

The Circuit of the Life Power of Wisdom: Yunqi Zhuhong’s Thoughts on Abstention from Killing During the Late-Ming Dynasty*

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Abstract

Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615) was a pioneer of a new Buddhism of the late-Ming Dynasty. Throughout his life, he abstained from killing living things (*bushasheng* 不殺生) and practiced life release (a practice of abstention from killing by releasing living creatures of various types; *fangsheng* 放生), and his teachings have been widely revered to the present day. Based on the *Brahma’s Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經), the Buddhist principle of abstaining from killing living things combined the Indian theory of rebirth and the Confucian virtue of filial piety.

This principle was criticized by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610, Chinese name Li Madou 利瑪竇), a central figure in the Christian mission to China that began at the end of the sixteenth century. In his doctrinal tract *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 [The True Meaning of (the Doctrine of) the Master of Heaven] (1603), he claimed the idea of human stewardship: killing animals for human use and consumption is to honor this divine blessing. Therefore, he concluded that the ideas of rebirth and filial piety, as well as the Buddhist principle of abstaining from killing living things are erroneous.

Ricci’s view was unacceptable to Zhuhong who believed in the equality of human and animal life. He was repulsed by meat-eating. In his view, humans

* [Editor’s note: Translation of “Emyō no kairo: Minmatsu, Unsei Shukō no fusesshō shisō” 慧命の回路——明末・雲棲株宏の不殺生思想, from Nishimura Ryō 西村玲, *Kinsei Bukkyō ron* 近世仏教論 (Tokyo: Hōzōkan, 2018), 83–103.]

and animals are of the same meat, and therefore, the act of eating animal meat is equivalent to that of eating human meat. Being reborn as various existences through the six paths, one's soul breaks free from the shackle of this present life, opening itself to the infinite past and future. Killing living things means to terminate this cycle, while abstaining from it is a way to participate in the infinite circuit of life.

Zhuhong promoted life release as good conduct that anybody could adopt as an expression of their commitment to abstention from killing. Thus, he succeeded in making his teaching accessible and widely popularizing it in Chinese society.

Keywords:

Yunqi Zhuhong, abstention from killing, the *Brahma's Net Sūtra*, life release, Matteo Ricci, late Ming China

慧命的回路

——明末雲棲株宏的不殺生思想

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摘要

明末新佛教的先驅雲棲株宏（1535–1615）終其一生持不殺生戒與實踐放生，而他的教法至今仍廣泛地受到敬重。以《梵網經》為依據，佛教的不殺生原理將印度的輪迴理論與儒家的孝道結合。十六世紀末基督教開始在中國傳教時，核心人物利瑪竇（1552–1610）對此原理提出批評，在其《天主實義》一書中，他宣稱因為人是萬物的管理者，所以人類殺生與食肉也是天主所賜予的恩惠，因而批判輪迴與孝道的觀念以及佛教不殺生的原理是錯誤的。株宏認為人與動物是平等的，也無法接受利瑪竇的觀點。株宏拒絕食肉，他認為人與動物是同樣的肉，因此吃動物的肉是等同吃人肉的行為。眾生的魂靈在六道中流轉輪迴成為各種型態的生命，從無限的過去至今世而朝向無限的未來。鑑此，殺生意味著斷了這樣的循環，而不殺生則是讓生命自然地持續無限循環的一種方式。株宏提倡放生是任何人都能採取的善行，藉此表達他們對不殺生的承諾。因此，他成功地讓自己的教法平易近人且在中國社會中廣泛地普及化。

關鍵詞：

雲棲株宏、不殺生、梵網經、放生、利瑪竇、明末中國

1. The Principle of Abstaining from Killing

As long as human beings must survive by eating flora and fauna, it will be impossible to strictly adhere to the injunction: “do not kill any living thing.” The idea “abstaining from killing living things” (*fusesshō* 不殺生) is fundamentally arbitrary, leading to its various formulations emerging in different cultures in specific historical contexts. In this article, I will discuss the idea of abstention from killing living things in East Asian Buddhism through the thought of Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (J. Unsei Shukō, 1535–1615).

Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (better known as Taizu 太祖, 1328–1398) of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) inherited the idea prevalent in the previous Song Dynasty (960–1279) that the “Three Teachings—of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—are one,” placing Confucianism at the center of this trio.¹ Buddhism was nearly annihilated due to its suppression in the mid-Ming Dynasty, but as Wang Yangming’s Neo-Confucian theory of mind became popular in the sixteenth century, Buddhism was reevaluated as a study of the mind and was revived by the end of the Ming Dynasty.² Zhuhong became a central part of this process, and he pioneered a new Buddhism during the late Ming Dynasty characterized by the idea of unity among the Three Teachings (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一). Through his moderate approach of combining *nianfo* practice (i.e. chanting the name of the Buddha), precepts, and Chan, Zhuhong enthusiastically instructed not only monks but also ordinary people. He was a popular teacher that gained widespread support throughout late-Ming society and is presently revered in Chinese society.³ The publication of Zhuhong’s work in China around 1600 continued with publications in Japan from the mid-1600s. Thereafter, many commentaries and related works were published into

¹ Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫, “Mindai ni okeru sankyō gōitsu shisō to zensho” 明代における三教合一思想と善書, in *Sakai Tadao chosaku shū 1: Zōhō Chūgoku zensho no kenkyū, vol. 1* 酒井忠夫著作集 1 増補中国善書の研究 上 (Kokusho Kankōkai, 1999), 271–279.

² Araki Kengo 荒木見悟, *Unsei Shukō no kenkyū* 雲棲株宏の研究 (Daizō Shuppan, 1985), 13–24.

³ Modern Buddhist rituals in China and Taiwan are said to have been mostly instituted during the Ming Dynasty; among them, many were developed by Zhuhong. See Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō girei* 中国の仏教儀礼 (Daizō Shuppan, 1986), 71, 161, 318.

the Meiji era,⁴ and thus Zhuhong's ideas had a great influence on Japanese Buddhism and society. One can argue that East Asian intellectual history after the seventeenth century had two major trends, namely the popularization of Buddhism and an emphasis on the unity of the Three Teachings; Zhuhong is one of the primary creators of these two trends within the Buddhist tradition. In this article, I would like to consider Zhuhong's lifelong belief in abstention from killing living things by examining his disputes with proselytizing Jesuits of his time in East Asia.

