

DHARMA EYE



法眼

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

The Bodhisattva Precepts in Soto Zen Buddhism

Rev. Shohaku Okumura

Director, Soto Zen Buddhism International Center

By receiving the precepts, we become Buddhists

Since Buddhism is not an ethnic religion, no one is born a Buddhist. In order to be a Buddhist, we need to make up our minds to take refuge in the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In this way, we receive the Buddha's precepts as guidelines for our life. Originally in India, monks received 250 Vinaya precepts and nuns received 348 precepts. Lay people received 5, 8, or 10 precepts. In Mahayana Buddhism in China, monks and nuns received both the Vinaya precepts and the Bodhisattva precepts that were probably created in China.

Precepts in Japanese Tendai School

At the beginning of the 9th century, Saicho (767-822), the founder of the Japanese Tendai School, decided it was necessary to confer only the Mahayana precepts. Saicho's reason for this was that Japan was a Mahayana country and the Vinaya was not Mahayana. In the Tendai School, the Mahayana precepts were called *Endon-kai* (perfect and immediate precepts) which consisted of the threefold pure precept, the 10 major precepts and the 48 minor precepts. These originated in a Sutra called the *Bonmo-kyo* (The Brahma Net Sutra). According to modern scholars, this Sutra was composed in China in the 5th century CE and not in India.

Dogen Zenji received only the Bodhisattva precepts

Dogen Zenji (1200-1253), the founder of Japanese Soto School, originally became a monk in the Japanese



Tendai tradition in 1213. Therefore, he received only the Mahayana precepts. According to his biography, Dogen had some difficulty receiving permission to practice in a Chinese monastery. This was because he had not received the Vinaya precepts which was a requirement to be recognized as a Buddhist monk in China. However, he did not receive the Vinaya precepts. To his disciples and lay students, Dogen Zenji only gave the 16 precepts that were called *Busso-shoden-bosatsu-kai* (the Bodhisattva precepts that have been correctly transmitted by Buddhas and Ancestors). The nature of the Bodhisattva precepts we receive in Soto Zen tradition is quite different from that of the Vinaya precepts.

The Bodhisattva precepts in the *Bonmo-kyo*

In the introduction to the ten major precepts and the 48 minor precepts, in the *Bonmo-kyo* it says,

The Vajra-brilliant Jeweled Precepts are the original source of all Buddhas, the original source of all Bodhisattvas, and the seed of Buddha-nature. All

living beings possess Buddha-nature. All beings with intent, consciousness, form, and mind – be it sentience or thoughts – are included in the precepts of Buddha-nature. This is because for every occasion there is definitely a cause, and in every instance, it is absolutely within the permanently-dwelling Dharma Body. Hence, the ten Pratimoksha Codes arise in the world. They are precepts of the Dharma. They are received and upheld in utmost reverence by all beings of the three periods of time. For the great multitudes, I shall now speak again on the chapter “The Treasury of the Inexhaustible Precepts.” They are the precepts of all living beings; their source is the purity of Self-nature. (translated by Dharma Realm Buddhist University, Buddhist Text Translation Society, Talmage, Ca. 1982, with minor revisions by author).

And in the introduction of the ten major precepts, the Sutra says, “At that time, when Shakyamuni Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree and attained unsurpassable awakening, he first set forth the Bodhisattva *pratimoksha*.”

Pratimoksha is the text of the precepts, and here, it refers to the *Bonmo-kyo*. This means that the Bodhisattva precepts were established as soon as the Buddha attained unsurpassable awakening and even before he began to teach. Historically, this is not true. After the Buddhist Sangha was established, Shakyamuni Buddha admonished his disciples when they made mistakes and said, “You should not do it again.” Such admonitions by the Buddha were memorized by Upali, one of the Buddha’s ten great disciples. At the meeting lead by Mahakashapa immediately following the Buddha’s death, Upali recited such admonitions. This was the source of the Vinaya precepts. The Buddha did not establish any precepts or regulations before people made mistakes. In the Vinaya text, the stories explaining why the different precepts were made were recorded. When we read these stories, we can see that the Buddhist Sangha was a gathering of actual human beings. People made all sorts of mistakes even though they aspired to study and practice the Dharma under the Buddha’s guidance.

The basic idea of the Bodhisattva precepts is different from the Vinaya precepts. This difference is pointed out in the *Bonmo-kyo* where it says that the Bodhisattva precepts were set forth when the Buddha attained unsurpassable awakening.

Dogen Zenji pointed out the same thing at the very beginning of his *Kyoju-kaimon* (Comments on Teaching and Conferring the Precepts), “The great precepts of the Buddhas have been upheld and maintained by the Buddha.

Buddhas conferred them to buddhas, and ancestors transmitted them to ancestors. Receiving the precepts transcends the borders of past, present and future.”

The Bodhisattva precepts are not a collection of the Buddha’s admonitions to the monks who made mistakes and prohibitions against making the same mistakes. The precepts are the same as the true Dharma that has been transmitted by buddhas and ancestors. This is why they were called the precepts of Dharma in the *Bonmo-kyo*. The ten precepts are the ten ethical aspects of the Dharma to which Buddha awakened. They were then taught to his disciples and were transmitted by the ancestors, generation after generation.

The basis of the Bodhisattva precepts is the reality of all beings to which the Buddha awakened. In other words, impermanence, egolessness, and the interdependent origination of all things. When we awaken to the reality that we ourselves and all other things are impermanent and ego-less, we see that we cannot cling to anything. We are then released from attachment to ourselves, our possessions, and all other objects. When we awaken to the fact that each thing is interconnected to every other thing, like all the knots in Brahma’s net, we see that we are supported by everything and live together with everything. We can exist only within relationship with others. That reality is the source of the precepts. When we see the interconnectedness of all beings, we can only try to be helpful to them and avoiding being harmful to them.

Repentance

At a precepts ceremony in the Soto Zen tradition, first we make repentance by reciting the following verse, “All the twisted karma ever created by me, since of old, / through beginningless greed, anger and ignorance, / born of my body, speech and thought. / I now make complete repentance of it all.”

There is another repentance verse taken from *Samanthabhadra-sutra* that says, “The ocean of all karmic hindrances arises solely from delusive thoughts. / If you wish to make repentance, sit in an upright posture and be mindful of the true nature of reality. / All faults and evil deeds are like frost and dew. / The sun of wisdom enables them to melt away.”

This verse clearly shows that our precepts are based on awakening to reality and wisdom of such reality.

The Three Refuges

We then take refuge in the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha is the one who awakened to reality. The Dharma is reality itself, the way

things truly are. The Sangha are the people who aspire to study and living according to the teaching of the reality of all beings.

The Threefold Pure Precepts

Next, we receive the threefold pure precepts: (1) the precept of embracing moral codes, (2) the precept of embracing good deeds, (3) the precept of embracing all living beings. These three points are the direction we walk on the Bodhisattva path.

The Ten Major Precepts

The ten major precepts are: (1) do not kill, (2) do not steal, (3) do not engage in improper sexual conduct, (4) do not lie, (5) do not deal in intoxicants, (6) do not criticize others, (7) do not praise self and slander others, (8) do not be stingy with the dharma or property, (9) do not give way to anger, (10) do not disparage the Three Treasures.

On the first precept, Dogen Zenji comments in *Kyojukaiimon*, “By not killing life, the seeds of the Buddha are nurtured, and one is enabled to succeed the Buddha’s life of wisdom. Do not kill life.”

In order to nurture the seeds to actualize Buddha, we should strive not to kill. In the same way, the other nine major precepts all show the virtue of the true reality of all beings.

Zen and the precepts are one

The Bodhisattva precepts we receive in the Soto Zen tradition are also called, *Zen-kai* (Zen precepts). This means that our zazen and the precepts are one. In our zazen practice, we put our entire being on the ground of true reality of all beings instead of the picture of the world that is a creation of our minds. By striving to keep the precepts in our daily lives, we strive to live being guided by our zazen.



