



Student Work Sample 5

The Feminization of Zen in the Motif of Bodhidharma and Courtesan: From Masculine to Feminine, to the Non-Duality and Emptiness

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Bodhidharma (Jp: Daruma), the founder of Zen Buddhism, appears in Japanese paintings or sculptures. Yet, Bodhidharma in Japan is not merely a religious figure that people attempt to visualize it through art form for worshipping, but a ubiquitous motif in popular art and culture. For instance, the Daruma doll for fortune and wish-making, as well as its presence on everyday commodities. Out of all these collaborations between the symbol of Zen and popular art, the most striking must be the motif of Daruma and courtesan in Ukiyo-e. In this study, the student argues the motif of Daruma and courtesan in Ukiyo-e as a feminization of Daruma and Zen. They analyze the feminization in visual terms, how feminine qualities are added to the Zen patriarch in Ukiyo-e. Based on the visual analysis, they move on to the feminization in conceptual terms, revealing how the addition of femininity is in fact facilitating the delivery of ideas of both Zen and the floating world (Ukiyo). Lastly, the feminization of Daruma and Zen is discussed in the sense of how the motif of Daruma and courtesan entails a separation from the political power.

