



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

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## A Greeting

### **Rev. Shinryu Asakawa**

Director of the Division of Education and Dissemination  
Sotoshu Shumuchu

To all of you who read *Dharma Eye*, I would like to thank you for your support. I hope you are doing well. I would also like to thank you for your continued love for the Dharma. My name is Shinryu Asakawa. I was appointed as the Director of the Division of Education and Dissemination on October 21, 2020. Taking on the heavy responsibility of teaching activities and education, which for me is the basis of Soto Zen, is a sobering thought. I humbly thank you for your continued guidance and love for the Dharma.

On March 11, 2022, the World Health Organization announced a “Pandemic Declaration” due to the spread of the novel coronavirus infection. The harm caused by the spread of this infection continues now even after a year has passed. More than 2,750,000 precious lives have been lost. I would like to express from the bottom of my heart condolences for those who have passed away as well as my deepest sympathy to all family members and those related to people who have been infected by this virus.

We are now in a pandemic. In addition, climate change due to global warming and so forth are challenges that are piling up. We, the priests of the Soto sect, have aroused the Way-seeking mind and as one monk or nun who has received the bodhisattva precepts, we must

earnestly think about how we will meet these future challenges.

From 1992 onwards, when the Soto sect adopted the slogan “Human rights, Peace, and the Environment” which is in line with sustainable development goals (SDGs), we have been searching for a practical and concrete way to take a new step forward.

In particular with regard to the fifth goal of SDGs – “Achieving Gender Equality” – there are more female Soto priests outside Japan than in Japan. The Soto Zen Buddhism International Center is the only Soto sect organ where, in the ratio between men and women, there are more women on the staff than men. For this reason, this office is a valuable institution for gender equality efforts in the Soto sect. My hope is that these overseas efforts for gender equality will from now on be delivered to Japan.

Next year, in 2022, Soto Zen in North America will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

In 1922, Rev. Hosen Isobe, Director of Soto Zen in Hawaii (Hawaii Kaikyo Sokan) at that time, was requested by Hioki Mokuzen Zenji and Arai Sekizen Zenji to go to Los Angeles, California. There, he met Toyokichi Nagasaki. This meeting was the opportunity through which “Zenshuji Temporary Church” was opened when they leased the second floor of Mr. Nagasaki’s home. Later, as the number of believers gradually increased, this space became too small. Consequently, Mr. Nagasaki opened up his whole house so Zenshuji could use it. After repeated renovations, the current building of

Ryodai Honzan Betsuin Zenshuji took shape.

Later, in the 1960s, as the younger generation came to play a central role, a movement to create a new society arose called the “counter-culture.” Many of these younger people were attracted to the teaching of knowing one’s true self though the practice of shikantaza or just sitting. Through the guidance of Zen teachers, they began to practice Zen, and this led to the development of Zen centers as Soto Zen spread throughout the country. As these Zen centers and Zen Groups spread through all parts of North America, an emphasis was put on sitting in zazen and the members of these places worked hard at their daily practice.

In this way, Soto Zen has become one movement that has spread across the great land of America. Walking together, this is the first step in creating the future. We look forward to the 100th anniversary celebrations of North America international teaching activities.

I pray, of course, for the success of the events next year for the 100th anniversary in North America and for the further development of international teaching activities there. I would like to conclude this greeting by asking for your continued cooperation and love for the Dharma.



## **On Installation as Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office**

**Rev. Shoten Minegishi**  
Director of Soto Zen Buddhism  
Europe Office

Meeting people in Europe who are earnestly practicing Zen, I once again feel the universal attraction to zazen. It seems that first of the features of zazen is harmonizing the mind by means of the body. No matter how much you may have studied about zazen, that is not zazen. Through the body, by the body, there is something that we could get through physical practice of zazen.

The second thing I’ve noticed is that it is not possible to practice zazen if you do not believe in it and this is something that doesn’t necessarily appear at the beginning of practice. Anyone can sit in zazen. if they have a body. It does not discriminate on the basis of a person’s background, knowledge, upbringing, status, ethnicity, or culture. Zazen is something experienced with the body – that’s it. I think that in zazen there is a universality that accompanies the body, and, in that universality, there is also the potential to open up a new symbiotic horizon.

Thirdly, in connection with using the body to harmonize the mind, there is the refined manner of the Soto school. “A dignified manner is the Buddhadharma; decorum is the essential [Soto] teaching.” In other words, when we accept the way a person is, this is the Buddhadharma. The way of doing things is the way for

the self to embody the intangible truth of the supreme Way.

Fourthly, in Buddhism, I think there is cause and there is effect. Furthermore, that cause can be traced back indefinitely. Therefore, the Buddhadharma does not directly duplicated with modern science.

In order to correctly transmit this sort of Zen, there is the teaching that master and disciple must spend time together. In Japanese, the character for the word “習·learn” (narau) is written with two smaller characters that mean “羽·wing” and “白·white.” In order for the parent bird to teach the chick how to flap its wings, the parent must move its wings with all its might. I was taught that the meaning of this character for “learn” is because the base of the feather is white and if the parents doesn’t show this to their children, they will not learn how to fly. There is an aspect of this that connects with Buddhism because it a way of life that is demonstrated through example. The more the corona vortex spins the more it will be important to find ways to meet face to face as much as possible, including the use of online methods. In other words, I take the transmission of the correctly transmitted Buddhadharma by the buddhas and ancestors – or zazen – to be the way to repay our gratitude for receiving the kindness of their Dharma milk.

From my experience with monastic training, I have come to feel that if I don’t understand the background of other people, then it will not really be possible to transmit on the thing I am holding. Therefore, I hope to continually to learn

about the history of other people’s minds – in other words, their cultural traditions – so that while taking in others completely I would like to properly pass on what should be passed on.

When I came to Europe, I was reminded that I have three principals for myself. The first is “To live with the mind of zazen both when sitting in zazen and when not sitting in zazen.” Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down – this is to keep practice in mind throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. (Daichi Zenji’s “Dharma Talk Throughout Day and Night”). Consequently, even though I only brought Dharma [priest’s] clothing with me from Japan, France is a county where it has been said, “Don’t be proud of your religion.” (Former President Sarkozy) Also, “There is the freedom to criticize religion.” (President Macron) France has this national character. This is a serious problem which I think involves the French Revolution, so I won’t go into this in detail here. However, it seems to me that the ideals advocated in France for “Liberty, equality, and fraternity” also include within them “freedom from religion.” There is also the prejudice caused in connection with the corona pandemic. I have received contact from the Japanese embassy in France with messages that say “Be careful because there are texts like ‘If you find an Asian person, beat him’ that are flowing on social network services.” The situation is dangerous and so the suggestion from the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office staff – “We hope you will not go outside dressed as a Buddhist priest” – sounds heavy. This is where the subject of always being able to live with the mind of zazen beyond the pros and cons of specific clothing has come up.

The second is “To aim for a life dedicated to Buddhism without bringing in selfish mind.” According to traditional Indian culture, I have already reached the age of the “forest-dwelling period” of life. For this reason, my hope is to keep the following teaching from Dogen Zenji’s *Shobogenzo* “Birth and Death” chapter close to my heart: “When we simply let go of our body and mind, and throw them into the house of Buddha, they are set into action from the side of the Buddha. Then, when we continue to go along with this, without exerting any force and without expending mind, we are free from birth-and-death and become buddha.” My hope is, as much as is possible, to devote myself to the Way of Buddha in whatever I do without inserting selfish mind.

Finally, the third thing is “to be one with the minds of the local people.” I think the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office exists in order to support Soto priests in Europe. My transmission master told me, “If the Soto sect does not have people who specialize in zazen, then the Soto sect will disappear.” In Keizan Zenji’s “Precautions Concerning Zazen,” there is the teaching, “Always abide in great compassion and dedicated the boundless power of zazen to all living beings.” As I endeavor at the work at the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office, my hope is to not forget this teaching and to keep in mind that my job is to help with the accomplishment and fulfillment of zazen.

In addition, with regard to the three objectives I’ve mentioned above, namely: the first “to live with the mind of zazen”, the second “to dedicate my life to the Way of Buddha,” and the

third “to be one with mind”, I would appreciate your understanding that these are the goals I long to accomplish. It is my deep wish that in order for me to get even a little closer to accomplishing these goals that you will continue to give me as well as the staff at the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office even more support, encouragement, and guidance. My sincere thanks for reading this article to the end.





## A Commentary on Dogen Zenji's *Bendowa* "Talk on Pursuing the Way" (2)

**Rev. Kenshu Sugawara**  
Associate Professor at  
Aichi Gakuin University

### 1. Introduction

In this article, I will comment on the first half of Dogen Zenji's work "Talk on Pursuing the Way" (*Bendowa*). It should be noted that while *Bendowa* is a work from Dogen Zenji's earliest period, it was the first systematic work that he wrote. Furthermore, it is possible to know the outline of zazen and about its true meaning for Soto sect studies from this work.

While Dogen Zenji transmitted the "the true Dharma of the Buddhadharma" that was centered on zazen, in *Bendowa* it is also possible to see the strong feeling Dogen Zenji had for transmitting true Dharma to people in Japan who knew nothing about this.

### 2. "Practice and Enlightenment" (1)

While *Bendowa* is a work that explains practice and enlightenment in detail – in other words his "view of practice and verification" – near the beginning of this chapter it is possible to have an insight into what Dogen Zenji taught about this.

Although this dharma is abundantly allotted to each person, when we have not practiced it, it does not appear, and when we do not verify it, it is not attained.<sup>1</sup> Let it go, and it fills the hand — how could it be bounded by one or many? Speak of it, and it fills the mouth — vertically and horizontally without limit. The buddhas are always

within it, dwelling in and maintaining it, without leaving perception of it in any of its quarters; living beings are continuously within it, making use of it, without its quarters appearing in any of their perceptions.<sup>2</sup> The concentrated effort in pursuit of the way that I teach here brings the myriad dharmas into existence based on verification and practices their oneness on the path leading out.<sup>3</sup> When we pass beyond those barriers and slough them off, how could we be concerned with these distinctions?<sup>4</sup> [Translations of *Bendowa* by Dr. Carl Bielefeldt]

First of all, while it is difficult to understand the meaning of this term "this dharma," I would like to understand it in this case as the "Buddhadharma." In biographies of Dogen Zenji, there is mention made about the doubt that arose during his training. When he was studying the Tendai sect teachings on Mt. Hiei, he got caught on the words "From the beginning, we originally are an awakened/enlightened existence. We are naturally the body of awakening itself. But if it is the case that we are originally an awakened existence, why is it that all buddhas aroused the mind of the Way and underwent training?" Dogen Zenji had this doubt about the relationship between the teaching that from the beginning we are an enlightened existence and the fact that all the buddhas had aroused the mind [of the Way] and they did wholehearted practice. This first passage from *Bendowa* can be seen as the answer that Dogen Zenji obtained to this doubt.

In other words, this means that while the nature of human beings is to be abundantly endowed with Buddhadharma, the Buddhad-

harma will not appear if we haven't practiced and it is not attained if we haven't verified it.

Furthermore, even if we grasp the Buddhadharma with our hands and then let it go, in order to fill the hands, there is no difference between one or many. If we speak about it, it fills the mouth; there is no limitation on the Buddhadharma either vertically or horizontally. Then, while the buddha always exists within the Buddhadharma, for each person there is no perception [of dwelling within it] remaining. Many living beings live forever within it and make use of it without any of these descriptions appearing in any of their perceptions.

For this reason, in *Bendowa*, Dogen Zenji wanted to teach a way of training where all beings are made to exist within enlightenment and from that realization, we practice at one with the Buddhadharma. He emphasizes that where there are no barriers between enlightenment and practice, we will not be concerned about the seams.

### **3. Concerning the history of Dogen Zenji's training**

In *Bendowa*, Dogen Zenji discloses the history of his own training.

From the time that I brought forth the mind [of bodhi] and sought the dharma, I inquired of wise friends throughout our kingdom. Thus, I met the Honorable Zen of Kennin.<sup>5</sup> Frosts and flowers, one after another, swiftly passed nine rounds, as I heard something of the house style of Linji.<sup>6</sup> The Honorable Zen, the foremost disciple of the Ancestral Master Reverend Sai,

alone received the direct transmission of the unsurpassed buddha dharma; none of the others could compare.<sup>7</sup>

Thereafter, journeying to the Land of the Great Song, I called on wise friends in the Two Zhes and heard of the house styles at the five gates.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I went to study under Chan Master Jing of Taibai Peak, and here the great matter of my entire life's study was resolved.<sup>9</sup>

This portion of the text states that from the time Dogen Zenji aroused way-seeking mind and sought the Buddhadharma, he searched for teachers in Japan. It was at this time that he met Ven. Myozen at Kenninji Monastery in Kyoto and listened for some time to the teaching of the Rinzai sect. Nine years passed quickly while he trained under Ven. Myozen.

If we look in works such as "Myozen kaicho okugaki" and "Shariso denki", we can see that Ven. Myozen went to China with Dogen Zenji and that Ven. Myozen died in the hospice room at the monastery on Mt. Tiantong on May 27, 1225. In other words, Dogen Zenji had trained at the side of Ven. Myozen receiving his instruction from 1217-1225 for a total of nine years. In some biographies, it is stated that Dogen Zenji left Mt. Hiei at the age of eighteen in order to enter Kenninji. This coincides with this period of nine years.

Ven Myozen was reputed to steadfastly observe the precepts. Dogen Zenji says that Ven. Myozen was Eisai Zenji's greatest disciple and that it was Ven. Myozen alone who transmitted the supreme Way, that Eisai Zenji's other disciples did not measure up to him. In short, we

know from this account that Dogen Zenji thought very highly of Ven. Myozen.

However, even though he heard from Ven. Myozen about the teaching of the Rinzai sect that had been transmitted by Eisai Zenji, Dogen Zenji decided to go to China in search of a master. There, he heard of the five schools of Chinese Zen. Finally, he practiced under Zen Master Rujing at Taibai Peak (Mt. Tiantong). It was there that the great matter of his lifetime, the most important thing of his practice and study, was resolved. In other words, this means that at Mt. Tiantong his practice was completed under Zen Master Rujing.