Precept Master Koshu Itabashi Zenji,
Former Head Priest of Soto Zen Buddhism



Jukai-e at Zenshuji

Rev. Ryusho Nagaso

Eighty years have passed since Dogen Zenji’s teaching was first brought to the United States. A Jukai-e (Receiving the Precepts) ceremony was held in Los Angeles at Zenshuji, representative of both Eihei-ji and Sojiji, to commemorate this. I was one of the priests from Japan who crossed the Pacific Ocean in order to help with this ceremony.

This Jukai-e was conducted both in Japanese and English, so at times, it proceeded in a halting manner. Yet, all of the monks, both Japanese and Western, combined their efforts in performing the various ceremonies and overall, I found it to be a moving experience. For me, the highlight of the ceremony was during the Place of Receiving Instruction. First, the Guiding Master read the text in Japanese and this was followed by Ejo McMullen

who read the same text in English in a stern, but powerful voice. The two alternating voices reverberated throughout the quiet Dharma Hall. It was a scene that truly captured the Jukai-e in America.

All of the people involved in the ceremony shone brightly including the Kokusai Fukyoshi who have been making the effort to cultivate the Dharma in a new world, the earnestness of the Dendokyoshi, as well as the American priests we met at the Jukai. I especially respected the Dendokyoshi who diligently practiced their respective duties each morning and evening.

The Jukai-e was a wonderful experience, but I was also deeply impressed by the grandeur of the Grand Canyon. However, as this was my first trip to the United States, perhaps the thing that left the biggest impression on me was Las Vegas. This is a city where enormous hotels line

the streets and where a person can gamble 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The brilliant colors of the neon lights – which may be the zenith of manmade beauty – shine throughout the night. It is literally an entertainment district where night is turned into day. It is a melting pot of desire.

In the noise and commotion, I saw a person overweight from eating too much fast food holding a cola in one hand and working a slot machine with the other. A shiver went up my spine when I realized this was the epitome of

human greed. I thought over and over to myself that in order to control this desire, the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha is necessary so that people can attain true well-being.

For that reason, it seems to me that the significance of this Jukai-e was not that this 80th anniversary represented the completion of something, but rather that this is perhaps just one step, one foothold for Buddhism as it moves east.



Jukai at Zenshuji: Unity and Diversity

Rev. Toshu Neatrou

From October 15 to 19, 2003 Zenshuji of Los Angeles held a memorial for the 80th anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhist teaching activities in North America and the founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission. I'd like to make some general remarks on jukai as a practice form before discussing this event in particular.

Perhaps many who practice Zen in Zen centers are unaware that there are three different types of ceremony that practice precepts: *shukke tokudo* (priest ordination), *zaike tokudo* (lay ordination), and *jukai* (taking precepts). There is a tendency to confuse lay ordination and jukai but the two are quite distinct. Shukke and zaike tokudo are ordinations and so represents a change in the relationship of the ordainee to the sangha as a whole. Jukai on the other hand is practiced by ordained and lay people alike and does not represent a change in status. Another difference is that the lay and priest ordinations are brief, taking only a few hours, compared to jukai which traditionally lasts a week but is sometimes shortened.

Although I had seen several priest and many lay ordinations before, I had only seen one jukai (in Japan) prior to the event hosted by Zenshuji. Certainly part of the reason for this is that Jukai takes place over a number of days, requires much planning and needs the coordination of the efforts of many people. So jukai is a relatively rare event. Naturally I was glad to have the opportunity to come.

Part of the reason that I dwell on the distinctions between these practice forms is that from meeting with

American practitioners I hear that there is a real need for a practice form like Jukai. On several different occasions various practitioners have expressed the desire for a means of more deeply practicing and living with the precepts that did not involve priest or lay ordination. There folks who have expressed a real need to connect or re-avow connection with the Buddha's precepts without the taking on the additional obligations of lay or priest ordination. Jukai provides a response to this need.



Praying Buddha Ceremony at Zenshuji

Also a number of the people with whom I practice have discovered that there is a problem in becoming too proud of one's practice. They have discovered that even folks who have sat zazen for a long time sometimes become very proud of that fact. All too commonly one hears "we're sitters, not worshipers" as a point of pride in sitting and as a disparagement of other practices. Jukai involves a considerable practice of bowing and other devotional

practices such as reciting one's devotion to the Three Treasures and so provides an excellent means of reminding oneself that there is no need for pride. Pride is extra and an often not very beneficial extra. There is nothing so effective at extinguishing the possibility of doing better as pride in doing well enough.

The central practice of jukai involves repentance and vow. One repents or confesses one's faults and makes vows of devotion to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; to cease from wrong, to do good, and to do good to benefit others; and to uphold the ten prohibitory precepts. This is not at all opposed to zazen as some may think but expresses the very essence of a life based in zazen. Rev. Kosho Uchiyama Roshi explained zazen times as involving repentance and vow: in sitting we sit awake and aware only to drift from time to time into sleepiness or distraction. Each time we find ourselves doing that we repent and renew our vow to sit with full awareness of body breath and mind. Thus zazen itself can be seen as a continuing cycle of vow, repentance and renewal of vow.

In our contemporary culture which emphasizes so strongly personal, individual effort and profit it is perhaps natural that we should make the mistake of taking pride in our practice of zazen. If we are truly practicing zazen we can of course recognize pride as a kind of distraction. Then it would be best to follow Uchiyama Roshi's advice, repent of it and vow to sit wholeheartedly. Often though we do not. Our one sided devotion to individualism blinds us to pride as a distraction from practice and we follow the rut of personal narrow benefit. In pride, especially pride of sitting zazen, we forget the beginner's mind of which Dogen Zenji speaks in Bendowa and which Suzuki Roshi reminded us. Devotional practices, of which I count jukai as one, provide a means to jog us out of this rut of pride by putting us face to face with the Buddha and his teachings, by requiring that we bow in acts of devotion, and by providing us with many opportunities to discover our faults and wholehearted repent, vowing to do better. There is nothing as effective against pride as putting one's forehead to the floor wholeheartedly.

That jukai is a powerful and effective practice could be seen quite well in the practice at Zenshuji. Many of the priests come from various backgrounds with differences in experience, training and custom. Some few came from places and backgrounds where jukai is practiced regularly. More came from places where jukai is not practiced at all or only very rarely. As the jukai progressed, these many different backgrounds formed a wonderful basis for the

single present practice of jukai at Zenshuji.

Naturally at the start there were rough edges and difficulties in adjustments that needed to be made. Nevertheless through the kind and patient help of those who were more experienced we were able to function with a high degree of harmony. This was good to see: the ability to act in oneness while retaining our diversities and differences. People who had practiced jukai elsewhere also adapted to the form that was adopted at Zenshuji. It was interesting to compare notes with those who had other experience of jukai and get a sense of how the form of jukai is adapted to particular circumstances. The talks on jukai and the precepts were extremely helpful and beneficial in promoting this sense on harmony and cohesiveness.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the organizers of the jukai and the many teachers who participated, the precept masters and the kind and thoughtful priests of Zenshuji, the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office, and the International Center who made this jukai and memorial service a successful event and also an event of deep personal significance. The tireless and cheerful efforts of those behind the scenes arranging lodging, meals, and logistics are deeply appreciated and a true inspiration. Lastly I would like to thank all those who participated in the jukai for their engagement in learning and practicing the Buddha's teaching.





The Jukai-e Ceremony held in connection with the Eightieth Anniversary of Zenshuji

By Mariko Urushidani

I made an application to attend the Jukai-e (Receiving the Precepts) Ceremony without really knowing the meaning of receiving the precepts. My only intention was to listen to the talks of the various senior priests. However, on receiving the precepts, I realized we had received something that was truly great and precious.

I was very happy to be able to listen to Itahashi Zenji, a person whom I deeply respect. The talks of the senior priests were important of course, but I was also grateful to attend the Jukai-e because we were surrounded by many splendid priests. All of their movements were graceful and restrained, including the master of ceremonies, Rev. Ryusho Nagaso.

I had often heard the words that are generally used for repentance, but have never liked them because of a certain feeling that they seemed to be out of place. However, to give one example from this Jukai-e, I realized it is necessary to feel repentant because in order to live we must kill other

things. Now, I am really able to express repentance wholeheartedly. Then, I realized that by repenting I feel grateful for many other things. I also noticed that this feeling of gratitude actually makes me feel big-hearted.

