

## PROLEGOMENA TO A TIMELY READING OF ZEN MASTER HAKUIN: HIS POLITICAL CRITIQUE, MORAL ATTITUDE, AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AGAINST THE ABUSIVE AUTHORITY OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

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*The purpose of this paper is to examine the political attitudes of Zen master Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769) against the abusive power of the Tokugawa-shogunate's authority. It first reconsiders briefly the received views of Hakuin as the reviver of the contemporary Japanese Rinzai Zen tradition. It suggests that the hitherto dominant interpretations of Hakuin as a powerful religious icon of the tradition have been crafted by Zen authorities to maintain a conservative, elite Zen system. It then examines and reevaluates Hakuin's political critiques that have been heretofore overlooked by scholars and intellectuals, focusing on some of his neglected works, particularly the *Hebiichigo* as well as others. In particular, it considers his moral attitude, political critique of abusive power, and social engagement against political authority. Why has the established Zen hierarchy ignored these political aspects of Hakuin's work? How can a new reading of Hakuin's critiques of power be used to reexamine the course of the tradition's history up to the present? How is it possible to map a new understanding of Hakuin that is appropriate for today? This paper explores not only the contents of these neglected treatises and the possible reasons these writings were suppressed, but more importantly, it locates the precise meaning of Hakuin today.*

In this paper, I explore the neglected segments of the writings of Hakuin with a focus on his significant work *Hebiichigo*. In this work, and others, Hakuin displays a marked critique of authority and its tendency to abuse power. I demonstrate how a number of scholars have missed this aspect of Hakuin's work and life because of their traditional interpretations and selective readings of Hakuin. These scholars have created an increasingly dominant religious status and role for Hakuin inside the Zen tradition, especially when Zen started to be revitalized during the latter half of the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). Therefore, I am interested in exploring how Hakuin has been constructed and used in the creation of contemporary conservative, elite Zen culture. Furthermore, I am interested in revealing

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Hakuin's critique of (as well as moral attitude and social engagement against) political authority, which should be seen as an historically significant issue of the mid-Tokugawa period with ramifications both inside and outside Zen centers. I proceed as follows: First, I briefly discuss the dominant interpretations of Hakuin by Zen priest scholars and intellectuals. Second, I examine Hakuin's critique of political authority (and his deeply moral attitude and social engagement against political power) found in his work *Hebiichigo*, and explore why the elite Zen establishment neglected this political critique in their construction of the almost iconic Hakuin. Last, I explore how it is possible to map a new understanding for Hakuin as an "authentic master" in every generation, as people begin to accept the invented nature of their traditions as the very source of their authenticity, partly out of necessity and partly out of a perceived validation of the dialogic nature of tradition.<sup>2</sup> I thus provide a reevaluation of the dominant understanding of Hakuin through a critical analysis of the layers of interpretation and reinterpretation through which the image of Hakuin has been modified in the course of the tradition's formative development. In this paper, by looking at the work *Hebiichigo* with a more critical and hermeneutical approach, I hope to open a new reading of this fascinating person, free of the power objectives of those who have been inventing him again and again since the time of his death in 1769.

### **The Hitherto Dominant Understandings of Hakuin**

The study of Hakuin since the beginning of the twentieth century has been almost exclusively the domain of scholars who focused on Hakuin as the reviver of the contemporary Japanese Rinzai Zen tradition. They applied their historical analysis within the confines of religious authority to determine the cultural, religious, historical, and literary influences that eventually gave rise to the elite Zen establishment. In order to supplement their historical studies of Hakuin, these scholars of religion, predominantly Buddhist priest scholars and historians, emphasized the need for more inquiry into the institutional roles and functional status of Hakuin as a symbol of the Rinzai Zen tradition in the ongoing life of religious communities. Although not all were lacking the tools to conduct a critical analysis of the historical Hakuin, they meticulously preserved the religious status of Hakuin and passed it down from generation to generation through Zen religious centers, with a particular emphasis on the religious attitudes Hakuin had to his practice and the propagation of his teachings. This movement has significantly enhanced the sacred status and authority of Hakuin within Zen communities, and eventually gave rise to the modern elite Zen establishment.

One example in particular exemplifies this essentializing of Hakuin's religious status as a way of making him off limits for any critical inquiry. Ōsaki Ryōen (1880–1953), in his work

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to my doctoral advisor Professor Jane Marie Law for this insight into the relationship between the dialogic nature of tradition and tradition's very inventedness.

