



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

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## **A Report on the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen International in North America**

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In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Soto Zen International Teaching Activities in North America and the founding of Zenshuji Temple, a “the *Jukai-e* (Ceremony) for commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen in North America” was held at Zenshuji Temple in Los Angeles, California from November 16 to 20, 2022, followed by a “Ceremony Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen North America” on May 28, 2023.

In 1915, during the Panama International Exposition held in San Francisco, the Head Priest of the Sotoshu, Hioki Mokusen Zenji, attended the World Buddhist Convention. On his way back to Japan, he stopped in Hawaii and asked Rev. Hosen Isobe to go to the mainland United States in order to propagate the Soto Zen teaching there. In 1922, Rev. Isobe moved to Los Angeles, where on July 15, he rented the second floor of Mr. Toyokichi Nagasaki’s house and put up a sign that read “Zenshuji Temporary Church.” This was the first step in Soto Zen Teaching activities in North America.

### ***Jukai-e* (Precept Ceremony)**

The planning for the 100th anniversary events dates back to 2018, five years ago. After much discussion about what kind of ceremony would

be appropriate for the 100th anniversary of Soto Zen in North America, it was decided to hold a “*Jukai-e*” (Precept Ceremony) with the aim of revitalizing Zenshuji, the first temple in North America, as well as other Japanese American temples, and to have it used as part of future teaching activities at local temples and Zen centers in North America.

There are three points worthy of special mention regarding this *Jukai-e*. First, the local American Soto Zen priests took the lead in the practice. The Preceptor for the ceremony was the Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office, the Instructing Teacher was Rev. Chozen Bays Kokusai Fukyoshi (Daiganji, Great Vow Monastery, Oregon), the Guiding Teaching was Rev. Shoken Winecoff Kokusai Fukyoshi (Ryumonji Monastery, Iowa), and the other positions in the ceremony including the Precept-Explaining Teacher, the Preceptor’s Secretary, the Platform Manager, and other principal positions were held by Soto Zen priests who are active in North America.

The second most important factor was the participation. All of the participants were from all over the North America region. The Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office has had *Kokusai Fukyoshi* (International Teacher) from the United States, Mexico, and Canada, with the exception of Hawaii, and over the course of its century-long history, Zen has spread throughout the region. In recruiting the participants, we collaborated with the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center and some of our staff actively traveled to temples and Zen centers around the world. After the onset of the pandemic, we used

social networking sites and participated in online zazen meetings to spread the word, and we received more applications than we had planned for.

The last point is that there are two types of people who received the precepts: ordained and laypeople. There was also an equal number of men and women involved with this ceremony. This was done to reflect the concept of gender inequality in American society.

Prior to the *Jukai-e*, a two-day workshop training session was held focusing on *Jukai-e* forms. About thirty of the assigned priests, including members of the Precept Ceremony committee and leaders of each section, had several opportunities to attend practice sessions beforehand. Since this was the first time for many of the local priests to attend a *Jukai-e* and be assigned one of the roles, they took these practice sessions seriously from start to finish, with English manuals in hand.

The opening of the ceremony for Inviting sacred beings was held on November 16, 2022, and proceeded as prescribed, from the chanting of the sutras to meeting the three main officiating priests. The sutra reading, sermons on the precepts, and general instruction from the Platform Manager were done in English. Everything that was spoken in Japanese was translated into English. The Precept-Explaining Teachers were *Kokusai Fukuyoshi* Rev. Shohaku Okumura and Rev. Zenki Anderson who carefully explained the Sixteen Precepts. Due to many requests for online access to the sermons and Dharma talks from those who were unable to attend due to the

Corona Pandemic, Zoom streaming was provided for these events.

At the end of the first day, the rituals of “Veneration of the Myriad Buddhas of the Platform” and “Veneration of Buddhas and Ancestors” were performed, and the ordinands chanted “Homage to the Buddhas of the Three Times” as they made prostrations. After the events of the day were over, meetings and practices for the next day’s events continued until late at night in each section. Each morning, during the Preceptor’s Dharma talks, they spoke about the precepts, and the disciples listened attentively so as not to miss anything. The Dharma grandsons of the three Zen masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, Rev. Hakuyu Maezumi, and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, served as the Donor Seats at the memorial services that were held before the midday meal. At the midday meal, the students used *oryoki* and enjoyed vegetarian food prepared in the *Tenzo-ryo*.

A special lecture was given on the *Baika* style of chanting, and all the participants chanted the “Hymn in Praise of the Three Treasures” to welcome the officiating priests as they entered the dharma hall. During the afternoon tea time, the priests and the ordinands had a chance to interact with each other and deepen their friendship in a friendly atmosphere in the warm Los Angeles sunshine.

In the Repentance Hall (*Sange Dojo*) part of the *Jukai-e*, following the repentance of one’s sins and the burning of the confession book, the participating priests chanted “Homage to Great Compassionate Avalokiteshvara (Namu Mahavairocana)” and there were some ordinands who

were moved to tears. In the Precept Giving Place proper (*Shoju Dojo*), after ascending the platform, a *Kechimyaku* lineage certificate was given to each ordinand by the Precept Teacher. At the end of the ceremony, the disciples filed out of the Dharma Hall to the applause of the participating members and shouts of “Congratulations!”

At the completion of the ceremony, about thirty participating priests and lay disciples asked questions, and the Precept Teacher answered each one of them. After a commemorative photo session, the five-day Commemorative Precept Giving Ceremony was successfully concluded with Rev. Tenyu Fukagawa, Director of the Department of Education and Dissemination at Sotoshu Headquarters in Tokyo, leading the “Celebration Prayer Ceremony for the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism in North America” in which the opening and fanning of the Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra (*Tendoku Daihannya*) was held. Altogether, there were ninety ordinands, seventy-seven participating priests, and many Zenshuji temple parishioners in attendance.



### Commemoration Ceremony

The Commemoration Ceremony marking the 100th anniversary was originally scheduled to be

held in conjunction with the Jukai-e, but was postponed due to the effects of the new coronavirus pandemic. The ceremony was attended by fifty Zen priests from the U.S., about sixty people from Japan, including several members of the Sotoshu Assembly and tour participants, as well as eight young Japanese Zen priests who helped in the preparation of the ceremony. In addition, many parishioners and members of Zen temples and Zen centers in the area attended the ceremony.

In addition, the “Preliminary Memorial Ceremony for the 700th Anniversary of Daihonzan Sojiji’s Founder, Keizan Jokin Zenji,” was also held at this time.

On May 27, the Unveiling Ceremony of the Memorial Stone Monument in Zenshuji was led by the former abbot of Kotakuji Temple in Nagano Prefecture, Rev. Ryugen Ogasawara. This monument is one of the projects to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Zenshuji Temple, and is inscribed with the names of 54 successive *Kokusai Fukyoshi* of Zenshuji Temple. It is hoped that this monument will provide an opportunity for many people to come into contact with the history of Zenshuji.

Following that event, the “Preliminary Memorial Ceremony for the 700th Anniversary of Daihonzan Sojiji’s Founder, Keizan Jokin Zenji,” was held with Rev. Hattori Shusei, President of the Sotoshu Headquarters in Tokyo, serving as officiant. Before the memorial service, Rev. Bunryu Oyama, the Rector (*Ino*) of Sojiji Temple, gave a memorial lecture in English on Keizan Zenji. Those in attendance were able to



experience once again the teachings of Keizan Zenji, who founded Sojiji Temple and who contributed greatly to the spread of Soto Zen today.

In the evening, a commemorative banquet was held with approximately 400 participants. After congratulatory speeches by Sotoshu Head Priest, Ishizuki Shuko Zenji, the President of the Sotoshu Headquarters, Rev. Shusei Hattori, and the Director of Eihei-ji, Rev. Shodo Kobayashi, the banquet was opened with a toast by members of Zenshu-ji. A slideshow summarizing the 100-year history of Zenshu-ji was shown during the banquet, and a performance by the Zenshu-ji Temple's Taiko drum group, Zendekko, added to the festivities.

On May 28th, the next day, the Service for the Deceased Soto Zen Priests who served in North America was officiated by Rev. Tenyu Fukagawa, Director of the Department of Education and Dissemination at Sotoshu Headquarters, in memory of the numerous deceased Zen priests who had been involved in international missionary work in North America.

Next, there was a Sutra Chanting for the Founder and Former Abbots of Zenshu-ji which was officiated by Rev. Shodo Kobayashi, Director of Daihonzan Eihei-ji Temple. This service was held in memory of the founder of Zenshu-ji, Rev. Hosen Isobe, and other successive international missionaries.

The Head Priest of the Sotoshu, Ishizuki Shuko Zenji, officiated the Ceremony Commemorating the 100th Anniversary. As befitting the 100th anniversary of the international teaching of Soto

Zen Buddhism in North America, the ceremony was performed in a solemn manner with the presence of priests from Japan, Hawaii, South America, and Europe, as well as North America.

After the ceremony, Head Priest Ishizuki Zenji presented certificates of commendation to *Kokusai Fukyoshi* who have made great contributions to the development of international teaching work over the years as North American priests. Certificates of appreciation were also given to those members of Zenshu-ji who have given distinguished service through their dedication to the prosperity of the temple. In addition, a Rakusu was presented to each of the *Kokusai Fukyoshi* to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the temple.

In his Dharma message, Ishizuki Zenji said:

“Dedication to teaching the Dharma for more than 100 years,  
Holding fast to the Mind of the Way through the difficult challenges,  
The fragrance of the commemorative mind of early summer and  
The light of virtue spread everywhere over the Soto Zen gate.”