Based on the research of Araki Kengo 荒木見悟, I will first introduce Zhuhong.⁵ Zhuhong was born into a wealthy merchant family in Hangzhou. He showed excellent promise as a young man, and at twenty years old married his nineteen-year-old wife. From that time onward, he embraced his aspirations to leave home (*chujia* 出家) as a monk, abstained from killing living things, and maintained a vegetarian diet until his death. During religious services that involved sheep and pig sacrifices, Zhuhong would announce to the gods that he would “uphold the precepts and not kill [the animals],” and he would stop the animal sacrifice.⁶ He lost several family members in his early life: his child after a few years, his father at age twenty-seven, and his wife at age twenty-nine. He reluctantly married his second wife Yu, who was sixteen at the time, under the strong pressures of his mother. Born into a poor family, Yu is said to have left home as a nun and maintained vegetarianism.

Zhuhong's mother died when he was thirty-one, and the following year, he took tonsure. At that time, he presented a poem to his wife, expressing the idea of impermanence: “Whether a woman with the vitality of a tiger or a child with the ferocity of a dragon, everybody will die soon.” He concluded the poem by stating, “With tears flowing like fresh blood, I speak of our frequent connections during our time together, but following me [by leaving home] is up to you.”⁷

4 Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫, “Edo jidai no Nihon bunka ni oyoboseru Chūgoku zensho no eikyō narabi ni ryūtsū” 江戸時代の日本文化に及ぼせる中国善書の影響並びに流通, in *Sakai Tadao chosaku shū 2* 酒井忠夫著作集 2 増補中国善書の研究 下 (Kokusho Kankōkai, 2000), 333–337, 358–359.

5 For a foundational study on Zhuhong, see Araki, *Unsei Shukō no kenkyū*. Zhuhong's biography appears on pages 44–102.

6 *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (J. *Chikusō zuihitsu*), edited by Araki Kengo, and translated by Sō Min Tetsugaku Kenkyūkai (Chūgoku Shoten, 2007), “On the Disuse of Ritual Sacrifice,” 46.

7 *Chujia bieshi rentang* 出家別室人湯 (J. *Shukke besshitsu nintō*), dated 1693 (Genroku 6), a photographic reproduction of the original copy printed from the Japanese edition of *Shanfang zalu* 山房雜錄 (J. *Sanbō zatsuroku*) [Translator's

Zhuhong continued, “I will leave. You should make your own plans [for life] freely,” and she responded with “You go first; I will follow you gradually (or later).”⁸ As these words communicate, Yu later took refuge as a nun and took the dharma name Zhujin 祿錦. It appears that Zhuhong was always concerned for her well-being, and at the age of seventy-two he wrote that his dying wish was to protect the hermitage where Zhujin dwelled, and further wrote the “Xiaoyi Hermitage Agreement” in order to ensure the preservation of the hermitage.⁹

Immediately after taking refuge as a monk, Zhuhong paid visits to Chan masters of various regions, as was typical for that time, but he was more attracted to the practice of Amituo *nianfo* than to Chan. At the age of thirty-seven, he decided to settle in Mt. Yunqi in Hangzhou, where he entered a life “mostly according to the Pure Land, devoting himself to seated meditation in the winter and, at other times, to Buddhist lectures and recitation”¹⁰ while devoting himself to teaching both monks and laypeople. He eventually died at the age of eighty-one. It is said that several hundred followers lived on Mt. Yunqi with him, and there were more than one thousand living there even after his death.

Zhuhong’s thought was introspective and moderate compared with thinkers in Chan and left-leaning imperial learning (王學左派; *wangxue zuopai*) famous for their radical words and behaviors. He mainly studied Huayen 華嚴 (J. Kegon) doctrines while practicing Pure Land *nianfo* and abiding by the Buddhist precepts. Zhuhong’s written works are thus diverse. In addition to commentaries on the *Amitabha Sūtra* (*Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經, J. *Amida kyō*), *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Huayan jing* 華嚴經, J. *Kegon kyō*), *Brahma’s Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經, J. *Bonmō kyō*), and the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan jing* 楞嚴經, J. *Ryōgon kyō*), he wrote various ritual protocols, such as those for *fangsheng hui* 放生會 (a practice of abstention from killing by

correction: Nishimura gives the title as “Shanfang shilu” 山房實錄 instead of “Shanfang zalu” 山房雜錄, in *Kinsei kanseki sōkan shisō 4-hen*, 6: *Unsei Renchi [Zhuhong] Daishi ikō gairokubu* 近世漢籍叢刊 思想四編六 雲棲蓮池大師遺稿外六部 (edited by Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦 and Araki Kengo 荒木見悟) (Chūbun Shuppansha, 1984), 4913–4914.

⁸ *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (*Chikusō zuihitsu*), “The Stūpa Name (4),” 516.

⁹ See Araki, *Unsei Shukō no kenkyū*, 95.

¹⁰ *Shanfang zalu*, 4750.

releasing living creatures of various types; J. *hōjō-e*), which thereafter became the model for similar Buddhist ceremonies.¹¹

For laypeople, he advocated abstention from killing in everyday life by publishing the *Zizhilu* 自知錄 (J. *Jichiroku*), which assigns numerical points to good and evil behaviors, a practice common in Daoism at that time, and the *Jiesha fangsheng wen* 戒殺放生文 (J. *Kaisatsu hōjōmon*), which prohibits killing and recommends releasing living creatures. The *Jiesha fangsheng wen* prohibits meat-eating during social customs of birthdays, ancestral holidays, weddings, and banquet assemblies that were held at that time, as well as the killing of animals for ritual sacrifice and in livelihoods such as fishing and hunting. During that time, Zhuhong's practice of *fangsheng hui* was well-known, and there were many intellectuals who participated.¹² Thus, he reinterpreted what was specific to devoted Buddhists—such as the precept against killing or the practice of releasing living creatures—as applicable to larger social customs in everyday contexts by, for example, prohibiting meat eating at banquets. Some say, however, that the social situation during the Ming dynasty had already called for the popularization [of this principle] within Buddhist thought.

Araki Kengo has clarified the historical reason behind the need for abstaining from killing in late Ming society. He argues that, by the late Ming, the everyday lives of common people had improved and meat-eating was pervasive. In reaction to this, ideologies of abstaining from killing that went beyond the Confucian and Buddhist frameworks were in demand and the *fangsheng hui* became fashionable. Various schools of thought each called out for abstention from killing from their own positions, but because Zhuhong pushed for personal good acts in order to promote compassion, Araki positioned Zhuhong's principle of abstention as a Buddhist idea that was not aimed at social change.¹³ Araki's foundational study thus reveals the social relevance of

¹¹ For the tradition of the life release ritual transmitted from Zhuhong through his *Chanmen risong* 禪門日誦 (*Zenmon nichiju*), see Kuwatani Yūken 桑谷祐顕, “Chūgoku ni okeru hōjō shisō no keifu” 中国における放生思想の系譜 (*Eizan Gaku'in kenkyū kiyō* 叡山学院研究紀要, Bulletin 22, 2000), 94. Also see Chiba Shōkan 千葉照観, “Chūgoku ni okeru hōjō shisō no tenkai” 中国における放生思想の展開 (*Tendai gakuho* 天台学報, Bulletin 36, 1994), 86.

