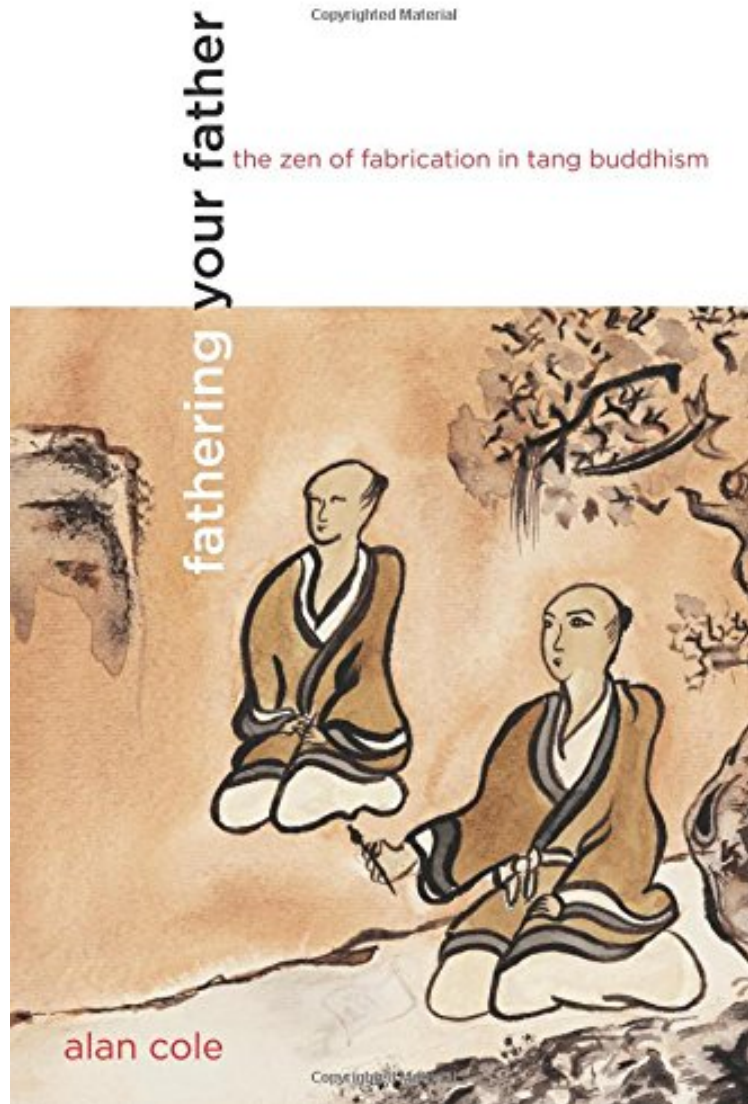


(Read ebook) Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism

Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism

Alan Cole

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Alan Cole : Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Challenging and Delightful By Dae An This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the true origins of Zen Buddhism. With a scholar's attention to detail and a revolutionary's urge to dismantle sacred cows, Cole takes on the traditional romantic view of the birth of Zen. He makes the case that the genealogies of transmission which are so sacred to Zen, were a self-conscious fabrication designed to win political

battles for power and authority. He persuasively argues that the image of the Zen Master as a simple and pure manifestation of wisdom is a literary tradition based on Taoist precedents rather than on actual human beings. As a Zen teacher, I found his detailed reasoning both compelling and disturbing. Other contemporary scholars are also challenging the internal origin stories of the Zen movement, but none with the no-holds-barred approach that Cole brings to this work. In the end, I do think he over-reaches in claiming there is nothing to the whole Zen enterprise is nothing but smoke and mirrors. Clearly the persistence of the Zen tradition itself is living proof that something is happening, even if the stories we tell ourselves are better taken for their internal truth rather than their historical veracity.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Very stimulating
By Philip Leetch
The book is a masterly display of the historian's art, questioning texts and approaching past records in their contexts and with due scepticism. It is also a delightful read [although I see its easy style irritated some scholarly reviewers]. Read alongside such books as *Forgery and Counterforgery*, this book does alert one to the dubious nature of much religious tradition.

1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Trying too hard to be different but has a nasty edge
By Darvid Koh
This book may claim to be a different deconstruction of traditional Chan history but it is too glib in its approach with a nasty lack of respect for traditional human wisdom. So Alan Cole thinks there is no such thing as enlightenment as a worthwhile human experience? Of course, given the scandalous behavior of some recent American "dharma heirs" of Japanese Zen masters who were embroiled in financial and sexual shenanigans and their dubious satori experiences, he may be somewhat justified in his views. (It would certainly be worthwhile for someone to write a full-blown book about them with all the sordid details.) But there are many people still living who have come into contact with Chan masters such as Xu Yun (1840-1959) who can testify that there is such a thing as enlightened wisdom. He may try to offer a somewhat different interpretation of Chan's relevance to Chinese society and history but his dismissal of fellow scholars' (some of them conveniently now dead such as John McRae) interpretations as still clinging to traditionalist views shows up his own overly critical approach. He is just trying to be different for the sake of being different. Reading such a book is a waste of time.

This book offers a provocative rereading of the early history of Chan Buddhism (Zen). Working from a history-of-religions point of view that asks how and why certain literary tropes were chosen to depict the essence of the Buddhist tradition to Chinese readers, this analysis focuses on the narrative logics of the early Chan genealogies—the seventh- and eighth-century lineage texts that claimed that certain high-profile Chinese men were descendants of Bodhidharma and the Buddha. This book argues that early Chan's image of the perfect-master-who-owns-tradition was constructed for reasons that have little to do with Buddhist practice, new styles of enlightened wisdom, or "orthodoxy," and much more to do with politics, property, geography, and, of course, new forms of writing.

"It is rare to review a book that successfully overturns many of the assumptions held in an area of study. This book achieves this revolution for Chan studies and deserves to be read closely by all researchers in the field." John Jorgensen, *T'oung Pao* 97 (2011): p. 225. "Alan Cole's *Fathering Your Father* offers a provocative rereading of a 'text family' associated with the construction of early Chan Buddhist lineages during the Tang dynasty.... Cole's strength lies in his sensitivity to larger issues in the history of religion and postmodern thought. His sophisticated reading of texts, influenced by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Lacan, and Bourdieu, undoubtedly enriches the academic discourse on the history of Chan." (Jiang Wu, *Journal of Asian Studies*) Overall, this is a superb study of the workings of early Chan literature.... a must-read for students of Chan and the history and literature of medieval Chinese Buddhism. In fact, I would highly recommend this book to anyone who might be interested in the study of religion. Prof. Juhn Y. Ahn, University of Michigan, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37:3 (September 2010) 513-518

From the Author
This isn't an easy book to read, but I think it's worth the trouble. The arguments that I'm making in *Fathering Your Father* aren't to be found in other books, so if you're interested in new ideas about early Chan Buddhism, this might be a good place to start.

From the Inside Flap
"Fathering Your Father is indubitably an important, timely work. In this incisive re-reading of the sources for the early history of Chinese Chan Buddhism, Cole conveys a new understanding of material familiar to scholars that might well make students engage with these sources more imaginatively. Hitherto scholars have pored over the five or six key sources; now we are invited to read them as successive literary inventions. In short, this study has no competition and is bound to provoke debate." T. H. Barrett, Professor of East Asian History, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and author of *The Woman Who Discovered Printing*