly another error for the surname Hóu. A good Chan master would be expected to be familiar with the real meaning of such allusions, and indeed we see exactly this in Xūtáng's comments.

On the sources for this story, see Sūn Chāngwǔ 孫昌武, Kinugawa Kenji 衣川賢次, Nishiguchi Yoshio 西口芳男, eds. *Zǔtángjí* 祖堂集 (Zhonghua shuju, 2007), *juān* 14, vol. 2, p. 615; *Jīngdé chuándēnglù* 景德傳燈錄 (T51, no. 2076, p. 252a28-29); *Biyánlù* 碧巖錄 (T48, no. 2003, pp. 200c10-201c15). For an example of Zen misinterpretation, see Katō Totsudō 加藤咄堂, *Hekiganroku daikōza* 碧巖録大講座 (Heibonsha, 1940), vol. 9, 323–31. See also Inoue Shūten 井上秀天, *Hekiganroku shin kōwa* 碧巖録新講話 (Kyōbunsha shoten, 1931), 700-701; R.D.M. Shaw, *The Blue Cliff Records* (London: Michael Joseph ltd., 1961), 226-227; and Lǐ Zhuàngyīng 李壯鷹, "Chán yǔ jiědú —tóubái yǔ tóuhēi" 禪語解讀—「頭白」與「頭黑」*Běijīng shīfàn*

refrain from a detailed analysis here.

Turning back to the vernacular phrase of “empty promises,” we similarly see evidence of its widespread usage long before Xūtáng. By the early Song, if not earlier, this phrase was already picked up by Chan masters from across China and given a double meaning. Two of the earliest recorded instances are in *Yúnmén guǎnglù* 雲門廣錄 (T47, no. 1988, p. 550c14-15):

> [In response to Yúnmén Wényǎn,] the monk has no response. Yúnmén said, “This fellow of empty talk and deceit!”
> 無對。師云：「脫空妄語漢。」

and in *Míngjué chánshī yǔlù* 明覺禪師語錄 (T47, no. 1996, p. 673a23)

> [In response to Xuědòu Chóngxiǎn,] the monk was silent. Xuědòu said, “This fellow of empty talk and deceit!” and then struck the monk.
> 僧無語。師云：「脫空謾語漢。」便打。

This expression “a fellow of empty talk and deceit” became a standard part of the Chan repertoire centuries before the time of Xūtáng Zhìyú. Again, we see that Xūtáng was adept at the proper use of established Chan expressions. The first couplet combines two expressions to suggest Library Yuán is a nasty fellow. However, this kind of sacred bad mood is a sign of his freedom. The compliment here is especially apt for a librarian, one who might become attached to written words. Instead, a

dàxué xuébào: shèhuì kēxué bǎn (1996.2) 49-55.

librarian must focus on the ineffable meaning behind the words filling his monastery library.

In the final couplet, Xūtáng turns to describe the departure of Librarian Yuán. He offers praise couched in insults. First, the region of Wú and Yuè refers to the Jiāngnán area and includes Hángzhōu, where Yuán visited Xūtáng. As Librarian Yuán leaves to visit other monasteries, Xūtáng anticipates he will encounter other teachers, and perhaps a manifestation of Gautama himself. Next, Xūtáng appears to say Librarian Yuán is a gnat incapable of devouring a tiger. Whether that tiger is the other teachers he encounters, or Gautama from Line 1, this seems like a put down. Yuán is as insignificant as a tiny bug.

However, after the kind of praise seen in the first two couplets, Xūtáng's insult here should also be praise. I would argue that insulting Yuán in this way implies he has overcome any attachments to knee-jerk piety. When they discussed the dharma, Yuán likely was relentless in his Chan critique of language and concepts. Perhaps Yuán used more ordinary language to gesture at awakened experience. We can only speculate what was said. Regardless, it becomes clear that this last line was a positive compliment once we recognize that it alludes to Yúnmén Wényǎn analyzing the story of Niútóu Fǎróng 牛頭法融 meeting the Fourth Patriarch Dàoxìn 道信. A version of this story is found in Jǐngdé chuándēnglù 景德傳燈錄 (T51, no. 2076, pp. 226c26-227b6). At the beginning of this story, Fǎróng is so pious that a hundred birds bore flowers and offered them to Fǎróng. Yúnmén describes this as "Guanyin in every household" 家家觀世音. Then, upon meeting Dàoxìn, Fǎróng's knee-jerk piety for even the written name of the Buddha is revealed to be an obstacle to his total liberation. Fǎróng is then freed from this ordinary kind of worship of icons. Yúnmén says Fǎróng was transformed and is now like "a cicada in the fire swallowing a tiger" 火裏蜘蟟吞大

蟲 , per Yúnmén guǎnglù 雲門廣錄 (T47, no. 1988, p. 549b8-10). With this allusion, Xūtáng is pointing to a canonical master who went beyond piety to real understanding. This is a fitting end to this poem. It means Librarian Yúan has indeed grasped the meaning of scolding buddhas, the idea introduced in Line 1. Yúan has moved beyond sanctimoniousness. Liberation can be a dirty business, and Yúan embodies the sacred bad mood of a young master.

This poem is a good representative of the genre of parting *gāthā*. Parting *gāthā* was perhaps the most common genre of poetry written by Chan masters. A critical stage of development for Chan students was the period of itinerant wandering (*xíngjiǎo* 行腳), during which they were known as monks of "clouds and waters" (*yúnshuǐ* 雲水). During this stage of development, a relatively advanced monk would seek out teachers for direct instruction. A monk of skills and competence was likely to be assigned duties as one of the monastic officers, such as the head of the library (*zángzhǔ* 藏主). Given this monastic traffic, the abbots of popular Chan monasteries wrote parting poems with great frequency.

The contents of a Chan parting *gāthā* often reflect on Chan philosophy and practice—thus distinguishing it from a secular literary parting poem. For example, the poem above contemplates the meaning of "scolding the Buddhas." In some cases, the poem will reference a particular topic or insight that the recipient had discussed with the master. Some poems may either praise or make humorous reference to the insight of the student receiving that poem. For example, Xūtáng and dozens of other members of his community wrote farewell poems to the Japanese Zen monk Nanpo Shōmyō 南浦紹明 (1235–1309) that include this kind of humor and specificity.[20]

In addition, manuscripts such as this possessed a kind of social

20 See Protass, *The Poetry Demon*, Chapter 5.

capital, because the Chan aspirant, as they wandered on, could display the manuscript to others. The social fact of possessing calligraphy by a famous Chan master was a sign of one's standing. Beyond this, the colophon was a space for the author of the manuscript to confer additional social capital on the recipient. The monk who received the above poem, Librarian Yuán, is named explicitly on the manuscript and is praised as a person who is so bad (he is good). By contrast, some calligraphy does not include any colophon. Having one's name inscribed by a master conferred additional social capital for the original owner of this manuscript. In addition, the colophon affirms that recipient is a monk who attained the monastic office of "librarian." This title distinguishes Yuán from ordinary members of the sangha who have not yet received Chan training. Yuán the Librarian is leaving Xūtáng's temple to "wander the realm." That phrase refers to the *xíngjiāo* practice of Chan students, who go from teacher to teacher, seeking enlightenment. Both along his way and at his subsequent destinations, Librarian Yuán could display this calligraphy by the famous Chan Master Xūtáng that was personally addressed to him. We have evidence that some Chan monks did exactly this—gathering calligraphy from various teachers they met and presenting it when they arrived in subsequent communities.[21]

Calligraphy circulated among viewers and collectors within monastery communities in various ways, and the calligraphy of famous teachers continued to be valued by later generations of monks.[22] In

21 See the parting poem from Liǎoān Qīngyù 了庵清欲 to Mubō Issei 無夢一清, signed 1350, image no. 9 in *Chūgoku o tabishita zensō no ashiato* 中国を旅した禅僧の足跡 (Kyūshū kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2014).