¹² See Sakai, “Mindai ni okeru sankyō gōitsu shisō to zensho,” 295.

¹³ Furthermore, Araki examines the *Fanwang jing xindipin pusajie jing yishu fayin* 梵網經心地品菩薩戒經義疏發隱 (*Bonmōkyō bosatsu shinji hon bosatsukai kyō gisho hatsuin, hereafter Yishu fayin*) and argues that abstention from killing living beings embodies the unconditioned essence of the precepts (in this case, the determination to do a virtuous act) and that life release actualizes a mind of

Zhuhong's ideas. However, Zhuhong's principle of abstention from killing was not so much derived from the demands of the surrounding social situation as from the *Brahma's Net Sūtra* and the Chinese Buddhist orthodox worldview of transmigration through the six paths in the past, present, and future. Therefore, his idea cannot be understood through this-worldly ethics of Confucianism alone. It is necessary to rethink this from a Buddhist perspective.

The *Brahma's Net Sūtra* explains the Mahāyāna precepts that bodhisattvas are to abide by, and it became foundational for the principle of abstention from killing and *fangsheng hui* in East Asia.¹⁴ Let us first look at how this sūtra defines *fangsheng hui*, which will then become the basis of the discussion to follow:

By means of a compassionate mind, Buddhists engage in the activities of *fangsheng hui*. You ought to produce the following thoughts. Every man is my father and every woman is my mother. Throughout my multiple rebirths in the past, I was always born this way [i.e., I was always born from a pair of male and female parents]. For this reason, the sentient beings on the six paths [of rebirth] are all my mothers and fathers. If you kill living creatures and eat [their flesh], this is none other than killing your mother and father and is therefore [none other than] killing yourself. All of the earth and water is my previous body and all of the fire and wind is my own original form. For this reason, regularly perform *fangsheng hui*, and teach *fangsheng hui* according to this *dharma* of constantly repeated rebirths.¹⁵

goodness (see Araki Kengo, 荒木見悟, “Kaisatsu hōjō shisō no hatten” 戒殺放生思想の発展 in his *Yōmeigaku no kaiten to Bukkyō* 陽明学の開展と仏教, Kenbun Shuppan, 1984, 227–234). However, the essence of the precepts should motivate all good acts, and it cannot be limited to abstention from killing and life release. On Zhuhong's thought about abstention from killing, as well as the ethics of precepts, see Araki in note 2 above, 62–68, 154–167. If one were to evaluate Zhuhong from the perspective of the Neo-Confucian philosopher, Wang Yangming, one could say that he was socially disheartened. See Araki Kengo, *Bukkyō to Yōmeigaku* 仏教と陽明学 (Daisan Bunmeisha, 1979), 122–133.

¹⁴ In addition to the *Brahma's Net Sūtra*, the practice of life release has its scriptural basis in the *Jingguangming jing* 金光明經 (J. *Konkōmyō kyō*), in the chapter “The Merchant Son Udakaśrotas” 流水長者子品 (T 663, 16), 352–353.

¹⁵ This is one of the forty-eight minor precepts given in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*: “Do not fail to help the living or deceased” 不行放救戒, *Fanwang jing* (J. *Bonmōkyō*)

Buddhists should perform *fangsheng hui* according to their compassionate mind. They ought to recall the following: “All men are my father, and all women are my mother. In the limitless cycle of death and rebirth, no life was not born from males and females. Therefore, all living things are my parents. To kill or eat that living thing, is at once to kill my mother and father and to kill my past self. All the earth, water, fire, and wind are my body and are the original form [of my body today].” Accordingly, consider it the universal dharma to always perform *fangsheng hui*, let living things live, and teach other people of *fangsheng hui*. Elsewhere in the *Brahma’s Net Sūtra*, it is said that “meat-eating terminates the seed of the Buddha-nature based on the great compassion.”¹⁶ Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀 explains that this principle found in the *Brahma’s Net Sūtra* combines the Indian idea of transmigration through the six paths with filial piety, an absolute ideal in Chinese society.¹⁷ Zhuhong is one of the representatives of this line of thinking.

Thus the principle of abstention from killing stems from the way of thinking that has been long forgotten to us; it seems oddly powerful and yet largely alien and even illogical to us. This very point was discussed by the Jesuit Mateo Ricci (1552–1610) at that time. Ricci was one of the first Catholic missionaries to have arrived in China to proselytize.

梵網經 vol. 2 (T 1484, 24), 1006b. According to Taisho canon note 21, *yingzuo shi nen* 「應作是念」 was added.

16 The precept against meat-eating, one of the forty-eight minor precepts given in the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra*; *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (J. *Bonmōkyō*), vol. 2 (T 1484, 24), 1005b. [Translator’s correction: the original text gives 1005c instead of 1005b]: 「若佛子、故食肉。一切肉不得食。夫食肉者、斷大慈悲佛性種子」。 According to Taisho notes 17 and 18, characters were supplemented. On the treatment of meat-eating in the Tathāgata-garbha thought, see Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, *Nehangyō no kenkyū: Daijō kyōten no kenkyū hōhō shiron* 涅槃經の研究——大乘經典の研究 方法試論 (Shunjūsha, 1997), 416、419.

17 Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, “Hōjō shisō to dan nikushoku” 放生思想と断肉食 in *Chūgoku Bukkyō shisōshi no kenkyū: Chūgoku minshū no Bukkyō juyō* 中国仏教思想史の研究——中国民衆の仏教受容 (Heirakuji Shoten, 1979), 228–230. Meat eating has been widely studied. About the process by which meat-eating came to be prohibited in Indian Buddhism, see Shimoda in note 16 above, 417–419. For meat-eating in Europe, see Sabata Toyoyuki 鯖田豊之, *Nikushoku no shisō* 肉食の思想 (Chūkō Shinsho, 1966).

The global proselytization of Catholicism began as a reaction to the rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century.¹⁸ At the center of this effort was the Order of the Jesuits, which was newly established in 1540. Their missionary policy was one of local adaptation, through which Christianity or “Tianzhujiao” 天主教 (J. Tenshukyō) was presented as sharing many similarities with Confucianism while completely clashing with Buddhism.¹⁹ Ricci’s doctrinal treatise *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (J. *Tenshu jitsugi*) directly criticized the Buddhist tenet of abstention from killing and allowed for the human killing of animals.²⁰ In response, Zhuhong wrote *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (J. *Chikusō zuihitsu*) during his final years, severely denouncing Ricci’s criticism and sparking the overall criticism of Catholicism in Chinese Buddhism.

