



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

Greetings p1  
Taido Kojima

The way in which we are all saved p3  
Shundo Sekimizu

Soto Zen Buddhism 2022: Aspiration,  
Opportunities, and Challenges (1) p8  
Duncan Ryuken Williams

Removing the bars p12  
Kalen McAllister

Lecture on the Chapter of Shobogenzo Zenki (4) p14  
Shohaku Okumura

Sound of the stream, Form of the mountain  
(Keisei sanshoku) p21  
Carl Bielefeldt

My footnotes on Zazen (4) p30  
Issho Fujita

法  
眼

Number

31

March 2013



## Greetings

### Rev. Taïdo Kojima

Director of the Education and  
Dissemination Division  
Sotoshu Shumuchō

**“Go carefully and slowly without making a commotion”**

(*Eihei Shingï*, Dogen’s Pure Standards for the Zen Community)

I would like to extend greetings to each of you. I imagine that all the readers of Dharma Eye are well and enjoying great happiness and health. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to your warm support for Dharma Eye.

I am Taïdo Kojima. I became the new Director of the Education and Dissemination Division on October 22nd of last year. I feel very much honored to be appointed to such an important position in spite of my shallow knowledge and lack of ability. I was a member of the International Dissemination Council from 2010 through 2012. I had been doing whatever I can do to promote Sotoshu’s international teaching activities. Education and dissemination are always the backbone of Soto Zen. I feel braced up to assume the weighty responsibility of Director of the Education and Dissemination Division, as a leader at the frontier of those activities.

Reflecting back on the history of international teaching activities of Sotoshu, it began with dissemination to Japanese immigrants in

Hawaii and South America. And then dissemination activity gradually expanded to North America and Europe. This year is the 110th anniversary of teaching activities in Hawaii and South America, the 91st anniversary in North America, and the 46th anniversary in Europe. The pioneering priests who engaged in teaching activities outside Japan overcame many difficulties and challenges, committing themselves wholeheartedly to the teaching activities. Through their efforts, they widely spread the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Two Founders to many people in various areas. Succeeding in their spirit, now 107 *Kokusai-fukyoshi* (International Dissemination Teachers) are active in education and dissemination around the world. The number of “Special Temples” (Soto Zen temples located outside Japan and officially registered with Sotoshu) has now increased to 50. The branches and leaves of the tree of Soto Zen are growing bigger and bigger.

While the number of foreign priests keeps increasing, as yet there is no training monastery to provide them with Sotoshu teacher qualifications. At present, there are only two ways to train priests abroad. One is to have them enter the two Head Temple’s Monasteries or the registered training monasteries in Japan for formal *ango*, in the same way as Japanese monks. The other is to have them enter the Sotoshu Training Monastery (*Shuritsu Senmon Sodo*), which is occasionally opened for three months every year. So far, the Sotoshu Training Monastery has been held six times. When it is held in Japan, participants have to pay the costly expense of going to Japan. I am con-

cerned that due to this reason priests who can attend the Sotoshu Training Monastery will be very limited. To remedy this situation, with much help from each regional office, we are making an effort to establish a permanent training monastery outside Japan. But there are still many tasks and challenges ahead of us, in terms of management and facilities. As Director of the Education and Dissemination Division, I will definitely do my best to work these out, together with each regional office and the sections involved, toward establishing the first training monastery outside Japan.

As for the progress of the translation project of the *Shobogenzo* and the *Denkoroku* by the Soto Zen Text Project, the translation of the 75-fascicle version of the *Shobogenzo* was completed last year. Currently, the translation of the 12-fascicle version of the *Shobogenzo* and the *Denkoroku* is in progress. There has been a strong request to promptly publish a translation of the Sotoshu version of the *Shobogenzo* and the *Denkoroku*. We, together with the project members, will make a redoubled effort to complete editing them as soon as possible. The English version of the Standard Observances of Soto Zen School (*Sotoshu Gyoji Kihan*) has been well received by various quarters. Its glossary section is now posted at the Sotoshu Multi-language Website as “Glossary” (see <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/index.html>). Many people are now accessing it for various uses.

After the renewal of our Multi-language Website in the spring of 2011, more people have been coming to the site for information.

We will continue making a big effort to improve its user-friendliness. We will also make the site accessible not only from personal computers but also from mobile devices. It is our goal to have our site easily accessible to search and browse the information of Sotoshu in whatever situation a person is. In the future, we will try to update its content as quickly as possible. In addition to education and dissemination by way of written letters, we will also use visual media so that a wide range of people in terms of age are interested in browsing the site. That is what we are aiming at while maintaining the Multi-language Website.

As I already mentioned, both the Hawaii and the South America Regional Offices are planning to hold commemoration events for the 110th anniversary of teaching activities: At Jionji in Peru, South America in late August and at the Soto Mission of Hawaii, Shoboji, and a hotel in Honolulu, Hawaii in early November. We will definitely try our best to make thoroughgoing preparations for these events, but support from you is essential for the success of these projects. We appreciate your cooperation and support for our events. These are my words of greeting.



## **The way in which we are all saved**

**- The teaching that benefits both self and others -**

**Rev. Shundo Sekimizu**

Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher  
Resident Priest of Tosenji Temple,  
Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan

Missouri Zen Center

Missouri, U.S.A.

September 13, 2012

It gives me great happiness to have been able to sit in zazen with all of you here tonight at the Missouri Zen Center. In zazen, we sit quietly, with still bodies and share the time together at the same place. We also sit all together for a long time without speaking anything. Another important thing is that it is possible for us to spread out quiet mind together as one in this space. Zen is wonderful, isn't it?

During the summer, children come to my temple to sit zazen. I brought this photo with me. (shows photo) The children and their mothers and fathers sit together. This boy began sitting zazen when he was three and now he is ten years old. He is a fifth grader now and has been sitting for eight consecutive years. He really sits wholeheartedly. I am very happy that, regardless of age, everyone can have this common activity and can share the time this way.

This is my first visit to the Missouri Zen Center. You are connected with the Sotoshu, so I feel that we are colleagues as Sotoshu temples sharing Zen practice. There are many Zen centers throughout the U.S. The present Head

Priest of the Sotoshu is the abbot of Eihei-ji, Fukuyama Taiho Zenji. If it were possible, he would visit each of the Zen centers in the U.S. to deliver a message. As his representative, I have come to deliver his message, as he cannot go to many faraway places. The piece of paper written in English at your hand is his message.

Here is the essence of Fukuyama Zenji's message.

The first thing Fukuyama Zenji mentions is the earthquake and the tsunami which hit Japan last year (2011), followed by the nuclear accident. This huge disaster continues to cause great distress in Japan. Fukuyama Zenji also mentions that Japan received much support and sympathy from people around the world. I'm sure all of you here in this area also felt great sympathy for the Japanese people. Fukuyama Zenji expresses his gratitude.

The earthquake and tsunami last year did great damage to the environment and claimed many lives. In one area, everything was swept away except for one lone pine tree. It was a miracle that this tree survived and many Japanese people working to recover felt encouraged by this lone pine tree. It was called the "Miracle Pine Tree." I just received an e-mail, however, that unfortunately this tree has recently died. At present, the news is that it was recently cut down. Before it died completely, branches were taken from this tree and grafted onto other trees to make four new trees. Each of these young trees was given a name. The first was named "Life," the second "Connections," the third "Hope," and the fourth "Grow." Each was named with the idea of giving the Japanese people strength. These trees that lead to the energies of recovery are now growing up. In

this way, nature keeps trying, people hang tough, and there is this hope that they will be able to continue to live together.

In Zenji's message, the second thing is that this disaster is not only concerned with natural disasters. He goes on to mention that people themselves can bring about disasters. There are human-made disasters in which people end up causing other people to suffer. Isn't it a concern for us that we cause each other such suffering? Fukuyama Zenji urges us to study Zen and the Buddha Dharma in order to be aware of this possibility.

There has been much progress in terms of material comfort, convenience, and social welfare, as well as in science. People have pursued these things, but are such developments really best for us and for the natural environment of the whole world? Isn't it necessary to rethink what is really best? From there, isn't it necessary to aspire for the Way that brings happiness to all people, the Way that benefits all beings? In order to do this, we must face each other; you and I must meet one another. Then, it is necessary to transmit the important teachings and also to support each other. Fukuyama Zenji concludes his message with these suggestions.

Thinking about this message, we realize that, 2,500 years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha already had an insight and issued an alert about this matter of problems caused by human beings. It has been handed down to us as Buddha Dharma. People cause suffering to other people. It is easy to fall into this - we all have this potential. It is very easy for us to always want to fulfill our desires. We are often irritated. We easily become peeved and fretful.

We have these attributes as human beings. In addition, we can also be foolish and lacking in wisdom by not being aware. The delusion of not noticing our mistakes is also an attribute of human beings. Shakyamuni Buddha realized this. He taught that the way out of such problems is the Way of spiritual practice, the Way of Zen, and the Way which has become the encouragement of our everyday lives. For example, he said, "The hair on your head is on fire. It's burning furiously. Why don't you notice this?" We do not notice that our hair is on fire. This refers to my earlier remarks about human character. We must put out that fire of foolishness. In Zen, we say "Train as if you were trying to put out the fire on your head." Monks shave their heads and it has been said that we do this so that our hair won't catch fire.

There is Sojiji in Yokohama, the city where I live. (Sojiji is one of the Two Head Temples of Sotoshu) Sojiji was founded by Keizan Zenji, who said "Dedicate the boundless merit of zazen to all beings." What does this mean? Why do we sit in zazen? Now, someone is sitting quietly in zazen facing the wall. What is he or she doing? I ask you, for whose purpose or benefit do we do zazen? If you think you're doing it for yourself, please raise your hand (majority of the people raise hands). Keizan Zenji says that of course we practice zazen for ourselves, but at the same time we are sitting together with all other people. By means of zazen, the other people around us are also saved. His teaching is that we should have this feeling when we sit zazen; we should include all other people when we sit. The Miracle Pine Tree survived when all other trees were swept



away, and continued standing because its roots were deep in the ground. Some people survived by holding onto that tree. In the same way, with zazen it is possible to save others by doing what is correct, by practicing ourselves, by standing firmly, and by joining hands with others. It is possible to support each other this way. When an earthquake strikes, everything shakes and falls over, but if we stand firmly and steadfastly, it is possible to save all others. This is the boundless merit of zazen.



