CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR （Dai nijūyon shō 第二十四章）

ROOT CASE 【本則】

第二十四祖、師子尊者、問二十三祖曰、
The Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Venerable Simha, questioned the Twenty-third Ancestor [Halenayaśas], saying:

我欲求道、當何用心。祖曰、汝若求道、無所用心。師曰、既無用心、誰作佛事。祖曰、汝若有用、即非功德。汝若無作、卽是佛事。

经曰、我所作功德、而無我所故。師聞是言已、卽入佛慧。

”I wish to seek the way, so what should I pay attention to?” The Ancestor [Halenayaśas] said, “If you seek the way, there is nothing to pay attention to.” The Master [Simha] said, “If there is no longer any paying of attention, then who would carry out buddha-activities?” The Ancestor [Halenayaśas] said: “If you have any ‘paying,’ then there is no merit. If you are without projects, then this is buddha-activity. As a sūtra says, ‘The merit I myself have produced has nothing of self in it.’” The Master [Simha], having heard these words, entered into buddha-wisdom.

1 saying (C. yue 日; J. iwaku). The quotation in Chinese that follows is nearly identical to one that appears in the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame under the heading “Twenty-third Ancestor, Halenayaśas” (T 2074.51.214b16-20).

2 pay attention (C. yongxin 用心; J. yōjin). Literally, to “use” (C. yong 用; J. yō) the “mind” (C. xin 心; J. shin). To be careful, or “watch out” for something, as a precaution for obviating problems, or a method for attaining some goal.

3 If you have any ‘paying’ (C. ruo you yong 若有用; J. nyaku yū yō). That is to say, if there is any “paying” (C. yong 用; J. yō) of “attention” (C. xin 心; J. shin), or any “using” (C. yong 用; J. yō) of the “mind” (C. xin 心; J. shin) in a purposeful way.

4 “As a sūtra says, ‘The merit I myself have produced has nothing of self in it.’” (C. jing yue, wo suo gonde, er wu wo suo gu 經曰、我所作功德、而無我所故; J. kyō ni iwaku, waga nasu tokoro no kudoku, shikamo gasho naki ga yue ni 經に曰く、我が作す所の功德、而も我所無きが故に). This expression, including its attribution to a “sūtra,” is found in many Chan/Zen texts (albeit none older than the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame, completed in 1004), but the sūtra in question, if indeed there ever was one, remains unknown.
Pivotal Circumstances

The Master [Simha]\(^1\)

was a man of Central India. His clan was brāhmaṇa.

Originally he studied different paths and was greatly accomplished, with a strong memory. Subsequently, while studying under the Twenty-third Ancestor [Halenayaśas], there were the aforementioned questions and answers. Upon encountering [the words] “there is nothing to pay attention to,” he suddenly entered into buddha-wisdom.

At the time,\(^2\) the Twenty-third Ancestor [Halenayaśas]

suddenly pointed to the northeast and asked, “What is that meteorological phenomenon?” The Master [Simha] said, “Looking in the air, I see something resembling a bright rainbow connect-

\(^1\) The Master (Shi wa 師は). The block of text that follows 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 “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhiksū”:

《景德傳燈錄》中印度人也。姓婆羅門。(T 2076.51.214c7-8).

\(^2\) At the time (toki ni 時に). The block of text that follows 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 “Twenty-third Ancestor, Halenayaśas”:

《景德傳燈錄》忽指東北問云。是何氣象。師曰。我見氣如白虹貫乎天地。復有黑氣五道横亘其中。尊者曰。其兆云何。曰莫可知矣。尊者曰。吾滅後五十年。北天竺國當有難起。應在汝身。(T 2076.51.214b21-25).

In the Jingde Era Record, this passage follows immediately after the one that is quoted in the Root Case of this chapter. That is to say, it comes immediately after the statement that Simha “entered into buddha-wisdom,” which is “the time” referred to here.
ing heaven and earth. On the other hand, there are five pathways of black air that run through it horizontally.” The Ancestor [Halenayaśas] asked, “What would you say it is a sign of?” The Master [Simha] replied, “I have no way of knowing.” The Ancestor [Halenayaśas] said, “Fifty years after my death, troubles will arise in a country of North India, and you will be involved in it.

Although that will be the case, you will surely receive transmission of my dharma treasure, and convert people in future times.” At the time, the Master [Simha] received this secret prediction and then upon carried out conversions in the Country of Kashmir. There he encountered Vasiṣṭa and told him: “There is an unfulfilled prediction that my master [Halenayaśas] secretly gave me, that there will be troubles in which I am involved. It is not in the least degree avoidable, so I will stay here. You must uphold my way by going to other countries to preach and convert people.” He bestowed both the robe and dharma [on Vasiṣṭa].

