



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

News of Soto Zen Buddhism: Teachings and Practice

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**Water fits in square or circular vessels - Upon assuming the role of the Director of Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office -**

**Rev. Choho Seino**  
Director of Soto Zen Buddhism  
South America Office

I had the honor to be appointed Director of Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office by Rev. Donin Minamizawa, Head Priest of Soto Zen Buddhism, on October 20th after I resigned as *Tokuha Fukuyoshi* or Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher during my fifth term on October 6th. However, I have been working virtually for the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office from Japan since I have not been able to work in-person for Busshinji temple, Comunidade Budista Soto Zenshu da América do Sul Busshinji, due to the pandemic in the city of Sao Paulo in Federative Republic of Brazil where the office is located. Now, I will finally go to Brazil on September 30 2021, so when you see this article, I'm in....

As we look back, patients of the Covid-19 started to be reported in Japan early last year after the new year holiday was over. The number of patients then exponentially continued to grow seriously affecting not only various kinds of domestic and foreign organizations but also families and individuals, forcing us to change our life up to this day. We have not yet seen the light at the end of the tunnel of the pandemic and the spread of the new variant is posing another concern, keeping the situation so grave that we are not able to lift the restriction even during the Tokyo Olympics.

Teachings of Buddhas and Ancestors show us the path to live our life overcoming the various sufferings and sorrows people all around the world face. It is my sincerest hope to assume a role as a bridge meeting people looking for opportunities to learn Soto Zen Buddhism and hopefully become one of the stepping stones or a rubble stone. Currently, due to the rapid development of scientific technologies, we are witnessing swift globalization transcending the national boundaries, continuing to change the shape of the society on a global scale, and increasing the occasions of exchange among different cultures. This phenomenon has brought us not only desirable creativity but also serious conflict. I am certain that people would find the unshakable way of life from Buddhism which shows us the teachings of causes and conditions.

Originally, I have always been curious about different cultures since I was a student. While I was studying in the department of Buddhism at Komazawa University, I also attended a language school which was a part of Goethe-Institut Japan, a German Culture Center in Tokyo, and had opportunities to study in West Germany twice as an exchange student. Germany back then was filled with passion and a sense of exaltation heading right toward the reunification of the country. Many students from all over the world including myself were inspired by the atmosphere and had heated debates with others on subjects such as politics, history, culture and religion every day and night. Especially we had heated discussions on faith and I clearly remember how they were so eager to engage in the conversation on Buddhism, especially Zen Bud-

dhism, that I was able to share with my limited ability. It was both surprising and refreshing when I saw them get greatly inspired by or refute against my explanation on the most ordinary sense as Japanese. Also, I had a heated debate over God with a female student of Brazilian nationality who was said to be a follower of Catholicism. She was friendly at school with me with no resentment until then. But after this incident, we ended up distancing ourselves completely and I had a glimpse of religious conflict from such reality.

Through many kinds of incidents during my study abroad as a young man, I felt many things and learned about the existence of difference formed by different viewpoints and recognized the importance of religion and how big people's expectation of zen was. I wonder if (it would be foolish to think that) I can interact with people of different faith in a little bit deeper level after 30 years since that day and yet it is my hope indeed.

I was appointed as *Tokuha Fukuyoshi* (Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher) in 2013 and had the privilege to visit temples in South America for the dissemination in 2016. This experience in South America further boosted my interest in the international mission. I saw Buddhists of Japanese descent and non-Japanese descent engaged in religious activities respectively in different atmospheres.

Nikkei people of Japanese descent have a sincere wish to attend a memorial service for the deceased conducted by priests directly sent from the head temples in Japan and listen to their

dharma talk. People of different Buddhist denominations beyond the framework of Soto Zen Buddhism participated in the lecture traveling for 3 days to reach the venue from their area.

People of non-Japanese descent originally grew up in a family filled with a Christian atmosphere but then intentionally chose to learn and understand Buddhism, especially zen and Soto Zen Buddhism. They are, therefore, extremely stoic and sincere and we can never have enough time for discussion once we start to talk with those who like logical conversation. Witnessing both the Nikkei people's passion for their home country of Japan and the serious attitude of non-Japanese people seeking zen practice, I naturally felt moved and inspired. I am sure that my practice will be greatly enhanced due to the merit of Dharma that I receive from them.

Unfortunately, however, in-person activities of dissemination must be limited now because of the pandemic. For this reason, we initially had no choice but to host a series of online exchange events and lectures for all at the same time as the second-best option. But unexpectedly we received many good comments from people living in various parts of South America who had struggled with the problems of the distance and cost for the travel before.

By a strange coincidence, I felt more possibility of the mission with realization and results I never even imagined before due to the new tools and methods that we had to employ out of necessity. In the midst of the rapidly changing times, I hope to try out everything like the water fitting in vessels of square and circular shapes as

the director of Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office and mutually seek the Way in harmony like milk and water with dharma friends who study Buddhism in South America and all dharma siblings of Soto Zen Buddhism in ten directions. I look forward to working with you.



## A circular cosmogony

**Rev. Daiju Bitti**

Mosteirozen Morro da Vargem,  
Zenkoji, Brazil

A circular cosmogony, where forces and powers complement and recreate each other. The divine, manifest in nature. Time flowing through it, being it and creating it. The spirit inhabiting the body in this space. The mind tied to this body that, ephemeral, passes through the world until it dissolves, in nature, in incessant transmutation. Inclusive by essence, Zen Buddhism is a compass in the crossing of existence. From birth to death, it teaches how to worship the natural forces as directly as possible.

Coexisting with them - and, consequently, with all humanity - in an ecology that integrates what the occidental separated centuries ago. Body and spirit. And both, in this *Do* (path), seek harmony with each other, and with the environment. Life and Death. Brevity and permanence.

A pioneer in Latin America, the Morro da Vargem Zen Monastery - Zenkoji, Temple of the Light of Zen had its construction marked by long stages of silence and surrender. Just as a small stone thrown into a lake forms a concentric ring that unfolds into a larger ring, and so on, each of these stages keeps the essence of the first movement, of the creative throw.

It all began with a group of young monks,



interested in the practice of zen. Soon, they built a simple hut on top of the Vargem Hill, at that time deforested and depleted. Those were difficult days, with no electricity, no contact with the outside world. And so, stone after stone, tile after tile, the Morro da Vargem Zen Monastery, for almost five decades, has established itself as a reference in various areas of human knowledge, from religious practice to ecology, from sustainability to education for a better world.



Boldness and perseverance have led to the growth, year after year, of the monastery's physical structure, in concomitant and constant involvement with the surrounding community, in the municipalities of Ibirapu, Fundão, João Neiva and Aracruz - and from this micro-region of Espírito Santo to the whole state, Brazil, and the world. And it is precisely in this time and space that the work of Zen in Ibirapu operates, whose main objective is to promote this Do, this path of harmony and spiritual and physical health.

A successful example of sustainability at a time when this term was not even used, an adept of organic agriculture since its genesis,

besides being an ecumenical center with its daily life organized around a millenary practice, the monastery has been developing a long educational work (spiritual, environmental, social) with the surrounding population, with a methodology to promote well-being, based on work and humanism.

In almost five decades, more than 300 thousand students have passed through this open-air laboratory of spirituality and environmental communion. Without dogmas, punitive and excluding gods, the Morro da Vargem Zen Monastery offers those who seek it the teachings of the secular Soto Zen school, its origin. This entire spring of life and exchange, composed of strict discipline and simplicity, lightness and beauty, like water that flows without stagnating, has gained a new and striking symbol: the giant Buddha, seated in the lotus position, 35 meters high and weighing more than 300 tons of iron, concrete, and lightness, which, since the spring of 2020, merges harmoniously with the mountainous landscape of the region, where it will remain silent for centuries.

Its construction, huge sponsored by the monk Kosei Kato, Abbot of the Yomeiji temple in Fuji City, Shizuoka, Japan, materializes the scope of the work of hundreds of monks, practitioners, and collaborators in almost half a century of operation. The Great Buddha and dozens of other statues placed in the nearly 300 hectares of the monastery, less majestic in size, but equally powerful in beauty and message, give the place another facet, besides the spiritual and ecological one: that of a sacred art gallery, whose works, mostly outdoors, commune with the

fauna and flora - and teach us more about the subtleties of Zen Buddhism.

In a society that is becoming more and more excessive, noisy, hurried, and meaningless, in which excess shows no essence, the tsunami of incessant messages disorients us, and haste leads us astray, Zen offers pause and rest, silence and meaning, distracted attention and attentive distraction.

The images express these subtleties and invite us to reflect on our impatience and impermanence. Their records would not be viable without the perseverance of photographer Vitor Nogueira over the years. What they evoke are like tropical rain composed of drops of silence. A long dive into the dense lake that exists inside each one of us.



## Visceral Concentration in Zazen

### Rev. Mokugen Sobrinho

Assistant Director of Soto Zen Buddhism  
South America Office

Shakyamuni Buddha, upon reaching enlightenment, clearly saw the condition of “emptiness of all things” and, in this way, completely dissolved the concreteness of his own selfishness. Once and for all, he clarified the functioning mechanism of human mind and clearly ratified its empty structure. The Buddha perceived the contamination of his own mind and, attaining the state before the contamination of the mind, at last reached Nirvana. He experienced great Enlightenment, under the Bodhi tree, when he entered meditation. On the eighth day, seeing the dawn star he emancipated himself from delusion and gained True Freedom.

Shakyamuni Buddha, then prince Siddharta Gautama, left the palace at age 29, trained for six years, practicing even asceticism; through mortifications he sought the liberation of his spirit, however, upon realizing the confusion of the mind, he entered deep meditation under the Bodhi tree and, on the eighth day, the Great Satori blossomed. As human beings, we are all born with the desire for life, and this we call the ego preservation instinct. When we lose awareness, though, passions arise and take control, this we call delusion. In experiencing Satori, the Buddha completely freed himself from delusion and got to know full freedom.

With this great awakening, his self-centered illusions were revealed and totally eradicated. Upon realizing this Supreme Wisdom, he was ready to guide other beings out of their sufferings. In this way, beings who were born after the enlightenment of the Buddha have the opportunity to realize the same state of wisdom as that achieved by the Supreme Enlightened Shakyamuni Buddha. According to the teachings of Indian philosophy, “the fact of knowing something leads us to be that something.” The great fascination of Zen Buddhism is to achieve Nirvana, which is a state of purity, before the mind is contaminated and tainted by delusion, thoughts, concepts and ideas.

The root of human suffering resides precisely in the concrete and dominant strength of ego-centrism. All beings and things in this world do not exist for their own convenience, they receive existence from the cosmos. We are children of the Great Nature and we have innately received our precious body endowed with this Universal Mind and all-natural faculties. For the realization of this fundamental matter, we should be immensely grateful to the Buddhas and Patriarchs, who, with great compassion, bequeathed us the precious teachings of the Dharma.

What is the thought of zazen? It is thinking not thinking. During zazen, spiritual activity merges with physiological activity, the grip of self-centered thinking should not be stimulated or positively affirmed. In true zazen, concepts and intellectual thinking must be left alone, in a state of latency, without relevance. Zazen is a natural state, in which the mind and thought are physiological. Thus, habitual thinking itself becomes physiological thinking, that is, the habitual mind

becomes physiological mind itself. In Zazen physiological mind is the very reality of nature, it is the same as the movement of clouds, the movement of stars. Eventually our fixation that the reality of nature is habitual thought vanishes.

In zazen, one can never deny the existence of thought, after all we are alive. In true zazen, thought is unthought. Our will must not direct thought, we are simply thought, naturally by our own Original Nature. Therefore, unthought thought is our own Original Essence, it is the very reality of nature, just as it is.

During zazen, discriminatory thinking should not be encouraged; on the contrary, it is left to be thought by our Original Essence and, thus, naturally the thought becomes appeased and emptied. You do not direct thinking, you are left to think by your own Original Nature. In spite of this, we can infer that there is certainly a Universal Original Essence within each one of us; it operates constantly, even if we don't notice it.

In the deep state of zazen, we are spontaneously thought of by our Original Universal Essence, which naturally transcends any discriminatory dualism. All beings and things in the universe, as well as all phenomena, are pierced and permeated by the Unique Original Essence. Zazen is not a passive state, it is highly vigorous and concentrated. It is a static and dynamic state at the same time and is closely linked to nature, so it is said to be natural. The deep state reached in zazen is neither objective nor subjective, it is beyond dualisms as cause and effect, inside and outside, superficial and profound, etc. The true state of zazen uniformly covers the entire

universe. The deep Zen state transcends the attachment to discriminatory thinking and heightened emotion.

Perfect zazen is one in which discriminatory thinking is transcended, emptied and forgotten. In authentic zazen, thoughts and emotions are as fleeting as bubbles in seawater that rise with the waves and immediately dissolve, joining the waters of the great ocean. Bubbles are nothing more than sea waters that return to their origin, just as our transcended and forgotten thoughts and emotions are world phenomena that return to the Original Great Nature. In this way, in real zazen we let go of our self-centeredness and are truly focused in the present moment, and in this way, we can return to our true origin of Universal No-mind.

In our Western culture, for hundreds or thousands of years, we have become highly rational, intellectual and cerebral, gradually leading people in our current civilization to move away from their Original Nature. The difficulty of natural expression of this Original Nature, undoubtedly subjects us to enormous suffering, arising from attachment to illusions and lack of wisdom. Because of that, in Zen Buddhism we highlight the three poisons, which are: greed, anger and ignorance.

In our Western culture, with the growing emphasis on brain, rational and intellectual, the focus of our attention has shifted from the center of our body to the brain. In the West, this has led many to believe that the center of our body would be the brain. However, if we ask oriental people what is the center of our body, without a doubt,

as has already been researched, they answer that this center is in the belly, in our womb.

Thus, we can say that we move away from our visceral, original and natural central core, which is found in the center of our body, that is, in our womb. In other words, we move away from our Original Nature, which can only be accessed through a bridge with our visceral plexus. The more we become intellectual and rational, the more we move away from our visceral consciousness and consequently distance ourselves from our Original Essence.