At first glance, the principle in the *Brahma’s Net Sūtra* appears irrational, but what kind of logic and what kind of worldview produced this principle? What was the rationality for this principle? In the following, I will analyze the motivation for abstention from killing and its significance in the context of East Asian Buddhism as manifested in Zhuhong’s thought. After explaining Ricci’s claim, I will consider Zhuhong’s idea of abstaining from killing.

18 For an overview of the history of Christianity in East Asia, see Okamoto Sae 岡本さえ, “Higashi Ajia Kirisutokyō no bektoru” 東アジアキリスト教のベクトル (*Chugoku* 21, Bulletin 28, 2007), 37. In the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic mission began in Japan, and after the nineteenth century, it became a Protestant mission.

19 For details, see Ōchō Enichi 横超慧日, “Minmatsu Bukkyō to Kirisutokyō to no sōgo hihan” 明末仏教と基督教との相互批判 (*Chūgoku Bukkyō no kenkyū, daisan*, Hōzōkan, 1979). On the disputes between Ricci and Chinese Zen, see Nishimura Ryō 西村玲, “Kokū to tenshu: Chūgoku Minmatsu Bukkyō no Kirisutokyō hihan” 虚空と天主——中国・明末仏教のキリスト教批判 (*Shūkyō kenkyū*, Bulletin 366, 2010) [Translator’s note: a translation of this article, included in Nishimura’s book, *Kinsei Bukkyō ron* 近世仏教論, is included in the current Journal.]

20 Nakajima Takahiro 中島隆博, “Tamashī o koto ni surumono no e no taido aruiwa ‘shinobizaru kokoro’ sesshō, nikushoku, dōbutsu” 魂を異にするものへの態度あるいは「忍びざる心」——殺生、肉食、動物 (*Hi Seiō no shiza* 『非・西欧の視座』, eds. Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士 and Nakajima Takahiro 中島隆博 Daimeidō, 2001) [Translator’s correction: Nishimura’s original text gives the title as *Hi Seiō no shisō* 非・西欧の思想 and the publisher as Daimyōsha 大明社], introduces the controversy regarding meat-eating between Chinese Buddhism and Christianity focusing on Ricci.

2. Matteo Ricci's Criticism of the Principle of Abstention from Killing

Matteo Ricci first wrote his doctrinal treatise *Tianzhu shiyi*²¹ (published in 1603) in order to target and convert intellectuals. Published in eight chapters, the *Tianzhu shiyi* became a fundamental book for proselytization thereafter. Each chapter consists of a dialogue between a Chinese intellectual and Jesuit missionary, which he must have based on his actual interactions with Chinese intellectuals. Feng Yingjing 馮應京 (1555–1606, J. Hyōōkyō/Fūōkei) wrote the introduction, deploring the current situation, where Buddhism from India deludes the “foolish people” (*guzoku* 愚俗) with ideas of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Feng praises Ricci’s “speaking reality,” as opposed to Buddhism’s “speaking emptiness.”²² This indicates a rivalry that emerged between the newly arrived Catholicism and Buddhism in their capacity to address afterlife and salvation.

In the fifth chapter of *Tianzhu shiyi*, Ricci denounces the Buddhist idea of absolute abstention from killing as a futile act based on superstition about rebirth:

Buddhists prohibit killing living beings because they believe cows and horses to be slaughtered could have been their mothers and fathers in their previous life and they find killing them unacceptable. If they indeed suspect this, how could they endure using cows to till their land and horses to draw their carts?... To me, there is not much difference between killing one’s parents and using their labor in cultivating a field; both are transgression... However, since it is impossible for humans to abolish agriculture and to not use animals for agricultural labor, how can I not dismiss the precept against killing? Do not believe that humans can be reborn as birds and beasts.²³

Buddhists say, “One must not kill living animals” because they find it unacceptable to slaughter cows and horses that could have been their own

²¹ See Shibata Atsushi 柴田篤, “Kaisetsu” 解説 (In *Tenshu Jitsugi* 天主實義 written by Matteo Ricci, translated and annotated by Shibata Atsushi, Tōyō Bunko, Heibonsha, 2004), 314–337.

²² Li Madou [Matteo Ricci] 利瑪竇, *Tianzhi shiyi* 天主實義 (J. *Tenshu jitsugi*) (Photographic copy of the original Ming edition of *Tenshu jitsugi*, Taiwan: Kokubō kenkyū-in Chūka daitenben inkai, 1967), preface, leaf 1, left, leaf 3, left.

²³ *Ibid.*, leaf 6, right to left.

mothers and fathers in a previous life. According to the Buddhist theory of rebirth, laboring cows and horses is none other than using one's own parents for labor; both are unfilial transgression. Since it is unavoidable to use animals for agriculture and labor, Ricci concludes that it is impossible to actually apply the theory of rebirth that maintains humans are reborn as birds and beasts. By considering the act of killing animals as equivalent to using them for labor, Ricci argues that it is impossible to use the theory of rebirth to guide one's actual life. So, what does Ricci himself think about killing living beings?

I have already proven that there is no good reason to believe that humans can be reborn as birds and beasts. Now, let me also demonstrate that there is no [need] for the precept against killing. Let us try to consider the following. When God created Heaven and earth and the myriad living things between them, all of His creations were meant to be used by humans. We should always acknowledge the precious grace of God, and we should respectfully put it to our use on the right occasion. The fur, feathers, skin, and hides of birds and beasts can be used as clothes and shoes; jewels, tusks, horns, and shells can be made into precious tools; medicines [made from animals] can heal sickness effectively. How can we not use them?²⁴

Having proven there is no good reason to believe that humans are reborn as birds and beasts, Ricci moves on to demonstrate that there is no need to ban killing. In Ricci's view, because God has created the myriad things between Heaven and earth for human use, we humans should express our gratitude and use all things in this honor. Feathers and hides of birds and beasts are used for clothes and footwear; horns, tusks, and shells are excellent tools; medicines [gained from the animals] are effective in healing. Why not use them?

Ricci asserts that killing animals is a blessing from God and approves of killing animals for human use. In the Bible, God decrees to those He created, "Give birth, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule over all of the fish in the waters, the birds in the sky, and the creatures that crawl on the ground." The Bible continues, "Behold, I give you all of the seed-bearing grasses and seed-bearing trees that will grow all over the land. That will be your food."²⁵ This passage, in which God gives humans control and ownership of animals and plants, seems to be the basis of Ricci's claim.

²⁴ Ibid., leaf 8, right to left.