*Hakuin Zenji Den* (1905), gives only the particulars of Hakuin's hard practice for himself, strict instruction for students, and impassioned activities to spread teachings to the lay people. Ōsaki writes:

What I had attempted to do was to measure a great man of the religious world through the suspicious lenses of the so-called philosophy or ethics. How dangerous that was! Because a religious man's sayings and actions are entirely based on his faith, he may often go against the criteria and rules of the world, or at times be criticized by scholars. However, we must know that it is imprudent to merely rely on the evaluation of scholars in trying to determine the true value of the man of virtue of the past.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, he warns:

Anyone who wishes to portray Hakuin must at least also be a prominent man who can come up to the tip of his nose. A dullard, how would I dare undertake this task?<sup>4</sup>

These statements imply the conservative, closed field of the study of Hakuin in the early twentieth century. Ōsaki and others like him, by taking Hakuin's religiosity as both a starting and ending point, denied his historicity. In understanding Hakuin with a focus on his religious attitudes, he demands that people who describe Hakuin should stand at the same level as Hakuin. Given that Hakuin is rightly regarded as one of the most brilliant and unusual talents of Japanese Buddhist history, few would venture to step up to the plate.

Fukuba Hoshū (1896–1943), in his work *Hakuin* (1941), also provides the religious attitudes of Hakuin in his biographical sketch, particularly with a focus on his hard training, earnest propagation activities, and the importance of achieving Enlightenment with kōan.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, both Ōsaki and Fukuba emphasize Hakuin's Dharma lineage as directly traced back to the Zen religious tradition of the Sung period in China, to Bodhidharma, and to the Buddha Śakyamuni. Also, they underline that all priests in Rinzai Zen today are direct disciples of Hakuin and belong to the same Dharma lineage. They insist that Hakuin is the only authentic element in the Rinzai Zen tradition. Furthermore, they consider Rinzai Zen to be superior to other sects of Buddhism.

Any cursory look at the Hakuin lineages, however, shows considerable revisions and creative inventions. One must ask what Ōsaki and Fukuba were trying to accomplish with Hakuin by grounding their studies in the claim to an unbroken lineage. This parallels a similar mechanism of tradition legitimation seen in Japanese claims about the unbroken imperial line. The twentieth century has more than enough evidence about the directions such claims can go.

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<sup>3</sup> Ryōen Ōsaki, *Hakuin Zenji Den*, Tokyo: Bunmeidō, 1905, 1. This statement is included in the preface of the work and was translated by Dr. Kyoko Selden at Cornell University.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. This statement is also included in Ōsaki's preface. This was translated by Dr. Selden.

<sup>5</sup> Kōan are the stories that help Zen practitioners focus on their own practice and help bring about insight and enlightenment.

Kamata Shigeo (1927–2001) in his work *Hakuin* (1977) translated Hakuin's three major works, *Yasenkanna*, *Oradegama*, and *Yabukōji* into modern Japanese with full annotation. In his biographical reflection, while he focuses on Hakuin as the reviver of Rinzai Zen, he highlights Hakuin's accomplishments of succeeding the "traditional" form of Zen in the Sung period in China, adjusting it into the cultural reality of Japan in those days, and establishing his unique Zen system. In particular, Kamata emphasizes the kōan system which Hakuin created, based on his most famous kōan called *Sekishu no Onjō*, or "the sound of one hand clapping."

Yanagida Seizan (born in 1922), in his works *Rinzai no Kafū* and *Zen no Jidai* written in 1967 and 1987 respectively, focuses on the significance of the establishment of Hakuin's kōan system in Japanese Zen history. Yanagida gives us three reasons as to why the kōan system is important. First, the kōan "Sekishu" was the easier way to achieve Enlightenment for Japanese because it was written in the Japanese *kana* script. It was hard to understand kōan written in Chinese. Second, it enabled the kōan-Zen tradition from the Sung period in China to be continued in Tokugawa Japan. Third, it was to criticize the Zen movements popular in those days, which insisted on "Do-nothing Zen" and "Silent-illumination Zen,"<sup>6</sup> and which denied the importance of the kōan study. Hence, Hakuin's kōan system was the result of his critique against the stagnation and decline of the Zen tradition inside and outside Japan in his own time. For Yanagida, this is why Hakuin is called in Japanese "gohyaku nenkan shutsu," which means "a person who appears only once in five hundred years."<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the examples mentioned above, some scholars criticized traditional interpretations of Hakuin. In particular, two scholars, Rikukawa Taiun and Akiyama Kanji, especially in the 1960s and 1980s respectively, examined the traditionally constructed images of Hakuin. Although they did not come to change the interpretations of Hakuin in the elite Zen establishment, they did open the way for critical studies of Hakuin.<sup>8</sup>

