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RELIGIOUS ART AND MEDITATIVE CONTEMPLATION IN
JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY AND BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY

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Abstract: Far Eastern calligraphy has always been regarded by the Occident as an “esoteric” issue, laden with a peculiar “mysticism,” which presents spiritual and philosophical aspects too outlandish to truly comprehend. That is probably the reason why calligraphy was amongst the last artistic “disciplines” to gain access to the international world of the arts. This study focuses on Japanese calligraphy as a visual and verbal image, conducting a hermeneutic investigation into the nature and function of this type of image, into the value and significance of this way of representing the sacred in accordance with Japanese spirituality. Undertaking an unusual exploration, this research draws together the symbolism of calligraphic art and that of Byzantine icons, looking for similarities and differences between them, seeing them as intuitive gateways to the mysteries of the universe, to revelations of an ontologically superior nature.

Key Words: Japanese calligraphy, Zen Buddhism, religious philosophy, contemplative meditation, Byzantine icons

- Maître, la lune claire et paisible brille tellement haut dans le ciel!
 - Oui, elle est très loin!
 - Maître, aidez-moi à m'élever jusqu'à elle.
 - Pourquoi? Ne vient-elle pas à toi?
- Henri Brunel, *Les plus beaux contes Zen*

Situated midway between the concrete and the abstract, between the real and the imaginary, between the sensory and the intelligible, images have become, in recent times, a focal point of interest for a wide range of approaches, coming from both the area of socio-humanities and the scientific domain; this is so because images allow not only for a mere preservation of the real thanks to the material support they provide, but also for the revelation of a secret world, located in a horizon of mystery, which they may invest with meaning.

An image, defined as the concrete representation of a material or ideal object (a public image, a mental idea, a painting / what can be seen, a description, a similarity of form or content), which may be present or absent from a perceptual point of view, continues to maintain a relationship with its referent, thus allowing for the latter to be known.¹ The specialised literature that addresses the image phenomenon from diverse perspectives suggests that its nature and the problematics it generates are rather complex.

As a dictionary entry, the word “image” presents a large number of occurrences and contextualisations; its etymology takes into account two etymons – one Latin and one Greek – in order to explain the meanings the word has today. The Greek term is *eikon*, denoting “an image, a representation offered to sight, which reproduces reality”; *eikon* derives from an Indo-European root, which would have signified the “idea of resemblance,” and from this lexeme, the French *icône*, the English *icon* or the Romanian *icoană* developed later on, all of these signifying a “veridical representation of an existing thing.”² However, the Latin term *imago*, with a rather unclear etymology, entered the European languages under the form *image* (French), *image* (English) or *imagine* (Romanian) and has lost none of its original acceptations; moreover, its initial significance of “visual image” became enriched with that of “literary image,” which was a key concept in the rhetorical vocabulary of Antiquity. The stylistic register of an image is therefore linked not only to a visible form but also to an unreal content,³ which is transmissible through words.

As regards the Japanese language, the Longman English-Japanese Dictionary offers four Japanese equivalents for the English *image* (the Romanian *imagine*), the first and the fourth being both invested with two acceptations: 1. *imēji* (an image, in a syntagm such as *public image*, but also a *symbolic image*), 2. *gazō* (portrait, but also *televised image*), 3. *shinshō* (mental image) and 4. *zō* (a reflected image (in a mirror, for example), but also

figurative, figural image).⁴ It can easily be noticed that, apparently, the lexis of the Japanese language has enough terms to cover the wide connotative spectrum that images presuppose. The question that arises, however, is the extent to which, in the Japanese culture, these terms acquire a semantic charge that is similar to that of western terms. This is what this study attempts to answer, by hermeneutically investigating Japanese calligraphic art, by examining the nature and function of this type of image, and by highlighting the value and significance of this manner of representing the sacred⁵ in Japanese spirituality.

Far from being accepted merely as a cultural inheritance, calligraphy finds its own place today in contemporary Japanese society; it is an art that is continually rediscovered, without, however, having ever been forgotten. A traditional art, a “social grace”⁶ and an object of academic research in its own homeland, calligraphy is considered to be an integral part of the “Japanese spirit”. Capable of adapting itself to the progress of the world, calligraphy may convey the sensibility of a new age, since besides having an ornamental role, the calligraphic scroll (*kakejiku*) also maintains a status and a meaning, translated into image and word, remaining, as always, the same spiritual testimony of a different type of metaphysics.

In Europe, any definition attempt is bound to cross over into an even more unknown and abstract domain,⁷ and this is probably also due to the writing system adopted in this geographical area. It is known that, at its beginnings, mankind was familiar with two types of languages and with two types of writing: one based on sound, and the other based on sight. As one of the most important forms of human communication deploying a set of visible traces, which are related, by convention, with certain linguistic levels, writing has recorded two main directions throughout its history: Sumerian and Chinese writing.⁸ The former, also known as the cuneiform writing, was a symbolical script used in the eighth millennium B.C., evolved in time from a pictural to an increasingly conventionalised form: the culminating point in its development coincided with the invention of the Greek alphabet, deemed to be the great fulfilment of western and scientific culture.

Chinese characters (pictograms/ ideograms), however, are reminiscent of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, even though they are not as close to the objects they represent as was the case in the old Egyptian writing. While in Egypt they used abbreviated paintings to represent sounds, in the Far East, even today Chinese characters mean stylised paintings used as paintings;⁹ in other words, stylised paintings of the things or concepts they represent, without, however, being paintings of the sounds. Unlike the alphabet, which has developed a linear form of representation, the writing system that deploys Chinese characters, which are not conventionalised signs, allows for a situation of equilibrium which is unique in the history of writing:¹⁰ Chinese characters may easily be

transformed into means of conveying and recording thought, they are “a means of transmission and registration of thought,”¹¹ remaining, at the same time, graphic signs with rather high imagistic potential. Given its graphic quality, a Chinese character activates a rhythmic form¹² which has its own significance, becoming thus a visual sign; this, while representing a concept,¹³ also allows for direct recognition of symbolical thought. This is the graphic quality that the art of calligraphy generously exploits, revitalising the functions of the sign that has been released from its object. Through dots, lines, surfaces, light, space, sound, rhythm, movement, time,¹⁴ the calligraphed character manages to stimulate not merely the sense of sight, but also the tactile sense, or the sense of direct touch.

According to the old Chinese mindset (1766-1122 B.C.), the various inscriptions on animal bones or turtle shells were considered to be manifestations of divine will. Having been initially provided with orifices, bones and shells were thereafter placed in the fire, and the cracks and lines that appeared because of the burning process were interpreted by the priests of those times and recorded in the form of simplified paintings, which were seen as representations of divine voices.¹⁵ The idea of pictograms that were sacralised and preserved for oracles became fundamental for the later development of Chinese characters and, implicitly, of the art of calligraphy. Even today in China, these pictograms/ ideograms are regarded as “objects” of veneration or as “chalices” filled with magic and power.

