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Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism

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Citations

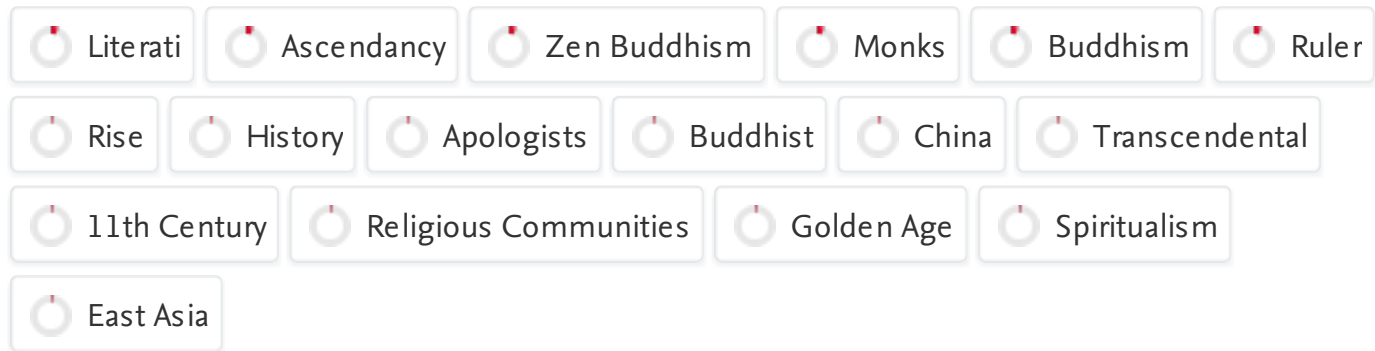
Abstract

The Chan (Zen in Japanese) school of Chinese Buddhism began when, in the 7th century, a small religious community gathered around a Buddhist monk named Hongren. Over the centuries, Chan Buddhism grew from an obscure movement to an officially recognized and eventually dominant form of Buddhism in China and throughout East Asia. This book presents the story of the rise of Chan, a story which has been obscured by myths about Zen. Zen apologists in the 20th century, the book argues, sold the world on the story of Zen as a transcendental spiritualism untainted by political and institutional involvements. The book shows that, in fact, the opposite is true: relationships between Chan monks and political rulers were crucial to Chan's success. The book concentrates on an important but

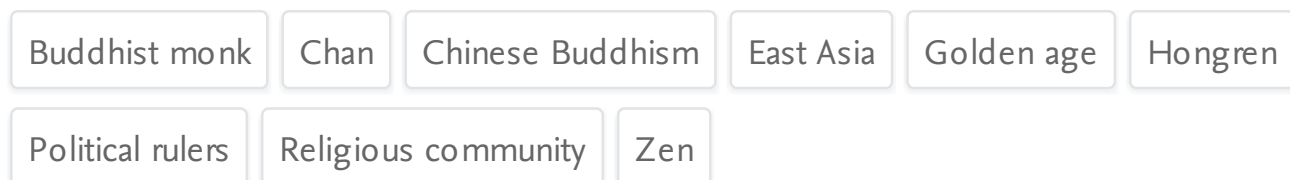
neglected period of Chan history, the 10th and 11th centuries, when monks and rulers created the so-called Chan "golden age" and the classic principles of Chan identity.

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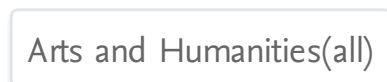
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