22 For two Southern song examples, see Wúzhǔn Shīfàn's comments about a piece of calligraphy by Dàhuì Zōnggǎo shown to him by a visiting monk; an entry entitled「跋大慧出隊歸止知事頭首出迎手帖」in *Wúzhǔn Shīfàn chánshī yǔlù* 無準師範禪師語錄 (X70, no. 1382, pp. 273c23-274a2). And, Wúwén Dàocàn's comments on

general, the personal belongings of monks were to be auctioned to other members of the sangha after their death, and the proceeds benefitting the monastery.[23] It is also possible that monks gifted objects such as calligraphy to associates, students, or their community. In the present case, the current format of this scroll does not preserve any historical colophons added by previous owners or renowned viewers. If the calligraphy was originally presented to Wúxué Zǔyuán, as later Japanese commentaries suggest, then it is possible that he carried it with him when he emigrated to Japan in 1279. Regardless of how this calligraphy traveled to Japan, the photos published by Christie's display Japanese silk brocade framing the calligraphy, confirming that it was part of a Japanese collection in the recent past. All other known pieces of Xūtáng's calligraphy also survived thanks to medieval and early modern Japanese collectors. We can conclude that this calligraphy circulated to Japan (probably around the same early time as other Song and Yuan Chan monks' calligraphy), over centuries passed between collectors in Japan, before entering the private American collection from which it was most recently sold.

Comparing Manuscript and Early Print

The poetic contents of this manuscript match a verse found in *Xūtáng's Record*. This likely corroborates the historicity of the manuscript, and may contribute to our knowledge of the editorial process of Chan recorded sayings as well as the relationship between manuscripts and

three monks' calligraphy entitled「跋無準癡絕北磵送演上人法語」in *Wúwén Dàocàn chánshī yǔlù* 無文道燦禪師語錄 (X69, no. 1372, p. 816c23).

23 For a translation of the Song dynasty rules on auctioning a late monk's possessions, as found in *Chányuàn qīngguī* 禪苑清規, see Yifa, *Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 207–209.

printed texts. Many different historical editions of *Xūtáng's Record* survive. Because later editions can make minor changes to texts, it is important to examine different historical editions of *Xūtáng's Record* and compare them to the recently sold manuscript.

The most widely available today is found in Volume 47 of the modern Japanese Buddhist canon entitled *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. This was the first critical edition of the canon, created between 1922–1934 by scholars led by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 (1872–1933). (Volume 47 was published in 1924.) This canon can be called a critical edition because the editors compared several different editions for each text, selected the most excellent, and included any textual variants in footnotes on each page. By contrast, the compilers of earlier Buddhist canons selected one "correct" text and excluded variants.

The Taishō edition undoubtedly is the most widely available for two reasons. First, major research universities purchased copies of *Taishō Daizōkyō* and it can be found in thousands of libraries in many countries around the world. It has become the standard reference for scholars who wish to communicate with one another using a universal citation system. Second, two different teams digitized the *Taishō Daizōkyō* and established freely available websites. The *SAT Daizōkyō Text Database Committee* at University of Tokyo digitized all 85 volumes of *Taishō Daizōkyō*. The CBETA team in Taiwan digitized the Chinese portions of *Taishō Daizōkyō* (excluding the latter volumes of Japanese Buddhist texts) together with Chinese Buddhist texts from other important collections such as the *Manji Shinsan zoku zōkyō* 卍新纂續藏經 (first published 1905–1912; revised edition published 1975–1989). Today, digitized copies of *Xūtáng's Record* are freely available on the internet. From CBETA especially, many more copies have proliferated. As a result, the digital edition of Xūtáng's

Record most readily accessible online is based on the *Taishō Daizōkyō*.

Reading the *Taishō* edition of *Xūtáng's Record*, the textual contents of our manuscript correspond to a poem found in fascicle seven (T47, no. 2000, p. 1037b26-28). When we compare manuscript and print, the only difference is that Xūtáng's manuscript includes a simplified form of 虫 whereas the *Taishō* printed text gives the full traditional character 蟲 . Given this minor difference, the textual contents of the poems in manuscript and in print are virtually identical.

By contrast, where the manuscript includes a signed colophon after the poem, *Xūtáng's Record* has a title for the poem and no colophon. When we compare them, it is obvious that the manuscript colophon and printed title are related. The title found in the printed *Xūtáng's Record* reads: "Librarian Yuán sets off to wander the realm" 元藏主遊方 . The manuscript's colophon reads: "Idle words for Librarian Yuán as he sets off to wander the realm" 元藏主游方， 蕪辭 . This title was adapted from the manuscript's colophon—or from the colophon of another manuscript copy kept by Xūtáng for his own records. One difference is a minor stylistic variant: the manuscript has 游 and the printed *Record* has 遊 . In addition, the printed text omits all other information from the colophon. This kind of abbreviation of manuscript colophons to create titles is widely attested, and is consistent with the normal editorial processes used to create Chan *Recorded Sayings*.[24] Therefore, it is most likely that a manuscript held by Xūtáng or one of his disciples, perhaps the manuscript auctioned at Christie's, was available to the original Southern Song compilers of *Xūtáng's Record*.

Many Chan Buddhist texts found in the *Taishō Daizōkyō* are based on editions produced during the late Ming dynasty as part of the so-called Jiāxìng Canon 嘉興藏 , also known as the Jìngshān Canon 徑山

24 See Protass, *The Poetry Demon*, Chapter 2.

藏. Many of these late Ming editions of Chan texts were newly altered by their 16th and 17th century compilers; and are unreliable witnesses to the underlying Song dynasty texts that they claim to represent.[25] It is thus particularly significant that when creating a new edition of *Xūtáng's Record* for the *Taishō Daizōkyō*, the editors relied on two "Five Mountains Editions" (*Gozan-ban* 五山版), early Japanese reprints of a Song dynasty original. As a result, the *Taishō* edition of *Xūtáng's Record* is a generally reliable edition of the text, but with some differences from the underlying Gozan editions.

The recently published photoreproduction of a Gozan edition of *Xūtáng's Record* shows that this poem also appears directly in these earliest printed editions. This poem was not added by a later editor who was recompiling the text, and was not newly added into the *Taishō Daizōkyō* edition. The Gozan edition follows the Song edition closely, as book historian Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄 observed. The Gozan and Song editions are identical in page layout, format, and likeness. Both the Gozan and Song editions are organized into "volumes" (*cè* 冊), and do not contain *juǎn* 卷 fascicle divisions. (*Taishō Daizōkyō* redivided the text into ten *juǎn* fascicles, which corresponds with later Japanese editions.) The Gozan edition does not have running page numbers. Instead, each new section begins with new pagination. Our poem is found on a sheet labeled page 12 of the section for *Gāthā* 偈頌; which happens to be the 64th sheet

25 A particularly well-known example is *Recorded Sayings of Master Fayan* 法眼語錄, completely re-created in the late Ming. See Suzuki Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄 "Shohon taishō *Kinryō Seiryōin Bun'eki zenji goroku*" 諸本対照 金陵清涼院文益禅師語録, *Aichigakuin daigaku ronsō* 愛知学院大学論叢 27 (1997): 63-73; and ibid., part ii, *Aichigakuin daigaku ronsō* 28 (1998): 47-68. For a recent re-evaluation of the possibilities for reconstructing Fayan's thought see the essay by Tsuchiya Taisuke in Tsuchiya Taisuke 土屋太祐 and Yamago Mikiyasu 柳幹康, *Hougenroku / Mumonkan* 法眼録／無門関 (Daizōshuppan, 2019).

of Volume Three.

In the early Gozan edition of *Xūtáng's Record*, the poem and title are again virtually identical with the *Taishō* edition. However, the Gozan text uses the simplified form 虫 , just like the manuscript, and differing from the character 蟲 found in the *Taishō*. Looking ahead, we see that the character 蟲 was used by the 17th century, when the ten-fascicle edition of *Xūtáng's Record* began circulating in Japan. We will discuss these later Japanese editions in the following section, together with marginalia and commentary whereby readers attempted to identify the original recipient of this poem.

The Identity of Librarian Yuán

The manuscript colophon and poem title both address one Librarian Yuán, using only a single character from the dharma-name of the recipient. It is difficult to identify a monk based on a single character. Nevertheless, by the early Edo period, Japanese readers and scholars had concluded that the recipient of this poem was Wúxué Zǔyuán 無學祖元 (1226–1286). However, these readers seem guilty of motivated reasoning. Zǔyuán was among the first émigré Chan masters to come to Japan. He founded the Engakuji Zen Temple, had many important Japanese disciples, and was tremendously influential on the development of Rinzai Zen. For a Rinzai Zen monk, there is great value in connecting this poem with both Xūtáng Zhìyú and Wúxué Zǔyuán.