There is a person who comes to practice zazen at my temple. This man is boisterous at home and always says his principles straight. When he starts behaving that way, he leaves, saying, “I am going to the temple to sit zazen.” At home, everyone is happy because it is quiet while he is away. When he returns, he is settled. Ah, thank goodness for zazen. “Father, we like you going to the temple to sit zazen.” You can see that zazen is not only for yourself, but that it is also for family and people around you.

Zazen is for me and also for others. These two are actually two aspects of one zazen. We should practice zazen so that these two become one. Keizan Zenji taught us that way. You may

think it will be your loss if you are kind to someone else. Here we see gain and loss, two things. But in fact my gain also saves other people. Here we see one gain for both self and others. Zen is a teaching that benefits both self and others. Two people become one through this activity.

Here is an example of this. In Yokohama, the city where I live, we do not have priority seats, called “silver seats,” on our subway. These are seats that should be given up to elderly or disabled people. Our mayor suggested that the city do away with these seats. His reasoning was that it was not good for people to express their kindness to others only at these specific places. So, he made an appeal to make all seats in Yokohama into priority seats. At the beginning, there was a good deal of confusion because no one would budge from their seat. Consequently, people who needed seats were not given a place to sit. This situation continued for some time. However, gradually, people came to realize that, while it was fine for them to sit down if they could, others would suffer if they could not sit down. In the end, this is the same thing. The people of Yokohama came to understand that being kindly treated and kindly treating others are interconnected - one thing. Benefitting others and being benefitted are one thing. If you are kind to others, you will receive something in return.

I would like to mention another example. I heard this story from an elderly man when I was traveling in Akita Prefecture. It is a story of feeling joy even when something was given up. The man’s family served cakes and each person

took one. The last cake was for this old man. Then a small grandchild looked at the remaining cake as if he wanted to eat it, so the grandfather offered his cake to his grandson. The grandson said, "If I eat the cake, then grandpa will lose out." The old man said, "It will not be my loss. I will be much happier if you enjoy eating it than if I eat it." This is a simple example, but I think it is a case of gaining something by losing or giving up something. This is an important issue, I think. For this reason, gain and loss are not two separate things, and are connected. Both gain and loss constitute one joy.

Another story is one of Zen beyond gain and loss. It is connected to my travels here in the United States. Several people have asked me about Zen - Does Zen bring them something good? What kind of goodness does Zen bring? When will it happen? How can they make it happen?... I was a school teacher until about fifteen years ago. Students would ask me, "Teacher, which questions should I solve and which workbook is best? Which workbook is most suitable for me?" I would say, "Which workbooks do you have? Bring them to me." They would bring many of them. I would look at the first page, then the second, but in each case, the third page was blank. That was the end. There was nothing more. Looking at the other workbooks, they were all the same. This meant that they had lots of workbooks, but they weren't using them. Then, I said "Close your eyes and pick one. After you use it for a month, I will answer your question." They did just as I told them to. Then they would come and say, "Teacher, I think this is the very best

book for me." "Good," I would say, "You found the answer by yourself, didn't you?" The same thing can be said about zazen. Zazen is everywhere and we can practice zazen wherever we are. But without practicing it, we will never find the answer. Also, without appropriate conditions we never encounter zazen. You are fortunate that you have already encountered Zen. I believe you already have found the answer. That is why you have been practicing Zen wholeheartedly. The important thing is to let go of thoughts which assume the dichotomy of gain and loss and sincerely study Zen, seeing gain and loss as one – face-to-face with the truth. I am so happy to see you practicing Zen the way you do.

Dogen Zenji, who brought Soto Zen to Japan, said;

"Establish practice in the mist of delusion, attain realization before awakening." [*Gakudo Yojinshu*]

Practice is an action. When you are wavering: "Should I do this or should I do that? Is it good or is it bad?" It is time to act. So long as you waver, asking, "Is Zen good or is it bad?" and do not act, you will not find the answer. Being unsure is precisely a chance to challenge yourself. If you act in the midst of delusion, that action will provide the answer. "Attain realization before awakening," means that the answer is already there in the action. These are the words of Dogen Zenji. By all means, I hope that you will continue with Zen practice. When you have some understanding, please share it with others. It is a great thing to do.

Finally, I have one more story, one more message that I would like to give you. It has to do with Mamoru Mouri, the Japanese astronaut who went into space on the Endeavor space shuttle. When he returned from his trip, he remarked, “When looking at the Earth from space, it is not possible to see any national borders.” These words deeply affected the Japanese people. His following words appear in an ethics textbook used in Japanese elementary schools, “When looking at the Earth from space, I was struck by how all living things live only on the thin surface of the planet. Furthermore, that surface is primarily oceans, mountains, and deserts. Human beings can live only in very limited areas.” And then, “Each human being is connected to each other human being by air and water. Everyone is connected by these

things on a planet where I could see no national boundaries. Looking from above, I felt the interconnectedness of life. We must cherish this life. The thing that impressed me the most was the small space in which we all live together. I saw how deeply this precious life is interconnected. So, we must get along with each other, coping with our difficulties, if we are going to survive.”

Moreover, in our encounter here now, we are connected not only through the interconnectedness of life but also through the invaluable spirit of precious Zen. We are in this moment sharing this same space together. I’m happy that we could meet today. I think this is an important thing. Thank you very much for our encounter today.







## Soto Zen Buddhism 2022: Aspiration, Opportunities, and Challenges

**Prof. Duncan Ryuken Williams**

Director of the University of Southern California  
Center for Japanese Religious and Culture

This article is the record of the keynote speech in the 90th Anniversary of Soto Zen Teaching Activities in North America and the Founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission, held on September 8, 2012.

Thank you for that kind introduction and for asking me to participate in this very important occasion. It is really an honor for me to do so. As you said, Zenshuji is a special place for me. I first came when the bishop was Yamashita Roshi and continued my connection with this temple during the time of the next bishop, Akiba Gengo, who was the officiant for one of my weddings. I had three wedding ceremonies and he conducted my ceremony here in the U.S. Of course, now this temple has you (Bishop Rummé) in this very critical, important time for both this temple and for Soto Zen history.

Let me try to say something about this temple as well as the ninetieth anniversary of Zen Buddhism in this country. When I was given this idea of thinking about the future of Zen Buddhism in America, I had recalled a recent opportunity to do some scenario thinking for a Japanese think tank. They asked me to think about the future of Japan. In that exercise, I came up with three possible scenarios for Japan. I just want to lay out my thinking about that before I lay out three possible scenarios for

Zen Buddhism in the United States. The focus was on mapping out possible futures for Japan in the twenty-first century. I suggested three possible pathways the nation of Japan could take. One is a return to a closed nation. In Japanese history there was the period, called the Sakoku Period, in which Japan cut itself off from other nations and became inward-looking. There are many suggestions today that Japan, especially its young people, is looking inward. People are not traveling abroad so much, Japanese corporations making products that only work in Japan. These are things that are rather inward-looking. I mentioned this because there is a way in which we might think about Zen Buddhism, if it takes a certain path, also becoming potentially inward-looking. Another path I see for Japan is one that looks outward not in a productive way but in an antagonistic way. In the politics of East Asia now, Japan is in territorial disputes with Russia, China and Korea over some islands. There is a resurgence of militarism. The first option is a neo-sakoku, a new closed nation. A second option is a return to the 1930s, to neo-nationalism and neo-militarism. I have always thought that Japan has better options and I propose the hybrid-Japan option. It is an option in which Japan in substance looks backward to look forward. It looks back to its older, longer array of history and understands that the Japanese nation and culture is a hybrid one, that its peoples are a mixture of continental peoples, Polynesian peoples, the Ainu from the northern islands, mixing its language, its culture, religion – everything is mixed. In fact, that mixture, that hybridity, is what has produced things like Zen Buddhism and Toyota

Priuses – hybrid cars – as something Japan can offer to the world.

This got me thinking that maybe when we talk about the future of Zen in America or the future of Buddhism in America we should talk about hybridity. I will talk about that in a moment. It is one of the three possible futures I imagine for Buddhism in America.

There is an option that is more in line with the inward-looking option I mentioned previously. I call it the self-contained future, an option that is primarily preservationist. It is not just this temple but Nishi Hongwanji and all the temples here in Little Tokyo. There are some temples that, for very good reasons, want to preserve the past, preserve the traditions that have been handed down from the issei pioneers and the nisei. Now we're down to the gosei - the fifth and rokusei - the sixth generations. Maintaining those values and those cultural transmissions as well as religious transmissions - the way things are done in Japan - and trying to follow ritual and other kinds of forms, as much as possible, to preserve a certain way of practicing Buddhism, living Buddhism in a somewhat preservationist way. I think this is one possible option that this temple and other Zen temples could take - to focus slightly inward on the transmission of Soto Zen traditions and the traditions that have developed over nearly a century at this temple and temples like San Francisco's Sokoji. So, this is one possible option.

The reality is that Soto Zen Buddhism, not just at this temple but especially at some of the

Zen centers, also was founded at a time when Soto Zen and Buddhism in general was less a conservative tradition and more of a countercultural tradition. Because it was a countercultural tradition, it attracted people who wanted to challenge mainstream society. It almost had a prophetic voice, a voice that could suggest alternatives to the way mainstream society thought and worked. For those in the United States, being Buddhist in America is itself countercultural. We hear a lot today from politicians who claim that America is a Christian nation. We are not in the majority, in the mainstream of American life and we are therefore able to raise some questions about things that are more normative – questions of ethics, the environment, a non-violent society, a more pluralistic and tolerant religious culture. Buddhists have played a role, whether it's Japanese-American Buddhists at this temple during World War II or other Americans. I have been surveying members here whose parents served honorably in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team or in military intelligence service in World War II, at a time where Japanese-Americans and their loyalty to this country were being questioned. They sacrificed so their children could live in America and proudly claim that they are American and Buddhist at the same time. Many other people, not just at this temple - other Buddhists - have been involved in creating alternate visions, countercultural visions of how we might engage the world. The comment is sometimes made that by being prophetic and countercultural we take ourselves out of the mainstream and marginalize ourselves even before anyone else marginalizes us. So, I think one of the chal-

lenges if we consider this as a future for Zen in America is to also consider all the ways in which we might also embrace the mainstream and make Buddhism also a mainstream point of view in America.



