



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

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650th Great Memorial Ceremony for Gasan Joseki Zenji

Rev. Shodo Niimi

Chief Director of the
Daionki office at Daihonzan Sojiji

Daihonzan Sojiji is planning to solemnly observe two Great Memorial Ceremonies during the next ten years; in 2015 the 650th Memorial Ceremony for Sojiji's second abbot, Gasan Joseki Zenji, and in 2024, the 700th Memorial Ceremony for Sojiji's founder, Keizan Jokin Zenji.

"*Daionki*" are major ceremonies held, especially every 50 years, to show our heartfelt gratitude to the two founders (Koso Dogen Zenji and Taiso Keizan Zenji) and the two second abbots (Koun Ejo Zenji and Gasan Joseki Zenji) of two head temples, Eiheiji and Sojiji. *Daionki* is observed in accordance with the Sotoshu Regulations.

At Daihonzan Sojiji we revere both Taiso Keizan Zenji and Gasan Joseki Zenji as one unity and respectively call them "*Kei Ga Goryoson*" (Keizan and Gasan: Two Venerable Ones). This time we will have two *Daionki* with a nine-year interval between. We have launched a long-term project, spanning about ten years, to enhance earthquake safety of every hall at Sojiji and to build an over-ground cloister. During this period we are planning ceremonies to express our gratitude to the Two Venerable Ones, memorial events and cultural programs, programs to foster human resources and more. Now we are proceeding with preparations we are calling "Daihonzan Sojiji's Great Memorial Ceremony for Commemorating the Two Ven-

erable Ones."

Gasan Zenji's most notable achievement is his training of the great disciples called *Gotetsu* (five abbots) or *Nijugotetsu* (twenty-five dignitaries), thus promoting the rapid growth of Sotoshu through their activities and exponentially expanding the accessibility of Soto Zen teachings in Japan. Everyone would agree with this. We have decided to express this in the theme of the Great Memorial Ceremonies as *Sojo* (inheritance and transmission). We ask "Can you hear the sound of holy steps?" remembering the footprints of Gasan Zenji and the strong bond between the Two Venerable Ones. We also will produce an introductory DVD about Gasan Zenji so people can feel "the sound of the holy steps" which leads up to us as dharma descendants in the Sotoshu lineage and to tell people about the life and achievement of Gasan Zenji. At the beginning we will make a seven-minute long preview and send it to all the district offices and local offices for viewing. We are now making this preview. We hope to show and honor the beneficial influences and great achievements of Gasan Zenji from various angles.

We will also republish "The Story of Gasan Zenji," which was published in 2002, and we will send it to temples all over Japan, hoping to deepen the understanding of Gasan Zenji's teaching. We are now exhibiting panels at the entrances of Sojiji, *Koshakudai*, and at the hallway in front of the abbot's quarters. Signs and posters are being posted at JR Shinagawa and Tsurumi Station. They are making this event of *Daionki* known to many people in the area and people in general.

This *Daionki* project will be expensive. In April, 2013, we set a period for donations: five years for standard donations and ten years for special donations. We asked all Sotoshu temples and members for financial support. We have already received many contributions. We appreciate their collaboration from the bottom of our heart.

This year we will observe the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony for the 650th Anniversary of Gasan Joseki Zenji. Being hosted by Shumicho, the Preliminary Ceremony will be held in Kinki and Kyushu region in April, Shikoku and Tokai region in May, Kanto and Hokushinetsu region in June, Hokkaido, Tohoku and Chugoku region in July. The officiants for the Preliminary Ceremony in these nine regions will be the abbots from two head temples. The Preliminary Ceremony will be also held in four overseas districts: Hawaii, North America, South America, and Europe.

As part of this event we, the *Daionki* office, will have a scroll-style portrait and stupa-style memorial tablet for Gasan Zenji. We are now arranging for those to be enshrined at the sites of the ceremony. They will be also enshrined at the All-Japan Baikaryu Recitation Convention of 2014, which will be held at Kami Arena in Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture, on May 28th and 29th. We plan to perform the Preliminary Recitation there. Singing voices will resound to express our feeling of gratitude.

2015 is the exact year of Gasan Joseki Zenji's 650th Memorial. We are reserving the period between June 1st and June 8th as quasi-ceremony time. The actual ceremony will take

place from October 7th to October 20th. During those periods we will invite incense-burning masters from all over Japan and perform many ceremonies to express gratitude. For now, we are asking many priests to play the role of an incense-burning master through various Sotoshu organizations.

People may make commemorative visits to Sojiji from September 1st through November 29th in 2014, and from April 1st through October 20th in 2015. We are now accepting applications for these *Daionki* visits. During this time, visitors to Sojiji will be able to join a ceremony of respect to chant and offer incense to express their gratitude.

All of us at the *Daionki* office are working together to enable as many members as possible to feel an intimate connection with Gasan Zenji and Sojiji on this precious occasion of *Daionki*.

We are looking forward to having your visit.

For more details, see our special website for the *Daionki* of Daihonzan Sojiji at <http://sojo.jp/>



"Sojo"

Theme of Great Memorial Ceremony for
the 650th Anniversary of Daihonzan Sojiji's Second Abbot
Gasán Joseki Zenji



Gasán Joseki Zenji's Memorial tablet



Portrait of Gasán Joseki Zenji (Stored in Sojiji Soin)



Study together, Live together – On the practice of “Generosity”–

Rev. Shunya Sano

Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher
Resident Priest of Hokoji, Hokkaido, Japan

Good evening. I am Shunya Sano and I have come from Japan. It's a great honor and pleasure to be here and to meet you.

I would like to say “thank you,” to Okumura Roshi and for all the preparation you have done here today. Thank you also to Rummé Sokan and Kushida-san for accompanying me and to Rummé Sokan for translating my talk tonight.

At the beginning, I will read a message from the Head Priest of Soto Zen Buddhism who is also the Abbot of Eihei-ji, Fukuyama Taiho Zenji.

This message addresses the various issues we are facing and how we should think and act as Buddhists. Please look at the translation.

Message from the Head Priest of Sotoshu in 2013

Here in Japan, we are now face-to-face with many major challenges related to our lives. We are still working through such big problems as the rehabilitation and reconstruction following the Great East Japan Earthquake, the great tsunami, the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant, and so forth. We are also dealing with the issue of implement-

ing a society that is reassured with not relying on nuclear-generated electricity. We are also grappling with various issues such as bullying, suicide, an unequal society, poverty, war and other matters.

All of these issues are related to the Sotoshu wishes expressed in the words “respect for human rights, establishment of peace, and conservation of the environment.” Let us build a society in which we can accept other people's hardships as our own affairs, where we reexamine a society in which people only seek their own comfort and convenience, and where each and every individual life is valued.

For this reason, this year we have the concrete objective of “meeting all challenges, transmitting the teachings, and supporting all beings,” which is expressed through “generosity,” one of the components of “The Bodhisattva's Four All-Embracing Methods.” This is the pillar of a bodhisattva's practice, in which we are willing to share generously whether it is something material or spiritual.

Dogen Zenji taught that “generosity” is not to be greedy. This is a way of living where we do not use flattery and where we don't give something to others with the expectation of what we might receive in return. It is rather a way of living that builds a mutually-energizing society.

Keizan Zenji taught that when we prac-

tice zazen, the essential way of living filled with the mind of compassion expands. In the midst of swift impermanence and the great matter of life and death, and without wasting the preciousness of one single day, let us sit quietly in front of the Buddha and our ancestors, allowing the mind and the breath to settle.

Even if the path is long and the challenges ahead of us look difficult, let us proceed with the bodhisattva practice of “generosity” whereby we meet the sadness and suffering of other people, we are able to straightforwardly convey our thoughts and feelings to others and also understand their thoughts and feelings, and we can support each other.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught that we must bring forth the mind that has unlimited compassion for all living beings.

Namu Shakyamuni Buddha

The fundamental teaching of Buddhism is “to think a great deal of life” or “to value life.” Everyone has a right to be happy --this is a human right. Wishing for “all living things to be happy” is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. The message from Fukuyama Zenji is: To create a better society, let’s study the Buddhist teaching and strive at Zen practice together.

One of the specific practices is *dana*, or generosity. This is one of the “Four Integrative Methods of Bodhisattvas.” This is the practice of being able to freely share and give psychological and material support to each other. In order to face our problems and to establish a society where we respect each other’s lives, I’m going to talk about the following three topics which are based on “the practice of *dana*.”

The first is encountering other people as well as ourselves. The second is to pass on to others what we have learned. The third is to support all beings with our life and practice.

On March 11, 2011, there was a great earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan. I’m sure you all remember that you saw images of this disaster in the news reports. On that day, fifteen thousand people were killed. Furthermore, there are still four thousand people unaccounted for. There are also many people who have been suffering from bad physical condition caused by mental stress, as well as those who have committed suicide because of anguish. I realized again through this sorrow that our lives are ephemeral and small in the face of natural threats like this one.

I think you may know of the French philosopher Pascal, who lived in the seventeenth century and wrote a collection of essays called *Thoughts (Pensées)*. In this book he wrote, “Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed.” Pascal was a devoted Christian and, for him, perhaps being able to believe was more important than thinking. For this reason, it might be more appropri-

ate to say that he thought human beings are “reeds that have faith.” Nevertheless, he used the term “thinking reed” because he wrote this about people who do not believe in the Christian faith. I think that the image of a reed appears in the Bible. A reed is actually quite delicate. If there is a wind, it will be blown about. If the weather is cold, the water in the stalk of the reed freezes and the reed will wither away. A reed is delicate. We human beings are also weak like a reed, but we have the power of thought. I am going to talk a little bit about “thinking.” Descartes, another French philosopher, said “I think, therefore I am.” He emphasized this matter of thinking and this notion helped bring about modern society. We tried to conquer nature by thinking, but we also became arrogant, thinking that nature belonged to us. I think that this arrogant attitude has spread all over the world, including Japan. As one of form of that arrogance, the terrible accident happened at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, Unit 1 through 4. Unfortunately, we haven’t been able to recover from this accident, and consequently we have another problem with the leaking of contaminated water. We are concerned about this. There’s not enough time to go into detail about this matter, but I would like to say that Sotoshu in Japan supports a policy of independence from nuclear energy. Returning to the subject of “thinking,” we can say that we think with the head or we think with the mind. However, the teaching in Zen is that we think with body and mind together, because they are not different. We say that mind and body are one thing. That’s not to say that they are exactly the same, but that they are not separate.

So, to really examine this matter of thinking through our deeds and practice--this is what Zen and zazen is about. Zazen – sitting – is the way to deepen this function. Earlier I spoke about three aspects of giving. The first one is “encountering other things.” This includes encountering the self.

Are there any people here who read and write Chinese characters? The Chinese character for “sit” is 坐; it is the *za* in zazen. On the bottom, you see the character for “earth.” At the top you see two small characters that represent human beings. The character for “sit” is made up of two people sitting on the earth. When we sat zazen together earlier, each one of us was sitting in harmony with the people around us, in harmony with mind and breath. This is one way of sitting, encountering others. Another way is encountering the self. We find ourselves, wandering in the world of illusion and delusion, as well as we found the pure true self, arising from the true world and enlightenment. We sit zazen as two people – the pure self and the deluded self are encountering each other.