²⁵ *Seisho (Shinkyōdō yaku)* 聖書 (新共同訳). "Sōseiki" 創世記, part I, section 28–29

As part of his criticism of Buddhism, Ricci repudiates absolute abstention from killing animals as a meaningless act. Ricci correctly understood the principle of abstention from killing as based in the ideas of rebirth and filial piety, and proceeds to criticize the irrationality of the European missionary's viewpoint. As Ricci says, animal slaughter is rational as long as one prioritizes oneself as a human being. How, then, does Zhuhong reply to this rationale?

3. Zhuhong's Idea of Equality Between Humans and Livestock

After becoming a monk, Zhuhong created two life release ponds for fish. The amount of grain given to birds and beasts at the release site on Mount Yunqi 雲棲山 exceeded about 200 *shi* 石 per year.²⁶ Throughout his writings, Zhuhong laments repeatedly and persistently the killing of livestock such as pigs and sheep, eel, fish, and shellfish for food, as well as the killing of pests such as flies and mosquitos. Here, I would like to focus on his *Zhuchuang suibi*, and his commentary on the *Brahma's Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing pusa xindi pin pusa jiejing yishu fayin* 梵網經菩薩心地品菩薩戒經義疏發隱, hereafter, *Yishu fayin*), both of which circulated widely in China.

Among his various discussions about abstaining from killing, Zhuhong denounced meat-eating above all, displaying an almost psychological revulsion, saying, “[Whether human or animal,] those who possess sentience also possess the same body.”²⁷ He explains this further: “How can we kill and eat creatures with blood who have children and mothers, who possess sentience and feel pain and discomfort, and who know life and death?” This was his conviction, which he maintained throughout his life. He then continues his criticism. “People say, ‘Vegetarianism is not necessarily important; having a good intention is important.’ Humans can have a variety of bad thoughts—evil thoughts, cruel

²⁶ *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (J. *Chikusō zuihitsu*), “The Stūpa Name (4),” 517.

²⁷ *Jiesha fangsheng wen* 戒殺放生文 (J. *Kaisatsu hōjōmon*), “Jiesha wen” 戒殺文 (J. *Kaisatsu mon*), in Okada and Araki, *Kinsei kanseki sōkan shisō 4-hen*, 6: *Unsei Renchi [Zhuhong] Daishi ikō gairokubu* 近世漢籍叢刊 思想四編六 雲棲蓮池大師遺稿外六部, 5017, interjection 「凡有知者必同體」. It appears that this passage was based on the introduction to the *Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經 (J. *Engaku kyō*): 「夫血氣之屬必有知、凡有知者必同體」 (T 1795, 39: 523b) [Editor's correction: The reference here is to the Preface by Pei Xiu 裴休 to Zongmi's 宗密 commentary on the *Yuanjue jing*, *Dafanguang yuanjue xiuduoluo liaoyi jing* *lüeshuzhu* 大方廣圓覺修多羅了義經略疏註.]

thoughts, malicious thoughts, and unwholesome thoughts—but nothing is worse than the [thought] of killing and eating meat. How could there be any good intention while one is engaging in the act of killing and eating animals?”²⁸ Why does Zhuhong never allow the consumption of meat?

Humans and beasts are of the same flesh. That humans of flesh do not eat animals of flesh is a logical conclusion [if one follows] one’s emotions and their inborn principle. How could people consider this strange? How could they call this foolishness? Alas, people are extremely deluded!²⁹

Both humans and animals are hunks of meat. Zhuhong laments that people are deluded because they do not understand why a human made of flesh should not eat an animal made of the same flesh. He addresses this same point in the *Yishu fayin* when he explains that the principles of abstaining from killing and of releasing life apply “to both humans and animals.”³⁰ In his view, humans and animals are perfectly equal. In other words, for Zhuhong, who believed that humans and animals are of the same flesh, meat-eating was equivalent of what we call cannibalism today.

To some extent, this appears to have been a historically shared sentiment. According to Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, from China’s ancient period through the Qing Dynasty, people sometimes ate human flesh during periods of war and famine. Particularly from the Tang Dynasty onward, human meat was regarded as good medicine, leading to the popularity of the practice of slicing off a piece of flesh from one’s thigh and offering it to one’s sick parents as an expression of filial piety. While cannibalism was considered a major taboo, it was also revered as the ultimate act of bodhisattva to offer one’s own flesh.³¹ For example, in the *Fayuan Zhulin* 法苑珠林 (J. *Hōen shurin*; completed in 668), in order to save pigs that were to be sacrificed at a village ritual, a monk slices off a piece of flesh from his thigh with a sword and offers it to the villagers, saying, “People and pigs are of the same meat. You eat pigs that eat dung and filth. The [meat of] the person who eats rice is more precious,” i.e.,

²⁸ *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (*Chikusō zuihitsu*), “Jiesha” 戒殺, 71.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, “Shirou” 食肉, 150–151.

³⁰ The original text reads: 「『而殺而食』、兼人畜言」, *Yishu fayin* 義疏發隱; X 679, 38: 191c.

³¹ Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, “Chūgoku Bukkyō to shoku jin’niku no mondai” 中国仏教と食人肉の問題, in *Chūgoku Bukkyō shisōshi no kenkyū: Chūgoku minshū no Bukkyō juyō*, 309–325.

eat my human meat instead.³² During the turbulent period of the late Ming Dynasty when Zhuhong lived, people were slaughtered like sheep and pigs, and it is said that the tough meat of men was worth one *jin* 斤 and seven *qian* 錢 and the tender meat of women was worth one *jin* and eight *qian*.³³

Whereas the equality of human and animal may be understood today in rather aspirational and ideal terms—that the two *should* be treated equal at that time in China reflected the physical, immediate reality where human and animal meat were both consumed and sold. Zhuhong’s appeal for abstention from killing reflected the sense of urgency felt in such a historical reality. His absolute aversion to meat-eating is equal to the sense of repulsion and fear we feel when faced with eating human flesh. If we understand it that way, we can see part of the reason Zhuhong continued to speak of abstaining from killing throughout his life.

Zhuhong’s thoughts on the equality between humans and animals extend beyond this physical realm and encompasses a metaphysical dimension. Commenting on a story about a certain Daoist master who could not ascend to heaven because he killed a living being to produce medicine, Zhuhong states:

Although people may think that it is not at all acceptable to kill living beings in order to satisfy one’s appetite, they think it is faultless to harm living beings to save human life. They do not realize that they value human life and devalue the life of livestock. This is a natural human feeling, but it is not the mind of equality that buddhas and bodhisattvas possess. Even the benevolent person in Confucianism does not take a life to save a life. Moreover, the limit of one’s life and death is settled. It is not necessarily possible to save one’s life [by killing another life]. But this simply increases the resentment one may receive as a karmic consequence of one’s action.³⁴

People may think it wrong to kill animals for food while they may also think it faultless to sacrifice animals for medicine to save human life. They do not realize that this very fact indicates that they value human life and devalue animal life. This cannot be called the mind of equality that buddhas and

³² *Fayuan Zhulin* 法苑珠林, vol. 28 (Taisho canon, vol. 53), 493c.

