CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE (Dai sanjūisshō 第三十一章)

ROOT CASE【本則】

The Thirty-first Ancestor, Chan Master Dayi,¹ paid obeisance to Great Master Jianzhi [Sengcan], and said,²

願和尚慈悲、乞與解脱法門。祖曰、誰縛汝。師曰、無人縛。祖曰、何更求解脱乎。師於言下大悟。


PIVOTAL CIRCUMSTANCES【機縁】

The Master’s personal name was Daoxin.³

His family was the Sima Clan. Generation after generation, they had resided in Henei. Subsequently, they moved to Guangji District in Qizhou Prefecture. From birth, the Master was exceptional. From his youth, he had yearned for the various gates of liberation in the emptiness schools, just as if he had conditioning from a previous life.

¹ Chan Master Dayi (C. Dayi Chanshi 大醫禪師; J. Daii Zenji). This is the posthumous honorary title of Daoxin 道信 (J. Dōshin; 580–651), the Fourth Ancestor of the Chan/Zen Lineage in China.
² said (C. yue; J. etsu, iwaku 曰く). The block of Chinese text that follows these words is nearly identical to a passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Thirtieth Ancestor, Great Master Sengcan” (T2076.51.221c19-21).
³ Daoxin (Dōshin 道信). The block of text that follows this name is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of an identical Chinese passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Thirty-first Ancestor, Great Master Daoxin”:《景德傳燈錄》姓司馬氏世居河內。後徙於蕲州之廣濟縣。師生而超異。幼慕空宗教解脫門。宛如宿習。(T 2076.51.222b2-4).
At the beginning of his fourteenth year, he consulted with the Great Master Third Ancestor, saying, “I pray for your compassion, Reverend” ...and so on, down to... At these words, the Master greatly awakened.

[Daoxin] did manual labor for nine years. Later he received the precepts in Jizhou Prefecture, attended upon [Sengcan], and was especially deferential. The Ancestor [Sengcan] frequently tested him in subtle ways. Knowing his karma had ripened, he [Sengcan] thereupon entrusted him [Daoxin] with the robe and dharma.
The Master

The Master carried on the ancestral style and concentrated his mind without sleeping or allowing his ribs to reach a mattress for nearly sixty years. In the 13th year of the Daye Era of the Sui Dynasty, leading a congregation of followers, he arrived in Qizhou Prefecture. He encountered a group of bandits who had surrounded the city for seventy days without a break. The populace was terrified. The Master took pity on them and taught them, having them recite “mahā-prajñā.” When the horde of thieves gazed at the outer battlements of the city walls, it was as if there were divine soldiers on them. Thereupon they said to each other, “There certainly must be an extraordinary person in the city. We should not attack.” They gradually withdrew. During the Senior Wood Year of the Monkey in the Wude Era of the Tang Dynasty, the Master returned to Qizhou Prefecture. That spring he served as abbot on Mount Potou. Student monks gathered like clouds.

---

1 The Master (Shi 師). The block of text that follows this word is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of a nearly identical Chinese passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Thirty-first Ancestor, Great Master Daoxin”:

《景德傳燈錄》嗣祖風。攝心無寐脇不至席者。僅六十年。隋大業十三載。領徒眾至吉州。郡盗。城を囲て七旬解かざるに値て、万衆惶怖す。師、之を愍て教へて摩訶般若を念ぜしむ。時に賊衆、雉堞間を望めば神兵あるが如し。乃ち相謂て曰く。城内必ず異人あらん、攻むべからずと。稍稍に引去る。唐の武徳甲申の歳。師却て蘄に返る。春、破頭山に住す。學侶雲の如く臻る。(T 2076.51.222b4-10).

2 13th year of the Daye Era of the Sui Dynasty (C. Sui Daye shisan zai 隋大業十三載; J. Zui no Daigyō jūsan sai 隋の大業十三載). The year corresponds roughly to 617.