From the time I was a child, whenever I prayed to Buddha, I never turned my back to the altar. However, when I received the precepts and was allowed to climb up on the altar with my back to the Buddha image, it caught me by surprise and I really thought it was an amazing thing. I even wondered if it was an appropriate thing to do. Nevertheless, now that I have received the precepts, I will not be able to do anything bad. So for that reason, I followed the instructions of the priests and did climb up on the altar. I knew that from then on, I wouldn't be able to live in an absent-minded sort of way.

It is thanks to Akiba Roshi that I have been able to receive this treasure of the heart. I am also full of gratitude to all the other priests who helped with the ceremony. I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart.



Hawaii Soto Mission Centennial Celebration

By Rev. Ryuji Tamiya

On October 26, 2003, the centennial of Soto Zen Buddhism in Hawaii was celebrated with over one thousand three hundred participants in attendance at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. The theme of this celebration was "New Era, New Challenges with Spirit and Harmony" and the Vice Archbishop of Daihonzan Sojiji, The Rev. Shingi Saito, officiated at the centennial celebration ceremony on behalf of the Archbishop Kosen Ohmichi. With approximately seven hundred guests from Japan and the mainland U.S.A., this celebration was a weekend of joyful harmony and reminiscence. The many guests who traveled from the faraway land of Japan participated with lots of aloha and brought with them a warm and friendly spirit to the islands.

The celebration ceremony began with an offering of a

hundred candles, a performance of the taiko, and the singing of the "Hole Hole Bushi," a working song which was sung in the cane fields in remembrance of Japan and the families which the immigrants left behind. The ceremony itself was a unique blend of traditional and non-traditional elements: traditional in the chanting of sutras, offering of incense, and bowing in gassho, and non-traditional in that there was active participation from the congregation, which is an important part of western culture. Through this ceremony the participants were able to express their deep gratitude to the pioneers of the Soto Zen Buddhism in Hawaii, and to truly say "Gokurosama" to the "Isseis and Nisseis" from their hearts. Following the formal ceremonies, the participants were treated to a festive show of Hawaiian singing and dancing followed by an outstanding performance by the Hawaii Matsuri Taiko.

Two days before the main celebration, I bumped into Rev. Zendo Matsunaga, currently serving at Daihonzan Eihei-ji and a former minister of the Kauai Zenshuji Temple, in the lobby of the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. We recognized each other immediately and talked for a few minutes. I remember the first few words he spoke to me. He said to me with a big smile, "Wow, isn't this great? I keep bumping into so many former ministers from Hawaii. Lots of old friends here. It's really like a big reunion, isn't it?" And indeed there were many ministers there. During the ceremony on the 26th, I excused myself to go to the restroom and it took me a long time to get there and back to my seat. I kept bumping into people whom I hadn't seen for years and to people such as friends of good friends. I only wished that I had more time to spend with the familiar faces all around me.

Having grown up in the small temple of Aiea as the child of a minister, I, through the eyes of a child and also as a minister in Kona, have seen some of the changes which have taken place here in Hawaii over the past forty years. As for the sixty years before I was born, I can only imagine what those years were like. Through stories I have heard and read, I can easily imagine how difficult life was for those who had to live in a faraway land thousand of miles away from home, mostly in sugar plantations and in tremendously harsh environments. People may say that it was their choice to leave their homeland. It was their choice, however, life was still difficult and even in the most difficult circumstances, they had to continue on with life. The ministers who served here in Hawaii, regardless of denomination, had always worked closely with the members of the temples. They understood the pain and the sufferings of the members and also shared the simple joys and pleasures of their everyday lives. Over the past 100 years, the life of the people in Hawaii has changed tremendously. However, the role of a minister – meeting the needs of the members and living a life in the midst of their sufferings, sorrows, and joy – has not changed.

It is said that in Buddhist meditation we begin with acknowledging ourselves just the way they are. We learn to acknowledge our pain, our attachments, the karma we carry, and our vulnerability as human beings. And only by acknowledging these and by knowing where we stand, are we able to fully accept, let go, and continue on. The centennial celebration in Hawaii was truly a milestone or perhaps the hundredth milestone for those who live here and for those who work here as ministers. It gave us the opportunity to acknowledge the past and to honor those who walked before us. It gave us the opportunity to closely

look at where we stand today. And I would like to believe that it has given us the opportunity to let go of what has to be left behind and to courageously continue on into the future.

Thanks to all who traveled to the faraway islands of Hawaii and to all who supported Soto Zen Buddhism in Hawaii over the past one hundred years, the centennial celebration was a great success. In this world of impermanence, in a world where there is nothing really to hold on to, we will depend on fellow friends of the path and continue on into the next one hundred years.



Vice Abbot of Daihonzan Sojiji, Rev. Shingi Saito

“We’re still here, George!”

By John R. McRae
Visiting Numata Professor
University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

George knew he was in trouble, even before he got up to speak. In introducing him as moderator of the panel discussion about to take place, Rev. Shugen Komagata was referring to the shock that George Tanabe, professor of religion at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, had given him long ago:

Thirty years ago, he said that “Buddhism in Hawai’i is ready for its funeral. Buddhism is dying.” We have to hear from him... We still haven’t had our funeral yet, and we don’t want to have our funeral!

The audience, consisting of well over a hundred Japanese American members of Soto Zen congregations from throughout the Hawai’ian islands, almost all of them elderly, laughed in recalling the incident. When George got up to serve as moderator, he responded to Rev. Komagata’s introduction with humor and an honest confession:

Well, maybe it’s a long wake service. Because obviously my prediction was wrong -- no funeral yet, and so maybe the funeral is way into the future! And looking up into the audience and seeing all of you here -- all of you young people here -- I think we can say that there still is a while to go before we come to any disaster.

The setting for this exchange was the recent Centennial Celebration of the Hawaii Soto Zen Mission, more specifically, a panel discussion held on October 23, 2003, discussing the theme “New Era, New Challenges. . . with Spirit and Harmony: Buddhism Today and Tomorrow.” (What an ungainly catch-all of a title!) A wide range of topics were discussed, but the issue on everyone’s mind was what should be done to help Soto Zen Buddhism thrive in Hawaii, in spite of the seemingly inexorable demographic changes in force over the last half century or so. Everyone knows the problem: congregations are getting smaller as their members move elsewhere, join other churches, grow older, and pass away. As more and more time passes from the initial immigration of Japanese to Hawai’i, the cohesion of the ethnically Japanese community has steadily declined. Although the details are unique to Hawaii, the general process is that of the great American “melting pot”

in action. George Tanabe had seen this process under way three decades ago. In 1977, as he recently described it to me, he had just returned to his native Hawai’i after finishing his Ph.D. at Columbia, not knowing much about the state of Buddhism here. Filled with the heady enthusiasm of youth, he soon began to present his ideas about the imminent demise of Buddhism in Hawai’i to all who would listen. Thus when the subject was mentioned to an audience of Soto Zen laypeople, everybody had already heard of it. It would have been the same if he’d been the moderator of a panel discussion on Pure Land Buddhism, or Tendai, or Shingon, in Hawai’i. I told George that he’d been an “equal opportunity offender”! He said that he had issued such pronouncements when he was a “young turk,” but now he was just an “old turkey”!

A few weeks later, George and I participated in a workshop at the Honganji Mission Betsuin, the local headquarters for the True Pure Land (Jodo Shinshu) denomination. I have been Visiting Numata Professor at the University of Hawai’i this semester, with George as my host and closest colleague, and it was fun to bounce ideas back and forth in this informal setting. In his presentation, George went through the background of his remarks at the Hawaii Soto Mission Centennial Celebration, evaluating his original positions in light of developments during the subsequent decades. Looking back at one of his earlier publications, he explained that it was actually more like 25 years ago, not 30, that he’d made his famous prediction. And the prediction was not that “Buddhism will be dead” in 25 years, but that by 2025 it would probably be almost dead. So, from one perspective, his actual statement way back then was much more temperate than as it has been remembered.