³³ Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, “Renchi Daishi no kaisatsu hōjōmon ni tsuite” 蓮池大師の戒殺放生文について, 249–253, and “Chūgoku Bukkyō to shokujin niku no mondai” 中国仏教と食人肉の問題, 309–325.

³⁴ *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (*Chikusō zuihitsu*), “Yijie shasheng” 医戒殺生, 285.

bodhisattvas possess. [As Zhuhong states], “Even the benevolent person in Confucianism does not take a life to save a[nother] life. Moreover, the limit of one’s life and death is settled.” There is no guarantee that by sacrificing animal life [to produce medicine], one can save the sick. The only reward for killing an animal for the purpose of acquiring medicine is the increase in resentment one may receive [as a consequence of this action]. At the end of this section, Zhuhong tells the reader, “Those who have illness, think carefully about this, and those who work with medicine, think carefully about this.” Killing to prolong one’s life is more terrifying than imminent death, and accordingly, there is a debt that the soul bears in the afterlife. In his *Zizhilu* 自知錄 (J. *Jichiroku*), too, he describes how killing animals for medicinal purposes is of the same level of evil as the ritual sacrifice of animals.³⁵ This indicates his view on the consequences of killing animals for future lives, but how do they affect past lives?

With regard to the question of what is the greatest evil humans can commit, Zhuhong says that, rather than a lack of filiality, as some might think, “there is no greater evil than killing.” To this, Zhuhong introduces a counterargument: “The meat of killed animals fills the kitchen. This is what happens everyday. Why can we say that killing for food is evil? Why can it be the greatest evil?” Zhuhong says, “What we generally consider unfilial is discarding one’s parents and not taking care of them, or despising and disrespecting one’s parents, but it is not killing one’s father as Ajātaśatru 阿闍世王 and Emperor Yangdi 煬帝 did.” He then continues as follows:

Ajātaśatru and Yangdi only killed their parents in their current life. [However,] The [*Brahma’s Net*] *Sūtra* states, “Living beings are often your parents from past lives.” People kill numerous living beings from when they are young until they are old. The harm affects their parents in multiple lives in the past...Who could blame them for each instance of killing? There is a limit to the harm that those who break the laws could commit [because their actions are punishable by law]; but there is no limit to the harm that people can cause by killing living beings [because it is impossible to punish them for every instance.] Therefore,

³⁵ *Jichiroku* 自知錄, in Shibata and Araki, *Kinsei kanseki sōkan shisō 4-hen*, 6: *Unsei Renchi [Zhuhong] Daishi ikō gairokubu* 近世漢籍叢刊 思想四編六 雲棲蓮池大師遺稿外六部, 5089–5090. The lives of twenty animals are treated as passed.

the great virtue between heaven and earth is called life, while the great evil between heaven and earth is called killing life.³⁶

Patricide committing Ajātaśatru and Yangdi only killed their parents in their present life. [However,] The *Brahma's Net Sūtra* states, “Living things were your parents in infinite past lives.” Since there are innumerable living creatures that are killed from a human’s time of youth through to their old age, that harm extends to their parents in the many past lives. It is true that killing is a daily activity, so no one blames a single killing. There is a limit to the harm caused by one’s breaking the law because such an act is punishable by law; however, the harm of blameless killing is indeed endless. That is why the great virtue of Heaven and earth is called life, while the great evil is called killing. There is punishment and guilt when committing a crime as stipulated by the law, which includes parental murder, but with murder that is not punished, there is no awareness of transgression and therefore it will be repeated. That unawareness is the reason for this great evil. According to Zhuhong, the present self is the culmination of an array of innumerable past lives; so when the present self kills creatures, it is as if they are killing one’s past selves.

How did Zhuhong arrive at this view? Let us look at other sources such as the *Jin guangming jing chanhui meizui chuan* 金光明經懺悔滅罪傳, found at the end of the *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經, one of the *sūtras* that was used as the basis for life release. It explains how Yama judges a person by examining the indebtedness that animals feel toward this person (based on this person’s virtuous acts of life release), as opposed to the feeling of resentment (based on this person’s evil acts of killing). This is meant to show the reasons why people should avoid slaughtering and meat-eating, and why they should be encouraged to practice life release. What kind of relationship is there between a human being and an animal in this world?

At the beginning of [the *Jin guangming jing chanhui meizui chuan*], a slaughterer is brought before Yama while being accused by the thirty pigs that he has killed. The pigs submitted their complaint to Yama, saying, “We were born as pigs for transgressions we had committed, but we were supposed to be born as humans after the set period of compensation [of living as a pig] ends. But because we were killed by a slaughterer, our atonement was interrupted and could not be paid off; therefore, we are condemned to an unfortunate rebirth, and we will be born again as animals, and as such, we will be killed again. Even

³⁶ *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (*Chikusō zuihitsu*), “Shasheng renshi dae” 殺生人世大惡, 341–342.

in the realm of the dead this is against the laws and ordinances, and so we appeal here and ask for judgement [against the slaughterer].”³⁷ A human could have been a pig in his or her past life, and a pig could have been a human in its past life. In this worldview, the soul of pigs and that of humans are essentially the same, but in reality, there is a clear hierarchy between the two existences. Just as the land we tread on now is the result of the accumulation of strata over the past billions of years, our souls have also been formed by countless lives in the past. The different existences before our eyes are the strata of our souls.

4. Zhuhong’s Thought on Abstention from Killing

Zhuhong’s framework of understanding is not limited to the body and life of a person living in the present. His framework is based on the idea of the self that we have lived since an infinite past and continue to live into the future; in that expanse of time, our self is reborn through six paths. When one accepts the ideas of the past, present and future and six paths as true, killing in order to extend one’s current lifetime becomes meaningless and only unreasonably increases one’s future debt, while killing for meat becomes a ruthless act of eradicating the self of one’s past life. In response to the question of why living things can be one’s parents, Zhuhong thinks as follows:

Question: How is it that sentient beings are my parents? Answer: Confucianism and Daoism only address this present life. [However,] Buddhism discusses one’s previous births. One has been reborn in many different bodies in the process of the transmigration through the six paths. One has been conceived in the wombs of different mothers through multiple rebirths. Is it not obvious that all sentient beings of the six paths are my parents?³⁸

Confucianism and Daoism only address this current lifetime, but Buddhism addresses one’s previous lives. We have transmigrated through six paths and lived infinite past lives. How can all sentient beings among the six paths not be my parents? The idea of abstaining from killing based on the three times and the six paths is a circuit that releases the soul from the shackles of this present

³⁷ *Jin guangming jing chanhui miezui chuan* 金光明經懺悔滅罪傳 (J. *Konkōmyō kyō sange metsuzai den*); T no. 663, vol. 16: 358b.