Japan adopted the Chinese writing system (called *kanji*, in Japanese) in the sixth century, at the same time it adopted Buddhism. Later on, between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, the graphic deformation of Chinese characters gave rise to the development of the *kana* syllabic script on this territory – a Japanese writing system that was and still is successfully exploited by the art of calligraphy:

“Our writing system with its mixture of *Kanji* and the syllabic letters of *Kana* is more varied than alphabetical writing systems. For just this reason, each incorporates a different feeling. Is it not the integration of feelings in *Kanji* which permits the original form of the cosmos of a language to live on? *Kanji* – to prescribe it somewhat roughly – incorporates painting, poetry, music, sculpture and even gesture in their original form in the words.”¹⁶

According to a Chinese legend, painting and calligraphy are twin sisters, having their miraculous origins in time immemorial;¹⁷ the arguments supporting this theory is that a painter and a calligrapher use the same materials, namely rice paper, an animal-hair brush and charcoal dissolved in water as ink, that both artists’ brush techniques have many aspects in common, and last but not least, that both are judged by the

same criteria of a strong or subtle accentuation in the rhythm of the brushstrokes. The two formal elements of calligraphic art that have captivated the imagination of the Far East for centuries, the dark line and the white space, create a simple but profound and subtle art, which is indebted to tradition without precluding originality in any way. Similar to the case of Byzantine iconography, the masters of calligraphy are studied very carefully even today, in a certain spirit of freedom as well as docility, of sincere and prideless emulation:

“It is probably its very simplicity which is part of its charm. It is a simplicity which has given birth to a plethora of expressive line. There are as many lines as there are calligraphers who write. The scripts have certain conventions that should be followed, but the lines themselves are unique to the person writing them.”¹⁸

A calligraphic line is an energetic, dynamic and sensitive expression, defined, in a certain kind of way, by the white space. The relation between line and space is one of profound intimacy, which may be compared to the tangential rapport between matter and air, as it is valorised by the art of sculpture.

One of the most important breakthroughs in Western abstract art, specialised literature contends,¹⁹ was the discovery of the colour black, which had been hitherto rejected by traditional painting, since it had been conceived as a non-colour. Pierre Soulages turned black into a forceful colour, Wassily Kandinsky proposed a “cosmosophy” of colours in which white meant absence or utter silence and black meant “nothingness,”²⁰ while Malevich looked for the supreme intensity in “absence,”²¹ impelled by a religious drive to explore a hidden world and anticipating, somehow, the general crisis of the image.²² The richness and the varieties of expression that black entailed were, however, a “discovery” that had taken place millennia before in the Far East, given that the exercise of representing pictograms/ ideograms with a brush was seen as “a uniting feature between man, nature and divinity, between the world of the matter and that of the spirit.”²³ These dark signs were pregnant, therefore, with the possibility of revealing anything at once.

Moreover, in this geographic area, calligraphy adds invisible, empty brushstrokes (*kūkaku*) to the dark, visible lines. Unlike Western calligraphy, Oriental calligraphy is vertical and optically discontinuous.²⁴ In geometrical terms, therefore, calligraphed characters are seen architecturally, in their three-dimensionality; this interpretation is enabled by exactly those invisible, empty lines, which do not appear clearly drawn on paper. Between those lines, however, there is a necessary connexion which is actually very strong, even though, for the very reason of increasing its dynamic strength, it is occasionally hidden from sight. It

is a sort of exemplification of what might be called the “process of becoming” in calligraphy, to which the varying intensities of black also contribute; there are, in fact, six types of black which are considered to be different colours: dry, diluted, white; wet, concentrated, black.²⁵

A painting of invisible reality, the calligraphed word seems to have access to veritable, “metaphysical” knowledge, capable of going beyond the exterior appearance of phenomena in order to reach their intimate essence.²⁶ Through specific pictorial means, the word that is highlighted through calligraphy is endowed with a vision of profound reality, upon which it acts in a sort of magic way, as it attempts to evoke it in the full acceptance of the word. Refusing colour, calligraphy has chosen to enter the world of spirit through a special sort of analogy, correspondence and affinity.

In calligraphic writing, the written sign combines the pictographic and the phonetic features: the former “visualises” a referent, while the latter “permits” an oral reading of a word or enunciation.²⁷ The graphism of calligraphed characters is capable of revealing a meaning, so much so that the visual form of writing may, after the message, become the medium of unwritten poetry.

The relation between the visual and the scriptural images may be interpreted from two contradictory perspectives. On one hand, the link between signifier and signified that it generates seems to be related to a signified that cannot be reduced to a model and that is revealed in and through writing itself, as it is known in a mystic communion; in the face of such a model, the image would only create the impression of a degraded message. However, if the visual image is, by definition, an object, writing enjoys, in this sense, the privilege of being attached to immateriality. Writing appears, thus, to be the appanage of an elite, for whom it represents the occasion for both reading and practice, while the image may be made to serve writing, marking the divorce between decipherment and practice.²⁸ A different perspective, the very reverse of the first, interprets the visual image as a panoramic, synoptic image, in which everything is offered all at once, while the linguistic image remains tributary to the linearity of discourse and to the temporality of signs that are written one after another.²⁹ Calligraphy seems to offer a totalising vision, in which the visual is combined with the scriptural to configure a harmonious whole.

Two image registers are found in Japanese calligraphy: a visual image, which pertains to intuition, and a verbal image, which pertains to a function of abstract analysis. A calligraphic work presupposes, therefore, both perception *via* the senses, given its pictorial character, and a distancing from this type of perception, given its aspect of a linguistic image. Sight is strongly related to intuition, making the one who gazes an active participant in the emergence of something into space, while the linguistic image remains tributary to the linearity of discourse, to the

temporality of the sign.³⁰ Calligraphy entails, ultimately, both a representation of the world through the dark line and the white space and a progressive discovery of the significance of the calligraphed characters. The global meaning lends itself to instantaneous as well as gradual decipherment, rendering the calligraphic work a unique way of the manifestation of being in the world.

Concurrently denotative and connotative, questions like “What is this?” and “What does this mean?” seem to find an answer in calligraphic works. Their cultural and spiritual meaning demands and allows for decipherment. The object and its interpretation are, however, in a relationship of interdependence; to understand an image of this type, not only its nature, but also its finality must be comprehended. The meaning of such an image lies, undoubtedly, beyond the significance of the calligraphed characters, since a vast experience is concentrated in just one signifying graphic sign. The visual image and the verbal image eschew intellectual understanding; although it remains unknown in its literality, the calligraphic scroll masks another, concealed facet of meaning, “understood as the source of a different truth.”³¹ Still, this is not the case of a meaning that conveys a univocal concept; it is rather an ideatic network that may naturally combine even the contraries. Pictural and literal language become revelatory, even though there may appear to be no ultimate truth or, if there is such truth, what is important is not the aim but the path towards it, the enlightenment that the pursuit of a final meaning entails.