Panel Discussion During Centennial Celebration

At the time, George remembers, various Japanese scholar-priests were describing contemporary Buddhism in very critical terms and calling for radical change. Senchu Murano (1908-2000), bishop of the Nichiren school in Hawai'i, had described contemporary Buddhism as "degenerate," and an article by Kanmo Imamura, bishop of the Honpa Honganji Mission from 1967 to 1972, described Buddhism as like a person shot by an arrow and bleeding -- but not recognizing he had been shot. Hence George was motivated then to say about Buddhism in Hawai'i that "if it's not dead by 2025, we should kill it." He laughs at the statement now, amazed at how shocking it is.

To return to the panel discussion, George did a masterful job as moderator, introducing each of the speakers, often with amusing and/or touching personal anecdotes based on his previous contacts with them. After each presentation he made brief interpretive comments, helping the audience understand their individual perspectives and insights. Beatrice Yoshimoto, a long-time Hawaii Soto Mission member and the organist there, made numerous practical suggestions for how members can bring Soto Zen into their daily lives. I was struck by the way she uses quick moments of *zazen*, not necessarily while seated on a *zafu* but anywhere and anytime, to center herself before or during stressful moments.

Rev. Eric Tatsuo Matsumoto, a Jodo Shinshu minister from the Moili'li Honganji Mission in Honolulu, essayed upon how Buddhist concepts and ideals can and should be expressed in our everyday speech. Mary Beth Jiko Oshima-Nakade, an assistant minister at the Daifukuji Soto Mission in Kona, described how she has welcomed young students of non-Japanese ethnic backgrounds into their Sangha on the island of Hawai'i, and how this non-traditional congregation has embraced the practice of *zazen*. From what she and others report, this seems to be the most inventive and most successful effort now underway to transform Hawai'ian Soto Zen in ways that will allow it to survive the demographic threat.

Finally, Shuji M. Komagata, who is in the final phases of the Hawaii Soto Zen Mission Minister's Training Program (and a student in my University of Hawai'i class this semester), described what it is like to grow up as the son of a Soto Zen minister and to prepare for a life as a minister himself. Euro-American Zen students would be surprised by his conception of religious practice. Based on his comments here and during a subsequent interview, I am impressed with the manner in which he is working to

find his own religious identity while meeting the expectations, both stated and understood, of his father/mentor, the bishop, the parishioners, and -- last but certainly not least -- his wife!

The questions and comments from the audience were insightful, expressing a deep interest in learning more about Buddhism as well as a certain frustration with the lack of written resources and a perceived unwillingness of the clergy to help them in this regard. One woman eloquently pointed out that they needed to learn how to separate Buddhism from Japanese culture, then focus on practicing and disseminating the former. But the very first question from the audience during the discussion period was to George. In a polite voice, but with a certain combative undertone, an elderly gentleman demanded to know what George thought of his prediction now!

George gave an eloquent if somewhat professorial explanation, thanking the questioner, a Mr. Yamamoto, by name. I'm not sure that Mr. Yamamoto really wanted all the explanation, so much as a confession. In fact, to me it seemed like he just wanted to be able to say, "We're still here, George!"



My Zazen Notebook (12)

Rev. Issho Fujita
Pioneer Valley Zendo

Fragmentary Thought XXI “Movement within Immovable Sitting (2)” Swaying Motion of the Body Axis

In comparison with the standing posture, the sitting posture is far more stable. In the case of the standing posture, the soles of the feet are the only part of the body in contact with the ground as the base of the posture to support the body weight. This area is only about 1% of the total surface of the body, so this foundation is very small. In contrast to this, in the sitting posture of zazen that base is much broader. In the case of someone sitting in the full lotus position, the two knees and buttocks form a foundation that is triangular in shape. It could be said, then, that if the standing posture were likened to a cone standing on the pointed end, the sitting posture is like a trigonal pyramid that sits heavily. The main cause for the increase in stability is that in the sitting posture the center of gravity is placed much lower. Consequently, the full lotus position provides the most stable posture in which the central axis of the body naturally stands upright.

Nevertheless, the quality of stability in the sitting position is different from the immovability found in material objects. No matter how stable a posture may be, a living person who is sitting is always pulled down in a vertical direction by the force of gravity. For that reason, it is inevitable that there are always movements to correct the balance of the whole body in relation to the pull of gravity along the body axis. For this reason, it should be called “dynamic stability.” I would like to look at how the body axis moves during zazen.

When we begin to sit in zazen (as well as at the end of sitting), we sway the body left and right. This is a movement we make by not moving the buttocks and then swaying the body by keeping the head and spine in a straight line. This is a movement, then, where the body from the lower back upwards moves like a stick in a slow manner from left to right (moving forward and backwards is also acceptable). At first, we make big movements and in the process of gradually making seven to eight smaller movements we come to a stop in the center. This is part of the preparation for sitting including “Take a deep breath” that is mentioned in Dogen Zenji’s *Fukan-zazengi* (A Universal Recommendation for Zazen).

These movements help to remove the stiffness in our muscles and joints. It also has the objective of helping us to release any tension in our posture.

There is another objective that I would like to add. This is the discovery through bodily sensation of the most balanced position for the body axis, (“Sit upright, leaning neither to the left nor to the right, neither forward nor backward”) and this is done through the process of swaying first in bigger movements and gradually making smaller ones. In this way through moving forward and backward, left and right, and trying various angles, we gradually approach the best position. Finally, our body axis stops at the right place. (For this reason, this movement has an important significance in leading us into upright sitting and is something we must not neglect).

“Settle into immobile sitting” means that we must firmly put the body axis in a stable position and then sit there without moving. Nevertheless, the swaying motion never stops completely. Even though the larger, intentional swaying movements have stopped, the subtle swaying motions continue unconsciously as before. This is the natural swaying motion of the body axis.

Even though we have settled for the time being into a suitable position for the body axis, that position easily changes because of various things that influence both our body and mind while we sit in zazen. To maintain the perfect upright position of the body axis is a profoundly subtle thing. For this reason in order to keep sitting upright, we must continually make compensations as we detect divergences from the basic upright position. If we clearly feel the correct position of the body axis and are sensitive to any divergences, then we can quickly detect and adjust those divergences so that from the outward appearance the movements are so minute they cannot be seen by another person. On the other hand, if we are drowsy when we are sitting (dullness), the sensation of divergence becomes dull and the body rocks when we correct our position, in a way we say in Japanese “rowing a boat.” Also, when we chase after thoughts during zazen (distraction), the sensation of divergence from the upright position also becomes dull and detection of those movements slows down. This results in the body leaning in one way or another.

Most of the small movements that take place in upright sitting are corrected unconsciously. A person is just sitting comfortably, enjoying the feeling of “the body axis being in a good place where it is harmonized with the force of

gravity and a comfortable sensation where the whole body is balanced”, and is remaining in that position, aiming to deepen this “feeling.” Any other actual small adjustments are entrusted to the body. When this “feeling” becomes clearer, the position of the body axis might become even more well-adjusted. Or it can happen that this sensation becomes indistinct and so we lose the “feeling” of this centeredness. This “feeling” itself is also changing and fluctuating with time.

A Japanese researcher, Yaichiro Hirasawa – also known as the “Dr. Foot-Sole,” has opened up a new field of study called “stasiology” that studies the nature of the body at rest. Dr. Hirasawa has developed a special device to detect and record the fluctuations of the center of balance on the upright sitting position. In connection with what I feel his writings are so important reference materials for my investigation into zazen. If I can, I would like to use his device to investigate the fluctuations of the center of balance during zazen. This is because I expect that we will learn more details about the actual way of the “movements within non-movement”, the relation between the degree of the fluctuations of the center of balance and the accuracy of sitting posture, the relation between such fluctuations and a person’s mental state during zazen...etc... I believe that this approach will more clearly reveal the various aspects of the actual sitting posture itself than studying brain waves during zazen.



The 28th Chapter of *Shobogenzo*: Bodaisatta-Shishobo The Bodhisattva’s Four Embracing Actions

Lecture (2)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura
Director, Soto Zen Buddhism International Center
(Edited by Koshin Steve Kelly)

Offering means not being greedy

First is offering or dana. Second is loving-speech. Third is beneficial-action. Fourth is identity-action.