The third approach, the one I started out with, the hybrid approach, is the one where I think there is the most possibility for innovation and for keeping our traditions dynamic and appropriate to place and time. The history of Zen is also very hybrid. We sometimes speak as if Zen is the pure tradition of Japan, but if you look at Daigaku Sensei, you see the white kimono, then over that, the koromo, which has the long sleeves of the Confucian scholar. Over that is the okesa, which is Indian. It's the layering of different traditions that makes up who we are and how we have formed this tradition called the Zen tradition. In my own life, this being in-between, being hybrid was the gateway to understanding myself. I was born in Japan to a Japanese Buddhist mother and a Christian British father. I was very much confused as a teenager. "Who am I?" This is a good question, a Buddhist question, too. "Am I Brit-

ish or Japanese, a Christian or a Buddhist?" This was when I met Rev. Kojima, the resident minister at Zenshuji. I have known him since I was seventeen years old. He has taught me a lot over the years and he also introduced me to Reverend Ogasawara Ryugen, who is here in the audience today from Kotakuji Temple in Nagano. One of the first pieces of guidance he gave me was "Duncan, you should stop clinging to being Japanese or being British or being Christian or being Buddhist. Find that in-between place of freedom." Paradoxically, it turns out that emptiness is a good place to be free. When you're there, you can become British when you need to, Japanese when you need to, and you move around freely. There's something about hybridity, something about being in-between, that seems very dynamic and productive.

That's where I want to take this discussion now and think about a couple of different places where we might consider how, as fellow Zen Buddhists, we might want to pull together some things that on the surface may seem disparate or working in different registers. Last weekend I was at Manhattan Beach. Nishi Honganji, Higashi Honganji and all the other Southern District sanghas asked me to talk to their youth, to the Junior YBA. Junior YBA members are in high school. I spent the day with them talking about what their situation was in high school. Being Buddhist in most of our schools, though it's becoming more acceptable, is a bit difficult. The number one thing these young people told me as I spent the day talking with them about their experiences of being young Buddhists today in America was

that they still get asked “Do you have a God?” “Do you believe in God?” “Do you rub the belly of those fat Buddhas? Is that your practice?” The evangelical Christian kids at school will talk about how the Buddhist students will be going to Hell and really try to pin them down about what Buddhism is. We spent the afternoon trying to come up with some language to deal with being a young Buddhist in America today, with finding a way of talking to people without using language that’s too off-putting and yet Buddhist enough to convey who you are. We talked about things like wisdom and compassion and about Buddhism as about alleviating suffering and finding freedom. Very few American Christians will say that freedom is bad or that ignorance is good and wisdom is not so good or that compassion or love is not an acceptable way of living your life. We developed some techniques, found language they could use to talk across boundaries - outside the sectarian divisions of their Buddhist traditions.

But it got me to thinking about some of the hybridity that needs to happen in which we are simultaneously able to talk about our particularistic and different traditions, including Soto Zen Buddhism, so our young people can articulate clearly what distinguishes Soto Zen Buddhism from other forms of Buddhism. We are a minority religion in this country. We also need, in a different register, to just talk about being Buddhist with someone from a different Buddhist tradition. Finally, I am also interested in ways we as a sangha can help our young people articulate Buddhism to people who are not Buddhist. In all those three registers I’d like

to find techniques for really educating ourselves on how to present ourselves in a world that is increasingly pluralistic, especially in a place like Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, we have got Cambodians, Tibetans, many others. It turns out that in the 2,500 year history of Buddhism that no other city has been as diverse with respect to Buddhism as Los Angeles. We have got everybody here. We have every other religious tradition here in Los Angeles as well, and this is a good moment to be thinking about this. In talking about the future of Zen-shuji, we also need to understand where we live. We are living in an increasingly globalized and increasingly plural neighborhood called Los Angeles.

(To be continued)







## Removing the bars

**Rev. Kalen McAllister**  
Ryumonji, Iowa, U.S.A.

**"When you take away a person's ability to do good because they have done bad, what do you leave them?"**

(Retired Correctional Officer, Dean Harper  
From an NPR story about Vienna Correctional Center, Vienna, IL)

A friend recently sent me this quote and I found it very appropriate. You see, while they are ever evolving, prisons today are still more punitive than restorative.

My experience with inmates is that most of them are suffering greatly. Maybe not due to the harsh conditions that ruled the prisons of the past, but more internally. We hurt others when we are ourselves hurting. Many hurt so bad that they have lost the ability to even feel for others. Many are self-medicating with drugs and/or alcohol. When I listen to stories of their families and the strange messages (a lot of times abusive) they received from their families, I don't wonder why they ended up in prison.

But what are we doing to help change patterns? The prisons of the 21st century are about controlling a person's actions and keeping over-crowded prison populations in control. There are educational opportunities, classes on such things as anger management and a general movement towards offering avenues of reform.

The emphasis, however, is still on controlling from the outside rather than internally. Some of the officers, when placed in such positions of power, even exhibit cruel behavior towards the inmates. One inmate told me that an officer in his housing unit said "You have two choices; you can either do it or die." Once released, the offenders are still considered "threats" by the general public and are serving a life sentence on the outside.

When I first started working inside a prison offering a Buddhist group meeting, I was surprised by the reaction to it. The six men who attended quickly doubled to twelve and the group continued to grow. All faith groups attended - Christians, Jews, Native Americans, Muslims and Wiccans. The meditation seemed to be the draw. Never in their life had these men sat quietly examining their thoughts and then letting the thoughts go. It was a novel idea. As weeks passed, these offenders started reporting changes in their behavior. They didn't fight as much. They listened more to others viewpoints. Some had trouble sitting still and we talked about that. We talked about Karma as being "habit energy." As we talked, the men were starting to put together tools that would help them change - that would give them a new approach to life.

Non-judgment was another novel idea. To let go of all their pre-conceived ideas and really look at the world was scary to a lot of them. Their beliefs protected and insulated them from really looking at the harm they may have caused. When they were in a group that was "safe," they were able to slowly bring up hurtful

pasts and fears of the future. We laughed together and cried together.

Change began to occur from the inside out. Seeds were planted and started to grow. We put together a newsletter that was originally sent to only about 100 inmates in Missouri. It was a place where the inmates could share their experiences with meditation and teachings of Buddha. As our newsletter heading, we included the quote by Lilla Watson who was an Aboriginal activist:

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together.”

The idea that we were part of the problem may at first seem strange. Did we ever, as children, ridicule another child? Did that cause him or her to retreat to a place deep inside away from the pain and to stop caring about others. Or when the alcoholic down the street publicly beat his daughter and no one interfered or called the police, what were we saying about the value of that child's life. When we don't want an ex-offender living in our neighborhood simply because they are an ex-offender, are we closing our mind to possibilities?

Most of the inmates I have met don't want someone coming in and telling them how to live their lives and what is good or bad. They have their pride and their own value system. They are real people that are intelligent and have feelings and solutions. Respect is so very important. However, if we can sit down

together and quietly and safely look inward, a deeper peace starts to develop. We are able to just let go and start to move forward. One man recently wrote:

“I wanted to thank X too for all the wisdom she gave me and the help in getting me to see that living in the moment and not worrying about the past or future does wonders for our inner peace. I learned so much from her and am truly thankful I had a chance to meet her and learn what's really important in life. And that's others! I'm able to see the beauty in everything and everyone now. Years ago before I met X I just saw crud and negativity.”

The interesting thing is, is that X didn't give him anything. He already had the potential and discovered it on his own. What X shared with him was the tools he needed to discover it. This is the most important idea. The fact that Buddhism allows someone to explore, question and then move forward is critical if we want to change behavior. But the only way we can really change is from the inside out. Change simply does not occur from the outside in.

The approach to Buddhism inside a prison is very intense. At the same time I started going into prisons to start Buddhist groups, I was also teaching a beginners class on the outside. The interest level inside the prisons was incredible compared to outside. The reason, these men had their backs against the wall. Things had gone bad. They lost most of their material belongings and family and friends turned away from them. They were searching desperately

for answers. And they wanted to trust these answers. When the answers came from within them, there was no doubt.

I don't want to paint a picture that all offenders are sitting around waiting to do good with their lives. Many of them have committed horrific crimes and may go on to commit additional crimes. However, prison has provided a "stopping point" for them. Many have been able to recover from alcoholic or drug use. They have hit bottom and when that happens, the question of "where do I go from here?" often arises. This "stopping point" is actually a great "starting point" for self-examination. The Buddhist teachings and practices can provide tools to look at life differently and make different choices in the future. It is one of the few offerings in prison that points their attention inward.

While meditation is a lifelong commitment and change is slow, these offenders have a lot of time on their hands. Some simply cannot commit to this at this point in their life, but they have had the experience and may come back to it in the future. Others find that they can meditate 3 or 4 times a day. They discover that for the first time they are truly free despite the bars, the iron doors and the miles of barbed wire fence. They came looking for an answer, but instead started a journey. This journey is not about advancing in life. It's a journey of understanding and seeing how we are all connected and to appreciate each moment no matter where you are. Buddhism in prison is removing walls, one person at a time.



## The 22nd Chapter of *Shobogenzo: Zenki* (Total Function) Lecture (4)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura  
Sanshinji, Indiana, U.S.A.  
(edited by Rev. Shodo Spring)

[text]:

(2) この機関、よく生ならしめ、よく死ならしむ。

This functioning makes [life into] life, makes [death into] death.

この機関の現成する正当恁麼時、かならずしも大にあらず、かならずしも小にあらず、遍界にあらず、局量にあらず、長遠にあらず、短促にあらず。

At the very time of this functioning manifesting, [it is] neither necessarily great nor necessarily small. It is neither the whole universe nor the restricted part of it; neither eternity nor instant.

いまの生は、この機関にあり、この機関は、いまの生にあり。

The life of this present moment is within this functioning; this functioning is within life of this present moment.