To once again summarize the history of Dogen Zenji's training, he first studied at Mt. Hiei. After that, he entered Kenninji at the age of eighteen and practiced under Eisai Zenji's disciple, Ven. Myozen. Dogen Zenji and Ven. Myozen then went together to China. However, Ven. Myozen ended up dying at Mt. Tiantong. It was as if the grief Dogen Zenji felt from Ven. Myozen's death changed into effort under Zen Master Rujing and he was able to complete his training.

#### **4. Regarding the idea of "Spreading the Dharma and saving sentient beings"**

In 1227, Dogen Zenji returned to Japan after having finished his training under Zen Master Rujing. This was, in other words, for Dogen Zenji to return to his own country as one of the Buddhist ancestors who held transmission of the Buddhadharmā. He returned with this extraordinary aspiration to spread the Dharma and save

sentient beings.

Thereafter, at the beginning of Shaoding in the Great Song, I returned to my native land, with the intention of spreading the dharma and saving beings.<sup>10</sup> It was just as if I had shouldered a heavy burden. Nevertheless, in order to put aside my thoughts of propagation and wait for a time when I could fully devote myself to it, I drifted like a cloud and floated like a water plant, seeking to convey the style of the former wise men.<sup>11</sup>

From biographical materials, we can see that Dogen Zenji returned to Japan in what seems to be 1227, as stated above. However, in this passage from Bendōwa, he states that he returned home at the beginning of the Shaoding Era in the Great Song. Since this era was renamed in 1228, this would be about one year off from the biographical materials. Since the reason for this discrepancy is not clear, I will only point out that there is this difference.

On returning to Japan, he had the intention of "spreading the Dharma and saving beings", which he said was like carrying a heavy burden on his shoulders. Nevertheless, he decided to put aside this intention for some time. While waiting intensely for that time to come, he traveled to different places and listened to the lineage styles of various eminent predecessors. Put plainly, we can understand that Dogen Zenji was sizing up the right time to begin spreading the Buddhadharmā.

After returning to Japan, he stayed at Kenninji in Kyoto. According to his "Instructions for

the Tenzo”, he vaguely mentions staying there for one to three years. On the other hand, in biographical materials that were documented in older times, he was using this time, at the invitation of a patron, to go around looking at land at some twelve to thirteen locations. Nevertheless, he was unable to find a suitable place. The result was that he went to live at Kannon Dorin temple which was located in the present-day district of Fushimi in Kyoto City. Later, while the temple buildings were being built, he renamed it Koshoji.

Still, are there not occasionally genuine students, unconcerned with fame or profit and giving priority to thoughts of the way?<sup>12</sup> Led astray in vain by false teachers, rashly obscuring the correct understanding and worthlessly drunk on their own delusions, they may sink into the land of delusion. How could they nurture the true seed of prajñā and reach a time when they gain the way? If this humble monk is now drifting like a cloud and floating like a water plant, what mountains and rivers will they visit?<sup>13</sup> Out of pity for them, compiling these teachings of what I personally experienced of the customs and rules of Chan groves and what I received of the dark import of the wise friends while I was in the Land of the Great Song, I leave them for those who would study and master the way, that they may know the true dharma of the house of the Buddha.<sup>14</sup> This indeed is the true arcanum.

Still, Dogen Zenji asks, aren't there a few true students without the desire for fame and profit who put the mind of the Way first? Instead, he says, people are led astray by mistaken teachers who confuse others about the

significance of Buddhist practice. Consequently, confusion continues on forever, he says. In this sort of situation, how is it possible to extend the wisdom of Buddha and when will these students have the opportunity to attain the Way? In which mountains will they wander, which rivers will they visit? Pitying these sort of practitioners, Dogen Zenji wrote down what he actually saw and experienced in the monasteries of Great Song China, as well as the teachings he received from teachers there. He leaves these teachings for those who wish to practice the way of Buddha. He wants them to know the true Dharma of the Buddha. Dogen Zenji says that this is the teaching of the truth.

At this stage, we can understand the image of a Zen practitioner that Dogen Zenji was seeking. He says that it is important they deny the mind that seeks for fame and profit; that they are people who wish for the teachings of a true teacher. It should be noted that we do not know for certain who was training under Dogen Zenji around the time *Bendowa* was written. Later, Ejo Zenji (1198-1280), the man who became Dogen Zenji's successor, did come one time for an exchange of questions and answers with Dogen Zenji. However, it was some time after this that Ejo Zenji formally became his disciple. In a biography that was written considerably later, it is written that Jakuen Zenji, founder of Hokyōji Temple in Ono City, Fukui Prefecture, and who had trained together with Dogen Zenji at Mt. Tiantong in China, missing him very much came to Japan chasing after Dogen Zenji. However, this was not written in older biographies. For this reason, Keizan Zenji (1264-1325) wrote in Chapter Fifty-one of his “Record of the Transmis-

sion of Illumination” (*Denkoroku*) that at this time in Dogen Zenji’s life he was alone.

Therefore, while there are some unknown parts of Dogen Zenji’s life in his biographies, we can be certain that he was seeking the opportunity to transmit the “true Buddhadharma” to Japan.

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**1. this dharma** (*kono ho* この法): Presumably, the antecedent is the “wondrous dharma” marked by “the samadhi of self-enjoyment.”

**2. The buddhas are always within it, dwelling in and maintaining it** (*shobutsu no, tsune ni kono naka ni ju taru* 諸佛の、つねにこのなかに住持たる): This sentence might be paraphrased, “The buddhas reside in this dharma without being self-conscious of it; we are also living in this dharma but are oblivious of it.

**3. bringing the myriad dharmas to existence based on verification, practices their oneness on the path leading out** (*shojo ni manbo o arashime, shutsuro ni ichinyo o gyojuru* 證上に萬法をあらしめ、出路に一如を行ずる): Perhaps meaning something like, “revealing all things as they are to the awakened consciousness, practices on the path to liberation in the light of their ultimate unity.” The term *shutsuro* 出路 (rendered here “path leading out”) is not common in Dōgen’s writing; it is taken here as roughly synonymous with his more common *katsuro* 活路 (“path to survival”; “lifesaving route”).

**4. When we pass beyond those barriers and slough them off** (*sono chokan datsuraku no toki* その超關脱落のとき): The antecedent of “those”

(*sono* その) here is not entirely obvious: it could be taken as the distinction between “verification” (*shojo* 證上) and “the path leading out” (*shutsuro* 出路); or, perhaps, between “the myriad dharmas” (*manbo* 萬法) and their “oneness” (*ichinyo* 一如). The following “these particulars” (or, perhaps, “this division”; *kono setsumoku* この節目) presumably refers to the same distinction.

**5. the Honorable Zen of Kennin** (*Kennin no Zen ko* 建仁の全公): I.e., Myozen 明全 (1184-1225), a dharma heir in the Rinzai 臨濟 lineage of Eisai 榮西 (1141-1215), founder of Kenninji 建仁寺.

**6. Frosts and flowers** (*soka* 霜華): I.e., autumn frosts and spring flowers; the seasons of the year. The “nine rounds” (*kue* 九廻) here represents the years from 1217, when Dogen first met Myozen, to 1225, when the latter died while Dogen was accompanying him on pilgrimage to China.

**7. the Ancestral Master Reverend Sai** (*soshi Sai osho* 祖師西和尚): I.e., Eisai 榮西. In fact, he had a number of prominent disciples, including Taiko Gyoyu 退耕行勇 (1162-1241), who succeeded him as abbot of Kenninji.

**8. I called on wise friends in the Two Zhes and heard of the house styles at the five gates** (*chishiki o Ryosetsu ni toburai, kafu o gomōn ni kiku* 知識を兩浙にとぶらひ、家風を五門にきく): I.e., Dogen sought out teachers in the Districts of Zhedong (*Setto* 浙東) and Zhexi (*Sessai* 浙西) (in present-day Jiangsu and Zhejiang) and learned the teachings of the Five Houses (*goke* 五家) of Chan.

**9. Chan Master Jing of Taibai Peak** (*Taihakuho no Jo zenji* 太白峰の淨禪師): I.e., Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (1162–1227). Taibai Peak (*Taihakuho* 太白峰) is the mountain, near Ningbo, in present-day Zhejiang, at which Tiantongshan 天童山 was located.

**10. at the beginning of Shaoding in the Great Song** (*Daiso Jotei no hajime* 大宋紹定のはじめ). The first year of the Shaoding era corresponds to 1227 CE in the Julian calendar.

**11. Nevertheless** (*shika aru ni* しかあるに): Some readers suggest this should be taken in the sense “thus” (*shika areba* しかあれば).

**drifted like a cloud and floated like a water plant** (*unyu hyoki* 雲遊萍寄): A fixed expression for the life of the peripatetic monk.

**12. occasionally** (*onozukara* おのづから): Taking this in the sense *tama ni* たまに.

**13. what mountains and rivers will they visit?** (*izure no sansen o ka, toburawan* いづれの山川をか、とぶらはん): I.e., where can they go for instruction?

**14. those who would study and master the way** (*sangaku kando no hito* 參學閑道の人): A phrase that appears to play with the opening line of the famous *Zhengdao ge* 證道歌, attributed to Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (or Zenjue 眞覺, d. 713) (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄, T.2076.51:460a15), which describes not the student in need of instruction, but one with nothing more to study: 絕學無爲閑道人

A person at ease in the way, finished learning, with nothing to do.



**The 18th Chapter of *Shobogenzo Kannon* (Avalokiteshvara) Lecture (3)**

**Rev. Shohaku Okumura**  
Sanshinji, Indiana, U.S.A  
(Edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

**10. *Book of Serenity* (*Shoyoroku*)**

In the last issue, I introduced Case 89 of *The Blue Cliff Record*. This time, I would like to introduce Case 54 of *The Book of Serenity*, “Yunyan’s Great Compassion.” The main case is the same dialogue between Yunyan and Daowu. It is interesting to me to compare these two texts and consider the similarities and differences between the Chinese Rinzai and Soto traditions.

The Chinese Soto Zen Master Hongzhi Zhengjue (宏智正覺; Wanshi Shokaku; 1091 – 1157) collected 100 koans and composed a verse for each of them. This collection is called *Hongzhi Songgu* (宏智頌古; Wanshi Juko; *Hongzhi’s Praising Verses for the Ancients*) and is included in the second volume of *The Extensive Record of Hongzhi* (宏智広録). About 100 years later, the Soto Zen master Wansong Xingxiu (万松行秀; Bansho Gyoshu, 1166-1246) added instructions, commentaries and capping words to the koan s and Hongzhi’s verses. That text was published in 1224 and entitled *Congronglu* (従容録; *Shoyoroku; The Book of Serenity*). *Congrong* was the name of the hermitage in which the master lived. Although Wansong was a contemporary of Dogen, they did not have a chance to meet because Wansong lived in the

northern part of China, which at that time was governed by the Kim Dynasty and therefore off-limits to him. Dogen also didn't have the opportunity to read *The Book of Serenity*, but he was familiar with Hongzhi's verses. Dogen Zenji respected *Hongzhi* very much and he often used his expressions in *Shobogenzo* and *Eihei Koroku*.

### **Wansong's Introduction**

The introduction to Case 54 by Wansong is as follows:

Crystal clear on all sides, open and unobstructed in all directions, emanating light and making the earth tremble in all places, subtly exercising spiritual powers at all times— tell me, how is this manifested?<sup>1</sup>

According to this introduction by Wansong, the essential point of the koan is to show us how the hands and eyes of Avalokitesvara work.

### ***Crystal clear on all sides, open and unobstructed in all directions***

This is a description of Indra's Net, where everything is connected to everything. The thread of this connection is transparent, and the knots of the thread appear to us as individual beings. On each and every knot, there is a crystal-clear jewel. Each of these jewels reflects all jewels in the net and is also reflected by them. The entire net is also like a jewel in which each and every being is interconnected. This is Avalokiteshvara. Each and every being,

including ourselves, is a hand and eye of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

### ***Emanating light and making the earth tremble in all places***

This expression means each and every being is emanating light, and therefore the entire network of Indra's Net is radiant light, Buddha's wisdom and compassion. Because our habitual way of seeing ourselves and the whole world is completely transformed, when we awaken to this reality it seems as if the entire world is shaking.

This expression often appears in sutras where at the end the Buddha's dharma discourse his audience is delighted and the earth trembles. This means the Buddha's teaching positively influenced his listeners and their world has changed. It also means each and every action of even the tiniest being influences and changes the world, that all things are universal and pervade the entirety of everything. It means each and every activity, even the smallest, influences the entire network. So the expression is a description of what is happening within this network when we awaken to the reality of interconnectedness.

### ***Subtly exercising spiritual powers at all times***

This expression "subtly exercising spiritual powers at all times" (神通妙用; *jinzu myoyu*) is a very famous and important expression from another koan story. I'd like to introduce the original story because this expression, according to Wansong, has something to do with the

essential point of the koan we have been studying..

The expression comes from a Koan about Pang Yun (龐蘊; Houn; 740 – 808), who was commonly known as Layman Pang and practiced with many Zen masters such as Shitou Xiqian (石頭希遷; Sekito Kisen, 700 – 790), Mazu Daoyi (馬祖道一; Baso Doitsu, 709-788), and others.

Shitou was the first Zen master Layman Pang visited. He asked Shitou, “Who is the man who doesn’t accompany the ten thousand dharmas?” In response the master covered the layman’s mouth with his hand. At that moment, Pang attained realization.

“Ten thousand dharmas” means “all myriad dharmas” or “everything.” Is there anyone who is not part of this network? If so, who is it? If we consider this story from the Daoist point of view, the answer is Avalokiteshvara, who freely uses his thousand hands and eyes.

At the end of this case Wansong says, “Inside the puppet stage there must be someone pulling the strings.” But is there such an Avalokiteshvara who is the separate owner and operator of these ten thousand dharmas? What is this absolute or ultimate reality beyond the myriad dharmas of this phenomenal world? Is there such a reality or not? This is the question the layman asked Zen Master Shitou.