It is exactly what also happened in various Western popular traditions, where beliefs, especially religious belief, acquired an iconographic expression, icons becoming “the image of an existentially assimilated revelation.”³² Unlike the Latin Church, however, which situates images in the field of rhetoric,³³ the Greek Church conceives images from a metaphysical angle, in which the figure attempts to encompass the absolute, as it is conceived by the collective imaginary in the respective culture:

“The cult of the icon existing beyond the scope of sanctuary and liturgy allows it to be researched in reference to the world of the collective imagery of people, who worship them at a given time and place. The icon, conscious of typical ethnic group representatives, has its own connotations that not only refer to the canonical and religious content, but are also one of the symbols from the perspective of the world in which they function. Therefore questions as to: what the icon is, what is painted on it and what it signifies within the culture are at the same time questions about

collective imagery existing in that particular culture.”³⁴

The visual and the verbal images are also conjoined in Christianity, where the manifestation of God passes from the revealed Word, which is written down in the Gospels, to the representation of the image painted in the icon. The practice of the art of icons in Byzantine Christianity is based on a principle that “borders on the principle of resemblance,”³⁵ through the founding myth of the icon that has not been made by man (*acheiropoiètos*); by way of consequence, the art of man-made icons becomes a chain of images whereby the absolute Being is manifested without alteration. “An image-based theology,”³⁶ the icon is the result of a change of attitude. Following a descending path, God makes Himself visible by following a human path, His unrepresentable countenance becoming a face through “enclosure within the spatial limits of the visible world.”³⁷ An icon is an image that does not cover (as apparent surface) but reveals (as apparition),³⁸ actively participating in regenerating man through a new image. The icon puts an end to the ontological rupture between the natural and the supernatural, between the visible and the invisible, accepting the secret presence of the model within the image.³⁹ In calligraphy too, the image associates its plenitude with “emptiness” or the “void,” the only way of access to the invisible that conceals and reveals the sacred. That is why both the icon and the calligraphic scroll challenge the beholder to a particular way of seeing, in order to accede to what is concealed. The mystery or the enigmatic horizon of icons or calligraphic works has always been either assumed or missed. An aesthetic emotion is mystically transfigured into a “sacred image,”⁴⁰ and the direct revelation of divinity is accomplished concurrently through word and image, allowing for the unseen to become seen, and for the unrepresentable to become representable. Through linguistic and imagistic mediation, the icon and the calligraphy scroll somehow become representations of “religious identity.”⁴¹

In an icon, however, it is not only the subject that is extremely important, but also its means of representation or the manner in which the subject is approached. It is natural that such a pictorial language that corresponds to the divine revelation should be elaborated, in accordance with which the icon may express the “spiritual experience of holiness,”⁴² which it may signal with the aid of forms, colours and symbolical lines, as the component parts of a harmonious whole. Consequently, in order to fulfil the imperatives of tradition, the icon maker is required to empty the icon of any individual element; since the composition of the icon is pre-established, no deviation from the canon is allowed. Without the marks of the visible world, without shadows, the frontally presented characters in the icon communicate directly with the beholder, conveying to the latter notions about the spiritual, sacred world.⁴³ The delight an icon offers to the eyes of the beholder, the solar mystique suggested through the gold

and the brightness of the rainbow colours becomes almost sonorous;⁴⁴ the liturgical function of the icon culminates with the contemplation of mysteries.

From the point of view of the technique it uses, calligraphy attempts a transfiguration of the world image (*imago mundi*) through a very simple material technique, provided by black ink and rice paper. All the colour pigments become nuances of black, while the equilibrium between the dark line and the white space transforms itself into a means of rendering the rapport between light and shadow. The white-black monochromy serves here the attempt of revealing the sacred. Without figuration and without the technique of perspective, the calligraphic work contains in itself a system of its own connexions, in which the space of abstract representation obeys the law of movement from right to left, that is counter-clockwise. This movement fosters metamorphosis, in the sense of the passage from a materially constituted space, with its own laws, to an imaginary space, which makes possible the re-creation of a world “whose specific constraints serve exactly to present what is offered to the subject.”⁴⁵

Icons speak through silence, rendering the holy script legible to the illiterate. Through icons, the holy word becomes visible and may be contemplated, since the church does not merely *tell* the truth but also *shows* it through images.⁴⁶ It does not suffice for the truth to be told. It must also be shown. Icons become thus the simultaneous contemplation of what is not uttered and of what is displayed.⁴⁷ In the universe the icon proposes, it is not rational categories or human morality that reign supreme, but the divine charisma; hence, the majestic nature of icons in all their simplicity.⁴⁸ “A blueprint of ineffable reality,”⁴⁹ icons become the visible testimony of the divine descending upon the human, as well as of the human aspiring to the divine.⁵⁰ Icons make man fully aware of the presence of divinity, without the latter being actually seen. An icon is a visible figure that invites man to go beyond the visible, towards the unfigurable. Consequently, icons cannot legitimate adoration (*latreia*), but only a recognition of the sacred through an attitude of veneration (*proskunesis*).⁵¹ In the attempt to picturally translate such enlightenment, icons replace reading though beholding. They help man to participate in the divine life, offering the latter the possibility of spiritual rebirth, although it has always been known that such inner accomplishment is inexpressible and may only be defined as absolute silence.⁵² As a religious experience, an icon proposes “beholding”⁵³ God on the eighth day, attesting to the visual character of the word. The visual order is juxtaposed to the intelligible order, and the image is juxtaposed to the word,⁵⁴ while the word becomes an object of contemplation. The unseen are revealed in the seen, and the image acquires the same value as the word in pursuit of an expression of divinity.

Unlike the icon, however, which attempt to integrate the Christian believer within the universal unity of the church, calligraphy urges towards a return of the self upon itself, in a meditation that is most of the times solitary, on the pathway towards the revelation of the noumenal, hidden depth of this world.