### This Functioning (*kikan*, 機関)

"Functioning" in this sentence is a translation of *kikan* (機関). I am not sure if this English word fully conveys the original meaning of the Chinese compound and Dogen's usage of this expression. I would like to make some explanation about this expression as a common usage in Chinese and Japanese, the usage in Buddhism and Zen in general, and Dogen's usage in particular.

*Ki* (機) is the same word as *ki* in *Zenki* (全機). This is the first time this word *ki* is used except in the title *Zenki*. Here Dogen Zenji uses the expression as a compound *kikan* (機関).

**Here are the everyday meanings of the word**

***Ki* (機) :** ① a loom; an apparatus on which fabrics are woven, ② machine, mechanism, machinery, contrivance, device, works, workings. ③ momentum, chance, opportunity, occasion, time. ④ symptom, sign, indication, omen.

In Buddhism and Zen this word is used for: ⑤ the working, function, or operation of mind ⑥ ability, quality, or nature of a student, ⑦ a student, a disciple, ⑧ a method, a device, means, or an expedient to educate students ⑧ the koan system used as a device to teach students.

***Kan*(関):** ① a bar or a bolt to shut a gate; as a verb to shut or to close the gate, ② a barrier or a gate at the entrance of a country, a city, etc. ③ a boarder, or a boundary between countries, cities etc. ④ a joint to connect two or more separate parts, like a joint of knee or elbow (関節).

***Kikan* (機関) as a compound:**

① a mechanism, an engine, an instrument, etc. that consists of two or more separate parts working as one, ② a medium that connects two or more groups of people, ③ an institution, an organization, an agency, a system, or a facility that is a collection of separate departments or parts working as one for the sake of a certain purpose.

As a Zen term, since the Song dynasty *kikan* has been used to mean a method, a device, or

an expedient used by Zen masters to teach their students. For example, Linji (Rinzai)'s *shiryo-ken* (four ways of seeing), Dongshan (Tozan)'s *goi* (five ranks), and other koans were considered *kikan*. The style of practice using these devices is called *Kikan Zen*. Sometimes *Kikan Zen* is used as the synonym of *Koan Zen*.

Here Dogen uses this term, *kikan*, for the working of a machine or mechanism, as an analogy of the function of the entire network of interdependent origination. A machine is different from a tool. In the stone ages, tools such as a hammer, a knife, a fishing needle, etc. were made using stones. These were the first devices human beings invented and used to make their hunting, fishing, cooking etc. more efficient. A machine is different from these stone made tools. These tools have only one part, but a machine has several parts. Various parts are connected and work together to carry out a certain job.

One of the oldest machines in China was a loom, apparatus on which fabrics are woven. In Chinese Zen literature, a loom is used as an analogy of the function of the nature within time and space. For example, Hongzhi Zhengjue (Wanshi Shokaku, 1091-1157) composed a verse on the koan of The World Honored One ascends The Seat.

The main case is:

One day the World Honored One ascended the seat. Manjusri struck the gavel and said, "Clearly observe the Dharma of the King of Dharma; the



Dharma of the King of Dharma is thus.”  
The World Honored One then got down  
from the seat.<sup>1</sup>

Hongzhi’s verse:

一段真風見也麼  
綿綿化母理機梭  
織成古錦含春象  
無奈東君漏泄何

The unique breeze of reality – do you see?  
Continuously creation runs her loom  
and shuttle,

Weaving the ancient brocade, incorpor-  
ating the forms of spring,  
But nothing can be done about  
Manjusri’s leaking.<sup>2</sup>

In this verse, Hongzhi uses the expression *huamu* (*kemo*, 化母), the mother of creation, as an analogy for the entire network of interdependent origination. The nature permeating the entire heaven and earth includes both creator and creatures, as one function of creation. The warp is often thought of as time, and the weft as space. Within time and space, all beings work together, changing and creating the patterns of each season (spring, summer, fall, and winter), the scenery of the situation of the societies in the world, and each person’s life.

This is what total function of the entire network of interdependent origination means. The loom of creation is working all the time. All different scenery is woven as a pattern of the fabric. When a spring breeze starts to blow, various flowers bloom, birds are singing, the day is getting longer and warmer, each moment and each day things are changing, but the

entire heaven and earth is nothing other than the spring. All the things, flowers, birds, and insects, are the creatures produced by the working of the loom. But each of these things actualizes the spring of the entire heaven and earth. Each tiny individual thing and the entire heaven and earth are not like a guest and a hotel, but one whole thing. There is no entirety outside of each phenomenal thing. A breeze, a flower, or a bird makes the entire heaven and earth into spring.

[text]:

*This functioning makes [life into] life, makes [death into] death.*

Our birth, living, and dying are parts of this total functioning. We appear from the entire heaven and earth, stay for a while, change in shape and condition, and eventually disappear, returning to the entire heaven and earth. A seed is planted in the spring; it sprouts, grows, bears flowers, bears fruits, produces seeds for the next generation, and disappears. In this process, the plant receives support and help from the entire network of beings, and when it becomes mature it has something to offer to the network. All beings are connected, and they work and support each other.

Our lives are patterns of the fabric produced by the loom of time and space. When we see the individual things, each one is impermanent, constantly changing, without any fixed independent entity. But this work of weaving continues. Our life is a result and a gift from people and things from the past. What we do now influences later generations, whether posi-

tively or negatively. The loom is weaving the ancient brocade of eternity, while the spring is new, fresh and different each year. The spring of the entire heaven and earth is manifested within a tiny plum blossom in the cold air. The tiny blossom actualizes the spring of the entire heaven and earth.

All individual things are working together as a whole without anything being excluded. There is no observer and observation from outside. There is no possible way to express this total function using concepts, words and letters. That was why the World Honored One kept silence at his seat. But Manjusri leaks and made an extra, unnecessary explanation, “The Dharma of the King of Dharma is thus.” This saying by Manjusri was “placing a flower on the golden brocade.”

This expression, “placing a flower on the golden brocade,”<sup>3</sup> appeared in Yuanwu Keqin’s comment on the story of Daowu’s “I won’t say. I won’t say.” Even “I won’t say,” is unnecessary extra addition. However, from another perspective, since the total function includes all and excludes nothing, even these extra sayings are parts of the total function. And these are the expedients given to us to study the Dharma.

[text]

*At the very time of this functioning manifesting, [it is] neither necessarily great nor necessarily small. It is neither the whole universe nor the restricted part of it; neither eternity nor instant.*

“At the very time of this functioning manifesting,” means this present moment when we are parts

of this process of weaving. Since this loom of creation is constantly working, there is not even a single moment that is not the very moment of this functioning manifesting. And no one can be an observer of this functioning while standing outside of it. When we pretend to be an observer, our “observation” is also a part of this total functioning. We are like a drop of water within the great ocean. That one drop of water, somehow, is trying to measure how small we are and how big is the great ocean.

*[It is] neither necessarily great nor necessarily small. To measure the length of things around us, human beings first used the size of our fingers, hands, arms or feet. Because each person’s body is different, we created a ruler as a device to measure objectively. We compare the length of the ruler and the length of the thing we want to measure. This is how we measure things. Basically we compare the size of ourselves and other things to measure. I can say the pine tree is ten times taller than me. The mountains are much greater than me. But how can we measure the total function of the loom of creation? I am a part of it. Obviously a part is smaller than the entirety, so we can say we are small and the loom is larger. However, when we see the emptiness of ourselves as zero, or no-separation between me and the entirety, we are as big as the entirety; we are infinity. (1=0=∞)<sup>4</sup> There is no way to measure. In Buddhist scriptures, this is expressed as, “A poppy seed accommodates Mt. Sumeru; a skin pore contains the water of the vast ocean.”<sup>5</sup>*

*It is neither the whole universe nor the restricted part of it. In Shobogenzo Komyo (Radiant*

Light), Dogen quotes a sentence from the first chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "This light illuminates the eighteen thousand Buddha lands in the East." When Shakyamuni was sitting in the Samadhi of Infinite Meaning, he emitted a beam of light from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows illuminating eighteen thousand worlds in the east, so that there was nowhere the light did not reach. The Buddha's radiant light illuminated the world in the east, and yet it reached everywhere. In a common-sense way of thinking, this is strange. East is only a part of the entire universe, and yet the light reached everywhere.

In Komyo, Dogen writes,

This light is Buddha light. Illuminating the East is the East illuminating [the East] itself. The East is nothing to do with the conventional discussion of here and there; it is the center of the Dharma universe, and the center of the fist. Even though [the word East] restricts the East, it is eight pounds of radiant light. There is the East in this land, and there is the East in the other land. We should study that there is the East within the East....The Buddha land means the inside of the eyes. When we see or hear the expression, "illuminating the East," it is not how we study the Buddha way to imagine as if one piece of white silk were extending to the East. The entire ten-direction world is only the East. The East is called the entire ten-direction world. For this reason, there is the entire ten-direction world.<sup>6</sup>

East is a part of the entire world. If we live in

the East, we live in a particular restricted part of the world. But here Dogen says that the East is the entire world, and the entire world is the East. We can say the same thing about the self as a part and as the entirety:  $1=0=\infty$ . When we say I am here, this place "here" has a certain size. I live in the USA. When I say, "I am here," to my friend living in Japan, "here" can be as large as the USA, the state of Indiana, the city of Bloomington or the temple ground of Sanshinji. When I talk with a person at Sanshinji and say, "I am here," "here" refers to my office where I am writing this article. The person who hears my saying does not think "here" means the USA. Even though my office is a small, restricted space, it can still be divided here and there. No matter how small it can be, if there is a tiny bit of size, still we can divide the space into two. Ultimately speaking "here" is only a position without any size. This is the same with the definition of "point" in geometry; that has only position but no extension. Here is zero. Since zero has no boundary with other things, this place "here" (1) has no space (0), and zero is also the entire world ( $\infty$ ). Wherever we are, we are in a particular place within the space, but this place is directly permeating the entire world.

*Neither eternity nor instant.* The original word Dogen uses for "eternity" is *choon* (長遠) literally meaning "long and far." This expression can be translated as "neither long nor short." But I think here *choon* is used with the same meaning with *kuon* (久遠), that is, the adjective used for the Buddha's longevity in the sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Life Span of Tathagata. I think *choon* and *kuon* are the

same with modern Japanese expression *eien* (永遠), that means eternity. The moment we are, “now” is also  $1=0=\infty$ .