(1) [Offering]

Offering means not being greedy. Not to be greedy means not to covet. Not to covet commonly means not to flatter. Even if we rule the four continents, in order to offer teachings of the true Way, we must simply and unfailingly not be greedy. It is like offering treasures we are about to discard to those we do not know. We give flowers blooming on the distant mountains to the Tathagata, and offer treasures accumulated in past lives to living beings. Whether our gifts are Dharma or material objects, each gift is truly endowed with the virtue of offering or dana. Even if this gift is not our personal possession, nothing hinders our practice of offering. No gift is too small. But our effort should be genuine.

Dogen Zenji’s definition of offering (*dana*) is “not to be greedy”. I think this is a wonderful definition. The basic teaching of the Buddha is that our life is suffering and we transmigrate within the six realms of *samsara* because we live and act based on three poisonous states of mind : greed, anger/hatred and ignorance. All Buddhist practices are about cessation of suffering in *samsara* by being released from these three poisonous minds. This basic structure is also true in the case of the four embracing actions. Offering (*dana*) is a way to be released from greed. Loving speech is a way not to be caught up in anger and hatred. Beneficial action is a treatment for both greed and anger. Identity action is a practice to be free from the ignorance of self-centeredness through the wisdom of seeing the heart of being that is empty of self and interconnected with all beings. Commonly, the four embracing actions are considered to be methods of guidance used by bodhisattvas to lead people to become Buddhists. But in Dogen Zenji’s teaching, as it is clearly said in the section on beneficial action, the practice of the

four embracing actions are not only the way to lead others, but also the way for the person practicing them to be free from the three poisonous states of mind. *“Ignorant people may think that if we benefit others too much, our own benefit will be excluded. This is not the case. Beneficial-action is the whole of Dharma; it benefits both self and others widely.”*

Not to be greedy means not to covet. Not to covet commonly means not to flatter.

“To be greedy” and “to covet” have almost the same meaning. To English speaking people, this sentence may sound like a repetition of the same word. In the original text, Dogen Zenji uses the Chinese word *fu-ton* (不貪) and he put the Japanese equivalent using *hiragana* (one of the two Japanese phonetic alphabets made by simplifying Chinese characters), *musaborazarunari* (むさぼらざるなり). Structurally, this is the same as the English sentence, “Dana is offering.” Because *dana* means offering in Sanskrit, to say “*dana* is offering” seems repetitive. When we study *Shobogenzo*, however, it is important to understand that Dogen Zenji was writing in two different languages and sometimes playing with the Chinese words and expressions in a way only a non-native speaker can. Unfortunately when we translate his writings into English, we cannot show his subtle use of both Chinese and Japanese. Sometimes his sentences do not make any sense, and sometimes they look like childish repetition.

According to Dogen, “to flatter” is another expression of our greed. Typically, when we have enough power to get the things we want by ourselves, we covet them and just take them. But when we don’t have enough power to get things we want, we flatter someone who has the power to give them. By flattering the superior person, we try to satisfy our personal desires.

I think it is interesting that Dogen Zenji uses the negative expression in order to define *dana* instead of using a positive one such as “Dana is generosity. To be generous means such and such.” By doing this, I think he is urging us to reflect on our deeper motivation when being generous to others. Often we can see, even when we are giving something to someone who is in need and the action looks really generous on the surface, if we take a close look at our mind, we almost always see that greed is still working there. We may expect some return from the receiver or we covet the receiver’s gratitude. We may want to think we are generous or expect others to think that we are great people. Of course on the level of social morality, it is good to do good things. However, Buddhism is not merely a teaching of social morality. If the deeper

motivation is greed, no matter how much we give, it cannot be *dana paramita*; perfection of offering. To practice *dana* is to be free from greed.

Traditional practice of *Dana* in *takuhatsu* (begging)

In India, since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, Buddhist monks were required to relinquish the bonds with their families, give up their livelihood and property and live with three robes and one bowl. Monks begged in nearby villages for food, eating only once a day before noon. Their begging was a practice to be free from desire for possessions and essentially from ego attachment. This tradition still continues in the Theravada Buddhism in South Eastern Asia. There are two sorts of offering in Buddhism: the offering of materials and the offering of Dharma. Lay people offer materials such as food, clothing medicine and other requirements to monasteries or monks. Also lay Buddhists offer things as charity to the needy people in society. And monks offer Dharma, the spiritual teachings they study and practice. Monks and laity support each other through the practice of these two kinds of offering (*dana*).

Takuhatsu at Antaiji

In modern Japan, almost all Buddhist temples are supported by temple members. Temple priests commonly do not practice *takuhatsu* except on certain special occasions. Only monks in training practice it while they are living at a monastery. And usually people at this time offer money instead of food, except when they do *takuhatsu* specifically for rice or some vegetables.

During the time I was practicing at Antaiji, because the temple had no members, our practice was supported solely by our *takuhatsu*. We monks did it a few times a month. We walked on the market streets in Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and other smaller cities and towns in the area. When we did *takuhatsu*, 3 to 5 of us walked together. Since most of us were in our early 20’s, it was fun, like taking a hike.

It was also very meaningful practice. At Antaiji, we focused on *zazen* practice and Dharma study mainly of Dogen Zenji’s teachings. When we practice in this way, we tend to feel like we are living a much more meaningful and higher way of life than the people who are working hard in society to earn money day after day. We may even look down on people by seeing them from our lofty position. But when we practice *takuhatsu*, we are just beggars on the street. We have a chance to see society from the bottom.

When doing *takuhatsu* we walk on the street wearing

the traditional monks' black robe, straw sandals and a bamboo hat. We hold a begging bowl (*oryoki*) and intone "Hooo (It refers to *hau*, the begging bowl)" in a loud voice. We usually stop in front of each house or shop on the street for a short while until the shop owner or other people give a donation or express their rejection with words or a gesture. If no one is there or people do not react, we continue on to the next shop.

When people make a donation, we recite the praising verse of *dana* that says, "*Zaiho nise kudoku muryo danbaramitsu gusoku enman naishi hokkai byodo riyaku.*" (The virtue of two kinds of offering; the offering of materials and offering of Dharma, is boundless. The Perfection of generosity (*dana paramita*) is completed and it benefits all living beings in the entire dharma world.) When we are rejected or ignored, we simply and sincerely make a bow and walk to the next door.

Some people make a bow with *gassho* like they do to the Buddha when they put their donation into our begging bowl. Some people look down on us and put money in our bowls like they would with a beggar. Some people shout, "Go away!" Some people decline to make an offering by saying, "I am sorry but ----." Some people just ignore us. Some people make fun of us. We encounter many different reactions from many different people; rich, mediocre or poor, tough, gentle or pious, etc. etc. We just see people's reactions and keep the same respectful attitude toward everyone. We walk in this way about five to six hours a day.

When we first go on *takuhatsu*, we are taught several important principles of *takuhatsu* practice. The most important point is to keep the same respectful attitude toward all people. We should not skip any single house or shop on the street. Whether rich or poor, kind or not kind, we should not have any preferences toward people. We should not change our attitude depending upon the amount of donation or their way of treating us. We should be mindful not to disturb people working at a shop, people shopping or people walking on the street. *Takuhatsu* is a practice of equanimity, freeing us from self-centeredness and our discriminating minds. Through *takuhatsu*, our practice is connected with everyone in society.

Takuhatsu as a koan

In my early 30's while I was living on *takuhatsu*, I had a question regarding this definition of *dana* by Dogen Zenji. From 1981 to 1984, I lived in a small nunnery in Kyoto as a care-taker. A friend of mine looks after the

temple and because he had another temple, he generously allowed me to live there and practice. I also worked on translation of Dogen Zenji's and my teacher's books from Japanese to English with my American Dharma brother, Daito Tom Wright. I had daily zazen and monthly 5-day sesshin. Because I became a monk while I was a university student studying Buddhism and Zen and entered a monastery directly from school, I have no skills to make an income at all. All I knew was zazen practice and some knowledge of Zen Buddhism. But to be mature as a zazen practitioner takes a really long time, and in my 20's and 30's, I felt I had nothing to offer anyone. A few times a month, I practiced *takuhatsu* in the market streets in Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and other places just as I did while I was at Antaiji. In that manner, I received approximately 30,000 Yen (\$300), just enough income to keep my practice and translation work going.