In Daoism, this ultimate reality beyond phenomena is called the Way (道; Chi., *Dao*; Jap., *Do*) or nothingness(無; *wu*; *mu*). This

nothingness gives birth to oneness, oneness gives birth to duality, and duality gives birth to multiplicity, the myriad phenomenal things.<sup>2</sup>

This differs from the teachings of Buddhism where the ultimate (absolute) truth (第一義諦) is “emptiness” and the relative truth (世俗諦) is the reality of all phenomenal things. In Chapter 24 of the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, “Examination of the Four-fold Noble Truths,” Nagarjuna said:

Verse 8:

The teaching of the Dharma by the various Buddhas is based on the two truths; namely, the relative (worldly) truth and the absolute (supreme) truth.

Verse 9:

Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha’s teaching.

Verse 10:

Without relying on everyday common practices (i.e., relative truths), the absolute truth cannot be expressed. Without approaching the absolute truth, nirvana cannot be attained.

Verse 18:

We declare that whatever is relational origination is *sunyata*. It is a provisional name (i.e., thought construction) for the mutuality (of being) and, indeed, it is the middle path.

Emptiness (*sunyata*) is how all phenomenal

things are. Nagarjuna uses the words “relational origination” and “provisional names” (thought constructs) as terms for all phenomena. He says this relativity of all beings is itself the ultimate truth and the middle way (中道). So according to Nagarjuna, there is no absolute, initial source underlying phenomenal things.

Because Chinese Buddhism in general and Zen in particular interpreted “emptiness” using Daoist ideas, the difference between “nothingness” in Daoism, and the ultimate truth or emptiness in Buddhism is difficult to distinguish.

In the koan story, Shitou said nothing and simply covered the layman’s mouth. This can mean we should not speak at all about the Dao or nothingness because whatever we say is wrong, or it could mean there is nothing beyond the phenomenal world.

At the end of his poem entitled *Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage*, Shitou wrote, “If you want to know the undying person in the hut, / Don’t separate from this skin bag here and now.” Whether this means “the undying person” manifests here and now as this skin bag or “the undying person” doesn’t exist at all, being simply another name for “this skin bag,” is a subtle point.

According to the Buddhist view, we should keep our mouth shut because there is no such thing beyond this network of interdependent origination. That means there’s no such person named Avalokiteshvara; only hands and eyes exist. “Avalokiteshvara” is simply a name of the entirety of all interdependent, phenomenal things.

We cannot say anything about this entirety because we are just one tiny hand and eye within this immeasurable network, and when we think of it, it is already a concept rather than the reality. So we cannot see Avalokiteshvara as an object of our six sense organs

Shitou used a different approach than other Zen masters in Mazu’s lineage. They often used methods such as shouting or hitting, but covering a person’s mouth is a gentler method to show ultimate reality is unreachable using thinking or language.

As the story continues, Shitou one day asks Layman Pang, “Since seeing me, what have your daily activities been?” The layman replied, “Because of your teaching, I can’t open my mouth.”

Precisely because he knew the layman understood the true reality beyond thinking, Shitou asked him to say something. This means we need to shut our mouth to see the ultimate reality beyond thinking, but once we see the reality, we have to express our insight in some way to share it with others.

Unless we see the reality beyond thinking, whatever we say is off the mark, but once we see the reality directly, we have to say something. So we must return to silence and afterwards we must say something. There are always these two sides. If we stick to the ultimate side and remain silent, that is a mistake. But if we think we can describe ultimate truth with words, that is also wrong. Then what is the point of our practice? The

point is we cannot stay on one side or the other; there's no place we can stay forever. We have to use both silence and speech in each moment.

Then the Layman offered this verse to Shitou:

My daily activities are not unusual,  
I'm just naturally in harmony with them.  
Grasping nothing, discarding nothing,  
In every place there is no hindrance, no  
conflict.  
Who assigns the ranks of vermilion and  
purple?—  
The hills' and mountains' last speck of dust  
is extinguished.  
[My] supernatural power and marvelous  
activity—  
Drawing water and carrying firewood.<sup>3</sup>

The first question Layman Pang asks Shihou is about something beyond everyday life or phenomenal things. But now the question turns to how we carry out our mundane activity in the phenomenal world after we have seen the reality beyond thinking.

*My daily activities are not unusual, I am  
just naturally in harmony with them.  
Grasping nothing, discarding nothing.*

In the layman's daily life, there is nothing special. "With them" means he is with all beings around him, not beyond or outside of them. I think this is another way of stating there is no Avalokiteshvara besides the five aggregates, and both Avalokiteshvara and the five aggregates are empty. Layman Pang is

saying there's neither attachment nor detachment, there is just acting in harmony with the people and things he meets; everything he encounters is his life.

*In every place there is no hindrance, no  
conflict. Who assigns the ranks of vermilion  
and purple?*

"Vermillion and purple" refers to the color of government officers' uniforms that signify ranks in the social hierarchy. Such ranks were used even in Buddhist communities. But Layman Pang is not interested in such stages. His life is very natural, and he is saying there is no ladder of progress we need to climb. He tells us to just be natural and function within this network harmoniously.

*The hills' and mountains' last speck of dust  
is extinguished.*

Shenxue said in his famous verse, "At all times we must strive to polish the mirror, and we must not let it collect any dust," but here the layman says all dust is completely extinguished.

Our delusions look more real or true than reality as it is. If we think Avalokiteshvara is beyond the five aggregates of our phenomenal world, that is delusion. Layman Pang is free from such delusion, and just living naturally within this phenomenal world is his practice. In conclusion he says:

*My supernatural power and marvelous activity  
-Drawing water and carrying firewood.*

This is a famous saying often used in Zen literature. “My supernatural power and marvelous activity” is a translation of 神通妙用 (*jinzu myoyu*), the same expression Wansong used in his introduction to this koan . 神通 (*jinzu*) is “divine power” or “supernatural power.” In ancient India people thought one could attain six kinds of supernatural powers through meditation practice. These included such things as the ability to transport oneself anywhere, being able to see and hear things at any distance, and the ability to know the past and future of oneself and others. But Chinese people, especially Zen practitioners, didn’t like the idea of practicing meditation to gain these kinds of superhuman powers. Layman Pang’s words expressed this idea that the point of our practice should not be to gain something supernatural but to live together with all beings in a very usual, ordinary way. That is the meaning of “drawing water and carrying firewood” (運水搬柴; *un sui han sai*) .

“Wondrous activity” is a translation of *myoyu* (妙用). *Myo* (妙) can translate as “marvelous,” “excellent,” “wondrous,” or “beautiful.” It refers to something that is beyond our understanding yet excellent and beautiful, and *yu* (用) is translated as “activity.” So our day-to-day, nothing special, ordinary activities such as drawing water and carrying firewood are the wondrous activity and divine power of the network of interdependence.

In ancient times, water for cooking and bathing had to be fetched daily from a well or river, as did the firewood used to heat stoves and baths. There were many chores that had to

be done every day. In a monastery, this kind of work was assigned to beginners. Layman Pang was new at Shitou’s community, so he was assigned the job of carrying water and firewood. For him, this activity was divine power and the wondrous function.

After reading this poem, Shitou approved the layman’s understanding and practice. Then he asked, “Do you want to become a monk, or do you want to continue to be a layperson?” Layman Pang replied, “I want to do what I like,” which meant, “I don’t want to be a monk.” So he never shaved his head or dyed his clothing, continuing to live with his family as a layperson his entire life. His wife, son, and daughter all were Zen practitioners, and some interesting stories about them exist.

Now let’s return to Wangson’s introduction to this *koan* about Avalokiteshvara. His final words are, “Tell me, how is this manifested?” This is asking us to discover how we can carry out our ordinary activities as the manifestation of the divine power and wondrous function of the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara.

In his introduction to the same koan as it appears in *The Blue Cliff Record*, Yuanwu says “if your whole body were an eye, you still could not see it.” But he also asks, “if you have no eye, how can you see?” According to these words, it seems the essential point of the koan is to ask how we can see in the way Avalokiteshvara sees, how we can see wisdom. But in his introduction, Wansong asks how we can *do* things as the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara, as the manifestation of compassion.

Of course, we already carry out ordinary, everyday things, but we often approach these things as meaningless rather than precious. We say, “I don’t want to do this, I have more important work to do.” If we practice doing ordinary things with this kind of attitude, too often we will say to ourselves, “I don’t like doing this, but I have to do it anyway.”

When speaking about their jobs, many people often say, “This is not what I really want to do, but somehow I have to do this to make money to support myself and my family.” A Japanese Rinzai Master, Morinaga Soko Roshi, when asked about the definition of samadhi, gave an example. He said it was like a child playing in a sandbox who shovels sand into a bucket and constructs something like a castle. If someone were to ask, “do you want to do something else?” or “will you let me shovel the sand?,” the child would certainly say “no,” because he’s enjoying the activity for its own sake. But if an adult hired laborer were doing the same kind of work and was asked to let someone else do it without losing any pay, there would be no reason for the worker to refuse. That’s because what the person actually wants to do is earn money, not work. Morinaga Roshi said this is the difference between samadhi and doing a job.

This is a very important point. Because doing zazen is not such an easy thing, after we have spent some time simply sitting without “reward,” the habitual thought that accompanies other activities will inevitably arise: “I want to get something from this, otherwise this doesn’t make sense.” Actually

doing zazen doesn’t make sense according to the values of the mundane world. In fact it has the worst cost performance index imaginable.

However, Sawaki Roshi said, “Zazen is good for nothing, no matter how much you sit, you won’t get anything.” And precisely because zazen is “good for nothing,” it can be samadhi. It is not a job that can be done in exchange for money. It is a very ordinary thing, not a practice to gain a certain kind of supernatural power. According to Wansong, this is the point of this koan about Avalokiteshvara and his/her thousand hands and eyes. It shows how the bodhisattva's hands and eyes carry out divine power and wondrous functioning. In other words, all things in the universe are divine power and wondrous functioning, and our activities should be in harmony with them.

But too often our intentions are not directed so much at being part of the natural divine power. We want to do something good for ourselves, something that will benefit “me.” We are always thinking, “what can I get from this? Is this good or meaningful to me or not?” That attitude is in opposition to the divine power.

The point, rather, is how we can be a part of the compassionate thousand hands and eyes, and as bodhisattvas we take a vow to do this. When part of Avalokiteshvara’s hands and eyes, our activities become his/her wisdom and compassion. That is the meaning of practice based on the bodhisattva vow. Avalokiteshvara is not something like a god existing beyond this world to be worshiped in order to gain something we want. Although this is a common

idea in the human world, in reality we are the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara. How we can function as a hand and eye of Avalokiteshvara is the point of this koan in *The Book of Serenity*. This differs a bit from *The Blue Cliff Record*.

### **The Main Case** 「本則」

What follows is the main case of the koan. Since it is almost identical to the case in the Blue Cliff Record, I don't think any explanation is needed:

Yunyan asked Daowu, "What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do with innumerable hands and eyes?"

Daowu said, "[The bodhisattva] is like a person reaching his hand behind [his head] at night, groping for a pillow."

Yunyan said, "I understand! I understand!"

Daowu said, "How do you understand it?"

Yunyan said, "Throughout the whole body, there are hands and eyes."

Daowu said, "You spoke quite well. But only eighty or ninety percent was achieved."

Yunyan said, "I am just like this. What about you, dharma brother?"

Daowu said, "The entire body is hands and eyes."<sup>4</sup>

### **Wansong's Commentary**

In the beginning of his commentary, Wansong introduces three examples of activities that function as the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara.

The first example is a dialogue between a

government officer and a Zen master. Li Ao was a high-class government officer, a famous poet, and a writer in the Confucist tradition. He also had some interactions with Yaoshan (Yakusan), the master of Yunyan and Daowu. In volume 7 of *The Record Of The Transmission Of The Lamp*, Li Ao asked Zen master Ehu Dayi (Gako Daigi; 鵝湖大義; 745 - 818), a dharma heir of Mazu Daoyi, "What does Avalokiteshvara use his hands and eyes for?" The Zen master replied, "What does the emperor use public officials for?"

In this answer the emperor is Avalokiteshvara and the thousand hands and eyes are the government officers. The emperors of the past used many government officers to govern the nation. Although this was the structure of the ancient Chinese political system, today we don't appreciate this kind of structure. In ancient times, emperors were dictators, and I think it is dangerous to say a political leader is like Avalokiteshvara and his ministers, officials and subjects are like his or her hands and eyes. But throughout Chinese and Japanese history, the relationship between Buddhist institutions and political power has almost always been this way. Buddhism was supported and controlled by the emperor, and his government in return offered support and political power.

The second example is about how a person with a disability can use Avalokiteshvara's hands and eyes. Once there was a blind mountain man who was probably a fortune teller. After a rain he walked down a muddy road to the marketplace wearing white shoes.

Someone there asked him, “ How were you able to walk down that muddy road without getting your shoes muddy when you can’t see?” Then, the mountain man raised his staff and said, “There is an eye on my staff.”

For this blind mountain man, his staff was his eyes. Wansong says the way a blind person walks on a muddy road without getting his shoes dirty is the same way a half-sleeping person searches for a pillow in the darkness. When some part of our body doesn’t function, another part can compensate for it. This is the power of Avalokiteshvara assisting living beings.

Wansong says when reaching for a pillow in the night there is an eye in the hand, when eating there is an eye on the tongue, and when recognizing someone’s voice there is an eye in the ear. He is saying that all six sense organs work together as one. It’s not that only the eye sees color and shape, but all six sense organs work together in sensing the entirety of a situation, so an experience can’t really be separated out into the objects of the six sense organs. The body is one whole, and things happening around me make up one situation. We accept, understand and try to work with the situation as an entire person. It’s not that our eyes are working with color and shape independently from our other sense organs. If one part of the body isn’t functioning, another part can compensate. Also, the person and the situation are actually one thing, so that is another meaning of the expression *zenki* (全機) or “total function.”

The life we live using these five skandhas

and our sense organs/objects is one life, the life of Avalokitesvara. It’s not that some being named Avalokitesvara appears from beyond this phenomenal world and manifests in all things. Rather, each and everything is itself Avalokiteshvara.