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the elite Zen establishment has focused on Hakuin's hard practice, strict instruction, enthusiastic propagation activities, and kōan system, with a particular emphasis on his institutional roles and functional status in Zen religious communities. Additionally, the elite Zen establishment insisted that Hakuin's idea of "Hell and its terrors" was developed in his childhood and was the reason he became a Zen priest. While arguably religious people at Zen institutions might want to focus on the religious life of Hakuin, this approach also strongly suggests that criticizing Hakuin is paramount to

<sup>6</sup> I refer to Norman Waddell's translation found in his work *Wild Ivy*, Boston: Shambhala, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> In foreign countries as well, two major scholars have made a great contribution to today's Hakuin studies. One is Philp B. Yampolsky who translated Hakuin's three works *Orategama*, *Yabukōji*, and *Hebiichigo* into English. The other is Norman Waddell who has published *Wild Ivy (Itsumadegusa)* and *Yasenkanna*. Both of these scholars paid attention to what Hakuin wrote.

<sup>8</sup> For more details of these scholars' works, please see Chapter Four of my MA thesis.

criticizing the tenets of the Rinzai Zen tradition itself, and the work of these scholars had everything to do with protecting that elite cultural world. Hence, Zen authorities inside tradition did not accept other images of Hakuin as the “authentic.”

While the elite Zen establishment has become a pervasive and enduring movement for producing understandings of Hakuin in the contemporary Rinzai Zen tradition, I have become keenly aware of the tremendous retention of seemingly outdated interpretations inside the tradition versus the more progressive, creative, meaningful interpretation of Hakuin outside the tradition at present. In constructing the images of Hakuin, the elite Zen establishment has lacked thus far a significant interpretation of Hakuin that is relevant for today. This observation has been made all the more apparent to me in the past few years when, as a person within the Zen tradition, I think about the meanings of the recent Iraq war and other incidents of violence such as the endless suicide-bombs since 9/11. As the everyday news related to these seems to be the fashion today, I ask, “What would Hakuin do?” To begin such a discussion, we can look at Hakuin’s critique of political authority as well as his subservient moral attitude and social engagement in his work *Hebiichigo*.

### **Hebiichigo**

Hakuin wrote *Hebiichigo* in 1754 at the age of seventy. The work is actually a letter Hakuin wrote to the daimyo Ikeda Tsugumasa (1702–1776) of Okayama castle urging him to implement just policies for farmers, based on his keen observations of social as well as political conditions in those days. Moreover, he criticized as meaningless the Tokugawa government’s policy of *sankin-kōtai*, which forced rulers to visit the capital of Edo once every two years and leave family members there permanently. In this letter, while Hakuin urges the daimyo (Japanese feudal lord) to restrain his luxurious lifestyle and to conduct righteous politics, he condemns political authority. He writes:

You, my lord, in your ruling of your land and protection of your domains – be it for a hundred years, be it for fifty years – must be very circumspect and recognize that the essence of virtuous action is to forbid luxury, regulate extravagant expenditures, and, when you have a surplus, to use it for the benefit of the farmers. When you read the ancient honored texts and writings, all speak of the Kingly Way as being of first importance. If it does not discuss the Kingly Way it is not an honored text. If you inquire into what the principal message of this Kingly Way is, it is nothing more than to give priority to dispensing benevolence, to rescue the common people with compassion, and thus to govern your domain. In the world of today dispensing benevolence and succoring the common people require no methods other than to forbid luxury, regulate excessive expenditures and, to touch upon a rather difficult subject these days, to reduce the number of women in the inner chambers, and to simplify all matters in general.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Philip B. Yampolsky (trans.), *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, 216.

Moreover, he states:

I hear from time to time of various easygoing lords who pay out sums of from three hundred to five hundred pieces of gold to buy singing and dancing girls or other so-called women of pleasure from the Kyoto area. They amuse themselves with them for two or three years and then exchange them for other girls, much as they would fans or pipes. There are reports that in some households one third of the total expenses go for the needs of the women's quarters. This does not matter so much for a house blessed with a splendid fortune, and possessing an overflow of wealth, but very frequently people not so well provided for will pile up two thousand *ryō* of debts on an income of a thousand *koku*, twenty thousand *ryō* of debts on an income of ten thousand *koku*. Then they will ignore, impoverish, and bring suffering to their hereditary, whose duty it is, when an emergency arises, to ward off the flying arrows and sacrifice their very bones and flesh for their lord. In a time of need these lords will expend their money on people who are unfit even to carry a raincoat box. In the end isn't it the people as a whole within the domains who suffer? What state of mind is it that allows for the concentration of luxury in one person, while causing many to suffer? What will happen in the next world? A frightening prospect indeed!<sup>10</sup>