The Japanese soul (*yamato damashii*) is characterised, amongst others, by religious syncretism, which encompasses the *Shinto* values (literally, the “way of the gods”) and the Buddhist ones. While Shintoism is the ancient belief of the Japanese, Buddhism – a religion imported from India, via China and Korea – became established in Japan in the sixth century, bestowing also another gift upon the new culture: writing. Moreover, if we were to functionally distribute the two main religious currents, Shintoism, with all its animist religious manifestations, would be associated with the “forces of life and of fecundity,” while Buddhism would be connected to “the world beyond and of death.”⁵⁵ The oldest sacred text belonging to the Shintoist faith, *Kojiki*, was written in 721, and it was a compilation in three volumes of Japan’s “ancient deeds,” with the aim of presenting the genealogy of the gods, from the ones who had created the archipelago to the forefathers of the imperial house in Yamato, presided over by the sun goddess Amaterasu O-mikami (“the Great deity that lights up the sky”). According to *Kojiki*, the *Shinto* faith represents a diverse ensemble of beliefs, cultures and conceptions based on the “importance of shamanic practices, of agrarian rituals and of the cult of the dead.”⁵⁶ Buddhism, however, the most difficult to characterise of the world’s religions, is the only religious manifestation whose founder does not declare himself to be either the prophet of God, or His envoy on earth. Moreover, the Buddhist faith rejects the very idea of a deity as a supreme being, since the founder of this religion proclaims himself the “Awakened” (“the Buddha”) and, hence, “the spiritual master and guide.”⁵⁷ The very term “Buddha” is, actually, a form of the past participle, (with the meaning of ‘awakened, fulfilled’), derived from a verbal root signifying ‘to awaken, to understand, to recognise.’ Without being a proper name, it is in fact an epithet for those who have reached the supreme intelligence, having the connotation of a paradigm.⁵⁸

Emerging from Buddhism and established as a practice in India, contemplative meditation – as a way of access to enlightenment without resorting to the greeting of the Buddha or of the various bodhisattvas – became later on the foundation of a doctrine that found a proper terrain for consolidation and dissemination in China. According to an old legend, a monk of noble origin who had come from India, by the name of Daruma (or Bodhidharma, in Sanskrit), introduced meditation on Chinese territory at the beginning of the sixth century, after imposing upon himself that he should practise meditation in front of a rocky wall for nine years. His teachings then transformed into a fascinating doctrine, called *chan* in

Chinese or *zen* in Japanese, which is considered to be the most “unreligious” (“*irrélégieuse*”)⁵⁹ of all the world’s religious doctrines.

In the thirteenth century, the Zen doctrines were also imported into the Land of the Rising Sun through Japanese monks who had studied in China; these practices and teachings which were reserved for the intellectual or warrior elite were to give a new incentive to Japanese Buddhism. Eisai brought over the Zen called Rinzai, whose practice is based on meditation upon a *koan*, an enigma leading to illumination, while his disciple, Dogen, established the Soto Zen, whose unique practice is *zazen* (meditation in the sitting position). The success Zen enjoyed in Japan was probably also due to the fact that this doctrine addressed itself, first and foremost, to the common man, proposing the latter the way of individual salvation, situated beyond life and death, history and society.⁶⁰

The attempt to define Zen Buddhism encounters many obstacles, proving equally difficult and risky for the researchers who have embarked on such a venture. The origins of Zen Buddhism [*-Skt. Dhyana* (‘meditation’)] are linked to the yoga tradition and, in particular, to the belief that self-control and meditation may lead to the peace of Enlightenment.⁶¹ On one hand, from the point of view of historical manifestations, Zen may be interpreted as a form of Buddhism; hence, the syntagm Zen Buddhism does not appear to be improper. On the other hand, however, for certain specialists,⁶² Zen is situated beyond Buddhism, since it is not based on any *sutras* (Buddhist scripture), but returns directly to the origins of Buddhism. Since it is not based on any theological doctrine, Zen Buddhism cannot be considered to be a religion, being interpreted as a philosophy instead, although there are attempts to prove that Zen is not even a philosophy, given that it lies behind words and the intellect and, unlike philosophy, it is neither a study of the processes that govern thought or conduct, nor a theory of the principles and laws that govern the human world or the universe. Zen Buddhism might rather be considered as a form of anti-intellectualism or intuitionism:

“Zen is taken to be a form of antiintellectualism
or a cheap intuitionism, especially when satori in
Zen is explained as a flash like intuition.”⁶³

Despite its appearance to be neither of these, Zen Buddhism includes a very profound philosophy, while, at the same time, not representing a philosophy in the true sense of the term.

According to the Zen belief, *satori*, the enlightenment or awakening of Buddha’s consciousness, appears when there is an unexpected event, a chance happening, an opportunity, when the spirit is prepared to receive it. “What/ which is the sacred path of enlightenment?,” the disciple asked his master. “The reflection of flowers in the eye of their beholder,” the master answered.⁶⁴ The finite has become infinite, and the infinite has become infinity. The present has transformed into eternity. Devoid of any

feeling of attachment or possession and discarding all desire, Zen means complete freedom, the journey from the shore of illusion (*samsara*) to that of enlightenment (*nirvana*).⁶⁵ Every man is a miniature version of the universe, and enlightenment consists, in a way, in realising or understanding this.⁶⁶ Enlightenment, however, should be immediate and direct, and the path to follow is practice, the meandering road in pursuit of illumination, whereby what is attempted is knowing and surpassing one's own self. Calligraphy becomes, in this way, a Zen practice and meditation:

“Zen masters never considered their painting to be either abstract or ‘art for art’s sake’, as it is the Zen masters’ spiritual zeal which is expressed in their brushstrokes. Reflecting the unique Zen Buddhist vision, spontaneous brushwork can be a path to enlightenment.”⁶⁷

Avoiding the theoretical attempts to define it, Zen means, above all, practice and teaching whereby Self-Awakening may be reached. According to the Japanese tradition, calligraphy is not only a means of expressing the spirit, but also the path to self-perfection, one of the ways to *satori* or Zen enlightenment: “Zen is none other than your own mind, so look within and wake up!”⁶⁸

Through calligraphy, the Zen religious philosophy introduces the textual and iconic image in the sphere of ordinary, daily existence. Zen becomes a type of thinking through graphic-scriptural images, attempting, through a visible form, to get closer not to an invisible supra-reality, but to a state of spirit, called “*mushin*” [*mu* ‘nothingness, emptiness, void, naught’ + *shin* ‘heart, spirit’] (‘empty heart, nothing in the heart’, ‘no-mind’), the state above all determinations. Calligraphy may accede to a hidden meaning of the world, to superior ontological revelations. The “nothingness” is the clue of an emancipation, of an optimistic or tragic liberation of the world. Being and nothingness, fullness and emptiness, presence and absence are concepts that may be recognised through the dark stroke in the calligraphic image:

“The stroke originates, and returns to *konton kaiki* (‘pristine existence’); it arises from nothingness and that nothingness is incomprehensibly gathered up in the brush. When the writing springs forth from *konton kaiki* the effect is dramatic...”⁶⁹