The earliest dated evidence for this identification of Librarian Yuán with Wúxué Zǔyuán is in *Kidōroku Shō* 虚堂録鈔 ("Notes on Xūtáng's Record") by the Zen monk Ryūkei Shōsen 龍溪性潜 (1602–1670), seen in Fig. 2. The abbreviated title *Kidōroku Shō* is given on the outside cover, the full title found inside is *Kidō Zenji Goroku giji* 虚堂禅師語録義事 . An

extensive preface by the author signed "Shōsen" 宗潜 records the date 1653 (承応癸巳), a good approximation for the year of carving blocks and printing. Shōsen was an important Kyoto monk of Myōshinji 妙心寺. Shortly after completing this book, Shōsen famously became a supporter of the Chinese émigré monk Yǐnyuán Lóngqí 隱元隆琦 (1592–1673; J. Ingen Ryūki) and played an important role in the foundation of the Ōbaku School.[26]

26 Shōsen's calligraphy is one of 43 Ōbaku Zen monks featured in a handscroll, now in the collection of The Met: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/852552

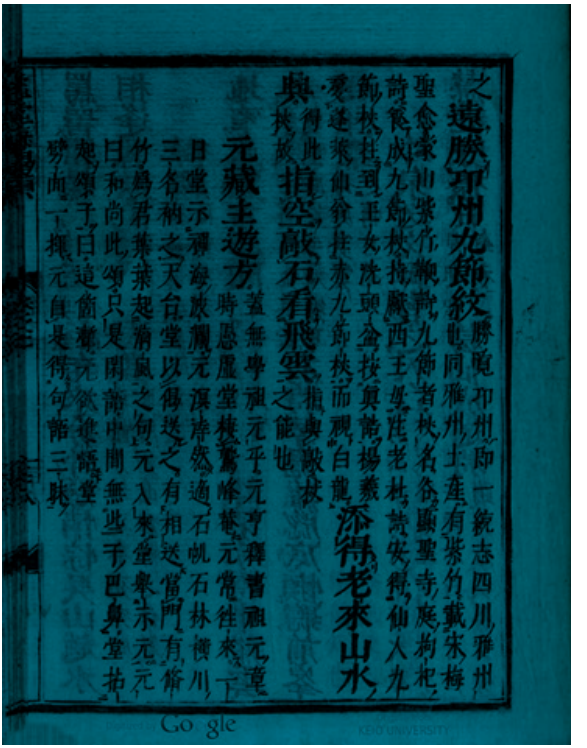


Fig. 2 *Kidōroku Shō* 虛堂錄鈔 (also known as *Kidō Zenji Goroku giji* 虛堂禪師語録義事) by Ryūkei Shōsen 龍溪性潛 (1602–1670), 1658 edition. Keio University Library. Digitized in collaboration with Google. Public Domain.

Shōsen in his preface to this book makes the point of mentioning that both Wúxué Zǔyuán and Xījiàn Zītán 西澗子曇[27] (1249–1306; J. Seikan Sudon) each studied Chan under master Xūtáng. The preface

27 當時宗匠如元無學、曇西磵在宋之日，往來于禪師席下，故相與助贊其風化可知矣. Preface, page 2b to 3a.

suggests Wúxué Zǔyuán was better known to the Japanese audience than Xūtáng Zhìyú. Xījiàn Zītán was also an émigré monk known to knowledgeable Zen readers. Shōsen seems to want to impress upon his readers the importance of Chan Master Xūtáng as the teacher to famous Chan masters. When it comes to the poem addressed to Librarian Yuán, Shōsen adds a lengthy comment. Here, he strikes a more cautious tone.

> Is this perhaps Wúxué Zǔyuán? Zǔyuán's biography in *Genkō Shakusho* reports: […]
>
> 蓋無學祖元乎？元亨釋書，祖元章：・・・[28]

This passage is the first to identify Librarian Yuán as Wúxué Zǔyuán, but Shōsen shows some uncertainty. To corroborate his speculation, he quotes a passage from *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書 written by Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278–1346). I do not provide the quotation here, and will analyze and translate the passage from *Genkō Shakusho* below. For now, I want to emphasize that Shōsen's identification of Zǔyuán is tentative. He uses a rhetorical construction to express uncertainty: *kai* 蓋 at the beginning of the sentence and *ko* 乎 at the end of the sentence. *Kai* is used to indicate conjecture, as in *kedashi* 蓋し, as opposed to certainty; and *ko* is an interrogative particle, which may also be used for rhetorical purposes. The meaning of Shōsen's rhetorical question could also be

28 *Kidōroku Shō* 虚堂録鈔 (1653), Iwase Bunko, Nishio City, 西尾市岩瀬文庫, item no. 2502-5-42. Made available online in the *Kokusho Database* 国書データベース, hosted by National Institute of Japanese Literature (NIJL). https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100175991/523

phrased as the supposition: “This is perhaps Wúxué Zǔyuán.”[29] In later Edo commentaries, the assertion of the identification of Librarian Yuán with Wúxué Zǔyuán grew stronger. We can see this in both published commentaries as well as hand-written marginalia on surviving copies of *Xūtáng's Records*.

In 1650 (慶 安 3), another edition of *Xūtáng's Record* was published in Kyoto by Tsutsumi Rokuzaemon 堤 六 左 衞 門 under title “Newly Carved *Recorded Sayings of Venerable Xūtáng*” 新刻虛堂和尚語録 , in ten fascicles—the format seen in the *Taishō*. This same publisher Tsutsumi Rokuzaemon published “*Recorded Sayings of Venerable Xūtáng*, Corrected Edition with Headnotes” 頭書校正虛堂和尚語録 in 1669 (寛文 9), again in 10 fascicles, now also in 10 volumes. Copies of the 1669 edition are readily available online.[30] The 1669 annotated edition has a note for this poem that reproduces Shōsen's commentary word-for-word: “Is this perhaps Wúxué Zǔyuán? Zǔyuán's entry in *Genkō Shakusho* reports: […].” Here, we see that the speculative assertion continued to be reproduced in this popular annotated edition. Before we consider the details of *Genkō Shakusho*, first, let's turn to marginalia found in editions roughly contemporaneous with these early Edo commentaries, and then 18th century commentaries. These texts demonstrate how Zen monks grew

29 Shōsen adds two comments on the poem itself that are not directly relevant to our present analysis. For Line 1 he notes it addresses the fact that that “the recipient had served as librarian” 典藏經故 . On the entire poem, he says: “The poem says that if anywhere in the world you encounter a true master, like this you can apply the technique that goes beyond a teacher.” 言諸方若逢本分宗師, 可用如此超師之作略 .

30 Fascicle 7, page 18a. A digital copy of this 1669 edition is available through the National Diet Library https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2576515/ as well as from *Denshi Daruma* at Hanazono University http://saku.hanazono.ac.jp/ ; another edition with the same title, 頭書挍正虛堂和尚語録 , was published in 1708 by an unknown printer.

increasingly confident in the identification of Librarian Yuán as Wúxué Zǔyuán.

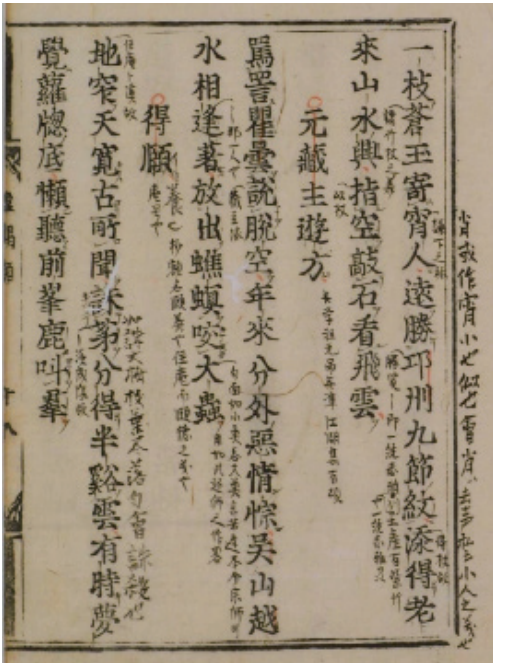


Fig. 3 Page with undated marginalia from *Xūtáng's Record*, likely printed early 17th c. Komazawa University Library, H124W/274-4. Reproduced with permission from Komazawa University Library.