As a result, we contract a wide range of mental and psychosomatic disorders and illnesses, etc. and in that way, we lose our precious natural health of body and mind. We don't know how to transcend delusion, we fall into confusion, into ignorance and we don't know how to return to our Original Essence. The diligent study of Zen with the incessant practice of zazen leads us to this encounter with our Original Self.

Zazen training is not an intellectual practice, but it is something experiential, which clearly emphasizes that the more we get used to practicing visceral concentration, the more we become less intellectual and less rational, as we get closer to our Original Nature. For Zen students, with diligent practice, theory and intellect are less dominant. Truly, it is according to practice and life experiences that facts are proven. These deep results of zazen practice are not mere concepts or ways of thinking. In Zen, the systematization of experiences into theoretical forms is strongly opposed.



We can say that our Original Essence and our viscera are umbilically interrelated and close. As symptoms of this excessive rationalization today, many human beings are affected by the most varied diseases, among which the accelerated thinking syndrome draws attention, especially among young people. The practice of zazen, combined with the teachings of Dharma, has long been considered the perfect remedy to cure the ills of the human spirit. Shakyamuni Buddha, when enlightened, showed us the Great Universal Void of everything and elucidated, once and for all, the functioning mechanism of the human mind: “all the forms and phenomena of the five aggregates are totally empty.”

In the practice of zazen there are three essential points to be harmonized: the adjustment of body posture, breathing and mental posture. In zazen, the body must be positioned correctly, releasing its forces and tensions, especially that of the shoulders. Breathing must be harmonized and reach the lower abdomen. As for mental posture, the focus of awareness must be on the lower abdomen. Also, when we chant the Buddhist sutras, we should sing them using the hara, that is, our belly, being, therefore, a visceral recitation.

By standing up and being more centered in the center of our body, we can be more confident and secure, because, in the visceral terrain, lies the confidence in our True Essence, moving further and further away from the egocentrism generated from our rational, intellectual and emotional thinking. We can say that it is, at the heart of our guts, that we will find the safe haven of calm and tranquility. Without any doubt, with our body and mind concentrated, in

unity, we will be able to express, in a very clear way, our Original Nature.

During zazen there is nothing to emphasize and Buddha Mind is already the ordinary mind. We can hardly achieve transcendence and peace of mind and body only through intellectual reason or through emotions. Using body and mind simultaneously and indivisibly, we focus our awareness on the abdominal region and that is how we approach the original Truth and simplicity, and there we express our Universal Original Essence.

In Ancient India, asceticism was a common practice, in which the physical body was believed to restrict the spiritual aspect of the human being. When carrying out ascetic practices, Buddha realized its contradiction and in recognizing the unity of body and mind, he abandoned these ascetic practices and established, once and for all, the supreme excellence of zazen. It is worth emphasizing here the fundamental and indispensable importance of preserving our bodies in a healthy way, so that, far from the exaggerations of asceticism, we can express the fullness of a healthy body and a healthy mind. Abdominal concentration during zazen is the genuine way to get rid of the occurring mental acceleration syndrome, which plagues our modern civilization, especially among young people.

With the visceral focus on our concentration, we can thus bring the illusory rational contents to be digested in the last instances of the truth, which emerges from our guts. Undoubtedly, the practice of zazen, through concentration in the womb, from ancient times to the pres-

ent day, has become a great remedy in our Western culture, which has increasingly emphasized the cult of the intellect, moving us away from our visceral nature of the Natural Essence.

Acting directly at the root, it must be said that it is in the guts that we digest our questions, it is there that we transcend and forget our egocentrism and return to our Original Home in the here and now. Let us, therefore, do abdominal concentration during zazen and get used to focusing awareness more and more on the belly and less on the head. In this way, we can recover the lucidity of the healthy mind, away from the self-centered fantasies that usually populate more than ninety-nine percent of our thoughts.

We could say that we lost a lot of time and suffered a lot from a highly intellectual and cerebral life, becoming prisoners of a deadly vicious circle. Only through circular and overactivated brain thoughts, we will not disengage, forget, or get rid of the conflicting egocentric mind, and therefore, in this way, we cannot find peace. The visceral concentration practiced in zazen is a teaching advocated and transmitted by the Buddhas and Patriarchs since 2600 years ago.

The practice of zazen, like Zen Buddhism, is not something to be understood intellectually, but it is something that must be assimilated with the body and incorporated in an experiential way. If you want true peace, sit in zazen and sincerely expose your insides to the Great Nature; let us indulge in this one, and we will certainly be given great peace of mind.

Through the constant repetition of visceral

concentration, the excessive performance of the intellect so common in our Western minds, gradually loses ground and the focus of our life is gradually and patiently installed in the center of our body, in the belly. In fact, it is not an easy job, because for thousands of years we have been conditioned and accustomed to cultivating and focusing on a rational, intellectual and cerebral mind.

In Buddhism, perseverance and patience are noble and indispensable virtues. The Buddhist mind is, par excellence, a visceral mind, so in Buddhist countries people are naturally more concentrated and quieter, as in Japan, for example. Zen training rightly emphasizes this shift from the intellectual, brain and emotional focus to a natural visceral focus and, thus, we can be reborn to a new life.

During zazen, the intense work of concentration on our solar plexus is activated and it becomes a whirlwind of dynamism, digesting our issues and effectively and permanently emptying our minds, as well as minimizing and normalizing our intellectual world and emotions. With the practice of true zazen, we considerably reduce the affirmative force of discriminative thinking and, in this way, we manifest our Original Natural Essence.

We emphasize and strongly recommend in the practice of zazen, especially for beginners, abdominal concentration. As practitioners get deeper into the training, we emphasize that this concentration must be in tune with all body and soul.

A beautiful oriental teaching tells us that

“when we enter a mountain it disappears.” Likewise, with the visceral concentration in zazen, when we delve into our issues, they disappear. At first, the mountain seems insurmountable, but with relentless perseverance, we look at it patiently and, finally, we overcome a mountain of issues. Each person, respecting their peculiarities and with due care, will dive inside their unconscious in a gradual and diligent way, making it possible to dissolve and digest difficulties, purifying and transcending delusions.

Faith is one of the most important virtues for those who seek the Way. Without faith we lose the strength of perseverance and become mechanical. True zazen should never be achieved for secondary purposes and even enlightenment should not be pursued in an attached and obstinate manner. When Shakyamuni Buddha attained satori, he did it together with all beings on the great earth. This reveals to us the completely universal range that is present in every enlightenment experience. Each moment is new and, in zazen, we are brought to this eternal present. We have all been born gifted with universal mind, so we deserve nothing but fully living the eternal present!

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## The 18th Chapter of *Shobogenzo Kannon* (Avalokiteshvara) Lecture (4)

Rev. Shohaku Okumura

Sanshinji, Indiana, U.S.A

(Edited by Rev. Shoryu Bradley)

### 11. *Shobogenzo Kannon*

In lecture (2) and (3), we examined case 89 of The Blue Cliff Record (*Hekiganroku*) and case 54 of The Book of Serenity (*Shoyoroku*), which both present the same koan, a dialogue between Yunyan and Daowu about Avalokiteshvara (*Kannon*). Since we now know how Chinese people studied, discussed, and understood this dialogue, we are ready to examine Dogen’s fascicle about *Kannon*.

As I said in lecture (1), *Shobogenzo Kannon* was written in 1242. In this year, Dogen Zenji wrote 16 fascicles of *Shobogenzo*. In the fourth month alone he wrote four fascicles: *Gyoji* (Continuous Practice), *Kaiin-zanmai* (Ocean Seal Samadhi), *Juki* (Giving Predictions), and *Kannon*. *Juki* was written on the 25th day, and *Kannon* was written on the 26th day of this month. Did he write a fascicle a day? I suppose these dates are the days he completed the writings or presented them to his assembly, so it might have taken him more days to compose them, but in any case, his productivity is amazing.

The topics of both *Juki* and *Kannon* come from the Lotus sutra. A few years ago, I held a *Genzo-e* retreat studying *Juki* (Giving Predictions).

“Prediction” here refers to a buddha pronouncing that someone will themselves in the future become a buddha. This person, having aroused bodhi-citta (awakening mind, or aspiration), meets a buddha, and the buddha gives the person a prediction that they will complete their bodhisattva practice and become a buddha during a certain lifetime in the future. The buddha tells the person what their name will be as a buddha, when they will achieve buddhahood, the name of their buddha-land, etc.

Of the 28 chapters of the Lotus sutra, the main topic of the first nine are about *Juki* predictions. In them Shakyamuni Buddha gives predictions to all of his important disciples such as Shariputra and Mahakasyapa, as well as his less important disciples; in other words, all of his disciples are given predictions. This illustrates an important point in the Lotus Sutra. Since it is the teaching of the one-buddha-vehicle, the Lotus Sutra basically wants to say that all people can become buddhas. But there was one problem for the people who made the Lotus Sutra in showing this is true: the nirvana of Buddha’s disciples.

It was believed that those great disciples (sravakas) who had attained the stage of arahat had entered nirvana. According to traditional Buddhist teachings of the time, once a person had entered nirvana they could not return to this world of samsara because they had permanently left the cycle of transmigration. They had completed their practice, although they had not become a buddha. If a person entered nirvana before becoming a buddha, there was no way for them to become a buddha

in the future. This was the problem for people who made the Lotus Sutra in saying that everyone has the possibility of becoming a buddha. Because, logically speaking, if those important disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha could never become buddhas, the theory of the one-buddha-vehicle does not make sense.

Therefore, in the first nine chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the main topic of the various stories are about those disciples of the Buddha receiving predictions. In a sense, their entering nirvana was canceled, and they were invited to return to Vulture Peak. They came back to this world and received predictions from Shakyamuni that they would become buddhas in the future. So, *Juki* is a very important concept in the Lotus Sutra.

In preparation for the *Genzo-e* on *Juki*, I studied the entire Lotus Sutra and tried to understand what *Juki* means in the sutra. When I finished studying the sutra and began studying *Shobogenzo Juki*, I was disappointed and almost angry because what Dogen wrote in *Juki* has almost nothing to do with what the Lotus Sutra says about giving predictions. But when I thoroughly studied and tried to understand the deeper meaning of Dogen’s writing, I began to see what Dogen wrote in *Shobogenzo Juki* was the same as what those people who made the Lotus Sutra really wanted to say.

This fascicle, *Kannon*, is the same. *Kannon* is mentioned in Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, which is also called *Kannon-kyo* (觀音經, Sutra of Avalokiteshvara). If you read *Kannon-kyo* and try to understand what Dogen writes in this

fascicle, you will be disappointed.

What Dogen writes here is very different, having almost nothing to do with what *Kannon-kyo* is saying. In the *Kannon-kyo*, it basically says that when we are in trouble and ask Avalokiteshvara for help, our wishes will be fulfilled. When I was a teenager, I started to have a question about the meaning of life and I became interested in religious teachings, and the religious texts I had at hand were Buddhist sutras stored in my family altar. My family belonged to a Pure Land Buddhist Temple. But somehow, I found a copy of *Kannon-kyo*, and out of curiosity I tried to read it. In the book I saw an illustration of Avalokiteshvara, a gigantic female Bodhisattva standing on the ocean with tiny human beings worshiping her. Since it was written in Chinese, I didn't understand the sutra in detail. But I found it repeatedly said if we have any wish and ask Avalokiteshvara to fulfill it, it will be granted. I felt such a teaching was not what I was looking for. After that, I never read the *Kannon-kyo* again until I read Uchiyama Roshi's book on the sutra. For him the practice of chanting the name of Avalokiteshvara, "*namu Kanzeon Bosatsu*," was important. He explained the meaning of the chanting practice and its relationship to zazen practice. Sawaki Roshi also gave teishos on the sutra.

Their interpretation of *Kannon-kyo* was different from the common understanding that simply says if we have sincere faith in *Kannon's* power of salvation, our wishes will be fulfilled. Both Sawaki Roshi and Uchiyama Roshi interpreted *Kannon-kyo* based on Dogen's

verses about his visit to Mount Potalaka, the supposed dwelling place of Avalokiteshvara. Dogen said, "*Kannon* or Avalokiteshvara does not abide on Mt. Potalaka."

When I read *Shobogenzo Kannon* and compared it with the *Kannon-kyo* in the Lotus Sutra, it appeared to be very different. But somehow, it's important to find the connection between these two. Uchiyama Roshi and Sawaki Roshi did make a connection between them.

When we read Dogen's comments on this conversation between Yunyan and Daowu, it's a good idea to forget what we have read in *Kannon-kyo*. It's the same with the discussions in the Blue Cliff Record and the Book of Serenity. Their basic philosophy is not so different, but what Dogen writes is quite different from their comments. Yet without understanding their discussions, we can't understand the uniqueness and significance of what Dogen is saying in this fascicle. There is a subtle relationship between the other interpretations of this conversation and Dogen's.

Now we can begin to read Dogen's *Shobogenzo Kannon*.

### (1)

雲巖無住大師、問道吾山修一大師、「大悲菩薩、用許多手眼作麼。」

Great Master Yunyan Wuzhu (Ungan Muju) asked Great Master Daowu Xiuyi (Dogo Shuitsu), "What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do with innumerable hands and eyes?"

道吾云、「如人夜間背手摸枕头。」

Daowu said, “[The bodhisattva] is like a person who is reaching his hand behind, groping for a pillow in the night.”

雲巖曰、「我會也、我會也。」

Yunyan said, “I understand! I understand!”

道吾云、「汝作麼生會。」

Daowu said, “How do you understand it?”

雲巖曰、「徧身是手眼。」

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

道吾云、「道也太殺道、祇道得八九成。」

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

雲巖曰、「某甲祇如此、師兄作麼生。」

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

道吾云、「通身是手眼。」

Daowu said, “The entire body is hands and eyes.”

This conversation is almost the same as the versions in the Blue Cliff Record and the Book of Serenity. The only tiny difference is that in these two texts it says “only eighty percent of it”(八成, *hachi jo*), while in Dogen’s text says “only eighty or ninety percent was achieved” (八九成, *hachi ku jo*). Dogen quotes this dialogue from another Chinese text. I don’t think I need to explain the conversation since I spoke about it in Lecture (3).