3 having them recite “mahā-prajñā” (maka hannya wo nenzeshimu 摩訶般若を念ぜしむ). This is probably a reference to the Heart Sūtra, the title (and recitation) of which begins with the words “great perfection of wisdom” (C. mohe bore 摩訶般若; J. maka hannya; S. mahā-prajñā).

4 Senior Wood Year of the Monkey in the Wude Era of the Tang Dynasty (C. Tang Wude jiashen sui 唐武徳甲申歳; J. Tō no Butoku kōshin no sai 唐の武徳甲申の歳). The year corresponds roughly to 624.
One day, on the road to Huangmei, he personally accepted Hongren as a disciple, and on the peak of Mount Niutou, he sent out a branch horizontally.1

It was the Junior Water Year of the Rabbit in the Zhenguan Era.2 Emperor Taizong was inclined toward the Master’s [Daoxin’s] flavor of the way and wished to see him. He ordered [Daoxin] to proceed to the capital. Three times, altogether, the Master [Daoxin] expressed his humble refusal, and in the end explained that it was on account of illness. The fourth time, the messenger was commanded, “If, in the end, he will not show himself, then take his head and bring it to me.” The messenger went to the

---

1 on the peak of Mount Niutou, he sent out a branch horizontally (Gozu chōjō ni yoko ni isshi wo dasu 牛頭頂上に横に一枝を出す). The reference here is to Niutou Farong牛頭法融 (594–657), a dharma heir of Daoxin who founded the so-called Oxhead Lineage (C. Niutouzong 牛頭宗; J. Gozushū). That is referred to as a “horizontal offshoot” (C. chengchu 横出; J. ōshutsu) in traditional Chan/Zen lore because the main line of descent is said to lead from the Daoxin to Hongren and Huineng, the Fifth and Sixth Ancestors in China, respectively.

2 Junior Water Year of the Rabbit in the Zhenguan Era (C. Zhenguan guimao sui 貞觀癸卯歳; J. Jōgan kibō no toshi). The year corresponds roughly to 629. The block of text that begins with this line is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of a nearly identical Chinese passage that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Thirty-first Ancestor, Great Ancestor, Zen Master Keizan.”
mountain\textsuperscript{1} and explained this intention. The Master extended his neck to receive the blade. His demeanor was respectful. The messenger, thinking this strange, returned and submitted a report. The emperor sighed and admired him all the more. As a result, he bestowed precious silk, and by that means accomplished what he desired. On the 4th day of the intercalary 9th month of the Junior Metal Year of the Boar in the Yonghui Era\textsuperscript{2} of Emperor Gaozong, [Daoxin] suddenly admonished his followers, saying, “All dharmas, without exception, are liberated. All of you, each on your own, please keep this in mind and disseminate it in the future.” Finishing these words, he sat peacefully and died. His lifespan was seventy-two. His stūpa was built at his monastery. The following year, on the 8th day of the 4th month, the door of the stūpa opened of itself without anything causing it, and his dignified form was as if he were still alive. After that, his followers did not dare shut it again. Later, the title Chan Master Dayi was bestowed on him [by the emperor].

**INVESTIGATION**

Although there truly is no superior or inferior regarding the bearing of the various [Chan/Zen] masters, “from his youth, he had yearned for the various gates of liberation in the emptiness schools, just as if he had conditioning from a previous life.” At that time, he [Daoxin] did not draw near to the imperial court, and he aspired without waverin to pursue the way in practice. From the start he expounded the dharma gate of liberation and, even at the moment of death, opened the dharma gate of liberation to make people realize that, when one passes through it, one is not bound by birth and death. Really, he was the kind of unique, transcending person who is encountered but once in a thousand years.

\textsuperscript{1} mountain (C. shan ；J. san, yama). That is, Mount Potou, the monastery where Daoxin was abbot.