The world conceived by reason is, for Zen Buddhism, a false world, a world of ignorance and deception, removed from the world of true reality. Denying the influence of reductionist reason, the world of discrimination might disappear with it and, in this way, the true reality might find room, in all its plenitude. In its turn, denial is not mere

abandonment, but a redefinition of the world. In Zen, the absolute is identified with *Mu*, the boundless Nothingness, which is entirely non-substantial; hence the individual may paradoxically be identical with this absolute: "Many people are afraid to empty their minds lest they plunge into the void. They do not know that their own mind is the void."⁷⁰ *Nothingness* surrounds man, helping the individual to enter a direct communication with his own self:

"In Zen's realization of absolute Nothingness, an individual is determined by absolutely no nothing. To be determined by absolutely no thing means the individual is determined by nothing other than itself in its particularity it has complete self determination without any transcendent determinant. This fact is equally true for every individual."⁷¹

The tension between *being* (*U*) and *not being* (*Mu*), which governs the human condition, is overcome by *Mu*, *Nothingness* being the transcendence of the opposition between existence and non-existence. But *Mu* should not be read as the denial of *U*. Since it is the counter-concept of *U*, *Mu* is a stronger form of negation than the simple *not being*. Absolutised, it transcends both *U* and *Mu*, in their relative senses.⁷² In other words, life no longer differs from death, good no longer differs from evil, etc. In Buddhism, life is not superior to death, since life and death are two antagonistic and mutually exclusive processes, becoming, thus, inseparable from one another. What Buddhism calls *samsara*, transmigration or the wheel of life and death, is nothing but the endless cycle of life and death. Only thus may the past and the future become present, the only recognisable moment;⁷³ perfect liberation, the Awakening, may only occur through the fulfilment of *Nothingness*, which lies beyond any form of duality. Without the hope in any salvation from the outside, Zen Buddhism seeks only self-enlightenment. *Nothingness* is not exterior to man; on the contrary, since the beginning of time it has existed in man, in one's own self, here and now:

"Mu is the absolute 'no' of Zen practice; it demands everything we have:

To pass this barrier, concentrate all 360 bones and joints and 84,000 pores of skin of your body on this word *mu*... every ounce of strength you have must be exhausted on this single character."⁷⁴

Zen insists on delineating its perspective: the human self has resided, ever since the origins, in enlightenment. The self is therefore inseparable from self-enlightenment, this true facet of man becoming visible only through the practice of exercise:

“The work is executed in the space of a moment, but this can only be done after twenty or thirty years of practice.”⁷⁵

Once man has reached enlightenment, he is no longer on the path to enlightenment, since the Zen practice has no goal. The true Zen is in itself enlightenment, that is understanding the fact that *Mu*, *Nothingness* is not outside the human being, but within oneself: “In the realization of absolute Nothingness, the true Self awakens to itself.”⁷⁶ The realisation of absolute *Nothingness* is, in Zen, the fulfilment of the self, which goes beyond individual subjectivity, beyond any possible subject/ object duality or the so-called relation between the human and the divine. *Hitsuzendō*⁷⁷ means the combination between the exercise of calligraphy and the Zen practice. *Hitsu* is the brush that captures and then projects the state of the practitioner’s mind and spirit, *zen* becomes the function activated by the mind and the spirit, and *dō* constitutes the path of uninterrupted practice. The unity of the three components is the path towards one’s own self and the revelation of the ultimate truth.



Rodica Frentiu, *Heart Sūtra*/ 無(*Mu*) 'Nothingness, Void'

In Western culture, however, the image of the void has been felt as an image devoid of holiness, as a “refusal” of the visual and sensible testimony of divinity made flesh, whereby Christ’s nature as God is ignored, and His resurrection no longer presents any important aspect.⁷⁸ The contemplation of nothingness may coincide, in such a culture, with metaphysical despair and religious gravity,⁷⁹ and the consequence becomes inevitable: the theology of the death of God.

Buddhism has registered three periods after Buddha's death: *shoho*, *zoho* and *mappo*.⁸⁰ In its turn, the *shoho* period may be subdivided into three subperiods, each of them having a specific characteristic: *kyo* (teachings), *gyo* (asceticism) and *sho* (nirvana). The immediately following period, *zoho*, consisted in teachings and asceticism, without being able to reach the nirvana, however, while in the period of chaos from *mappo*, all that has remained are the teachings of Buddha. Calligraphy also knows several types of styles: the seal style (*tensho*), the clerical style (*reisho*), the cursive style (*sōsho*), the cliché-imprinted style (*kaisho*) and the semicursive style (*gyōsho*), the evolution being from the seal style to the semicursive style and covering a period of time between the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. Could the existence and name of these calligraphic style be a mere coincidence, without any possible connection with the periods mentioned by Buddhism?

Harmony, sometimes even in asymmetry, *sabi* ('solitude'), simplification: these are features that the beholder's eye might distinguish in a calligraphic work. Automatic writing, depending entirely upon inspiration, calligraphy captures the present of the moment within itself. The trace left by the brushstroke on the rice sheet is the rhythmic movement of the spirit, entrusted to paper for safekeeping. No experience is analysed or interpreted; all that is communicated directly to paper is the memory of the present moment. The creative spirit of the calligraphic work consists in a direct expression, in simplicity, movement, fulfilment in mystery (*myo*). The *satori* experience, that is being able to see within yourself, may be reached through intuition, which comes in direct contact with reality; this, in turn, is nothing but the mystery of being. This way, man may become conscious of the un-conscious (*mushin*), and the state of being "outside the spirit," when the self acts in full accordance with nature, is the path above all limitations.⁸¹

The calligraphic image becomes a vehicle of meaning. Like any ordinary visual image, not only does the calligraphic work try to reproduce the real, being concurrently something else than the real, but it may also become the negation or absence of the represented reality. The logic of *mimesis* has made room for the revelation of eternity, where calligraphy has the role of interpreting visible and invisible things. From presence, absence has been reached, which judgment and reasoning, intellectual operations have been eliminated, since no speculative or pragmatic goal is pursued. Rather than being the image of an image, calligraphy is pure image.

Just like in the icon the link between the visible and the invisible is sealed, calligraphic art confirms the same interweaving between the seen and the unseen. The information that pertains to an image is not immediately legible, but finds itself dissimulated in the shape of the calligraphed character. This image-artefact is somehow subordinated to several necessities: of expression, of communication, of religious

experience. Through an iconic and linguistic transposition, the calligraphic work attempt to express and master something incommensurable, such as faith. As an image, calligraphy proposes a unity between the immediately tangible and contemplative meditation: "When we are one with the universe, all of nature becomes our meditation hall."⁸² An initially concealed and distant content tries to manifest itself, progressing all the way from inside outside, from the invisible to the visible, borrowing the shape of calligraphy. Something similar to a painting is offered to the beholder to be read, but in order for everyone to see directly within one's own nature, the message should not be rejected, understood, or not understood, but overcome.