My understanding of eternity is not in terms of the linear flow of time from past to the future through present. We measure the length of time using the length of a day. We divide a day into 24 hours; we divide one hour into 60 minutes; we divide one minute into 60 seconds. That is the limit of the length of time we can feel and has some meaning in our daily lives. We can divide time further into extremely short period. But no matter how short it can be, if there is some length, we can still divide it into two parts, half already in the past and another half still in the future. Present moment (1) has no length (0). Then this present moment without length becomes one with the time that does not flow. From the moment of big-bang until the end of this time and space, there is only one seamless moment ( $\infty$ ) without any segments. We separate and measure time using a method convenient for us, such as one day, one week, one year, one century, one millennium etc. But all these segments of time are manmade things. There are no such things in reality. Time does not really flow. To me, this is what eternity means.

Self, here, and now are all  $1=0=\infty$ . As the self, each one of us is restricted and conditioned within time and space. We cannot live outside here and now. But when we are really mindful and attentive here and now, here-and-now disappears and becomes one with infinite space and eternity. Including the restrictions and conditions of here-and-now, we are boundless.

This is because self, here and now has no independent, fixed entity.

This is what Dogen means when he says in *Shobogenzo* Inmo (Thusness) that we are the furnishings existing within the ten-direction world, our body and mind are not our personal possessions. The image of the moonlight reflected on each and every drop of water, mentioned in Genjokoan, expresses the same reality.

*The life of this present moment is within this functioning; this functioning is within life of this present moment.* Our life here and now is a part of this working of the loom of creation within infinite time and space. All beings and the movement of the entire network of interdependent origination are seamless. The entire functioning is fully manifesting within each and every particular beings.

Dogen expresses the same insight in Genjokoan.

When a fish swims, no matter how far it swims, it doesn't reach the end of the water. When a bird flies, no matter how high it flies, it cannot reach the end of the sky. Therefore, no fish and no bird have never left the water and the sky since ancient times. When the bird's need or the fish's need is great, the range is large. When the need is small, their range is small. In this way, each fish and each bird uses the whole of space and vigorously acts in every place.<sup>7</sup>

[text]:

(3) 生は来にあらず、生は去にあらず、生は



現にあらず、生は成にあらざるなり。

Life is not coming; life is not going; life is not appearing; life is not becoming.

しかあれども、生は全機現なり、死は全機現なり。

And yet, life is manifestation of the total function, death is manifestation of the total function.

しるべし、自己に無量の法あるなかに、生あり、死あるなり。

We should know that among the numberless dharmas in the self, there is life; there is death.

*Life is not coming; life is not going; life is not appearing; life is not becoming.* Everything is arising and perishing, being born, living and dying. No Buddhist negates this reality of impermanence and no fixed-self (*anatman*). However, when we take closer look here and now at this thing, the individuality disappears. Self or thing that is not fixed (but a temporal collection of causes and conditions) is connected with the entire world, “here” is one with infinite space, and “now” is connected with eternity within the network of interdependent origination. In this sense, nothing is coming, nothing is going, nothing is appearing and nothing is becoming.

*And yet, life is manifestation of the total function, death is manifestation of the total function.* Each and every thing, coming and going as the process of the working of the loom of creation which includes life and death, is a manifestation of total function. In a sense, there is no such thing as an independent fixed self called Shohaku; there is no birth and no death. In this sense, Shohaku is as old as this universe. All

beings were there at the moment of big-bang. Since then nothing has been added from outside of the universe and nothing has been taken out. We have been there the whole time, moving, changing and evolving with the entire universe. There is a saying in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, “we are the same age with Amitabha Buddha.” Amitabha means infinite life.

*We should know that among the numberless dharmas in the self, there is life; there is death.* This “self” is not an individual, self-centered self, but the self connected with the universe. This self is a furnishing of the total functioning. Appearing and perishing, being born and dying is the same as clouds appearing in the blue sky, staying for a while, then disappearing and returning to the blue sky.

These statements of Dogen remind me what Nagarjuna wrote in the introductory verse of *Mulamadhyamakakarika*.

I pay homage to the Fully Awakened One,  
the supreme teacher who has taught  
the doctrine of relational origination,  
the blissful cessation of all phenomenal  
thought constructions.  
(Tehrein, every event is “marked” by):  
non-origination, non-extinction,  
non-destruction, non-permanence,  
non-identity, non-differentiation,  
non-coming (into being), non-going  
(out of being).<sup>8</sup>

Dogen expresses this functioning of the loom of interdependent (relational) origination that

is beyond all of the phenomenal thought construction, as “liberation (*todatsu*) and manifestation (*genjo*)” in the very beginning of this fascicle Zenki.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Clearly’s translation in Book of Serenity (Lindisfarne Press, 1990) p.3

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.4

<sup>3</sup> See lecture (1).

<sup>4</sup> See lecture (2).

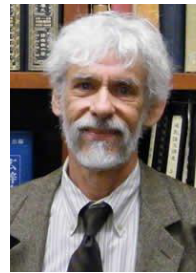
<sup>5</sup> See lecture (3).

<sup>6</sup> This is Okumura’s unpublished translation. Another translation is in Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo, Book 2 (Gudo Nishijima, Windbell Publications, London, 1996) p.239

<sup>7</sup> Okumura trans., *Realizing Genjokoan* (wisdom Publications, 2010) p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth K. Inada, trans., *Nagarjuna: A Translation of His Mulamadhamakakarika with an Introductory Essay* (Tokyo: Hoku-seido Press, 1970), p.39

## Treasury of the True Dharma Eye Book 25



### Sound of the Stream, Form of the Mountain *Keisei sanshoku*

Translated by  
Prof. Carl Bielefeldt

## INTRODUCTION

This fascicle was composed in the spring of 1240, during the summer retreat at Dōgen’s monastery at Fukakusa, south of Heian. It is thus among the earliest texts of the *Shōbōgenzō*, written before the period, 1241-1244, during which the bulk of the collection was composed. It occurs as number 25 in both the 75- and 60-fascicle redactions, and as number 9 in the vulgate edition.

The fascicle takes its title from a verse by the famed Song-dynasty poet official Su Shi, known as Su Dongpo (1036-1101), that celebrates an experience on Mt. Lu in which the poet heard the sound of a stream as the preaching of a buddha and saw the shape of the mountain as the body of a buddha. The title theme, then, is the natural world as the manifestation of the dharma body of the buddha and the expression of the buddha’s teaching. Dōgen would return to these two elements of Su Dongpo’s verse in later fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō* — e.g., in the celebrated *Mountains and Waters Sūtra* (*Sansui kyō*), written in the autumn of 1240, and “The Insentient Preach the Dharma” (*Mujō seppō*), from 1243.

After commenting on Su Dongpo’s verse, Dōgen makes brief remarks on several thematically related passages dealing with the natural

world: the famous stories of Xiangyan Zhixian's spiritual awakening at the sound of a tile striking a bamboo, and of Lingyun Zhiqin's resolving thirty years of practice upon seeing peach trees in bloom; as well as two Chan dialogues on the topic of the phrase "the mountains, rivers, and earth" (*sanga daichi*).

The *Keisei sanshoku*, however, is not merely a poetic appreciation of the spiritual value of the natural world. Rather surprisingly, after the material on the title theme (which occupies less than half the total fascicle), the remainder of the text is taken up with matters ethical. In a lament about the ethical state of Japanese Buddhism in his own day and an extended criticism of clerics who seek fame and profit through Buddhism, Dōgen warns his readers against "the dogs that lick the dry bone" of worldly fortune, "the dogs that bark at good people," "the dogs" like those who tried out of jealousy to poison the Chan ancestor Bodhidharma. He calls on his readers to repent of their transgressions and pray for help from the buddhas and ancestors, to arouse the pure aspiration of the bodhisattva for supreme, perfect bodhi, and "to walk the path of prior sages." Finally, in his conclusion, Dōgen connects the two parts of his essay by emphasizing that only when we have this right attitude toward Buddhist practice can we hear "the eighty-four thousand verses" of the stream and the mountain.

The following translation is based on the text appearing in Kawamura Kōdō, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, volume 1 (1991), pp. 274-284. A digital version with annotation will also be made available on the website of the Soto Zen Text Project: <http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3>. Other English renderings of this text can be

found at "Keiseisanshoku—Sound of the valley, color of the mountains," in Kōsen Nishiyama and John Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1 (1975), pp. 91-99; "Keisei sanshoku: The Sounds of Valley Streams, the Forms of the Mountains," in Francis Dojun Cook, *How to Raise an Ox* (1978), pp. 101-114; "Keisei-sanshiki (The Sound of a Rill and the Figure of a Mountain)," in Yuho Yokoi, *The Shobo-genzo* (1986), pp. 317-329; "Sounds of the Valley Streams, Colors of the Mountains," in Thomas Cleary, *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji* (1992), pp. 116-127; "Keisei-sanshiki: The Voices of the River-Valley and the Form of the Mountains," in Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Book 1 (1994), pp. 85-96; "On 'The Rippling of a Valley Stream, The Contour of a Mountain,'" in Hubert Nearman, *The Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching* (2007), pp. 65-77; and "Valley Sounds, Mountain Colors," in Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, vol. 1 (2010), pp. 85-94.

### Sound of the Stream, Form of the Mountain

In *anuttara-bodhi* [unsurpassed awakening], the buddhas and ancestors who transmitted the way and handed on the work are many; the traces of our predecessors who pulverized their bones are not lacking. We should learn from the ancestor [Huīke] who cut off his arm; do not differ so much as a hair covering the mud. As each is able to slough off the husk, we are not restrained by our previous views and understandings, and matters unclear for vast kalpas suddenly appear before us. The present of such

a time, I do not know, no one recognizes, you do not expect, the eye of the buddha looks at without seeing. How could human thinking fathom it?

In the Land of the Great Song, lived Su Shi, the laymen Dongpo, who was styled Zizhan. He must have been a real dragon in the ocean of the brush, who studied the dragon elephants in the ocean of the buddha. He swam and sported in deep pools; he climbed and dived through the layered clouds. Once, when he had gone to Mt. Lu, he awakened to the way upon hearing the sound of the evening current of a valley stream. Composing a verse, he presented it to the Chan Master Changzong:

The sound of the stream is his long, broad tongue;

The mountain form, his immaculate body.