## (2)

道得觀音は、前後の聞聲ままにおほしといへども、雲巖・道吾にしかず。

As for expressing Avalokiteshvara, although we now and then hear many voices, [uttered] both before and after [Yunyan and Daowu], none of them is equal to Yunyan and Daowu.

觀音を參學せんとおもはば、雲巖・道吾のいまの「道

也」を參究すべし。

If we wish to study Avalokiteshvara, we need to thoroughly investigate these sayings of Yunyan and Daowu.

In this fascicle, Dogen discusses Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of great compassion. First, he says there are many people who have talked about Avalokiteshvara, but this conversation between Yunyan and Daowu expressed the nature of Avalokiteshvara most excellently. I think he wants to say his understanding of *Kannon* is different from what people commonly understand after reading *Kannon-kyo* and other texts about the bodhisattva. He says if we wish to study the significance of Avalokiteshvara, we should thoroughly investigate what is expressed in this conversation.

“Thoroughly investigate” is a translation of *sankyū* (參究). *San* is the same word as in *dokusan* (独參, personal meeting), or *henzan* (遍參, widely visiting), meaning, “to widely visit and meet with teachers.” And *kyū* means “to study completely” or “penetrate.” This *sankyū* does not mean to only study intellectually, rather it means we need to study and practice with our entire body and mind, even during our day-to-day experiences, in addition to reading texts and consulting teachers.

## 12. Introducing Avalokiteshvara

### (3)

いま道取する大悲菩薩といふは、觀世音菩薩なり、觀自在菩薩ともいふ。

The Great Compassion Bodhisattva discussed here refers to the Seeing-the-World’s-Sounds Bodhisattva (*Kanzeon Bosatsu*), also called the

Freely-Seeing Bodhisattva (*Kanjizai Bosatsu*).

諸佛の父母とも参學す、諸佛よりも未得道なりと學することなかれ。

We study how [this Bodhisattva] is the father and mother of all buddhas; we should not study how [this Bodhisattva] is inferior to all buddhas and has not yet attained the Way.

過去正法明如来也。

In the past, [this Bodhisattva] was the True-Dharma-Brightness Tathagata (*Shobomyo Nyorai*).

In this paragraph, Dogen introduces Avalokiteshvara. Yunyan and Daowu called Avalokiteshvara the Great Compassion Bodhisattva (大悲菩薩, *Daihi Bosatsu*) because he/she is the embodiment of the Buddha's absolute, non-discriminating compassion toward all beings. This bodhisattva is called either Seeing-the-World's-Sounds Bodhisattva (*Kanzeon Bosatsu*) or Freely-Seeing Bodhisattva (*Kanjizai Bosatsu*). In a previous lecture I explained what these names mean and how the Sanskrit name "Avalokiteshvara" can be translated in two different ways.

"Bodhisattva" originally meant "a buddha to be." There is a story about how Shakyamuni became a bodhisattva in a past life, more than 500 lifetimes before he became a buddha. In it he appears as a young man named Sumedha. When he met Dipankara Buddha, he aroused bodhi-citta (bodhi-mind, or way-seeking-mind), and took a vow to become a buddha. At that time, Sumedha received a prediction from Dipankara Buddha that he would become a buddha in the future, named Shakyamuni. When he received this prediction, his attaining buddhahood became certain because it was

guaranteed by a buddha. Thus, he became a candidate for becoming a buddha, a bodhisattva (Pali, bodhisatta). Shakyamuni was referred to as a bodhisattva until he attained awakening and became a buddha under the bodhi tree. Therefore, originally the word "bodhisattva" was used for only one person, Shakyamuni, before he became a buddha.

But in Mahayana Buddhism, people began to think that being a bodhisattva is not restricted to only one person, but that anyone who has aroused bodhi-citta and takes bodhisattva vows can be a bodhisattva. Since then, all Mahayana Buddhist practitioners are called bodhisattvas. Being a bodhisattva means we have aroused bodhi-mind, received the bodhisattva precepts, and taken the four bodhisattva vows. Actually, all of us are bodhisattvas; not only so-called Mahayana Buddhists, but in the broadest sense, all beings are bodhisattvas.

In the common understanding of the Buddhist term, "bodhisattva" refers to a candidate of a buddhahood, one who has the potential to become a buddha but has not yet realized it. Such a person is in the process of walking the bodhisattva path to reach the goal of buddhahood. Common sense says the rank of a buddha is higher than the rank of a bodhisattva. That is because only after many lifetimes of practice, a bodhisattva will become a buddha.

However, Dogen says in the case of Avalokiteshvara, that is not the correct understanding. He says Avalokiteshvara used to be a buddha in the past. This buddha became a

bodhisattva, so this is the opposite of the common understanding of what it means to be a bodhisattva. In one of the sutras about Avalokiteshvara, it is said that True-Dharma-Brightness Tathagata (*Shobomyo Nyorai*), a buddha of the past, somehow became a bodhisattva, going down in rank; he/she gave up the highest rank and came down to the rank of bodhisattva. I don't know why this would happen, but my guess is that it was because a buddha-land is not so interesting. This Saha world must be much more interesting because there are so many problems here, and all living beings need his/her compassionate help. A buddha becoming a bodhisattva is also an expression of the teaching that samsara and nirvana are identical, and it is symbolic of the nirvana of no-abiding (無住処涅槃, *mujusho nehan*).

Avalokiteshvara is not a candidate to become a buddha, but a past buddha who intentionally returned to this world of samsara to walk and work together with all beings who are struggling with various problems. Dogen says Avalokiteshvara is the father and mother of all buddhas. Avalokiteshvara is therefore a symbol of Buddha's compassion, which is the parent of all buddhas. Also, Manjusri is a symbol of the wisdom we call prajna, and in the Prajna Paramita sutras, prajna is referred to as "the mother of buddhas." Compassion and wisdom are the father and mother of all buddhas.

When we study about Avalokiteshvara, we need to understand that she/he is not incomplete, rather he/she intentionally stays at

the rank of bodhisattva because of his/her vow to save all beings.

### 13. innumerable hands and eyes

#### (4)

しかあるに雲巖道の「大悲菩薩、用許多手眼作麼」の道を擧拈して、参究すべきなり。

Thus, we should thoroughly investigate [this Bodhisattva] upholding Yunyan's saying that "The Great Compassion Bodhisattva does what with innumerable hands and eyes."

観音を保任せしむる家門あり、観音を未夢見なる家門あり。

There is an ancestor who enables [practitioners] to uphold and maintain Avalokiteshvara; there is another ancestor who has never seen Avalokiteshvara even in a dream.

Now Dogen starts to talk about this conversation. In the original Chinese dialogue, Yunyan's saying, "大悲菩薩用許多手眼作麼" is obviously a question. "What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do with innumerable hands and eyes?" However, as Dogen often does, he reads this Chinese sentence in a unique way that is different from the way Chinese people normally would have read it; he reads it as both a question and a statement. But this is not because he lacks understanding or knowledge of the Chinese language.

It is said that Dogen started to study Chinese literature when he was three years old. He was from a high-class noble court family. His family lineage was well-known for their scholarship, and both his grandfather and father were court ministers and poets. He received the best possible education of his time



in Japan to prepare him to become a high government official. He was a brilliant person. After his mother passed away when he was seven years old, he began to study Buddhism. It is said that, when he was nine years old, he started to study *Abhidharmakosabhasya* (A Treasury of Abhidharma), an immense scholastic book of thirty volumes written by Vasubandhu. He received ordination as a Tendai monk when he was thirteen.

Before Dogen went to China, he extensively studied both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Chinese texts. Not only could he read Chinese, but he could speak it fluently. Right after arriving in China, for example, when still on his ship, he had a conversation with an old *tenzo* monk. The *tenzo* was visiting the ship to buy Japanese mushrooms, and Dogen invited him for tea, and they had a conversation. So right after he arrived in China, he could freely converse in Chinese with a Chinese monk about the practice and teachings of the Dharma, and he could write about this conversation in Chinese as well.

Dogen reads this Chinese sentence in a unique way not because of a lack of knowledge of the language, but rather his unusual reading is intentional. I think such a unique way of interpreting it was fun for him, and probably Chinese people would never think to do such a thing. But because Chinese was not his native language, Dogen could read Chinese sentences in a creative way. His reading of this conversation is an example.

In my translation of the conversation, this

first saying of Yunyan is a question. The question is, “What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do using so many hands and eyes?” This is a very simple sentence.

*Daihi bosatsu* means “Great Compassion Bodhisattva.” *Hi* is an abbreviation of *jihī*, meaning “compassion,” *bosatsu* is Bodhisattva, *yo* means “to use”, and I translated *kota* (許多) as “innumerable”; this means “so many” and also “without number” –this is not a fixed number, and Dogen will discuss this expression later. “Hands and eyes” is a translation of *shugen* (手眼) : *shu* is “hand,” and *gen* is “eye.”

*Somo* (作麼) is “what,” an interrogative word that makes this sentence into a question. In the original Chinese there is no punctuation such as a question mark (?). There are simply eleven Chinese characters in the sentence. For Chinese people, this *dai hi bosatsu* is the subject of this sentence, and “use” is the verb, and *kota shugen*(許多手眼) are the devices the bodhisattva uses. *Somo* or “what” means “what does this bodhisattva do using so many hands and eyes?” This is the only possible way of reading this sentence for Chinese people.

However, Dogen reads this not only as a question, but also as a statement. I translate this sentence in Dogen’s comments as: “The Great Compassionate Bodhisattva does ‘what’ with innumerable hands and eyes.” This “what” does not make the sentence into a question. In Chinese texts, many Chinese masters use this word *somo*(作麼, 什麼, what) or *inmo* (恁麼, how, thus, such). Dogen wrote a fascicle of *Shobogenzo* titled *Inmo*. *Inmo* means

“how” or “thus.” These words have a function, but there are no concepts in them. These words are used to point out what or how things are before being conceptualized. It is the same as the expression *nyoze* (如是), “like this” or *nyo* (如), a translation of the Sanskrit word *tatha* or *tathata*. *Tata* is an adjective and *tathata* is a noun often translated into English as “thusness” “suchness” or “as-it-is-ness,” the way things really are. Dogen reads this some in that way, not as a question. This is Yunyan’s question to Daowu and at the same time, it is a statement about what Avalokiteshvara is doing.

The things Avalokiteshvara is doing with his/her many hands and eyes are here called “what” or “thusness.” I think Dogen enjoys this way of creatively reading Chinese sentences. This is an example of his playing with words. But because of his having fun, we suffer because we have to figure out what he means. We have to ask ourselves, “Why is such an interpretation possible?” In many of his writings, Dogen’s mind seems to go around, up and down, or here and there so freely, so extensively and so quickly. By “here and there” I mean it goes back and forth from this concrete phenomenal ground to the absolute reality beyond conceptual thinking. He goes back and forth, even within one sentence. We are always wondering whether he is speaking from “here” or from “there.”

Anyway, he reads this simple Chinese sentence in both ways, as a question and a statement at the same time. This is not simply a question he is asking because he doesn’t know something and he is looking for an answer, and there are other questions that Dogen reads in

this way in this conversation. In his interpretation, both Yunyan and Daowu are “expressing” Avalokiteshvara with a thousand hands and eyes. Yet Dogen does not mention a number of hands and eyes when he uses the name of this bodhisattva, because in his reading, any number used in this way is too limiting. In Dogen’s interpretation, Yunyan is expressing his understanding from one side and Daowu is expressing his understanding from the other side. For him their conversation is not a series of question and answers, rather both of them are making offerings to express how the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara function.

First Yunyan makes an offering by saying this Bodhisattva is doing or manifesting “thusness” or “what” with his/her many hands and eyes. Then Daowu offers his understanding by saying, “like a person groping for a pillow in the night,” which is his way of expressing what Avalokiteshvara’s hands and eyes are doing. In my understanding, Yunyan is talking about Avalokiteshvara as the entirety of the network of interdependent origination ( $\infty$ ), and Daowu is talking of how each one of us as an individual person (1), within this network, is expressing the same reality as his/her hands and eyes. In a sense, these two sides refer to different perspectives about Avalokiteshvara: awakening to the ultimate reality beyond discrimination, as emphasized in the Blue Cliff Record (*Hekiganroku*), and actualizing the function of Avalokiteshvara as emphasized in the Book of Serenity (*Shoyoroku*). In Dogen’s interpretation, Yunyan is expressing Avalokiteshvara as the entirety of interdependent origination, and Daowu is talking about how each one of us,

as a hand and eye of Avalokiteshvara, expresses the reality of interdependent origination.

There is an ancestor who enables [practitioners] to uphold and maintain Avalokiteshvara; there is another ancestor who has never seen Avalokiteshvara even in a dream.

This sentence can be interpreted in two ways. In the first interpretation, the ancestor(s) who uphold and maintain Avalokiteshvara are both Yunyan and Daowu. Nishiari Bokusan Zenji said this means these two Zen masters uphold Avalokiteshvara, but other masters have never seen Avalokiteshvara even in a dream, and that is why we should study this conversation between them.

In the other interpretation, the former refers to Yunyan and the latter refers to Daowu. Kishizawa Ian Roshi said that Yunyan upholds Avalokiteshvara and Daowu has never seen Avalokiteshvara. In this case “never seen even in a dream” is not negative. This is expressed in Daowu’s later phrase “in the night,” referring to complete darkness, where there is no way to see Avalokiteshvara.

I agree with Kishizawa Roshi. I think in this entire fascicle about *Kannon*, Dogen thinks that Yunyan and Daowu are expressing the same reality of Avalokiteshvara ( $1 = 0 = \infty$ ) from two opposite sides. Yunyan upholds Avalokiteshvara speaking from the side of ( $\infty$ ), and Daowu has never seen Avalokiteshvara, speaking from the side of an individual person (1).

## (5)

雲巖に観音あり、道吾と同参せり。

Avalokiteshvara is in Yunyan and practices together with Daowu.

ただ一兩の観音のみにあらず、百千の観音、おなじく雲巖に同参す。

Not only one or two Avalokiteshvaras, but hundreds or thousands of Avalokiteshvaras together practice with Yunyan.