Wansong introduces another example of a person with a disability.

In this story a man named Su Zizhan used writing to communicate with a person who could see but not hear. After communicating in this way, Su Zizhan laughed and said, “He and I are both strange people.” The Chinese sentence can also be read, “We are different people.” This means although each person has different capabilities, there is some way for us to communicate; people are all different, but somehow we can work together.

He then said, “I use my hand for a mouth, he uses his eyes for ears.” Su Zizhan says he wrote with his hands instead of speaking with his mouth, and the deaf man used his eyes as ears by reading the words; the man had the ability to use his eyes to read and compensate for not being able to hear with his ears.

So, if some sense organ doesn’t work, some other part of our body can help us. This is an example of help or support somehow appearing when we have a serious need. Wansong is saying this appearance is Avalokiteshvara’s wondrous function, made possible by the emptiness and interconnection of all six sense organs.

The 19th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, *The Blessing of the Dharma Teacher*, says when people receive and embrace, read, recite, explain, and copy *the Lotus Sutra*, their sense organs will obtain numberless blessings, become pure, and obtain divine powers. Writing about this in his commentary on *the Lotus Sutra*, Vasubhandhu states, “Purifying the six sense organs means each organ can see color, hear sound, smell fragrance, sense touching, and know objects of mind. All sense organs interpenetrate each other.”<sup>5</sup>

This idea seems to come from the statement about the capacities of the Tathagata in *The Mahayana Parinirvana Sutra* which says, “One sense-organ of the Tathagata can indeed see colours, hear sounds, register smell, know taste, feel touch, and know dharmas. Because of [his] sovereignty, he is sovereign over his sense-organs.”<sup>6</sup>

In his article, *Just This is It: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness*, Taigen Dan Leighton explored this kind of relationship between the sense organs and their objects. He did this when examining a dialogue between Donshan and his teacher Yunyan regarding the dharma expounded by insentient beings (無情說法). At the end of this dialogue Dongshan composed the following verse:

How marvelous! How marvelous!  
The Dharma expounded by nonsentient  
beings is inconceivable.  
Listening with your ears, no sound.  
Hearing with your eyes, you directly  
understand.

In explaining the final line of the verse, Taigen says:

“Hearing with your eyes, you directly understand” provides a description of synesthesia, the mingling of senses so that sensation in one mode occurs from stimulus in another sense mode. This synesthesia has been described as a subtle and skillful mode of apprehension in a great number of contexts, both in Buddhism and in other human cultural traditions.

Then Taigen introduces this same koan from *The Book of Serenity* along with Wansong’s commentary. In conclusion he says, “Here we see a new model of apprehension for sentient beings, with awareness flowing through the interactivity of various senses.”<sup>7</sup>

I think Taigen’s discussion is correct in terms of Wansong’s commentary.

This idea of the interactivity of the senses comes from *The Mahayana Parinirvana Sutra* and Vasubhandhu’s commentary on *The Lotus Sutra*, and it is a part of Tendai teaching as well. Hongzhi also expressed this understanding when he said, “The six sense organs intermingle their functions. The hands and eyes throughout the body function in the best way [depending on each situation]. That is, the eyes accomplish the buddha’s function of the ears; the ears accomplish the buddha’s function of the nose.”<sup>8</sup> I also expressed a similar understanding of this story in my commentary on the Heart Sutra,<sup>9</sup> that Wansong is saying that Avalokiteshvara’s hands and eyes are continually intermingling with the function of the six sense organs.

However, recently I found that Dogen wrote about Dongshan's statement, "only when I hear the voice with my eyes am I able to know it," in *Shobogenzo Mujoseppo* (無情說法):

*We should further investigate the eyes extensively. Because "hearing the voice with the eyes" must be the same as "hearing the voice with the ears," "hearing the voice with the eyes" can never be the same as "hearing the voice with the ears." We should not understand that there are ears in the eyes; nor should we understand that the eyes are themselves ears or that the voice appears within the eyes.*<sup>10</sup>

According to Ian Kishizawa Roshi's *teisho* on this paragraph, this is a negation of the six sense organs intermingling in their function. Although I am not sure if Dogen disagreed with this interpretation in *The Book of Serenity* or not, it is true Dogen discusses it differently in *Shobogenzo Kannon* than Wansong does here.

Anyway, Wansong explains that Daowu's saying, "It's like someone reaching back for the pillow at night," refers to the intermingling of the sense organs. According to him, this is not something special for Buddhist practice in certain higher stages, as it is seen in Tendai teaching. Rather, this is actually happening within this phenomenal world, and it is how each one of us not only human beings but all beings are living and working and supporting each other as parts of the whole system. It is divine power. So the way we live as one of the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara is to offer help when it's necessary. After all, the first of

the six paramitas is offering.

Next in his introduction, Wansong quotes a comment on the koan by Zhang Shanyong (張商英; Cho Shoei; 1043 – 1122), whose courtesy name was Tianjao (天覺; Tenkaku) and Buddhist name was Wujin(無盡; Mujin). To summarize, Zhang says:

(1) Avalokiteshvara's thousand hands and eyes exist to help living beings with their problems. Because we have innumerable kinds of sicknesses, Avalokiteshvara has innumerable hands and eyes to cure them. So Avalokiteshvara and people in need are interdependent; if there were no deluded people, there would be no awakened bodhisattvas.

(2) Yunyan's "all over the body" and Daowu's "throughout the body" are basically the same. In *The Blue Cliff Record*, Yuanwu said both are the same and both are no good because they still exist within the realm of thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Zhang Shanyong was a high-class government official who once served as prime minister. He was also a well-known Zen practitioner and lay dharma heir of Rinzai Zen master Doushuai Congyue (兜率從悅; Tosotsu Juetsu; 1024 – 1104). Zhang was also a patron of Yuanwu, who compiled *The Blue Cliff Record*. It seems Wansong did not care about the difference between Rinzai and Soto Zen. Yuanwu's disciple, Dahui, attacked Soto Zen masters as practitioners of evil, "silent illumination Zen," but I have yet to find any counter-arguments by Chinese Soto Zen masters criticizing Dahui's *kensho* Zen. It seems Dogen was the only Soto Zen Master

who criticized *kensho* Zen. I used to believe that from the 12th century to today there had always been an argument between Rinzai and Soto about the necessity of an enlightenment experience (*kensho*) in China and then Japan. Now I feel that might be an illusion.

In the 13th century Dogen wrote in *Bendowa*, “These days in Song China, only the Rinzai school is present everywhere.”<sup>12</sup> Since then, Soto or “silent illumination” Zen has barely existed, having never become popular in China. After Dogen passed away, up to the 17th century, even in some Japanese Soto Zen lineages monks practiced *kanna* (看話; *kanhu*; “seeing the story”) Zen that was the same as Rinzai practice. It wasn’t until the Tokugawa period (1603 – 1868) that Soto Zen monk-scholars insisted Dogen’s Zen was unique and different from Rinzai’s *kensho* Zen. Since then we have had the idea this argument had been ongoing since the 12th century, but that might not be true. I am not 100% sure, but as far as I know, Dogen was the only Zen master in either China or Japan who criticized Dahui and *kanna* Zen before the 17th century.

### Hongzhi’s verse

一竅虛通。(一竅虛通。)  
八面樞樞。(八面樞樞。)  
無象無私春入律。(象無く私無く、春、律に入る。)  
不留不礙月行空。(留せず礙せず、月空に行く。)  
清淨實目功德臂。(清淨の實目、功德の臂。)  
遍身何似通身是。(遍身は通身の是なるに  
いれぞ。)  
現前手眼顯全機。(現前の手眼、全機を顯す。)  
大用縱橫何忌諱。(大用縱橫何ぞ忌諱せん。)

One hole, emptiness pervading;  
Crystal clear on all sides.  
Formlessly, selflessly, spring enters the  
pipes;  
Unstopped, unhindered, the moon traverses  
the sky.  
Pure jewel eyes, arms of virtues;  
All over the body – how does it compare to  
throughout the body being it?  
The present hands and eyes reveal the  
whole works;  
The great function works in all ways – what  
is taboo?

The first two lines, “One hole, emptiness pervading; Crystal clear on all sides,” are basically the same as Wansong’s lines in the beginning of his introduction: “Crystal clear on all sides, open and unobstructed in all directions.” This is a description of Indra’s Net in which everything is connected within the entirety of time and space.

### *Formlessly, selflessly, spring enters the pipes;*

Spring is a metaphor for the entirety of the network of interconnectedness, or Avalokiteshvara. It has no form and no self, and yet it permeates every place and everything. “The pipes” is a term from a Chinese classic. It is said in ancient times people would make a bamboo pipe, put ash in one end, and then leave it in a room. Supposedly when the Yan energy (気; *chi*) of spring came, it would get into the pipe and push out the ash. Hongzhi uses this expression to show that the timeless, formless spring appears during a certain time of year and enters into even a tiny space the way it entered these

bamboo pipes. He says each and everything in the phenomenal world, no matter how small, expresses the formless spring.

***Unstopped, unhindered, the moon traverses the sky.***

The function of each and every hand and eye of Avalokiteshvara is like moonlight. It never stops, reaches everywhere, and illuminates everything.

***Pure jewel eyes, arms of virtues;***

Avalokiteshvara's hands and eyes are like the spring arriving in each phenomenal thing and the moon reflecting on everything. All things in nature are the wisdom eye and virtuous hand of Avalokiteshvara.

***All over the body– how does it compare to throughout the body being it?***

Comparisons between Yunyan's "all over the body," and Daowu's "throughout the body," cannot be made and we can't say which is superior.

***The present hands and eyes reveal the whole works; The great function works in all ways – what is taboo?***

"The whole works" is a translation of 全機 (*zenki*), which I usually translate as "total function". Dogen wrote a fascicle of the *Shobogenzo* about *zenki*. Yuanwu, Hongzhi, Wansong and Dogen use this expression in a positive way. How we can awaken to and

express "total function" might be the common theme between all of their teachings.

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from The Book of Serenity in this article are taken from *The Book of Serenity: One Hundred Zen Dialogues* (translation by Thomas Cleary, Lindisfarne Press, 1990)

<sup>2</sup> In Chapter 42 of the *Tao Te Ching* we read, "The Tao gives birth to One. One gives birth to Two. Two gives birth to Three. Three gives birth to all things." (translation by Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching*, HarperCollins, 1988) p.42.

<sup>3</sup> *A Man of Zen: The Recorded Sayings of Layman Pang* (translated by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Yoshitaka Iriya, Dana R. Fraser, Weatherhill, 1971) p.45-46.

<sup>4</sup> This is Okumura's translation from *Shobogenzo Kannon*.

<sup>5</sup> Okumura's unpublished translation from a Chinese translation of the original Sanskrit.

<sup>6</sup> Translation by Kosho Yamamoto in *Nirvana Sutra: A Translation of Dharmakshema's Northern Version*. P.210

<sup>7</sup> Just This is It: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness (Taigen Dan Leighton, Shambhala, 2015), p.28-29.

<sup>8</sup> Okumura's unpublished translation. This saying is a part of his dharma hall discourse in *The Extensive Record of Hongzhi*, volume 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Living By Vow: A Practical Introduction to Eight*

*Essential Zen Chants and Texts* (Wisdom Publications, 2012) p.144 – 147.

<sup>10</sup> Okumura’s unpublished translation.

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting that both *The Blue Cliff Record* and *The Book of Serenity* negate the image of Yunyan as dull-witted and Daowu as sharp-witted. Ultimately it therefore rejects that Daowu’s saying completely expresses the truth but Yunyan’s reached only 80 to 90 percent.

<sup>12</sup> Okumura & Leighton’s translation in *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dogen’s Bendowawith Commentary by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi* (Tuttle, 1997) p.21.



## Treasury of the True Dharma Eye Number 14 Sky Flowers *Kūge*

Translated by  
**The Soto Zen Text Project**

### *Introduction*

This chapter was composed in the spring 1243, during Dōgen’s last months at his Kōshōji monastery south of Kyoto. It occurs as number 14 in the sixty- and seventy-five-chapter compilations of the *Shōbōgenzō* and as number 43 in the ninety-five-chapter Honzan edition.

The title of the essay, “sky flowers” (*kūge*; S. *khapu pa*), refers to spots appearing in the vision of a diseased eye. It is widely used in Buddhist literature as a metaphor for something empty of substance, only apparently real, lacking objective existence, and so on. Beginning with a verse attributed to Bodhidharma on the flowering of the Chan lineage, Dōgen comments here on eight quotations on flowers by representatives of the lineage, from the Buddha Sākyamuni to Chan figures of the Song dynasty.

Throughout his comments, Dōgen seeks to transform the sense of “sky flowers” from a symbol of delusion to an expression of the way everything really exists. As he argues at one point, if we take what we see with our ordinary, clouded eyes as delusion, then everything will be delusion, and the very notion of delusion will make no sense. Rather, he says, sky flowers are precisely the sutras of the buddhas, and the sky blossoms scattering

in rank profusion are the manifestations of the buddhas.

This translation is based on the text published in Kawamura Kōdō, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1991). For ease of reference, the sections into which that text is divided have been numbered by the translators.

The Eminent Ancestor said,<sup>1</sup>

A single flower opens five petals;  
The fruit forms, ripening naturally of  
itself.<sup>2</sup>

We should study the occasion, as well as the physical mark of radiance, of this “flower opens.”<sup>3</sup> The layers of the “single flower” are the “five petals”; the “opening” of the “five petals” is the “single flower.” Where the truth of the “single flower” is penetrated, it is, “I originally came to this land, to transmit the dharma and save deluded beings.”<sup>4</sup> Inquiry into the radiance should be this study.

“The fruit forming is up to your fruit forming” — this is “ripening of itself.”<sup>5</sup> “Ripening of itself” means cultivating the cause and experiencing the fruit.<sup>6</sup> There are causes in the public realm, and there are fruits in the public realm; one cultivates these causes and fruits of the public realm and experiences the causes and fruits of the public realm.<sup>7</sup> “Itself” is oneself; “oneself” is definitely “you”; it is the four elements and the five aggregates.<sup>8</sup> Since it uses the “true person of no rank,” it is not self; it is not other; hence, that it is indefinite is called “itself.”<sup>9</sup> “Naturally” is consent.<sup>10</sup> “Ripening of itself” is the occasion when the “flower opens” and the “fruit forms”; it is the

occasion of “transmit the dharma and save the deluded.”