This evening's eighty-four thousand verses —  
How will I tell them tomorrow?

When this verse was presented to the Chan Master Zong, the Chan Master Zong accepted it. Zong was the Chan Master Zhaojue Changzong. Zong was the dharma heir of the Chan Master Huinan of Huanglong; Nan was the dharma heir of the Chan Master Ciming Chuyuan.

At one time, when the layman [Su Shi] was meeting with the venerable Liaoyuan, the Chan Master Foyin, Foyin presented him with a dharma robe and the buddha precepts. The layman always put on the dharma robe to practice the way. The layman offered Foyin a priceless jeweled belt. People of the time said it was not behavior that could be attained by the worldly.

Thus, might not the case of hearing the stream and awakening to the way be of benefit in addition to later types? What a pity that, for so many times, we seem to have missed the

teaching method of “manifesting a body to preach the dharma.” How does he further see the form of the mountain and hear the sound of the stream? Is it one phrase? Is it a half phrase? Is it eighty-four thousand verses? We should regret that there are sounds and forms hidden in the mountains and waters; we should also rejoice that there are cases of times when sounds and forms appear in the mountains and waters. The mark of the tongue does not weary; how could the form of the body persist and expire? Nevertheless, should we learn that when they appear they are close, or should we learn that when they are hidden they are close? Are they one piece? Are they a half piece? For the preceding springs and autumns, he had not seen or heard the mountains and waters; on the occasion of “this evening,” he sees and hears a little of the mountains and waters. Bodhisattvas who study the way today should also open the gate that enters the study from “the mountain flows; the water does not flow.”

On the day before the evening when this layman awakened to the way, he had asked the Chan master Zong about the saying, “insentient beings preach the dharma.” Though, under the words of the Chan master, he did not yet exhibit the behavior of flipping the body [i.e., awakening], when he heard the sound of the stream, the waves of water reversing struck the heavens on high. Therefore, where the sound of the stream startled the layman, should we take it as the sound of the stream, or should we take it as the pouring forth of Chaojue? What I wonder is whether Chaojue's words on “insentient beings preach the dharma” may still be echoing, secretly mixed into the evening voice of the valley stream. Who could confirm



this as one *shō* [a measure of two quarts], or “gather the currents” as one ocean? Ultimately speaking, did the layman awaken to the way, or did the mountains and water awaken to the way? Who with clear eyes would not sharply fix their eye on the mark of “the long tongue and the immaculate body”?

\* \* \* \* \*

Again, once, when the Chan Master Xiangyan Zhixian was studying the way in the congregation of the Chan Master Dayuan of Dawei, Dawei said, “You are intelligent and learned. Without something memorized from the commentaries, say a phrase for me as you were before your father and mother were born.” Xiangyan repeatedly sought for something to say but could not get it. Deeply regretting his body and mind, he searched through the volumes he had collected over the years but was still stumped. Finally, setting fire to the books he had collected over the years, he said, “A painted cake does not satisfy hunger. I vow that I shall not seek to understand the buddha dharma in this life. I shall simply become a meal-server monk (*xing zhoufan seng*). So saying, he spent the years and months providing the gruel and rice. The *xing zhoufan seng* is the one who provides gruel and rice to the assembled monks; it is like the meal attendant in this country.

Thus, he said to Dawei, “Zhixian, confused in body and mind, cannot say anything. The venerable should say something for me.” Dawei said, “I don’t refuse to say something for you, but [if I did] you will likely resent me later.”

Thus, after years and months spent follow-

ing the tracks of the National Teacher Dacheng, he entered Mt. Wudang, where he bound the grasses to fashion a hut at the site of the National Teacher’s hut. He planted bamboo to keep him company. Once, when he was clearing a path, a piece of tile flew up and hit against a bamboo; upon hearing the sound, he suddenly had a great awakening. Bathing and purifying himself, he faced Mt. Dawei, offered incense, made prostrations, and said to Dawei, “Great venerable Dawei, if long ago you had explained it to me, how could this have happened? The depth of your kindness is greater than that of a parent.” Then, he composed a verse that said,

One hit, and I lost what I know;  
I won’t be training myself again.  
Action and repose given over to the old path;  
I won’t be sinking into worry.  
Without traces wherever I go;  
Department beyond sound and sight.  
Masters of the way in all directions  
Will call this the highest faculty.  
He presented this verse to Dawei. Dawei said, “This lad has got it.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Again, the Chan Master Lingyun Zhiqin pursued the way for thirty years. Once, while traveling in the mountains, resting at the foot of a mountain, he looked out at a village in the distance. The time was spring, and, seeing the peach blossoms in bloom, he suddenly awakened to the way. Composing a verse, he presented it to [his teacher,] Dawei.

Thirty years a passenger seeking the sword.  
How many times have the leaves fallen and

the branches budded?

After once seeing the peach blossoms,

He's like this now, without further doubts.

Dawei said, "Those who enter from objects never revert or lose it." This was his acknowledgement.

Which of "those who enter" does not do so "from objects"? Which of "those who enter" "reverts or loses it"? This is not just said about Qin. Subsequently, he succeeded to the dharma of Dawei. Were the form of the mountain not the immaculate body, how could this be?

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chan Master Changsha Jingcen was asked by a monk, "How does one turn the mountains, rivers, and earth back to the self?"

The master said, "How does one turn the self back to the mountains, rivers, and earth?"

This saying means that the self is naturally the self, that while "the self" may be "the mountains, rivers, and earth," it should not be restricted by "returning."

\* \* \* \* \*

The venerable Huijue, the Chan master Huangzhao of Langye, was a distant descendant of Nanyue. Once Zixuan, a lecturer from a teaching house, asked him, "How does what has purity as its original state suddenly produce the mountains, rivers, and earth?"

Thus asked, the venerable responded to him, "How does what has purity as its original state suddenly produce the mountains, rivers, and earth?"

Here, we know that we should not confuse

the mountains, rivers, and earth that "have purity as their original state" with the mountains, rivers, and earth. Nevertheless, since the sūtra master has never heard of it even in his dreams, he does not know the mountains, rivers, and earth as the mountains, rivers, and earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

We should realize that, were it not for the mountain form and stream sound, "holding up a flower" [as the Buddha did on Vulture Peak] would not expound [the dharma]; "getting the marrow" would not "take its place" [as Huike did in response to Bodhidharma]. Because of the virtues of the stream sound and mountain form, "the earth and sentient beings simultaneously achieve the way" [as it is said of the Buddha's awakening], and there are buddhas who see the bright star and awaken to the way [as the Buddha did under the Bodhi tree]. Skin bags such as these are the prior wise men whose resolve to seek the dharma was extremely deep. Their traces, people of today should study without fail. Even today, the true study that has nothing to do with fame or profit should establish such resolve.

In the recent times of a remote quarter [such as Japan], people who truly seek the buddha dharma are rare. It is not that there are none; but they are difficult to meet. There are many who happen to become renunciates and seem to be apart from the secular, but they just treat the way of the buddha as a ladder to fame and profit. It is pitiful, it is lamentable, that, without regretting the passing days and nights, they trade at their dark deeds in vain. When can they expect to get free and attain the way? Even

if they were to meet a true teacher, they would not love the real dragon [but only admire the carved dragon]. Such types, the former buddha called “the pitiful.” They are like this because they have evil causes in their former lives. While receiving birth, because they have no resolve to seek the dharma for the sake of the dharma, when they see the real dharma, they doubt the real dragon, when they meet the true dharma, they are despised by the true dharma. Because their bodies and minds, bones and flesh, have never been born from the dharma, they are not in accord with the dharma, do not make use of them as the dharma.

Masters and disciples of the ancestral lineage have been handing down this sort of thing for a long time. It is as if they speak of the aspiration for bodhi as an old dream. What a pity that, while they are born on a mountain of jewels, they do not know the jewels, do not see the jewels, let alone get the riches of the dharma. After we have produced the aspiration for bodhi, though we may turn round in the six destinies and four births, the causes and conditions of that turning all become the practice of the vow of bodhi. Hence, though we may have spent our previous days and nights in vain, while this life is not yet exhausted, we should quickly make a vow:

I pray that, together with all living beings, from this life through life after life to come, I will hear the true dharma; that whenever I hear it, I will not doubt it and fail to believe in it; that when I encounter the true dharma, casting aside the worldly dharma, I will accept the buddha dharma, and finally I will achieve the way together with the earth and sentient beings.

When we make a vow in this way, it will naturally be the cause and condition of correctly producing the aspiration. This mental attitude is not to be neglected.

Again, this land of Japan is a remote quarter beyond the ocean. The minds of the people are exceedingly stupid. From ancient times, no sages have been born here, no innately wise have been born here; needless to say, real gentlemen who study the way are rare. When a person teaches the mind of the way to those who do not know the mind of the way, since “sincere words offend the ear,” they resent the person instead of reflecting on themselves. In general, in the vow of the aspiration for bodhi, one should not think to inform the worldly of whether one has or has not produced the aspiration for bodhi, whether one is or is not practicing the way. We should conduct ourselves so as not to inform them, how much less should we voice it ourselves. Because it is rare for them to seek the real thing, people today, though their bodies lack practice and their minds lack insight, when they get praise from another, seem to look for the people who will tell them that their practice and understanding are in accord. “Delusion within delusion” — this is it. These false thoughts, we should quickly cast away.