観音を眞箇に観音ならしむるは、ただ雲巖會のみなり。

Only in Yunyan’s assembly does Avalokiteshvara truly become Avalokiteshvara.

所以はいかん。雲巖道の観音と、餘佛道の観音と、道得道不得なり。

Why is this so? [When we compare] the Avalokiteshvara spoken of by Yunyan and the Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas, there is a difference between [one who was able to] express the bodhisattva and [one who was not able to do it].

餘佛道の観音は、ただ十二面なり、雲巖しかあらず。

The Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas has only twelve faces. Yunyan’s [Avalokiteshvara] is not like this.

餘佛道の観音はわづかに千手眼なり、雲巖しかあらず。

The Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas has only one thousand hands and eyes. Yunyan’s [Avalokiteshvara] is not like this. 餘佛道の観音はしばらく八萬四千手眼なり、雲巖しかあらず。

The Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas has, for the time being, eighty-four thousand hands and eyes. Yunyan’s [Avalokiteshvara] is not like this.

なにをもてかしかありとする。

How can we know that it is so?

“There is Avalokiteshvara in Yunyan” means that Yunyan is upholding Avalokiteshvara, the entire network of interdependent origination. Avalokiteshvara comes to Yunyan and manifests himself/herself through Yunyan’s practice. Yunyan hides himself within the network of interdependent origination. Yunyan’s Avalokiteshvara is practicing together with Daowu, who has never seen Avalokiteshvara. Not only Yunyan and Daowu, but all beings co-existing within the entire network of interdependent origination are hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara. Daowu practices as Daowu himself within darkness. That is the meaning of “hundreds or thousands of Avalokiteshvaras together practice with Yunyan.” From Yunyan’s perspective, all beings in the framework of interdependent origination are Avalokiteshvara. Avalokiteshvara is not like a transcendental god or a goddess outside of this phenomenal world, helping living beings who worship and ask him/her for some benefit. Rather the entire network of interdependent origination is itself Avalokiteshvara, and each and every living and non-living being make up the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara. Yunyan makes this clear with his first saying to Daowu, “What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do with innumerable hands and eyes?” Dogen praises Yunyan’s use of the word “innumerable,” since he avoids using any limited number such as twelve, one hundred, or one thousand.

[When we compare] the Avalokiteshvara spoken of by Yunyan and the Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas, there is a difference between [one who was able to] express the bodhisattva and [one who was not able to do it].

“Other buddhas” refers to the buddhas and ancestors who said Avalokiteshvara has the mysterious ability to transform his/her body in various ways. No matter how large the number, any number one can give is limited.

“The Avalokiteshvara spoken of by other buddhas has only twelve faces” refers to the story of Magu and Linji, introduced at the end of this fascicle. The Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara (十一面觀音, *Juichimen Kannon*; Sanskrit, *Ekadashamukha*) is one of the well-known forms of Avalokiteshvara. Statues of this bodhisattva have eleven small heads on the crown, which along with the original face give it twelve faces.

When people talk about Avalokiteshvara and her attributes, they often mention a certain number, as when they speak of his/her ability to manifest in thirty-three forms. An example of this representation of the bodhisattva exists at *Sanjusangendo* (三十三間堂), established during the 12th century in Kyoto within a part of the detached palace of the retired Emperor Goshirakawa. Here Avalokiteshvara with a thousand hands is enshrined as the main statue, and it is accompanied by 1001 smaller Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara statues. People who were involved in Avalokiteshvara worship had a tendency to use large numbers when referring to the bodhisattva. However, Yunyan didn’t use any specific number but just said “innumerable (without number).” This stresses that Dogen was not interested in practices that worshiped Avalokitesvara for the sake of worldly benefit.

People also build enormous statues of Avalokiteshvara to attract large numbers of pilgrims and sightseers. There is one at Mt. Potalaka in China, a place where Dogen composed verses when visiting. There are also many in Japan, and millions of people visit such “holy” places every year. But Dogen was not interested in the association of large numbers or huge statues with Avalokitesvara.

## (6)

いはゆる雲巖道の「大悲菩薩、用許多手眼」は、「許多」の道、ただ八萬四千手眼のみにあらず、いはんや十二および三十二三の数般のみならんや。

When Yunyan says, “The Great Compassion Bodhisattva uses innumerable hands and eyes,” the expression “innumerable” does not mean only eighty-four thousand hands and eyes, much less some particular number such as twelve or thirty-two or thirty-three.

「許多」は、いくそばくといふなり。

“Innumerable” means “how many (an indefinite number).”

如許多の道なり、種般かきらず。

Saying “innumerable” does not restrict it to any number.

種般すでにかぎらずは、無邊際量にもかぎるべからざるなり。

Because it is not restricted to any number, it is not limited even to some unbounded infinite amount.

「用許多」のかず、その宗旨かくのごとく参學すべし。

The principle of an “innumerable” number needs to be understood in this way.

すでに無量無邊の邊量を超越せるなり。

This already goes beyond the boundary of [the concept of] being infinite and immeasurable.

いま雲巖道の「許多手眼」の道を拈来するに、道吾

さらに「道不著」といはず、宗旨あるべし。

Upholding Yunyan’s expression “innumerable hands and eyes,” Daowu did not at all say, “this expression does not hit the mark.” There must be an essential principle here.

Various numbers are used to show that Avalokiteshvara has mysterious powers to manifest himself/herself in many forms, depending upon the needs of the person she/he helps. This is part of the image of Avalokitesvara as a supernatural bodhisattva who can transform his/her formless form into various concrete forms. Such versions of Avalokiteshvara are broadly worshipped for the benefit of people’s worldly desires.

For example, in Volume 6 of the Surangama Sutra, there is a section on Avalokiteshvara. The sutra describes how Avalokiteshvara can manifest his/her form in many ways:

Therefore, I can assume many different and wondrous forms and can proclaim numberless esoteric and efficacious mantras. I may appear with one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, as many as one hundred and eight heads, or a thousand heads or ten thousand heads and more, even as many as eighty-four thousand indestructible heads.

Avalokiteshvara then repeats the same numbers regarding his/her arms and eyes, and says, “In these forms, by displaying kindness, by inspiring awe, and by manifesting samadhi and wisdom, I can rescue and shelter beings, allowing them to attain great mastery and

ease.” The various forms of Avalokiteshvara statues we find today are representations of such esoteric ideas.

Dogen does not appreciate the Shurangama Sutra, particularly when it promotes this kind of esoteric or mystical idea in the image of Avalokiteshvara as a supernatural god/goddess, ultimately existing outside of the phenomenal realm but manifesting himself/herself in numberless forms in this world. Dogen was not interested in the kind of Avalokiteshvara worship that was popular in mainstream Buddhism during his time.

According to Yunyan and Daowu’s conversation, Avalokiteshvara is not an object of worship to be entreated for the sake of worldly benefit. Rather, Avalokiteshvara is the network of interdependent origination itself, and all beings existing in Indra’s Net are the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara. This is why Dogen emphasized Yunyan’s avoidance of using limited numbers to indicate the bodhisattva’s supernatural ability to bestow blessings. Avalokiteshvara is beyond such numbers and is not limited even to some unbounded, infinite amount.

“This already goes beyond the boundary of [the concept of] being infinite and immeasurable” means even “infinite or immeasurable” is within the boundary of human conceptual thinking. Even though I use “innumerable” (without number) in my translation, probably this is also not the correct word. Dogen’s Avalokiteshvara is beyond human conceptualization; he/she is reality itself

working here and now, while simultaneously and continuously working everywhere through all beings.

Upholding Yunyan’s expression “innumerable hands and eyes,” Daowu did not at all say, “this expression does not hit the mark.” There must be an essential principle here.

When Yunyan expresses his insight about Avalokiteshvara in the form of the question, “What does the Great Compassion Bodhisattva do with innumerable hands and eyes?” Daowu did not say, “your expression does not hit the mark.” So Daowu agrees with Yunyan on this point.

Dogen’s understanding of the bodhisattva I explained above is an example of a reason I said that it is better to forget what is said in the *Kannon-kyo* when trying to understand *Shobogenzo Kannon*.

#### **14. Yunyan and Daowu are equal**

##### **(7)**

雲巖・道吾は、かつて薬山に同参の齊肩より、すでに四十年の同行として、古今の因縁を商量するに、不是処は剝却し、是処は證明す。

Yunyan and Daowu had practiced shoulder to shoulder as co-practitioners under Yaoshan (Yakusan), and afterwards they practiced together for forty years. Through discussing the causes and conditions [of stories] from ancient times and the present, they cut off each other’s understanding when it was not right and verified each other when their understanding was right.

恁麼しきたれるに、今日は「許多手眼」と道取する

に、雲巖道取し、道吾證明する、しるべし、兩位の古佛、おなじく同道取せる「許多手眼」なり。

Having been [practicing] in this way, Yunyan today, in expressing innumerable hands and eyes, makes a statement and Daowu verifies it. We should know that “innumerable hands and eyes” is what both of these ancient buddhas express.

「許多手眼」は、あきらかに雲巖・道吾同参なり。

As for “innumerable hands and eyes,” Yunyan and Daowu are practicing together [sharing the same understanding].

いまは「用作麼」を道吾に問取するなり。

Now, [Yunyan] is asking Daowu, “What is [Avalokiteshvara] doing in using them?”

In the first sentence of this paragraph, Dogen says that Yunyan and Daowu had been practicing shoulder to shoulder for forty years, all the while discussing the dhamra with each other. “Shoulder to shoulder” is an expression indicating they are equal. During that time they would ask each other questions and verify each other. Here Dogen negates the common images of Yunyan and Daowu created in Zen literature, some of which I introduced in lecture (1). In those stories Yunyan is unenlightened and dull-witted and Daowu is sharp-witted. Daowu continually tried to help Yunyan attain enlightenment, yet Yunyan was still not enlightened when he died.

However in this conversation, Yunyan expresses his understanding of Avalokiteshvara in the form of a question, and Daowu didn't say he was mistaken. That means Daowu verifies Yunyan's statement. They agree about this point, that Avalokiteshvara uses innumerable

hands and eyes doing “what.” This “what” is the reality of all beings: emptiness and interconnectedness.

Having been [practicing] in this way, Yunyan today, in expressing innumerable hands and eyes, makes a statement and Daowu verifies it. We should know that “innumerable hands and eyes” is what both of these ancient buddhas express. As for “innumerable hands and eyes,” Yunyan and Daowu are practicing together [sharing the same understanding].

Here Dogen picks up and focuses on Yunyan's expression, “innumerable hands and eyes” rather than Avalokiteshvara. “Innumerable hands and eyes” are themselves Avalokiteshvara. Although often people think Avalokiteshvara is the owner and operator of these hands and eyes, there is no Avalokiteshvara other than these hands and eyes. This is the same as saying there is no single hand other than five fingers, or there is no person other than a collection of five aggregates, or a body is simply the totality of all its parts such as its various organs, flesh, blood, bones and so on. So “innumerable hands and eyes” means all myriad things existing within interconnectedness. Dogen says both of these ancient buddhas, Yunyan and Daowu, express how all beings exist in connection with each other.

Yunyan and Daowu are in complete agreement on this point. That means each one of us is a hand and eye within the network of interdependent origination, that is, Avalokiteshvara or Indra's Net. We are the hands and eyes. “Hands” refers to our activity and “eyes” refers

to wisdom. The question is, how can we conduct our lives as an expression of the hands and eyes of Avalokiteshvara?

Now, [Yunyan] is asking Daowu,

Earlier Dogen says Yunyan's saying is not a question but a statement. But here again he says Yunyan is "asking." He's always creating confusion for me. Perhaps it is because I have a fixed way of thinking that when Dogen suddenly switches the point of view he is speaking from, I cannot follow him when he goes back and forth so quickly. Here Dogen is thinking about or interpreting Yunyan's saying as both a question and a statement. One possible way of translating this sentence might be as a rhetorical question such as, "Avalokiteshvara is doing 'what' using innumerable hands and eyes, isn't he/she?"

"What is [Avalokiteshvara] doing in using them?"

I put Avalokiteshvara in brackets here because Dogen erases "Avalokiteshvara;" the only word he wrote is *yo somo* (用作麼). *Somo* means "what"; *yo* is "to use" or "to function." The subject of this sentence disappeared. It's often difficult to translate Chinese or Japanese into English, because in English we almost always need a subject. In this case the subject is Avalokiteshvara, but Dogen is not talking directly about Avalokiteshvara, he is discussing his/her hands and eyes –the function, working, or movement of phenomenal things. According to Dogen, Yunyan is asking Daowu about how the "hands and eyes" function in doing "what."

## (8)

この問取を、経師論師ならびに十聖三賢等の問取にひとしめざるべし。

We should not consider this question as tantamount to questions by sutra masters, commentary masters, people in the ten stages of holiness and the three stages of wisdom, and so on.

この問取は、道取を擧来せり、手眼を擧来せり。

This question elicits expression, and it elicits hands and eyes.

いま「用許多手眼作麼」と道取するに、この功業をちからとして成佛する古佛新佛あるべし。

Now, within the statement "[Avalokiteshvara] is doing what in using innumerable hands and eyes," there must be old buddhas and new buddhas who attain buddhahood through the power of this effort.

「使許多手眼作麼」とも道取しつべし。

It is possible to say "[Avalokiteshvara] is doing what in employing innumerable hands and eyes."

「作什麼」とも道取し、「動什麼」とも道取し、「道什麼」とも道取ありぬべし。

It can also be said, "making what," "moving what," and "expressing what."

We should not consider this question as tantamount to questions by sutra masters, commentary masters, people in the ten stages of holiness and the three stages of wisdom, and so on.

"Sutra masters and commentary masters" refers to scholar monks in India, China, and Japan. Since the original Buddhist sangha divided into various sects, which began around 100 years after Shakyamuni's death, there have



been many scholar monks who focused on studying sutras and making philosophical commentaries on them. Each sect developed its own Abhidharma, a system of philosophical doctrines. Subsequent generations created commentaries on commentaries that became greater in number and length than the originals. Thus, over the course of the history of Buddhism, many schools or sects were established, and monks argued with each other over doctrine. As a result, an enormous number of texts were produced, too many for any one person to read and study. Only exceptional experts with a specialized education could understand these texts.