“It is one hundred years since this splendid Zenshu-ji temple, the representative temple of the Two Head Temples in Japan, was established. It is a great honor to be able to touch so many believers and seekers of the truly transmitted Buddhadharma and *Zazen*. From now on, I would like to continue to make every effort to reward all of you for your past efforts over the next 100 years, 200 years, and 300 years, and I

would like all of you to do your best to calm your minds and do zazen, following the teachings of *Shikantaza* (Just sitting) and *Soku-shin-ze-butsu* (Mind itself is Buddha), so that you may encounter the mind of Buddha. Please strive to have this conviction so that you may encounter the mind of Buddha.” He ended his remarks by asking that everyone come to Japan next year to offer incense at the Ceremony for the 700th Anniversary of Daihonzan Sojiji’s Founder, Keizan Jokin Zenji that will be held at Sojiji.



The ceremonial events concluded with a Food Offering Ceremony for the Congregations of Zenshuji and All Temples and Zen Centers in North America, officiated by Rev. Konjin Godwin, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center. The names of deceased Zen Buddhists and those associated with the Zen Center and temples in North America were written on colorful paper cranes called “Zenbatsu” that decorated the ceiling of the main hall. Participants offered incense, joined hands, and prayed for the peace of the deceased.

A commemorative group photo was taken in front of the main building of Zenshuji, and a lunch was served in the social hall of the temple.



### In Closing

Even though these various ceremonies were done with the hope that “North American priests will make these ceremonies happen,” I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Japanese priests and the Directors of Soto Zen Offices in Hawaii, South America, and Europe for their cooperation in numerous ways, which enabled us to successfully carry out the celebrations.

Over the past 100 years, the international teaching activities work of Soto Zen has grown through the stormy seas of history. It is thanks to the faith of successive generations of international teachers and *Kokusai Fukyoshi*, the faith of the various temple parishioners, as well as the love for the Dharma of people from Japan and all over the world that this has been possible.



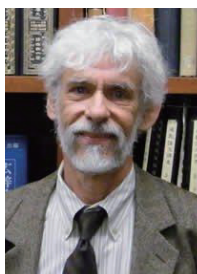
We are endlessly grateful to our predecessors. As Zenshuji Temple became the origin of Soto Zen in North America, Zen then spread across the land of North America with the principles of *Shikantaza* (Just sitting) and “Mind itself in Buddha” (*Sokushin-ze-Butsu*), “Zen and the precepts are one” (*Zenkai ichinyo*), and “Practice and Enlightenment are not two” (*Shusho-Funi*).

I would like to make this report on these events in the hope that the spirit of Soto Zen in North America will be further spread by the guidance of American Zen teachers over the next 100 years.



*Memorial Celebrations For The 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism Teaching Activities in North America  
And Founding of Zenshuji Soto Mission  
May 28, 2023*

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## On the Publication of The SōtōZen Text Project's *Shōbōgenzō*

Carl Bielefeldt

As the editor of the new Sōtōshū Shumuchō English translation of the *Shōbōgenzō*, I have been asked to say a few words about the publication. First, I shall say something about the Soto Zen Text Project, the team responsible for the translation; then, I will describe some distinctive features of this new version of the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*. Since many of our visitors from Japan in the audience today are not necessarily at home with English, rather than speaking informally from notes, I have typed out my remarks for translation into Japanese and, therefore, will need to stick more or less closely to a reading of what I typed. If you are like me, you will probably find such a reading rather tedious; so, I have tried to keep my remarks fairly short. I think they will take me about half an hour, after which we can open the floor for questions and discussion.

The initial impetus for a Sōtōshū translation of the *Shōbōgenzō* came from repeated requests by the Sōtō Zen overseas ministers, who had long wanted English versions of the major texts of the school for use in teaching. Eventually, in 1995, Rev. Yamamoto Kenzen, head of the then newly-established International Department of the Shūmichō, called a meeting in Tokyo to begin discussing a translation project. Following this meeting, in 1997, the International Department

founded an initiative to plan and carry out the translation work. The initiative received the Japanese title “Sōtōshū Shūten Kyōten Honyaku Jigyō 曹洞宗宗典・經典翻譯事業” (meaning roughly, “Project for the Translation of the Normative Texts and Scriptures of the Sōtō School”). This rather cumbersome title was shortened in English to the slightly more stylish “Sōtō Zen Text Project,” often further abbreviated to “SZTP” (though, for Americans, this acronym unfortunately reminds them of a popular fuel additive). The Project had a Board of Editors, initially chaired by the late Prof. Nara Yasuaki, of Komazawa University, and most recently by Prof. Ishii Seizan, also of Komazawa; and a team of four translators: myself and Prof. Griffith Foulk, of Sarah Lawrence College, serving as the editors-in-chief; Prof. William Bodiford, of UCLA, and the late Prof. Stanley Weinstein, of Yale. The team also included Dr. Urs App, who served as technical consultant, and was subsequently joined by Drs. Sarah Horton and the late John McRae.

As its name indicates, the Sōtō Zen Text Project was established to translate, not only the *Shōbōgenzō*, but other texts used in the Sōtō School. Indeed, the initial list proposed by the International Department was quite ambitious: it included the major writings of Dōgen and Keizan, of course, but also the the *Sōtōshū gyōji kihan* 行持軌範, the manual of Sōtō ritual practice, and the *Nikka gongyō seiten* 日課勤行聖典, the Sōtōshū “missal,” so to speak, or handbook of liturgical texts, including the Chinese texts in that handbook, such as the *Cantongqi* (or *Sandōkai* 參同契) and *Zhendaoge* (or *Shōdōka* 證道歌), as well as Indian scriptures



used in chanting, such as the *Heart Sūtra* and passages of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Thus, the early work of the Project was focused, not only — or even primarily — on the *Shōbōgenzō*, but on translations of the liturgical and ritual texts: the *Nikka gongyō seiten*, published in 2001 under the title *Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice*; and the *Gyōji kihan*, published as *Standard Observances of the Soto Zen School* in 2010. We then moved on to a translation of Keizan's major work, the *Denkōroku* 傳光錄, published as *Record of the Transmission of Illumination*, in two volumes, edited by Prof. Foulk, which initially appeared from the Shūmichō in 2017, with a revised edition from the University of Hawaii Press in 2021.

During this time, of course, we continued to work away on a translation of Dōgen's *magnum opus*, which has now finally been published by the Shūmichō in eight volumes under the title *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*. As I understand it, this publication is intended for distribution in Japan, with limited distribution to selected Sotoshu organizations abroad. (If you have questions about its availability, please address them to representatives of the Shumuchō, who are present with us today.) In any case, like the Project's *Denkōroku* translation, this *Shōbōgenzō* translation will likely also be reissued, perhaps as soon as this year, by the University of Hawaii Press, which is now in the process of negotiating a contract with the Sōtōshū. It seems that this will be the final publication of the Sōtō Zen Text Project, since we have recently been informed that the Sōtōshū

has terminated the Project.

That is as much as I will say by way of introduction to the Sōtō Zen Text Project. If you have questions about the project, we can talk more about it later. Let me turn now to the translation itself.



When I first started studying Sōtō Zen under Suzuki Shunryū 鈴木 俊隆 in the 1960's, although of course he often talked about the *Shōbōgenzō*, the only English-language access his students had to that work was the few selected chapters translated in an obscure book entitled *The Soto Approach to Zen*, published in Japan in 1958 by Prof. Masunaga Reihō 増永靈鳳 of Komazawa University. Today, of course, the student of Sōtō Zen has access to many English versions of the *Shōbōgenzō*, not only to selected chapters but to several more or less complete translations of the entire work — from the early publication of Nishiyama Kōsen 西山廣宣 (with John Stevens, 1975), through the versions of Nishijima Gudō 西嶋愚道 (with Chōdo Cross, 1994), and of Hubert Nearman, of Shasta Abbey (1996), to the recent translation by Kaz Tanahashi 棚橋一晃 (2010).



Why, then, yet another translation? In a narrow sense, the answer in this case is first of all institutional. While the demand of Sōtō teachers for English versions of the school's major texts might well have been met by the existing translations, the Sōtō organization seems to have wanted to have official versions, to match the authorized Japanese-language editions of Keizan's *Denkōroku* and Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, recently published by the Shūmichō. The institutional desire for such an official translation is perhaps understandable, but I doubt that there are many in the International Department of the Shūmichō who actually expect us to stop reading other translations of the *Shōbōgenzō* and adopt the authorized version as our bible.

Of course, we will not and should not do that. And this is a broader, intellectual reason for another translation: a work as interesting and obscure as the *Shobogenzo* can never have too many translations, each one capturing some feature of, or approach to, the text missed by the others. Think, for example, of the *Daodejing*: There seems to be no consensus on the number of times it has been translated, but the estimates tend to be in the hundreds. The *Shōbōgenzō* might not be quite as obscure as Laozi's famous Daoist classic, but any translator looking for a challenge cannot help but be tempted by Dōgen's striking turns of phrase and startling leaps of logic; and any reader, bewildered by these same qualities of Dōgen's prose cannot help but welcome additional English renderings of his of Japanese. Let us hope that many others in the future will take up this challenge and give us a steady stream of new versions of this fascinating book.

