

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPORTS: CHAN MASTER YIN YUAN (JP.INGEN) AND THE LEGACY OF HIS IMPORTED CHINESE MATERIAL CULTURE IN JAPAN

In 1654, the Chinese Linji (Jp. Rinzaï) Chan master Yinyuan Longqi (Jp. Ingen Ryūki; 1592-1684) left his exalted position as abbot of the historic Buddhist monastery of Wanfusi on Mount Huangpo in the southern Chinese province of Fujian and made the perilous journey to Nagasaki, Japan, together with some twenty disciples, ten artisans, and assistants. Soon thereafter he founded Japan's third Zen sect, Ōbaku and built his sect's head temple at Manpukuji in Uji, south of the imperial capital of Kyoto. This simple act of defiance, fleeing the repressive, foreign Manchu warriors who established the Qing dynasty, set in motion momentous changes to the Buddhist world in Japan and beyond that affected the course of diverse aspects of Japanese intellectual and artistic life, popular culture, and even the basic diet of Japanese citizens up to the present. This talk will introduce the various types of Chinese material culture Ingen brought to Japan and illuminate their legacy. These imports included a large trove of rare religious and secular books, Chinese Ming-style Buddhist temple architecture (made of teak wood imported from Thailand, originally bound for Formosa on a Dutch ship), previously unknown styles of Buddhist and secular paintings, devotional imagery representing popular Chinese deities and personages, and foodstuffs, such as kidney beans (known in Japan as Ingen mame), originally a product of the Americas that was exported to Europe, then China, via the extensive global trade networks of the 16th century, and sencha (unfermented green leaf tea), both of which have become staples of Japanese cuisine.



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