These are powerful, clear statements about the daimyo's luxurious lifestyle. The daimyo have many women, and after they enjoy themselves for a few years, they exchange them for other women, as if they were exchanging fans and pipes. The most noteworthy point here is that he condemns the daimyo's extravagant lifestyle as the main reason why farmers suffer from starvation and why farmers riot. After all, the most wretched and pitiable people are farmers. Therefore, while he describes the farmers' riots that occurred in many parts of the country in those days, he develops his critique of political authority. He states:

The common people day by day grow feebler, month by month become more stunted. It becomes impossible to support a wife and family. Each house moans under the suffering, each family falls into decline, until misery and starvation are everywhere. There is grain in the fields in abundance; thus hatred wells up within. At last there comes a time when life is no longer of any consequence. When things reach this point, twenty or thirty thousand men gather together like swarms of ants and bees. Screaming their hatred, they first surround the village head's house, smash open the doors, and scatter his possessions. If they catch him they will be sure to tear him to pieces. Thoroughly aroused, they end up by storming the city, entering its gates, and creating a riot. Then the temples within the domains are called upon, and with deception and persuasion they bring things under control. Once peace is restored, a spy is sent around in secret to search out and seize the conspirators. Then twenty or thirty men are crucified or executed, and their rotting bones litter the fields. But it must be known that the conspirators are not among the people. They are the official and the village head... If the official imitates an earlier benevolent official and takes into account the quality of the crops each year, investigates what is good and what is bad for the people, sees to it that the high and the low gain profit equally, and shares in the misfortunes and joys of the noble and the base, who will take an evil attitude toward the ruler of the province? Don't they say that a

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 217–218.

desperate rat will bite a cat? No, the conspirator is not among the people. How can you say that he is not the official and the village head?<sup>11</sup>

This is his very powerful criticism of the social as well as political conditions of his time. In pointing out that the daimyo's luxurious and lavish lifestyle was supported through the labors of commoners, Hakuin shows his awareness of social inequality. Hakuin also shows sympathy for the farmers' plight and thus their riots, even going so far as to say that "a desperate rat bites a cat." With this intense tone, he accuses the daimyo's unmoral behavior as inexcusable. The ideal behavior of the daimyo, Hakuin emphasizes, is to eliminate extravagance, to trim expenses, and devote themselves to the welfare of the people. He is concerned first and foremost with protecting people from political oppression. Similar social and political criticisms by Hakuin are also seen in his activities for social justice and in several of his other works.

For example, the first part of his work *Oniazami*, written in 1751 at the age of sixty-seven, is a letter by Hakuin that includes his teachings to Hōkyōji Monzeki and Kōshōin Monzeki, both daughters of Emperor Nakamikado (1701–1737). This letter includes Hakuin's criticism of the luxurious lifestyles of the two imperial daughters in their temples. In particular, Hakuin criticizes their sumptuous and showy clothes (and robes), and also reproaches them for being too lazy to clean their temples in which their servants do all the sweeping, despite the fact that cleaning is an important element in Zen practice. It is remarkable that Hakuin gives members of the imperial household such a frank advice.

Another example can be found in Hakuin's work *Yasenkanna* Part two, which was written when Hakuin was seventy-one years old and which contains a well-known, unrelated text by the same title of *Yasenkanna* in which Hakuin describes his recovery from his Zen sickness, or *zenbyō*. This work includes Hakuin's advice and teachings on righteous politics for Matsudaira Masanobu (1728–1771), the Lord of the Kojima domain in Suruga, the region where Hakuin lived. Because his domain was small and did not even give him enough wealth to built even a castle, it was financially difficult for him to comply with the policy of *sankin kōtai*, which the shogunate required. To help this domain with its struggle against poverty, Hakuin suggests several strategies to Matsudaira: first, stop having expensive parties; second, reduce the number of concubines; third, eliminate extravagant expenditures; fourth, quit falconry (which not only hurts the farmers' crop but also is regarded as the killing of life in Buddhist doctrine); fifth, dismiss unreliable sycophants; and last, appoint wise and righteous vassals to government positions. In these strategies, Hakuin gives fundamental moral principles on governing the domain with particular emphasis on the virtues of good officials. These points can be also found in his works *Hebiichigo* as well as *Sashimogusa*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 196–197.

<sup>12</sup> The exact date of the *Sashimogusa*'s publication is unclear, because there is no description of it. However, Waddell, with good reasons, puts the date as 1761, while Yampolsky sets it as 1760.