Chinese Zen masters, who thought studying such texts without experiencing awakening was meaningless, insisted that they transmitted the Buddha's mind, not the Buddha's words. "Sutra masters and commentary masters" was a critical term used by Zen practitioners for those belonging to the teaching schools of Chinese Buddhism.

"People in the ten stages of holiness and the three stages of wisdom" refers to bodhisattvas in the higher stages of the bodhisattva path. According to the Mahayana philosophical system, there are 52 stages in the bodhisattva's development. Stage 41 to 50 are called the ten stages of holiness, and stages ten to 40 are considered to be within three broader stages of wisdom (each made up of ten more specific stages). Zen masters did not like this kind of gradual developmental system, rather they emphasized "sudden enlightenment." A famous Zen expression is, for example, "directly

entering tathagata-hood with one leap (*iccho jikinyu nyoraichi*, 一超直入如来地.) Here Dogen is saying there are no such stages when we study and practice this function of Avalokitesvara's hands and eyes. He says Yunyan's question is not an intellectual question but a practical one.

This question elicits expression, and it elicits hands and eyes.

Yunyan's question here invites Daowu to make a statement. In the next paragraph Daowu responds, "like a person in the night reaching her hand behind, groping for a pillow." That is Daowu's expression about how the innumerable hands and eyes work.

Now, within the statement "[Avalokiteshvara] is doing what in using innumerable hands and eyes," there must be old buddhas and new buddhas who attain buddhahood through the power of this effort.

Here I put "Avalokiteshvara" in brackets again because the word is not present in the original. Dogen is saying when we really understand this statement "using innumerable hands and eyes doing this thing called 'what,'" and we practice doing things in our daily lives based on reality rather than words, then "old buddhas and new buddhas" appear.

This is an interesting expression, but it doesn't necessarily mean someone becomes a buddha. In my understanding, our practice here and now, following the Buddha's teachings, is itself the appearance of a new buddha. In one fascicle of *Shobogenzo*, Dogen discusses *gyobutsu*

*igi* (行仏威儀). *Gyo* is “practice,” *butsu* is Buddha, and *igi* is dignity and conduct: “practice buddha, dignified conduct.” Usually this expression is understood as, “practicing buddha’s dignified conduct.” It means this is what we do in our practice: we practice following the Buddha’s conduct. In monastic settings there are many such dignified behaviors expressed as monastic forms. Practitioners follow all the forms, such as using oryoki bowls to eat in the monks’ hall, chanting during services, and doing various ceremonies. Everything is prescribed and all follow the traditional instructions. Following formalities in this way is called, “practicing (行) buddha’s dignified conduct (仏威儀).”

But Dogen reads this expression in a different way. He cuts this 4-word expression into two parts, *gyobutsu* (行仏) and *igi* (威儀). Dogen reads this as “dignified conduct of *Gyobutsu*,” where *Gyobutsu* is the name of a buddha. That is, it is a buddha whose name is “Practice.” So our practice is a buddha; it isn’t that “a person” becomes “a buddha.” It’s not a matter of whether this person, who is a collection of five skandhas we call Shohaku, becomes a buddha or not. But when we practice following Buddha’s teaching, the dharmakaya-buddha appears right here. Then this practice is Buddha.

I think this idea has something to do with what Shakyamuni Buddha taught in the sutra of Buddha’s final discourse. In Japanese this sutra is called *Butsu yui kyo gyo* (佛遺教經, Sutra on the Buddha’s Bequeathed Teaching). In the sutra, right before he entered nirvana, he spoke

about what his disciples should do after his death. When Buddha died, Buddha’s students lost their teacher. A problem arose because his students didn’t think it was possible to select someone to be a second Buddha. Shakyamuni was a very special person, and no one thought another person could take over his position as teacher. To lose Shakyamuni Buddha was really a big problem for the Sangha: they lost one of the three treasures.

In the Sutra, Shakyamuni said, “From now on all of my disciples must continuously practice. Then the Thus Come One’s Dharma body will always be present and indestructible.” So the Buddha told his disciples they must continue to practice following his teaching (the dharma), and when they did so his indestructible dharmakaya (dharma body) would appear in their practice.

The dharmakaya is the first of the three kinds of buddha’s body. The second is sambhogakaya (reward body), and the third is nirmanakaya (transformation body). The nirmanakaya is Shakyamuni Buddha as a person, having five skandhas that make up a human body and mind.

This saying in the *Yuikyogyo* shows the original meaning of the Buddha’s dharma body. It meant that even when Shakyamuni Buddha as a human being (nirmanakaya) passed away, the Buddha’s body still existed in the form of his teaching (the dharma). Originally this concept of the dharma body referred to what the Buddha taught. It meant when we practice following the Buddha’s teaching, then the

Buddha's dharma body is always present and manifesting within our practice. It said the dharma body never dies as long as Shakyamuni's disciples practice following his teachings, even though he as a person had passed away.

This concept of the dharma body grew bigger and bigger until finally in Mahayana Buddhism, the dharma body became this entire universe itself, the Buddha's body as Dharma. The way things are within this entire universe came to be called the dharma body. This dharma body buddha's name is Vairochana (Jp. *Birushana Nyorai*, 毘盧遮那如来) in the Avatamsaka Sutra, and it is called Maha Vairochana (Jp. *Dainichi Nyorai*, 大日如来) in Vajrayana Buddhism. This means the reality of the entire universe itself is Buddha's dharma body.

But when Dogen uses the term "Practice Buddha (*gyobutsu*)," it means our practice itself is Buddha. So when we do things in accordance with Buddha's teaching, this practice, rather than this person, is itself Buddha because it is connected to all beings. In a sense we can call this the fourth buddha body, the "practice-kaya" buddha.

"There must be old buddhas and new buddhas who attain Buddhahood" means our practice in each activity following Buddha's teaching is a new buddha. So our practice gives birth to buddhas. These buddhas are always new and fresh. "Old buddhas" refers to the dharma body which is always present and indestructible. It means "eternal buddha," and "new buddha" is our activity right now, right

here. Our sincere practice is a very new and fresh buddha. So "old buddha" and "new buddha" are actually one buddha. Our practice is a manifestation of an old eternal buddha and also a new buddha that is born right now, right here. I think what Dogen is saying here is a very unusual idea. The buddha he speaks of is not a buddha statue or an apparition in the sutras. Rather Buddha is our practice following the Buddha's teaching.

Therefore, "old buddhas and new buddhas" here means our practice of following this expression of innumerable hands and eyes that are doing "what" or "thusness." "Through the power of this effort" refers to the effort of "doing what." "Doing what" is being in accordance with this interconnectedness, being in harmony with other beings within this interdependent network. That is our practice, and that practice is an old buddha and at the same time a new buddha.

It is possible to say "[Avalokiteshvara] is doing what in employing innumerable hands and eyes."

In this sentence Dogen uses a different *kanji*, 使 (*shi*), for the working of Avalokiteshvara's hands and eyes. *Shi* and *yo* (用, used in the previous sentence) have almost the same meaning. Both mean "to use," "to employ," or "to utilize." In modern Japanese, we used these two *kanji*, *shiyo* (使用) as a compound. But if we make a distinction between them, *yo* is more like using something as a tool with our hands, and *shi* is used when we ask someone to do something. This word itself is not so

important; we can interchange certain words to point to the same reality.

It can also be said, “making what,” “moving what,” and “expressing what.”

“Making” is *sa* (作), which means “to create” or “to make.” “Moving” is *do* (動), which means to make changes, so this suggests that with our practice we change what is going on in this network. This means “what” or reality is not something fixed. It is always moving, changing, and evolving, and our practice or our activities make changes in the network. Even though we are a small part of it, we can change the entirety of the network through our practice.

“Expressing” is *do* (道). This is the same word as *dao*, but in this case it means “to speak,” “to say something,” and here it means to express reality. Within this expression, *yo* (use) and *somo* (what) can be all of our activities. It can mean making changes in the network through our practice and also speaking about it and expressing it in order to share insight, wisdom and practice with others. All of our activities are included in this statement.

Dogen interprets Yunyan’s first question/statement as describing Avalokiteshvara not as a transcendental god/goddess with the ability to transform into thousands of different forms to bestow blessings, but rather as the entirety of the interconnections of innumerable hands and eyes within the network of reality, of which we ourselves are hands and eyes.

## Treasury of the True Dharma Eye Number 15 Radiance *Kōmyō*

Translated by  
The Soto Zen Text Project

### *Introduction*

This essay represents number 15 in the early sixty- and seventy-five-chapter *Shōbōgenzō* compilations and number 36 in the modern Honzan edition. According to its colophon, it was composed at Kōshōji, its author’s monastery near the capital, in the early morning hours of a rainy summer night in 1242. The colophon includes a rare verse comment:

The plum rains rain on,  
Drip dripping from the eaves.  
What is this radiance?  
Gentlemen:

We can’t help but be seen through by Yunmen’s words.

The term “radiance” (*kōmyō*) refers to the nimbus surrounding the body of a buddha, often taken as a symbol of the wisdom with which he illumines the world. The question, “What is this radiance?” reflects a saying of the Tang-dynasty Chan master Yunmen Wenyan, who asked his monks, “What is this radiance that all people have?” Dōgen’s essay focuses on this saying and another, by Yunmen’s older contemporary, Changsha Jingcen, that “all the worlds in the ten directions are the radiance of the self.” In his comments, he moves the sense of “radiance” beyond the self and the world of these sayings to include the lineage and the

practice of his Buddhist tradition.

This translation is based on the text published in Kawamura Kōdo, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1991).

## **Treasury of the True Dharma Eye**

### **Number 15**

#### **Radiance**

Great Master Zhaoxian of Changsha in Hunan in the Land of the Great Song, in a convocation lecture, addressed the assembly, saying,<sup>1</sup>

All the worlds in the ten directions are the eye of the sramana. All the worlds in the ten directions are the everyday words of the sramana.<sup>2</sup> All the worlds in the ten directions are the entire body of the sramana. All the worlds in the ten directions are the radiance of the self. All the worlds in the ten directions are within the radiance of the self. In all the worlds in the ten directions, there is no one that is not the self.

In studying the way of the buddhas, we should always study diligently; we should not get remote and distant from it.<sup>3</sup> According to this, the maestros who have studied “radiance” are rare.<sup>4</sup>

Emperor Xiao Ming of the Later Han in the Land of Cīnasthāna was named Zhuang; his ancestral shrine name was Emperor Xianzong.<sup>5</sup> He was the fourth son of Emperor Guangwu. During the reign of Xiao Ming, in the tenth year of Yongping, senior earth year of the dragon, Mātanga and Dharmaratna first transmitted the teachings of the buddhas to the Han Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Before the platform for burning the sūtras, they

subdued the false followers of the Daoists and displayed the spiritual powers of the buddhas.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang, in the Futong years, the First Ancestor proceeded from Sindh in the West across the southern seas to Guangdong.<sup>8</sup> He was the legitimate heir to the directly transmitted treasury of the true dharma eye; he was a dharma descendant in the twenty-eighth generation from the Buddha Sākyamuni. Thereupon, he hung his staff at the Shaolin Monastery on the Shaoshi Peak of Mount Song.<sup>9</sup> He directly transmitted the dharma to the Second Ancestor, Chan Master Dazu; this was personal familiarity with the radiance of the buddhas and ancestors.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to this, [the Chinese] had not experienced the radiance of the buddhas and ancestors; how much less could they have known the radiance of the self? Though they might have encountered this radiance by bearing it from the crown of the head, they did not study it in the eye of the self.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, they had not clarified whether the radiance is long or short, square or round; they had not clarified whether the radiance is rolled or unrolled, gathered or dispersed. Because they disdained to encounter the radiance, the radiance got remote and distant from radiance. This remote and distant may be radiance, but it is obstructed by remote and distant.<sup>12</sup>

The stinking skin bags who are remote and distant hold the view that the light of the buddha and the light of the self are red, white, blue, and yellow, and must be like the light of fire or the light of water, like the light of a pearl or the light of a jewel, like the light of dragons and devas, like the light of sun and moon.<sup>13</sup>

Whether from a wise friend, whether from a sūtra scroll, upon hearing the teaching of “radiance,” to think that it is like the light of the firefly is not the study of the eye or crown.<sup>14</sup> From the Han, through the Sui, Tang, and Song, till the present, there have been many such types. Do not study with the dharma masters of letters.<sup>15</sup> We should not listen to the confused talk of Chan masters.<sup>16</sup>

The “radiance of the buddhas and ancestors” here is “all the worlds in the ten directions”; it is all the buddhas and all the ancestors; it is “only buddhas with buddhas.”<sup>17</sup> It is the light of the buddha; it is the buddha of light.<sup>18</sup> The buddhas and ancestors take the buddhas and ancestors as radiance; practicing and verifying this radiance, they make a buddha, sit [as] a buddha, and verify a buddha.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, there is the saying, “This light illumined a myriad eight thousand buddha lands in the eastern quarter.”<sup>20</sup>

This is the light of a saying.<sup>21</sup> “This light” is “the light of the buddha”; “illumined the eastern quarter” is the illumination of the eastern quarter.<sup>22</sup> “The eastern quarter” is not a secular discussion of this or that: it is the center of the dharma realm; it is the center of the fist.<sup>23</sup> Though it may restrict the eastern quarter, it is eight tael of radiance.<sup>24</sup> We should study the essential point that there is an eastern quarter in this land, there is an eastern quarter in that land, there is an eastern quarter in the eastern quarter. In “a myriad eight thousand,” a “myriad” is half a fist; it is half this mind itself.<sup>25</sup> It is not necessarily ten thousand, nor a myriad myriads, nor a hundred myriads, and so on. The “buddha lands” are in the eye. Hearing the words “illumined worlds in the eastern

quarter,” to presume or to study that it is like stretching a single piece of white silk to the eastern quarter is not study of the way.<sup>26</sup> “All the worlds in the ten directions” is just “the eastern quarter”; “the eastern quarter” means “all the worlds in the ten directions.” Therefore, there are “all the worlds in the ten directions.” The saying that proclaims “all the worlds in the ten directions” is heard as “the myriad eight thousand buddha lands.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Emperor Xianzong of the Tang was the imperial father of the two emperors, Muzong and Xuanzong; he was the imperial grandfather of the three emperors, Jingzong, Wenzong, and Wuzong.<sup>27</sup> Summoning *sarīra* of the Buddha, he installed them in the palace and made offerings to them; at night, they emitted a radiance.<sup>28</sup> The Emperor was greatly pleased, and his ministers at morning court all presented congratulatory memorials saying, “It is a sacred response to your majesty’s sacred virtue.”