\textsuperscript{2} 4th day of the intercalary 9th month of the Junior Metal Year of the Boar in the Yonghui Era (C. Yonghui xinhai sui run juuyue siri 永微辛亥歲閏九月四日；J. Eiki shin-gai no toshi uru ku gatsu yokka). The date corresponds to October 23, 651.
空門の修練、本より解脱の法門と號す。生佛、尚ほ汝を縛ることなし。更に何の生死の相關るべきかあらん。然れば身心を以て論量すべきに非ず、迷悟を以て辨別すべきに非ず。心と説き境と説き、煩惱菩提と説くとも、悉く是れ自の異名なり。故に山河隔なく、依正別異なし。之に依て、寒の時は闍黎を寒殺し、熱の時は闍黎を熱殺するなり。

The training undertaken in the gate of emptiness has from the beginning been labeled the “dharma gate of liberation.” You are not bound by either ordinary beingness or buddhahood, so beyond that, what connection could you possibly have with birth and death? This being the case, it is not anything that can be debated or calculated in terms of body and mind, and it is not anything that can be distinguished in terms of delusion and awakening. Even if you speak of mind and speak of sense objects, or speak of mental afflictions and bodhi, all of these are just other names for oneself. Therefore, there is no separation between mountains and rivers, and no differentiation between circumstantial and primary recompense. Due to this, “when it is cold, the cold kills the ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills the ācārya.”

更に此関を一超する時、又這箇の道理に非ず。謂ゆる無縛無解、無彼無此。故に箇箇名を立せず、物物形を分ず。故に功勤を及盡す。豈偏正に拘らんや。堂に当て遂に正坐の分なし。縱横兩頭の機に住まること勿れ。

Still, when one jumps over this barrier in a single leap, it is not this principle. As is said, “no bonds, no liberation”; “no there, no here.” Thus, there is no establishing of names for item after item, and no distinguishing of shapes for thing after thing. Thus, one “reaches the very end of meritorious work.” How could one possibly be concerned with “inclined or upright”?

1 this barrier (C. ciguan 此關; J. shikan, kono seki). The “barrier” in question is the kōan just quoted, which ends with the line, “When it is cold, the cold kills the ācārya; when it is hot, the heat kills the ācārya.”

2 As is said (iwayuru 謂ゆる). The first saying appears frequently in the perfection of wisdom genre of sūtras. → “no bonds, no liberation.” The second saying appears in a number of Chan/Zen texts. → “no there, no here.”

3 “reaches the very end of meritorious work” (C. gongxun ji jin 功勤及盡; J. kōkun wo gyūjin 功勤を及盡). Modern Sōtō scholars assume that the expression gongxun 功勤 (J. kōkun) in this context is an abbreviation of “five positions of meritorious work” (C. gongxun wuwei 功勤五位; J. kōkun goi), a formula attributed to Dongshan Liangjie (807–869). However, the saying “reaches the very end of meritorious work” is also attested in Chan/Zen literature independently of that formula.
"In the hall," ultimately, there is nobody assigned to “sit properly.” Do not abide in dualities such as vertical and horizontal. If you are able to see things in this way, you will not even use the name “liberation”; how could you possibly weary of the matter of “bondage”?

然も汝に光明あり、是を見三界と謂ふ。汝が舌、餘味あり、是を調六味と名く。故に處處放光し、時時調錯す。味来り味去るとも、滋味なき所に深き滋味あり。見来り見去るとも、色塵なき所に異色あり。故に玉臣に近くべきなく、身心の坐臥すべきなし。

This being so, you truly have a radiance, which is called “seeing the three realms.” Your tongue has an extra taste, which is named “adjusting the six flavors.” Thus, in place after place you radiate light, and in moment after moment you adjust the seasonings. Although flavors come and flavors go, in the place where there is no flavor there is an unfathomable taste. Though seeing comes and seeing goes, in the place where there are no form-objects there is true form. Thus, there is no need to draw near to the imperial court, and no need to sit or recline in body or mind.