Moreover, in his work *Kabezoshō* written in 1759 at the age of seventy-five, Hakuin severely criticizes the immoral activities of government officials and others in political authority. He also refers to the peasants' rebellions that were occurring in many parts of the country at the time, thus revealing his deeply moral attitude and social engagement against the abuse of power. In his writings Hakuin says that iniquitous and haughty government officials pride themselves upon their prosperity, amuse themselves with many women, and live in luxury. When their funds to continue such a lifestyle meet the difficulty, Hakuin claims that those officials in turn oppress the farmers and extort money and possessions from them. The squeezed farmers suffer and starve, and thus rise in revolt against the rule of their domain and surround his castle at the risk of their life. The best example is the riot called *Uchinoko sōdō*, an enormous riot that occurred in Ehime Prefecture in 1749. According to Yoshizawa, this riot lasted for over ten days, which was relatively long. About eighteen thousand peasants fought in the rebellion and demanded the reduction of *nengu*, or periodic tribute, dismissal of iniquitous village officers, and restriction on the excessive profits of wealthy merchants.<sup>13</sup>

In his descriptions of the peasants' riots, however, it is noteworthy that Hakuin condemns the immoral priests who supported the village and government officials in suppressing the farmers' riots.<sup>14</sup> The priests were employed by the officials to persuade the farmers with deception and to suppress the disturbances. While the farmers, who trusted the temples, were open about their intentions, later spies were sent by the officials in secret to search for the conspirators of the riots who were all executed in the end. It is shameful that priests used their positions of power to collaborate in the oppression of the farmers. Hakuin's work *Kabezoshō* is a short writing, but an important one which contains his rage over the actual immoral alliance between the priest and government.<sup>15</sup> In a sense, it raises a question of the complexity of the relationship between religion and politics in a wider range of Japanese history. As it were, the relationship reveals a given religious system which simultaneously served as a political ideology.

Hakuin had keen observations on the social and political crisis based on the power structure of his time, which showed that his moral views were influenced by the common people. While he understood the clear social hierarchy, which was divided into four classes by the Tokugawa shogunate, he also understood the social injustice and inequality that resulted from the hierarchy of social status. Thus, Hakuin's deeply moral attitude and social engagement against political power are critical attempts to address social injustice and inequality, and express his concern for a social change in morality, in protecting the farmers'

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<sup>13</sup> Katsuhiro Yoshizawa, "Hebiichigo and Kabezoshō", in *Hakuin Hōgo Zenshū*, vol. 1, Kyoto: Zenbunka kenkyūjo, 1999, 240–242.

<sup>14</sup> This can be seen in the *Hebiichigo* as well.

<sup>15</sup> The *Uchinoko sōdō* presented here was the exceptional case in which the farmers' requests were accepted by the domain's village officers.

status and identity from political, economical, and ethnical oppressions in the feudal system in the mid-Tokugawa period.

In Hakuin's work *Hebiichigo*, Hakuin's most striking critique of that Tokugawa's political authority refers to daimyo processions called the *sankin kōtai*. The *sankin kōtai* is the system established in the Tokugawa period by which certain feudal lords were required to travel to Edo and spend half the year there, leaving their families behind as hostages when they returned to their own domains.<sup>16</sup> He fearlessly condemns the *sankin kōtai* as a wasteful as well as extravagant political system. Hakuin states:

When one watches the *sankin kōtai* processions of the lords of the various provinces, a huge number of persons surround them to front and rear, bearing countless spears, spikes, weapons of war, horse trappings, flags, and curtain poles. Recently, even for trivial river crossings, depending on the status of the family, a thousand to two thousand *ryō* are used without even thinking about it. In the Tenshō and Bunroku eras when the country was not yet at peace this was an established precautionary procedure. But the Divine Ruler [Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of Tokugawa shogunate] brought order to the world, and now as the various lords go back and forth, there is no one even to shoot a rusted arrow at them. If under the motto 'a humane man has no enemies' you take the true precautions of being extremely benevolent, worrying about the people, and governing your domains well, then ten good hereditary retainers to front and rear will do. It will be far more profitable than employing a horde of several thousand insincere flatters. But if you are wealthy and powerful and do not bring pain and suffering on the people, how many thousands of people you employ should be at your own discretion. Yet from what one hears from all the provinces everywhere, the sadness of life lodges itself among the common people.<sup>17</sup>

This is a direct statement about the *sankin kōtai*, which intentionally served to weaken the daimyo by having them spend much money for financing their trips to Edo and residencies there. According to Katsuhiko Yoshizawa's analysis, in the case of Okayama castle, in 1698, people who joined the *sankin kōtai* numbered approximately sixteen hundred, and also people who were left in Edo numbered about fourteen hundred. The sum of both the numbers, in 1707, occupied about thirty percent of the total population working in connection with Okayama castle. Moreover, on average for twenty-eight years from 1798 to 1826, the round-trip cost between Okayama and Edo was approximately three thousand *ryō*, which would be about one million and four hundred thousand dollars today.<sup>18</sup> We can easily surmise how the cost of maintaining two residences affected the economy and politics of the domain. Consider also that this was during a political era when famines wiping out entire villages were not uncommon.