At that time, there was one minister, Han Yu, or Wen Gong, who was styled Tuizhi.<sup>29</sup> He had once studied at the back seats of the buddhas and ancestors. Wen Gong alone did not present a congratulatory memorial. Emperor Xianzong inquired of him, “The ministers have all presented congratulatory memorials. Why do you, sir, not present a congratulatory memorial?”

Wen Gong respectfully replied, “Your humble minister once read in a Buddhist book that the light of the buddha is not blue, yellow, red, or white. What happened just now was the radiance of the protection of the dragon

spirits.”<sup>30</sup>

The Emperor inquired, “What is the light of the buddha?”

Wen Gong had no reply.

This Wen Gong, though he may have been a householder layman, had a manly spirit, a talent to revolve the heavens and turn the earth.<sup>31</sup> To study as he did is the initial thought in the study of the way.<sup>32</sup> A study not like this is not the way.<sup>33</sup> Even if by lecturing on the scriptures, we cause heavenly flowers to fall, if we have not yet reached this truth, it is effort in vain.<sup>34</sup> Even though they be the ten sages and three worthies, when they seek to maintain the long tongue in the same mouth as Wen Gong, this is bringing forth the mind, this is practice and verification.<sup>35</sup>

Though this may be so, there is something Han Wen Gong has not seen in Buddhist books. His saying, “the light of the buddha is not blue, yellow, red, or white” — has he studied what this is? If, sir, you have the power to study that, when you see blue, yellow, red, and white, it is not the light of the buddha, then, when you see the light of the buddha, do not take it as blue, yellow, red, and white. If Emperor Xianzong were a buddha or ancestor, he would have questioned him like this.

Hence, the perfectly clear radiance is the hundred grasses.<sup>36</sup> The radiance of the hundred grasses — its roots and stems, branches and leaves, flowers and fruits, light and colors are never given or taken away.<sup>37</sup> There is a radiance of the five paths; there a radiance of the six paths.<sup>38</sup> Where are we here, that we talk of light and talk of bright?<sup>39</sup> It should be, “how does it suddenly give rise to the mountains, rivers, and the whole earth?”<sup>40</sup> We should study

in detail Changsha’s saying, “All the worlds in the ten directions are the radiance of the self.” We should study the radiant self is all the worlds in the ten directions.

Birth and death, coming and going, are the coming and going of the radiance; transcending the commoner and surpassing the sage are the indigo and vermilion of the radiance; becoming a buddha and becoming an ancestor are the black and yellow of the radiance.<sup>41</sup> “It’s not that it lacks practice and verification” is the “defilement” of the radiance.<sup>42</sup> Grasses and trees, fences and walls, skin, flesh, bones, and marrow — these are the red and white of the radiance.<sup>43</sup> Smoke and mist, water and stone, the path of the bird and the dark road — these are the circling of the radiance.<sup>44</sup> Perceiving the radiance of the self is evidence of meeting the buddha, is evidence of seeing the buddha. “All the worlds in the ten directions” are “this self”; “this self” is “all the worlds in the ten directions.”<sup>45</sup> There is no other place of escape; even if there were a place of escape, it would be the life-saving path for leaving the body.<sup>46</sup> The present skull and seven feet are the shape, are the image, of “all the worlds in the ten directions.”<sup>47</sup> “All the worlds in the ten directions” practiced and verified on the way of the buddhas are the skull and body, the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Great Master Daciyun Kuangzhen of Mount Yunmen was a thirty-ninth-generation descendant of the Tathāgata, the World-Honored One.<sup>48</sup> He succeeded to the dharma of Great Master Zhenjue of Xuefeng.<sup>49</sup> Although he may have

been a latecomer to the buddha assembly, he was a hero of the ancestral seat.<sup>50</sup> Who could say that a radiant buddha never appeared in the world on Mount Yunmen?

At one time, in a convocation lecture, he addressed the assembly, saying, “People all have a radiance, but when they look for it, they can’t see it in the dark. What is this radiance that people have?”<sup>51</sup>

The assembly had no answer.

He himself, in their place, said, “the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate.”<sup>52</sup>

The Great Master’s saying here that “people all have a radiance” does not say that it will appear later, does not say that it was in the past, does not say it occurs to an onlooker. We should clearly hear the saying that “people naturally have a radiance.”<sup>53</sup> It is gathering a hundred thousand Yunmens and having them study together and say it in unison with a single voice. That “people all have a radiance” is not Yunmen’s own construction: people’s radiance itself takes up the light and forms the words.<sup>54</sup> “People all have a radiance” means the whole person is naturally the radiance.<sup>55</sup> “Radiance” means “people.” They have taken up the radiance and made it their secondary recompense and primary recompense.<sup>56</sup> It should be “the radiance all has the people”; it is “the radiance naturally is the people”; it is “the people naturally have the people”; it is “the lights naturally have the lights”; it is “the havings all have the havings”; it is “the alls have having the alls.”<sup>57</sup>

This being so, we should realize that the radiance that “people all have” is the “people” actually appearing, is the “people” the lights

“all have.”<sup>58</sup> Let us now ask Yunmen, “What do you mean by ‘people’? What do you mean by ‘radiance’?”

Yunmen himself says, “What is this radiance?”<sup>59</sup> This question is the radiance completely doubting a saying.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, when said like this, it is “people” and “lights.”<sup>61</sup>

At that time, “the assembly had no answer.” Even if they had a hundred thousand sayings, they took up “no answer” to say them.<sup>62</sup> This is “the treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvāna” directly transmitted by the buddhas and ancestors.<sup>63</sup>

Yunmen “himself, in their place, said, ‘the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate.’” The “himself in their place” mentioned here is “himself in place” of Yunmen; it is “himself in place” of the great assembly; it is “himself in place” of “radiance”; it is “himself in place” of “the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate.” Still, what did Yunmen call “the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate”? He should not call the great assembly or “people” “the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate.”<sup>64</sup> How many sangha halls, buddha halls, kitchens, and triple gates are there? Shall we say they are Yunmen? Say they are the seven buddhas? Say they are four sevens? Say they are two threes?<sup>65</sup> Say they are a fist? Say they are a nose?<sup>66</sup> The “sangha hall, buddha hall, kitchen, and triple gate” here, whichever buddhas and ancestors they are, do not avoid “people.” Therefore, they are not “people.”<sup>67</sup> Ever since this was so, there are cases in which there are buddha halls that have no buddha, cases in which there are no buddha halls that have no buddha; there are buddhas



that have light, buddhas that have no light, light that has no buddhas, light that has buddhas.<sup>68</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Great Master Zhenjue of Mount Xuefeng addressed the assembly, saying, “I met everyone in front of the sangha hall.”<sup>69</sup>

This is the time when Xuefeng’s “body throughout is eyes”; it is the occasion when Xuefeng looks at Xuefeng; it is the sangha hall meeting the sangha hall.<sup>70</sup>

Raising this, Baofu asked Ehu, “Setting aside ‘in front of the sangha hall,’ where were the meetings at Wangzhou Pavilion and Wushi Ridge?”<sup>71</sup>

Ehu ran back to the abbot’s quarters. Baofu then entered the sangha hall.

This “back to the abbot’s quarters” and “entered the sangha hall” — these are leaving the body of the statement; they are the principle of “meeting”; they are the sangha hall “met.”<sup>72</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Great Master Zhenying of Dicang Cloister said, “The cook enters the kitchen.”<sup>73</sup>

This statement is something prior to the seven buddhas.<sup>74</sup>

Treasury of the True Dharma Eye  
Radiance  
Number 15

[Ryūmonji MS:]

Presented to the assembly at Kannon Dōri

Koshō Hōrin Monastery; fourth strike of the third watch [approximately 1:30 a.m.], night of the second day, sixth month, summer of the senior water year of the tiger, the third year of Ninji [1 July 1242]

At the time,

The plum rains rain on,  
Drip dripping from the eaves.  
What is this radiance?

Gentlemen:

We can’t help but be seen through by Yunmen’s words.<sup>75</sup>

[Tōunji MS:]

Copied at the acolyte’s office of Daibutsu Monastery, Esshu; third day, month of offerings, senior wood year of the dragon, Kangen [14 January 1244]. Ejō

Copied in the abbot’s quarters of Keirin Vihāra, Ayō; twenty-first day, sixth month, senior metal year of the horse, the seventh year of Eishō [26 July 1510]. Yōken, in his seventy-third year<sup>76</sup>

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### Notes

1. **Great Master Zhaoxian of Changsha** (*Chōsa Shōken dashi*): I.e., the ninth-century figure Changsha Jingcen (dates unknown), a disciple of Nanquan Puyuan (748-835). Changsha is a district in Hunan; Zhaoxian dashi is a posthumous title. The saying quoted here is found in the *Jingde chuangdeng lu* (T.2076.51:274a1215) and elsewhere.

2. **All the worlds in the ten directions are the**

**everyday words of the sramana** (*jin jippō kai, ze shamōn kajō go*): This line, although repeated in the “Shōbōgenzō jippō” chapter, is not found in the extant sources of Changsha’s sayings; Dōgen’s source for it is unknown.

3. **get remote and distant** (*tenso ten'on*): An expression best known from the saying of Mazu Daoyi (709–788), “If you run around seeking it outside, you get more remote and distant from it” (*ruo xiang wai chi qiu zhuanshu zhuanyuan*) (*Liandeng huiyao*, ZZ.136:486b18).

4. **maestros** (*sakke*): Also read *soka*. A term widely used for an author or poet and, in Chan usage, an accomplished master.

5. **Emperor Xiao Ming of the Later Han** (*Gokan no Ko Mei kotei*): Posthumous name of the Emperor Ming (27-75 CE), second ruler of the Later Han dynasty, whose personal name was Liu Zhuang.

**Land of Cīnasthāna** (*Shintan koku*): Dōgen uses here the Chinese transliteration of a Sanskrit term meaning “Land of Chin,” a name perhaps derived from the Qin dynasty that first unified China in 221 BCE. The English word “China” also derives from Qin by way of the Arabic pronunciation of the Sanskrit Cīna.

**ancestral shrine name** (*byōgō*): Or “temple name”; the name assigned to the deceased in the ancestral temple of the royal family.

6. **tenth year of Yongping, senior earth year of the dragon** (*Eihei jūnen tsuchinoe-tatsu no toshi*): Probably indicating 67 CE, a date often given for the introduction of Buddhism to China. However, the cyclical year *wu chen*

corresponds to 68 CE, and some MS witnesses give “eleventh year of Yongping” here.

**Matanga and Dharmaratna** (*Matogya Jiku Horan*): Two Indian monks, whose names are often reconstructed as Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaratna, traditionally said to have undertaken the first translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese.

7. **platform for burning the sutras** (*bonkyo dai*): Reference to the legend that, in the year 71, Daoists resisting the introduction of Buddhism tested the Buddhist scriptures against their own books by setting both afire at platforms in the imperial palace. The Daoist books were reduced to ashes, while the Buddhist books refused to burn.

**displayed the spiritual powers of the buddhas** (*shobutsu no jinriki o arawasu*): Likely reference to the legend that Matanga flew into the air and sat cross-legged in space (See, e.g., *Guang hongming ji*, T.2103.52:99b11-12).

8. **Emperor Wu of the Liang** (*Ryō Bu tei*): Xiao Yan (472–549), founder of the Liang dynasty (502-557).

**Futong years** (*Futsu nenchū*): I.e., 520–527.

**First Ancestor** (*shoso*): I.e., Bodhidharma.

9. **hung his staff at the Shaolin Monastery on the Shaoshi Peak of Mount Song** (*Suzan Shoshippo Shōrinji ni kashaku shimashimasu*): Shaoshi is the western peak of Songshan, in the Dengfeng district of Henan. “To hang one’s staff” (*kashaku*) is used in reference to a monk’s enrolling in or residing at a monastery.

10. **Second Ancestor, Chan Master Dazu** (*Niso*

*Daiso zenji*): Posthumous title of Huike (487–593), successor to Bodhidharma.

**personal familiarity with the radiance of the buddhas and ancestors** (*busso kōmyō no shinzō*): “Personal familiarity” represents a loose translation of the adverbial expression *shinzō*, appearing several times in the *Shobōgenzō* in a nominal sense to indicate what is personal or intimate; probably adopted by Dōgen from a line in a poem by his teacher, Rujing: “He once personally saw the Buddha” (*shin zō ken butsu*).

11. **Though they might have encountered this radiance by bearing it from the crown of the head, they did not study it in the eye of the self** (*tatoi sono kōmyō wa, chōnei yori tanrai shite sōhō su to iedomo, jiko no ganzei ni sangaku sezu*): Both *chōnei* (“crown”) and *ganzei* (“eye”) are regularly used in reference to one’s true identity (though here the radiance at the “crown of the head” may also allude to the halo that surrounds the head in Buddhist iconography). The sense of this sentence would seem to be that, while the Chinese always had access to the radiance of the self, they had not truly recognized it in themselves.

12. **This remote and distant may be radiance, but it is obstructed by remote and distant** (*kono so’on tatoi kōmyō nari tomo, so’on ni keige seraruru nari*): Perhaps meaning that, while one can never really get away from radiance, there is still a (radiant) state that is distant from it.

13. **stinking skin bags** (*shūhitai*): A common term for the body, especially of humans; often used by Dōgen in reference especially to Chan

monks.

**dragons and devas** (*ryūten*): Presumably, listed here as beings whose bodies can glow.

14. **Whether from a wise friend, whether from a sutra scroll** (*nyaku jū chishiki shi, nyaku jū kyōkan su*): A fixed expression (here put in verbal form) often used by Dōgen for the two sources of hearing the buddha dharma; “a wise friend” (*zen chishiki*) typically refers to a Buddhist teacher.