I’ve forgotten to tell you another important thing. We are sitting in front of the Buddha,

and are also having quiet time in this wonderful zendo. However, I really recommend and encourage you to sit and face the Buddha at home, even a little bit. I would like you to continue that. In Japan, I frequently travel to teach, so I am often away from my temple. Of course, it's even better to have the Buddha inside of you and face that, but I need something to watch over me as a symbol. So, I always carry this small statue of the Buddha with me. If I am staying in a hotel, I put the statue in my room, and even if it is for a short time, I sit with this Buddha. I think that I can feel sympathy for others by encountering myself and the Buddha. I believe, even though it is my small world, that there will come a time--maybe just for a moment--to deeply encounter others deeply I have met.



Looking around this room, I see that you all are very sincere and have earnest looks in your eyes. I guess that you are faithful and have a warm heart. I think you will live long lives. I guarantee that you will live until you die. But, I predict that all of you will die at some time in the future. In terms of the whole universe, human life is just a small thing, but we are defi-

nately here. And yet, each of us has received this life from our respective parents. We were born by the occurrence of circumstances. This life is irreplaceable. Only you can live this life. We have to think of how special and wonderful is this short time we live. I don't know when I will die, so I would like to live without regret, to live as fully as possible. Please look back on yourself. Each of our lives is very valuable. There may be people who suffer from living a hard life, but right now, right here we are alive. Everyone lives his or her life treating it with importance in the same way you treat your own life with importance. For this reason, all of you are living within my life and within my world. The most important thing is that we are alive now and to encounter the self by looking at the condition of life as it is.

Thinking of the lives of others teaches us the specific way of practice. This practice is the practice of generosity I mentioned in Fukuyama Zenji's message. The practice is to freely share psychological and material support with each other and to give them to people who are in trouble without expecting something in return. There are some different kinds of generosity, and I will speak about three of them. One is to be generous with the physical things that we own – money or material items. The second is with the teachings or something we have learned. The third is peace of mind. I'm not going to say much detail. I'd like to mention one thing that is connected to the earthquake and tsunami. I would like to say "Thank you" to all the people, especially people in the US who supported us at that time, who gave both material things and spiritual things, and par-

ticularly to those who encourage us.

Now let's consider the second point, which is transmitting or passing on things to other people. There are different ways of passing on or transmitting teachings: transmitting by body, passing by heart, or passing by deeds. But fundamentally it comes down to words, speaking carefully and kindly with words that are full of sympathy, and it is called "kind speech." Not only the words but also the facial expression and attitude are important. As much as possible, I try to have a soft expression on my smiling face and use words which are warm and sympathetic. When I meet people who bring about harmonious situations through their practice of *zazen*, I feel that "kind speech" is the basis of this. On this trip I have been able to visit various temples and centers, and I have been very inspired by the people I have met there. I was impressed with Rummé Sokan when I met him in Los Angeles. I felt it would be fun to travel with him. This is true with the other teachers I have met, too, with Tesshin Sanderson who teaches Zen in Mexico City, Konjin Godwin who took care of me yesterday in Houston and Okumura Roshi who picked up me at airport today. Each of these teachers really impressed me. I felt as if I had met them before. I don't think they are simply gentle, warm or kind. I think they have walked along different paths in their lives, sometimes facing the north wind. They have faced various challenges and difficulties in their lives, but they continued to sit *zazen*. I believe that through facing difficulties and enduring troubles they have been cultivating "gentle face and kind speech." I feel a need to be more like them.

Another example of kind speech is a story of a person who came to the Buddha with a lot of sufferings and wished the Buddha to relieve him of this. But the Buddha took one look him and said, "*Zenrai Zenrai* 善来善来 (It is good that you came)." I think that the half of his suffering and worry were disappeared simply by seeing the splendid Buddha, and by looking at his bright and energetic face. This is why Buddha is called "*Nyorai* 如来" who says *Zenrai*.

To look at yourself is to see another self within yourself; it is also to see yourself within others. Sometimes you may feel that you have learned something, and that some information has been conveyed to you. Then you think "Ah, that's it. I understand." But it is not enough to understand just in your head. I am sorry to speak in Japanese. This word is "*Wa Ka Ru*." This means "understand." If I change the order of words, it becomes "*Ka Wa Ru*," and it means "to change." When we really understand something, it means that we have to change. When we transmit or pass teachings to other people, people might be changed and we ourselves might be changed as well. We are taught and changed by transmitting the teachings to other people. This appears as actions and as words. I think that if within this the spirit of generosity is conveyed, it's wonderful.

The third aspect of generosity is giving peace of mind by supporting each other.

When we think about our self – the true self, the essential self – there's really nothing there. From the instant a baby is born, that existence is always changing depending on various conditions, events, and connections.

Our original self is not something that has a permanent nature. My existence is directly dependent on the cause, which is the life I received through the meeting of my parents and the flow of life that was transmitted by my ancestors. That received life was then helped by many others and developed through the indirect power of conditions and connections which are always changing. We are dependent on air, water, earth, and food. Without these things we wouldn't be able to live. It is obvious that we have to thank the well-endowed environment that we are able to live. It is only natural that we share this. It's not something we can keep for ourselves, because we have received so much. We live in relationships with other people. The first step in supporting each other is to help the person next to you or the person with whom you have a deep relationship.

The Buddhist religion teaches peace and quiet, and that begins with peace in our own minds. In one of his poems, the poet Shuntaro Tanigawa says it is important to bring about peace in our own minds. It is important to appeal to the world for the stopping of wars and conflicts, but first there has to be peace in our own minds and our own hearts.

This Chinese character is for "person 人," which has two strokes. This is to say that a person is the form of two people supporting each other. This is another way of saying that human beings are dependent on each other. We live together, sharing the long term and this present moment. We must take care of this well-endowed planet so that our descendants can live properly, and must pass the earth to

them.

I would like to finish my talk with a story about our lives, from the Great East Japan Earthquake. The city of Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture is the area worst affected by the tsunami and one in which the most people lost their lives. There is a temple in Ishinomaki where I had gone to teach and had been taken care. After the disaster, I could not reach them, so I was anxious for their safety. When I finally was able to reach them, I asked them how everything was. They said that since the temple is up on a hill, and they were fine, but in the kindergarten they manage there were around three hundred people who had evacuated. I was seriously alarmed and worked with some people in my home town to deliver relief supplies. During the disaster, there was also a seven-meter tsunami in Erimo town, where I live. There was some damage; many houses were flooded, cars and boats destroyed, and some companies lost plants, but no one was killed or injured. Our town faces the same Pacific Ocean as Ishinomaki, and we were all suffering from the effects of tsunami, though our situation was not as severe. We wanted to do something for the people of Ishinomaki, so we collected many things through the great sense of cooperation and generosity of the people of Erimo. We loaded relief supplies on a specially-adapted truck and bus, crossed the sea by car ferry, had long-drive on the highway, and finally got to the temple. The tsunami damage was much worse than I imagined. There were many cars turned over on the side of the road and a big boat on top of a building. The shopping street in the center of the city

was in a state of near collapse. There were cars displaying red tape, which meant that someone had died in the car. Sometimes I have disturbing dreams of the scene. I cannot imagine the fear and despair those people had encountered in the earthquake and tsunami. Nevertheless, the power of human beings is strong. About a year later, I had an opportunity to teach in the area again and visited the temple in Ishinomaki. The family in the temple looked okay and the people in the town were working for recovery step by step.

When I stayed the temple, I met a young family. They had a boy of four or five years old and a newborn baby. I overheard their conversation with the priest. This couple had had another child. On the day of the tsunami, the mother grasped their hands, but she used up all of her energy and the child was swept away. A few days later, the child was found dead. The mother could not let go of her feelings of guilt, “Why did I let go? Why could I not hold onto my child?” Even though time had passed, she continued to be obsessed with this thought. The priest said, “The only thing we can do is put our hands together and pray for the repose of the child’s soul,” and chant sutra together. She put her hands together for the child every single day, with streaming eyes. Even though she had not yet recovered from the grief, she was relieved by having new life as time went by. Later she visited the temple and said, “We have come here to ask a favor of you today. Our family has made up its mind. Please build the grave for our deceased loved child. Though we manage to make a decent living, you advised us that we could pay the cost for the grave when

we can, little by little. We will move forward with two kids while we pray for the repose of the deceased loved child’s soul. Please support us.” It is a whole story I heard.



A large number of valuable lives were lost, but new life grows up. The history of human beings has been formed by this repetition. Hoping for the happiness of children in the future, we must live cultivating wisdom and compassion. I conveyed this story while telling myself that we must verify this together, continue to study more, and express this through our actions. We learn the spirit of “generosity” based on this irreplaceable life, and also cultivate the mind of “encounter, transmission and supporting each other.” I have been speaking for a very long time.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Report of the *Baika* class tour in South America

Rev. Keido Suzuki

Sotoshu Specially Dispatched *Baika* Teacher
Resident Priest of Kenkoan
Nagano Prefecture, Japan

The *Baika* class tour in South America lead by a Sotoshu Specially Dispatched *Baika* Teacher is usually held in June. But this year it was held from the end of April to the end of May. I left Japan after 6 p.m. on April 28th, passed the International Date Line, and arrived at Guarulhos International Airport in Sao Paulo, Brazil, after 7:00 a.m., via Dallas/ Fort Worth International Airport in the U.S.A. It was a full day of air travel.

In Brazil, the weather is totally opposite to that in Japan. I arrived there when winter was coming up soon. The mornings in Sao Paulo, where the elevation is about 900 m., were very fresh with the less humid air of dry season.

I first went to Busshinji, the branch temple in South America of the two head temples, guided by a person who picked me up at the airport. Then I visited two newspaper companies to explain about *Baika* and the *Baika* class tour sponsored by Sotoshu. I asked them to post a notice in the newspaper to recruit participants.

During this tour, I visited eight places in total to teach *Baika*: seven places in the State of Sao Paulo and Parana in Brazil and one place in Peru.

- Zengenji in Mogi das Cruzes: I was told that they had practiced on their own for a year by listening to the recorded tape of the *Baika* class lead by a specially dispatched *Baika*

teacher who visited them the previous year. They sang the “Hymns of Seeking Mind and Beneficial Deeds (*Dōshin Rigyō Gowasan*)” to me to show the fruit of their practice.



Zengenji

- Japanese School in Itapetininga, Sao Paulo: I taught them “Hymns of Offering to Newly Deceased Spirits (*Shinmō Shōrei Kuyō Gowasan*),” which they had never practiced before. I taught *Baika* but also had a conversation in which they poured out their deeply seated feelings. I was impressed to receive their pure heart that wished for spiritual salvation through singing *Baika*.
- Jisui Zendo, Porto Alegre: On the first evening, I gave a Dharma talk in translation for about 90 minutes. On the second day, I taught how to handle *Baika* instruments, focusing on the “Hymns of Three Treasures (*Sanbō Gowasan*).” They expressed their feelings through their attitude and voices when they discovered something new during the *Baika* class. I was moved by the fact that we could understand each other even though we could not communicate in words.
- Busshinji, Sao Paulo: We sang *Baika* for

the opening ceremony of *Baika* class. They always practice *Baika* in standing position, so I had them learn delicate manners in standing position. I made them repeat many times, but they learned seriously.