Hand-written notes can be found on a printed copy of *Xūtáng's Record* held in Komazawa University Library (Fig. 3). This imprint does not explicitly state a year of publication, but likely early Edo Keichō 慶

長 (1596–1615) or Genna 元　和 (1615–1624) eras, based on information handwritten on the outside of the Edo period box in which it is stored. If the date is correct, this is the earliest edition I am aware of that shows a division of ten fascicles (卷) into five volumes (冊)—a forerunner to the format used in the Taishō edition. However, it is also possible that this copy was rebound at a later time only after that format became more popular. The Komazawa Library Keichō-Genna edition of *Xūtáng's Record* contains interlinear notes in red ink. The hand-written note to the poem addressed to Librarian Yuán reads: "Wúxué Zǔyuán, heir of Wúzhǔn [Shīfàn]. A verse is in *Rivers and Lakes Anthology*" 無學祖元，嗣無準，江湖集有頌 . This is a definitive statement, and no longer speculation. The early Edo edition at Komazawa University Library includes several other hand-written inscriptions inside the back-cover of several volumes,[31] one signed and dated 1733, as well as seals from 19th century collectors. Therefore, we cannot assert a clear date for when this marginalia was added.

Another copy of this same edition is held at Yonezawa Library, and it also includes a reader's marginalia.[32] However, this imprint copy divides the text into four fascicles across seven volumes. Because this division is found in other 17th century editions, it is possible that this was the original format. The handwriting inside the Yonezawa copy is neater than the Hanazono copy. In addition, the Yonezawa marginalia conveys identical information (無學祖元，嗣無準，江湖集有頌). Indeed, a great deal of the interlinear marginalia of the Hanazono and Yonezawa copies is identical across all fascicles of the text. Here in the section on *gāthā* 偈 頌 , the Yonezawa copy includes additional information in headnotes

31　Komazawa Library, 虚堂和尚語録並後録 10 巻 , printed likely during Keichō 慶 長 (1596–1615) or Genna 元 和 (1615–1624) era, available online: https://repo.komazawa-u.ac.jp/repo/repository/collections/40683/

32　https://www.library.yonezawa.yamagata.jp/dg/AA074.html

that do not appear in the Hanazono copy. In fascicle one, the Hanazono copy includes additional interlinear notes not found in the Yonezawa copy. However, given the extensive and substantial similarities of the interlinear notes, it is clear that there is some direct connection between the readers who added notes to these texts. It was possible for readers to copy marginalia from established books, especially if the notes were attributed to a learned Zen teacher. It is also possible that there was some other common source, such as a primer. Indeed, the readers of each copy seem to have had access to both one source in common, as well as some sources not shared by the other readers.

In the Yonezawa copy, each fascicle has a seal associated with Zen master Kuzan Shūyō 九山宗用 (1572–1636), the first abbot of Zenrinji in Yonezawa, who lived there from roughly 1618 to 1619. It is possible that these marginal notes were added by Kuzan. If so, then we could attribute this definitive statement about Wúxué Zǔyuán's identity to Kuzan. Moreover, Kuzan's dates at Zenrinji are soon after the Keichō or Genna era printing of the text itself. If that were accurate, we would attribute the circulation of this knowledge to Kuzan and his community. However, there is no positive evidence of that being the case, and the Yonezawa copy has no signatures. Therefore, we cannot rule out that these notes were added to the Yonezawa copy by a later reader, who had access to the same information accessed by the readers of the Hanazono copy.

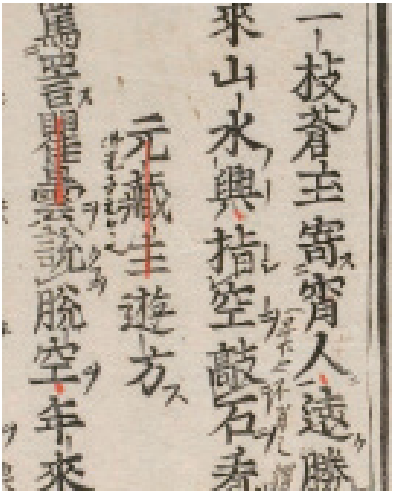


Fig. 4 Portion of a page with marginalia from *Xūtáng's Record*, printed 1632 by Nakano Ichiemon; Komazawa University Library, H124/145-6. Reproduced with permission from Komazawa University Library.

Another early Edo edition, likely Keichō 慶　長 era (1596–1615),[33] reproduced the earlier four-fascicle structure, bound into eight volumes. This text also includes the change to the full character 蟲 . Some texts printed in this four-fascicle format have marginalia added by readers. For example, an edition produced in 1632 (寛永 9 年) by the Kyoto publisher Nakano Ichiemon 中野市右衛門 divided the text into four fascicles across seven volumes. A copy held in Komazawa Library (Fig. 4) includes red ink marginalia that identifies the recipient as "Bukkō Shigen" 佛光子元 ,

33　Dating based on features, per Kawase Kazuma 川瀬一馬 ,『増補・古活字版の研究』1967, p789-790

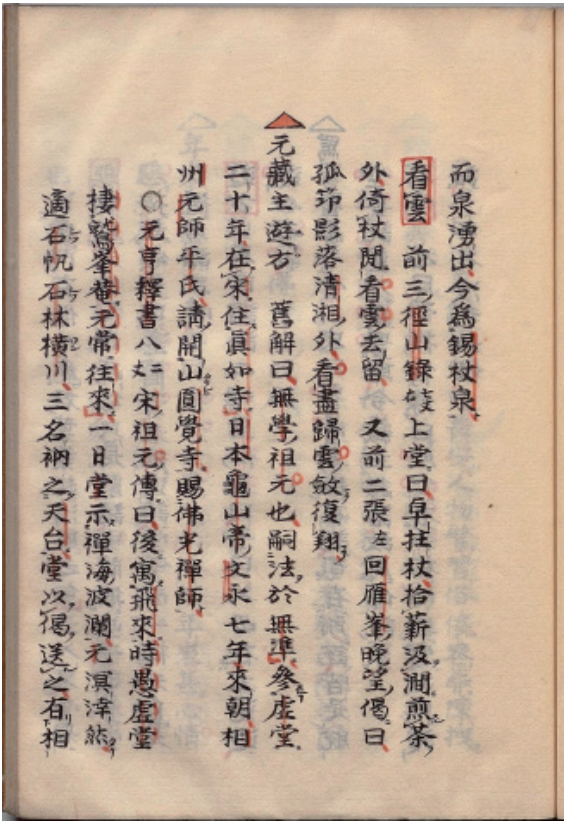
a name for Wúxué Zǔyuán.[34] (His sobriquet 號 was Zǐyuán 子元; and in Japan he was posthumously given the honorable title of National Teacher Bukkō 仏 光 国 師.) Again, an anonymous monkish reader of *Xūtáng's Record* annotated the text with increased certainty, not the nuanced supposition of the earlier scholars.

One might conclude that this historical movement from nuance towards certainty was the result of knowledge circulating from scholar monks to the not-as-well-educated readers who add marginalia. However, that does not appear to be the case. The great Zen scholar-monk Mujaku Dōchū 無 著 道 忠 (1653-1745) also wrote a commentary on *Xūtáng's Record*. Mujaku Dōchū is often held up by modern scholars as "Chan/Zen's greatest encyclopaedist[35]" and "one of the founders of Zengaku 禅 学, the systematic scholarly research on Zen history, institutions, practices, regulations, literature and language.[36]" This acclaim is not an exaggeration. Scholars throughout the 20th century and down to today continue to rely on Mujaku Dōchū's dictionaries, erudite glosses, and standardized editions.

34 Vol 6, page 18a. Komazawa library H124/145-6; 虚堂和尚語録 4 巻, [6] accessed https://repo.komazawa-u.ac.jp/repo/repository/collections/42492/ The same printing house published the text in seven volumes again in 1647 (正保 4), again with four fascicle divisions. See the copy held by 東洋大学附属図書館, made available online in the Kokusho Database 国書データベース, hosted by National Institute of Japanese Literature (NIJL). This copy does not include marginalia on the poem to Librarian Yuán under consideration.
https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/300094257/

35 Urs App, "Chan/Zen's Greatest Encyclopaedist Mujaku Dōchū," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 3 (1987): 155-174.