The image offered by a calligraphic work is a combination of several images, achieved through projecting the perspective on the world that the calligraphist proposes; it is a mixture of reflecting a vision imparted by faith and of imitating a model, as a resembling duplication, as well as a departure from the model. The calligraphic scroll is bidimensional in appearance, but becomes three-dimensional through interpretation. It is, in fact, a cultural sign that never reveals its intuitive content entirely. By using his brush, the calligraphist manages to create an object that does not exist as an object in itself, but through whose image he may inaugurate a new outlook on the world. The image impregnated by the word has become the bearer of a print that is simultaneously expression and meditation. The image vacillates between the plenitude of being and the void of nothingness. Hence, the calligraphic image can only be considered a symbolical supraréalité, which has its own consistency and which allows man to live in reality, with it by his side. The revelation evinced by the harmony of all the elements composing a calligraphic work may only be contemplated, not justified. Just like art becomes "dephenomenalised,"⁸³ the world also opens up to mystery through calligraphy. One verifies illumination through meditation, not through proofs.

One of the most famous calligraphic Zen works belongs to Master Sengai (1750-1838) and is entitled "Circle, Triangle, and Square." There have been numerous interpretations given to the symbolism of this calligraphy, which may be considered a veritable mandala, but two deserve special attention. A possible deciphering reading of this calligraphic work, made in the Zen code, would consist in an interpretation whereby the circle represents the mind undergoing illumination, the triangle is reminiscent of the *zazen* meditative posture, and the square suggests the walls of the temple where the "awakening" might happen. It appears, however, that Sengai, the Zen Master, visited the churches in Nagasaki and was therefore familiarised with the Christian faith. That is why, in another decryption attempt that might be fostered by the symbolism of the geometric forms in his work, made, this time, in a Christian code, the circle suggests the perfect and eternal existence of divinity, the triangle is reminiscent of the Holy Trinity, while the square is

related to the symbolism of terrestrial existence.⁸⁴ Irrespective of the interpretation given to the content of the work, it becomes certain that the calligraphic work ensures a visible presence for something that remains concealed in the invisible, a manifestation whose preservation pertains to a unique sacrality. It is an ideal reality, which calligraphy makes accessible only to acts of intuitive knowledge.

Explicated in metaphysical terms by Plato and Plotin, an intuitive content may transform itself into a representation⁸⁵ even before man is affected by the structure of the world he carries within himself. Comprising a plurality of significances, the meaning of the calligraphic work contains, beyond an immediate sense, also an indirect, hidden sense, which clamours revelation. In order, however, to make the image intelligible, its indirect apprehension, its in-depth exploration and its interpretation on various levels of meaning are required. Exploring depth layers, interpretation becomes a genuine path of initiation. Meaning becomes spiritual, and access to it can no longer follow a logical, rational passage. Meaning enters thus a “world of its own truth and significance,”⁸⁶ overtly opposing itself to a logical-conceptual rationality. The data of the real world may even be reversed, and the calligraphist who attempts to visualise and express a sacred emotion is no longer a proponent of meaning, but a receiver of meaning, receptive and active at the same time, and aware that understanding is not immediately accessible and that it must be translated into an altogether different code from the ones that are known. The calligraphist is no longer the centre, but an intermediary moment in the meaning that is being created, while approaching meaning is done *via* contemplative meditation, as the calligraphist creator attempts to give shape to the hidden dimensions of faith. The relation between image and the unrepresentable is a special one: here the image resonates upon the self, upon emotion, upon the state of being outside being. The calligraphic work has transformed into a “negative space,”⁸⁷ similar to a photographic negative: white paper has become the subject, while the blackness of ink has become the background of manifestation for this white space. For the calligraphist there is no other reality but that of the spirit or of a will that desires to participate in the gesture of creation through dots, lines, planes, through their capacity of becoming combined. Most of the times, at the end of a calligraphic work, the brush runs dry, producing the so-called effect of flying white. The wet load from the first contact between the brush and the paper until the “dry” end is a dramatic journey undertaken by the calligraphist’s hand in an instant. The white background is brought back into consciousness, the shape of the character and the white surface becoming ever more pregnant with meaning, while the calligraphed characters become materialised, like an object in itself.

In the Byzantine icon’s attempt to directly capture the transcendent,⁸⁸ a sensible content is objectivised on a material support, without any direct relation to the visual experience provided by the world

of the reality around. The eye as an organ and sight as a biological function of the human being become a privileged axis of image constitution;⁸⁹ for a true understanding of these, to them should be added the movement of the brushstroke and the gesture of the brush, which contribute to harmonising the component elements of the iconic image within a whole.

Japanese calligraphy is concurrently a pictural and a scriptural image, which, like Byzantine icons, demand sacralised contemplation. Knowing implies, in both cases, an attitude of adoration, to some extent. Beyond a philosophy of essence, governed by the law of causality, beyond an existentialist type of thinking with transcendences that are devoid of ontological depth, calligraphy proposes the disappearance of forms and the dissolution of contours, activating the principle of movement instead. Since there exist states that transcend thought and words, the ineffable nature of calligraphy tends to plunge into spiritual recesses, without ever exhausting the secrets of the created world which derive from intuition and from the subconscious.

Developed in the spirit of the Platonism governing Eastern patristics and of transcendence philosophy,⁹⁰ icons are instruments of contemplation whereby the soul removes itself from the sensible world and enters the world of divine illumination.⁹¹ Through icons, a way of access to divinity is created; they are the scripture attempting to arrest a vision through a pictural-scriptural image with singular characteristics. From the eye one moves to the voice and the other way around, while the testimony of optical and rhetorical bipolarity is ensured by the fact that one does not say “painting,” but “writing an icon”: writing does not refer here only to the writing of a name but to any teaching of the icon,⁹² in conformity with the teachings of the holy texts. Once uttered, it manifests itself directly, through naming. Nonetheless, where there is a mystery, the revelation of meaning cannot be done directly; it can only be achieved indirectly, through the icon as an intermediary, while symbolical knowledge, which is always indirect, resorts to contemplation in order to decipher the presence of the transcendent.⁹³ The theological definition of the image now moves beyond utility, becoming sacred art. The secret, irrational reality of the world is revealed through the two-dimensional surface, in which the icon-maker’s inspiration has come close to a miracle.