It is like, for example, the fact that the time and place in which the *utpala* flower blooms are within fire at the time of fire.<sup>11</sup> Every flicker and blaze is a place where the *utpala* flower blooms, a time when the *utpala* flower blooms.<sup>12</sup> Where it is not the time and place of the *utpala* flower, there is no birth of a single spark, there is no way of life of a single spark. We should realize that, in a single spark, there are a hundred thousand clusters of *utpala* flowers, which bloom in the sky and bloom on the earth. They bloom in the past; they bloom in the present. To perceive the time when the fire appears, the place where it appears, is to perceive the *utpala* flower. We should perceive them without overlooking the time and place of the *utpala* flower.

An old forebear has said, “The *utpala* flower blooms within fire.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the *utpala* flower invariably blooms “within fire.” If we wish to know about “within fire,” it is where the *utpala* flower blooms. We should not cling to the view of humans or the view of devas and fail to learn about “within fire.” To doubt this means we should also doubt that lotuses grow in water, and we should also doubt that there are flowers on branches. Again, among things to doubt, we should also doubt that the vessel world is stable; yet we do not have doubts about this.<sup>14</sup> Those who are not buddhas and ancestors do not know about “a flower opens, and the world arises.”<sup>15</sup> “A flower opens” means “three and three in front; three and three in back.”<sup>16</sup> In order to be endowed with this number, it has gathered the thicket of things

and raised them to towering heights.<sup>17</sup>

Bringing in this principle, we should understand spring and autumn. It is not just that there are flowers and fruits in spring and autumn: any given time invariably has flowers and fruits.<sup>18</sup> Flowers and fruits all maintain their moments; moments all maintain flowers and fruits. Hence, the hundred grasses all have flowers and fruits; the various trees all have flowers and fruits.<sup>19</sup> The trees of gold, silver, copper, iron, coral, *sphatika*, and so on, all have flowers and fruits.<sup>20</sup> The trees of earth, water, fire, wind, and space all have flowers and fruits.<sup>21</sup> The trees of humans have flowers; the flowers of humans have flowers; the dried-up trees have flowers.<sup>22</sup>

Among such [flowers], the World-Honored One spoke of “flowers in empty space.”<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, those of little hearing and little seeing know nothing of the brilliant leaves and petals of sky flowers and only barely hear of sky flowers.<sup>24</sup> We should understand that the way of the buddhas has talk of sky flowers, while the other paths do not know talk of sky flowers, much less comprehend it. Only the buddhas and ancestors know the blooming and falling of sky flowers and earth flowers, know the blooming and falling of world flowers, and the like, know that the sky flowers, the earth flowers, the world flowers, and the like, are scriptures.<sup>25</sup> This is a standard for the study of Buddhism. Since the vehicle ridden by the buddhas and ancestors is sky flowers, the buddha worlds and the buddha dharmas are sky flowers.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, the foolish people who hear

that the Tathagata said sky flowers are what is seen by clouded eyes declare that “clouded eyes” means the inverted eyes of living beings, and that diseased eyes, since they are inverted, perceive sky flowers in pure empty space.<sup>27</sup> Because they cling to this theory, they think that the three realms and six paths, with a buddha or without a buddha, are all nonexistent things deludedly seen as existent; and that, if this delusional cloudiness of the eye ceases, these sky flowers will not be seen.<sup>28</sup> Hence, they make it their business to say, “the sky originally has no flowers.”<sup>29</sup> How pitiful, that such types know nothing of the occasion, from beginning to end, of the sky flower spoken of by the Tathagata.<sup>30</sup> The principles behind the “clouded eyes” and “sky flowers” spoken of by the buddhas is not something ever seen by common people or followers of other paths. It is by practicing this “sky flower” that the buddhas, the tathagatas, get their robes, thrones, and rooms, gain the way, and gain the fruit.<sup>31</sup> Holding up the flower and blinking the eyes are both kōans in which the “clouded eye” and “sky flower” are realized.<sup>32</sup> That “the treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāna” has been directly transmitted without interruption till now is called “the clouded eye and the sky flower.”<sup>33</sup> Bodhi, nirvāna, the dharma body, the self-nature, and so on, are two or three petals of the sky flower’s “opening five petals.”<sup>34</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The Buddha Sākyamuni said,<sup>35</sup>

Again, it is like the person with clouded vision who sees flowers in the sky. If

the disease of cloudiness is removed, the flowers disappear from the sky.

There have never been students who clarified this statement. Because they do not know the sky, they do not know sky flowers. Because they do not know sky flowers, they do not know “the person with clouded vision,” they do not see the person with clouded vision, they do not meet the person with clouded vision, they are not the person with clouded vision. We should meet the person with clouded vision, know the sky flowers, see the sky flowers. After seeing the sky flowers, we should also see “the flowers disappear from the sky.” To think that, once the sky flowers cease, they should no longer exist is a view of the Small Vehicle.<sup>36</sup> When sky flowers are not to be seen, what would there be? Knowing only that sky flowers are just something to be discarded, we do not know the great matter after sky flowers, do not know the planting, maturing, and dropping off of the sky flower.<sup>37</sup>

Nowadays, commoner students, because they think that the “sky” is where the yang energy resides or think that the “sky” is where the sun, moon, and stars are suspended, think, for example, that, when we say “sky flowers,” we mean the appearance of colors like blossoms flying east and west, or up and down, before the wind, like clouds floating in this clear air.<sup>38</sup> They do not really know that the four elements as fabricator and fabricated, as well as the dharmas of the vessel world, along with original awakening, the original nature, and the like, are called “sky flowers.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, they do not know that the four elements as

fabricators, and the rest, exist because of the dharmas; they do not know that the vessel world “abides in its dharma position” because of the dharmas.<sup>40</sup> They hold the view only that the dharmas exist because of the vessel world. Comprehending only that sky flowers exist because of the cloudiness of the eye, they do not comprehend the principle that the cloudiness of the eye is enabled to exist because of the sky flowers.

We should realize that the “person with clouded vision” on the way of the buddhas is a person of original awakening, is a person of wondrous awakening, is a person of the buddhas, is a person of the three realms, is a person beyond the buddha.<sup>41</sup> Do not stupidly study that the cloudiness is delusive dharmas, apart from which there are real dharmas: to do so is a small view. Were clouded flowers to be delusive dharmas, then both the agent and the act of clinging mistakenly to them as delusive dharmas would themselves be delusive dharmas; where both are delusive dharmas, the truth could not be established; and where there is no truth established, it could not be the case that the clouded flowers are delusive dharmas.<sup>42</sup> When our awakening is clouded, the dharmas of our awakening are all dharmas adorned with cloudiness; when our delusion is clouded, the dharmas of our delusion are all dharmas adorned with cloudiness.<sup>43</sup>

For now, we can say that, when clouded eyes are equal, sky flowers are equal; when clouded eyes are unborn, sky flowers are unborn, when it is “the real marks of the dharmas,” it is the real marks of sky flowers.<sup>44</sup> We should not make an issue of past, present,

or future; it has nothing to do with beginning, middle, or end. Since they are not obstructed by their arising and ceasing, they cause arising and ceasing to arise and cease. They appear in the sky; they disappear in the sky. They arise in the clouded vision; they cease in the clouded vision. They arise in the flower; they cease in the flower. And so forth, to every other time and place, in just the same way.

Studying sky flowers can be of multiple types: there is what is seen by the clouded eye; there is what is seen by the clear eye; there is what is seen by the buddha eye; there is what is seen by the ancestor eye; there is what is seen by the eye of the way; there is what is seen by the eye of the blind; there is what is seen in three thousand years; there is what is seen in eight hundred years; there is what is seen in a hundred kalpas; there is what is seen in innumerable kalpas.<sup>45</sup> All of these may see sky flowers, but the sky itself is already multiple, and the flowers are various.

We should realize that the “sky” is a single blade of grass, and that flowers bloom in this sky just as flowers bloom in the hundred grasses. As an expression of this principle, the words of the Tathāgata say, “The sky originally has no flowers.”<sup>46</sup> Although it “originally has no flowers,” that now it has flowers is quite like the peach or the damson, like the plum or the willow.<sup>47</sup> It is like saying, “the plum yesterday had no flowers, but the plum in spring has flowers.”<sup>48</sup> Although this is so, when the time arrives, the flowers bloom; it will be the time for flowers, and the flowers will arrive. The very moment when the flowers arrive is never

random: the flowers of the plum and the willow invariably bloom on the plum and the willow. Seeing the flowers, we know it is a plum or a willow; seeing the plum or the willow, we distinguish between their flowers. The flowers of the peach or the damson never bloom on the plum or the willow; the flowers of the plum and the willow bloom on the plum and the willow; the flowers of the peach and damson bloom on the peach and damson. The blooming of the sky flowers in the sky is also like this: they do not bloom on other grasses; they do not bloom on other trees.

Seeing the various colors of the sky flowers, we calculate that the sky fruits are unlimited. Seeing the opening and falling of the sky flowers, we can study the spring and autumn of sky flowers. The springtime of sky flowers and the springtime of other flowers should be identical. And just as the sky flowers are varied, so there should be many kinds of springtimes. Therefore, there are the springs and autumns of past and present. Those who study that sky flowers are not real, while other flowers are real, have not seen or heard the teaching of the Buddha. Hearing the preaching that “the sky originally has no flowers,” to study that it means the sky flowers that originally did not exist now exist is weak thinking and a small view; we should step forward and think more fully.<sup>49</sup>

An ancestral master has said, “The flowers, too, have never arisen.”<sup>50</sup>

The expression of this essential point is, for example, “the flowers, too, have never arisen,” and the flowers, too, have never ceased; it is the flowers, too, have never flowered; it is the

truth that the sky, too, has never sky-ed.<sup>51</sup> There should be no dispute about their being or non-being, talking nonsense about the before and after of the time of the flowers. Flowers seem always to be imbued with colors, but colors are not always limited to flowers: various times also have their colors, such as blue, yellow, red, and white. Spring draws forth the flowers; flowers draw forth the spring.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Refined Talent Zhang Zhuo was a lay disciple of Shishuang.<sup>52</sup> In a verse on his awakening to the way, he said, “The radiance shines silently, throughout the sands of the Ganges.”<sup>53</sup>

This “radiance” reveals anew “samgha hall, buddha hall, kitchen, and mountain gate.”<sup>54</sup>

“Throughout the sands of the Ganges” is the manifestation of the radiance, is the radiance manifest.

“Commoners, sages, all the animate — together are my family.”<sup>55</sup>

It is not that there are no commoners or worthy sages; do not slander the commoners and worthy sages by this.

“A single moment of thought unborn, the entire body appears.”<sup>56</sup>

Thought by thought, one by one — this is always “unborn.” This is “the entire body” entirely “appearing.” Therefore, he says, “a single moment of thought unborn.”

“The slightest movement of the six organs,

and it’s obscured by clouds.”

The “six organs” may be eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, but they are not necessarily two threes; they should be the front and back, three and three.<sup>57</sup> “Movement” is like Mount Sumeru, like the whole earth, like the six sense organs, like “the slightest movement.” Since their moving is like Mount Sumeru, their not moving is also like Mount Sumeru.<sup>58</sup> For example, it makes clouds and produces water.

“The afflictions cut off and cleared away, the disease only doubles.”<sup>59</sup>

It is not that we have had no sickness up till now: there is the buddha “disease” and the ancestor “disease.” The wisdom and eradication here pile up the sickness, increase the sickness.<sup>60</sup> The very moment of “cut off and cleared away” is always “affliction.” They are simultaneous; they are not simultaneous. “The afflictions” necessarily entail the dharma of “cut off and cleared away.”

“Tending toward true suchness — this, too, is a mistake.”<sup>61</sup>

To turn away from true suchness — this is a “mistake”; to turn toward true suchness — this is a “mistake.” True suchness is turning toward and turning away; each and every turning toward and turning away — this is true suchness. Who knows that this “mistake” is “this, too,” is suchness.

“Conforming to worldly conditions, there are no obstructions.”<sup>62</sup>

“Worldly conditions” and “worldly conditions” “conform”; “conforming” and “conforming” are “worldly conditions.” This is called “there are

no obstructions.” We should get familiar with the fact that obstructing and not obstructing are “obstructed by the eye.”<sup>63</sup>

Nirvāna and birth and death — they’re flowers in the sky.

“Nirvāna” means *anuttara-samyak-sa bodhi*.<sup>64</sup> The abode of the buddhas and ancestors, as well as the disciples of the buddhas and ancestors, is this. “Birth and death” are “the true human body.”<sup>65</sup> Though we say this “nirvāna and birth and death” are those dharmas, they are “flowers in the sky.”<sup>66</sup> The “roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, flowers and fruit, lustrous and colored” of the sky flowers are all the blooming of “flowers in the sky.”<sup>67</sup> Sky flowers always produce sky fruit and drop sky seeds. Because the three realms we now perceive are the sky flower’s “five petals opening,” it is “he sees the three realms not as the three realms.”<sup>68</sup> It is these “real marks of the dharmas”; it is these flower marks of the dharmas.<sup>69</sup> And so on, through incalculable dharmas — all of which are sky flowers and sky fruits. We should study that they are the same as the plum, the willow, the peach, and the damson.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chan Master Lingxun of Mount Furong in Fuzhou in the Land of the Great Song, when he first went to consult Chan Master Zhizhen of Guizong Monastery, asked, “What is a buddha?”<sup>70</sup>

Guizong said, “If I tell you, will you believe it?”

The Master said, “The Reverend’s words

are sincere, how could I not believe them?”

Guizong said, “You yourself are one.”

The Master said, “How can I maintain it?”

Guizong said, “A single cloudiness in the eye; the sky flowers flutter down.”