36 John Jorgensen, "Mujaku Dōchū (1653-1744) and Seventeenth Century Chinese Buddhist Scholarship," *East Asian History* 32/33 (2006/2007): 25-56.



而泉湧出今爲錫杖泉
看雲 前三徑山錄云上堂曰阜挂杖拾薪汲澗煎茶
外倚杖閒看雲去留 又前二張左回雁峯晚望偈曰
孤帆影落清湘外看盡歸雲故復翔
元藏主遊方 舊解曰無學祖元也嗣法於無準參虛堂
二十年在宋住眞如寺日本龜山帝文永七年來朝相
州北條平氏請開山圓覺寺賜佛光禪師
○元亨釋書八云宋祖元傳曰後寓飛來時愚虛堂
接鷲峯舊老常往來一日堂示禪海波瀾元溟滓然
適石帆石林橫川三名衲之天台堂次偈送之有相

Fig. 5 Page from *Kidoroku rikō* 虚堂録犂耕 , fasc. 22, by Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653-1745), Collection of National Diet Library, Japan.

Mujaku Dōchū completed *Kidoroku rikō* 虚堂録犂耕 in 1727 (Fig. 5), which circulated in manuscript copies. Therein, he makes a firm assertion about the identity of Librarian Yuán, despite not having any additional information. This shows that this increase in certainty was not

only the result of the circulation of knowledge from specialist scholar-monks to more general monastic readers, but is a change we also detect in the writing of this scholar-monk. Mujaku Dōchū rewrote with certainty.[37]

> An old exegesis states: this is Wúxué Zǔyuán, dharma heir to Wúzhǔn Shīfàn, and who studied with Xūtáng. Some twenty years in the Song, he was abbot of Zhēnrú Monastery. He came to Sōshū (Kamakura) in our country in the seventh year of the Bunei reign of the Kameyama Emperor (1270), the Taira family invited him to open the mountain of Engakuji. He was dubbed Bukkō Zenji.
> 舊解曰：無學祖元也。嗣法於無準，參虛堂。二十年在宋，住真如寺，日本龜山帝文永七年來朝相州，元師平氏請開山圓覺寺。佛光禪師。

Although Mujaku Dōchū is celebrated for his scholarly acumen, in this passage he has made several errors. First, Wúxué Zǔyuán came to Japan in 1279 (second year of Kōan reign 弘安). Second, he received patronage from Hōjō Tokimune 北条時宗 (1251–1284), regent of the shōgun, and not from a member of the Heike clan. After a period at Kenchōji, Wúxué Zǔyuán became the inaugural abbot of Engakuji when it opened in 1282.

After the passage translated above, Mujaku Dōchū also quotes from *Genkō Shakusho*. When he quotes from *Genkō Shakusho*, he includes four additional words from that text that are not found in earlier commentaries on *Xūtáng's Record*. It seems Mujaku Dōchū directly consulted *Genkō Shakusho* himself, not copying from someone else's

37 *Kidoroku rikō* 虛堂録犂耕, fasc. 22. I compared the digitized copies available from NDL https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/14207552 and from International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism, Hanazono University, http://saku.hanazono.ac.jp/database/rikou?page=1722 and follow NDL for 元師 and not IRIZ as 元帥

notes, and added the four missing words to the start of the passage. His increased certainty perhaps is the result of his double-checking the sources and reproducing earlier scholarship.

As for the identity of Librarian Yuán, Mujaku Dōchū cites an unnamed earlier exegesis. On the one hand, it seems likely this earlier source is *Kidōroku Shō* 虚堂録鈔 by Ryūkei Shōsen. *Kidōroku Shō* similarly connects this poem to Wúxué Zǔyuán, and likewise cited the biography from *Genkō Shakusho* as proof. On the other hand, Mujaku Dōchū does not preserve the earlier source's tentative speculation. He has altered the exegesis to a statement with greater certainty. Likewise, although he also cites from *Genkō Shakusho*, he has done his own research and checked the citation himself. In these ways, Mujaku Dōchū is well deserving of his reputation as a forerunner of Zen Studies scholarship. However, if we compare the historical evidence that was available in the Edo period with the manuscript from Christie's, a more rigorous scholar would have doubts about whether Wúxué Zǔyuán could have been the recipient of this manuscript. To be fair, as I discuss below, Mujaku Dōchū was reading *Xūtáng's Record* and likely did not see this manuscript with its colophon.

These Edo period Zen scholars relied on earlier medieval Japanese Zen materials, especially *Genkō Shakusho*, to make scholarly hypotheses about the identity of Librarian Yuán. Ryūkei Shōsen is noteworthy for his careful nuance. Over the seventy-five years separating the commentaries of Shōsen (1653) and Mujaku Dōchū (1727), however, readers made stronger assertions that affirmed Librarian Yuán is Wúxué Zǔyuán. Because we have reason to suspect these Rinzai Zen monks of motivated reasoning, I will next review the evidence available during the Edo period to see if it would be sufficient to establish the identity of Librarian Yuán.

Reviewing Early Biographic Materials for Wúxué Zǔyuán

In this section I review materials for analyzing the biography of Wúxué Zǔyuán. In her recent book on Zǔyuán, Jiāng Jìng 江 靜 surveyed these sources, but her analysis of them is not sufficiently detailed to resolve the question of what year he visited Xūtáng.[38] First, I will review the materials that were available to Edo period scholars and commentators. I will show that the historical materials available to Edo scholars would argue against the identity of Librarian Yuán with Wúxué Zǔyuán. Then, I reconsider all available evidence for the biography of Wúxué Zǔyuán, and demonstrate why I believe Librarian Yuán most likely is none other than Wúxué Zǔyuán. In other words, although I critique the assumptions and calculations of the Japanese Zen commentariat, I agree with their conclusion because of my own independent reasons.

As seen above, Zen exegetes often cited the following passage from *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書, a text completed by Kokan Shiren in 1322, as proof that Wúxué Zǔyuán had met Xūtáng Zhìyú.[39]

> Later when [Zǔyuán] resided at the Fēilái Caves of Hángzhōu, Xūtáng Zhìyú was perched in the Vulture Peak Hermitage nearby, and so Zǔyuán frequently went back and forth. One day, Xūtáng revealed the great waves of the Zen sea, and Zǔyuán experienced

38 Jiāng Jìng 江靜, *Fù Rì Sòngsēng Wúxué Zǔyuán yánjiū* 赴日宋僧無學祖元研究 (Shangwu yinshuguan, 2011).

39 *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釋書, fasc. 8, *Dazangjing bubian* vol. 32, 210b24-c4)

this vastness. When three monks Shífān,[40] Shílín Xínggǒng (1220–1280), and Héngchuān Rúgǒng (1222–1289) were planning to go to Mount Tiāntái, Xūtáng wrote a *gāthā* to see them off, which had the lines: "I go with you as far as our gate, the tall bamboo, / leaf after leaf soughing in the wind for you."[41] When Zǔyuán came, Xūtáng showed him this verse. Zǔyuán remarked: "Venerable, this verse is just idle talk. There is nothing here that can hook someone by the nose!" Xūtáng held up the verse and said "Then how about this?" Zǔyuán

40 Shífān Wéiyǎn 石帆惟衍 was Xūtáng's dharma brother, and the teacher of émigré monk Xijiàn Zītán 西磵子曇 (1249-1306). Shífān's name appears in *Xūtáng's Record* in several places: (1) At Mount Āyùwáng 阿育王山, "A sermon given to mark Venerable Shífān's arrival" 石帆和尚至上堂 (T47, no. 2000, p. 1006a4); (2) At the end of a sermon given at Jingci 淨慈, Xūtáng praises Shífān: "Now before the assembly of men and gods, I cede to Venerable Shífān the realm of Suzhou; loudly proclaim his great merit, let the sangha everywhere know that the transmission of East Mountain has properly continued!" 今對人天眾前，分付石帆和尚，於姑蘇城畔。大闡芳猷，使天下衲僧，知有東山正續 (T47, no. 2000, p. 1044c5-6); and (3) his name was included in Xūtáng's "biographic record" 行狀 appended to the conclusion of the Southern Song text and reproduced in all later editions.