15. **dharma masters of letters** (*monji no hosshi*): I.e., a teacher specializing in Buddhist texts.

16. **confused talk of Chan masters** (*zenji koran no setsu*): Here, perhaps best understood as “the confused talk of the meditation masters” (as opposed to the dharma masters).

17. **“only buddhas with buddhas”** (*yui butsu yo butsu*): A well-known expression from Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:5c10-11): “Only buddhas with buddhas can exhaustively investigate the real marks of the dharmas.”

18. **It is the light of the buddha; it is the buddha of light** (*bukkō nari, kōbutsu nari*): Dōgen here simply reverses the two terms “light” (*kō*) and “buddha” (*butsu*). He is likely just emphasizing the identification of “buddha” and “radiance,” but the “Buddha of Light” can also be used in reference to Amitābha, the buddha of infinite light (Muryoko butsu).

19. **make a buddha, sit [as] a buddha, and verify a buddha** (*sa butsu shi, za butsu shi, shō butsu*

su): Or “become a buddha, practice seated buddhahood, and verify buddhahood.” The first two phrases reflect the famous conversation on meditation, often quoted by Dōgen, between Nanyue Huairang (677-744) and Mazu Daoyi (e.g., at *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:240c 18ff). When Mazu says he is practicing seated meditation (*zuochan*) in order to “make a buddha” (*zuo butsu*), Nanyue asks him, “Are you studying seated meditation or are you studying seated buddha (*zuobutsu*)?” Dōgen comments on this conversation at length in his “Shobōgenzō zazen shin” chapter.

20. **“This light illumined a myriad eight thousand buddha lands in the eastern quarter”** (*shi kō shō tohō manhassen butsudo*): From the *Lotus Sūtra*, describing the light emitted from between the eyebrows of the Buddha Sākyamuni (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:4c6). The English “myriad eight thousand” for “eighteen thousand” (*manhassen*) seeks to accommodate Dōgen’s play with the number below.

21. **light of a saying** (*watō kō*): I.e., the light of the Buddha’s saying just cited. The term *watō*, translated here as “a saying,” occurs several times in this chapter but only rarely elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*. The term has the common meaning of the “subject,” or “topic” of talk (what one might call the “talking point”) and is sometimes used in Chan literature in a technical sense for the main point of a saying studied as a *kōan*; here and elsewhere, however, Dōgen seems to use it simply for the “words” or “sayings” he is discussing.

22. **“illumined the eastern quarter” is the illumination of the eastern quarter** (*shō tohōwa tōhō shō nari*): I.e., the Buddha’s saying that his light illumined the buddha lands in the eastern direction is a reference to the luminosity of the eastern direction.

23. **secular discussion of this or that** (*hishi no zokuron*): Presumably referring to the ordinary understanding of spatial directions.

**center of the fist** (*kentō no chūō*): The “fist” appears often in Chan texts, and in Dōgen’s writings, as a synecdoche for the true self or a true master.

24. **Though it may restrict the eastern quarter, it is eight tael of radiance** (*tōhō o keige su to iedomo, kōmyō no hachi ryō nari*): The first clause should probably be understood, “while the term ‘eastern quarter’ may define the particular direction of the eastern quarter.” A tael (*ryō*) is a Chinese unit of weight, varying throughout history, equal to 1/16th catty (*kin*). It may here be short for “eight tael, half a catty” (*hachi ryō han kin*), an expression used elsewhere by Dogen as we might say “six of one, half dozen of the other” — hence, “it is the same radiance.”

25. **a myriad is half a fist; it is half this mind itself** (*man wa han kentō nari, han soku shin nari*): The expression “this mind itself” (*soku shin*) likely recalls the famous saying, “this mind itself is the buddha” (*sokushin ze butsu*). Both “fist” (*kentō*) and “this mind itself” (*sokushin*) are regularly used to express the true person. Here, then, the sense may be that, while “a myriad” may be only a part, it is a part

of something that cannot be divided into parts.

26. **a single piece of white silk** (*ichijō hyakuren ko*): A fixed expression in Chan literature, understood as unblemished spiritual practice; best known as the last of “Shishuang’s seven tendencies” (*Sekisō shichi ko*) (see, e.g., *Liandeng huiyao*, ZZ.136:790b10-12). The translation makes no attempt to render the final predicate *qu* (“depart”; here, perhaps something like “inclination”) in the Chinese phrase, which Dōgen has retained despite its oddity.

27. **Xianzong** (Kenshū): reigned 805-820; **Muzong** (Bokushū): reigned 820–824; **Xuanzong** (Senshū): reigned 846–859; **Jingzong** (Keishū): reigned 824–826; **Wenzong** (Bunshū): reigned 826–840; **Wuzong** (Bushū): reigned 840–846.

28. **sarīra of the Buddha** (*busshari*): I.e., relics of the buddha’s physical body, the imperial worship of which was an important feature of Buddhism in the capital during the reign of Emperor Xianzong.

29. **Han Yu, or Wen Gong** (*Kan Yu Bun Kō*): I.e., the important government official and scholar Han Yu (768-824), whose posthumous name was Wen Gong (“Duke Wen”), and whose public name (*ji*) was Tuizhi. He famously wrote a memorial to the throne opposing the worship of a finger bone relic of the Buddha; the story told here seems to be a Buddhist response to that incident. Versions of it are recorded in several Chinese texts, as well as Dōgen’s *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:214, case 173).

30. **Buddhist book** (*bussho*): The reference is uncertain. Perhaps a variation on a description in the *Fanwang jing* (T.1484.24:1004b3-4) of the light emitted from the mouths of those reciting the monastic rule: “The brightness is not blue, yellow, red, white, or black, not form and not mind, not being and not nothing, not dharmas of cause and effect.”

31. **householder layman** (*zaike no shizoku*): The term *shizoku* (“gentlemen and commoners”) may refer to the classes of society or to officials and the general public.

**talent to revolve the heavens and turn the earth** (*kaiten tenchi no sai*): A combination of two idioms used in reference to one of great power.

32. **initial thought in the study of the way** (*gakudō no shoshin*): The term *shoshin* is used in Chinese literature to indicate both a first thought and a state of innocence, or inexperience. In Buddhist usage, it may refer to the bodhisattva’s initial aspiration for awakening (*hosshin*; S. *bodhi-cittotpāda*) or to a beginner or beginning stage in a practice.

33. **A study not like this** (*funyo ze gaku*): Or “not to study like this.” Dōgen here shifts to Chinese, using a phrase that recalls a passage in the eight-thousand line *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Xiaopin bore boluomi jing*, T.227.8:567b 24), in which the Buddha asks Subhūti if the bodhisattva destroys all marks (*xiang*); Subhūti replies, “World-Honored One, this bodhisattva does not study like this.”

34. **heavenly flowers** (*tenge*): Reference to the trope in Buddhist literature that blossoms fall

from the heavens onto those skilled in preaching the dharma.

<sup>35.</sup> **ten sages and three worthies** (*jisshō sanken*): Also read *jisshō sangen*. Reference to the traditional path of the bodhisattva: the ten stages, or “grounds” (*chi*; S. *bhūmi*), of the “noble” (S. *ārya*) — i.e., those on the advanced levels of the path — and the three types of “worthy” (S. *bhadra*) — i.e., those on the level just preceding the *ārya*.

**when they seek to maintain the long tongue in the same mouth as Wen Gong** (*Bun Kō to dōku no chōzetsu o hōnin sen toki*): I.e., when they try to speak like Wen Gong. The “long tongue” (*chōzetsu*) suggests eloquence and evokes the “long, broad tongue” (*kōchōzetsu*), one of the thirty-two marks of the buddha body. **this is bringing forth the mind, this is practice and verification** (*hosshin nari, shushō nari*): I.e., generating the bodhisattva’s initial aspiration for buddhahood, his practice, and his realization.

<sup>36.</sup> **the perfectly clear radiance is the hundred grasses** (*meimei no kōmyō wa hyakusō nari*): “The hundred grasses” (*hyakusō*) is a standard expression for “all phenomena.” Playful allusion to a well-known Chan saying cited several times by Dōgen: “Perfectly clear, the tips of the hundred grasses; perfectly clear the intention of the ancestral masters.”

<sup>37.</sup> **never given or taken away** (*imada yodatsu arazu*): Perhaps, meaning that the concrete properties of the phenomenal world are inherent in the radiance.

<sup>38.</sup> **five paths** (*godō*); six paths (*rokudō*): The

five realms of sentient beings in samsāra: heavenly beings, humans, animals, ghosts, and beings in the hells; to this list is sometimes added a sixth realm, the demigods (S. *asura*).

<sup>39.</sup> **Where are we here?** (*shari ze jumō sho zai*): Dōgen here shifts to Chinese, in a variant of the question famously put to Linji by the monk Puhua (dates unknown) (as seen, e.g., at *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, DZZ.5:174, case 96): “Where are we here, that we’re talking of crude and talking of fine?”

<sup>40.</sup> **“how does it suddenly give rise to the mountains, rivers, and the whole earth?”** (*unga kotsu shō sanga daichi*): A standard question in Chan literature, taken from the *Sūrangama-sūtra* (*Shoulengyan jing*; T.945:19.119c17), where the question concerns how the phenomenal world arises from the pure *tathāgata-garbha*.

<sup>41.</sup> **transcending the commoner and surpassing the sage** (*chobon ossho*): I.e., going beyond the stages of the Buddhist spiritual path; a common expression in Chan literature.

<sup>42.</sup> **“It’s not that it lacks practice and verification” is the “defilement” of the radiance** (*shushō wa naki ni arazu, kōmyō no zenna nari*): Dōgen here plays with one of his favorite passages from Chan literature, the conversation between the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng (638-713), and his follower Nanyue Huairang (see, e.g., *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, DZZ.5:178, case 101). When Huineng asks whether “the thing that comes like this” is dependent on practice and verification, Huairang responds, “It’s not that it lacks practice and verification, but it can’t be

defiled by them.”

43. **skin, flesh, bones, and marrow** (*hi niku kotsu zui*): An expression, occurring very often throughout the *Shōbōgenzō*, indicating the essence or truth or entirety of something or someone. From the famous story, known as *Daruma hi niku kotsu zui*, of Bodhidharma’s testing of four disciples, to whom he said of each in turn that he (or, in one case, she) had gotten his skin, flesh, bones, and marrow. (See, e.g., *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:219b27-c5; *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, DZZ.5:230, case 201.)

44. **the path of the bird and the dark road** (*chōdō genro*): The first two of “Dongshan’s three roads” (*Tōzan sanro*) for teaching people. (See *Dongshan yulu*, T.1986A.47:511a26.)

45. **“All the worlds in the ten directions” are “this self”** (*jin jippō kai wa ze jiko nari*): Dōgen here plays with Changsha’s words to create the new term “this self” (*ze jiko*) by reading the Chinese copula “are” (*ze*) as the pronoun “this.”

46. **the life-saving path for leaving the body** (*shusshin no katsuro*): The term *katsuro* has the sense “survival route” — i.e., the way out of a dangerous situation; the term *shusshin*, while having the colloquial sense “advance one’s status,” is regularly used in Chan texts for “liberation.”

47. **skull and seven feet** (*dokuro shichishaku*): I.e., the human body. The term “seven feet” (*shichishaku*) used for the human body is based on the ancient value of the Chinese “foot” (*chi*).

48. **Great Master Daciyun Kuangzhen of Mount Yunmen** (*Yunmen zan Daijiun Kyōshin daishi*): I.e., Yunmen Wenyan (864–949).

49. **Great Master Zhenjue of Xuefeng** (*Seppō Shinkaku Daishi*): I.e., Xuefeng Yicun (822–908).

50. **latecomer to the buddha assembly** (*busshu no banshin*): I.e., a latter-day member of the sangha. hero of the ancestral seat (*soseki no eiyū*): An expression of high praise for a past master, appearing several times in Dōgen’s writings. The “ancestral seat” (*soseki*) is a common term for the Zen lineage.

51. **At one time** (*aru toki*): An incident recorded in the *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:166, case 81), probably from the *Yuanwu yulu* (T.1997.47:803a25-27).

52. **“the sangha hall, the buddha hall, the kitchen, the triple gate”** (*sōdō butsuden zuku sanmon*): Four common buildings of a Chan monastery. The sangha hall is the building in which the registered monks normally meditate, eat, and sleep; the buddha hall houses the main icon; the triple gate is the main entrance, so called for its three bays.

53. **“people naturally have a radiance”** (*ninnin ji u kōmyō zai*): Dōgen has here add “naturally” (*ji*) to Xuefeng’s statement, a version that does appear in other texts.

54. **Yunmen’s own construction** (*Unmon no jikō*): The term *jikō* is rather unusual; the element *kō* is regularly used in the sense “to take something in,” hence, “to grasp something”;

the translation takes it as equivalent here to the homophonous *kō* (“to build”).

**takes up the light and forms the words** (*nen kō i dō*): Or, more simply, “speaks of light.”

55. **the whole person** (*konjin*): An unusual expression, not seen elsewhere in Dōgen’s writing; the sense of here seems akin to its use in *konji* (“whole self”), or the more common *konjin* (“whole body”). Given the context, it is tempting to read it “people as a whole.”

56. **secondary recompense and primary recompense** (*ehō shōhō*): Standard Buddhist terms for the two aspects of karmic consequences: respectively, the environment, or circumstances, into which one is born, and the psychophysical makeup of the person.

57. **It should be “the radiance all has the people”** (*komyō jin u ninnin zai naru beshi*): From this point, Dōgen launches into a series of increasingly odd plays with the vocabulary of Yunmen’s saying, culminating in the almost unintelligible “all all have have all all” (*jinjin u u jinjin zai*).

58. **“people” actually appearing** (*genjō no ninnin*); “people” the lights “all have” (*kōkō jin u no ninnin*): Continuing the play with Yunmen’s words. The former phrase suggests “real people”; the latter represents a variation on the phrase above, “the radiance all has the people.”