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<sup>16</sup> For more information of the *sankin kōtai*, see James Murdoch, *A History of Japan: The Tokugawa Epoch 1652–1868*, vol. 3, New York: Greenberg Publisher, 1926.

<sup>17</sup> Yampolsky, *The Zen Master Hakuin*, 218–219.

<sup>18</sup> Yoshizawa, *Hebiichigo and Kabezoshō*, 221–223. Moreover, see a dictionary *Hanshi daijiten*, vol. 6, 1990.

Furthermore, according to Yoshizawa, over sixty percent of all the daimyo processions passed along the Tōkaidō road.<sup>19</sup> Born in an inn on the Tōkaidō, Hakuin would closely observe the daimyo processions during his childhood.<sup>20</sup> Also, when he became abbot of Shōinji in his later life, many daimyo processions would pass back and forth in front of his temple, on their way to and from Edo. Most likely, Hakuin watched them bitterly, while he thought about the harsh existence of the farmers, in contrast to the luxuriousness of the daimyo processions.

Since the work *Hebiichigo* contained a political critique, its publication was forbidden by the Tokugawa government as one would expect. The *sankin kōtai* was one of the fundamental political systems of Tokugawa shogunate, and it reduced the finances of each domain. This political situation is the reason why farmers suffered from poverty. Hakuin criticizes it severely with an intense tone. I argue that Hakuin's concern with the *sankin kōtai* system reflects a solid critique of misused resources, and people who ignore human suffering to advance their own power agendas. To extend my question "What would Hakuin do?" I think he would have strong words for both Saddam Hussein in his autocracy as well as George W. Bush and his power during the recent Iraq War and its influence. More relevant to this paper, however, I have been disquieted to observe the extent to which this very important side of Hakuin has been "missing in action" in the elite Zen tradition's retrieval of him as their icon.

Why has the elite Zen establishment missed this significant element in the history of Hakuin? I suggest that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, Zen authorities who have been closely associated with religious centers have paid attention to only the institutional roles and functional status of Hakuin in creating, propagating, and maintaining Hakuin and the tradition. This is a normative view inside the Zen tradition that tends to establish Hakuin's religious authority in the tradition's formative, creative, and constructive development. Although Hakuin is long dead, through his writings, we can still have a conversation with him. I sense a hermeneutical urgency to converse with Hakuin in a new way by examining his neglected aspects through a reading of his texts from a perspective that is different from the elite Zen establishment.

In understanding the question of why the elite Zen establishment has undervalued his political critique in its construction of Hakuin's image, I raise two possible reasons. One reason is that the elite Zen establishment has focused on only Hakuin's religious attitudes to intentionally maintain Hakuin's status as a reviver of Rinzaï Zen and to establish the traditionally "authentic" inside the tradition. The other reason is that for the elite Zen

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<sup>19</sup> Tōkaidō is one of the five roads (*kaidō*) that connected Edo and Kyoto, and along it grew many commercial centers.

<sup>20</sup> Hakuin was born in an inn named *Omodakaya* of the *kami-hatago* class, which was almost equally ranked with *honjin* and *waki-honjin* that served as officially designated lodging for daimyo, government officials, emissaries, courtiers, and other higher status people. According to Yoshizawa, however, the *Omodakaya* accommodated varying kinds of travelers, including entertainers. Moreover, according to Yoshizawa's analysis, Hakuin's home also provided transportation services using horses.