³⁸ *Yishu fayin* 義疏發隱 (J. *Gisho hatsuin*), X 679, 38: 191c.

life into the infinite past and future, and from this present human body into existences of various types within the six paths.

As quoted earlier, the *Brahma's Net Sūtra* states, "All of the earth and water is my previous body and all of the fire and wind is my own original form." The self and others are composed of the same elements; Zhuhong explains this quotation as follows: "From earth, water, fire, and wind, my own flesh and blood and warm breath are produced. When these earth, water, fire, and wind unite, I am born, and when they are extinguished, I die. The body will not exist separate from the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind." All beings are homogenous because their constituents are the same. Zhuhong continues:

The theory of [the four elements of] earth, water, fire, and wind demonstrates that objects and our self are similarly endowed, and our capacities for pain and fear are the same. For this reason, killing others ultimately means killing oneself. There is no difference between killing an animal and killing a person.³⁹

He explains that the theory of earth, water, fire, and wind demonstrates that one's self and other living beings are made of the same elements while sharing the same feelings of pain and discomfort. Therefore, to kill another is to kill oneself, and to kill an animal is to kill oneself.

Zhuhong also argues, "The four great elements are physical materials and have nothing to do with what is real and constant about one's self."⁴⁰ However, once you recognize one's physical body as your self, the body becomes a prison from which you cannot break free. Such is the nature of bodies, whether one's own or that of others." Thus he explains that the body is composed of physical materials, that is, the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, and that both human and animal bodies are like prisons. What is real and constant that is imprisoned in the physical body? Zhuhong's answer to this question can be found in his response to Catholicism.

In the *Zhuchuang suibi*, Zhuhong offers four brief rebuttals for Catholicism, including two that criticize the Catholic acceptance of killing and two discussing the contradictions in the concept of the Catholic God (*tianzhu* 天

³⁹ *Yishu fayin wenbian* 義疏發隱問辯 (J. *Gisho hatsuin monben*), X 681, 38: 235a.

⁴⁰ The original Chinese text by Zhuhong reads: 「四大全體虛妄、與吾真常了不交涉」; *Yishu fayin* 義疏發隱 (J. *Gisho hatsuin*), X 679, 38: 192a.

主).⁴¹ First, as for the abstention of killing, Zhuhong criticizes Matteo Ricci's view that "according to the theory of rebirth, even using animal labor is not acceptable because one's parents could be born as animals." He denounces this view as "a tactless and meandering argument," and as "a mere quibble obscuring the excellent teaching of the Great Way."⁴² He argues that the rebirth of the soul by reincarnation is discussed in Confucian texts that Catholics themselves recognize as truthful.

This argument is followed by a Catholic counterargument, and Zhuhong's response to it is entitled "Tian shuo yu" 天說余. This constitutes the final rebuttal for Catholicism in the *Zhuchuang suibi*. What is particularly important here is the exchange between Zhuhong and his Catholic interlocutor:

The Catholic interlocutor repeats, 'Killing only terminates a physical body; but obscene acts immediately terminate the life power of wisdom (*huiming* 慧命).' What he means is that killing is a less serious offense. However, he does not understand. He may think that when a living being is killed, only the body of this being is killed, and that killing is executed only momentarily when the killer gives rise to a cruel and poisonous thought. What the Catholic interlocutor misses, however, is that the killer is terminating his own life power of wisdom. How should one not lament this?"⁴³

The Catholic interlocutor once again criticizes Zhuhong by saying, "killing only terminates the physical body, but obscene acts immediately terminate the life power of wisdom." What the Catholic interlocutor meant is probably that killing is a less serious offense than obscene acts. But he does not understand. It may appear that what is killed is only the bodily flesh of the victim, and what executes the killing is the killer's cruel and poisonous thought held for a moment. However, the truth is, in so doing, the killer is killing his own life power of wisdom. This is to be lamented, Zhuhong concludes.

⁴¹ For details on Zhuhong's criticism of Christian God, see Ōchō, "Minmatsu Bukkyō to Kirisutokyō to no sōgo hihan" 明末仏教と基督教との相互批判, 229–232. See also Nishimura, "Kokū to tenshu: Chūgoku Minmatsu Bukkyō no Kirisutokyō hihan," 31.

⁴² *Chikusō zuihitsu* 竹窓隨筆, "Tianshuo er" 天說二, 494–498.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, "Tianshuo yushuo" 天說余說, 505–506.

Huiming (J. *emyō*; “life power,” lit. wisdom life) means life power as a metaphor for wisdom.⁴⁴ This is exactly what is constant and real within one’s self, and it is more important than the life of one’s physical body. In Zhuhong’s view, the purpose of life through the three times of past, present, and future is to nurture and cultivate the life power of wisdom within one’s self. As for the phrase from the the *Brahma’s Net Sūtra* discussed earlier, “meat-eating terminates the seed of the Buddha-nature based on great compassion,” Zhuhong understands this phrase to mean that [by killing living beings,] one terminates one’s own internal seed of buddha-hood. In other words, killing living beings means to terminate one’s own life power of wisdom.

Based on the idea of life power of wisdom, Zhuhong’s thought was expressed more concretely in the context of everyday life, and it became generalized as it spread widely throughout late Ming society. For example, in his *Jiesha fangsheng wen* 戒殺放生文, intended to be read by laypeople, Zhuhong explains, “Life release is a good act, but it alone only saves the body of the animal and not its life power of wisdom. For animals to be released, let them hear the name of Amituo Buddha and the words of *sūtras* to the extent that they do not weaken, so they will be reborn in the Western paradise, that is, Amituo’s Pure Land.”⁴⁵ Thus Zhuhong thinks that it is more desirable to foster the life power of wisdom in order to save not only the body of the animal, but also the soul that may continue into the future.

Zhuhong also recommends that one “give rise to compassion for the life that is before your eyes. Money is a transient and this-worldly wealth; it can be washed away by flood, destroyed by fire, levied by officials, or stolen by thieves.

