Fortunately, we do have a continuation of this kind of approach in other books in the Kuroda Institute series, and in George Tanabe Jr., ed. *Religions of Japan in Practice* (Princeton Univ. Press 1999), where many works from the same distinguished scholars who have contributed to *Re-Visioning “Kamakura” Buddhism* appear. Though one reviewer, while rightfully praising this collection for its important contributions, has expressed regret that it did not appear some years earlier, before most Buddhist studies scholarship had already embraced many of its central arguments, I see the work as yet being both timely and relevant. The fact remains that decades of scholarship reflecting the ‘Reformation Model’, while in many ways still valuable in its own right, fill the shelves of our university libraries, and these shelves are precisely where the average university student in search of information about Japanese Buddhism gets their information, most often from the well-known but now somewhat outdated historical overviews. Sections of *Re-Visioning “Kamakura” Buddhism* are required reading for my own students, and the book in its entirety is required reading for anyone who wants a more detailed look at specific aspects – and at the same time a more accurate presentation – of Buddhism as it actually existed in the Kamakura period.

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There appears to be no Western academic who devotes more explicit attention to the study of kōans (*gongan*) and kōan literature than Steven Heine. *Opening a Mountain: Kōans of the Zen Masters* is a short translation volume with sixty kōan cases from Chinese and Japanese sources, coupled with a brief but insightful introduction that aspires to present these kōans as evidence of the thaumaturgical traditions within Chan and Zen Buddhism. Previously, students and practitioners of Chinese Chan, Korean Sŏn and Japanese Zen have only had access to this expression of the function of kōan literature in English through the innovative scholarly work of Bernard Faure, T. Griffith Foulk,
John McRae and Robert Sharf. In this volume, Heine promptly introduces the reader to the localised cultural context within which kōans became effective tools in rhetorical debates between Chan/Zen masters and Taoists, as well as indigenous elite and popular religious specialists. Following William Powell’s research on the significance of mountains in Chinese Chan, Heine aspires to ‘demonstrate that the main theme underlying much of kōan literature deals with how Zen (Ch’an in Chinese) masters opened or transformed mountains’ because ‘mountains harbored spirits, demons, and bodhisattvas, as well as hermits, ascetics, and other irregular practitioners, and were opened through the use of symbols and rituals of spiritual significance’ (p.xiii). Heine is only partially successful in presenting his case. Mountains do indeed figure prominently in the narratives of kōan discourse, however they are only one significant part of the cultural-religious landscape caught up in the struggles for patronage by medieval Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen advocates. In spite of the fact that Heine’s approach is innovative, his presentation forms a perplexing labyrinth of historical and theoretical discussion necessitating a thorough background on kōan scholarship in the West.

The kōan translations are arranged in topical fashion and by chapter: ‘1. Surveying a Mountain Landscape’ (pp.37-72), ‘2. Contesting with Irregular Rivals’ (pp.73-100), ‘3. Encountering Supernatural Forces’ (pp.101-40), ‘4. Wielding Symbols of Authority’ (pp.141-68), ‘5. Confessional Experiences: Giving Life and Controlling Death’ (pp.169-96). Each chapter is further subdivided into both conventional Zen categories and pithy themes. In Chapter One the reader meets kōan cases about the Northern, Ox-Head and Southern lineages of early Chan, Master Dongshan, and Mount Wutai. Chapter Two relates cases pertaining to recluses, wonder-workers and engendered bodies. In Chapters Three and Five we become acquainted with kōans about ‘Trances, Visions, and Dreams’ (pp.103-13), ‘Spirits, Gods, and Bodhisattvas’ (pp.114-26), ‘Magical Animals’ (pp.127-40), ‘Repentance and Self-Mutilation’ (pp.171-83), and ‘Death, Relics, and Ghosts’ (pp.184-96). Heine groups kōans about religious icons and authority in Chapter Four.

