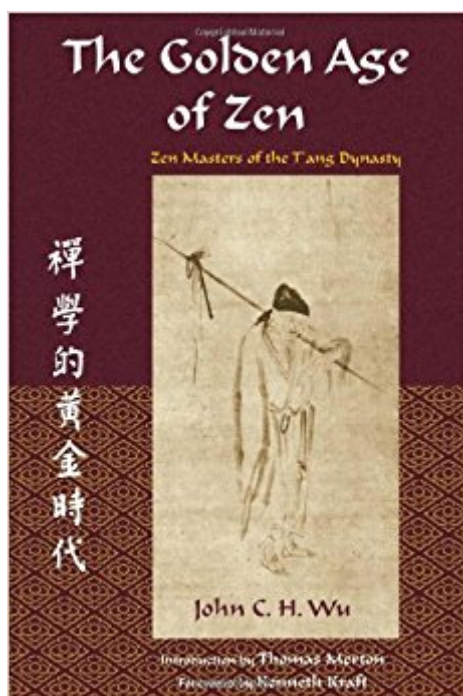


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# The Golden Age Of Zen: Zen Masters Of The T'ang Dynasty (Spiritual Masters)



## Synopsis

A classic, examining the history of the great Chinese Zen masters of the 7th through 10th century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A good place to make the acquaintance of what can be called the very quintessence of Buddhist wisdom." -- Thomas Merton, in the introduction  
"A rich harvest of the sayings and training methods of the great Chinese Zen masters. Highly recommended." -- Roshi Philip Kapleau, author, *The Three Pillars of Zen*

Wu Ching-hsiung (1899-1986), known as John C. H. Wu, born in China, was an author, translator, lawyer, juristic philosopher, educator, and prominent Catholic layman. He was president of the Special High Court at Shanghai, vice-chairman of the Legislative Yuan's constitution drafting committee, founder of the *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, translator of the Psalms and the New Testament, and Chinese minister to the Holy See (1947-48). After studying in the U.S. and Europe, he returned to China in 1924, where he became a professor of law at his alma mater in Shanghai. Within three years he was appointed principal of the School of Law. A chance reading of the autobiography of St. Theresa of Lisieux in 1937 sparked Wu's conversion to Roman Catholicism. His translations of both the Psalms and the New Testament into Chinese were received with wide acclaim. Chiang Kai-shek named Wu as the Chinese minister to the Holy See, and Wu presented his credentials to Pope Pius

XII in February 1947. In 1949, he moved to the U.S. and held posts at both the University of Hawaii and Seton Hall University. John C. W. Wu wrote and translated numerous books and articles on many subjects including religion, philosophy, and law.

This book reminds me of my first encounters with Zen as a teenager. I used to read with amazement and wonder about the Zen masters of old with their strange speech, their erratic behavior, their sticks, their wisdom. This book presents ancient Chinese Zen in all its imaginative color. Mr. Wu's commentary is precise and penetrating: he clearly knows his Zen, and he explains it well without giving too much away. I would recommend this book for anyone, but especially for those new to Zen. As for the review that says Mr. Wu is a Christian, this has no bearing or impact on his understanding. Zen is without colors, boundaries, or borders. Dr. Suzuki encountered this book toward the end of his life and commented favorably on it. I would ignore the prior reviewer and quickly snap up this gem of a book.

First, a full confession. I purchase way too many books on and have never, been moved to write a book review....until now. Since 1964 I have been collecting and reading books on Zen; a subject, which describes itself as "a special transmission, outside the scriptures / no dependence on words or letters." And before you ask, yes, the irony of spending a large portion of my lifetime reading books on a topic which is beyond the ability of words to explain is not lost on me. Although The Golden Age of Zen was apparently first published in 1967, I only discovered it a few weeks ago, and I cannot believe that it took me so long to find it. John Wu was an incredible writer and brilliant scholar with a very rare gift for explaining the unexplainable. Yes, as he ultimately discloses, he is a Christian, but so what! So was Thomas Merton, and he wrote most eloquently and insightfully on Taoism and the Way of Chuang-tzu. But I digress. I would rank The Golden Age of Zen among the top ten books I have ever read on the topic of Zen. If you are struggling to understand the historical development of Zen during the Tang period in China and, most importantly, struggling to grasp the meaning behind the seemingly bizarre actions and utterances of the most famous Chinese Zen masters, then you have found the right book. This beautiful book is a treasure! Buy it. You will not regret it.

I was disappointed to discover that the man who wrote this book is not a Zen Buddhist, but a Christian. Though he is a Chinese scholar of Zen, it seems his understanding is filtered through his relationship with Christianity, hence the long forward by the author's good friend Thomas Merton

trying to show some similarities between Zen and Christianity. I suppose this would have been a great book to have when it was published 40 years ago or so, but really there are so many better books available now which show a greater understanding and realization of Zen practice than this one. I would spend your money elsewhere.

A complete overview of the Zen masters, wonderfully written, and definately worth it. Dr. Wu is very insightful and was friends with Lin Yutang. The preface may mention christianity but the meat of the book is an excellent overview, insightful. One of my favorite books in my large zen/dao collection.

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