Jisui Zendo

- Japanese Community Hall in Pompeia: They asked me to teach some songs to be used for a ceremony which would be held later. I taught them some songs of offering. They asked me to teach one song after another up to five or so. I felt their strong wish to learn more.

- Japanese Community Hall in Lavinia: They told me that they felt sad about the decrease in *Baika* membership. But still the remaining members continuously get together every month to study *Baika*. I was very moved by their commitment. I indicated that there are hymns that may be sung in harmony. We sang “Hymns of Three Treasures (*Sanbō Gowasan*)” together in harmony with different parts. It became a wonderful memory.

- Busshinji, Rolandia: This was the last place I visited in Brazil. We first studied some songs they requested, and then practiced “Recitation of the Sacred Name (*Shōgō*)” in order to sing *Baika* for the closing ceremony of the

Baika class, which they have never done before. They actually sang *Baika* at the closing ceremony. It was magnificent. I felt admiration for the attitude with which they tried out a new challenge.

- Zuihoji, Lima: I left Brazil and flew for five hours to enter Peru. I had a *Baika* class in Portuguese with a help of a translator, like at Jisui Zendo, Porto Alegre. They stuck a sheet of paper showing an enlarged “Hymns of Three Treasures” with romanized *frigana* on the wall. I learned a lot from their creative ways of learning *Baika*



Zuihoji

After finishing the *Baika* class in Lima, I took 24-hour midnight flight back to Japan over Canada via Dallas. Thus the 25 day *Baika* class tour in South America was over.

During the tour, in the case of teaching at a place where we could not communicate in Japanese, I tried to communicate in Portuguese by looking up words in the dictionary. In the case of teaching at a place where people could speak Japanese we talked about many topics, such as stories of the area they lived, stories of

their old days, stories of their troubles since immigration, and their reminiscences. I learned a lot from them. I simply hope that a good memory of the *Baika* class with me will help them love *Baika* more and help them continue their practice from now on.

Baika is so wonderful. Its words and melodies are very moving, and we can learn the Buddha's teachings and history through singing. *Baika* also has the power to give solemn qualities to ceremonies and services.

South America is a big continent, so it was no wonder that we drove for five hours to move from one place to another. But the time went by very quickly while I was being fascinated by ever-changing magnificent scenery. I was very much moved by the Southern Cross, which cannot be seen in the Northern Hemisphere.

I felt that we could connect with each other in our hearts by singing *Baika* together even though we learned *Baika* at very distant places. After coming back from the tour in South America, I continue to renew my appreciation of the great value of *Baika* every day.

I thank everyone that took care of me during the *Baika* class tour in South America.



Report of the Sotoshu Training Monastery

Rev. Jisho Siebert

Disciple of Rev. Gengo Akiba
Kojin-an Zendo, California, U.S.A.

The experiences of a participant in the angō of the Sotoshu Training Monastery

We come to connect with the source of our practice, like drops of water swallowing the ocean. Many Zen students from the West state "connecting with the source" as their intention in coming to Japan for the 2013 Sotoshu Training Monastery, led by Rev. Hoitsu Suzuki and Rev. Seiken Okuno at Chosenji temple in Miyagi Prefecture. For some students, connecting with Japan feels like a sort of pilgrimage to honor the history of Soto Zen practice, which is still new in our countries. For others, the cultural context it provides helps us to more deeply understand the intention of the forms we practice back home. For still others, it is the first time we've seen anything like this--our first time to be so fully steeped in the depth and detail of the form. For all of us, it is a way to, as Keizan Zenji put it, "rest at ease in [our] actual nature." It is just good practice.

This is the second Sotoshu Training Monastery in which I have participated. The first was held in the mossy green mountains of Keizan Zenji's temple Yokoji, during its 700th anniversary year in 2011. I came the first time at my teacher's suggestion, and requested to return for another angō. Connecting with and living within the source of our practice is

highly encouraged and embodied by my teacher, Rev. Gengo Akiba, who is currently building Tempyozan monastery in California with this intention. It is also particularly important for me to live with a Sangha such as the one created here, since I live and work in Haiti most of the year, and do Zazen and services largely by myself each day, with trips to see my teacher or practice at American Zen centers a few times per year. There are also others here who do not live in a temple or with Sangha, though a few do have that opportunity year round.

On the surface, angu goes like this: the ten students from temples in France, the United States, Norway and Germany arrive in Japan, and start almost immediately memorizing the specific steps to the dance of angu life--how to ring this bell, how to chant this sutra in Japanese, how to play this drum. Do you step into the room with *gassho* or *shashu*? Did you remember to place the spoon in the rice for the food offering? Is the charcoal really lit, or is it just an illusion?

At the beginning, for some Westerners familiar mostly with Zazen and unfamiliar with the limitless precision of each activity in Japanese Sodo life, it can feel at first like an obsessive control freak suddenly has taken control of the world. So at first, we simply memorize and try, in each moment, to follow the rules. Sometimes we resent the corrections, or feel overwhelmed and inadequate. As one fellow student in 2011 put it laughingly, "I think I am not a stupid person. I study and think I understand. And then, in the moment,

I forget everything I thought I knew. I stand in front of the *moppa*n and I think, 'Was it one hit or two? One or two? One or two?' So, I ask my friend, 'One or two?' and he says 'I thought it was three!' And I think: 'Ok, three.' And I hit: One, two, three. And then a teacher comes running, saying 'Noooooooo!' And I think: 'Ohhh nooooo!!!!'"



Oryoki meal for breakfast at Sodo

But the true wisdom of this practice is revealed like layers of an onion, and we realize that freedom does not mean doing whatever we want whenever we want. The precision gets us in the room together, fully, even if only for a few moments at a time at first. Those moments are tremendous opportunities. And so it is that the ringing of the bells and the feeling of the drum being sounded seep into our bodyminds.

In Haiti, where I live, drumming is a very important part of traditional spiritual practice, and there is a saying about becoming a master drummer: "First you *beat* the drum, then you *hit* the drum, then you *play* the drum, then you *hear* the drum, and then, for some, *the drum plays you*." As we learn to forget ourselves in the drums and bells, and to experience each sound

and movement as a collective body, we too watch ourselves go through this process, and slowly abandon ourselves as the drum plays us.

The theme for the Sotoshu Training Monastery in 2013 is Dogen Zenji's famous line: "To study the self." We study ourselves in each sound, from before dawn, when the sun lights up the hills of graves and kindergarten playground equipment around Chosenji, until well past dark. For some, the difficult part is the physical schedule of ango; for others, it is related to living in community so close with others in a new culture. Things like sleeping on the floor, or using chopsticks, or getting our slippers while seated on a tan have proven true, wholehearted, challenging practice for many Western students. For many, ango gives us an opportunity to study our own mental blocks such as nervousness, anger, or our unhelpful mental and physical patterns. Living in close proximity to others in a life of interdependence, our selfishness is magnified and so is our kindness. We notice our selfishness as we go have coffee while we see someone else still struggling to finish their cleaning. We may even justify our action to ourselves--we are quick (and superior), and they are always slow. We feel annoyed when someone newer at a skill wishes to practice a second time, thinking that when we "get it," everyone should get it, so we can take a nap. In truth, the slower cleaner is often cleaning more mindfully, and the one who wants to practice a second time is often an excellent student. But even as ango life provides constant opportunities to study our selfishness, it also provides limitless opportunities to be thoughtful and live in harmony with

others; to practice being what Thich Nhat Hahn calls "the calm person in a rocky boat in a storm." During my first Sotoshu Training Monastery, there was much emotion and even anger between some of the ango students. Yelling and crying were almost daily occurrences. This environment also created many opportunities to study the self. What arises emotionally when someone else is upset? Do I get caught up in it and also become upset? Am I callous and uncaring? What does compassion look like in this instance? How is wisdom expressed? In each ango, the head Roshis, the Shike teachers, Rev. Yusho Sasaki, Rev. Shohaku Yoshimatsu, and our various Japanese senior monk and lecturers have provided many examples of how to navigate these moments, as well as the form of our practice, throughout the sweeping, wiping, and ringing activity of our days. As one student from Kanshoji in France put it, "the intention is not to blame, but to awaken."

We watch our own minds as we fail and as we succeed. Is our tendency under stress to blame others? Do we feel superior or condescending to someone who is weaker at something? Are we patient with ourselves? Do we develop an arrogant attitude and think we know already, and do not need to practice? Do we worry so much that we miss out on the potential of this moment? Are we so absorbed in our last mistake that we miss hitting the Moppan? If so, the Densho bell cannot start, and the whole Sangha is disturbed. Did we sound the bell half-heartedly? Someone *will* notice. For me, the position of Ino, chanting loudly in Japanese (which I do not speak) in front of many discerning ears, shook me to my

core, unexpectedly. I could practice the pronunciation one-on-one with kindhearted teachers and it seemed okay, but in the moment, chanting in front of everyone, the heart began to pound and the voice to waver. What was I afraid would happen? *Who* was this "I" that was so nervous? These questions arose, even as my voice continued to shake noticeably.



Work practice

Many of us have said it: it is as though all of ango life is a big mirror in front of your face. The mirror also reflects the practices which Westerners tend to love intuitively--*takuhatsu*, or the human rights tour which this year brought us to Earthquake and Tsunami-affected areas near Sendai. Naturally, we feel the interconnection between giver, receiver and gift, and between Sodo life and the activity of the street. We reside in the suffering and healing of this world.

At Chosenji, in the midst of it all, we have the unique experience of watching grandmotherly mind in action each day as the children at the temple kindergarten play just on the other side of the fence beside the Bonsho. We get to experience delight at their learning to say

"bonjour" and showing us the caterpillar they caught during playtime. We get to laugh as they run away and plug their ears when the Bonsho rings, screaming "foreign country monks!!!" We get to watch ourselves as the natural love of the universe is easily expressed in Rev. Okuno's interactions with the children and the large Sangha of Chosenji, or in Rev. Suzuki's careful prostrations and obvious delight in this life. And, with their examples, you can see the same thing that you feel in your marrow as you hear some Haitian drumming masters play: "and the drum plays you" does not even quite capture the heart of it. As Dogen Zenji writes, we "study the self *to forget the self*." You and the drum are not distinct. We practice together, naturally, and naturally the sound arises. There is no other thing in that moment. The gratitude which arises from this experience is beyond expression.



Takuhatsu

We are amazed throughout ango by the effort of the teachers and all of the administrative support that makes this experience possible. We are told by these teachers that we can express our gratitude by deepening our practice. So how do we take this mind, and this gratitude, back to our own temples and Sanghas? Our drumming and our bells sound better than when we arrived--we will take this back. In our various contexts, we may not have a Bonsho bell, or a drum on which to practice. But, as Rev. Issho Fujita put it in his lecture, "there is no time when Avolokiteshvara Bodhisattva is not practicing." We continue to practice, deeply. What else would we do?