Guizong’s words here, “A single cloudiness in the eye; the sky flowers flutter down,” are a saying that “maintains” “a buddha.” This being the case, we should realize that the “tumbling down” of the “cloudy” “flowers” is the manifestation of the buddhas. The flowers and fruits of the “eye sky” are the “maintaining” of the buddhas.<sup>71</sup> They use the cloudiness to make the eye manifest. They manifest the sky flowers in the eye; they manifest the eye in the sky flowers. It should be, “a sky flower in the eye; a single cloudiness flutters down; a single eye in the sky; the multiple cloudinesses flutter down.” Hence, “cloudiness,” “a manifestation of full function”; “eye,” “a manifestation of full function”; “sky,” “a manifestation of full function”; “flower,” “a manifestation of full function.”<sup>72</sup> “Flutter down” is “the thousand eyes”; it is “eyes throughout the body.”<sup>73</sup> In general, in the time and the place of a single eye, invariably there are sky flowers, there are eye flowers. “Eye flowers” means “sky flowers.” The words “eye flowers” are always clear.<sup>74</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Therefore, Great Master Guangzhao of Mount Langya said,<sup>75</sup>

Wonderful! The buddhas of the ten directions:

Fundamentally, they are flowers in the eye.

If we wish to know the flowers in the eye,

Fundamentally, they are the buddhas of

the ten directions.

If we wish to know the buddhas of the ten directions,

They are not flowers in the eye.

If we wish to know the flowers in the eye,

They are not the buddhas of the ten directions.

If we have clarified this,

The fault lies with the buddhas of the ten directions;

If we haven't clarified it,

The *srāvakas* dance,  
And the *pratyeka-buddhas* admire their makeup.

We should realize that “the buddhas of the ten directions” are not unreal; fundamentally, they are flowers “in the eye.” The position where the buddhas of the ten directions dwell is “in the eye.” If it is not “in the eye,” it is not the dwelling place of the buddhas. “Flowers in the eye” are not nonexistent, are not existent, are not empty, are not real: just as they are, they are “the buddhas of the ten directions.” Now, if we solely wish to know the buddhas of the ten directions, they are not “flowers in the eye”; if we solely wish to know “flowers in the eye,” they seem not to be the buddhas of the ten directions.

Because it is like this, both “have clarified” and “haven't clarified” are “flowers in the eye,” are “buddhas of the ten directions.” “If we wish to know” and “they are not” are the “wonderful” manifested; are “most wonderful!” The essential point of sky flowers and earth flowers spoken by buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor is full of style like this.<sup>76</sup>

While the term “sky flowers” is something heard even by the sūtra masters and treatise masters, the vital artery of “earth flowers” is something there are no conditions to see or hear if one is not a buddha or ancestor.<sup>77</sup> There is a saying by a buddha and ancestor who knew the vital artery of “earth flowers.”<sup>78</sup>

Chan Master Huiche of Mount Shimen in the Land of the Great Song was a venerable in the line of Liangshan.<sup>79</sup> Once, a monk asked him, “What is the treasure in the mountain?”

The essential point of this question is the same as asking, for example, “What is a buddha?” or like asking, “What is the way?”

The Master said, “Sky flowers arise from the earth. There's no place to buy them in the entire land.”<sup>80</sup>

This saying, we should definitely not equate with other sayings. Ordinary abbots in all quarters, in discussing the sky flowers of “sky flowers,” say only that they appear “in the sky” and disappear “in the sky.” They do not know even “from the sky”; how could they know “from the earth?” Only Shimen alone has known it. “From the earth” means beginning, middle, and end are, finally, “from the earth.” “To arise” is “to bloom.” At this very moment, they arise from all the whole earth; they bloom from all the whole earth.

“There's no place to buy them in the entire land” is not that there is no “buying them in the entire land”; it is “to buy no place.” There are sky flowers that arise from the earth; there

is all the earth that blooms from a flower. Therefore, we should realize that there is an essential point that sky flowers make both the earth and the sky bloom and arise.

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye  
Sky Flowers  
Number 14

[Ryūmonji MS:]

Presented to the assembly at Kannon Dōri  
Kōshō Hōrin Monastery; tenth day, third month  
of the junior water year of the rabbit, the first  
year of Kangen [31 March 1243]<sup>81</sup>

[Tōunji MS:]

Copied this in the acolyte's quarters, Kippō  
Monastery, Etsuu; seventeenth day, first month  
of the senior wood year of the dragon, the  
second year of the same [era] [7 March 1244].  
Ejō

Respectfully copied in the abbot's quarters of  
Keirin Vihāra, Ayō; twentieth day, fifth month,  
senior metal year of the horse, the seventh year  
of Eishō [26 June 1510]. Yōken, an elder of  
seventy-three<sup>82</sup>



## Notes

1. **Eminent Ancestor** (*kōsō*): Quoting the last two lines of the transmission verse attributed to the First Ancestor, Bodhidharma (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:219c17-18):

I originally came to this land  
To transmit the dharma and save deluded  
beings.

A single flower opens five petals;  
The fruit forms, ripening naturally of itself.

2. **A single flower opens five petals** (*ikke kai goyō*): There are two lines of interpretation of the “five petals” (*goyō*) in this famous verse: one that takes it as a prediction of the five houses (*goke*) of Chan recognized by the Song-dynasty historians of the school; the other that takes it as foretelling to the first five generations of the Chan lineage following Bodhidharma. In his “*Shōbōgenzō baika*,” Dōgen dismisses the latter interpretation, preferring to see “five petals” as a reference to the entire lineage from the seven buddhas of antiquity up to and including himself.

3. **physical mark of radiance** (*kōmyō shikisō*): Reference to the aureole (*kōmyō*) surrounding the body of a buddha, one of the thirty-two marks (*sō*; S. *lakṣaṇa*) of a buddha's body; an expression common enough in the Buddhist canon but not occurring elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

4. **“I originally came to this land, to transmit the dharma and save deluded beings”** (*go hon rai shido, denbō gu meijō*): The first two lines of Bodhidharma's transmission verse; see above, Note 1.

5. **“The fruit forming is up to your fruit forming”** (*kekka nin ji kekka*): I.e., the results are up to you. Dōgen is here commenting on the last line of Bodhidharma’s verse, “The fruit forms, ripening naturally of itself” (*kekka jinen jō*), using a remark of Jingshan Hongyin (d. 901) (found, e.g., at *Zongmen tongyao ji*, ZTS.1:156a10; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076,51:284c29). Hongyin’s remark is itself a comment on a well-known conversation that Dōgen records in his *Mana Shobōgenzō* (DZZ.5:166-168, case 85):

Shishuang (i.e., Shishuang Qingzhu [807-888]) was once asked by Senior Seat Quanming of Xuzhou, “What about when a single hair pierces multiple holes?”

The Master said, “It would surely take ten thousand years.”

[Quanming] said, “What about after ten thousand years?”

The Master said, “Passing the examinations is up to your passing the examinations; excelling at them is up to your excelling at them.”

Ming subsequently asked Yin of Jingshan (i.e., Jingshan Hongyin). Yin said, “Shiny shoes are up to your shiny shoes; the fruit forming is up to your fruit forming.”

6. **cultivating the cause and experiencing the fruit** (*shuin kanka*): A standard Buddhist expression for the cause and effect relationship of karma — that one will reap what one sows.

7. **public realm** (*kugai*): A term regularly used to refer to the common spaces of a monastery shared by the great assembly (*daishu*); here, however, more likely referring to the objective, or shared, world beyond the private experience of the subject.

8. **“Itself” is oneself; “oneself” is definitely “you”** (*ji wa ko nari, ko wa, hitsujo kore ji nari*): Dōgen is here commenting on the glyph *ji* (“itself”) in Bodhidharma’s phrase “ripening naturally of itself” (*jinen jō*), identifying it first with the term *jiko* (“oneself”), and then with the second person pronoun *ji* in his quotation of Hongyin: “The fruit forming is up to your fruit forming” (*kekka nin ji kekka*).

**the four elements and the five aggregates** (*shidai goun*): Standard Buddhist technical terms for the physical and mental constituents of the world. The first refers to the basic types (S. *mahā-bhūta*) of matter: earth, water, fire, and wind; the second, to the groups (S. *skandha*) into which are analyzed the constituents of existence: form (*shiki*; S. *rūpa*), sensation (*ju*; S. *vedanā*), perception (*sō*; S. *saṃjñā*), formations (*gyō*; S. *samskāra*), and consciousness (*shiki*; S. *viñāna*). Here, as elsewhere, Dōgen seems to be using these terms to refer to what we might call the psychophysical organism, much as he uses the expression “body and mind” (*shinjin*).

9. **Since it uses the “true person of no rank”** (*shitoku mui shinnin no yue ni*): The grammatical subject is unexpressed; presumably, the “itself” (*ji*) of the preceding sentence. The term “true person” (*shinnin*) first occurs in Chapter 6 of the *Zhuangzi*, to describe the ideal sage of ancient times; it subsequently became a term of art in Daoism, as well as Buddhism, for the true nature of the person, and/or for one who has realized that nature. “The true person of no rank” (*mui shinnin*) is an expression coined by Linji Yixuan (d. 866); see, e.g., *Linji lu*, T.1985.47:496c10:

Ascending the hall, [Linji] said, “In this lump of red meat, there is a true person of no rank.”

Dōgen regularly uses the term *shitoku* in the sense “to make use of,” as seen, for example, in the well-known Chan expression “make use of the twelve times” (*shitoku jūni ji*) (attributed to Zhaozhou Congshen [778-897]); see, e.g., Lian-deng huiyao, 136:60c7-8.

**that it is indefinite** (*fu hitsu naru*): In contrast here to the “definitely” (*hitsujō*) of the preceding sentence. The point would seem to be that the “itself” (*ji*) of Bodhidharma’s verse is at once the definite person (the “you” of “the four elements and the five aggregates”) and the indefinite “true person of no rank.”

10. **“Naturally” is consent** (*nen wa chōko nari*): Dōgen is here commenting on the glyph *nen* in the adverb *jinen* (translated here “naturally of itself”) and shifting its sense to “so be it,” or “so it is.” The nature of the “consent,” or “approval,” in question is unclear; perhaps, affirmation of the “indefiniteness” of what happens “naturally of itself.”

11. **utpala flower** (*ubarage*): A flower variously identified, most often taken as a blue lotus or other type of water lily. The image here of the *utpala* blooming in fire derives from a line in the *Shixuan tan* of Tong’an Changcha (dates unknown) Dōgen will quote below in section 3.

12. **flicker** (*sanka*): A loose translation for a term indicating fire generated by a flint or boring tool, here presumably in contrast to a great conflagration.

13. **old forebear** (*kosen*): Reference to the tenth-century figure Tong’an Changcha, author of the *Shixuan tan*, from which this line is taken (see *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:455c10).

14. **vessel world** (*ki seken*): S. *bhājana-loka*; a standard Buddhist term for the physical environment understood as a receptacle for living beings.

15. **“a flower opens, and the world arises”** (*kekai sekai ki*): A well-known line from the transmission verse of Bodhidharma’s master, Prajñātāra (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:216b1216):

The Venerable [Prajñātāra] addressed [Bodhidharma], saying, “The Tathagata passed the true dharma eye to the Great Kasyapa. In this way, it has developed down to me. I now bequeath it to you. Hear my gatha:

From the mind ground, grow the seeds;  
From phenomena, emerges the principle.

When the fruit ripens, bodhi is complete;  
A flower opens, and the world arises.”

16. **“three and three in front; three and three in back”** (*zen sansan go sansan*): Or, perhaps, “three and three of the former; three and three of the latter.” Generally interpreted to mean an incalculable number: so, e.g., SK.2:211:

“Three and three in front, three and three in back” does not mean “three and three are six”: it means “boundless.”

From a well-known kōan, usually known as “Mañjusrī’s three and three before and after” (*Monju zengo sansan*), appearing in several Chan collections (see, e.g., *Biyān lu*, T.2003.48:173b29-c8, case 35). Here is the version recorded in Dōgen’s *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:194-195, case 127):

Wenshu [Mañjusrī] asked Wuzhao [Asanga], “Where have you come from?”

Zhao said, “From the south.”

Shu said, “How is the buddha dharma maintained in the south?”

Zhao said, “Few bhiksus in [this age of]

the final dharma keeps the precepts.”

Shu said, “How big is the samgha?”

Zhao said, “Maybe three hundred, maybe five hundred.”

Zhao asked Wenshu, “How is the buddha dharma maintained around here?”

Shu said, “Common people and sages reside together, dragons and snakes intermingle.”

Zhao said, “How big is the samgha?”

Shu said, “Three and three in front, three and three in back.”

The meaning of Wenshu’s final answer is unclear and has been given various interpretations. In the context, the most obvious would seem to be “three each of the former pair [i.e., ‘common people and sages’], three each of the latter pair [‘dragons and snakes’]”; but most commentary takes it as indicating an indefinite or infinite number.

17. **thicket of things** (*shinra*): A metaphor for the myriad things of the universe, based on the image of a dense growth of trees. The subject of this sentence is unexpressed; the translation takes it as “a flower opens.”

**raised them to towering heights** (*iyoyoka ni seru*): The word *iyoyoka* represents an earlier form of *iyoyaka* (“to tower”).

18. **any given time** (*uji*): Dōgen uses here a term — commonly meaning “at one time,” “sometimes,” “once upon a time,” etc. — famous as the title of his “Shōbōgenzō *uji*.”

19. **hundred grasses** (*hyakusō*): A term regularly used in Chan texts for the myriad phenomena of the world.

20. **trees of gold, silver, copper, iron, coral, spha-tika, and so on** (*kon gon dō tetsu sango hari ju tō*): While the trees in Amitābha’s land of Sukhāvātī are said to be of the seven precious substances, the members of this list of six do not seem to correspond to any standard set. The last item, *sphatika* (transliterated here as *hari*), is typically identified as crystal.

21. **trees of earth, water, fire, wind, and space** (*chi sui ka fū kū ju*): Trees of the five elements (*godai*), discussed especially in esoteric Buddhism.