But what of the present new version? How does it fit into our expanding set of English translations? In what ways might it differ from what we have already? Here, I can think of at least four characteristics of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation that tend to set it apart from what we have already: the people who did it; the source text we used to do it; the apparatus we added to it; and the audience we imagined for it. Let me say something about each of these four in turn.

The first unusual feature of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation is the makeup of the team that produced it. It is probably safe to say that all the members of the team were, if not card-carrying Sōtō members, at least Buddhist sympathizers, who undertook the task of translation, not only as an intellectual challenge, but also as a contribution to the English-language Buddha dharma. Thus, we came to the *Shōbōgenzō*, not only as a challenging old Japanese book but as sacred Buddhist scripture. But we were all academics, more at home in the library than in the meditation hall and well aware — at least in our more lucid moments — that our strengths lay in philological rather than spiritual training. This character of the translation team sets it apart from the translators mentioned above, all of whom came to their work deeply steeped in Sōtō Zen training. The difference naturally affects our approach to the Japanese text and the resulting English version — a point that should be obvious in what follows here.

A second element that sets this new translation apart from previous versions is its unique source text. As those of you familiar with the

*Shōbōgenzō* are aware, the exact referent of this famous title, “Treasury of the True Dharma Eye,” is not easily defined. There are, first of all, two distinct works of this title authored by Dōgen: one, often referred to as the “*Shōbōgenzō* in Chinese Script” (or *Shinji Shōbōgenzō* 眞字正法眼藏); the other, sometimes called the “*Shōbōgenzō* in Japanese Script” (Keji *Shōbōgenzō* 假字正法眼藏). The former, popularly known as the “*Shōbōgenzō* in Three Hundred Cases” (*Shōbōgenzō sanbyakusoku* 正法眼藏三百則), represents a collection of some three hundred kōans, taken more or less verbatim from the Chinese Chan literature; the latter represents a collection of essays in Japanese commenting on these and a wide range of other topics. It is, of course, this latter, Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* that is the work we have translated.

I say, “the work we have translated,” but in fact the Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* has come down to us as several works. Dōgen himself, at the time of his death, seems to have left us with two separate collections of *Shōbōgenzō* essays: one in seventy-five chapters, and another in twelve chapters. Then, in the centuries following his death, these and several other Japanese texts by Dōgen were variously collected and edited to form new redactions, in twenty-eight, sixty, eighty-four, eighty-nine chapters, and so on. Eventually, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Eihei-ji, one of the head monasteries, or *honzan* 本山, of the Sōtō school, published a version of the *Shōbōgenzō* in ninety-five chapters that became what we might call the “Vulgate” edition — i.e., the text taken as normative by the Sōtō School and popularly recognized as Dōgen’s

*Shōbōgenzō*. It was widely disseminated throughout the twentieth century and is still the best-known version of the work. Newly revised editions of this version have recently been produced by both Eihei-ji and the Sōtōshū Shūmichō.

This ninety-five-chapter *Shōbōgenzō* has been the Japanese basis for the several complete translations that have so far appeared in English; but it is not the source text of the Sōtō Zen Text Project’s English. Instead, we have used a version, edited by Prof. Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道, appearing in volumes 1 and 2 of the *Complete Works of Zen Master Dōgen* (*Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集, published by Shunjūsha in 1991-93). Unlike the Honzan edition, which combines disparate manuscripts into a single new work in ninety-five chapters, the Shunjūsha edition relies on single medieval manuscript copies of Dōgen’s original seventy-five-chapter and twelve-chapter redactions (the Ryūmon-ji 龍門寺 and Yōkō-ji 永光寺 MSS, respectively). To these two collections, the Shunjūsha edition then adds two separate sections, providing the other, miscellaneous texts historically associated with the development of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

Mirroring this Japanese edition, then, the seven volumes of our English version are broken into four sections: the seventy-five-chapter compilation (Volumes I-V); the twelve-chapter compilation (Volume VI); and a separate Volume VII containing nine supplementary chapters included in the Honzan edition, as well as variant versions of seven chapters. In this, there is both good news and bad news for readers of the Sōtō Zen Text

Project translation: the good news (at least for those who care about such things) is that they will be reading an English version of the *Shōbōgenzō* thought by scholars to be closer to the work as it existed at the time of its author's death; the bad news is that they will be reading a version of the *Shōbōgenzō* different from the one that has made the book famous in modern times, that has been studied and commented on by Sōtō teachers for the past two hundred years, and that differs, not only in the ordering of its chapters, but not infrequently in its content from what has previously been translated into English. The differences are not so great that they need seriously affect our understanding of Dōgen's teachings, but they do make it awkward to compare our various English versions (as I know some of you like to do) and decide which to take as normative.

These details of the textual history of the *Shōbōgenzō* bring me to a third feature of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation that sets it apart from previous renderings of the work: the accompanying apparatus. As I have just described, the translation extends over seven volumes, of varying length but averaging roughly 350 pages per volume — roughly 2500 pages in total. Why so long? In fact, the seven volumes contain, not only an English rendering of the Japanese text, but an edition of that text itself, based on Kawamura's edition (with adjustments in the treatment of the Chinese glyphs). Following a format used in the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation of Keizan's *Denkōroku*, typically each page is divided into three registers: the Japanese passage, its rendering into English, and the footnotes to the English.

Often these footnotes actually dominate the page; and, indeed, their length and complexity sometimes became such that they could not be accommodated as footnotes; hence, we decided to create a separate batch of supplementary notes, in which we could incorporate the original texts and translations of many of Dōgen's sources in the Chinese canon. This material, compiled by Prof. Foulk, became almost a book in itself, occupying almost 250 pages of Volume VIII, the first half of which is devoted to a lengthy essay, by Prof. Bodiford, on the *Shōbōgenzō* and its author. Here, the reader will find a detailed account of the latest scholarly opinion on the composition and subsequent development of the *Shōbōgenzō* in its various redactions, as well as an extended study of its author's biography.

Let us be realistic. For many readers of the *Shōbōgenzō*, this kind of elaborate scholarly apparatus will be nothing but a distraction from the spiritual message of Dōgen's teachings; and this fact brings me to my final feature that sets the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation apart from previous English versions: the audience imagined for the work. Who reads the *Shōbōgenzō*? Virtually unknown outside of Japan during the "Zen boom" of the 1960's, it is by now probably fair to say that it is widely regarded as one of the great works of the Buddhist tradition, perhaps even one of the great religious classics, on a par, say with the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. Who reads translations of great religious classics? According to Amazon, the five-volume Dominican translation of St. Thomas's classic ranks around 80,000th in sales. Kaz Tanahashi's *Shōbōgenzō* lags quite a bit behind, at 213,000th; Nishijima's translation (which, of course, has

been out longer) does better, at around 190,000th for the first volume (though it falls to 350,000th by the fourth volume — a clear marker of the fatigue factor familiar to every reader of Dōgen’s classic).

My point is that, however famous it may be as a classic of religious literature, the audience for a complete translation of a book like the *Shōbōgenzō* will be limited. Although they have been watching me working on such a translation for a quarter century now, my wife and son will not read it, my friends will not read it, my colleagues at Stanford will not read it (though the university library will perforce purchase a copy). I suspect that most of those who might read it will be more or less like people in this room — people involved with Zen as teachers, students, or simply sympathizers, who seek to understand the message of Dōgen’s Zen and incorporate it into their own religious lives. As I mentioned earlier, prior translations of the *Shōbōgenzō* have typically been done by such people and have quite rightly aimed first of all to convey to such readers the translator’s understanding of Dōgen’s religious message. For such translation, the foreign form in which that message was delivered to its author’s own thirteenth-century Japanese audience represents less a feature of Dōgen’s Zen message than an obstacle to its communication, an obstacle to be overcome by the craft of the translator in rendering it into a readily intelligible English idiom — in effect, what Dōgen would have said had he been a native speaker of English.

But we had a slightly different audience in mind for our translation: an audience of those

who wish to study the *Shōbōgenzō* for its own sake, so to speak, as an historical document, as an example of thirteenth-century Japanese prose, as the writing of a brilliant, highly original Japanese Zen monk steeped in the Buddhist language and literature of his day, as the record of how the Japanese Zen monk Dōgen taught Zen to his students. We had in mind an audience of scholars of Zen, scholars of Japanese Buddhism, of medieval Japanese history and classical Japanese language; as well as a subset of those interested in Dōgen’s Zen for religious reasons: aspiring Sōtō translators of the *Shōbōgenzō*, who might use our translation as a reference and an example, both of what to do and what not to do; desperate Sōtō teachers who may need to prepare lectures and answer questions on the *Shōbōgenzō*, whether or not they know much about it; earnest Sōtō students, of a type seemingly found in every sangha, who seem to prefer studying the *Shōbōgenzō* to studying themselves.

For such an audience, the linguistic form of the *Shōbōgenzō* is not an obstacle to be overcome but at least as much the object of interest as its intellectual content; and, for such an audience, a smoothed-out English paraphrase of what Dōgen was trying to say is likely less helpful than a clunky literal translation of what he did say in the way that he said it — even when the resulting English is ugly, often seemingly as foreign as the original Japanese, even at times barely intelligible. Such is the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation — less an elegant English rendering of Dōgen’s Japanese language than a reference tool for the study that language — its striking syntax and diction; its frustrating obscuri-

ties, ambiguities, and equivocations; its obscure literary allusions, outrageous word play, and so on.