The word of the holy texts that is uttered and heard is offered to contemplation in the form of the icon, which is defined as “the liturgical vision of mystery made image.”⁹⁴ An icon is a component part in a whole; that is why, in the homes of Christians, it is placed in the dominating spot in the house⁹⁵, guiding the gaze towards the secret, hallowing both places and times. It is not surprising at all that in days of yore, a guest who entered the house of a believer would bow first to the icon and only afterwards greet the host. Similarly, the calligraphic scroll is placed in *tokonoma*, the alcove in the guest room or in *chashitsu*, the tea room, which

is the most important spot in the traditional Japanese home or in the tea house; the reason is that both the host and the guest should be able to participate in the spiritual encounter fostered by the “painting of the mind”:

“Pieces of calligraphy are displayed in the alcove (*tokonoma*) not so much to appreciate the artist’s skill as to discern the spirit concealed in the writing... In the finest examples of Oriental calligraphy, years of experience and training are consumed in each stroke of the brush.”⁹⁶

It has often been remarked that an icon does not have “a reality of its own,”⁹⁷ since it derives its theophanic value from its partaking of an epiphany. Hieraticism, asceticism, the absence of volume in an icon preclude any materialisation, while the emotion it provokes is transformed into a religious feeling that conduces to a mystical sense (*mysterium tremendum*). Not copying nature, an icon does not reproduce the real dimensions of reality, matter itself entering somehow a state of introspection. Divorced from the immediate historical context, “the icon abides by the transcendent rules of ecclesiastical vision,”⁹⁸ since it does not prove or demonstrate anything; it merely suggests “the seen to the unseen,”⁹⁹ the presence of the divine in the world. It also purifies and transfigures the one who contemplates it, guiding him towards the mystery. It elevates the spirit beyond itself, assisting it to see the “open skies” and leading him towards intimating the divine mystery.

The icon maker organises his composition by height, not by depth, subordinating the flat surface and removing the emptiness – *horror vacui*.¹⁰⁰ The protagonists, whose anatomy is barely sketched by the folds in their garments, are transposed in the two-dimensional plane and seem to slide about rather than move, properly speaking; the juxtaposed colours and touches engender distances, and chronological order is abolished. The point of fugue, the *chiaroscuro*, and the idea of a volume are categorically disavowed by icons. The perspective is oftentimes reversed, the lines are not moving away from the beholder but coming towards him; the iconographic universe is thus entirely oriented towards the human who gazes at it,¹⁰¹ since the image shows what happened in time and then became accessible to sight.¹⁰² Guiding himself by faith, dogmas, traditions and iconographic models, the icon painter paints by following a motif, but the outcome belongs to another world: “Without ever being static, the immovability of the bodies concentrates this entire dynamism in the gaze that reveals the spirit.”¹⁰³ The divine is unseen but is reflected in the humanly visible. Piercing through the phenomenal veil, through colour and the musical consonance of the lines and forms, the icon opens up to the revelatory vision. A contemplation, a silent introspection and an expression of the divine mystery, the icon assists one to participate in

what cannot be described, where the unseen, the unheard and the unspoken are to be encountered.

It has often been remarked¹⁰⁴ about visual, and especially nonfigurative, works of art that the relinquishment of the principle of representing objects has made it possible to propose the invisible structure of the world for visualisation. Relinquishing the representation of the visible, calligraphy also attempts to transform itself into a way of presenting metaphysical contents and revealing the absolute. Calligraphic art may be read like a *mandala*, whose morphological and aesthetic properties provide a support for meditation, and it is through meditation that the spirit may experience communion with the universe. The sensible image is not its own goal; it is just a means of entering the state of supreme meditation whereby a hidden truth may intuitively be reached. The calligraphic image liberates from the constraints of the real, allowing the spirit to experience true enlightenment. It is not the ontological plenitude of divinity that is sought, but the state of being in the presence of supreme illumination. The infinite may not be reduced to the finite; the invisible may not be reduced to the visible, but merely suggested. Through self-imposed asceticism, the calligraphic work demands a poetics in which the role of the visual and linguistic image is that of capturing the inexpressible. Since it may never be exhausted in any sort of immediacy, the calligraphic work becomes a space for reflection.

In contemplation, the spirit is permeated by silence, yet this silence does not entail the absence of noise. Here and now is permitted the attempt to accede to the essential; life and death have been drawn together, while man's passage through life is assimilated to the life of the universe. Through contemplation, the secret gate may be opened: the path towards the absolute. *Karma*, the Buddhist law of cause and effect, the ensemble of the physical or mental human acts and everything they generate, impermanence, it all gets diluted, it all becomes erased and annihilated. All forms dwindle away and vanish. This is an inner reality, the hidden divinity, the infinite within, to which man has access through Zen meditation.

In the calligraphic image, there is an analysis on the surface of the image and there is another analysis at its level of depth, the latter reaching plenitude in contemplation. Apparently, the calligraphic image is a visible, immediate representation, which may be reduced to its surface, but the transcendent meaning that demands revelation invites a transition to its level of depth. Given the encounter between the hand that writes and the eye that reads, calligraphic art proposes a visual reception of the act of reading; the image inserts itself within the linguistic sphere, establishing an intermediary level between the word and the thing, between the abstract and the sensible.¹⁰⁵ There are numerous experiences that a calligraphic work may generate: it is a unique moment of revelation,

in which amazement borders on silence, since it is only silence that allows for divine revelation:

“The moon and the paper are the same white,
The pupil of the eye and the ink, both black.
This mysterious meaning remains a circle,
Beyond the possibility of understanding.”¹⁰⁶

Calligraphy ultimately means a certain type of the pursuit of spiritual perfection, *kanshō hannya* (‘insight obtained through contemplation’), through which man, having embarked on his destiny of exorcising death, attempts to experience the revelation of meaning, out of a desire of both communicating the divine and communicating with the divine. A pathway towards soul purification, calligraphy becomes a method of self-perfection:

“Calligraphy is considered to be active meditation
by the painter, while the visual depiction serves as a
teaching tool for others.”¹⁰⁷

The internal dynamics generated by the meeting of two types of images – the graphic and the written expression – gives a calligraphy work or an icon a special power that can create new images, whether visual or verbal, which can, in turn, generate new universes of understanding and knowledge. The calligraphy and the icon are reminders of the total art that combines harmoniously several types of images, where the aesthetic touches us, but also opens the way to meditation, to reflecting upon the world beyond its objective representations. Through revelations of meaning, the calligraphy and the icon propose to the religious or philosophical conscience a profound knowledge of the universe, while the spirit may manifest itself freely in creation and interpretation.

Notes:

¹ Cf. Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Filozofia imaginilor [The Philosophy of Images]* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 13.

² Origene, apud Alain Besançon, *Imaginea interzisă. Istoria intelectuală a iconoclasmului. De la Platon la Kandinsky [The Forbidden Image. An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm. From Plato to Kandinsky]* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 75.

³ See Wunenburger, 16-18.

⁴ Cf. Ronguman Ei-Wa Jiten (Tokyo: Peason Edukēshon, 2006), 811.