As I said before, when I practiced at Antaiji, I did *takuhatsu* together with other monks. It was not difficult. I enjoyed it like a hike. But doing *takuhatsu* alone was completely different. I was often intimidated and felt as if I was just a meaningless beggar.

Once I did *takuhatsu* alone in a market place in Osaka. Osaka and Kyoto are quite different cities. In Kyoto, since there are many temples and monasteries, people know about *takuhatsu* and respect Buddhist monks. Osaka, however, has been a city of merchants from the Tokugawa era, and consequently there is much less sympathy for monks. Actually, my family had been merchants in Osaka for the last six generations, about 300 years, and I knew the people's attitudes towards monks there.

Once when I was begging, a boy about ten years old asked me, "You want money, don't you?" I thought what he was really asking was whether I did *takuhatsu* for the sake of Dharma, or for the sake of money to live on. I could not give him an answer. It was a big and difficult *koan* for me. If I didn't need money, I would not do *takuhatsu*. So, I could not say I did not want money. But, if money was really what I wanted, there are much better ways than *takuhatsu* to get it. *Takuhatsu* is not an easy way to make money. It was hot in summer walking wearing four layers of clothing – underwear, *juban*, *kimono*, and *koromo*. In the winter, walking with bare feet and hands was really hard practice. However, mentally it was even more difficult. I often felt I was a meaningless, valueless person in society and sometimes I really did not want to go. There were days I felt so guilty living on alms I quit begging and returned to the temple. I knew it would be

much easier to do some work to make money. At this time, I thought of many good reasons to quit, not only *takuhatsu*, but also being a monk. *Takuhatsu* practice makes it very clear whether we do things for the sake of Dharma or for the sake of ourselves.

My question regarding Dogen's definition of offering

Eventually my *koan* regarding Dogen Zenji's definition of *dana* became clear to me: by trying not to be greedy, I felt like I had nothing to offer. As Sawaki Roshi taught, *zazen* is good for nothing. Although I was working on translation, Japanese people were naturally not interested in English translations of Zen texts. I really felt I just received money from people without offering them anything. As I have said before, to be mature as a *zazen* practitioner takes really a long time. As long as we are half-baked, *zazen* practitioners are really good for nothing. Until we are quite ripe we are simply not edible, like an astringent persimmon.

Because I wanted to live without greed, I did *zazen* and *takuhatsu*. And because of that, I felt I had nothing to offer. I simply received donations from people. I often felt guilty. And my sense of unworthiness made me feel small and ashamed. I thought that my condition was totally contrary to Dogen Zenji's definition of offering.

Ryokan the beggar

In my 20s, I wanted to live like Dogen Zenji and I devoted myself completely to *zazen* practice. In my early 30s, I thought I could not live like Dogen anymore and further I found that I didn't want to do so. During that period, Ryokan (1758-1831) became my hero instead of Dogen. Ryokan was trained at a Soto Zen monastery and received Dharma transmission from his teacher. But after his teacher's death, he never lived in a monastery or a temple. He traveled all over Japan for many years and went back to live in his home town. He built a hermitage on a mountain and simply practiced *takuhatsu*. He never acted like a Zen master. He wrote poems both in Japanese and in Chinese, made calligraphy, and played with children while on his begging rounds.

Ryokan also wrote many poems about his *takuhatsu*. When children found Ryokan doing *takuhatsu* in their village, they gathered together around him and urged him to play with them. Ryokan often did so and forgot about begging. Ryokan's famous *waka* poems on *takuhatsu* show his attitude.

Playing ball
With the children in this village
Spring day, never let the shadow fall!

I was on my way to beg
But passing by a spring field
Spent the whole day
Picking violets.

In my begging bowl
Violets and dandelions are mixed together
Let's make an offering
To all the buddhas in the three times.

On a spring day, while he was doing *takuhatsu*, children asked him to play with them. Ryokan played with the children tossing a ball or picking the wild spring flowers in the field. Sometime he forgot about *takuhatsu* completely.

Oh! My poor begging bowl!
I left it behind
Picking violets by the roadside.

I left my begging bowl behind
And yet no one took it.
No one took it! my poor begging bowl!

(Translations of poems by Abe Ryuichi and Peter Haskel, *Great Fool - Zen Master Ryokan*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1996, with minor changes by the author).

My *takuhatsu* was not like Ryokan's. I never played with children. During the day time I did *takuhatsu*, children were in school except Sundays. At Ryokan's time, there were no schools or daycare for the children in a farming village. Playing with children was Ryokan's offering.

Also, to me, *takuhatsu* was the way to support my *zazen* practice and translation work. I needed to do *takuhatsu* efficiently. Otherwise, I lost my time to sit and work on translation. I tried to do *takuhatsu* only a few times a month; just enough to support my practice. But for Ryokan, *takuhatsu* was not a method to support his practice. *Takuhatsu* itself was his practice.

"In my begging bowl / Violets and dandelions are mixed together / let's make an offering / to all the buddhas in the three times".

Here, the begging bowl used to receive offerings from people became a container to make offerings of flowers

from the spring fields to all buddhas in the past, present and future. This is because Ryokan has no desire to get anything for himself. Ryokan was completely free from any greed to gain anything for his own sake. His *takuhatsu*, playing with children, and talking with the villagers were all his offering. And even after his death, his way of life itself was an offering to people in later generations. Many people have been inspired and encouraged by his way of life.

Although this poem is without a title, I am pretty sure Ryokan wrote it about his *takuhatsu*.

With no-mind, the flower invites a butterfly
With no-mind, the butterfly visits the flower
When the flower opens, the butterfly comes
When the butterfly comes, the flower opens
I am the same
I do not know the people
And the people do not know me
Without knowing
We follow the heavenly emperor's law.

I understood through Ryokan that receiving an offering can itself be an offering only when it is done without selfish concern. Once while I was begging in Kobe, a middle aged man riding a bicycle stopped in front of me and offered a 1,000 yen (about \$10) bill, an exceptionally large donation to receive for *takuhatsu*, saying, "My wife died a few days ago, this offering is for her."

During *takuhatsu*, we don't speak much with people, but in this encounter without words, I felt a deep and powerful communication. I felt the virtue of *takuhatsu* was not only for me but also for the people making the offering. To receive offerings, I had to keep my attitude toward life free from my selfishness. I had to live and practice for the sake of Dharma, not for myself personally. To keep this attitude is extremely difficult. Doing *takuhatsu* is a hard yet wonderful practice to examine one's way of life and life in society. This is a terribly difficult koan.

In studying Dogen Zenji's definition of "Offering is not to be greedy", I found a deeper meaning of offering. We exist only within the network of offering. We receive offerings from air, water, plants, animals, mountains and rivers and people. Our practice of offering is just to keep this cycle of offering circulating instead of only receiving and using it to satisfy my personal desires. The spring flower offers nectar to the butterfly. The butterfly carries

pollen for the flower. Each are helping and supporting without calculating how much they get as a reward. To keep the network of interconnected origination pure is the true meaning of practicing *Dana paramita*. We really don't need to gain things in order to offer them to others. The way of living without greed is itself an offering. The best example of this was Shakyamuni Buddha's life. He gave up his position as a prince and all family wealth and became a beggar. That was the greatest offering. Not because someone else could get his position and wealth but that people after him could study his example that we can live without greed. This is what Dogen says in the second paragraph of *Shobogenzo Shishobo*: "When the Way is entrusted to the Way, we attain the Way. When we attain the Way, the Way unfailingly continues to be entrusted to the Way. When material things are treasured, these treasures actually become *dana*."

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma

Book 9

Old Buddha Mind

(*Kobutsu shin*)

Translated by
Carl Bielefeldt

Introduction.