The 22nd Chapter of Shobogenzo: Zenki (Total Function) Lecture (6)

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(edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

Self, action, life and the world

[text]

(5) 生といふは、たとへば、人の、ふねにのれるときのごとし。

Life is, for example, like a time when a person is riding in a boat.

このふねは、われ、帆をつかひ、われ、かぢをとれり。

In this boat, the person operates the sail; the person manages the rudder.

われ、さほをさすといへども、ふね、われをのせて、ふねのほかにわれなし。

Although, the person rows with the oar, the boat gives the person a ride and other than the boat, there is no such person as a self.

われ、ふねにのりて、このふねをもふねならしむ。

The person rides in the boat and the person makes this boat into a boat.

この正当恁麼時を功夫参学すべし。

We should make efforts to study this very moment.

この正当恁麼時は、舟の世界にあらざることなし。

This very moment is nothing but the world of the boat.

天も水も岸もみな舟の時節となれり、さらに舟にあらざる時節とおなじからず。

The sky, the water, and the shore; all of those become the time of the boat: it is not the same with the time of something else other than the



boat.

このゆえに、生はわが生ぜしむるなり、われをば生のわれならしむるなり。

Therefore, we give birth to life; life makes us into ourselves.

舟にのれるには、身心依正、ともに舟の機関なり、尽大地・尽虚空、ともに舟の機関なり。

When riding in a boat, our body and mind, ourselves and the environment; all become the functioning of the boat. The entire earth and the entire space become the functioning of the boat.

生なるわれ、われなる生、それかくのごとし。

Thus, life is the self, and the self is life.

In paragraph (4), Dogen says that ourselves and all myriad things in the world are always together. We are born and live together with all people and things in the world. When we die, we died together with all beings and the entire world in which we live. In this paragraph (5) he says the same thing using a concrete and active example of sailing a boat.

In *Shobogenzo* Genjokoan, Dogen writes about the same reality using the examples of fish and birds and the ocean and the sky as their world. Tiny birds have small range and big birds have large range. Their abilities to fly are various and their views must be different. Humming birds have never seen the world eagles can see. And yet, Dogen says that each and every bird flies the entire sky. Fish and Ocean are the same.

Then he says, “[For a fish] water is life, [for a bird] sky is life. A bird is life; a fish is life. Life is a bird; life is a fish.” Here are a bird or a fish, life, and sky or ocean. A bird and a fish are

examples of individual, concrete, and conditioned beings. Life is something without form. All of the birds and fish live the formless life with certain particular form and conditions. Each of them is the actualized life restricted within the phenomenal world within certain restricted space and time. They live in the sky or ocean as their environment. Each of the concrete form of living being and formless life are one; all of the particular living beings are living the same system of the formless life together with their entire world.

Then Dogen further says, “And we should go beyond this. There is practice-verification--this is the way of living beings.” Birds need to fly and fish need to swim in their unique particular way everyday to be themselves, to actualize their lives. Human life or bodhisattvas’ process of practice-verification is the same, we have to live and study ourselves each day.

If a bird or a fish do not want to swim or fly until they completely investigate and understand what sky or ocean is like, then there is no time when they can fly or swim, thus they cannot actualize the formless life, they cannot live together with all beings in the world. If we try not to do anything until we understand what this world is like, what the meaning of life is, what we should do, there is no way we can study the Buddha way.

When we decide what to do and actually carry it out, we will find a place for us, a path and direction we should walk. “When we make this very place our own, our practice becomes the actualization of reality (*genjo-koan*). When we

make this path our own, our activity naturally becomes actualized reality (*genjo-koan*).” When we find the path and actually walk on the path, “as the person realizes one dharma, the person permeates that dharma; as the person encounters one practice, the person [fully] practices that practice.” Each and everything we do in our daily lives become our practice and realization. We experience one thing at a time, study and understand it. We continue to practice and study who we are, what are each thing we encounter and experience, what our life is, and what this world is like. This is the way we study ourselves and the Buddha way as *gnjo-koan*; actualized reality.

However, Dogen says that we cannot perceive what we have studied and actualized through our activities. “The boundary of the known is not clear; this is because the known [which appears limited] is born and practiced simultaneously with the complete penetration of the Buddha Dharma. We should not think that what we have attained is conceived by ourselves and known by our discriminating mind. Although complete enlightenment is immediately actualized, its intimacy is such that it does not necessarily form as a view. [In fact] viewing is not something fixed.”

From the another perspective, even though we don't perceive what the self is, what the formless life is, and what the world is like, within our activities, the formless life and entirety of the world of interconnectedness are revealed. This is what Hongzhi and Dogen said in their verses about “the mountain” and “the people in the mountain.” People walking in Mt. Lu

cannot see the true face of the mountain because they need to take a certain position within the mountain where their views are limited. But when we walk in the mountain together with all beings in the mountain, the entire mountain is our formless dharma body. The opposite is also true, even when we live together with all beings in the mountain, we still cannot conceive them as objects. In Zenki, Dogen says the same thing using the analogy of sailing the boat in the ocean.

Riding in a boat

[text]

Life is, for example, like a time when a person is riding in a boat. In this boat, the person operates the sail; the person manages the rudder. Although, the person rows with the oar, the boat gives the person a ride and other than the boat, there is no such person as a self. The person rides in the boat and the person makes this boat into a boat.

What Dogen is saying here without using any Buddhist technical term is clear and understandable. I don't think I need to explain the meaning of each word in this paragraph. In this analogy, there are the person, the person's action of riding a boat, the world and the life; that are the same with a bird or a fish, the action of flying or swimming, the entire sky or the ocean and formless life.

As I wrote in my book *Realizing Genjokoan*, when I was a high school student, I was like the fish or the bird who want to investigate the entire sky or the ocean before they start to swim or fly. I was so childish that I seriously

thought I could not make any decision to do anything until I understand the true meaning of life because any choice I would make without correct understanding of what human life and the world are, can be mistaken. I also found that by not making any choice until I understand the meaning of life, I have already made that choice. I was completely puzzled and could not find what to do.

In the process of searching the meaning of life in books on philosophy, religions, literature, science etc., I found that there is no such ready-made meaning of life that supports our lives even before human beings appear on the earth. All of the opinions about the meaning of life spoken by any religious teachers or philosophers are man-made as reactions toward certain situation in which they lived, therefore there is no guarantee that these are absolutely true everywhere and all the time. We cannot really rely on them. To me, it seemed that people live based on unreliable basis such as success in the materialistic society. I became more and more skeptical and even nihilistic.

As the result, I wanted to live without relying on any man-made meanings. I wanted to live like the big fish that eventually became the big bird appeared in the beginning of the first chapter, “Free and Easy Wandering” of *Chuangtsu*, the Chinese Daoist classic, which went beyond the conventional world of meaning and value. I also wanted to live like the useless huge tree named aیلanthus appeared at the end of the same chapter of the text, which could grow so big and lived long because it was meaningless, valueless and useless in terms of human market value.

When his friend, Huitsu said that Chuangtsu’s talk was like the tree vast and useless, he said, “Maybe you’ve never seen a wildcat or a weasel. It crouches down and hides, watching for something to come along. It leaps and races east and west, not hesitating to go high or low – until it falls into the trap and dies in the net.” To me, living in the Japanese materialistic society looking for success for wealth, status, or fame is to live like the wildcat or the weasel. They work hard to get these “desirable things” wandering here and there, compete with others, and trying to get this and that. They would finally be caught in a trap and killed. Chuangtsu recommends us to live like a huge yak as big as a cloud covering the sky. It is big, and seeks nothing, being different from a weasel that is always hunting rats or something else.

Finally Chuangtsu said to his friend, “Now you have this big tree and you’re distressed because it’s useless. Why don’t you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it? Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there’s no use for it, how can it come to grief or pain.”

The problem to me was that I did not know how to live without relying on any man-made meaning of life. Chuangtsu did not teach me where the Not-Even-Anything Village is, how could I reach there, and how to live in his way in the modern world. I did not know any actual tradition for living such a way. Other translations of Not-Even-Anything Village are, “the village where there’s nothing at all,” “middle of nowhere,” or “the land of nothing-

ness.” How can I find such a place?

When I read Sawaki Roshi and Uchiyama Roshi’s book on zazen, because I was attracted by Chuangtsu’s life of uselessness, Sawaki Roshi’s expression, “zazen is good for nothing” became attractive to me. I thought that zazen might be the land of nothingness. I have to say that my original motivation to study Zen Buddhism was escaping from the world of “man-made meaning” and “market value.”

When I continued to study Buddhism and Dogen’s teachings at Komazawa University and read more books by Sawaki Roshi and Uchiyama Roshi, I understood that was not right view and attitude for the Buddha’s students, or Mahayana Buddhist practitioners. All of their teachings said that Buddhism is not escapism from the human world, but a bodhisattva should walk together with all beings with wisdom and compassion. I had to change my understanding and attitude toward life to be a zazen practitioner under Uchiyama Roshi’s teaching. And yet, the deeper motivation in my psychology, that is escapism from the materialistic society, remained for about 10 years and I had to continue to work on it.

Anyway, when I made my mind to become Uchiyama Roshi’s disciple and actually devoted myself to practice of zazen at Antaiji, my entire world became the world of zazen. As a novice monk, I had to learn so many things. Until then, only thing I did was reading books and thinking about the meaning of life. I was a truly “useless” person in its worst meaning. When I graduated from the university and

started to practice at Antaiji, I put all of my books in the closet. I tried not to read any book except the texts on which Uchiyama Roshi gave lectures and *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*. I tried to read Dogen Zenji’s practical teachings in *Zuimonki* again and again almost hundred of times until the teachings became a part of me.

Instead of reading books and thinking, I had to learn how to prepare meals, how to do temple cleaning, how to do *takuhatsu* (begging), how to do various day-to-day chores such as chopping firewood, making fire to cook and to make Japanese bath, and so on. It was difficult for me to get along with other people who live together 24 hours a day, seven days a week all year round. We sat 5 hours each day and we had 5-day or 3-day sesshin each month. I finally felt that I was actually living, instead of thinking about life.

Antaiji was like a boat. I tried to do my responsibilities as a novice. I was neither the shipmaster nor the senior boatmen. What I did was not at all significant as the part of the boat. I was an incapable, useless novice. Uchiyama Roshi was focusing on teaching and writing books as the abbot. The senior monks actually managed the temple affairs and led the practice as Dogen says, “operating the sail; managing the rudder or rowing with the oar.” What I did were minor chores such as cleaning the boat and so on.

But still the boat was me, and I was the boat. “The boat gives the person a ride and other than the boat, there is no such person as a self. The person rides in the boat and the person makes this boat into a boat.” Uchiyama Roshi

and the community of Antaiji monks allowed this useless person to stay and practice as a resident practitioner. I made efforts to be a part of the community, to work for keeping the community functioning as a practice center although I was an underling.

Antaiji was a tiny boat sailing in Japanese Buddhist communities. As a part of the Japanese society, even as a temple within Soto School, Antaiji was really a small and poor temple without any temple members. Still Antaiji was the entire world to me.

However, in a sense, the world of zazen at the small temple like Antaiji was larger than the entire Japanese society. We sat as a part of tradition of twenty-five hundred years continued from Shakyamuni Buddha in India, Bodhidharma and his descendants in China, and Dogen Zenji and all of the Soto Zen ancestors in Japan. Many people not only from all over Japan but also the Western countries came to sit with us. Antaiji practice was connected with everything in the enormous time and space.