Practically speaking, creating such a reference meant two things for us as translators: first, the adoption of a translation style that seeks, as much as is linguistically realistic, to mimic Dōgen's writing in its word choice and sentence structure; second, the production of the elaborate apparatus mentioned above, in order to inform the reader of what is going on "behind" the translations — not only the usual notes on technical terminology, references to personal and place names, and to the sources of Dogen's many quotations, but also information on what is present in Dōgen's Japanese (either explicitly or implicitly) that is missing or obscured in the English, and also what is present in the English that is missing or obscure in the Japanese — what the translator has added or clarified out of linguistic necessity or interpretive preference.

But what about the rest of our readers, those interested less in Dōgen's writing for its own sake than in what it can tell us about Zen, about ourselves and our world. In fact, what we might call the "linguistically hypersensitive" style of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation will doubtless be a challenge to such readers, probably not the version of the *Shōbōgenzō* that they will want to keep on their bedstand for late night entertainment or inspiration. The reading of this version of the *Shōbōgenzō* will no doubt often seem less a pleasure than a chore, a task perhaps less like reading than cryptography — in effect the breaking of Dogen's code and the retranslation of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation into natural,

readable English. To be sure, because of the difficulty of Dogen's way of thinking and expressing himself, this sense of reading the *Shōbōgenzō* as "decoding" Dogen is something we are likely to feel in working through any reasonably faithful translation of the book; but it gets exacerbated to the extent that the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation tries to reproduce not only his way of thinking but the style in which he expresses himself.

Yet perhaps there is still hope here for readers looking for a spiritual message in the *Shōbōgenzō* — a message embedded in the medium itself. After all, easy bedstand reading may not be the best way to study the Buddha dharma or to study ourselves, and religious texts that do not challenge us may also not have the power to change us. If it may often prove painful to read, perhaps the overly literal style of the Sōtō Zen Text Project translation can itself be a challenge to the reader's search for the message of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Perhaps faced with 2500 pages of more-or-less raw renderings of Dōgen's highly idiosyncratic prose and the elaborate apparatus needed to unpack it, readers will be challenged to ask, "What is it all for?" Was there really no easier way to say what Dōgen wanted to say? Was this simply Dōgen's style as an author? Was he just showing off or playing around with words? Or is there some message Dōgen sought to convey by the medium of such prose? And, if there is a message in the medium, is it a message relevant only to Dōgen's time and place and monastic community of professional religious? Or is it also a more universal message about language and its role in our study of the Buddha dharma and our study of ourselves.



Back in the 1960's, when, as a graduate student, I first started translating the “Mountains and Rivers Sutra” (*Sansuikyō*) chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*, some of my fellow practitioners at the San Francisco Zen Center suggested that I might be wasting my time — time better spent on the meditation cushion. Why fool around with words? What is it all for? It is a question I still have all these years and more than a million words later.

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## Commemoration for 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen in North America Symposium Panelists' Speeches

**Professor Seijun Ishii**  
Komazawa University

Good morning. It is really nice to be here and to meet you all. I'm Seijun Ishi from Komazawa University. My role in this project has been to check all the interpretations. It has been very interesting work and I realized some characteristics of the interpretations in the text. I'd like to point out three characteristics now. Several of my points were presented by Carl Bielefeldt today, and I wondered whether I might have to change my talk. But I will present my prepared papers. I will make three points.

The first point is that this *Shobogenzo* has been translated by a team. All the translations of each fascicle have been checked by other translators on the team. I believe this practice has provided a balanced interpretation. Many Buddhist commentaries in ancient times represented

the personal bias of the translator. This was because all the thought at the time was already biased. The earlier *Shobogenzo* translations and all the commentaries are biased as well. This Soto Zen Text Project excluded personal bias because of the team translation.

The second point. In this translation, the Kanji or Chinese characters are basically translated to reveal their own original meanings. Professor Carl referred to this in his talk as “the linguistically hypersensitive style”. This style has challenges and difficulties. It is difficult to understand the meanings of the terms. Professor Carl calls the translation style “Ugly English”, but in this way the sense that Zen terms frequently have dual meanings or triple meanings in one word is preserved. Also, Dogen-zenji sometimes provided a brand-new meaning for the Kanji. If a translator chose only one of the possible meanings, it would fix, or cement that meaning. I think the translation team tried to be clear about their choices of meanings.

And the third point, substantial notes are provided with the translations. The complexity of Zen terms can often confuse readers. The footnotes provided in this translation explain such complex meanings in detail. We, the readers, can explore the notes and find the proper meanings from the notes. Those then, are my three points. The late professor Nara Yasuaki, who was the first chair of this project, told me that *Shobogenzo* interpretation should adhere to Dogen-zenji's original concepts. Dogen's sentences might read differently, in accord with the reader's stage of Zen. I believe this new translation work surely embodies Dogen-zenji's original concepts. Thank you.

## Hojin Kimmel

New York Zen Monastery

Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Carl, and thank you to the many translators who have brought the words of Dogen to English-speaking students of the Dharma here in America.

I feel like Dogen was in my monastic baby bottle; our sangha was nurtured with Dogen. My late teacher, Rev. John Daido Looi, loved Dogen's teaching. When he arrived in Mount Tremper, New York in the late 1970s, looking for a place to start a practice community, he went to a small cafe in a nearby town and picked up a local newspaper called the Woodstock Times. The banner across the top of the page read "These Mountains and Rivers of the present are the actualization of the word of Ancient Buddhas." Shocked to encounter the opening sentence of Carl Bielefeldt's translation of the Mountains and Rivers Sutra in a small local paper, he immediately set out in search of the editor. As Daido used to tell the story, he burst into the editor's office panting for breath and demanded "Who put the Mountains and Rivers Sutra into the Woodstock Times? Who knows about Dogen?" "Doesn't everybody know about Dogen?" the editor calmly replied. Daido took this as an affirmation that he was in the right place to found the community he had envisioned, which he named the Mountains and Rivers Order (MRO) in tribute to his favorite Dogen fascicle. It was a teaching that he returned to again and again.

Rev. Daido trained with Rev. Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi at the Zen Center of Los Angeles and received dharma transmission from him. Working with his passion for the arts (he was an avid photographer for most of his life) and a com-

mentary by Rev. Maezumi, Daido created a "visual koan" translation of *Genjokoan*. Later, he brought this practice of working with Visual Koans to his students; we took it up every Ango training period as part of our *Shobogenzo* study. To this day, the MRO places special emphasis on creative expression as a gateway to spiritual practice and realization. As someone with a background in the fine arts prior to monastic training, it has also been one of the primary teaching methods I use with students. It has been part of the Zen lineage for centuries and was passed on by my teacher.

What's so amazing about creative expression and Dharma study can be summed up in the word "grappling." The Dharma is not easy to understand; it unsettles us. And it is precisely grappling with that which unsettles us—in both zazen and the arts—that generates the energy necessary to penetrate appearances and find the essential. Dogen speaks of 84,000 doorways to grapple with and study ourselves, turning us like a diamond to see many facets, never to rest in a place of knowing.

I love Carl's observation that Dogen's teachings in *Shobogenzo* can be read and appreciated as great literature. Ezra Pound once said that "literature is news that stays news." I think Dogen's teaching is "news that stays news." Similarly, some of the earliest of the world's great literature is found in the *Therigatha*, the poems of the elder women practitioners from the time of the Buddha. In Southeast Asia their poems are called "crooked speech." As readers, our task is to discern from the details of the poems what these women are trying to say that they are not saying. I have a similar experience in grappling with Dogen's writing in *Shobogenzo*

what is Dogen trying to say that is not written?

In the Zen tradition, we have all this incredible literature. Yet Zen is said to be outside the scriptures, with no reliance on words, a direct pointing to our heart/mind. How does direct pointing come alive? To grapple with this question seems to be the work of a student of the Dharma: how to be this unbalanced person in an unbalanced world, and yet to develop for the benefit of all beings. Thank you.

### **Koun Franz**

Thousand Harbours Zen (Nova Scotia, Canada)

Good morning. I am not a scholar of Buddhism, nor am I a scholar of Dogen, nor did I contribute in any way to this project. And so, when I was invited to be here, I spent some time thinking, why would I be sitting at this table? What I kept coming back to was my reality, which is the reality for so many people in this room. While I'm not a scholar, I am in fact a translator of Dogen because I work with communities who read these texts. Often, I'm reading these texts with people who are saying, "Make sense of this for me." And I accept that role. I sit there and I say, "Well, maybe it was this, or maybe he meant this." And sometimes, if I'm not careful, I fall into language like "What Dogen meant was this," when in fact I don't know. So, I thought I would just take a moment today to be transparent, maybe even confessional, about how I relate to these kinds of translations in my own teaching.

I'm speaking from my own experience, but I've also spoken with many people in this room, and I know that I'm not completely alone, at least not all of the time, in what I'm about to describe, which is the process of taking up a text

that I want to share.

First of all, I choose these texts because they resonate with me. Some do, some don't. But some I read and I feel, I kind of get something about this, so maybe this is something I can share. And then I start reading various translations, and I usually settle on one that I like best. And why do I like it best? Well, if I'm honest about it, I probably like it because it uses language that I agree with. It's a reflection of me. So, I can think to myself, well, here, when I read this passage, I really agree with Dogen. Which is really a nice way of saying, "I think Dogen agrees with me about this point." Right? And from there, I can start to feel very comfortable. There are some texts that I've taught many, many times; while I may do a lot of research the first time, the second time there will be less, and the third time there will be less, because now I've found a translation that I really like and I have a way of speaking to that translation. I have a way of translating that translation that is kind of polished and feels pretty good. And at some point, I can lose that thread, if I'm not careful, of what Dogen was saying and what I'm saying. It all becomes a blur, right?