According to its colophon, the *Old Buddha Mind* (*Kobutsu shin*, also sometimes read *Kobusshin*) was delivered in the fourth month of 1243, at Rokuharamitsuji, an old temple in the eastern part of Kyoto. In Dōgen's day, this section of the city was dominated by local representatives of the new warrior administration recently established in Kamakura; and it is thought that Dōgen was invited to teach there by his chief patron in the administration, Hatano Yoshishige, who maintained a residence in the neighborhood. Several months before he delivered the *Old Buddha Mind*, Dōgen had taught the *Zenki* at this residence. These two texts are among the shortest in the *Shōbōgenzō*, perhaps a reflection of the attention span of an audience that may have included Hatano's warrior colleagues. They are also among the last teachings Dōgen would deliver in the capital: three months after producing the *Old Buddha Mind*, he was on his way to Hatano's home district of Echizen, where he would subsequently establish his community at Eihei-ji.

The text of the *Old Buddha Mind* is divided into two sections — the first dealing with the term “old buddha” (*kobutsu*); the second, with the title theme itself. In the former section, Dôgen is at pains to distinguish his sense of “old buddha” from that in common use in the broader Buddhist community, where it typically refers to the buddhas of the past — i.e., the sequence of seven buddhas culminating in Sâkyamuni. Dôgen introduces here the Zen use of the term in reference to the ancestors of the tradition and argues (to a Japanese audience for which these would have been somewhat novel claims) that all the great masters of the tradition should be understood as buddhas, that there can be more than one such buddha in the world at the same time, and that such buddhas are not merely past but occur throughout (and beyond) past and present. He then goes on to cite and comment on several examples of the Zen usage of “old buddha.”

The second section of the text turns to the title theme. Here, the discussion focuses especially on the famous saying by the Sixth Ancestor’s disciple Nanyang Huizhong (d. 775) that the old buddha mind is “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.” In his comments, Dôgen plays freely with the expression “old buddha mind,” resolving it into the “old buddha” that expresses himself as the world, the “old mind” that enacts and verifies the buddha, the “mind buddha” that is always old, and even the curious “buddha old” (sic) that forms the mind. He then goes on to warn us not to take the “fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles” of this saying for granted but to study what they really are. Finally, after brief comments on the saying by the Tang-dynasty figure Jianyuan Zhongxing that the “old buddha mind” means “the world collapses in ruins,” Dôgen returns to his opening theme to remind us that the old buddha mind occurs both before and after the seven buddhas, and (lest we think we have understood it) that the old buddha mind is “sloughed off” before the old buddha mind.

In the following translation, we have kept the annotation to a minimum. A more fully annotated version will appear on the Soto Zen Text Project web site, at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/sztp3>. For other English translations of this chapter of the *Shôbôgenzô*, see Kôsen Nishiyama and John Stevens, *Shôbôgenzô*, volume 1 (1975); Hee-jin Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness* (1985) (partial); and Yokoi Yûhō, *The Shôbôgenzô* (1986).

Translation

The dharma succession of the ancestral lineage is forty ancestors from the seven buddhas to [the Sixth Ancestor,

Huineng of] Caochi. It is forty buddhas from Caochi to the seven buddhas. Since the seven buddhas all have the virtues of both ascent and descent, [the succession] reaches [down] to Caochi and [up] to the seven buddhas. Since Caochi has the virtue of both ascent and descent, [the lineage] is correctly transmitted [to him] from the seven buddhas, is correctly transmitted [to them] from Caochi, is correctly transmitted to later buddhas.¹

[The relationship among the buddhas and ancestors] is not only a matter of before and after: at the time of the Buddha Sâkyamuni, there were the buddhas of the ten directions; at the time of [Huineng’s disciple] Qingyuan, there was [his fellow disciple] Nanyue; at the time of Nanyue, there was Qingyuan. Similarly, at the time of [Qingyuan’s disciple] Shitou, there was [Nanyue’s disciple] Jiangxi. That they do not obstruct each other is not to say they are unobstructed. The fact that they have such a virtue is something to be investigated.²

Though we say of these forty buddhas and ancestors above that they are all “old buddhas,” each has his own mind, his own body, his own radiance, his own realm; each is “long past,” each is “never past”. Whether it be “long past” or “never past,” it is equally a virtue of the old buddhas. To study the way of the old buddhas is to verify the way of the old buddhas, in generation after generation of old buddhas. Though [the term “old” in] “old buddhas” is the same “old” as in “new and old,” they go beyond past and present, they are straightforward in past and present.³

* * * * *

My former master [Tiantong Rujing] said, “I met the old buddha Hongzhi.” Thus, we know that there is an old buddha within the house of Tiantong, there is Tiantong within the house of the old buddha.⁴

The Chan master Yuanwu said, “I make prostrations to the true old buddha of Caochi.” We should make prostrations realizing that the thirty-third generation after the Buddha Sâkyamuni is an old buddha. Because the Chan master Yuanwu has the adornments and radiance of an old buddha, when he meets an old buddha, he bows to him thus. This being the case, with Caochi’s true head and tail as fodder, we should realize that old buddhas have this kind of grip. To have this grip is to be an old buddha.⁵

Sushan said, “There’s an old buddha in the Dayu Range. He emits a light that reaches here.” We should recognize that Sushan has already met the old buddha and

should not seek him elsewhere. The Dayu Range is where the old buddha is. One who is not himself an old buddha cannot know where the old buddha appears. To know where the old buddha is is to be an old buddha.⁶

Xuefeng said, “Zhaozhou, the old buddha.” We should realize that, while Zhaozhou may be an old buddha, if Xuefeng were not allotted the power of an old buddha, it would have been hard for him to master the form of an audience with an old buddha. Our observances are empowered by the old buddha, and therefore, in studying the old buddha, there is the concentrated effort that “does not answer.” This is the old man Xuefeng, a great person. One who is not an old buddha cannot compare with, is no equal to, the house style of an old buddha and the comportment of an old buddha. Therefore, studying the virtue of Zhaozhou’s beginning, middle, and end, we should study the lifespan of the old buddha.⁷

* * * * *

The National Teacher Dazheng, of Guangzhai monastery in the Western Capital, was the dharma heir of Caochi. He was revered and honored by the human sovereign and the divine sovereign, truly something rarely experienced in the land of Cīnasthāna [i.e., China]. Not only was he the teacher to four emperors, but the emperor himself brought him to the palace in a cart pulled by his own hands. Moreover, receiving an invitation to Indra’s palace, he ascended far into heaven, where amidst the gods, he preached the dharma for Indra.⁸

A monk once asked the National Teacher, “What is the old buddha mind?” The master answered, “Fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.” The question is saying “this may be so,” “that may be so.” It has taken up these expressions and made them a question, and the question has become an expression widely used in past and present. Therefore, the ten thousand trees and the one hundred grasses of “a flower opens” are an expression of the old buddha, are a question of the old buddha. And the nine mountains and eight seas of “the world arises” are the sun face and moon face of the old buddha, are the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow of the old buddha.⁹

Furthermore, it should be the case that the old mind is practicing the buddha, that the old mind is verifying the buddha, that the old mind is making the buddha, that “the buddha old” is forming the mind. We say “the old mind” because mind is old. Because the “mind buddha” is always old, the old mind is “a chair,” “bamboo and wood.” It is “I can’t find a single person anywhere on earth who

understands the dharma”; it is “Reverend, what do you call this?” Whether it be these times and circumstances or innumerable realms and empty space, it cannot be said that any are not the old mind. To maintain the old mind or to maintain the old buddha is, with one face, to maintain two heads, to depict two heads.¹⁰

The master answered, “Fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.” The main point here is that there is “one advance” that speaks to fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles: it is fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles. There is “one road” that speaks out. There is “one retreat” in which the fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles speak within the fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.¹¹

In the round, full completion of what these sayings reveal are walls built to a thousand *jin* [i.e., 7-8,000 feet], ten thousand *jin*; fences built to encircle the earth and encircle the heavens; tile coverings of one piece or half a piece; pebbles pointed large and small. This is so not only of the mind; it is [true of] the body, it is [true of] the objective and subjective [results of karma].

Therefore, we should ask, we should say, “What are fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles?” In answering, we should answer, “old buddha mind.” Maintaining it in this way, we should go on to investigate it. We should investigate in detail just what these fences and walls are, what it is we call “fences and walls,” what form they have taken. Are fences and walls made to appear from our construction? Is our construction made to appear from fences and walls? Are they a construction? Are they not a construction? Are they sentient? Are they insentient? Are they immediately apparent? Are they not immediately apparent? Making concerted effort to investigate them in this way, [we should understand that] whether it appears among gods or humans, in this land or the other world, the old buddha mind is fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles. Nor has a single dust mote ever appeared to defile it.