Living by Vow

I wished to continue what my teacher did as his own vow, that is, practice zazen with disciples and students, and writing the texts of zazen for the modern people. In my case, I have been practicing zazen with mainly American people and working on translation of Dogen Zenji's and Uchiyama Roshi's writings. After Uchiyama Roshi retired in 1975, I came to the USA to establish a small zendo in Massachusetts with two dharma brothers. Since then, until today, I have been practicing zazen, studying

Dharma, and working on translation, writing books, and so on with small number of people. These are the only thing I want to do in this life time and I can offer to the world. And yet, to support my activities based on zazen, I had to do many different things. And many people helped and supported me each time and each place I practiced.

I have never worked for a large institution. I worked as the director for Soto Zen Buddhism International Center founded by the Sotoshu Shumicho for thirteen years. Sotoshu Shumicho is a quit a large institution. But I actually worked with three or four staff at the office of the International Center in Los Angeles or San Francisco.

Since I was ordained in 1970, I have been riding small boats one after another and continue to practice zazen. The boats allow me to continue to practice, and I have been working for the communities of zazen practice. My world is the world of zazen. All of myriad things in the world have been the parts of zazen world.

World of the boat

[text]

"We should make efforts to study this very moment. This very moment is nothing but the world of the boat. The sky, the water, and the shore; all of those become the time of the boat: it is not the same with the time of something else other than the boat."

When we practice and work for zazen, everything becomes parts of zazen. The entire world becomes the world of zazen. I believe this is

what Dogen meant when he said that when we sit all things in the universe becomes realization.

However this does not mean we don't have any difficulty and challenges when we sit or working to establish or maintaining the place for zazen practice. We need to face the continuation of problems and challenges each day. But such problems are part of our zazen as a kind of teacher to us. We can study numberless things from the obstacles and our own mistakes. I feel really fortunate that I have been able to ride the boat of zazen practice for so many years both in Japan and in the USA.

We give birth to life

[text]

"Therefore, we give birth to life; life makes us into ourselves. When riding in a boat, our body and mind, ourselves and the environment; all become the functioning of the boat. The entire earth and the entire space become the functioning of the boat. Thus, life is the self, and the self is life."

From one perspective, we are conditioned from the time of our birth. We could not make any choice to be born or not to be born; to be whose child, to be which nationality etc.. When we are born, in my case, as a Japanese, I could not choose which language is best for me, which school I should go, who is the best teacher for me, etc. etc. We are simply forced to live as a child of my parents born in certain time and condition of the country. That is what conditioned karmic beings mean. I was born three years after Japan lost the World War

II in Japan. My family lost entire property except the land in one night in March, 1945 when US air force bombed Osaka. My life was determined for certain degree based on the situation of Japan and my family when I was born. I could not do anything about that. I was a production of numerous elements of causes and conditions within time and space.

However, Dogen says that "we give birth to life; life makes us into ourselves." Our self and conditions of the life are not one sided. The formless life and "I" as an individual person work together within certain environment. We are produced by the entire situation when I was born and while I have been living, and yet, I gave birth to life. This is really amazing statement to me. If we are not born, there is no such thing called life. Life needs us to continue. And the causes and conditions of the entire world make me as who I am. Our self and the formless life work together as the total function. We cannot tell which is the cause and which is the result. Both are working together.

"Functioning" is the translation of the Chinese expression, "kikan (機関)" I discussed in the lecture (4) of this series. Dogen uses this term pointing to the working of a machine or mechanism, as an analogy of the function of the entire network of interdependent origination. All of the elements working together as both causes, conditions, and result without beginning and end. Our vow to live as a bodhisattva is one of the elements in our lives, but the bodhi-mind, vow and practice determine the nature of the entire world in which we are living. This is really a wondrous nature

of our lives. We are produced by all of the causes and conditions, and yet, we determine the nature of the entire universe by which we are produced.

[text]

(6) 圓悟禪師克勤和尚云、「生也全機現、死也全機現。」

Zen Master Yuanwu Keqin (Enko Kokugon, 1063-1135) said, “Life is manifestation of the total function; death is manifestation of the total function.”

Here, Dogen Zenji finally quotes the saying of Yuanwu in his comment on the story of “Daowu’s Condolence Call.” I already discussed on the story and Yuanwu’s comment using various versions of the story in lecture (1) and (2).

Here I would like to introduce the Soto Zen master Hongzhi Zhengjue (Wanshi Shokaku, 1091-1157) also used the expression Zenki (total function) in his verse of the case 54, “Yunyan’s Great Compassion” of Book of Serenity.

One hole, emptiness pervading:

Crystal clear on all sides.

Formlessly, selflessly, spring enters the pipes:

Unstopped, unhindered, the moon traverses the sky.

Pure jewel eyes, arms of virtues:

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

The present hands and eyes reveal the whole works:

The great function works in all ways – what is

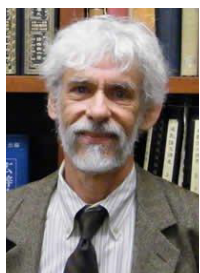
taboo?

This case is the conversation between Yunyan and Daowu about the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara. As Dogen discussed in Shobogenzo Kannon (Avalokiteshvara), what Yunyan and Daowu talked using the hands and eyes of the Bodhisattva Great Compassion is the total function of the entire network of interdependent origination and how we can live as a hand and eye of Avalokiteshvara. Here Hongzhi expresses the total function as the scenery of spring. The spring of entire world enter into each and every phenomenal thing no matter how small it might be. Everything is working formlessly, selflessly, without being hindered. We are pure jewel eyes and arms of virtue of Bodhisattva Great Compassion. “The whole works” is Tomas Clearly’s translation of Zenki.



Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

Book 12



Lancet of Seated Meditation *Zazen shin*

Translated by
Carl Bielefeldt

Introduction

This essay is preserved in an early manuscript, belonging to Kōfuku ji, in Kumamoto, that is thought by some to be in Dōgen's own hand. The manuscript does not bear a colophon, but the versions appearing in the 75-fascicle redaction of the *Shōbōgenzō* list the work as number 12 and assign its composition to the spring of 1242 at the Kōshōji, its author's monastery on the southern outskirts of the capital at Heian-kyō. A second colophon states that it was subsequently presented to the monastic assembly in the winter of 1243-1244 at Yoshimine shōja, the monastery where Dōgen taught following his move to Echizen province in the summer of 1243. The work is treated as number 27 in the vulgate Eihei-ji edition.

The *Zazen shin* represents one of the most important texts for the study of Dōgen's views on Zen meditation. It is divided into three major sections. The first is devoted to the famous kōan known as "thinking of not thinking," a saying of the early eighth-century master Yaoshan Weiyan. Although the discussion of it here is very brief, this kōan is central to the Sōtō understanding of Dōgen's meditation; for it appears as a description of (or perhaps prescription for) the practice

in his *Fukan zazen gi*, a manual recognized by the school as the chief source for its style of meditation teaching. This section concludes with a sharp criticism of those in Chinese Chan who do not understand seated meditation.

In his second section, Dōgen turns to another famous story, known as "Nanyue polishes a tile," in which the eighth-century master Nanyue Huairang likens his disciple Mazu Daoyi's attempt to "make a Buddha" by sitting in meditation to someone's trying to make a mirror by polishing a tile, or trying to drive an ox cart by whipping the cart instead of the ox. On the face of it, the story would seem to be a criticism — often in fact seen in the sayings of the masters — of the view that meditation practice is central to Zen soteriology. But Dōgen's commentary here goes through the story to bring out in each line of the dialogue his own vision of a higher understanding of the practice.

The final section of the essay opens with a return to Dōgen's lament over the benighted Chan understanding of seated meditation. After dismissing most of the literature on the practice, he introduces with high praise the verse from which our essay takes its name: the "Lancet of Seated Meditation" (*Zuochan zhen*) by Hongzhi Zhengjue, most famous master in the recent history of Dōgen's Caodong lineage and former head of the Tiantong monastery where he had studied in China. After commenting on the lines of Hongzhi's piece, Dōgen offers in closing his own version of the poem.

Lancet of Seated Meditation

Kannon Dōri Kōshō Hōrinji

Once, when the Great Master Hongdao of Yaoshan was sitting, a monk asked him, “What are you thinking of sitting there so fixedly?”

The master answered, “I’m thinking of not thinking.”

The monk asked, “How do you think of not thinking?”

The master answered, “Nonthinking.”¹

Verifying that such are the words of the Great Master, we should study fixed sitting; we should correctly transmit fixed sitting. This is the investigation of fixed sitting transmitted in the way of the buddhas. Although he is not alone in “thinking fixedly,” Yaoshan’s words are singular: he is “thinking of not thinking.” [These words] have what is the very “skin, flesh, bones, and marrow” of “thinking,” the very skin, flesh, bones, and marrow of “not thinking.”

“The monk asked, ‘How do you think of not thinking?’” Indeed, though “not thinking” may be old, going further, this is “how do you think?” Could there be no “thinking” in “sitting fixedly”? How could it not pass beyond “sitting fixedly”? If we are not the sort of fool that “despises the near,” we ought to have the strength, ought to have the “thinking,” to question “sitting fixedly.”²

“The master answered, ‘Nonthinking.’” Although the employment of “nonthinking” is “crystal clear,” when we “think of not thinking,” we always use “nonthinking.” There is someone in “nonthinking,” and [this] someone maintains us. Although it is we who are “sitting fixedly,” “sitting fixedly” is not merely “thinking”: it presents “sitting fixedly.” Although “sitting fixedly” is “sitting fixedly,” how could “sitting fixedly” “think” of “sitting fixedly”?³

Therefore, sitting “fixedly” is not the “measure of the buddha,” not the measure of the dharma, not the measure of awakening, not the measure of understanding. Such single transmission by Yaoshan represents the thirty-sixth generation directly from the Buddha Śākyamuni: if we trace beyond Yaoshan thirty-six generations, we come to the Buddha Śākyamuni. And in what was thus properly transmitted, there was already “thinking of not thinking.”

Recently, however, some stupid illiterates say, “Once the breast is without concerns, the concentrated effort at seated meditation is a state of peace and calm.”⁴ This view does not reach that of the students of the Lesser Vehicle; it is inferior even to the Vehicle of Humans and Devas. How could one [who holds such a view] be called a man who studies the buddha dharma? At present, there are many such practitioners in the Land of the Great Song; it is lamentable that the path of the ancestors is overgrown.

Then there is another type [which holds] that to pursue the way through seated meditation is a function essential for the beginner’s mind and late student, but it is not necessarily an observance of the buddhas and ancestors. “Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen; in speech or silence, motion or rest, the substance is at ease.”⁵ Do not [they say] adhere solely to the present concentrated effort. This view is common among those calling themselves a branch of Linji. It is because of a deficiency in the transmission of the right life of the buddha dharma that they say this. What is the “beginner’s mind”? Where is there no “beginner’s mind”? Where do we leave the “beginner’s mind”?