22. **dried-up trees** (*koboku*): A term appearing often in Chan literature as a metaphor for the seemingly lifeless thing or person, as in the phrase “dried-up trees and dead ashes” (*koboku shikai*).

23. **the World-Honored One spoke of “flowers in empty space”** (*seson dō, kokū ge*): Or “of empty sky flowers,” a term synonymous with “sky flowers” (*kūge*). Dōgen shifts here to Chinese, as if quoting a source; though it is unclear whether he had a specific text in mind, given that he refers just below to “world flowers” and identifies “the buddha worlds” with sky flowers, he may have been thinking here of a line from the *Yuanjue jing* (T.842.17:915b6):

All the buddha worlds are like flowers in empty space.

24. **little hearing and little seeing** (*shōmon shōken*): I.e., little learning.

25. **world flowers** (*sekai ge*): Likely reflecting the phrase, quoted above (section 3), “a flower opens, and the world arises” (*kekai sekai ki*).

26. **vehicle ridden by the buddhas and ancestors** (*busso no shojō*): Or perhaps simply “what the buddhas and ancestors avail themselves of” — i.e., the subject matter of Buddhist study.

**buddha dharmas** (*shobuppō*): Probably, “the teachings of the buddha.”

27. **the Tathagata said sky flowers are what is seen by clouded eyes** (*nyorai dō no, eigen shoken wa kūge*): “Clouded eyes” (*eigen*) refers to a medical condition, often identified as cataracts, in which the vision is blurred or, as here, sees spots before the eyes. Dōgen’s report of the Tathāgata’s words, given in Japanese, does not seem to be a quotation of any particular source. Reference to the sky flowers seen by clouded eyes can be found in several sūtras; see, e.g., *Dacheng suizhuan xuanshuo zhufa jing* (T.652.15:774c2-4):

[The Buddha said,] “When the eyes of living beings are diseased, sky flowers appear. The appearance and disappearance of the flowers are what is seen by the diseased eye. Once the cloudiness of the eye is removed, the sky flowers also disappear.”

**inverted eyes of living beings** (*shujō no tendo no manako*): I.e., the distorted view of ordinary people. “Inverted” translates *tendō* (*S. viparyasta*), a technical term in Buddhism for perspectives that are “upside down” — i.e., that see things as just the opposite of what they really are.

28. **three realms and six paths** (*sangai rokudō*): The levels of existence in samsāra: the realms of desire, form, and formlessness; and the six stations of rebirth in samsāra: deva, asura, human, animal, ghost, and hell being.

**with a buddha or without a buddha** (*ubutsu mubutsu*): Translating the most common senses

of these terms, used in reference to times or places in which a buddha is or is not present. Some commentators take the two terms here in a more metaphysical sense, as “buddhas that exist” and “buddhas that transcend existence.”

29. **“the sky originally has no flowers”** (*kū hon mu ge*): A line often used by Chinese Buddhist authors; see, e.g., *Yuanjue jing lüeshu* (T.1795.39:533c29) by Guifeng Zongmi; *Zongjing lu* (T.2016.48:670b21) by Yongming Yanshou.

30. **the occasion, from beginning to end** (*jisetsu shishu*): A phrase that could be interpreted either as “the entire occasion from start to finish” or as “the occasion and its beginning and end” [i.e., the appearance and disappearance of the sky flower].

31. **robes, thrones, and rooms** (*e za shitsu*): Allusion to a verse in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:32a18-19):

Should a person preach this sūtra,  
Let him enter the rooms of the tathāgata,  
Don the robe of the tathāgata,  
And sit on the throne of the tathāgata.

32. **Holding up the flower and blinking the eyes** (*nenge shi shunmoku suru*): From the fixed phrase *nenge shunmoku* (“to hold up a flower and blink the eyes”), a reference to the act of the Buddha Sākyamuni in some versions of the famous story of his transmission of Zen on Vulture Peak to the First Ancestor, Mahākāśyapa. Though the story is, of course, ubiquitous in the Chinese Chan literature, this particular phrase seems to become common only in Japan.

**kōans in which the “clouded eye” and “sky flower” are realized** (*eigen kūge no genjō suru*

*kōan*): I.e., cases expressing the clouded eye and sky flower. Dōgen invokes here the “realized *kōan*” (*genjō kōan*) that appears so often in his writing.

33. **“treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāna”** (*shōbōgenzō nehan myōshin* 正法眼藏涅槃妙心): Reference to the words of the Buddha Sākyamuni describing what he was transmitting on Vulture Peak to the First Ancestor, Mahākāśyapa; the essence of the Buddhist teaching, transmitted through the lineage of the buddhas and ancestors.

34. **the dharma body, the self-nature** (*hosshin jishō*): Or “the self-nature of the dharma body”; the translation follows Kawamura’s punctuation. The term *jishō* refers to the ultimate nature of a thing, what it is in itself.

**sky flower’s “opening five petals”** (*kūge no kai goyō*): Recalling Bodhidharma’s verse, in section 1, above.

35. **The Buddha Sākyamuni** (*Shakamuni butsu*): Quoting the *Sūrangama-sūtra* (*Shoulengyan jing*, T.945.19:120b29-c1). The *sūtra* text gives the homophonous “cataract” (*yi*), rather than Dōgen’s “clouded” (*yi*).

36. **To think that, once the sky flowers cease, they should no longer exist** (*hitotabi kuge yaminaba, sara ni aru bekarazu to omou*): A view expressed in the passage of the *Sūrangama-sūtra* from which Dōgen quoted in the preceding section (*Shoulengyan jing*, T.945.19:120c3-4):

To see the flowers vanish from the sky is already an inverted view; to expect them to reappear is real lunacy.

37. **great matter** (*daiji*): The ultimate purpose of Buddhism, as understood especially through the passage in the *Lotus Sūtra* where it is defined as leading all beings to buddhahood (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:7a21-28).

**planting, maturing, and dropping off** (*ju juku datsu*): A horticultural metaphor, used in the literature especially of the Tiantai tradition, for three stages of Buddhist spiritual development based on the *Lotus Sūtra*: to plant the seed of faith in the *sūtra* (*geshu*); to develop one’s wholesome roots through practice (*jōjaku*); and to attain liberation for the sake of all beings (*tokudatsu*).

38. **commoner students** (*bonbu no gakusha*): I.e., students of Buddhism who are still among the “common people” (*S. prthagjana*) not yet advanced to the higher, “noble” (*S.ārya*) stages of the Buddhist path.

**where the yang energy resides** (*yōki no sumeru tokoro*): In accordance with the common understanding of Chinese cosmology that heaven is yang and earth is yin.

**for example** (*keryō suraku wa*): Alternatively, one might take this as “what they casually assume.”

39. **four elements as fabricator and fabricated** (*nōzō shozō no shidai*): The expression *nōzō shozō* most often refers to the four elements as the “fabricator” and the material world as the “fabricated.” Here, the four elements themselves seem to be both fabricator and fabricated, perhaps in the sense that the four elements both produce the material world and are themselves produced from the characteristics of hardness (earth), fluidity (water), heat (fire), and motion (wind).

**original awakening, the original nature, and the like** (*hongaku honshō tō*): The former term

refers to the nature of awakening inherent in all beings, in contrast to the “initial awakening” (*shikaku*) attained as a result of Buddhist practice. The latter term refers to the fundamental reality of something; roughly synonymous with “self-nature” (*jishō*) (seen above, section 6).

**dharmas of the vessel world** (*ki sekai no shohō*): I.e., the phenomena of the physical environment.

40. **the vessel world “abides in its dharma position” because of the dharmas** (*shohō ni yorite ki sekai wa jū hōi nari*): I.e., the physical world is constant in the sense that it is made up of a series of momentary phenomena. Dōgen here invokes one of the most cited lines in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:9b10):

The dharmas abide in their dharma positions; the marks of the world constantly abide.

The translation here follows a common traditional reading of Kumārajīva’s version of the *Lotus*.

41. **person of original awakening** (*hongaku nin*); **a person of wondrous awakening** (*myōkaku nin*): A contrasting pair: the person understood as awakened by reason of the buddha nature inherent in consciousness, and the person who has attained the unsurpassed perfect awakening of buddhahood.

**person of the buddhas** (*shobutsu nin*); a person of the three realms (*sangai nin*): Another contrasting pair: the person who ranks among the buddhas, and the person who belongs to the threefold world of rebirth.

**person beyond the buddha** (*butsu kōjō nin*): A common term in Chan texts for one who, like the awakened Chan master, has transcended the

distinction between the human and the buddha.

42. **it could not be the case that the clouded flowers are delusive dharmas** (*eiga no mōbō naru koto, shika aru bekarazaru nari*): The argument would seem to be that the claim that all our knowledge is false is incoherent, since (a) we would have no knowledge against which to contrast it, and (b) the claim would apply to the claim itself.

43. **dharmas of our awakening** (*go no shuhō*); **dharmas of our delusion** (*mei no shuhō*): I.e., the objects of our awakened consciousness and the objects of our deluded consciousness.

44. **clouded eyes are equal** (*eigen byōdō*); **clouded eyes are unborn** (*eigen mushō*); “the real marks of the dharmas” (*shoho jissō*): The first two adjectives are common Buddhist descriptions of ultimate reality — that it is without distinctions, and that it does not arise and cease as do the dharmas we ordinarily perceive. The third expression introduces a famous phrase in Chinese Buddhist literature, best known from Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:5c10-11):

Only buddhas with buddhas can exhaustively investigate the real marks of the dharmas. Dōgen discusses the phrase at length in his “Shōbōgenzō shohō jissō.”

45. **buddha eye** (*butsu gen*); **ancestor eye** (*sogen*); **eye of the way** (*dōgen*): The first term here is a standard Buddhist expression for the wisdom of a buddha, the highest of a commonly encountered set of “five eyes” (*gogen*). The content varies somewhat, but the most common version

lists (1) the physical eye (*nikugen*); (2) the deva eye (*tengen*) that enables one to see the future rebirths of sentient beings; (3) the wisdom eye (*egen*) that enables one to see the emptiness of all things; (4) the dharma eye (*hōgen*) that enables bodhisattvas to find the appropriate teaching for leading others to awakening; (5) the omniscient buddha eye (*butsugen*). The “ancestor eye” (*sogen*) is no doubt modeled on the “buddha eye” and used especially in reference to the wisdom of the Chan masters. “The eye of the way” (*dōgen*) is another standard Buddhist term, sometimes listed with the five eyes, for the wisdom especially of the advanced bodhisattva.

**eye of the blind** (*katsugen*): A term that can also mean “one-eyed.”

seen in three thousand years (*sanzen nen no shoken*): Perhaps an allusion to the udumbara flower (*udonge*), said to blossom only once every three thousand years.

46. **“The sky originally has no flowers”** (*kū hon muge*): Curiously, Dōgen repeats here as the words of the Buddha the phrase he seems to reject above, section 6, as the words of the foolish. While common enough in other texts, this exact phrase does not seem to occur in any extant sutra. However, a very similar expression, “the sky from the beginning has no flowers” (*kū gen mu ge*) does appear in the *Sūrangama-sūtra* (*Shoulengyan jing*, T.945.19:120c2), in the passage on the diseased eye cited above, Note 27.

47. **damson** (*ri*); **plum** (*bai*): The former (*Prunus insititia*), called *sumomo* in Japanese, is also known as the Damask plum, or plum of Damascus; the latter may refer to several trees of the genus *Prunus*, especially *Prunus mume*, called

*ume* in Japanese, or the Chinese plum.

48. **“the plum yesterday had no flowers, but the plum in spring has flowers”** (*bai saku mu ke, baishun u ke*): Dōgen here shifts to Chinese syntax, though there is no evident Chinese source. The line is sometimes read, “In the yesterday of the plum, there were no flowers; in the spring of the plum, there are flowers.”

49. **weak thinking and a small view** (*tanryo shōken*): Both expressions are a bit unusual. The latter is likely synonymous with the more common *shōken*; the former (literally, “short thought”) is the opposite of the common *enryo* (literally, “extended, or long-term, thinking”), translated in the next clause as “think more fully.”

50. **An ancestral master** (*soshi*): From the transmission verse of Bodhidharma’s successor, the Second Ancestor, Huike (487–593) (*Jingde chuan-deng lu*, T.2076.51:220c29):

Originally, there are no seeds;

The flowers, too, have never arisen.

51. **the sky, too, has never sky-ed** (*kū yaku fuzo kū*): Or, less playfully, “the sky, too, has never been the sky.”

52. **Refined Talent Zhang Zhuo** (*Chō Setsu shūai*): “Refined Talent” renders *shūsai*, a reference to one who has passed the examination for civil service (C. *jinshi*). Zhang Zhuo is a ninth-century lay figure (dates unknown), who left a versé marking his spiritual insight under Chan master Shishuang Qingzhu (807–888). In the following sections, Dōgen will quote and comment on each line of the verse, beginning here with the first

line. Here is the entire verse as recorded in the *Liandeng huiyao* (ZZ.136:794a11-14):

The radiance shines silently, throughout the sands of the Ganges.

Commoners, sages, all the animate — together are my family.

A single moment of thought unborn, the entire body appears.

The slightest movement of the six senses, and it's obscured by clouds.

The afflictions cut off and cleared away, the disease only doubles.

Tending toward true suchness — this, too, is a mistake.

Conforming to worldly conditions, there are no obstructions.

Nirvāna and birth and death — they're flowers in the sky.

53. **“sands of the Ganges”** (*gasha*): Also written *gōgasha*; a standard metaphor for something too numerous to count; in this case, no doubt, “worlds equal to the sands of the Ganges.”

54. **“samgha hall, buddha hall, kitchen, and mountain gate”** (*sōdō butten zuku sanmon*): I.e., the buildings of the monastery, the last of which is also known as the “triple (or ‘threefold’) gate” (*sanmon*). Recalling a saying attributed to Yunmen Wenyan (864-949) (quoted at *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, case 81, DZZ.5:166; and see, e.g., *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T.1997.47:803a25-27):

Yunmen addressed the assembly saying, “People all have a radiance, but when they look for it, they can't see it in the darkness. What is this radiance?”