⁵ See Jefferson Macariola Chua, “A Sketch for a Ricoeurian Hermeneutics of Religious Identity”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 12, issue 34 (2013): 59.

⁶ Cecil H. Uyehara, *Japanese Calligraphy. A Bibliographic Study* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 11.

⁷ See Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979), 19.

⁸ Cf. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. 29, 15th edition, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1993), 1025.

⁹ Cf. Pound, 19.

¹⁰ Cf. Shuntaro Mukai, *Characters that Represent, Reflect, and Translate Culture – in the Context of the Revolution in Modern Art* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 1991), 72.

¹¹ Pound, 19.

¹² See Mukai, 77.

¹³ See Mukai, 65.

¹⁴ See Mukai, 74.

¹⁵ Cf. Kuiseko Ryokushū, *Brush Writing* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2002), 8.

¹⁶ Mukai, 66.

¹⁷ Cf. Michael Sullivan, *The Book of Art. Chinese and Japanese Art* (Vol.9, Revised Edition, Bergamo: Groliev Inc., 1994), 266.

¹⁸ Christine Flint Sato, *Japanese Calligraphy. The Art of Line & Space* (Osaka: Kaifusha, 1998), 1.

¹⁹ See Marcel Brion, *Arta abstractă [Abstract Art]* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1972), 241.

²⁰ Cf. Besançon, 366.

²¹ See Paul Evdochimov, *Arta icoanei - o teologie a frumuseții [The Art of Icons – A Theology of Beauty]* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1992), 74.

²² Cf. Besançon, 327.

²³ Brion, 241.

²⁴ Cf. Mukai, 67.

²⁵ See François Cheng, *Vid și plin. Limbajul pictural chinezesc [Void and Full. Chinese Pictorial Language]* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1983), 74.

²⁶ Cf. Besançon, 369.

²⁷ Cf. Wunenburger, 251.

²⁸ See *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (Vol. 11, Paris, 1989), 928.

²⁹ See Wunenburger, 35.

³⁰ See Wunenburger, 34-35.

³¹ Wunenburger, 257.

³² Leonid Uspensky, *Teologia icoanei în biserica ortodoxă [The Theology of Icons in the Orthodox Church]* (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1994), 15.

³³ See Besançon, 9.

³⁴ Ewa Kokoj, “The Damned of the Last judgement or what the Romanians Paint in the Orthodox Icons – Historical and Contemporary Cultural Contexts”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 12, issue 35 (2013): 89.

³⁵ Wunenburger, 143.

³⁶ Uspensky, 183.

³⁷ Wunenburger, 154.

³⁸ Cf. Wunenburger, 203.

³⁹ Cf. Evdochimov, 78.

⁴⁰ Uspensky, 15.

⁴¹ See Chua, 59.

⁴² Uspensky, 118.

⁴³ See Uspensky, 46.

⁴⁴ See Evdochimov, 141.

⁴⁵ Wunenburger, 173.

⁴⁶ Cf. Uspensky, 59.

⁴⁷ See Uspensky, 112.

⁴⁸ Cf. Uspensky, 130.

⁴⁹ Uspensky, 139.

⁵⁰ Cf. Uspensky, 130.

⁵¹ See Wunenburger, 207.

⁵² See Uspensky, 121.

⁵³ Evdochimov, 33.

⁵⁴ Cf. Evdochimov, 35.

⁵⁵ Jean-Pierre Berthon, *Șintoismul. Repere istorice și situația actuală* [*Shintoism. Historical Landmarks and the Situation Today*] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 578.

⁵⁶ Berthon, 578.

⁵⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase* [*The History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas*] (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 73.

⁵⁸ Cf. Jean-Noël Robert, *Budismul. Istorie și fundamente* [*Buddhism. History and Foundations*] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 431.

⁵⁹ Cf. Miyeko Murase, *L'Art du Japon* (Paris: La Pochothèque, 1992), 173.

⁶⁰ See Shuichi Kato, *Japan. Spirit & Form* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1994), 83.

⁶¹ Alicia & Daigan Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism* (Tokyo: Eikyoji Foundation, 1993), 193.

⁶² Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 194.

⁶³ Abe, 3.

⁶⁴ Henri Brunel, *Les plus beaux contes Zen* (Paris: Éditions Calmann-Lévy, 2002), 254.

⁶⁵ Cf. John Stevens, *Zenga. Brushstrokes of Enlightenment* (New Orleans Museum of Art, 1990), 132.

⁶⁶ See Stevens, 138.

⁶⁷ Stevens, 19.

⁶⁸ Daruma, apud Stevens, 66.

⁶⁹ Sōgen Ōmori and Katsujō Terayama, *Zen and the Art of Calligraphy. The Essence of Sho* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 9-10.

⁷⁰ Stephen Addiss, *Obaku: Zen Painting and Calligraphy* (Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, 1978), 31.

⁷¹ Abe, 20.

⁷² See Abe, 94.

⁷³ Cf. Abe, 131.

⁷⁴ Sōgen Ōmori and Katsujō Terayama, 90.

⁷⁵ Christopher J. Earnshaw, *Sho. Japanese Calligraphy. An In-depth Introduction to the Art of Writing Characters* (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2000), 119.

⁷⁶ Abe, 187.

⁷⁷ Sōgen Ōmori and Katsujō Terayama, 89.

⁷⁸ See Uspensky, 214.

⁷⁹ Cf. Besançon, 326.

⁸⁰ See Kato, 72.

⁸¹ Cf. Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1988), 17.

⁸² Stevens, 56.

⁸³ Evdochimov, 26.

⁸⁴ See Stevens, 18.

⁸⁵ See Wunenburger, 103.

- ⁸⁶ Wunenburger, 109.
⁸⁷ Addiss, 12.
⁸⁸ See Evdochimov, 67.
⁸⁹ Cf. Wunenburger, 13.
⁹⁰ Cf. Evdochimov, 147.
⁹¹ Cf. Besançon, 146.
⁹² Cf. Besançon, 146.
⁹³ See Evdochimov, 148.
⁹⁴ Evdochimov, 154.
⁹⁵ See Koko, 89.
⁹⁶ Sōgen Ōmori and Katsujō Terayama, 7.
⁹⁷ Evdochimov, 158.
⁹⁸ Evdochimov, 160.
⁹⁹ Evdochimov, 161.
¹⁰⁰ Cf. Evdochimov, 192.
¹⁰¹ Cf. Evdochimov, 194.
¹⁰² Cf. Besançon, 133.
¹⁰³ Evdochimov, 195.
¹⁰⁴ Cf. Wunenburger, 302.
¹⁰⁵ Cf. Wunenburger, 40.
¹⁰⁶ Sokuhi, apud Addiss, 11.
¹⁰⁷ Stevens, 23.

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