1 “In the hall,” ultimately, there is nobody assigned to “sit properly” (dō ni atatte tsuini shōza no bun nashi 堂に当て遂に正坐の分なし). This alludes to the kōan in which a monk asks Huayan Xiujing what the sacred monk (the image of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva enshrined in the sangha hall, who is portrayed as a monk sitting in meditation) will do when all the other monks must leave the hall to perform communal labor. Of course, a statue cannot get up and leave, so the sacred monk’s “role” (C. fen 分; J. bun) is to “sit properly” (C. zhengzuò 正坐; J. shōza) in the hall. However, the question is framed as a choice between “sitting properly” and joining the rest of the monks in labor, and Xiujing’s answer, in effect, is that the sacred monk does not engage in any such discriminating thought. In the present context, therefore, to “sit properly” means to discriminate. Note that the glyph zheng 正 (J. shō), translated here as “properly,” also appears in the previous sentence as part of the compound “inclined or upright” (C. pianzheng 側正; J. henshō). Even “upright” is to be avoided, because it involves dualistic thinking. → “neither sits properly in the hall, nor crosses over to either of the extreme functions.”

2 “seeing the three realms” (C. jian sanjie 觀三界; J. ken sangai). An expression borrowed from the Lotus Sūtra:

The Tathāgata perceives the true aspect of the three realms exactly as it is. There is no ebb and flow of birth and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering extinction. It is neither real nor vacuous, neither similar nor different. Nor is it what [beings in] the three realms perceive the three realms to be. All such matters the Tathāgata sees clearly, without any error.

《妙法蓮華經》如來如實知見三界之相、無有生死、若退若出、亦無在世及滅度者、非實非虛、非如非異、不如三界見於三界、如是之事、如來明見、無有錯謬。(T 262.9.42c13-16).

3 no need to sit or recline in body or mind (shinjin no za ga subeki nashi 身心の坐臥すべきなし). “Sitting” (C. zuo 坐; J. za) and “reclining” (C. wo 臥; J. ga) are two
If you are able to arrive at this standpoint, the Great Master Fourth Ancestor will be all of you, and all of you will truly be the Great Master Fourth Ancestor. Is this not the gate of “all, without exception, are liberated”\(^1\)? Is this not to “disseminate it in the future”? The door and windows of his seamless stūpa\(^2\) suddenly spring open; his ordinary features, looking serene, appear before us.

Now then, today I again have a humble verse. I would like to comment on the aforementioned episode. Great assembly, do you wish to hear it?

**VERSE ON THE OLD CASE**

Mind is empty; pure cognition has no false or true; herein, one does not know what bondage or liberation is.

Even if we distinguish the five aggregates and four primary elements, seeing and hearing, sound and form are ultimately not of anything “other.”

---

1 “all, without exception, are liberated” (C. xijie jietuo 悉皆解脫; J. shikkai gedatsu). This and the following quotation (“disseminate it in the future”) together comprise a slightly abridged repetition of Daoxin’s final words, quoted in the preceding Pivotal Circumstances section.

2 *door and windows of his seamless stūpa* (muhō tō no kosō 無縫塔の戸窓). A seamless stūpa is a monument made from a single, solid piece of stone, carved in an oval shape. Thus, it has no door or windows, and it cannot contain a corpse (although bones and ashes resulting from cremation can be deposited underneath it). When Keizan says that the “door and windows” of Daoxin’s seamless stūpa spring open, therefore, he can only be speaking metaphorically. That which is “revealed,” likewise, is something that cannot be “seen” in any literal sense. Note that in the account given above in the Pivotal Circumstances section, the text does not say that the stūpa is “seamless,” so we may presume that (as far as the story is concerned) it was a building that did in fact have a door that opened to reveal Daoxin’s seated corpse, which had not decayed. The miraculous preservation of a corpse, taken as a sign of sagehood, is a standard trope in Chinese Buddhist hagiographies.