So, I feel very excited, as an ordinary person put in that strange position, when I look through this new translation—I had the opportunity to flip through *Shobogenzo* last night. I remember when some of these fascicles were online, the experience of seeing these texts new—not just new, but with all the footnotes—realizing that these footnotes are here essentially to challenge my argument for why I would like this translation better or this translation better. They undermine my experience of Dogen in a way that is unsettling. A translation like this, of this scope

and of this depth, of course has the function of illuminating, but I think in equal measure, it has the function of frustrating us as the ones who are tasked with translating it one more time. I just want to take this opportunity to state my resolve to dive into these with an open mind, with a beginner's mind, and to take up these texts as if I've never seen them before. I also want to express my gratitude to everyone who did this incredible work, bringing to us something that some of us may think we know in a form that we don't know. Thank you.

**Shinshu Roberts**

Ocean Gate Zen Center (Santa Cruz, U.S.A)

Thank you very much. I am totally jazzed about this translation. Thank you, Carl, and everyone else who has been involved in this project. At the end of Carl's remarks, he asked the question: "Why do we want to read the *Shobogenzo*?" I would like to respond to this question.

I read the *Shobogenzo* because Dogen's vision of how the world functions, and the importance of bodhisattva practice is a many-faceted diamond. I believe that for Dogen all of reality can be viewed from different angles. And each face of the diamond is part of a larger whole called reality itself. Dogen had an altruistic vision. This vision is a unified theory of reality's functioning through the self of each and every being's activity. So, of course this includes us. Dogen's work is aimed at us as human beings and as Buddhas. His vision of our place in the mandala of a Buddha's life and practice is optimistic and encouraging. It is inspiring and occasionally opens our minds and hearts to such an extent that we share his all-encompassing

vision, and we act accordingly.

I find that many of his teachings are about the "how" of awakening. And they are from a very practical point of view, but in order to share his vision we have to be willing to engage the Buddha Dharma from his perspective, through his eyes, without overlaying our own preconceived ideas. Consequently, the difficulty of Dogen's language helps to free us from those preconceptions and significantly expand our perception of the world. The style of Dogen's expression of practice -- because he is talking about practice, not about a philosophy of religion, forces us beyond our comfort zone. We become transformed, and perhaps awakened through the difficulty of his teaching. This is the intimacy of our relationship with him through his writing.

I find this to be true not only for myself but also for my students as we study the *Shobogenzo*. For this reason, I deeply appreciate what Carl said in his opening remarks: this translation tries to reproduce not only Dogen's way of thinking but the style in which he expressed himself. I think this is exactly the kind of translation we as Soto Zen students need. Because what we need is not just imagining the path of practice but also to walk that path. If we have what Dogen actually wrote, as close as we can get it in English, in the style that he used, then that challenges us as well as clarifies for us, the meaning of his practice. How exciting to have a translation that speaks to us in the way that Dogen spoke himself. I think that's inspiring, and I want to walk that path with him as closely as I can.

Thank you.

## Kokyo Henkel

Green Gulch Farm, Soryuji (California, U.S.A)

Good morning. When I was a young Zen student at Tassajara Zen Center in the early 1990's, Professor Bielefeldt would come down every summer and talk to the students about Dogen and I always looked forward to that summer event. I really admire his wonderful book "Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation". It has been a real treasure for Dogen fans like myself. Also, Carl's well translated and annotated version of "*Shobogenzo Zazenshin*" has been kind of a standard version that we use at San Francisco Zen Center to study Zazen through Dogen's teaching. And then the Soto Zen Text Project began and these translations started getting released and are still being released month by month in the Dharma Eye newsletter – I always look forward to those new translations and especially the footnotes.

I myself am deeply moved by the *Shobogenzo* and, inspired by Rev. Okumura, I've been kind of stumbling along trying to offer *Genzo-e sesshins* over the last 15 years. I think I have gone through 30 or so *Shobogenzo* fascicles line by line. This really relies on good translations to understand and present and talk about the *Shobogenzo*. Because I have such a love of studying and teaching the *Shobogenzo*, this new project will form a major milestone in my own life. I think for many of us it will be a great treasure and a kind of definitive translation. I love that term "linguistically hypersensitive", and I think that's the kind of translation we need. We have more poetic versions, maybe easier to understand, but this will be closer to the original. And I especially look forward to volume 8, the whole last volume, with the appendices and supplementary notes.

The translation includes the source texts and original Chinese Zen stories for most of Dogen's references, which we often don't have access to, and the bilingual edition, with interspersed Japanese and English is a great offering also.

In Dogen's time, Zen had been happening in Japan for perhaps 50 years or less. The actual teachings of the Zen ancestors were not known at all in Japan, as I understand it, until around Dogen's time, and I've often wondered how that was for Dogen's students. There are so many subtle one-line references woven into Dogen's teaching, quoting old Zen stories. Dogen often doesn't mention their source. Sometimes of course he quotes a whole story but sometimes it's just a line from a story. I've often wondered how Dogen's students would have ever known what he was doing. I imagine that a lot of what Dogen was saying, or stories he was obliquely referring to, probably went right over the heads of his students. Maybe eventually some of them started learning the references. And how Dogen even knew all these references is amazing to me.

So now, Zen has been in the US for around the same time as Zen had been in Japan during Dogen's life. We now have translations of Dogen, but his unique style is still new to us – what his writings are based on, their root sources, and so on. It may be that we as students of Dogen in this country, through this new translation, will have more access to what Dogen is doing than Dogen's own students during his lifetime because they didn't have the annotated translation and all the source references.

I've been enjoying the translations as they've gradually come out in the Dharma Eye. Often when studying or teaching the *Shobogenzo* I look for Carl's or the Soto Zen Text Project's



translations as a kind of a go-to. But only a small percentage of them have been released so far. To have them all come out at once like this is like opening a great treasure store. Thank you so much to all the translators and the Soto Zen Text Project team for doing this. I am a little disappointed to hear that the project is now complete and there won't be any more texts, because of course the earlier translations of the SZTP, like the Denko Roku, are great treasures as well. I have already been using the Denko Roku translation a lot. At San Francisco Zen Center where we do a lot of the ceremonies, yet don't know Japanese, we use the SZTP translation of the *Sotoshu Gyoji-kihan* regularly to refine the way we do ceremonies, and to understand the

ceremonies. So, there could be a lot more translations! This is just an encouragement to maybe start a new Soto Zen text project. Maybe the Shumicho could work on some of the shorter Dogen essays like the *Fukanzazengi* and the *Gakudo Yojinshu*. To have bilingual annotated translations of some of these would be great. I know that the *Eihei-koroku* would take another 20 years but some of the shorter ones would be wonderful additions.

Again, thank you so much. I have many questions I'd love to ask the translators. For example, I think it would be great to hear, if it's possible, about the choice of the Shunjusha version over the vulgate version, and if Soto Shu in Japan is moving more towards the 75 fascicle Shunjusha version. Will that become a new standard in Japan or was the intention to translate that version simply to go back to Dogen's earliest words? I have many other questions and would love to talk with the translators at some point.





## The Life and Great Work of Keizan Zenji (2)

**Rev. Ryuken Yokoyama**  
Aichi Gakuin University

In this article, I would like to give an overview of the life of Keizan Zenji.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, Keizan Zenji left behind an autobiography and a diary<sup>2</sup>, so I will give a brief account based on these documents.<sup>3</sup>

### The Era in which Keizan Zenji Lived

According to the classification of the period of Japanese history, Keizan Zenji lived in the late Kamakura Period (1185-1333). During his childhood and adolescence, the Mongolian Empire attacked Japan twice, forcing the country to face the threat of invasion from a foreign country. In preparation for the third attack, Hojo Tokimune (1251-1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura shogunate, ordered temples and shrines in various parts of Japan to pray for the surrender of the Mongol Empire and mobilized Shinto and Buddhist priests in response to this national crisis.

After the Mongol invasion, the Hojo Tokuso family (Nine generations of Hojo family) began a despotic rule, but the more despotic it became, the stronger the opposition to the shogunate from the nobles and the imperial court grew. The more the government took on a tyrannical tone, the stronger the opposition to the shogunate grew among the courtiers and members of his family. The accumulation of such opposition eventually culminated in Emperor Godaigo's

plan to overthrow the shogunate (Shochu no Hen, 1324), and it was during this period that Keizan Zenji lived from his mature years to his later years.

### Birth and Childhood

His father's name was Ryokan Joza (date of birth and death unknown), and his mother's name was Ekan Daishi (1228-1314). These are both Dharma names. The secular lineage and surnames are unknown. She became pregnant at the age of thirty-seven and continued to worship a statue of the eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva<sup>4</sup> and to recite the "Kannon Sutra" daily so that her unborn child would become a saint. After seven months of this life, Keizan Zenji was born at the Kannon Hall in the village of Tane on the way to the birth center. Because he was born on the way to the birthplace, he was named "Gyosho" (possibly, "born while traveling.")

As a child, he lived with his grandmother as well as his parents. His grandmother was named Myochi Ubai (date of birth and death unknown), and was a lay disciple of Dogen Zenji (1200-1253). At an early age, Keizan Zenji ascended to Eihei Temple and entered a life of ascetic practice, which is thought to have been greatly facilitated by the advice of Myochi Ubai, who very much looked up to Dogen Zenji.