41 Shílín Xínggǒng (1220–1280) and Héngchuān Rúgǒng (1222–1289) were two dharma brothers, both disciples of another heir to Sōngyuán Chóngyuè 松源崇嶽 (1132-1202), and thus dharma cousins to Xūtáng. This poem appears in *Xūtáng's Record*, fascicle 7 (T47, no. 2000, p. 1037c18-20):

> "For the three Chan monks [Shífān] Yǎn, [Shílín] Gǒng, and [Héngchuān] Gǒng headed to Guóqīng Temple"
> 衍、鞏、珙三禪德之國清
> Which of you knows what is in the three hermits' silence,
> As you speak of renewing old friendships and depart from Vulture Peak?*
> I go with you as far as our gate, the tall bamboo,
> leaf after leaf soughing in the wind for you.
> 誰知三隱寂寥中。因話尋盟別鷲峯。相送當門有脩竹。為君葉葉起清風。
> *Note: Xūtáng is teasing these three traveling monks for comparing themselves to the three hermits of Guóqīng Temple— Hánshān (Cold Mountain), Shídé, and Fēnggàn.

> was about to say something else when Xūtáng slapped his face with one swing. That is how Zǔyuán obtained the samadhi of language.[42]

> 後寓飛來, 時愚虛堂棲鷲峰菴。元常往來。一日堂示禪海波瀾。元溟涬然。適石帆、石林、橫川三名衲之天台，堂以偈送之，有:「相送當門有脩竹，為君葉葉起清風」之句。元入來，堂舉示元。元曰:「和尚此頌只是閑語，中間無些子巴鼻。」堂拈起頌子，曰:「這箇蠶。」元欲進語，堂劈面一揮，元自是得句語三昧。

From this passage in *Genkō Shakusho*, an Edo period reader would know that Wúxué Zǔyuán had met Xūtáng Zhìyú. Although one can estimate the place of this event within the broader sequence of Wúxué's life, the *Genkō Shakusho* does not provide an explicit date for his encounter with Xūtáng.

In addition, there are some obvious tensions between the encounter described here and the poem found in *Xūtáng's Record*. The *Genkō Shakusho* describes Wúxué Zǔyuán leaving Xūtáng after a specific discussion about another poem written by Xūtáng. Xūtáng wrote that poem to say farewell to a group of three monks. He teases them for comparing themselves to the three poet-hermits Hánshān, Shídé, and Fēnggàn. That earlier poem also deals with the problem of language, however it is unrelated to "scolding the Buddha and cursing the ancestors." The poem found in the manuscript and in *Xūtáng's Record* does not directly reference this same encounter, which apparently was an important step in Wúxué Zǔyuán's spiritual biography. There are several possible reasons for this. First, it is possible that the received

42 Chan texts more often speak of 語言三昧 , which is how I have interpreted this phrase.

biography is derived in part from Wúxué Zǔyuán's memory, or his formative experiences as retold to his disciples. Second, it is possible this poem is from another one of their encounters. This poem gifted from Xūtáng to a monk would be precious and well worth keeping, regardless of whether it was written right after the most important moment. I would argue that because the colophon indicates the Librarian Yuán is about to head off wandering, it is likely to have been a final farewell. Therefore, it is possible that this farewell message was written sometime after the transformative encounter that Zǔyuán later remembered as most pivotal. Third, one could attempt to argue the poem is about the same encounter described in Zǔyuán's biography, though I think it is unlikely. Perhaps one could say "cursing Gautama" is a reference to the way Zǔyuán questioned Xūtáng's poem as "idle talk." Although there is some resonance between Zǔyuán's behavior in the biography and the behavior of Librarian Yuán, there are no words that clearly connect the episode in the biography with the poem. At this point, the manuscript to Librarian Yuán may or may not refer to Wúxué Zǔyuán, but it does not fit neatly into the received biography of Wúxué Zǔyuán.

As I will show, it is clear that Kokan Shiran while completing his research for *Genkō Shakusho* took some information from the two "biographic records" 行狀 for Wúxué Zǔyuán that had been composed by contemporary monks shortly after his death. Many of the same details about Zǔyuán's encounter with Xūtáng are found in *Wúxué chánshī xíngzhuàng* 無學禪師行狀 by Língshí Rúzhī 靈石如芝 (1243–1328)[43] and in *Bukkō Zenji gyōjō* 佛光禪師行狀 by Muzō Jōshō 無象靜照 (1234–1306). Copies of each were included in various editions of Zǔyuán's recorded

43 Here is the relevant passage: 復有契入谿命主藏。職解寄榻靈鷲。時虛堂愚和尙。謝事育王。歸侍松源祖塔。時往參扣。峻機波辯。未易轂泊。久之出示送僧一偈。師云。偈總是間長。語言無些子禪。堂拈起云。者箇蹇。師擬對。劈面一揮。

sayings, *Bukkō kokushi goroku* 佛光國師語錄. Here I translate the relevant portion of the latter:

> … soon thereafter, Wúzhǔn passed away. Zǔyuán went to Língyǐn Monastery, and called on Shíxī Yuè. The next year, he called on Yǎnxī Wén at Āyùwáng Monastery. When Yǎnxī returned to Jìngcí Monastery, he once again asked Zǔyuán to serve as his secretary. Zǔyuán declined and did not go to Jìngcí. Subsequently, he went back to Jìngshān to call on Shíxī. He was reading a "public sermon" by Sōngyuán, and saw him discuss "strike the ox or the cart?" when he at once forgot all he had attained. He went back to Jìngcí, and Yǎnxī employed him as the librarian, and then he moved back to Vulture Peak. When he visited the Vulture Peak Hermitage, he applied himself to Chan Master Xūtáng Zhìyú, who especially instructed him about the great waves of the Zen sea, and Zǔyuán experienced a vastness that knows no shores. Xūtáng one day took a parting poem he had written for other monks and used it to instruct Zǔyuán. Zǔyuán examined it closely, and finally said: "Venerable, this verse is all idle talk. There is absolutely no Zen in it." Xūtáng held up the manuscript, and said: "And like this?"[44] Zǔyuán was about to answer, when Xūtáng slapped his face with one swing. Right there Zǔyuán had a great release, and was regarded as a vessel for the dharma.

既而無準示寂。卽下靈隱。見石溪月禪師。明年見偃溪聞於育王。偃溪歸淨慈。復招師爲記室。師避不就。次第再上徑山見石溪。偶閱松源普説。看打牛車話。頓忘所得。再下淨慈。偃溪職師知藏。既歸移居靈鷲。時

44 歟 here is an interrogative particle.

往鷲峯菴中。參扣虛堂愚禪師。特示禪海波瀾。師茫茫然不知涯涘。虛堂一日送僧頌示師。師熟看了曰。和尙此頌都是閒説。中間都無些子禪。堂拈起頌子云。這箇蠶。師欲答。堂劈面一揮。師當下脱然器之。

The two "biographic records" written by two contemporaries of Zǔyuán are the source for Kokan Shiren's claim that Zǔyuán and Xūtáng met.[45] Although these two posthumous records also agree on the sequence of events, they do not provide information about years nor precise information about Wúxué's age at the time.

Nonetheless, given this evidence, there is little reason to doubt that when Zǔyuán was relatively young he visited Xūtáng. The remaining question is whether we can determine if Zǔyuán was near Xūtáng when the calligraphy addressed to Librarian Yuán was signed in 1254. If Zǔyuán was not near Xūtáng's place in 1254, then the Librarian Yuán to whom this poem was addressed must be some other monk also named Yuán. We should note that neither Shōsen (1653) nor Mujaku Dōchū (1727) had access to the manuscript that sold at Christie's. Therefore, they could not know that Xūtáng's poem was written in 1254. This may be why they did not try to piece together the available evidence to determine the exact year when Zǔyuán met Xūtáng. Nonetheless, other Zen monks were concerned with these questions, and the knowledge they produced was available at the time.