* * * * *

Once, a monk asked the great master Jianyuan Zhongxing, “What is the old buddha mind?” The master answered, “The world collapses in ruins.” The monk asked, “Why does the world collapse in ruins?” The master answered, “Better without my body.” The “world” here means that the ten directions are all the buddha world; there is no non-buddha world. The state of its collapse should be studied throughout this world of the ten directions; do not study it in the self. Because we do not study it in the self, since the precise time of the collapse is

one instance, two instances, three, four, five instances, it is inexhaustible instances. Each of those instances is “better without my body”; “my body” is “better without”. Do not prize the present and take “my body” as not the old buddha mind.¹²

* * * * *

Truly, before the seven buddhas, the old buddha mind is already established; after the seven buddhas, the old buddha mind is newly arisen. Before the buddhas, the old buddha mind opens its flower; after the buddhas, the old buddha mind forms its fruit. Before the old buddha mind, the old buddha mind is sloughed off.

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma,
Old Buddha Mind
Presented to the assembly at Rokuharamitsu Temple,
on the 29th day of the fourth month of the
first year of Kangen (1243)
Old Buddha Mind

Notes

1. Or “to the later buddha” — i.e., the future Buddha Maitreya.
2. The issue here is how two buddhas can coexist in the same buddha field. Some commentaries explain the difficult sentence on “obstruction” by resort to two senses of the term: from the relative perspective, the buddhas do not obstruct each other because they are distinct; from the absolute perspective, they obstruct each other because they are one.
3. Or “they pass directly through past and present.” The description of the old buddhas as “long past” may reflect the words of Nanyang Huizhong: “A monk asked, ‘What is [the Buddha] Vairocana, the original body?’ The master answered, ‘The old buddha is long past.’”
4. Given their dates, the “meeting” between Dôgen’s master, Rujing (1163-1228), and the former abbot of Rujing’s Tiantong monastery, Hongzhi (1091-1157), must be understood in a metaphorical sense.
5. Dôgen is here playing with the spiritual “adornments” of the buddha’s body, treating them in terms related to livestock: “fodder” often refers to what we might call the “food for thought” given by a master to a disciple; “grip” (or “halter”) suggests a “hold” or “handle” on something.
6. The Chan master Sushan Guangren (837-909) here expresses his appreciation of the words of Loshan Daoxian (dates unknown), who was living on the Dayu Range, in southern Jiangxi.
7. This passage alludes to a story in which Xuefeng Yicun (822-908), upon hearing of the words of Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897), simply called him an old buddha and did offer a response.
8. “National Teacher Dazheng” refers to Nanyang Huizhong (d. 775), about whom there are several legends of the sort reflected here.
9. The “ten thousand trees and one hundred grasses” refer to the phenomenal world, while the “nine mountains and eight seas” express the topographic features of the world surrounding Mt. Sumeru in Buddhist cosmology. “Sun face” and “moon face” invoke the names of two buddhas, the former said to live for 1800 years, the latter for one day; “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” allude to words attributed to Bodhidharma and regularly used by Dôgen to mean the entirety or essential character of something.
10. In this passage, Dôgen is alluding to a conversation between Lohan Guichen (867-928) and Xuansha Shibe (835-908):

Once Xuansha asked the great master Zhenying of Dizang Cloister, “‘The three worlds are but one mind.’ How do you understand this?” The master pointed to a chair and said, “What do you call this?” Xuansha said, “A chair.” The master said, “Reverend, you don’t understand ‘the three worlds are but one mind.’” Xuansha said, “I call it bamboo and wood. What do you call it?” The master said, “I also call it bamboo and wood.” Xuansha said, “I can’t find a single person anywhere on earth who understands the buddha dharma.”
11. Dôgen is here playing with terms expressing motion forward and back along a path (or away from and toward the subject), as well as three terms for speech. “One road that speaks out” renders an unusual expression that might also be understood as “one road beyond speech” (or “beyond the way”).
12. Zhongxing’s remark, “better without my body” (or perhaps simply “without me”), is ambiguous: some commentators take it to mean that his body will not collapse with the world; others, that it will collapse.

Ryusetsu Kokuzo, *Sumi-e* Artist

A native of Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, Ryusetsu was raised in an area of great scenic beauty. These vivid impressions of nature have remained with her throughout her life, and have been a major influence in her artwork.

A student of the master *sumi-e* artist, Bokusetsu Kawai, Ryusetsu Kokuzo, specializes in paintings of birds, flowers, animals, and people. She works in traditional Japanese ink monochrome style with the addition of applied colors.

Ryusetsu lived and taught *sumi-e* in Southern California for 28 years before coming to Hawaii in the year 2000. While in California, to celebrate her 25 years of teaching *sumi-e*, in 1997, she held a solo exhibition of her works at the Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

She has been an artist exhibitor at the Art-a-Fair Festival in Laguna Beach, California for 14 years, and has exhibited her *sumi-e* artwork in the Nisei Week Festival, and Japan Expo held in Los Angeles annually. Among her other accomplishments, she has done commissioned work for the Hilton Hotel chain, and the California Bank and Trust in Los Angeles, and is considered to be one of the finest artists in Southern California.

Here in Hawaii she has started *sumi-e* and calligraphy (*shodo*) classes at the Waipahu Soto Zen Temple, and has put out an annual calendar of her *sumi-e* works.

Waipahu Soto Zen Temple, Taiyoji, 94-413 Waipahu St.
Waipahu, HI 96797 Tel (808) 671-3103



Sumi-e drawings in this issue by Ryusetsu Kokuzo

NEWS

Oct. 15-19, 2003

Memorial celebrations for the 80th Anniversary of Zenshuji and of Soto Zen teaching activities in North America were held together with a Jukai-e (Receiving the Precept Ceremony) in Los Angeles. The first two days included a workshop on Jukai for Kokusai Fukyoshi and Dendokyoshi. Over 120 people received the precepts from Itabashi Koshu Zenji who was the Precept Master. Fifty-six priests from Japan and thirty-six priests from North America came to help with the activities.

Oct. 24-26, 2003

The Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office conducted the memorial celebrations marking the centennial anniversary of Soto Zen teaching activities in Hawaii. (See the article in this issue by Rev. Ryuji Tamiya).

Nov. 7-Dec. 9, 2003

The Dendokyoshi Kenshusho (a training/practice session for Dendokyoshi) was held at Zuioji Monastery in Niihama, Ehime Prefecture. There were three participants from Europe and three from North America.

SOTO ZEN BUDDHISM INTERNATIONAL CENTER
1691 LAGUNA STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94115, USA
TELEPHONE 415-567-7686 FACSIMILE 415-567-0200

PRESORTED STANDARD
U S P O S T A G E
P A I D
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
PERMIT NO.19

Address Service Requested

International Events

European Soto Zen Conference

Place: Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office
Via San Martino 11/C
20122 Milan, Italy
Date: January 17 and 18

North American Soto Zen Conference

Place: Sokoji
1691 Laguna Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
Date: February 28 and 29

International Exchange Sesshin and Dharma Talk

Two sesshin will be led by Rev. Harada Sekkei, Director of Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office. These sesshin are co-sponsored by the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and the Zen Center of Los Angeles:

Place: Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
6367 Sonoma Mountain Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
Date: May 19-23, 2004
Contact telephone number: 1-707-575-8105

Place: Zen Center of Los Angeles
923 S. Normandie Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90006
Date: May 27-31, 2004
Contact telephone number: 1-213-387-2351

Rev. Harada will also give a Dharma talk, co-sponsored by the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center and the San Francisco Zen Center, at:

Place: San Francisco Zen Center
300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102
Date: May 25, 2004 7:30 p.m. Contact telephone number: 1-415-863-3136

SOTO ZEN JOURNAL is published semiannually by
the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center
Shohaku Okumura, Editor

Please address all inquiries or comments to: Soto Zen Buddhism International Center
1691 Laguna Street, San Francisco, CA 94115
Phone: 415-567-7686 Fax: 415-567-0200