### Going to Eihei Temple

In 1271, at the age of eight, Keizan Zenji ascended to Eihei Temple, which had been founded by Dogen Zenji, and began his life as a novice monk under the guidance of the third abbot, Gikai Zenji (1219-1309).

In 1276, at the age of 13, he was permitted to become an official monk (*tokudo*). It is thought that he was given the name “Jokin” (his Buddhist monk’s name) at this time. Gikai Zenji had already gone into retirement, and the abbot of Eihei-ji at the time was Gien Zenji (? - 1314?) who was the fourth abbot of Eihei-ji. Thus, Keizan Zenji was ordained by Gien Zenji as his teacher. Four years later, in 1280, when Ejo Zenji (the second abbot of Eihei-ji) died, Keizan Zenji became a “matsugo shoshi” monk<sup>5</sup> at which time he once again underwent the rites of master and disciple.

Ejo Zenji, Gikai Zenji, and Gien Zenji, and Jakuen Zenji (1207? -1299), who will be mentioned later, were all direct students of Dogen Zenji. Even though Keizan Zenji did not have the opportunity to meet Dogen Zenji, he was able to learn from his direct disciples.

### **Travels to Various Places**

In 1282, at the age of 19, Keizan Zenji left Eihei-ji to visit Jakuen Zenji at Hokyō-ji Temple (Ono City, Fukui Prefecture). Under Jakuen Zenji, Keizan Zenji was appointed to the post of “*Ino*” (chief monk and disciplinarian), and it is known that he was held in very high esteem.

According to the autobiography of Keizan Zenji (in *Tokoku-ki*), at the age of 19 he entered into the state of “*Futai Teni*” (Unshakeable Religious Awakening), at the age of 22 he had the experience of “*Monsho Godo*” (“hearing a sound and awakening to the Way”), and at the age of 25, he made “*Guzeigan*” (a great vow of Compassion, a vow that he would himself attain Buddhahood after having saved all living beings). It can

be inferred from this that Keizan Zenji’s religious life in his youth was of a very high level.

### **Becomes Abbot of Jomanji Temple**

In 1291, at the age of 28, he became the abbot of Jomanji Temple (Kaifu-gun, Tokushima Prefecture). This was the first place where Keizan Zenji resided as a resident priest. The following year, he went to Eihei-ji Temple to receive the precepts of its fourth abbot, Gien Zenji (see the back cover of the book “*Busso Shoden Bodhisattva Precepts*”). The reason he asked to receive the precepts (*Denkai*) from Gien Zenji was that Gien Zenji had bestowed the Bodhisattva precepts upon him when he was ordained. He asked Gien Zenji to do this again so that he could be in a position to bestow the Bodhisattva precepts upon his own disciples.

After receiving the precepts from Gien Zenji, Keizan Zenji was able to take on new disciples. In the winter of 1292, he received his first five disciples at Jomanji Temple, including Tetsugyo Genka (? -1321) and continued to give the precepts to over 700 disciples and followers until the Genkyo period (1321-1323) \*from “*Sanmoku isso bun*”.

### **Succeeded to the Dharma of Gikai Zenji**

In 1293, while Keizan Zenji was engaged in teaching activities at Jomanji Temple, Gikai Zenji left Eihei-ji and entered Daijō-ji Temple (now in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture). From around 1295, Keizan Zenji began to visit Gikai Zenji at Daijō-ji, and finally succeeded to the Dharma from Gikai Zenji on January 14, 1296. As a sign of his succession, he was given the robe of Dogen Zenji.<sup>6</sup> Hereby, Keizan Zenji became the



official successor of Dogen Zenji, the “fifty-fourth generation following Shakyamuni Buddha” (the fifty-fourth generation of priests to have received the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha). He was 32 years old and Gikai Zenji was 77 years old.

For Keizan Zenji, it was not only Gikai Zenji (his original master), whose Dharma he succeeded, but also that of Ejo Zenji, who had served as his teacher, and Gien Zenji, who had also been his teacher and preceptor. Indeed, Dogen Zenji’s direct disciples were the cradle that nurtured Keizan Zenji.

The question and answer that led to the approval of his Dharma inheritance from Gikai Zenji is as follows.

One day, when Keizan Zenji saw the following words in the Lotus Sutra, “With the eyes as they were received from one’s parents, one sees the whole universe,” he suddenly became enlightened and said, “An old man (the original self) is transformed and appears in everything (reality).” At that time, Gikai Zenji heard these words and said, “If you have realized it like that, then that is the most important thing about the Soto sect (the teachings of Dogen Zenji).”  
*“Shobogenzo Bussho Gosoku”*

When Keizan Zenji saw this sentence in the “The Blessings of the Dharma Teacher” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he suddenly became enlightened and said without thinking, “An old man (the original self, which transcends reality) is transformed and appears through all things (reality). In Zen Buddhism, delusion and enlight-

enment are not considered to be separate, but rather the relationship between daily activities (actuality) and enlightenment (originality) is one of non-attachment and non-separation. This is not an attempt to distinguish between the original self and reality, but rather to find a world in which reality and originality are in perfect harmony. Although the two cannot be seen as exactly the same thing, the world in which we live (reality) is established while being backed by the originality (enlightenment) that lies behind it. In other words, this short phrase expresses the fact that the world can be a beautiful world of enlightenment not because of the unconditional splendor of the everyday world around us, but because of the innate nature that pervades the everyday world. This is how Keizan Zenji’s awakening was recognized by Gikai Zenji.

### **Another Question and Answer Reportedly Conducted at the Time of His Dharma Succession**

There are different variations of the question-and-answer session that led to Keizan Zenji’s succession to the Dharma. The following question and answer can only be found in later sources, but it is so well-known that I would like to introduce it here.

One day, Gikai Zenji mentioned the story of Zen monk Zhaozhou Congren’s “Everyday mind is the Way,” and Keizan Zenji suddenly came to an enlightened realization. He asked him, “How do you understand ‘Everyday mind is the Way’?” The teacher (Keizan Zenji) said, “It is like a pitch-black ball racing through the dark night.” Gikai Zenji said, “Try saying it in different words.” Keizan Zenji said, “When you drink tea, you

just drink tea, and when you eat a meal, you just eat a meal.” Gikai Zenji smiled and said, “From this time on, you shall promote the style of the Soto school.” (Taken from “*Shogaku kaizan niso zenji anroku*”).

In this story, Keizan Zenji is enlightened after listening to Gikai Zenji’s teaching on “everyday mind is the Way.” In response to Gikai Zenji’s question, Keizan Zenji replied, “It is like a pitch-black ball racing through the dark night.” The pitch-black ball and the dark night are the same color, so they hide each other and are indistinguishable from each other. This is an explanation of the state of being in which all distinctions are dissolved, and one is equal in the world of true nature (enlightenment). Upon hearing this answer, Gikai Zenji asked for a different answer, because the answer given by Keizan Zenji now only describes the world of original nature. If one is immersed in original nature and enjoys the state of enlightenment only for oneself, this is contrary to the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, which is based on the principle of altruism. The true purpose of Mahayana Buddhism is to save all living beings, after having attained this true nature.

Therefore, Keizan Zenji replied that enlightenment is present in the casual act of drinking tea or eating a meal. This is a concrete expression of the original nature at work in reality. Because enlightenment is present in every action, it is important to pay attention to even the most casual of actions, such as drinking tea or eating rice, and to carefully perform them as Buddhist practices. This is why Zen Buddhism prescribes detailed rules for daily activities such

as how to wash one’s face, how to eat, how to use the toilet, and how to get under the covers when going to bed at night.

### **Inauguration as head priest of Daijoji Temple and beginning to give the *Denkoroku* teisho**

After succeeding to the Dharma of Gikai Zenji, Keizan Zenji continued his studies under Gikai Zenji, and in 1298, at the age of 35, he became the second abbot of Daijoji Temple.

Two years after assuming the post, on the 11th day of the 11th month of the 2nd year of Shoan (1300), he began lecturing on the *Denkoroku* (The Record of the Transmission of Illumination). *Denkoroku* is not only Keizan Zenji’s principal work, but is also regarded as one of the fundamental texts of the Soto school, along with the *Shobogenzo* (The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye) by Dogen Zenji.

The title “*Denkoroku*” means “a record of the light transmitted by the successive ancestors of the Soto school in Japan.” The “light” here can be understood as the “true Dharma” (the correct teachings of the Buddha) transmitted by Dogen Zenji. In the *Denkoroku*, the enlightenment of fifty-three Buddhist ancestors from India, China, and Japan, from Shakyamuni Buddha to Ejo Zenji, is carefully discussed and explained one by one. This book clarifies the historical transmission process of “the true Dharma” as expounded by Dogen Zenji in the *Shobogenzo* and his other writings. The true essence of Keizan Zenji’s thought can be found in his understanding of Dogen Zenji’s thought. *Denkoroku* is an outstanding work in that it reveals what is not mentioned in the *Shobogenzo*.



At the time of the *Denkoroku* lectures, Meiho Zenji (second abbot of Yokoji Temple) and Gasan Zenji (second abbot of Sojiji Temple) were also visiting Keizan Zenji, and both must have listened closely to his teachings. Interestingly, the dates of enlightenment of both Zen masters are 1302 for Meiho Zenji and 1301 for Zen Master Gasan, which is just following the teisho Keizan Zenji gave on *Denkoroku*. It can be inferred that the teachings of Keizan Zenji provided important clues for their enlightenment.