What is difficult to see and hear when we study the way is the mental attitude of the true dharma. This mental attitude is what buddha after buddha has transmitted. It is transmitted as both the radiance of the buddha and as the buddha mind. From the lifetime of the Thus Come One till today, there have been many who appear to take the search for fame and profit as a concern in studying the way. Nevertheless, on encountering the teachings of a true

teacher, if they reverse themselves and seek the true dharma, they will naturally attain the way. We should realize that there is likely this kind of sickness in the study of the way now. For example, whether they be beginners starting the study, or trained practitioners of long practice, one may get those with the potential to transmit the dharma and hand on the work, or one may not get them. There should be some who “admire the ancients” and learn; there are likely also demons who slander [the dharma] and will not learn. We should neither love nor resent either one. How can we not deplore them, not resent them? Because those who know the three poisons [of desire, anger, and delusion] as the three poisons are rare, we do not resent them. Not to mention that we should not forget our aspiration at the time we first embarked on the joyful quest for the way of the buddha. At the time we first produce the aspiration, we do not seek the dharma for the sake of other people; we have discarded fame and profit. Without seeking fame or profit, we aspire only singlemindedly to attain the way and never anticipate respect or offerings from the king of the land or his great ministers. Still, now there are such cases. They are not our original anticipation; they are not what we seek: to get caught up in the bonds of humans and gods is not what we anticipate. Yet foolish people, even if they have the mind of the way, quickly forgetting their original resolve and mistakenly expecting the offerings of humans and gods, rejoice that the merit of the buddha dharma has reached them. When the refuge of the king of the land and his great ministers is frequent, they think it is an expression of their way. This is one [type of] demon studying the way. Though we should

not forget the mind of compassion, this is not something in which to rejoice. Have you not seen the golden words spoken by the buddha, “even in the lifetime of the Thus Come One, there are many who are hateful and jealous”? The principle that the stupid does not know the wise, the little beast hates the great sage, is like this.

Again, many of the ancestral masters of the Western Heavens [i.e., India] were destroyed by outsiders, followers of the two vehicles [of *śrāvaka* and *pratyeka-buddha*], or kings of the land — though it is not the case that the outsiders were superior, or that the ancestral masters lacked circumspection. After the First Ancestor [Bodhidharma] came from the west, he hung up his staff at Mt. Song. [Emperor] Wu of Liang did not know him; the ruler of Wei did not know him. At that time, there were two dogs, named Tripi aka Bodhiruci and Vinaya master Guangtong. Fearing that their empty fame and false profit would be obstructed by a true person, they were as if looking up and thinking to darken the sun in the sky. They were worse than [the Buddha’s evil cousin] Devadatta, when [the Buddha] was in the world.

How pitiful: the fame and profit you so deeply love, the ancestral master hates more than dung and filth. The reason for this sort of thing is not that the power of the buddha dharma is not complete; we should realize that there are dogs that bark at good people. Do not be bothered by barking dogs; do not resent them. We should make a vow to guide them; we should declare to them [as is said in scripture], “You are beasts, but you should produce the aspiration for bodhi.” A prior wise man has said, “These are beasts with human faces.”



Again, there must also be a class of demons that takes refuge and makes offerings. The former buddha said, “He does not approach kings of the land, princes, great ministers, officials, brahmans, or laymen.” Truly this is a practice not to be forgotten by those who would study the way of the buddha. The merit of the initial practice of the bodhisattva will accumulate as he or she progresses.

Again, since ancient times, the Deva Ruler [Śakra] has come to test the resolve of a practitioner, or Māra Pāpīyas [the Evil One] has come to block a practitioner’s training in the way. These things always happened when [the practitioner] was not free from the ambition for fame and profit; where his great kindness and great compassion were deep and his vow widely to deliver beings was mature and great, these obstacles did not occur. The power of practice sometimes naturally gains a country, sometimes resembles the achievement of worldly fortune. At such times, we should reappraise that [case]; do not doze through that. Stupid people’s celebrating this is like a foolish dog licking a dry bone. The wise men and sages hate this, as worldly people fear dung and filth.

In general, the sentiments of the beginner cannot gauge the way of the buddha; we may measure it but will not get it right. Even though, as a beginner, we fail to measure it, it is not that ultimately it is not exhaustively investigated. The fully penetrated interior of the hall is not the shallow consciousness of the beginner. We should just observe the practice of walking the path of prior sages. At this time, in seeking out teachers and inquiring about the way, we “ladder up mountains and boat over seas.” As we visit guides and inquire of friends,

they descend from the heavens, they well up from the earth. Where they engage us, they make sentient beings speak, they make insentient beings speak; and we hear them with our body and hear them with our mind. [In the words of the Chan masters] “Using the ears to hear” is “home-style tea and rice,” but “when the eyes hear the voices,” this is “why is it necessary?” and “It’s not necessary.”

In seeing the buddha as well, we see both our own buddha and the buddha of others, we see a great buddha and a small buddha. Do not be surprised or frightened by the great buddha; do not be suspicious of or troubled by the small buddha. The “great buddha and small buddha” here are what we are for now regarding as “the mountain form and stream sound.” In them are “his long broad tongue” and the “eighty-four thousand verses”; “to tell” them is [what is called] “far off and free”; to see through them is [known as] “alone and removed.” Therefore, the secular say, “ever higher, ever harder.” A former buddha said, “it fills the heavens; it fills everywhere.” That the spring pine has constancy, the autumn chrysanthemum has elegance, is precisely this.

When the good friend reaches this field, he will be a great teacher of humans and gods. Those who arbitrarily adopt a demeanor for the sake of others without having reached this field, is a great thief of humans and gods. They do not know the spring pine; they do not see the autumn chrysanthemum. What “fodder” could they have? How could they “cut off the root source”?

Again, both the mind and the flesh may flag, may lose faith; in such cases, with sincere mind, we should repent before the buddha. At

such times, the power of the merit of repenting before the buddha will save us and make us pure. This merit will grow a pure faith and vigour without obstacles. When pure faith once appears, self and other are equally turned by it. Its benefits cover the sentient and the insentient everywhere. The gist is [as follows].

I pray that, although I have accumulated evil deeds in the past and have causes and conditions that obstruct the way, the buddhas and ancestors who have attained the way through the way of the buddha, taking pity on me, will liberate me from the bonds of my deeds and remove my hindrances to studying the way; that their merit and teachings will fill and pervade everywhere the inexhaustible dharma realm, and that they will share their compassion with me.

The buddhas and ancestors were us in the past; we will be buddhas and ancestors in the future. When we look up at the buddhas and ancestors, it is one buddha and ancestor; and when we contemplate their production of the aspiration, it is one production of the aspiration. As they extend their compassion through “seven passes and eight arrivals,” we “gain an advantage,” we “lose an advantage.”

Therefore, [the Chan master] Longya [Judon] said,

What in past lives we have not finished, now we should finish.

In this life, we can deliver the bodies of accumulated lives.

When the old buddhas were not yet awakened, they were the same as those now.

Once awakened, people now will be the people of old.

We should quietly investigate this case; it is

what is assented to as the verification of buddhahood.

When one repents in this way, one will invariably have the unseen aid of the buddhas and ancestors. We should expose and announce to the buddha the thoughts of our minds and the conduct of our bodies: the power of exposure causes the roots of our offenses to be destroyed. This is right practice of a single color; it is the mind of right faith; it is the body of right faith. When we have right practice, “the sound of the stream” and the form of the stream, “the form of the mountain” and the sound of the mountain — none begrudge the “eighty-four thousand verses.” When the self does not begrudge the body and mind of fame and profit, the stream and mountain are also ungrudging in this way. “This evening” may be one in which the “sound of the stream” and “the form of the mountain” express or do not express the “eighty-four thousand verses”; but, were the stream and the mountain to exhaust their strength without success in “telling them” of the stream and mountain, who would see and hear you as the sound of the stream and form of the mountain?

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye  
Sound of the Stream, Form of the Mountain  
Number 25

Presented to the assembly five days following the binding of the rule [of the summer retreat], the *kanoe-ne* year of En’ō [May 13, 1240], at Kannon Dōri Kōshō Hōrinji

Copied on the birthday of the Buddha, before the binding of rule, the *mizunoto-u* year of Kangen [April 28, 1243], at the attendant’s quarters of the same monastery.  
Ejō



## My Footnotes on Zazen (4) Sitting Upright With Proper Posture: Sitting Like An Infant

Rev. Issho Fujita

Director, Soto Zen Buddhism  
International Center

### The poise of an infant's sitting

When we teach zazen we often show a photo of an austere Zen monk sitting zazen with upright posture. We begin by saying, "This is a model for zazen. You should sit like this..." I usually show a photo of an infant sitting on the floor. Here is a photo of an eleven-month-old baby. I think we can learn a



lot about zazen posture from this photo. According to Zen master Dogen, sitting upright with proper posture (*shoshin tanza* in Japanese) is the A to Z of zazen. Breath and mind will naturally be

regulated by establishing proper zazen posture.

Please notice that this baby shows no sign of contrivance or pretentiousness. We do not see any strain or lack of naturalness. The baby does not seem to be thinking, "I should keep my back straight!" "I must not move!" "If I sit nicely, I will be praised." He is effortlessly sitting comfortably. To borrow Dogen's phrase, he sits "with no need for any expenditure of either physical or mental effort" (*Shobogenzo Shoji*). Nevertheless he is sitting firmly grounded on the floor so that his upper body stands up beautifully and freely, extending in the direction of gravity. He does this because

his posture has spontaneously emerged from within as *katadori* (form), and not as *katachi* (shape) forcibly imposed from the outside. Shosui Iwaki, a Japanese traditional martial arts master, says, "*Katadori* has softness and flexibility. *Katachi* is stiff and lacks liveliness or principle. It is artificial, like a doll's posture."

In many cases, zazen instruction consists of a series of "how to's" - how to cross legs, how to place the hands, how to drop the line of sight, how to keep the back straight, how to pull in one's chin, how to settle one's tongue, how to breathe, how to control one's mind, and so on. With these "how to's," practitioners make a lot of effort to control all the body parts, the breath, and the state of mind by faithfully following those instructions one by one. That kind of effort is usually understood as "regulating body, breath and mind." In this approach to zazen the shallow layer of the mind, the "conscious I" (the ego-consciousness, which is the product of thought), is trying to unilaterally give orders and force the rest of the mind and body to devotedly obey. It is as if it is telling them, "Because our instructor said so, you should do what I tell you without complaints or questions! That is zazen!"

This approach might work to some extent in the beginning, but eventually there will be many problems - "I can't sit still because of so much pain in my legs!," "I can't do anything about idle thoughts. My mind is out of control," "I am not good at zazen..." It is no wonder because "I," which is only a product of thought, is trying to control everything else without getting any agreement, consent, or

cooperation from the layer of the mind and body which is much deeper, wider, and wiser than “I.” It is quite natural that the practitioner will experience many kinds of resistance, rebellion, disagreement, and complaint one after another in the form of sleepiness, chaotic thoughts, uncomfortable sensations and so on. If one tries to win this battle by willpower, one is bound to fail. The practitioner will just end up hurting the body and mind by doing too many unnatural things.