Our Edo period readers of *Xūtáng's Record* do not reference Wúxué Zǔyuán's recorded sayings, *Bukkō kokushi goroku*, but his recorded sayings

45 Interestingly, this event is not mentioned in a third account by Yòngqián Juéming 用潛覺明 (n.d.), who also wrote a memorial. Yòngqián mentions that he had not had a chance to read the teaching records from Zǔyuán's time in Japan, but heard about Zǔyuán's successes in Japan from one of Zǔyuán's Japanese disciples who came to China to visit him. It is unlikely that this story was well-known in China.

text was frequently reprinted in the Edo period and a reader living in an urban temple could have readily accessed then current editions. Some of those later editions reprinted two additional documents that lay out the year-by-year chronology of Zǔyuán's life. Although first compiled centuries earlier, these two documents represent the state of knowledge in the Edo period: "A Chronological Biography of Venerable Wúxué" 無學和尚年譜 (hereafter *nenpu*), and a newly annotated copy of the "Epitaph Inscription of Chan Master Bukkō" 佛光禪師塔銘 . The latter is a heavily annotated copy of Zǔyuán's funerary inscription, that stitches together in chronological order as many available facts as possible. The detailed annotations were created by a Rinzai Zen monk named Chūzan Hōei 中山法穎 (1317–1390).[46] Chūzan Hōei then created the *nenpu* to summarize the detailed annotations. These two records were reproduced in the Edo period, and are the clearest attempt by any premodern scholar to give explicit dates and plot out Zǔyuán's early life.

Chūzan Hōei's annotated copy of the funerary inscription provides detailed evidence for his chronology; which is presented in a pithy fashion in the *nenpu*. The funerary inscription itself was written by Jiē Xìsī 揭係斯 (1274–1344) sometime around 1326. That date is found in an appended colophon, which notes that Jiē wrote the inscription by the request of Tengan Ekō 天岸慧廣 (1273–1335)—who may have paid Jiē for this service. Indeed, it is likely that the source of the information in Jiē's inscription was none other than Tengan Ekō himself. Ekō had served as a disciple of Wúxué Zǔyuán and later became a dharma heir of Zǔyuán's Japanese disciple Kōhō Kennichi 高峰顯日 (1241–1316).[47] Ekō in 1324 traveled to Yuan China and in 1329 returned to Japan. Jiē's inscription

46 For references to Japanese works on Chūzan Hōei, see Jiāng Jìng, *Fù Rì Sòngsēng Wúxué Zǔyuán yánjiū*, 79.

47 Enomoto Wataru 榎本涉 , *Nansō gendai nitchū tokōsō denki shūsei* 南宋元代日中渡航僧傳記集成 (Tōkyō: Bensei Shuppan, 2013), 128–129.

says only the following on the matter of visiting Xūtáng: “he returned to Jìngcí where he resided and was in charge of the library, and then he studied with Master Zhìyú at Língjiù” 還淨慈留知藏，參愚公於靈鷲. There is no additional detail about what year.

I have come to view Zen master Chūzan Hōei as a biographer, the man who attempted to place the events of Zǔyuán’s life in chronological sequence. Chūzan Hōei, in a note appended to the end of the *nenpu*, says that he accomplished this by comparing the memorials by Jiē Xìsī, Yòngqián Juéming 用潛覺明 (n.d.), and Língshí Rúzhī, as well as records of Zǔyuán’s own statements. Chūzan did not, apparently, have access to the manuscript written by Xūtáng that recently sold at Christie’s, and did not consult *Xūtáng’s Record*.

Based on the information he had at hand, Chūzan Hōei calculated that Zǔyuán became a librarian at Jìngcí Temple in 1251, then visited Xūtáng in his second year as a librarian, which would be 1252 (壬子). He concluded that Zǔyuán soon left Hángzhōu to go to Mount Tiāntóng near Níngbō, possibly in late 1252 or 1253. Then, soon after arriving at Tiāntóng, Zǔyuán went to Níngbō. By 1254 Zǔyuán was in Níngbō, studying with Wùchū Dàguān 物初大觀 (1201–1268) at the monastery Jiàozhōng Bàoguó 教忠報國 (aka Mount Dàcí 大慈山), where he spent two years in the role of “Head of Purity” 淨頭, responsible for all manner of hygiene. If this information is correct, although he visited Xūtáng not long before the year 1254, Chūzan Hōei’s nenpu places Zǔyuán more than one-hundred-fifty kilometers away at the exact time Xūtáng signed this manuscript.

Most, if not all, of the readers of *Xūtáng’s Record* did not have access to the manuscript that recently sold at Christie’s. Those readers would not have known about the colophon dated 1254. Therefore, they could not have known that current knowledge in the Edo period would have

mitigated against this identification of Librarian Yuán with Wúxué Zǔyuán. Regardless, we can show that Chūzan Hōei's biographic works, as well as the biographic records and primary sources that he drew upon, were reprinted throughout the Edo period.

Chūzan Hōei's biographic works can be traced back to at least a 1388 edition of Zǔyuán's recorded sayings, hereafter *Bukkōroku* 佛光錄. Already at this time, two separate versions of *Bukkōroku* were circulating: one version that focused on his career in Japan, and one version focused on his career in China prior to emigrating. Although the "biographic records" by Chinese writers are included in the 1370 edition of *Bukkōroku* that focuses entirely on Wúxué's career in Japan, Chūzan Hōei's scholarly biographies were not.[48] By contrast, Chūzan Hōei's two biographic works are included with a 1388 edition of Wúxué Zǔyuán's recorded sayings, which focuses on his career in China.[49] The text published in 1388 is a Japanese reprint of a single fascicle *yǔlù* created earlier by the Yuan dynasty monk Yīzhēn 一真 (n.d.), which contains Wúxué Zǔyuán's sermons from his early career as an abbot at Zhēnrú Monastery in Song China. The latter has several titles, and for clarity I will refer to it as *Zhēnrúlù* 眞如録. *Zhēnrúlù* has two colophons attesting to the labor that was entailed in creating this text. A colophon at the end records how a fire in 1379 (康暦己未) destroyed the original

48 *Bukkōroku* 仏光録 (1367 or 1370), Tanimura Bunko, Kyoto University Library, item no. 1-25/フ/2 貴, accessed at https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00009513

49 These appendices can be found in multiple copies of this 14th c. edition, although the sequence varies. The copy in Naikaku bunko 内閣文庫 has the two biographic reference works before the main text. The copy at National Diet Library 国立国会図書館, they are appended after the main text. Naikaku bunko text accessed online at https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/1079319 and NDL text accessed at https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2532103

woodblocks, and that a long fund-raising effort culminated in financing these new blocks in 1388 (嘉慶戊辰). Although Chūzan Hōei was not directly involved in publishing that text, the same two Japanese monks who led fund-raising for the 1388 *Zhēnrúlù* are the same two monks who sponsored the printing of Chūzan Hōei's two biographic resources. These colophons demonstrate that the two appendices were created by the same community that created the 1388 recorded sayings. Moreover, Chūzan Hōei's two biographic texts appear in multiple extant copies of *Zhēnrúlù*, meaning Chūzan Hōei's two texts were soon an integral part of the 1388 edition, and unlikely to have been inserted at some significantly later date. At the same time, at least one copy of Chūzan Hōei's *Nenpu tōmei* 年譜・塔銘 circulated independently of the *Zhēnrúlù*, which may indicate that the *nenpu* was compiled independently and prior to the 1388 edition.[50] In all, 1388 is a reasonable terminus ante quem for these two documents by Chūzan Hōei. These two documents would be reprinted

50 It is also possible that this independent copy of the *nenpu* was originally produced together with *Zhēnrúlù* and was separated at some later date. This copy of *Mugaku oshō nenpu* 無學和尚年譜 is discussed in more detail below, accessed at https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100129054/26?ln=ja

in the Edo, and included in the modern Taishō canon edition of Zǔyuán's recorded sayings, *Bukkōroku*.