59. **“What is this radiance?”** (*somosan ze kōmyō zai*): Dogen here merely repeats Yunmen’s question, though it is also possible to read this

as a declarative sentence — i.e., “[the question] ‘what’ is this radiance.”

60. **radiance completely doubting a saying** (*gisatsu wato no kōmyō*): Seemingly, a variation on the earlier “light of a saying” (*watō kō*): i.e., radiance in the form of questioning the meaning of the saying. The verb *gisatsu* carries the sense, “to question thoroughly,” with the element *satsu* serving as an intensive.

61. **Nevertheless, when said like this, it is “people” and “lights”** (*shika aredomo, inmo dōjaku sureba, ninnin kōkō nari*): A tentative translation of a sentence subject to diverse interpretation. Both the antecedent of “like this” (*inmo*) and the grammar of the pattern *ninnin kōkō* (“people lights”) are unclear. One possible reading might be something like, “Although Yunmen’s question is the radiance of doubting a saying, asking this question is the light of every person.”

62. **they took up “no answer” to say them** (*mutai o nenjite dōjaku suru nari*): I.e., they spoke with no answer.

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

64. **He should not call the great assembly or “people” “the sangha hall, the buddha hall,**



**the kitchen, the triple gate**” (*daishu oyobi ninnin o yomude sōdō butsuden zuku sanmon to su bekarazu*): The grammatical subject is unstated and might be taken as “we” or the impersonal “one.” The “great assembly” (*daishu*) refers to the congregation of monastics; here, likely the assembly being addressed by Yunmen. “People” (*ninnin*) are the people said to have a radiance.

65. **seven buddhas** (*shichi butsu*); **four sevens** (*shi shichi*); **two threes** (*ni san*): Reference to the Zen lineage. “Seven buddhas” refers to the series of seven ancient buddhas culminating in the Buddha Sākyamuni. “Four sevens” refers to the twenty-eight Indian ancestors, from Mahākāśyapa to Bodhidharma; “two threes” refers to the first six ancestors in China, from Bodhidharma to Huineng.

66. **Say they are a fist? Say they are a nose?** (*kentō nari to ya sen, bikū nari to ya sen*): Like the “fist,” introduced above (Note 25), the “nose” is regularly used as synecdoche for the person, especially for Zen teachers and students.

67. **do not avoid “people.” Therefore, they are not “people”** (*ninnin o manukarezaru mono nari. kono yue ni, ninnin ni arazu*): Perhaps meaning that, since they are identified with the “people” who have (or are) the “radiance,” they are not merely people.

68. **there are cases in which there are buddha halls that have no buddha** (*u butsuden no mu butsu*): A tentative translation of a sentence, each of whose clauses might be parsed differently. Dōgen is playing with the verb “to have” (*u*),

from Yunmen’s phrase, “people all have a radiance,” and its opposite, “to lack” (*mu*) — play complicated by the fact that the two verbs also mean, respectively, “to exist” and “not to exist.”

It is sometimes suggested that the sentence reflects an exchange between Guling Shenzan (fl. ninth c.) and his ordination teacher recorded in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*; the version of the exchange appearing at T.2076,51:268a12-15 does not seem particularly relevant:

One day, when [his teacher] was bathing, he ordered the Master [Shenzan] to wash him. The Master rubbed his back and said, “A nice buddha hall, but the buddha isn’t sacred.”

His teacher turned his head to look at him. The Master said, “The buddha may not be sacred, but it still emits a light.”

The influential nineteenth-century *Shōbōgenzō shōten zokuchō* (SCZ.5:317) records a variant version, closer to our text here, that may or may not have been known to Dōgen:

The Master rubbed his back and said, “A nice buddha hall with no buddha.”

His teacher turned his head to look at him. The Master said, “There may be no buddha, but it still emits a light.”

69. **Great Master Zhenjue of Mount Xuefeng** (*Seppōzan Shinkaku daishi*): See above, Note 49. This saying can be found in the *Yuanwu yulu* (T.1997.47:802c28-29) and elsewhere. For the version recorded in Dōgen’s *Mana Shōbōgenzo*, see below, Note 71.

**“I met everyone”** (*yo shonin sōken ryō ya*): Can

be understood as “I met all of you.”

70. **the time when Xuefeng’s “body throughout is eyes”** (*Seppō no tsūshin ze ganzei ji*): The expression *tsūshin*, translated here “body throughout,” occurs regularly in Dōgen’s writings, typically, as no doubt here, alluding to the saying of Daowu Yuanzhi (769-835) regarding the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (*senju sengen Kannon*) that “his body throughout is hands and eyes” (*tsūshin ze shu gen*). (See, e.g., Dōgen’s *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, DZZ.5:182, case 105; discussed at “*Shōbōgenzō Kannon*.”)

71. **Raising this, Baofu asked Ehu** (*Baofu kō mon Kago*): I.e., Baofu Congzhan (d. 928) and Ehu Zhifu (dates unknown), two followers of Xuefeng. The anecdote comes from the passage in which Xuefeng said he had met everyone in front of the monks’ hall. Here is the version in the *Mana Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:272, case 290):

Xuefeng addressed the assembly, saying,  
“I met everyone in front of the sangha hall.  
I met everyone at Wangzhou Pavilion. I met everyone at Wushi Ridge.”

Later, raising this, Baofu asked Ehu,  
“Setting aside ‘in front of the sangha hall,’  
where were the meetings at Wangzhou Pavilion and Wushi Ridge?”

Ehu ran back to the abbot’s quarters.

Baofu then entered the sangha hall.

**“Wangzhou Pavilion and Wushi Ridge”** (*Bōshū tei Useki rei*): The former is a scenic spot at Xuefeng; the latter, probably the mountain of that name in Fujian.

72. **leaving the body of the statement** (*kattō*

*shusshin*): A tentative translation of an unusual phrase that might mean that the statement itself “leaves the body,” or that one “leaves the body” from the statement.

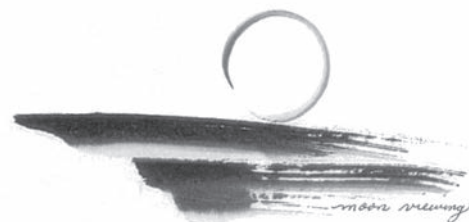
**the principle of “meeting”** (*sōken tei no dōri*);  
**the sangha hall “met”** (*koken ryō ya sōdō*): Dōgen is playing here with Xuefeng’s “I met everyone in front of the sangha hall.” The latter phrase could be interpreted variously: “the sangha hall where he met”; “the sangha that was met”; “the sangha that itself met.”

73. **Great Master Zhenying of Dicang Cloister** (*Jizō in Shin’ō daishi*): I.e., Luohan Guichen (867–928); “Great Master Zhenying” is a posthumous title. The saying is found at *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:400a18.

74. **something prior to the seven buddhas** (*shichi butsu izen ji*): A fixed idiom for that which precedes even the seven buddhas of antiquity (for which, see above, Note 65.)

75. The Tōunji MS shares an identical colophon.

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





## My Footnotes on Zazen (21) “The question of ‘thinking’ in zazen”(3)

Rev. Issho Fujita

It will be easy to see the background surrounding Shenhsiu and Wolun Zenjis’s verses from the framework and way of thinking that is emphasized in zen meditation (zazen) called “the four meditations” of early Buddhism. Mental activities (thinking) such as thoughts and cogitation were treated negatively at the [or early Buddhism] such that the aim [in meditation] was to stop or extinguish thinking. Incidentally, in the early days of zen, there were also emotional elements such as “joy and comfort that arise from a distance.” However, as the level of zen samadhi rose, such emotional joy and comfort disappeared. The practice of the southern Buddhist form of vipassana meditation, which is now becoming established in Japan, is also done within this framework.

However, speaking of us zen practitioners, we are standing in the current of the Sixth Ancestor Huineng who insisted on a completely different position to that of Shenhsiu and Wolun’s verses as well as that of Dogen Zenji who repeatedly emphasized that “zazen is not [learning] meditation practice.” I think this is something that we should be well aware of. Against the background of such questions, we must investigate the wording of Dogen Zenji’s teachings such as “Zazen is the dharma gate of joyful ease” and “Could there be no ‘thinking’ in ‘sitting fixedly?’”

(Alternatively, Is there “not-thinking” in steadfast sitting?) We must also be aware of teachings in Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen (*Fukanzazengi*) and the meaning of such words as the “do not think” of “do not think ‘good’ or ‘bad’,” the “do not judge” in “do not judge true or false,” the “give up” in “give up the operations of the mind, intellect, and consciousness” and the “stop” in “stop measuring with thoughts, ideas, and views.” We must not understand the context of these teachings simply to mean “the elimination or stoppage of thoughts.”

Let’s first firmly understand the point that zazen is not a practice of using the breath, sensations, and so forth as a method used as a means to gradually narrow your thoughts and finally eliminate and make them stop. This isn’t to say that zazen can be called a state where the mind is depressed and sinks or where the mind is floating and restless. Simply put, zazen is also not a condition of being controlled by “sleeping nor of thinking” (dullness or distraction). Falling asleep is falling asleep and is not zazen. Thinking is thinking and that also is not zazen. Zazen is to not fall into either of the two impasses of dullness or distraction. Zazen must always be the “Middle Way” that develops freshly and dynamically. There is no choice but to learn precisely through the practice of “making concentrated effort to examine this in detail” (one of Dogen Zenji’s often-used expressions that I am fond of). And yet, the sad thing is that if we ordinary people leave things as they are, we will certainly fall into either dullness or distraction. This can be understood from the fact that in the Abidharma-kosa (Kusharon) these two aspects are brought up as part of the Daibonno (klesa-

mahabumika), the Great Klesa Law (called “great” because the earthly desires: greed, anger, and ignorance always accompany us) and the consciousness-only doctrine that is based on the same thought that within the thing that adversely affects the mind (upaklesa), these two aspects of dullness and distraction are said to be the “great illusions or defilements.” If ordinary people do zazen as they are told to but do not understand any of the principles or if they don’t make concentrated effort, then inevitably zazen will follow the path of changing into dullness or distraction. So, how should we actually do zazen?

Rev. Rijin Yasuda (1900-1982), a leader in the Jodo Shinshu (the True Pure Land sect of Buddhism), accurately expressed this matter like this, “Becoming a buddha is made up of breaking dreams, no matter how hard we try and struggle in our dreams. No matter how much wisdom we pile up, that is not satori (enlightenment). No matter how much we polish our delusions, we only end up refining our delusions. But just because you say it isn’t good to make effort, no one can guarantee that if you wait without making effort the wisdom of Buddha will appear. Moreover, this is an issue we must overcome. The method of how to actually do this is important.” (Rijin Yasuda, A Collection of Lectures Vol. I, “A Call and Awakening to the One Name”, Daihorinkaku) “What is the method by which to do this?” We run into this problem. It was precisely this problem that Shakyamuni Buddha also met. Sitting under the tree, would it be possible for him to break through this impasse? This was the “supreme, sublime method of non-doing” of “upright sitting” and “studying Zen” that was transmitted

outside the teachings. In short, this was zazen.

Next, rather than stopping thoughts and ideas that are disturbing to us, we must do this [method] thoroughly such that we return to the source of thought. From the perspective of changing the direction of thought (“turning the light and shining it inward”), I would like by means of this teaching to discuss a little more the matter of thinking in zazen.

### **Meeting your thoughts while relaxing (1)**

In the Pali canon, there is a sutra called the Vitakkansathana Sutta. In this sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha carefully and kindly teaches about the method of how to deal with bad, unwholesome thoughts that arise during meditation. The context of this teaching is very interesting for those of us who are considering the issue of “thought” during zazen. I would like to quote the whole text. However, since it is rather long, I will only excerpt the main points.

1. When a monk is keeping his attention on a certain object or theme, there are times when bad, unwholesome thoughts connected to greed, anger, and delusion arise. He should then focus on another theme that brings about wholesome thoughts and then the greed, anger, and delusion that has arisen will disappear and the unwholesome thoughts will subside.
2. If it happens that after the monk has brought his attention to a theme that brings forth wholesome thoughts, and even though he is paying attention to this thoughts con-

nected to greed, anger, and delusion continue to arise, then that monk must take a closer look at the shortcomings, the drawbacks of those thoughts. “Really, these thoughts are bad. My thoughts are shameful. These thoughts result in suffering.” If the monk takes a closer look at the disadvantages of these thoughts, then the bad thoughts that are connected to greed, anger, and delusion will be abandoned and finally disappear.

3. In the case that even if the monk does take a closer look at the shortcomings, the drawbacks of those thoughts and the thoughts connected with greed, anger, and delusion continue to arise, he should ignore and forget about those thoughts. Without being concerned about those thoughts and without trying to pay attention to some certain theme, the monk will find that these bad, unwholesome thoughts will leave and disappear.

4. If it should happen that even by ignoring and forgetting the bad thoughts connected to greed, anger, and ignorance, the monk still finds that such bad, unwholesome thoughts keep arising, he should give attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts. When he gives attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts, then any bad, unwholesome thoughts connected with greed, anger, and ignorance will be abandoned and disappear.

5. If then while giving attention to the stilling of the thought-formation of thoughts that kind of unwholesome thought continues to arise, then at that time, the monk should

clench his teeth, press the tongue against the roof of the mouth, and beat down, constrain, and pulverize that mind. By clenching his teeth, pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth, and then beating down, constraining, and pulverizing the mind with the mind, bad and unwholesome thoughts will be abandoned and disappear.

Now when a monk changes the theme on which he is paying attention, and he has looked closely at the shortcomings of unwholesome thoughts, and he ignores and forgets those unwholesome thoughts, and he has stilled the thought-formation of those thoughts, and he has clenched his teeth, pressed his tongue against the roof of his mouth, and he has beaten down, constrained, and pulverized the mind with the mind, then his mind is steadied within, quieted, unified, and concentrated. This monk is then called “a master of the way of thoughts.” Then, such a monk will think what he wants to think, and he won’t think what he does not want to think. Such a monk will have transcended craving, have been liberated from attachments, will have correctly seen through the pride of ego-consciousness, and will have brought an end to suffering and anguish. This is what the Buddha said. The monks were satisfied and happy with the Buddha’s words.

## NEWS

June 16, 2021

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Zoom.

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