In addition to the *Denkoroku*, Keizan Zenji is known to have written “*Zazen Yojinki*,” (“Precautions for Zazen”) “*Sankon zazen setsu*,” (“Zazen for Three Kinds of Practitioners”), “*Shinjinmei nentei*,” (“Commentary on Verses Inscribed in the Mind of Faith”) and other works, which were also composed at Daijōji monastery.

### Opening of Yokoji Temple in Noto

In the spring of 1312, at the age of 49, Keizan Zenji received a donation of land in Sakaiho, Noto Province, from Unno Saburo Shigeno Nobunao. The actual donor was this man’s wife, Sonin-ni (Hei’shi no Musume, the eldest daughter of Sakawahachiro Taira no Yorichika), who is said to have made the donation to Keizan Zenji in order to attain unsurpassed enlightenment (“Mujo Bodai”). From a Yokoji document, “A Donation Letter from Heishi no Musume Letter”.

On the day he received the donation offer, Keizan Zenji had a dream of auspicious omens and was so impressed by the site and the pure intentions of Nobunao and his wife that he accepted the donation and made it his “final resting place” and the central temple of the Soto

school. With extraordinary zeal, he built and managed Yokoji Temple on this site.

Keizan Zenji’s zeal for the management of Yokoji Temple culminated in establishing the Five Elderly Peaks (*Goroho*), and in “*Tokoku-zan jinmiraisai no okibumi*” My Testament for Yokoji Throughout Eternity where he stated that there were two things that must be observed throughout eternity at Yokoji:

1. The priests at Yokoji temple and the lay patrons of the temple must respect each other.
2. The abbot of Yokoji should be selected from among the descendants of Keizan Zenji, and the lay believers should not object to the selection of the abbot, etc

By making these agreements between the lay believers and the priests, the people associated with Yokoji Temple strived to build a good relationship between the priests and lay believers, and were able to be protected semi-permanently by the disciples of Keizan Zenji.

“*Goroho*” is a cemetery established at Yokoji Temple for the burial of items related to the five Zenji (*Goro*): Nyojo (1162-1227, master of Dogen Zenji), Dogen, Ejo, Gikai, and Keizan. The *Goroho* (“Five Elderly Peaks”) is the proof of the succession of the true Dharma and a place of return for the faithful. By building *Goroho*, it became possible to assert widely both inside and outside Japan that Keizan Zenji was the legitimate heir of the Dharma passed down by Dogen Zenji, and it also served as a symbol of faith for the followers of Keizan Zenji. According to Keizan Zenji, *Goroho* is the most precious thing in Yokoji, and the abbot of Yokoji is the “tassu,”

(the priest responsible for the upkeep of *Goroho*).  
\*From My Testament for Yokoji Throughout Eternity. The establishment of Goroho Peak as a center of worship led to the fostering of momentum for the protection of Yokoji by the disciples of the temple.

Thus, it is known that Yokoji was the embodiment of Keizan Zenji's ideals and that he had extremely strong feelings for the temple. As if to confirm this, Yokoji was positioned by Keizan Zenji as the "main temple" (the central temple of the Soto school). Until his death, Keizan Zenji devoted himself to the training of his disciples while conducting dissemination activities mainly at Yokoji Temple.

### **Taking Over Sojiji Temple.**

In 1321, at the age of 58, Keizan Zenji was given charge of Sojiji Temple in Kushihiinoshō, Fugesigun, Noto Province (Present day Wajima City, Ishikawa Prefecture) by Teiken Risshi (date of birth and death unknown). Originally an esoteric Buddhist temple called Morooka-dera, this temple was renamed Sojiji by Keizan Zenji, and was changed to a temple of the Soto school of Buddhism.

Although Sojiji Temple is now one of the head temple of the Soto school, during Keizan Zenji's lifetime, it was positioned as the "third monastic center" \*From "Sanzo yuiseki teradera okibumi".

At that time, Sojiji Temple was expected to play a role different from that of Yokoji Temple. Let us look at the characters for "monastic center" on the right (僧所). The expression "monastic

center" means "a training environment where priests gather and reside." So, it can be assumed that Sojiji Temple was expected to serve as a "place devoted to spiritual practice centering on zazen." In contrast, Yokoji was actively engaged in external activities such as dissemination work and ceremonies. In other words, Keizan Zenji had each temple have its own role, and these roles were kept separate.

This is evident in the construction of the temple buildings of Yokoji and Sojiji. While Sojiji was one of the first temples to be completed with a *Sodo* (priest's hall), Yokoji only had a temporary *Sodo*. The *Sodo* is the central building for spiritual practices in Zen Buddhism. On the other hand, Yokoji gave priority to the construction of buildings where parishioners gathered, such as the *Hatto* and *Butsuden* (buddha hall), and it is known that these buildings were used for external ceremonies. A comparison of the *Butsuden*, *Hatto* and *Sodo* of the two temples shows that they are in sharp contrast to each other.



### **Death and Burial at Yokoji Temple**

Keizan Zenji continued his vigorous teaching activities and fostered many followers until his later years. In 1324, he handed over the abbacy

of Sojiji Temple to Gasan Zenji, and in 1325, he handed over the abbacy of Yokoji Temple to Meiho Zenji. He entrusted his disciples with his successors' affairs, and on August 15, 1325, he passed away after 62 years of life. The following is a paraphrase of his death verse:

Just as a farmer works hard to cultivate his fields, so I have worked hard to cultivate myself until the end of my life and to train my disciples so that the true Dharma, which Dogen Zenji brought to Japan, may take root in the land of Japan.

Now, like ears of rice, many disciples have grown up, and they are waving the hoe of his teachings in the Dharma Hall.

A translation of the original verse:

Cultivating myself, done through my own efforts – a deserted field,  
Sold and bought again and again, yet always new.  
Endless spirit seedlings, seeds, ripening, and casting off,  
I see people thrusting hoes in the Dharma Hall.

(Continues next issue)

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<sup>1</sup> For those who wish to learn more about the life of Keizan Zenji, please refer to "Chapter 2: Research on the Biography of Keizan Zenji: Focusing on the History of the Establishment of the Biography and Writings" (A dissertation submitted to Komazawa University in 2019) in my article "Research on the Biography of Keizan

Zenji: Focusing on the Old Manuscript *Tokoku-ki* or "Shinshaku Keizan Zenji Biography" (serialized in the journal of Daihonzan Sojiji Temple, "Leaping Dragon," from April 2021) in the same book. The dissertations can be viewed from the "Komazawa University Academic Institutional Repository" (<http://repo.komazawa-u.ac.jp/opac/repository/all/MD40138753/ko91.pdf>). The description in this essay is based on my dissertations.

<sup>2</sup> The autobiography and diary of Keizan Zenji are contained in a document called *Tokoku-ki* (Chronicles of *Tokoku*).

<sup>3</sup> Although many biographical materials on Keizan Zenji exist, most of them were prepared during the Edo period (1603-1868), more than 300 years after his death. Therefore, there are some factual errors and unreasonable interpretations in these materials, so references to them in this paper will be kept to a minimum.

<sup>4</sup> This eleven-faced Kannon statue is still enshrined in Yokoji Temple, in Ishikawa, Japan.

<sup>5</sup> The term "matsugo shoshi" refers to a disciple who has not yet been formally ordained, but who is actually ordained on the occasion of his or her master's transition to a higher priesthood. In this case, the latter is meant here.

<sup>6</sup> The kesa was passed down from Dogen Zenji – Ejo Zenji – Gikai Zenji – Keizan Zenji, then successively inherited by Keizan Zenji – Meiho Zenji – Daichi Zenji, and is now in the collection of Kofuku-ji Temple (Tamana City, Kumamoto Prefecture).

# Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

## Number 16A

### Sustained Practice

#### *Gyōji*

#### Part 1

#### (first half)

Translated by  
The Soto Zen Text Project

### *Introduction*

This work, easily the longest in the *Shōbōgenzō*, consists of two parts. In the seventy-five-chapter *Shōbōgenzō*, they are numbered as chapter 16, Parts 1 (*jō*) and 2 (*ge*); in the sixty-chapter *Shōbōgenzō*, they are treated as two separate chapters, numbers 16 and 17. The ninety-five-chapter Honzan edition accords with the seventy-five-chapter compilation in treating the two parts as a single chapter, numbered 30. At the end of Part 2, both the sixty- and seventy-five-chapter manuscripts bear a colophon by Dōgen placing the composition in May of 1242, at Kōshōji, with a second colophon in the sixty-chapter witnessed by Dōgen's disciple Ejō recording the latter's copying of the work in early 1243. These notices are presumed to refer to both parts of the work.

The title term, *gyōji*, which in other contexts, might better be rendered “to observe” or “to uphold” (as in “uphold” the Buddhist precepts), is translated here in keeping with the common interpretation of Dōgen's use in the sense “spiritual practice that is constant (or endures or is continuously maintained).” As this title suggests, then, our text is devoted to accounts of the spiritual practice of its author's predecessors.

Part 1 opens with a panegyric on “sustained practice” — what Dōgen describes as “the way circling round without being cut off — aspiration for buddhahood, practice, bodhi, and nirvāna, without the slightest interval.” This is not, he goes on to say, simply the individual's intentional practice: it is the sustained practice of the buddhas and ancestors manifested in us and, indeed, in the sun, moon, and stars. He then proceeds to recount edifying examples of such practice by some two dozen figures, including Buddha Sākyamuni and two of the early ancestors in India, as well as the example of Chinese emperors.