establishment, the idea of a “critique of political authority” cannot be the significant concern inside the tradition’s formative process. In the former case, it is obvious that the images of Hakuin have been almost exclusively the domain of scholars who have focused on his hard practice, strict instruction, enthusiastic propagation activities, and *kōan*. These concerns of scholars are closely associated with the concerns of Zen institutions on how Hakuin should be created, propagated, and maintained as a symbol of the tradition. It is to construct the images of Hakuin appropriate to the tenets of the Rinzai Zen tradition and vice versa, with a focus on his historical religious attitudes as allegedly unchanging teachings. In the latter case, I pay attention to an historical fact, namely that his work *Hebiichigo* was forbidden to be published by the Tokugawa shogunate. As the reasons for censorship, according to Yoshizawa, there are three possibilities. First, the work mentions the politics of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. Second, the work criticizes the lifestyle of the daimyo. Third, the work condemns *sankin kōtai*, a fundamental political policy of the Tokugawa shogunate.<sup>21</sup> For the Zen authorities, the contents of *Hebiichigo* do not closely fit into the significant category of the “authentic” in the creation of the elite Zen establishment. Even though he has been re-evaluated as the reviver of the contemporary Japanese Rinzai Zen tradition, his critique of political authority has been suppressed. It is in regards to his political critique that he does not reflect a religious status that is attractive to the Zen establishment. Thus, Hakuin’s political critique has been neglected thus far, while the image of Hakuin has been crafted by Zen authorities to maintain a conservative, elite Zen system whose first concern is to establish the institutional roles and functional status of Hakuin as the “authentic” inside the religious tradition. But why should the elite in the Zen tradition continue to ignore his *Hebiichigo*?

Through this study of Hakuin, I realized the tremendous retention of intentionally constructed images of Hakuin inside the Zen tradition versus the more progressive, creative interpretations only possible outside the tradition. Also, I realize the dynamic process of “tradition” in the formative, but very creative and constructive development in which the images of Hakuin have been sculpted by the elite Zen establishment. That is, the images of the historical Hakuin have been made of tradition and by tradition. Moreover, the allegedly unchanging tradition of Hakuin has been actively crafted by the “selective reading” of the elite Zen establishment to suit its own religious needs and desire for authenticity. In order to maintain the “authentic” of the religious tradition, the tradition itself has been creating itself in a chain of history.

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<sup>21</sup> Hakuin also condemns the prohibition of publication of *Hebiichigo*. He writes, “In years to come treacherous retainers and thieving samurai, detesting the thought that the Legacy will come into use, will be sure to say: ‘How can the testament of clear virtue and the highest good of our Divine Ruler be imprudently distributed throughout the country and be touched by the hands of base and common people! It must be wrapped up ten times in cloth, be stored away in the recesses of libraries, and never recklessly be shown to others.’” Moreover he writes, “... if you make this Legacy secret and hide it and vainly consign it to the bellies of silver fish, will this not be violating the will of the Divine Ruler? There is no greater disloyalty for a samurai of today than to violate the will of the Divine Ruler.” See Yampolsky, *The Zen Master Hakuin*, 208.

### **How Is It Possible to Locate a New Understanding as “Authentic”?**

My last concern in this paper is to understand how it is possible to map a new interpretation of the image of Hakuin as a basis for an authentic connection to tradition in every new generation. In order to establish the institutional roles and functional status of Hakuin inside the religious tradition, Zen authorities began to accept the invented nature of their traditions as the very source of their authenticity, partly out of necessity and partly out of a perceived validation of the dialogic nature of tradition. This means the maintenance of the tradition and also a creative social change inside the tradition, which seeks a new locus of authenticity. Therefore, I discuss the possibility of the acceptance of a new locus of authenticity in response to the dynamic process of tradition. I apply Eric Hobsbawm’s idea of “invention of tradition” to the case of Hakuin. Hobsbawm writes:

Nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy in its public ceremonial manifestations. Yet, ... in its modern form it is the product of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. ‘Traditions’ which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.... The term ‘invented tradition’ is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity.... It is evident that not all of them are equally permanent, but it is their appearance and establishment rather than their chances of survival which are our primary concern.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, he states:

[T]he peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious.... It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition.’<sup>23</sup>

These are powerful statements about the transmission of tradition being made of tradition and by tradition. Hobsbawm asserts that the traditions we have thought of as old in their origins have been always invented in more recent points of time. In other words, he implies that everything is invented without exception in a chain of historical transmission. Hence, invention, or reinvention, is a unique, powerful mechanism for tradition maintenance and formation. In short, “inventing a tradition” indicates the dynamic process by which people appeal to an inherited and allegedly unchanging tradition, yet recast it in terms of the current concern. It is a mechanism for tradition maintenance and also for creative social change. Significantly, the fundamental concept of this mechanism of tradition, therefore, should be

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<sup>22</sup> *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

understood not only as a pervasive and enduring motif in history, but more importantly also as a living force influencing people's real attitudes up to the present day.