The reader must turn to the ‘Introduction: What are Köans?’ (pp.1-35) for guidance on how to approach the kōan selections and for Heine’s astute discussion about the ‘rich component of
mythological and marvelous elements that pervade this genre of literature in a way that complements, rather than contradicts, the demythological or iconoclastic perspective’ (p.xiii). If one can ignore a few erroneous claims about the historical description of the development of Chan Buddhism in China, then the Introduction forms both a perceptive manual on how to correct misunderstandings about kōan literature and an astute discussion of contemporary scholarly attitudes on the function of that literature. The first section of the Introduction – ‘Sticks and Stones, but It’s No-Names that Hurt’ (pp.1-12) – sketches the controversy Heine wishes to engage with broad strokes. He begins by defining the kōan as ‘a brief, enigmatic anecdote or dialogue between two contesting parties’. He characteristically adds that most Zen kōans can be dated to the ‘golden age’ of Zen during the Tang dynasty (618-907), and that they ‘capture the dramatic and inscrutable encounters between masters and disciples or rivals’ (p.1). Immediately Heine places kōan narrative structure within the discourse of both the Buddhist ascetic tradition (dhutaguna) and Avadāna literature, which often emphasises the six supernormal powers (abhiṣā, shentong) of the Buddha. He underscores the fact that these attributes of Indian and Central Asian Buddhism were especially appreciated by the Chinese populace who were familiar with ‘pre-Buddhist shamanic techniques of purification and exorcism, Taoist folklore about mountain and other local deities, and generic popular texts on the efficacy of exorcism or turning the power of ghosts and spirits from malevolence to moral purposes’ (pp.2-3). After noting the significance of the ‘Biographies of Eminent Monks’ collection (Gaoseng zhuan) and sectarian Chinese Chan ‘Record of the Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era [1004]’ (Jingde chuandeng lu) as evidence of the marvellous in Chinese Buddhism, Heine moves to critique the ‘conventional’ perception of kōans (p.4). Therein he suggests a second definition of kōans: ‘kōans are rhetorical devices that use paradox, wordplay, and ambiguity to communicate a message about the maddening quality and inherent limitations of language’ (p.6). We encounter another set of correctives to the reader’s impression of kōans when Heine suggests that, in addition to the legal and political context of kōans, esoteric Buddhism also had a profound influence upon kōan literature: ‘Kōan discourse also relies on the modalities of esoteric Buddhist training that is
characterized by intense subjectivity... as well as an aura of secrecy and inscrutability to outsiders' (p.8). Here, as in many sections of the Introduction and subsequent translated material, the non-specialist reader would benefit from a short definition of esoteric Buddhism (or Taoism, shamanism, and so forth) the better to comprehend the significance of the author’s assertions.

In the subsection on ‘The Mythological Background of Köan Literature’ (pp.13-20) we see Heine’s most substantive critique of traditional modes of reading kōans. He contradicts his earlier teleological fallacy regarding the formation of kōan literature during the Tang ‘golden age’ when he states that these encounters were ‘originally contained in mythological narratives included in the transmission of the lamp records’, which date to the Song dynasty (960-1279) (p.13). Not only does Heine correct himself but he also points out that the transmission of the lamp texts (denglü) – as well as kōan collections – were intimately influenced by ‘non-denominational monk biography texts’ and and ‘non-Buddhist folklore collections, including the T'ai p'ing kuang-chi [Taiping guangji] (978)’ (pp.15-16). Heine then utilises the theoretical models of Jacques LeGoff and Michael Foucault to suggest that the Chan production of hagiographical literature during the Song – including both the transmission of the lamp and recorded sayings (yulu, goroku) genres – constructed encounter dialogues designed to contend with the diffuse environment of Chinese religion (pp.17-19). Heine eventually leads the reader back to the mountainsides of China in order to illustrate how mountain landscapes represent fertile ground upon which Chan masters transcend and reconstitute the traditional Chinese religious themes of pilgrimage, seclusion and the boundaries of the sacred and the vulgar (pp.20-5). Heine also provides definite directions on how to read kōans and explains how he chose to elide selected commentaries and add his own ‘discussion’ – or sub-commentary – to each kōan cited (pp.30-3).

The translations of the sixty kōans are largely accurate, however, given the depth of discussion in the Introduction, Heine’s sub-commentary lacks sufficient citations of indigenous Chinese sources. Instead, we find a good deal of discussion relating to Japanese commentaries – especially related to Dōgen (1200-53) – when Japanese context is missing from the Introduction. And, as mentioned before, he neglects to translate large
sections of each case, opting instead to paraphrase part of the remaining material. This detail renders Heine’s translations helpful for general reference to kōans rather than this volume being a new source to turn to for translated kōans. It is also curious to see that the reader finds little evidence of points raised in the individual chapter introductions mentioned in the corresponding kōan cases. For example, in Chapter Five, we are presented with the bodhisattva vows and Taoist immortals (pp.170-1), but the supporting kōans do not raise these issues directly. Moreover, in the discussion to kōan No.55 ‘Dōgen’s Disciples: Monk Gemmyō’ (pp.182-4), Heine pertinently mentions the Daruma-shū influence on Dōgen’s nascent Sōtō Zen sect, but provides little context for the non-specialist reader. Heine also unmistakably utilises many Japanese – especially Sōtō – Zen materials to present the translations but provides inadequate context or explanation for these choices.

Steven Heine should be commended for his effort to engage the issue of thaumaturgy and the ways in which Chan /Zen masters confronted indigenous religious traditions and practices in Opening a Mountain: Kōans of the Zen Masters. Unfortunately, without a glossary, Sino-Japanese character list or bibliography, the target audience is likely to be non-specialist readers without sufficient background to appreciate the nuanced portrayal of these kōans. As in many volumes that use the Wade-Giles system, Heine provides mistaken romanisation for Chinese terms including opening a mountain as ‘kuai-shan’, where kai-shan would be correct (p.26). I have not checked every page reference to the original source material; however, Case 6: ‘Kuei-shan Kicks Over the Water Pitcher’ (pp.48-51), from the Wumen guan, should give Taishō page 298a instead of 296a. In addition, it is regrettable to see the Wade-Giles system of romanisation for Chinese used instead of the now almost universally accepted Pinyin system; this fact alone is likely to deter instructors from using Opening a Mountain: Kōans of the Zen Masters in a classroom setting.

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233