We should realize that, in the established [means of] investigation for studying the way,

one pursues the way in seated meditation. The essential point that marks this [investigation] is that there is a practice of a buddha that does not seek to “make a buddha.” Since the practice of a buddha is not further to make a buddha, it is the “realization of the kōan.” The embodied buddha does not further make a buddha; when “the nets and cages” are broken, a seated buddha does not interfere with making a buddha. At just such a time — “from a thousand ages past, ten thousand ages past,” from the very beginning — we have the power “to enter into buddha, to enter into Māra.” In stepping forward and stepping back, its measure “fills the ditches, fills the gullies.”⁶

* * * * *

When the Chan Master Daji of Jiangxi was studying with the Chan Master Dahui of Nanyue, after intimately receiving the mind seal, he always sat in meditation. Once, Nanyue went to Daji and said, “Great Virtuous One, what are you figuring to do, sitting there in meditation?”⁷

We should quietly make concentrated effort at the investigation of this question. Does it mean that there must be some “figuring” above and beyond “seated meditation”? Is there no way that should be “figured” outside of “seated meditation”? Should there be no “figuring” at all? Or does it ask what kind of “figuring” occurs at the time he was practicing “seated meditation”? We should make concentrated effort to understand this in detail. Rather than “love the carved dragon,” we should go on to love the real dragon. We

should learn that both the carved and the real dragons have the ability [to produce] clouds and rain. Do not “value the distant”; do not despise the distant; become completely familiar with the distant. Do not “despise the near”; do not value the near; become completely familiar with the near. Do not “take the eyes lightly”; do not give weight to the eyes. Do not “give weight to the ears”; do not take the ears lightly. Make your eyes and ears clear and sharp.⁸

Jiangxi said, “I’m figuring to make a buddha.”

We should clarify and penetrate the meaning of these words. What does it mean to speak of “making a buddha”? Does it mean to be “made a buddha” by the buddha? Does it mean to “make a buddha” of the buddha? Does it mean that “one or two faces” of the buddha emerge? Is it that “figuring to make a buddha” is a sloughing off, and it is a sloughed off “figuring to make a buddha”? Or does “figuring to make a buddha” mean that, while there are ten thousand ways to “make a buddha,” they become “entangled” in this “figuring”?

It should be recognized that Daji’s words mean that “seated meditation” is always “figuring to make a buddha,” “seated meditation” is always the “figuring” that is “making a buddha.” This “figuring” must be prior to “making a buddha”; it must be subsequent to “making a buddha”; it must be at the very moment of “making a buddha.” Now what I ask is this: How many [ways of] “making a buddha” does this one “figuring” entangle? These entanglements further intertwine with entanglements. At this point, entanglements,

as individual instances of the entirety of “making a buddha,” are invariably the direct expression of the entirety of “making a buddha” and are all instances of “figuring.” We should not seek to avoid this one “figuring”: when we avoid the one “figuring,” we “forfeit our body and lose our life.” When we forfeit our body and lose our life, this is the entanglement of the one “figuring.”

At this point, Nanyue took up a tile and began to rub it on a stone. At length, Daji asked, “Master, what are you making?”

Who could fail to see that he was “polishing a tile”? Who could see that he was “polishing a tile”? Still, “polishing a tile” has been questioned in this way: “What are you making?” This “what are you making?” is itself always “polishing a tile.” This land and the other world may differ, but the essential message of “polishing a tile” never ceases. Not only should we avoid deciding that what we see is what we see, we should be firmly convinced that there is an essential message to be studied in all the ten thousand activities. We should know that, just as we may see a buddha without knowing or understanding him, so we may see rivers and yet not know rivers, may see mountains and yet not know mountains. The precipitate assumption that the phenomena before one’s eyes offer no further passage [for understanding] is not Buddhist study.

Nanyue said, “I’m polishing this to make a mirror.”

We should clarify the meaning of these

words. There is definitely a principle in his “polishing this to make a mirror”: there is the “kōan of realization”; this is no mere empty contrivance. A “tile” may be a “tile” and a “mirror” a “mirror,” but when we exert ourselves in investigating the principle of “polishing,” we shall find there are many examples: the “old mirror” and the “bright mirror” [often talked of in the Zen texts] — these are “mirrors” made through “polishing a tile.” If we do not realize that these “mirrors” come from “polishing a tile,” then the buddhas and ancestors have nothing to say; they do not open their mouths, and we do not perceive them exhaling.

Daji said, “How can you produce a mirror by polishing a tile?”

Indeed, though [the one who is] “polishing a tile” be “a man of iron,” who does not borrow the power of another, “polishing a tile” is not “producing a mirror.” Even if it is “producing a mirror,” it must be quick about it.

Nanyue replied, “How can you make a buddha by sitting in meditation?”

This is clearly understood: there is a principle that “seated meditation” does not await “making a buddha”; there is nothing obscure about the essential message that “making a buddha” is not connected with “seated meditation.”

Daji asked, “What is right?”

While these words may resemble a simple question about this, they are also asking about

that “is right.” We should understand [that the relationship between “what” and “right” here is like], for example, the occasion when one friend meets another: the fact that he is my friend means that I am his friend. [Similarly, the meanings here of] “What” and “right” emerge simultaneously.

Nanyue replied, “When someone’s driving a cart, if the cart doesn’t go, is beating the cart right, or is beating the ox right?”⁹

For the moment, [let us consider,] when he says, “the cart doesn’t go,” what is the “cart going” or the “cart not going”? For example, is water flowing the cart going, or is water not flowing the cart going? We might say that flowing is the water not going, and there should also be [cases where] water’s going is not its flowing. Therefore, when we investigate the words, “the cart doesn’t go,” we should study that there is “not going,” and we should study that there is no “not going”; for it must be time. The words “if it doesn’t go” do not mean simply that it does not go.

“Is beating the cart right, or is beating the ox right?” Does this mean that there should be “beating the cart” as well as “beating the ox”? Are “beating the cart” and “beating the ox” the same or not the same? In the mundane world, there is no method of “beating the cart”; but, though the common folk have no such method, we know that on the way of the buddhas there is a method of “beating the cart”; it is the eye of study. Even though we study that there is a method of “beating the cart,” we should give concentrated effort to understanding in detail that this is not the same as “beating

the ox.” And even though the method of “beating the ox” is common in the world, we should go on to study the “ox beating” on the way of the buddhas. Do they “ox-beat” the water buffalo? Or “ox-beat” the iron bull? Or “ox-beat” the clay ox? Is it the whip beating? Is it the entire world beating? Is it the entire mind beating? Is it beating out the marrow? Is it the fist beating? There should be the fist beating the fist; there should be the ox beating the ox.

That Daji had no reply we should not overlook. There is “tossing out a tile and taking in a jade”; there is “turning the head and changing the face.” We should not further violate his silence here.¹⁰

Nanyue went on, “Are you studying seated meditation or are you studying seated buddha?”

Investigating these words, we should distinguish the essential function of the ancestors. Without knowing the actual meaning of “studying seated meditation,” we do know here that it is “studying seated buddha.” Who but a scion of direct descent could say that “studying seated meditation” is “studying seated buddha”? We should know indeed that the beginner’s “seated meditation” is the beginning “seated meditation”, and the beginning “seated meditation” is the beginning “seated buddha.”

In speaking of “seated meditation,” he said, “If you’re studying seated meditation, meditation is not sitting or reclining.”

The point of what he says here is that “seated meditation” is “seated meditation”; it is

not “sitting or reclining.” From the time the fact that it is not “sitting or reclining” has been singly transmitted to us, our unlimited “sitting and reclining” is our own self. Why should we inquire about close or distant blood lines? How could we discuss delusion and awakening? Who would seek wisdom and eradication?¹¹

Nanyue said, “If you’re studying seated buddha, buddha is no fixed mark.”¹²

Such is the way to say what is to be said. The reason the “seated buddha” is one or two buddhas is that he adorns himself with “no fixed mark.” Saying here that “buddha is no fixed mark” is describing the mark of a buddha. Since he is a buddha of “no fixed mark,” the “seated buddha” is difficult to avoid. Therefore, since it is adorned with this [mark of] “buddha is no fixed mark,” “if you’re studying seated meditation,” you are a “seated buddha.” “In a nonabiding dharma,” who would “grasp or reject” anything as not the buddha?¹³ Who would “grasp or reject” it as the buddha. It is because it [i.e., seated meditation] has sloughed off all “grasping and rejecting” that it is a “seated buddha.”

Nanyue said, “If you’re studying seated buddha, this is killing buddha.”

This means that, when we further investigate “seated buddha”, [we find that] it has the virtue of “killing buddha.” At the very moment that we are a “seated buddha” we are “killing buddha.” When we seek them, the marks and signs and radiance of “killing buddha” are always a “seated buddha”.

Although the word “kill” here is identical with that used by ordinary people, it is not the same. Moreover, we must investigate in what form it is that a “seated buddha” is “killing buddha”. Taking up the fact that it is itself a virtue of a buddha to “kill buddha,” we should study whether we are killers or not.

“If you grasp the mark of sitting, you’re not reaching its principle.”

To “grasp the mark of sitting” here means to “reject the mark of sitting” and to touch “the mark of sitting.” The principle of this is that, in being a “seated buddha,” we cannot fail to “grasp the mark of sitting.” Since we cannot fail to “grasp the mark of sitting,” though our “grasping the mark of sitting” is crystal clear, we are “not reaching its principle.” This kind of concentrated effort is called “sloughing off body and mind.” Those who have never sat have no words like this: they belong to the time of sitting and the one who sits, to the “seated buddha” and the study of the “seated buddha.” The sitting of a human’s “sitting and reclining” is not this sitting buddha. Although human sitting may naturally resemble a “seated buddha,” or a buddha’s sitting, it is like a human’s “making a buddha,” or a human who makes a buddha: there may be humans who make buddhas, but not all humans make buddhas, and buddhas are not all humans. Since all buddhas are not simply all humans, a human is by no means a buddha, and a buddha is by no means a human. The seated buddha is also like this.

* * * * *

Here, then, in Nanyue and Jiangxi we have a superior master and strong disciple: Jiangxi is the one who verifies “making a buddha” as a “seated buddha”; Nanyue is the one who points out the “seated buddha” for “making a buddha.” There was this kind of concentrated effort in the congregation of Nanyue and words like the above in the congregation of Yaoshan.

We should know that what buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor have taken as their essential function is the “seated buddha.” Those who are buddhas and ancestors have employed this essential function; those who are not have never even dreamt of it. In general, to say that the teaching of the buddha has been transmitted from the Western Heavens [i.e., India] to the Eastern Earth [i.e., China] necessarily implies the transmission of the “seated buddha,” for it is the essential function [of that teaching]. Where the teaching of the buddha is not transmitted, neither is seated meditation. What has been inherited by successor after successor [in this transmission] is just this message of seated meditation; those who do not participate in the single transmission of this message are not buddhas or ancestors. When they are not clear about this one teaching, they are not clear about the ten thousand teachings, they are not clear about the ten thousand practices. Without being clear about each of the teachings, they cannot be said to have a clear eye. They have not attained the way; how could they represent the present or past of the buddhas and ancestors? By this, then, we should be firmly convinced that the buddhas and ancestors always singly transmit seated meditation.