At this time, the king of the Country of Kashmir took refuge in and revered the buddha-dharma. Although his interest was profound, he was still stuck on appearances.

Moreover, in that country¹

there were two followers of other paths. The first one was named Mamukta, and the second one was named Tullaca. They studied

¹ in that country (kano kuni ni 彼國に). The block of text that follows 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 “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhikṣu”:

《景德傳燈録》有外道二人。一名摩目多。二名都落遮。學諸幻法欲共謀亂。乃盜為釋子形象。潛入王宮。且曰。不成就罪歸佛子。(T 2076.51.215a8-11).
various kinds of magic and together planned a revolt. Accordingly, they disguised themselves as Buddhist monks and surreptitiously entered the palace, saying, “If we do not succeed, we will pin the crime on followers of the Buddha.”

And so on, down to:

The plot eventually failed. The king, as a consequence, was furious and said: “Up until now, I have in my mind taken refuge in the three treasures. How, then, could I have incurred this harm, which is the first thing to reach me here?” He immediately ordered that the monastery buildings be destroyed, and the monkish congregation driven away. Moreover, he himself took a sword in hand and went to Venerable Simha’s place. [The king] asked, “Master, have you understood the emptiness of the aggregates, or not?” The Master [Simha] replied, “I have already understood the emptiness of the aggregates.” The king asked, “Have you abandoned birth and death, or not?” The Master replied, “I have al-

1 and so on, down to (naisbi 乃至). What this expression indicates is that the Denkōroku is here eliding part of the Chinese text that it is in the process of quoting. In the Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame biography of the “Twenty-fourth Ancestor, Simha Bhikṣu,” the part elided reads:

This monstrous deed eventually resulted in a self-produced disaster, and it backfired on them.

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ready abandoned birth and death.” The king said, “If you have already abandoned birth and death, then offer your head to me.” The Master said, “This body is not a thing I have, so why should I begrudge its head?” The king immediately swung the sword and cut off the Master’s head. White milk gushed out several feet into the air. The king’s right arm spun around and fell to the ground. In seven days, he died.

Thus was the Master’s [Simha’s] beginning and end.

Investigation【拈提】

At the very beginning, when master and disciple had a face-to-face encounter, the first thing [Simha] asked was: “I wish to seek the way, so what should I pay attention to?” The Ancestor [Halenayāśas] said, “If you seek the way, there is nothing to pay attention to.

When one really seeks the way, how could the way have anything to do with “paying attention”? You die here and are born there, and in this place and that you are bent on the way and seek the dharma. Still, the fact that now you have no true refuge is fundamentally because you “pay” this “attention.” Nevertheless, if you want to suddenly accord with buddha-wisdom, then you must not only detach from the four inversions and three poisons, you must also be indifferent to the three bodies [of the Buddha]

1 This body is not a thing I have (mi wa waga u ni arazu 身は我有に非ず). Or, more literally, “this body is not possessed by self.”

2 “pay” this “attention” (kono shin wo mochiiru 此心を用る). The binome yōjin 用心, meaning to “pay attention” or (more literally) to “use the mind,” is purposefully broken apart here for emphasis. “This mind” (kono shin 此心) is the mind that deludedly grasps at reified concepts.
and the *four kinds of cognition*. When anyone roams about in such a way, the result is that it is difficult to rank them at the *level of ordinary people*, and also difficult to esteem them as being at the *level of buddhahood*. They are far beyond the emotional boundaries of the *sagely and ordinary*, and they quickly detach themselves from debate and calculation about difference or sameness. Therefore, it is said that this profound *place* cannot be reached even by *buddhas and ancestors*. It is not just that *buddhas and ancestors* cannot reach it: from the start, at the moment when we discuss this *place*, *buddhas and ancestors* do not even exist. Arriving at such a *stand-point* is, in reality, what we call the essence of seeking the way.

If you are not yet like this, then even if heavenly flowers rain down and the *great earth* moves, and even if you explain the *mind-nature* and discourse on profundity, you will not catch even a hair's-breadth glimpse of the true, wondrous way. Therefore, *Zen worthies*, you must reach verification of such a *place of profound obscurity* and clarify the matter shouldered by our line of *ancestors*.

To explain a little of this *principle*, as is customary, I have some *humble words*. Do you wish to hear them?

**Verse on the Old Case  【頌古】**

If you wish to reveal emptiness, you must not cover it up. Empty and void, pure and still: clear from the beginning.