Hobsbawm, moreover, states the possibility of social change in the dynamic process in which traditions are invented. He writes:

[W]e should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: in short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demands or the supply side.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, his comment goes on:

[F]irst that older forms of community and authority structure, and consequently the traditions associated with them, were unadaptable and became rapidly unviable, and secondly that 'new' traditions simply resulted from the inability to use or adapt old ones. Adaptation took place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes.<sup>25</sup>

"Invented tradition" occurs when the older tradition cannot sufficiently meet the new needs of the tradition. More specifically, it overtly and implicitly appears at a historical point of time when the components of the older tradition do not function as a mechanism to maintain tradition. Then, the older tradition must be reframed by the new possibilities. There the idea of "adaptation" takes place to maintain the tradition. The "application," or "adaptation," thus raises a new, valuable meaning suited for the tradition's own new needs in the present. This implies "the genesis of meaning," and it locates the locus of the new authenticity in the tradition. When people need older tradition refreshed, they modify that tradition to fit closely to their needs and realities through a process of adaptation.<sup>26</sup>

Conversely, the need of every new generation requests a social change inside the older tradition, and finally leads to the invention or reinvention of tradition through people's adaptation, or application. Then, more or less, there can be raised a new locus of authenticity to maintain the tradition in a chain of history. This movement maintains tradition and also creates social change inside the tradition.

This idea can be applied to the case of Hakuin in a chain of history from the past, to the present, and into the future. In contemporary Japanese Rinzai Zen, religious institutions and many scholars have maintained Hakuin as a symbol of the elite Zen establishment. This elite Zen establishment has focused on only the religious attitudes of Hakuin, and this image of Hakuin has been one of the most dominant inside the religious tradition. In the selective

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>26</sup> I refer to the idea of "application" in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, New York: Continuum, 2000.

reading of Hakuin by the Zen elites, realities that do not promote their interests are neglected and even hidden to create and maintain the images of Hakuin that are appropriate to the symbol, role, and status of Hakuin as the reviver of the religious tradition and the relationship of that tradition to established political authority, whether it be the Tokugawa shogunate or the more contemporary political powers. The Zen elites by selectively reading Hakuin have manipulated or sculpted unique “authentic” images of him, which they thought should be created and propagated.

I would not claim that all dominant interpretations of Hakuin since the beginning of the twentieth century have misunderstood Hakuin’s historicity. I would claim, however, that those interpretations are the result of the images of Hakuin that were deemed necessary or desired for understanding and propagating an image of Hakuin regarded as ideal. The elite Zen establishment has maintained the “authenticity” of Hakuin in the tradition’s development. I suggest that now is the time to seek a new interpretation of Hakuin aligned with the concerns of the present age. Hakuin’s critique of political authority is the best theme to find a new reading of Hakuin and to locate the new locus of authenticity for the hitherto dominant understanding of Hakuin since the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### **NAUJAS ŽVILGSNIS Į ZEN MEISTRĄ HAKUINĄ: APIE POLITINĘ LAIKYSENĄ, DOROVINĖS NUOSTATAS IR VISUOMENINĮ ATSAKĄ Į TOKUGAWA VYRIAUSYBĖS SAVIVALĘ**

**Masaki Matsubara**

##### **S a n t r a u k a**

Straipsnyje aptariamas Zen meistro Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769) politinis atsakas į Tokugawa karinės vyriausybės savivalę. Pirmiausia trumpai pristatomas prigijęs požiūris į Hakuiną kaip Rinzai Zen tradicijos atgaivintoją ir svarstomas tokio požiūrio pagrindimas. Galima spėti, kad ligšioliniai mėginimai padaryti Hakuiną galingu religinės tradicijos simboliu buvo inspiruoti valdančiųjų Zen sluoksnių, kuriems tai buvo vienas būdų įtvirtinti konservatyvią, elitinę Zen sistemą. Toliau straipsnyje nauju rakursu analizuojama Hakuino politinė kritika, kuri anksčiau nebuvo pastebima mokslininkų ir intelektualų. Nagrinėjami kai kurie netyrinėti meistro darbai, visų pirma *Hebiichigo*, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant moralinėms Hakuino nuostatoms, valdžios kritikai ir socialiniam angažuotumui. Kodėl politiniai Hakuino darbų aspektai nedomino aukščiausių Zen sektos hierarchų? Ar naujoviškas Hakuino kritinių darbų vertinimas paskatins pažvelgti į religinės tradicijos formavimą kitomis akimis? Ar įmanoma šiuolaikiška Hakuino darbų samprata? Šiame straipsnyje ne tik gilinamasi į Hakuino netyrinėtų traktatų turinį ir gvildenamos priežastys, dėl kurių šie darbai buvo nutylimi, bet ir bandoma išsiaiškinti tikrąją meistro veiklos prasmę, aktualią ir mūsų laikais.

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