To be illumined by the radiance of the buddhas and ancestors means to concentrate one’s efforts in the investigation of this seated meditation. Some fools, misunderstanding the radiance of the buddha, think it must be like the radiance of the sun or moon or the light from a pearl or fire. But the light of the sun and moon is nothing but a mark of action within transmigration in the six destinies; it is not to be compared with the radiance of the buddha. The radiance of the buddha means receiving and hearing a single phrase, maintaining and protecting a single teaching, participating in the single transmission of seated meditation. So long as we have not been illumined by the radiance, we lack this maintaining [a single teaching], we lack this faithfully receiving [a single phrase].

This being the case, from ancient times there have been few who understood seated meditation as seated meditation. And at present, in the “mountains” [i.e., monasteries] of the Land of the Great Song Dynasty, many of those who are heads of the principal monasteries do not understand, and do not study, seated meditation. There may be those who have clearly understood it but not many. Of course, the monasteries have fixed periods for seated meditation; the monks, from the abbot down, take seated meditation as their basic task; and, in leading their students, they encourage seated meditation. Nevertheless, the abbots who understand it are rare. For this reason, although from ancient times to the present there have been one or two old worthies who have written “Inscriptions on Seated Meditation,” one or two old worthies who have composed “Principles of Seated Meditation,” one

or two old worthies who have written “Lancets of Seated Meditation,” among them there is nothing worth taking from any of the “Inscriptions on Seated Meditation,” and the “Principles of Seated Meditation” are ignorant of its observances. They were written by those who do not understand, do not participate in, its single transmission. Such are the *Zuochan zhen* (“Lancet of Seated Meditation”) in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* and the *Zuochan ming* (“Inscription on Seated Meditation”) in the *Jiatai pudeng lu*.

What a pity that, though they may spend their lives passing among the “groves” of the ten directions [i.e., the monasteries throughout China], they do not have the concentrated effort of a single sitting — that sitting is not their own, and concentrated effort never encounters them. This is not because seated meditation rejects their bodies and minds but because they do not aspire to the true concentrated effort and are precipitately given over to their delusion. What they have collected is nothing but models for “reverting to the source and returning to the origin,” vain programs for “suspending considerations and congealing in tranquility.” They do not approach the stages of [meditation known as] “observation, exercise, infusion, and cultivation,” or the understandings of the “ten stages and virtual awakening” [on the bodhisattva path]; how, then, could they represent the single transmission of the seated meditation of the buddhas and ancestors? The Song-dynasty chroniclers were mistaken to record them, and later students should cast them aside and not read them.

Among the *Lancets of Seated Meditation*, only that composed by the Reverend Zhengjue, the

Chan Master Hongzhi of the Jingde monastery at Tiantong, renowned Mt. Dabai, in the district of Qingyuan in the Land of the Great Song, is by a buddha and ancestor, is a “lancet of seated meditation,” has said it right. It alone is a light throughout the surface and interior of the dharma realm, is by a buddha and ancestor among the buddhas and ancestors of past and present. Prior buddhas and later buddhas have been lanced by this Lancet; present ancestors and past ancestors appear from this Lancet. Here is that “Lancet of Seated Meditation.”¹⁴

* * * * *

Lancet of Seated Meditation

by Zhengjue, by imperial designation the Chan Master Spacious Wisdom

Essential function of every buddha,

Functioning essence of every ancestor —

It knows without touching things;

It illumines without facing objects.

Knowing without touching things,

Its knowing is inherently subtle;

Illumining without facing objects,

Its illumining is inherently mysterious.

Its knowing inherently subtle,

It is ever without discriminatory thought;

Its illumining inherently mysterious,

It is ever without a hair's breadth of sign.

Ever without discriminatory thought,

Its knowing is rare without peer;

Ever without a hair's breadth of sign,

Its illumining comprehends without grasping.

The water is clear right through to the bottom;

A fish goes lazily along.

The sky is vast without horizon;

A bird flies far far away.

The “lancet” in this “Lancet of Seated Meditation” is the “manifestation of the great function”; it is the “deportment beyond sound and sight”; it is the “juncture before your parents were born”; it is “you had better not slander the buddhas and ancestors”; it is “you do not avoid forfeiting your body and losing your life”; it is “a head of three feet and neck of two inches.”¹⁵

“Essential function of every buddha.”

Every buddha always takes “every buddha” as the “essential function”; the realization of that “essential function” is “seated meditation.”

“Functioning essence of every ancestor.”

“My master had no such words” — this principle is “every ancestor.” They have the transmission of the dharma, the transmission of the robe. In sum, every face of “turning the head and changing the face” is the “essential function of every buddha”; every head of “changing the face and turning the head” is “the functioning essence of every ancestor.”

“It knows without touching things.”

“Knowing” is not the knowing of perception: the knowing of perception is of little measure. The knowing of comprehending is not “knowing”: the knowing of comprehending is constructed. Therefore, this “knowing” is “not touching things,” and “not touching things” is “knowing.” We should not measure it as universal knowledge; we should not reduce it to self-knowledge. This “not touching things” is

“When the bright comes, I hit the bright; when the dark comes, I hit the dark.” It is “sitting and breaking the skin born of mother.”

“It illumines without facing objects.”

This “illumining” is not the “illumining” of “luminous comprehension” or of “spiritual illumination”; he takes “without facing objects” as “illumining.” “Illumining” does not change into the “object,” for the “object” itself is “illumining.” “Without facing” means “throughout the realms it has never been hidden”; “it does not emerge when you break up the realms.” It is “subtle”; it is “mysterious”; it is “interacting without interacting.”

“Its knowing inherently subtle, it is ever without discriminatory thought.”

That “thought” is itself “knowing” is not necessarily dependent on the power of the other: “its knowing” is its form, and its form is the mountains and rivers. These mountains and rivers are “subtle”; this “subtlety” is “mysterious.” When we put it to use, it is “brisk and lively.” When we make a dragon, it does not matter whether we are inside or out of the Yu Gate. To put this single “knowing” to the slightest use is to take up the mountains and rivers of all realms and “know” them with all one’s power. Without our “knowing” intimately the mountains and rivers, we do not have a single knowing or a half understanding. We should not lament that “discriminatory” thinking comes later: every buddha who has ever discriminated has already appeared. “Ever without” is “previously”; “previously” is “ap-

peared.” Therefore, “ever without discrimination” is “you don’t meet a single person.”

“Its illumining inherently mysterious, it is ever without a hair’s breadth of sign.”

“A hair’s breadth” here means all the realms. Yet it is “inherently mysterious”; it is inherently “illumining.” Therefore, it is as if it has never been brought out. The eyes are not to be doubted; we should not trust the ears. “Clarify the meaning apart from the sense; don’t look to words to grasp the rule” — this is “illumining.” Therefore, it is “without peer”; therefore, it is “without grasping.” This has been upheld as “rare” and maintained as “comprehending,” but I still have my doubts about it.

“The water is clear right through to the bottom; a fish goes lazily along.”

“The water is clear.” The water that rests in space does not get “right through to the bottom” of “clear water”; still less is that which forms clear, deep pools in the vessel world the “water” of “the water is clear.” Having no shore as its boundary — this is what is meant by “clear water” “right through to the bottom.” If a “fish” goes through this “water”, it is not that it does not “go”; yet, however many myriads the degree of its progress, its “going” is immeasurable, inexhaustible. There is no shoreline by which it is gauged; there is no sky to which it ascends, nor bottom to which it sinks. And therefore there is no one who can take its measure. If we try to discuss its measure, it is only “clear water” “right through to the bottom.” The virtue of seated meditation is like the “fish

going”: who can calculate its degree in thousands or tens of thousands? The degree of the “going” “right through to the bottom” is the body as a whole does not “go” on “the path of the birds.”

“The sky is vast without horizon; a bird flies far far away.”

“The sky is vast” does not refer to what hangs in the heavens: the “sky” that hangs in the heavens is not the “vast sky”; still less is that which extends everywhere here and there the “vast sky.” Without surface or interior either hidden or manifest — this is what is meant by the “vast sky.” When the “bird” flies this sky, it is the single truth of “flying” the “sky.” This conduct of “flying” the “sky” is not to be measured: “flying” the “sky” is all realms; for it is all realms “flying” the “sky.” Although we do not know how far this “flying” goes, to express what is beyond our calculations, we call it “far far away.” It is “you should go without a string at your feet.” When the “sky” flies off, the “bird” flies off; when the “bird” flies off, the “sky” flies off. In an expression of the investigation of this flying off, it is said, “they’re right here.” This is the lancet of sitting fixedly. Through how many myriad degrees does it express “they’re right here”?

Such, then, is the “Lancet of Seated Meditation” of the Chan Master Hongzhi. Among the old worthies throughout the generations, there has never been another “Lancet of Seated Meditation” like this one. If the “stinking skin bags” throughout all quarters were to attempt to express a “Lancet of Seated Meditation” like this one, they could not do so though they

exhaust the efforts of a lifetime or two. This is the only “Lancet” in any quarter; there is no other to be found.

When he ascended to the hall, my former master always said, “The Old Buddha Hongzhi.” He never said this about any other person. When one has the eye to know a person, he will also “know the music” of the buddhas and ancestors.¹⁶ Truly, we know that there are buddhas and ancestors [in the lineage] under Dongshan. Now, some eighty years and more since the Chan Master Hongzhi, reading his “Lancet of Seated Meditation,” I compose this “Lancet of Seated Meditation.” It is now the eighteenth day of the third month of *mizunoe-tora*, the third year of Ninji [19 April 1242]; if we calculate back from this year to the eighth day of the tenth month in the twenty-seventh year of Shaoxing [11 November 1157, the date of Hongzhi's death], there are just eighty-five years. The “Lancet of Seated Meditation” I now compose is as follows.

Lancet of Seated Meditation

Essential function of all the buddhas,
Functioning essence of all the ancestors —
It is present without thinking;
It is completed without interacting.
Present without thinking,
Its presence is inherently intimate;
Completed without interacting,
Its completion is inherently verified.
Its presence inherently intimate,
It is ever without stain or defilement;
Its completion inherently verified,
It is ever without the upright or inclined.
Intimacy ever without stain or defilement,
Its intimacy sloughs off without discarding;

Verification ever without upright or inclined,
Its verification makes effort without figuring.
The water is clear right through the earth;
A fish goes along like a fish.
The sky is vast straight into the heavens,
A bird flies just like a bird.

It is not that the “Lancet of Seated Meditation” by the Chan Master Hongzhi has not yet said it right, but we can go on to say it like this. Above all, descendants of the buddhas and ancestors should study seated meditation as “the one great matter.” This is the orthodox seal of the single transmission.

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye
Lancet of Seated Meditation
Number 12

Recorded at Kōshō Hōrinji
on the eighteenth day, third month of
mizunoe-tora, third year of Ninji [19 April
1242].

Presented to the assembly at Kippō shōja,
Yoshida district, Etsu province,
in the eleventh month, winter *mizunoto-u*,
fourth year of the same era [13 December
1243-11 January 1244].