Chūzan Hōei's biographic sketch circulated widely in the Edo period. Thankfully, Jiāng Jìng recently published a detailed study of the various Edo period editions of *Bukkōroku*, Zǔyuán's recorded sayings. Judging by the number of copies that survive, there were two particularly popular editions in the Edo period, and several earlier editions that survive in smaller numbers. The 1664 edition (寛文 4) edition printed with 13 *juǎn* fascicle divisions includes records from his two abbatial appointments in Japan only. It includes copies of the "biographic records," but does not include Chūzan Hōei's appendices. It is an heir to the 1370 edition. The Taishō edition is based directly on the other major edition, a ten-fascicle edition printed in 1726 (享保 11)[51]. The 1726 edition refers to itself as a "republication" (再刊) because it is a corrected reprint of an earlier text that also included "recorded sayings of three assemblies" 三會語録[52]. The "three assemblies" refers to the *Zhēnrúlù* and then Zǔyuán's two abbatial appointments in Japan—combining texts from his entire career spanning both China and Japan. The colophons to this 1726 edition state that a very similar edition circulated earlier: "Old prints of *Recorded Sayings of Three Assemblies* have decayed away, and there is no way to glimpse it" 三會語錄舊版湮蝕無由窺覿. This 1726 edition is a "recarving" 重鏤, financed by a fundraising effort led by Shundō Sekiryū 峻道碩隆, abbot

51 Three nearly identical copies of the 1726 edition known as *Saikan Bukkō kokushi goroku* 再刊佛光國師語録 are available online. Two copies at Kyoto University Library, both part of the Tanimura bunko, at https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00009512 and at https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00009515 (the latter includes an advertisement insert for a Kyoto bookshop); and a copy at Tohoku University Library, which includes ephemera from a former owner at Engakuji, available at https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100350860/

52 *Bukkō kokushi goroku* 佛光國師語録, T no. 2549, 80: 249c24–c31

of Engakuji. The abbot based the newly printed edition on a copy of the text preserved inside Shōzokuin 正続院, the Engakuji cloister dedicated to Wúxué Zǔyuán's memorial pagoda. For their 1726 edition, the text was "collated and corrected, lacunae were filled, reduplications were culled, reading marks were added, and the woodblocks were carved" 而參校訂正，補漏去重加點壽梓. Similar information about correcting and emending the text is repeated in the 1726 preface. These colophons are reproduced in the Taishō edition of *Bukkōroku*, as well.[53] Unfortunately, neither the preface nor colophon include information about the earlier "three assemblies" edition. Based on the investigation by Jiāng Jìng, it seems likely that the earlier edition is the undated Muromachi period *Bukkō kokushi goroku* held in Seikidō bunko 成簀堂文庫, now part of Ishikawa Takeyoshi Memorial Library.[54] That edition includes recorded sayings from all three temples, as well as both the *nenpu* and annotated funerary inscription.

Jiāng Jìng notes that several copies of *Bukkōroku* that predate 1726 also included the *nenpu* and annotated funerary inscription. In addition, earlier copies of Chūzan Hōei's *Nenpu tōmei* 年譜・塔銘 also continued to circulate independently of the *Zhēnrúlù*.[55] The copy now in the collection of the Ibaraki Prefectural Museum of History 茨城県立歴史館 appears to be a 14th century print, and includes important marginalia. An inscription inside the front cover states that this book once belonged to Myōshinji Temple of Kyoto. Several different owners of this copy signed and dated comments in the back. The book found a new owner in 1775 at Hōun-in 法雲院 temple in western Kyoto, and a new owner in 1805. This copy also shows an ownership seal by Kondō Jūzō 近藤重蔵 (1771–1829).

53 *Bukkō kokushi goroku* 佛光國師語錄, T no 2549, 80: 129a06–b13

54 Jiāng Jìng, *Fù Rì Sòngsēng Wúxué Zǔyuán yánjiū*, 199–202.

55 *Mugaku oshō nenpu* 無學和尚年譜, available at https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100129054/26?ln=ja

This particular copy seems to have become a collector's item due to its historical significance, and was no longer a readily accessible reference work unless one was friendly with the owner of the library.

We can say that Chūzan Hōei's biographic works were reproduced several times, and that they enjoyed a much wider circulation once the very successful 1726 edition was printed. This latter publication was roughly contemporaneous with Mujaku Dōchū's commentary on *Xūtáng's Record* completed in 1727. Therefore he, and any readers who added marginalia after this time, could have readily accessed Chūzan Hōei's biographic works about Wúxué Zǔyuán.

At this point, if we examine the manuscript and were to judge the identity of Librarian Yuán based on the information potentially available to a well-resourced Edo period reader, we would have to conclude that he was someone other than Wúxué Zǔyuán. We would conclude that Zǔyuán was far away in Níngbō at the time this manuscript was written. To give them credit, the Edo period exegetes and readers of *Xūtáng's Record* did not have access to the manuscript that provides the firm date of 1254. Regardless, if we rely only on Edo period knowledge to analyze the manuscript, it suggests that the Zen exegetes were wrong.

Conclusion

Despite my suspicion that Rinzai Zen exegetes were engaged in motivated reasoning, and finding that Chūzan Hōei's biographic works suggest Wúxué Zǔyuán was in Níngbō at the time Xūtáng's manuscript was written, after a thorough review of all available evidence I believe the most likely recipient of this calligraphy is Wúxué Zǔyuán. This poem was addressed to a person at Xūtáng's monastery very close to when Wúxué was thought to be there; it is addressed to a monk of enough

importance and talent that he garnered the office of "Librarian." At the same time, certain details on manuscript do not fit perfectly with other known evidence, and either some facts must be adjusted, or we must face the possibility that there was another librarian also called "Yuán" who was living at the same monastery at roughly the same period. Ultimately, this manuscript is reason to revisit the facts as presented by Chūzan Hōei.

The 14th century Japanese Zen scholiast Chūzan Hōei created a heavily annotated copy of Zǔyuán's funeral inscription, which was the basis for his *nenpu* biography for Wúxué Zǔyuán. These documents were reprinted and circulated in the Edo period. If his *nenpu* is accurate, it would mitigate against identifying Librarian Yuán as Wúxué Zǔyuán. However, Chūzan Hōei made a critical error in his calculations.

Chūzan Hōei determined the timing of Zǔyuán's activities in China based on how many years they occurred after the death of Wúzhǔn Shīfàn. For reasons that are unclear to me, Chūzan Hōei assumed Wúzhǔn Shīfàn's death to have occurred in 1248, and based many of his other calculations on this error. In fact, Wúzhǔn Shīfàn passed away in 1249. As a result, most of Chūzan Hōei's dates for Zǔyuán's activities in China need to be adjusted by one year.

Chūzan Hōei says that Zǔyuán became a librarian in 1251, I calculate he was given this position in 1252. Likewise, Chūzan Hōei says Zǔyuán visited Xūtáng in 1252, and I calculate he began visiting Xūtáng in 1253. Chūzan Hōei speculates that Wúxué left Xūtáng as early as the winter of that same year, though he does not provide any evidence for this suggestion. Indeed, there is nothing in Wúxué's biography that argues against a departure early the next year, or even as late as the next summer or fall. In other words, it is entirely possible that Wúxué Zǔyuán was still at Xūtáng's place when this manuscript was written in

autumn 1254. As there is no evidence to the contrary, this manuscript fills this lacuna. Chūzan Hōei was wrong about Zǔyuán's early departure. Wúxué did not leave later in the same year he arrived (1253), but rather stayed until the next year and took leave for the Níngbō area in Fall of 1254. The most reasonable interpretation of all available evidence is that the manuscript sold at Christie's was given by Xūtáng Zhìyú to Wúxué Zǔyuán.

This paper concerns more than whether or not the manuscript was addressed to Zǔyuán. This careful reading through all available Japanese commentaries shows that we should engage these great historical scholars, but not simply rely on their assertions. As knowledge circulated, the identity of Librarian Yuán hardened from thoughtful speculation to unfounded certainty. At the same time, this research also shows why it is important that we do not dismiss Japanese commentaries, even knowing they likely contain red herrings, historical errors, and anachronistic interpretations.

The present research into the identity of Librarian Yuán would not have been possible without the production and circulation of Chan knowledge in late medieval and early modern Japan. In many ways, the evidence-based historical methods used by Chūzan Hōei and Mujaku Dōchū are very similar to our own—and much modern value can be found by considering the questions these premodern scholars asked of our shared texts. Modern scholars of Song era Chan will continue to find much profit in later Japanese commentaries. More than simply critique their errors, we can read our scholarly forebears carefully, revisit their sources when possible, collect new sources, and re-do the research ourselves. We can learn from these historical scholars, while also refining the knowledge they produced. In this way, we may discover that these premodern scholars might be right, even when they were wrong.