⁴⁴ For all living beings, their life power of wisdom is more important than their physical life: it is the wisdom of the enlightened sage. (「賢聖智慧命、是為壽中最」, *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經 (J. *Zō agon kyō*), T 99, 2: 265a). While one’s physical body is sustained by food, the dharma body (*fasheng* 法身), that is, the true principle, is sustained by wisdom (「色身以食為命、法身以慧為命」, *Jin’gang jing zuanyao kanding ji* 金剛經纂要刊定記 (J. *Kongōkyō sanyō kanjō ki*), T 1702, 33: 191a). The life power of wisdom is the energy that nurtures and supports the the ultimate truth, that is, the dharma body. The afflictions of greed, aversion, and delusion kill not only the dharma body but also its source, the life power of wisdom (「三毒煩惱、殺人法身慧命」, *Foyijiao jing lunshu* 佛遺教經論疏節要 (J. *jiyaoButsuyuikyō gyō ronsho setsuyō*), T 1820, 40: 850a). Zhuhong, too, regards the life power of wisdom as more important than the physical body. See, for example: 「如殺一人而救多人、斷色身而全慧命。乃大士之洪規、非聲聞力量所及」 *Yishu fayin* 義疏發隱; X no. 679, 38: 166c.

⁴⁵ *Jiesha fangsheng wen* 戒殺放生文, “Fangsheng wen” 放生文, 5049.

By purchasing animals and releasing them, one should convert it into meritorious virtue, which is dependable wealth that can never be lost.”⁴⁶ For Zhuhong, the only dependable wealth is not material wealth that money can buy, but it is a meritorious virtue that can nurture the life power of wisdom. Releasing life and saving living animals from being killed is the easiest and most effective way for common people to obtain this dependable wealth. This must have been the reason that Zhuhong continued to release life while persistently encouraging people to do the same.

5. Conclusion

The late Ming was an ideologically and socially turbulent era. Buddhism, which had been in decline for a long time, was finally showing signs of a revival as Neo-Confucian theories of the mind gained popularity. Yunqi Zhuhong pioneered a new Buddhism of the late Ming period. Moderate in his thought, he instructed both monastics and laity while practicing abstention from killing and performing life release throughout his life. He has been widely revered to the present day. Zhuhong had a great influence not only on China but also on Japan, and is one of the pioneers of the trends in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism of the time, especially the movement toward the unification of the Three Teachings and the popularization of Buddhism among the masses.

Zhuhong debated the killing of animals with Catholics who came to China at the end of the sixteenth century. The Buddhist principle of abstaining from killing animals is based on the *Brahma's Net Sūtra*. The *Brahma's Net Sūtra* prohibits killing because killing animals, fish, and insects means killing and eating one's parents from prior lifetimes. It explains that meat-eating terminates the seed of the buddha-nature based on great compassion. Combining the Indian theory of rebirth and the Chinese theory of filial piety, the principle of abstaining from killing developed under the influence of Confucianism and Daoism. In late-Ming Buddhism, the practice of life release where captured birds, animals, and fish were released was widespread, as was abstention from killing living things based on the theory of rebirth.

The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci was a central figure in the early proselytization of Catholicism in China that began at the end of the sixteenth century. In his doctrinal treatise *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義, Ricci criticizes various aspects of Buddhism. Therein, he denounces the abstention from killing

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5046–5047.

based on the ideas of rebirth and filial piety, and he dismisses the absolute abstention from killing in Buddhism as silly and irrational. Ricci himself argues that it is a God-given benefit that humans kill and use animals on the basis of the *Book of Genesis*.

In opposition, Zhuhong demonstrates an instinctual refusal to eat meat and preaches an equality between humans and animals. All material existences, including humans and animals, are composed of earth, water, fire, and wind, and are therefore homogenous. For Zhuhong, humans and animals are exactly the same. Both are flesh, and eating animal meat is equivalent to eating human meat. Zhuhong's argument that "[humans and animals are] of the same flesh" reflects the general view of his time in China. Whereas the equality of human and animal may be understood today in rather aspirational and ideal terms, this idea reflected the physical, immediate reality where human and animal meat was both consumed and sold at that time in China. Zhuhong's appeal for abstention from killing living animals emerged from such historical, everyday contexts.

Zhuhong preached that killing animals in search of medicine to prolong one's life only increases the debt that one's soul bears in the next lifetime; furthermore, when one kills animals, one is killing one's past self because one could have been reborn as an animal in one of the infinite past lifetimes. The standard of Zhuhong's behavior was based not only on his body and life as a human being in this present life, but also those bodies and lives he had in his infinite past lives, and will have in his future lives; that is, [his behavior was based on] his soul that transmigrates through the six paths while being born as different beings. Abstention from killing was based on the ideas of the three times and the six paths; as such, it is a circuit through which the soul breaks free from the shackles of this present life while opening itself to the infinite past and future—in other words, it liberates the soul from being imprisoned in the present body as a human, and allows it to live various existences through the six paths. For Zhuhong, killing a living thing meant terminating the seed of the Buddha-nature based on the great compassion within himself. Killing life meant killing one's own life power of wisdom.

Zhuhong's idea of abstention from killing was explained in a simple form that was understandable for common people who were growing in power at the time, and it came to be widely accepted in late Ming society. Life release seems to have been a good act that was easy for ordinary people to adopt as an expression of abstention from killing.

Originating in the *Brahma's Net Sūtra*, Zhuhong's thought generated a large impact on Chinese society and eventually reached Japan. How Zhuhong's thought was received and spread in early modern Japan is a question I hope to examine in the future.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ [Editor's note following Asuka Sango's observation: Nishimura began publishing on the topic in 2012 ("Unsei Shukō no fusesshō shisō" 雲棲株宏の不殺生思想 [Yunqi Zhuhong's Thoughts on Abstention from Killing] (*Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究 371 (2012)). Two years later, she published "Minmatsu no fūtsatsu hōjō shisō no nihon juyō: Unsei Shukō to Edo bukyō" 明末の不殺放生思想の日本受容: 雲棲株宏と江戸仏教 [The Japanese Acceptance of Late Ming Thought on Abstention from Killing: Yunqi Zhuhong and Edo Buddhism], in *Okuda Shōō sensei shō kotobuki kinen ronshū kankō-kai* 奥田聖應先生頌寿記念論集刊行会 (Tokyo: Kōsei shuppansha, 2014), 1033–1042.]

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Abbreviations

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Buddhist Canon Compiled during the Taishō Era (1912-26)]. 100 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 et al., eds. Tōkyō: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934. Digitized in CBETA (v. 5.2) and SAT Daizōkyō Text Database (<http://21dzk.l.u-Tōkyō.ac.jp/SAT/satdb2015.php>).
- X (Wan) *xu zangjing* 卍字續藏經 (Man Extended Buddhist Canon). 150 vols. Xin wenfeng chuban gongsi 新文豐出版公司, Taipei 臺北, 1968-1970. Reprint of Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧, et al., comps. *Shinsan Dai Nihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經 [Extended Buddhist Canon of Great Japan], 120 cases. Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin 藏經書院, 1905–1912. Digitized in CBETA (v. 5.2).

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