The assembly had no response, so he

himself said for them, “Samgha hall, buddha hall, kitchen, and triple gate.”

55. **Commoners, sages, all the animate** (*bonsho ganrei*): I.e., ordinary humans, spiritual adepts, and all sentient beings.

56. **“A single moment of thought unborn, the entire body appears”** (*ichinen fushō zentai gen*): Or “when a single thought does not occur, the entirety is present.”

57. **two threes** (*ni san*): I.e., six in number. **Front and back, three and three** (*zengo sansan*): For the source, see above, Note 16.

58. **Since their moving is like Mount Sumeru** (*dō sude ni nyo Sumi sen naru ga yue ni*): Mount Sumeru, the mountain at the center of the world in Buddhist cosmology, is often used as a symbol of the unmoving — as when the meditator is told to sit “like Mount Sumeru.” The translation assumes the subject is the movement of the six sense organs, but it could also be taken simply as movement in the abstract.

59. **“The afflictions cut off and cleared away”** (*danjo bonnō*): I.e., to eradicate the spiritual defilements (S. *klesa*).

60. **wisdom and eradication** (*chidan*): Technical terms for the two prime desiderata of the Buddhist path: the wisdom of bodhi and the eradication of the *klesa* enabling nirvana; here used in reference to the verse's *danjo* (“to eradicate,” translated here “cut off and cleared away”).

61. **“Tending toward true suchness”** (*shu kō shin-*

nyo): I.e., seeking to reach the ultimate reality of things, their “suchness,” or “thusness” (S. *tathatā*).

62. **Conforming to worldly conditions** (*zuijun se'en*): I.e., going along with circumstances.

63. **“obstructed by the eye”** (*higen ge*): Likely reflecting a saying of Fayan Wenyi (885-958) (see, e.g., *Liandeng huiyao*, ZZ.136:878a5-6) that Dōgen records in his *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ. 5:186, case 111). Fayan was digging out a well blocked by sand, in order to open the “eye of the spring” (*quanyan*). He asked a monk,

“When the eye of the spring doesn’t flow, it’s the sand that blocks it. When the eye of the way doesn’t know, what is it that blocks it?”

The monk had no reply; so the Master answered for him, “It’s blocked by the eye.”

64. **anuttara-samyak-sambodhi** (*anokutara sanmyaku sanbodai*): The unsurpassed, perfect awakening of a buddha.

65. **“Birth and death” are “the true human body”** (*shōji wa, jinjitsu nintai*): After the words of Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135) (Yuanwu yulu, T.1997.47:740b23-24):

Now, I ask, what are birth and death; coming and going; earth, water, fire, and wind; sound, smell, taste, and touch? They are all this true human body.

66. **this “nirvāna and birth and death” are those dharmas** (*kono nehan shōji wa, sono hō nari*): The referent of “those dharmas” (*sono hō*) is unclear: perhaps, simply the dharmas of “nirvāna and birth and death”; alternatively, the dharmas of “*anuttara-samyak-sa bodhi*” and

“the true human body,” respectively.

67. **“roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, flowers and fruit, lustrous and colored”** (*kon kyō shi yo ke ka kō shiki*): From a line in the *Lotus Sūtra* describing the varied plants of the world watered by the same rain (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9: 19c26-27).

68. **“he sees the three realms not as the three realms”** (*funyo sangai, ken o sangai*): Reference to a passage in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhuā jing*, T.262.9:42c13-15):

The Tathāgata views the marks of the three realms as they really are. There is no birth and death, whether withdrawal or emergence; there is no one remaining in the world or passing into extinction. They are not reality or vanity; they are not thus or different. He sees the three realms not as the three realms.

69. **“real marks of the dharmas”** (*shohō jissō*): See section 10, above.

70. **Chan Master Lingxun of Mount Furong in Fuzhou in the Land of the Great Song** (*Daisōkoku Fukushū Fuyōzan Reikun zenji*): I.e., Furong Linxun (dates unknown). This dialogue can be found at *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:280c23-26.

**Chan Master Zhizhen of Guizong Monastery** (*Kisuji Shishin zenji*): I.e., Guizong Zhichang (dates unknown).

71. **The flowers and fruits of the “eye sky”** (*genkū no keka*): A play on Guizong’s line, “A single cloudiness in the eye; the sky flowers flutter down” (*ichi ei zai gen kūge rantsui*), suggesting that it could be read, “A single cloudiness in the

eye sky, and flowers flutter down.”

72. **“cloudiness,” “a manifestation of full function”** (*ei ya zenki gen*): This and the following three clauses are variations on a verse comment by Yuanwu Keqin (*Yuanwu Fogua chanshi yulu*, T.1997.47:793c6). When Daowu Yuanzhi (769-835) was asked at a funeral whether what was in the coffin was alive or dead, he said, “Alive, I don’t say; dead, I don’t say.” On this Yuanwu commented,

Alive, a manifestation of full function;

Dead, a manifestation of full function.

73. **“Flutter down” is “the thousand eyes”; it is “eyes throughout the body”** (*rantsui wa sengen nari, tsūshingen nari*): Allusion to the thousand hands and eyes of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the saying, by Daowu Yuanzhi, that “His body throughout is hands and eyes.” Dōgen records the source in his *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:182, case 105) and discusses it at length in his “Shobōgenzō Kannon.”

74. **The words “eye flower” are always clear** (*genge no dōshu, kanarazu kaimei nari*): A tentative translation; some would read the predicate as “necessarily clarifies.” In his use here of *kaimei*, Dōgen may be playing on the image of the “clear eye.”

75. **Great Master Guangzhao of Mount Langya** (*Rōya san Kōshō daishi*): I.e., Langya Huijue (dates unknown). His verse can be found at *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* (ZZ.136:79a2-5).

76. **full of style like this** (*inmo tei fūryū*): Also read *ei fūryū*. A fixed expression appearing else-

where in the *Shōbōgenzō*, where it reflects a line of verse by Tiantong Rujing (1162-1227) (*Rujing chanshi yulu*, T.2002A.48:122c18):

Letting go and holding on, full of style.

77. **vital artery of “earth flowers”** (*chige no meimyaku*): I.e., transmission of the meaning of “earth flowers.” The term *meimyaku* (“vital artery”) occurs often in the *Shōbōgenzō*, in the senses both of the “lifeblood” and the “bloodline” (especially of the lineage of the buddhas and ancestors).

78. **There is a saying** (*dōshu ari*): Dōgen is here introducing the quotation that follows in the next section.

79. **Chan Master Huiche of Mount Shimen in the Land of the Great Song** (*Daisōkoku Sekimon san no Etetsu zenji*): I.e., Shimen Huiche (early Song, dates unknown). The passage quoted here appears in *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* (ZZ.135:842 b11-12).

**in the line of Liangshan** (*Ryōzange*): Thought to refer to Liangshan Yuanguan (dates unknown), a disciple of Tong’an Daopi.

80. **“There’s no place to buy them in the entire land”** (*gaikoku bai mumon*): Taking *mumon* (“no gate”) to suggest a shop that sells “sky flowers”; other readers take it to mean “no way” to buy.

81. The Tounji MS shares an identical colophon.

82. **Ayō**: I.e., Awa, present-day Tokushima Prefecture. **Yōken**: I.e., Kinkō Yōken (1437–1513?).



## My Footnotes on Zazen (20) “The question of ‘thinking’ in zazen”(2)

Rev. Issho Fujita

Up until now, I have already spoken repeatedly about Shakyamuni Buddha after he sat under the tree and had determined the limits of thought-free meditation. If after having sat under the tree he had straightaway passed on zazen as simply a thought-free activity, then it must be said that zazen would have been distorted and taken a nose dive. In actuality, however, it isn't the case that this sort of distorted and cracked-up zazen has not arisen. As an example of this, let's turn our attention to the two pair of verses in the *Platform Sutra*.

The first pair is the verse of Shenhsiu (Jinshu) and that of the Sixth Ancestor Huineng (Eno):

The body is the tree of enlightenment,  
The mind is like a bright mirror on a stand.  
Polish it diligently, over and over again,  
Not letting it gather dust.

Enlightenment is originally not a tree,  
There is no bright mirror on a stand.  
Essentially there is not a single thing.  
Where then can dust collect?

The second pair of verses were written by Zen Master Wolun and the Sixth Ancestor Huineng:

Wolun has skills

For cutting off 100 thoughts.

When mind is not aroused in the face of objects,

Enlightenment grows day by day.

Huineng has no skills

To cut off 100 thoughts.

In the face of objects, mind is aroused again and again.

How then can enlightenment grow?

In placing these two pair of verses side by side, it is easy to understand that the standpoint of the Sixth Ancestor Huineng and those of Shenhsiu and Wolun are completely different in quality.

Nevertheless, it is far easier with our common sense to understand what Shenhsiu and Wolun are saying. It is rather easy for us to accept the idea that Zen practice is to continually make effort to prevent dust (mental afflictions) from collecting on the body and mind or that the objective of practice is to make enlightenment grow by having a skill such that in any situation we will keep all sorts of thoughts from arising. This is aside from the question of whether it would be difficult or easy to actually do these things. And yet, according to the Sixth Ancestor Huineng, all the things that are thought to be the premise of training – body, mind, dust, sweeping away – are removed all at once with “Essentially there is not a single thing” and “Huineng has no skills” and “How then can enlightenment grow?” If the objective of our effort is removed, we are at a loss and don't know what to do. We are likely to want to say, “What on earth should I do?”

In the Sixth Ancestor Huineng's harsh comment of Wolun's verse, he said, "What his verse is saying is proof that he doesn't really understand the mind. If he tries to put that into practice, it will only add to his bondage." If we consider Shakyamuni Buddha's zazen under the [bodhi] tree after he had thrown away meditation based on the principle of learning together with the Sixth Ancestor's two verses which address the distorted and fallen sort of zazen of their times, isn't it possible for us to understand them as a declaration for returning to the source? In *Shobogenzo Zazenshin*, Dogen Zenji also seems to respond to this where he calls zazen in which a person earnestly strives to stop the movement of thought and maintain stillness as "...vainly endeavoring to stop thinking and become absorbed in serenity." Continuing, he makes a harsh criticism about this sort of zazen meditation, "How could those people have received the one-to-one transmission of the buddhas and ancestors?" Another quote related to this is when Dogen Zenji says, "However, careless and stupid people in recent times say that the endeavor of zazen is complete when the mind is quiet as zazen is a place of calmness. This opinion is beneath even students of the Lesser Vehicle. It is inferior even to the vehicles of humans and celestial beings. How can we call such people students of the Buddhadharma?" Dogen Zenji is saying that those people who think that the psychological state where random, unwanted thoughts have completely disappeared is the state of peace and comfort that should be aimed for is the opinion of those who do not understand the Buddhadharma.

Again in *Zazenshin*, Dogen Zenji says, "Even

since ancient times, few people have known that zazen is zazen. On the mountains of the Great Kingdom of Song China today, even many of the heads of high-ranking monasteries do not know zazen and do not study it. There are only a few who clearly understand it." If we look at the point he is lamenting – Shakyamuni Buddha... Bodhidharma... the Sixth Ancestor Huineng – we can see that the zazen that had been correctly transmitted from master to disciple had already been lost by this time. For Dogen Zenji, no matter how much a person sits in zazen, if this is done from the standpoint of Shenhsiu or Zen Master Wolun, or if a person practices zazen with that sort of attitude, then that is not zazen but something else (learning Zen) which was popular at that time. And so, no matter who much you might say that the sitting form is similar, it simply had to be said with our common sense that that was not the one-to-one transmission of the buddhas' and ancestors' zazen.

Having renounced ascetic practice and then sitting under a tree, this became an opportunity for Shakyamuni Buddha to recollect sitting under a tree when he was young. It has been written that "While the father of the Shakya clan was holding a ceremony, [Siddhartha Gautama] remembered sitting in the cool shade of a Jambu tree. At that time, he let go of all desires and gave up all bad things. In the midst of coarse and minute thoughts, he knew there is joy and comfort that arises from the distance of having reached the first level of Zen and dwelling there." In his sitting, it was not the case that thought has completely stopped, but that "coarse and minute thoughts" accompanied him. In the original Pali texts, this phrase is written with the

words “vittaka” (coarse thoughts) and “vicara” (minute thoughts). This has also been translated into English as “accompanied by directed thought and evaluation,” so there is no mistake there was some sort of thinking activity taking place [in his meditation]. And so, there is no reason to expect that after having given up ascetic practice and then when sitting beneath the tree in zazen, that Shakyamuni Buddha had stopped all thinking.

Nevertheless, for some reason in Buddhist doctrine as it was taught in posterity, there were said to be three more steps above zazen (meditation) in the world of desire. These were zazen in the world of form, and further above that, zazen in the formless world. The meditation that Shakyamuni Buddha had spontaneously reached as a child when he sat under a tree was later regarded as “beginning Zen” in which coarse and minute mental functions accompanied him. However at “second Zen”

and other higher levels, it was said that both coarse and minute mental functions had disappeared. In other words, it was thought that the zazen he had experienced as a child was not yet ripe or was incomplete because there were still mental activities accompanying him. Since “beginning Zen” is placed at the very lowest level of Zen meditation in this sort of step-by-step way of thinking, it isn’t surprising that it is considered desirable to work hard at one’s practice in order to ascend to a higher level. Consequently, people have been encouraged to practice Zen mediation in such a way that they are able to stop coarse and minute thoughts. It was in this way that the zazen which Shakyamuni Buddha himself had originally experienced in his youth where coarse and minute mental activities accompanied zazen and he was confident that “this is certainly the way to enlightenment” happened to become something that was later denied in Buddhism.

## NEWS

### **September 16, 2020**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held on Zoom.

### **October 14, 2020**

North America Soto Zen Conference was held on Zenshuji in Los Angeles, U.S.A. and on Zoom.

### **December 16, 2020**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held on Zoom.

### **February 20, 2021**

Hawaii Soto Zen Conference was held on Zoom.

### **March 16, 2021**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held on Zoom.



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Please address all inquiries or comments to: Soto Zen Buddhism International Center  
633 Fallon Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94401 Phone: 650-344-4021 Fax: 650-344-4022