### Forcible action and spontaneous action

Zen master Dogen calls this type of action *go-i* (forcible action). It means to do something intentionally, by force, aiming at certain goal. He sets *un-i* against *go-i*. *Un-i* is spontaneous action that emerges naturally in response to the situation beyond judgment and discretion. There is a common misunderstanding that zazen is done as accumulation of *go-i*. But Dogen says that zazen should be done by “letting go of both your body and mind, forgetting them both, and throwing yourself into the house of Buddha, with all being done by Buddha” (*Shobogenzo Shoji*). This means that zazen should be practiced as *un-i*. I show a photo of an infant’s sitting when giving zazen instruction because I hope it will prevent practitioners from practicing zazen as *go-i*. There is a sentence in the Bible (Matthew 18-3): “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Borrowing this famous phrase, I would like to say, “Unless you turn and sit like children, you will never enter the gate of zazen.”

So, how can we sit zazen as *un-i*? What path

should we follow? That is what we need to investigate thoroughly.

### Sitting with sit bones (ischium)

Looking at the photo of the infant’s sitting,

we notice that he is firmly connected with the floor through his pelvis. His spine-neck-skull (twelve thoracic, five lumbar and seven cervical vertebrae), like the

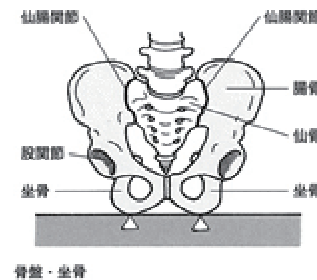


figure 1

links of a chain, is freely stretched upward, supported by the solid pelvic structure. The points of contact between the pelvis and the floor are the two sit bones, right and left (see figure 1). In sitting, the most important thing is letting our body weight fall onto the best point of the sit bones. This determines the tilt of the pelvis, which in turn strongly influences the shape of the upper body and the balance of the whole body. Sit bones are literally “zazen bones.”

When doing zazen, we put a round cushion, called a *zafu*, under the sit bones. If we use a *zafu*

of appropriate thickness - not too thick, not too thin - the outsides of both knees will easily and firmly touch the zabuton (square cushion under the *zafu*) or the floor (see figure 2).

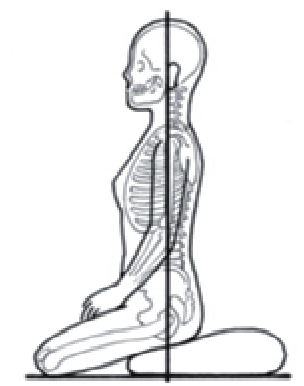


figure 2



Now please see figure 3. The line connecting the right and left sit bones (I) and the line connecting the anus (A) and sexual organs (S) meet at C. If we draw a line from C to the top of the head (TS), it defines a central axis of the body. It is crucial to sit so that the line C-TS

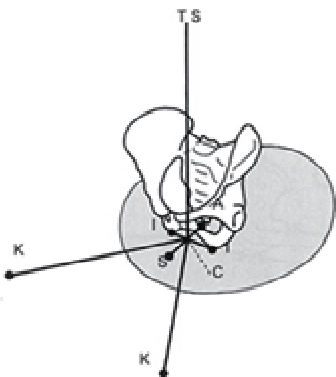
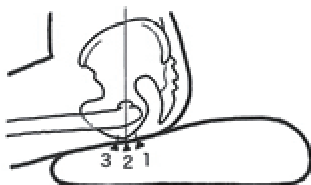


figure 3

extends up and down freely and vertically. Of course, this line does not exist as an anatomical entity. It only exists as a felt-sense to the sitter. The isosceles triangle KCK' (K and K' are the knees) is the foundation supporting the central axis.

For this to happen, it is necessary to let the body weight fall vertically straight onto the proper points of the curved surface of the sit bones. When we do this, our body's innate self-regulatory mechanism allows the upper body to naturally elongate upward. It is necessary to have the muscles around pelvic joints, pelvis, spine, neck and shoulders deeply relaxed



坐骨のポイント

figure 4

so that they do not hinder the spontaneous adjusting movement of the whole body. Slowly rolling the pelvis forward and backward on the curved surface of the sit bones, we carefully look for point 2 in figure 4, the point where our body weight is supported

most properly. If our body weight is supported at point 1, the pelvis tilts too far backward. This results in rounding of the lumbar and thoracic area, sliding down of the ribcage, compression in the abdominal area, pulling in of the chin, and closing of the eyelids. If our body weight is supported at point 3, the pelvis tilts too far forward. This results in bending backward at the lumbar and thoracic area, sliding up of the ribcage, protruding of the abdominal area, pushing out of the chin, and opening of the eyelids. These connected changes in various body parts are induced naturally by the movement of the pelvis, as a chain reaction. The body should be flexible enough to allow these changes to happen freely. Through carefully



figure 5

sensing with the whole body (figure 5), we should discover point 2, where our spine naturally elongates, somewhere between points 1 and 3.

When we are sitting on point 2 of the sit

bones, our body weight is so firmly and solidly supported with such a good balance that we can reduce muscle tension substantially. We can have a feeling of being in a perfectly “neutral” position and sometimes even feel that we have no sense of weight. Here there is no need to make an extra effort to put our back in position.

### **Natural regulation of the body**

When we sit down on point 2, we can feel the flow of supporting force from the floor along the central axis of the body (in reaction to body weight). We align our neck and head with this upward flow. Then, the back of the neck and the back of the head naturally extend upward and the chin is appropriately tucked in without forcibly pulling it in. If we keep our eyes softly open, with relaxed muscles around them, this upright posture naturally invites our line of sight to drop downward. Zen master Dogen never said, “Drop your line of sight to forty-five degrees.” Trying to align the line of sight with an artificially fixed angle is nothing but a forcible action. We must avoid such unnecessary effort.

With this posture, our mouth is naturally closed (teeth naturally together) and our tongue is naturally placed against the roof of our mouth just behind the teeth (not intentionally pushing against them). In zazen we relax the facial muscles because we do not need them to interact with others. We should particularly release the tension at the forehead.

### **Natural regulation of the breath**

Under these conditions, it becomes possible to naturally breathe with much ease and

depth. Through the nose, in-breath and out-breath quietly happen with our body’s own rhythm. With in-breath, the whole body expands, the sit bones press on the zafu, the pelvis tilts forward a bit and the spine slightly stands up. With out-breath, the whole body contracts and the pelvis and the spine come back to the original position. In this way the waves of breathing movement spread through all corners of the body. If we feel this spread is blocked, we unwind the blocked part so the wave of breath can go through our whole body. When we are casually (without focusing) sensing this subtle movement created by breath, we gradually become able to notice the intervals between in-breath and out-breath when breathing completely ceases.

### **Natural regulation of the mind**

As the body is arranged, the mind calms down by itself and becomes very sharp and wakeful. Various thoughts still freely appear like clouds, but there is now no more clinging to them. We just observe them freely appearing and disappearing. This state of mind is not produced volitionally or methodically by applying some technique to the mind but as a natural result of sitting with good alignment and deep relaxation.

Zazen is not “self-absorption - sinking deep into the inner world” by shutting oneself off from the outer world. Rather, it is acting to deeply re-connect oneself with outer world by opening oneself and responding to the world. Actually, it is possible for us to sit upright with proper posture only when we fully receive support from the outside world in what we see, what we hear, the supporting force from the

floor, the air coming from outside, etc.

### How to settle legs, arms and hands

As for our limbs, we just settle them at appropriate places so that they do not disturb the torso's balance. If we can cross our legs without so much difficulty, the traditional full-lotus or half-lotus position is recommended. This cross-legged position gives us a wonderful sense of groundedness and stability of lower body. Because the balance of the torso is most important, we should find the best position for our legs so that they give it maximum support. It would be counterproductive to sacrifice the torso's balance by forcibly crossing our legs.

As for arms, we naturally let them hang from both sides of the body. We relax the hands (particularly the center of the palm) and place the left hand palm-up on our right palm. The tips of our thumbs lightly touch each other. Consulting with our sensations, we find the most comfortable position for our hands and settle them there. We do not freeze our hands up, but keep them soft so they can freely move together with the whole body's subtle re-adjusting movements.

The practice of sitting upright with a proper posture is a dynamic self-regulatory process powered by the continuous interaction between consciousness (thinking to move the pelvis so that the body weight falls vertically onto point 2) and sensations (sensing the result of this movement in body, breath and mind). So, during zazen the body continually fluctuates in very subtle ways, although they are too subtle to notice. While sitting zazen, we continue

minutely adjusting the pelvis so that our body weight falls vertically onto point 2 at the bottom of our sitting posture, and we keep a delicate balance while feeling the verticality of the body's central axis in deep relaxation. This balance is so delicate and fragile that it is easily lost by drowsiness and discursive thinking. When we notice that the balance is lost we just slowly recover it, unhurriedly guided by kinesthetic sensations. Keeping ourselves open to the world, we patiently recover the balance every time it is lost. The practice of sitting upright with proper posture is just such a sober and sensible work, to be done serenely with sharp awareness (*kakusoku*).

(To be continued)



# NEWS

## **August 28, 2012 – November 28, 2012**

Sotoshu Training Monastery was held at Shogoji, Kumamoto, Japan. 14 priests attended.

## **September 6, 2012**

A Ground Breaking Ceremony for Tempyozan Zendo was held in Lower Lake, California

## **September 8 – 9, 2012**

90th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism Teaching Activities in North America and the Founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission was held at Zenshuji, California.

## **September 12, 2012**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Busshinji, Brazil.

## **October 7 – 9, 2012**

North America Soto Zen Conference and Workshop was held at Great Vow Zen Monastery (Daiganzenji), Oregon.

## **October 13, 2012**

Hawaii Autumn Minister's Meeting and Workshop was held at Taiyoji, Waipahu, Hawaii.

## **October 19 – 21, 2012**

Europe Soto Zen Workshop was held at Zendonien, France.

## **November 1 – 4, 2012**

South America Soto Zen Workshop was held at Busshinji, Brazil.



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL is published semiannually by the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center  
Issho Fujita, Editor

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