NOTES

1. “Great Master Hongdao of Yaoshan” is the posthumous title of the Yaoshan Weiyan (751-834). This dialogue is one of the prime sources for Dōgen’s meditation teachings and is cited

several times in his writings. The translation here adopts the usual Sōtō interpretation of the passage; but Yaoshan's first answer might also be rendered, "I'm thinking the unthinkable," and his final remark could be read, "It isn't thinking."

2. "The sort of fool that despises the near" reflects the the old Chinese saying, "The ordinary person values the distant and despises the near." Dōgen will allude to this saying again below.

3. This section is one of the more obscure arguments in the text. A possible paraphrase might look something like the following.

Although nonthinking is an awakened activity, free from all obstructions to knowledge (as in the Zen expression, "all eight sides are crystal clear"), it is a distinct act of cognition, with its own agent (the enlightened "someone" who is present in all our cognitive states). But the activity of nonthinking in meditation ("sitting fixedly") is not merely a matter of cognitive states ("thinking"): it is the act of meditation itself ("it presents sitting fixedly"). When it is just the act itself ("sitting fixedly" is "sitting fixedly"), it is not thinking even of itself.

4. Dōgen here shifts into Chinese, as if quoting a text; but the passage has not been identified as a direct citation from any known source. The "Vehicle of Humans and Devas" in the next sentence refers to the lowest level in a popular schema of five levels of Buddhist teaching, that emphasizing the laws of karma

and the keeping of the precepts.

5. From the "Song of Awakening" (*Zheng dao ge*), attributed to the early eighth-century figure Yongjia Xuanjue.

6. Here and in the previous sentence, Dōgen probably has in mind the words of Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135):

From a thousand ages past, ten thousand ages past; the blackness is everywhere.
It fills the ditches and clogs the gullies; no one understands it.

7. One of Dōgen's favorite conversations, between Mazu Daoyi (709-788) and his teacher, Nanyue Huairang (677-744).

8. "Do not take the eyes lightly" is from the Chinese saying, "To give weight to the ears and take the eyes lightly is the constant failing of the common person."

9. The analogy of the ox and cart is taken from the story of a Buddhist nun who criticized a brahmanical ascetic for his physical austerities, saying that punishing the body instead of controlling the mind was like beating the cart instead of the ox.

10. To "toss out a tile and take in a jade" refers to the give and take of Chan dialogue; "to turn the head and change the face" expresses the fact the face turns with the head.

11. "Close or distant blood lines" here is usually taken to mean the relationship between seated meditation and our "sitting and reclin-

ing.” “Wisdom and eradication” refer to the attainment of bodhi and the elimination of the defilements, the two goals of Buddhist spiritual training.

12. “No fixed mark” alludes to the famous teaching of the *Diamond Sūtra* that the true mark of a buddha is no mark, because he transcends all phenomenal characteristics. The English “fixed” here loses a play on a term used in the Buddhist lexicon for “meditation” (from *samādhi*: “to hold [the mind] steady”); hence, the secondary sense here, “buddha is not marked by meditation.”

13. Dōgen here introduces material from Nanyue’s answer to Mazu that he does not bother to quote: “In a nonabiding dharma, there should be no grasping or rejecting.”

14. “The Reverend Zhengjue” refers to Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157), a leading figure of Dōgen’s Caodong lineage and former abbot of the Tiantong monastery, where Dōgen studied.

15. Here and below, Dōgen will give a series of familiar expressions from the Zen literature.

16. To “know the music” means to another’s true heart, from the Chinese story of the man who knew his friend’s state of mind from the sound of music.



My Footnotes on Zazen (6) The Buddha’s Sitting Under a Tree 2

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I understand that the Buddha’s (first) sitting under a tree was an embodiment of a “middle way,” which avoids two dead ends. The first is living in fundamental ignorance and the second is living by controlling oneself artificially. “Fundamental ignorance” means that we just live driven by the power of habits with no awareness, without noticing how our body-mind is functioning. I use “body-mind” here because I want us to think of body and mind as one. “Artificial control” means that we try to unilaterally force our body-mind to follow some method or technique that we have decided on. The Buddha discovered a third way, in which we deeply experience the natural functioning of our body-mind without consciously manipulating it. For example, if we are watching our breath according to the Buddha’s third way, we will carefully notice our spontaneous breathing without interfering in its natural flow. We will neither be unaware of our breath, nor will we try to consciously control it.

Let’s consider the relationship between the body-mind and consciousness under these conditions. In the case of fundamental ignorance, consciousness does not pay any attention to the body-mind’s functioning. Therefore, there is little possibility for body-mind to improve its function, and it only repeats habitual patterns. In the case of artificial control, consciousness is

giving one-sided orders about how the body-mind should function without caring about how it really wants to function. This causes unnecessary difficulty. Because in this approach change cannot reach the deeper layer of body-mind, once we stop our conscious effort at control, we inevitably return to our old habits. In Buddha's sitting under a tree, however, consciousness is sincerely attending to the body-mind's natural functioning. In this situation, body-mind can spontaneously improve its function by receiving feedback from our consciousness. I think this is part of the revolutionary nature of the Buddha's sitting under a tree. I think Buddha pioneered the practice of deeply observing the natural function of the body-mind as it is, without controlling it in accordance with specific procedures based on a ready-made technique.

What the Buddha tried before sitting down under a tree - self-absorption meditation and self-mortification - were intentional efforts using ready-made means to realize a sacred state which cannot be obtained by simply living in ignorance. These involved use of the mind (in the case of meditation) or use of the body (in the case of self-mortification) as a means to an end. In this type of effort, there is no intention to humbly study the true nature of body itself, mind itself and body-mind which transcends the duality of body and mind. The Buddha's sitting under a tree was an effort to study the body-mind just as it is through direct observation. His meditation and ascetic practice were efforts to force something that was not there yet to appear by viewing body and mind as objects and trying to

change them. There was such a qualitative difference between meditation and ascetic practice and what the Buddha actually wanted to realize that he eventually abandoned them and went to sit under a tree.

When he sat down under the tree, there was neither a ready-made manual nor a teacher at hand. In his mediation and ascetic practice, he probably followed a very sophisticated, time-tested method which described techniques in detail. He probably also had teachers who were recognized masters of those techniques. He practiced very hard to follow these externally-imposed instructions. But when he sat down under a tree, the situation was totally different. He was not following prescribed procedures already existing as established methods. If this is true, we - those who wish to explore how to make our zazen equivalent to the Buddha's sitting under a tree - should not "do" zazen by just following the descriptions in a zazen manual or instructions from a teacher, consciously moving our legs to lotus position, hands to a cosmic mudra, eyes to half-open.... To do this is to do something different from what the Buddha did under the tree. If Buddha's sitting was not simply following a ready-made method, how should we practice zazen?

When Dogen Zenji talks about zazen, he often repeats this phrase, "Zazen is not *shuzen*" (learning in order to attain the state of *dhyana*). We find this phrase in *Fukanzazengi*, *Shobogenzo Zazengi*, and *Shobogenzo Zazenshin*. It means that the zazen of *shikantaza* is not practice so we can be proficient in a particular

mediation skill invented to create a special mental state called *dhyana* in which the mind remains in one place without being distracted. There is an important reason for Dogen Zenji's repeated emphasis on this point. In Dogen Zenji's day people were practicing zazen based on their confusion of zazen with *shuzen*, or misunderstanding zazen to be *shuzen*, or just practice for something else. For Dogen Zenji, this was such a crucial mistake that he could not overlook it.

The misunderstanding of zazen has not changed so much even now. People still confuse zazen with *shuzen*. Zazen is often thought to be a method of mental concentration or a technique for achieving a state of no-thought. Although the founder of our school strongly emphasized that zazen is not *shuzen*, we have not yet worked effectively enough to correct that conventional misunderstanding of zazen. We are just superficially practicing and teaching zazen without paying attention to this mistake. Thus, we are open to criticism that we are lazy as zazen practitioners and teachers.

The difference between zazen and *shuzen* is not a matter of good and bad or superiority or inferiority, but of quality. The confusion between them is a problem to be overcome. It is important to clearly distinguish them, to practice zazen as zazen in the proper way, and to teach zazen by definitely showing the appropriate way of doing zazen.

Let us examine again how the Buddha's sitting under a tree went far beyond the practice of *shuzen*. As I mentioned, when he sat

down under this tree he did not refer to any guidebooks or manuals and he had no teacher. He did not regulate his posture, breath and mind by following instructions on how to regulate them. He did not imitate the example of a coach and did not control his body, breath, and mind by following instructions given by someone like a coach.

Then, what was it that guided his sitting? We can find only one hint about this matter in the Buddhist scriptures. In one place, the Buddha recalled that when he was a child he sat down under a tree and thought this must be a path to awakening.

His sitting under a tree when he was a child was also done without suggestion or instruction from others. He spontaneously sat down for the first time in his life. It was a simple, plain, very innocent sitting. He did not have any intention or expectation of getting something out of it. He was not restricted by rules or frameworks about sitting. He was just moved by a strong calling from deep inside to sit alone quietly. He just happened to sit down that way. There was no room for artificial fabrications or manipulations. It was a complete and pure sitting, "just sitting." The Buddha intuitively thought this must be the path to awakening. I do not think the mental state he attained then (traditionally called the first *dhyana*) was the key to his later awakening. Rather, this crucially important recollection of his childhood led him to spontaneous sitting. He felt hope for awakening, not in the result of sitting, but in something much larger which makes zazen itself possible. And he decided to leave everything to it.

I think the Buddha's two sittings under a tree - one in his childhood and another right after abandoning self-mortification - did not happen because of an external force like a teacher's instruction, or a ready-made method. It was a spontaneous movement initiated by something released deep inside him. When the Buddha was stuck in a dead end in his spiritual quest and pondering what to do, he recalled

the "afterglow" of this spontaneous movement which was stored as a very nostalgic, subtle and definite somatic memory. It was very different in "flavor" from what he had experienced since his departure from the palace. In that difference he tangibly felt something very fresh and it made him think "this must be the path to awakening."

(To be continued)

NEWS

August 21- September 10, 2013

Dharma talks by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher were held at five places in Brazil and four places in Peru.

August 23, 2013

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at the Japanese Peruvian Culture Center in Lima, Peru.

August 24 – 25, 2013

110th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism Teaching Activities in South America was held at Jionji and Japanese Peruvian Culture Center in Peru.

September 22 – 29, 2013

Dharma talks by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher were held at five places in North America and one place in Mexico.

October 7 – 10, 2013

South America Soto Zen Conference and Workshop was held at Busshinji in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

October 8 – 10, 2013

North America Soto Zen Conference and Workshop was held at Zenshuji in Los Angeles, California.

October 10, 2013

Hawaii Autumn Minister's Meeting was held at Shoboji in Honolulu, Hawaii.

October 18 – 20, 2013

Europe Soto Zen Workshop was held at Zendonien in Blois, France.

October 31 – November 15, 2013

Baika classes by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Baika Teacher were held at four places in Hawaii.

November 9 – 10, 2013

110th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism Teaching Activities in Hawaii and 100th Anniversary of Founding of Soto Mission of Hawaii were held at Shoboji and Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii.

March 6 – 9, 2014

Europe Soto Zen Workshop for priests was held at Kanshoji in La Coquille, France.

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