



Making Zen Your Own: Giving Life to Twelve Key Golden Age Ancestors

Janet Jiryu Abels

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In this book, Janet Jiryu Abels traces the life stories of twelve Chinese Zen masters who, together, shaped what was to become known as Zen's Golden Age. She presents their biographies, describes their teachings, and shows how their lives and teachings can inspire those who practice Zen today. The book is a presentation of ancient Zen insight vividly relevant for the twenty-first century, addressing both the needs of both new and longtime Zen practitioners. Its singular distinction is in bringing Zen history, ancestral teachings, and present-day application of those teachings into one work.

Although the book is based on scholarly sources and historical records, Abels stresses the humanity of these Zen ancestors, showing that they were not formed from a generic mold but were individuals with quirks, senses of humor, heartfelt enlightenment experiences, varied ways of living, and unique ways of expressing Zen. She tells their stories in a lively, accessible manner, shedding light on their paradoxical teachings with clarity and simplicity. She also shows that they all faced the same challenges that Zen practitioners face today.

Interwoven among the stories and teachings are Abels' own insights into the dharma of Zen, as well as practical applications and encouragements that readers can bring to their individual practice of the Way. These insights are based on her more than ten years as a Zen teacher. She is the founder and co-resident teacher of Still Mind Zendo in New York City.

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