This translation reprints, with some revisions, the version appearing in Sōtō Zen Text Project, tr., *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmichō, 2023), Vol. II, pp. 5-56. Because of the length of the chapter, we have divided it into two installments, the second of which will appear in *Hōgen* 53.

### Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

#### Number 16A

#### Sustained Practice

#### Part 1

In the great way of the buddhas and ancestors, there is always unsurpassed sustained practice: the way circling round without being cut off — bringing forth the mind [of bodhi], practice, bodhi, and nirvāna, without the slightest interval — sustained practice is the way circling round.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is not something we force ourselves to do or that others force us to do: it is sustained practice that has never defiled.<sup>2</sup> The merit of this sustained practice maintains the



self and maintains the other.<sup>3</sup> The essential point here is that, in our practice, around the earth and throughout the heavens in the ten directions, everything receives its merit.<sup>4</sup> Although the other may not be aware of it, and we may not be aware of it, it is so.

Therefore, owing to the sustained practice of the buddhas and ancestors, our sustained practice is manifested, and our great way penetrates everywhere; owing to our sustained practice, the sustained practice of the buddhas is manifested, and the great way of the buddhas penetrates everywhere. Owing to our sustained practice, there is this virtue of the way circling round; owing to this, buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor do buddha-abiding, do buddha-denying, do buddha-minding, do buddha-attaining, and are not cut off.<sup>5</sup> Owing to this sustained practice, there are the sun, moon, and stars; owing to sustained practice, there are the whole earth and empty space; owing to sustained practice, there are secondary and primary recompense, body and mind; owing to sustained practice, there are the four elements and five aggregates.<sup>6</sup>

Although sustained practice is not what the worldly love, it should be people's real refuge.<sup>7</sup> Owing to the sustained practice of the buddhas of past, present, and future, the buddhas of past, present, and future appear. The merit of that sustained practice at times is not hidden; hence, we bring forth the mind and engage in the practice; at times, that merit is not apparent; hence we do not see, hear, perceive, or know it. Although it is not apparent, we should study it as not hidden; for it is not defiled by "hidden" or "apparent," "existing" or "vanishing." The sustained practice that manifests the self — that

we do not understand, in its present hiddenness, from what conditioned dharmas the sustained practice occurs is due to the fact that the understanding of sustained practice is not some further new special state.<sup>8</sup> We should make concentrated effort and study in detail that conditioned arising is sustained practice, for sustained practice does not arise from conditions.<sup>9</sup> The sustained practice that manifests that sustained practice — this is precisely our present sustained practice. The present of sustained practice is not the original being or primal abode of the self; the present of sustained practice does not come to and go from, enter or exit, the self. It is not that the word "the present" exists prior to sustained practice: the manifestation of sustained practice is called "the present."

This being the case, a single day's sustained practice is the seed of the buddhas, is the sustained practice of the buddhas. The buddhas are manifested and continuously practiced by this continuous practice; not continuously to practice it is to hate the buddhas, is not to make offerings to the buddhas, is to hate sustained practice, is not to be born together and die together, not to study together and practice together, with the buddhas. The present blooming of flowers and falling of leaves — these are manifestations of sustained practice; polishing the mirror and breaking the mirror — they are nothing but sustained practice.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, for those who think to set aside sustained practice, to think of setting aside sustained practice in order to hide the wrong thought of escaping sustained practice is also sustained practice; hence, to try to move toward sustained practice, while it may seem to be aiming for sustained practice, is to become the impoverished son

who, throwing away the wealth of the household of his true father, wanders aimlessly through other lands.<sup>11</sup> While it may be that the winds and waters during our wanderings do not cause loss of life, we should not throw away the wealth of our true father; it is to lose the dharma wealth of our true father.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, sustained practice is a dharma not to be neglected even for a moment.

\* \* \* \* \*

The compassionate father, the Great Master, Buddha Sākyamuni, after a buddha's lifespan of nineteen years, engaged in sustained practice in the deep mountains; and, upon reaching a buddha's lifespan of thirty years, he had the sustained practice of "attaining the way simultaneously with the whole earth and sentient beings."<sup>13</sup> Until he reached a buddha's lifespan of eight decades, he engaged in sustained practice in the mountains and forests, or engaged in sustained practice in gardens and parks.<sup>14</sup> He never returned to his palace and never availed himself of the privileges afforded by his country. He used as his robe a hemp *samghāti* and never exchanged it throughout his entire stay in this world; his one bowl, he never exchanged during his stay in this world; he never lived in solitude for a single day or a single hour.<sup>15</sup> He did not refuse the idle offerings of humans and devas; he endured the calumny of followers of the other paths.<sup>16</sup> In sum, his entire ministry was sustained practice. The Buddha's deportment in regard to the pure robes and the begging of food was in every case nothing but sustained practice.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Eighth Ancestor, Venerable Mahākāśyapa, was the legitimate heir of Sākyā, the Honored One.<sup>17</sup> During his lifetime, he devoted himself wholly to the sustained practice of the twelve *dhūta*, never neglecting them.<sup>18</sup> The twelve *dhūta* are:

1. Without accepting invitations from people, to make the daily rounds begging for food; also, not to accept money for a meal of the bhikṣu saṃgha.
2. To lodge in the mountains, not to lodge in people's residence, region, district, or village.
3. Not to beg clothing from people, also not to accept clothing from people; to obtain and mend the clothing of the dead discarded in the cemetery.
4. To lodge under a tree in a field or paddy.
5. To take one meal a day; this is termed *sengjiasengni*.<sup>19</sup>
6. Not to recline day or night, only to sleep while seated and to walk; this is termed *sengnishazheyu*.<sup>20</sup>
7. To possess three robes, not to possess other robes; also, not to sleep under a quilt.
8. To stay in a cemetery, not to stay in a Buddhist monastery, not to stay among people; to look upon the skeletons of the dead, sitting in meditation seeking the way.
9. To wish only solitude, not to wish to meet people or wish to sleep with people.
10. To eat fruit first and then eat rice, not to eat fruit after finishing the meal.
11. To wish only to sleep outdoors, not to stay under a tree or in a lodging.
12. Not to eat meat, not to eat ghee; not to anoint the body with sesame oil.

These are called the twelve *dhūta*. Through-

out his life, Venerable Mahākāśyapa never regressed from them. While he may have received the direct transmission of the treasury of the true dharma eye of the Tathāgata, he never retreated from these *dhūta*.

Once the Buddha said to him, “You are advanced in years; you should eat the samgha food.”<sup>21</sup>

Mahākāśyapa said, “Had I not encountered the appearance in the world of the Tathāgata, I would have become a *pratyeka-buddha* and lived in the mountains and forests for the rest of my life. Fortunately, I did encounter the appearance in the world of the Tathāgata and enjoy the benefits of the dharma. While this may be so, in the end, I cannot eat the sangha food.”

The Tathāgata praised him.

Kāśyapa’s body became emaciated due to his sustained practice of the *dhūta*. It seems the assembly looked on him with disdain. At that time, the Tathagata cordially summoned Kāśyapa and offered him a co-seat, and Venerable Kasyapa sat in the seat of the Tathāgata.<sup>22</sup> We should realize that Mahākāśyapa was the senior seat in the Buddha’s community. To give every instance of his sustained practice throughout his lifetime would be impossible.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Tenth Ancestor, Venerable Pārśva was one who, throughout his life, “his side never touched the seat.”<sup>23</sup> Although this was his pursuit of the way as an elder of eight decades, it was at that time that he suddenly received the unique transmission of the great dharma. Due to his not frivolously wasting the years and months, he received the unique transmission of

the true eye of *sambodhi* with merely three years of concentrated effort. The Venerable was sixty years in the womb; he emerged from the womb with white hair.<sup>24</sup> He vowed not to recline like the dead, and thus he was called “Venerable Side.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in the dark his hands emitted light, with which he took hold of the dharma of the sutras.<sup>26</sup> This is a wondrous sign he possessed from birth.

When Venerable Side reached nearly eighty years of age, he abandoned the home and dyed the robes.<sup>27</sup> Youths in the city ridiculed him, sāying, “Decrepit old fool, how stupid can you be?”<sup>28</sup> Those who leave home have two tasks: first to practice meditation; second to recite the sutras. But now you are so feeble and senile you won’t make any progress. You recklessly join the clear stream, knowing only how to gorge yourself on the food.”<sup>29</sup>

At this time, Venerable Side, upon hearing these disparaging comments, thanked these people, and then made a vow, saying, “If I do not master the principles of the three collections, do not cut off the desires of the three realms, do not attain the six spiritual powers, do not equip myself with the eight liberations, may my side never touch the seat.”<sup>30</sup>

From then on, fearing the days were not enough, he walked, sat, stood and thought.<sup>31</sup> By day, he studied the teachings; by night, he reflected quietly and focused his spirit. He continued thus for three years, till his study mastered the three collections, he cut off the desires of the three realms and acquired the wisdom of the three knowledges.<sup>32</sup> People of the time showed their respect and admiration by calling him “Venerable Side.”

Thus, Venerable Side emerged from the

womb only after sixty years in the womb. Was he not making concentrated effort in the womb? After he emerged from the womb, only as he was turning eighty did he seek to leave home and study the way. It was one hundred forty years since his conception. Though he may have been truly beyond the crowd, he was older and more decrepit than anyone else: he was old in the womb; he was old when he emerged from the womb. Nevertheless, paying no attention to the scorn and hatred of his contemporaries, and being determined not to regress from his vow, after only three years had passed, his pursuit of the way was realized. Who could soften [the adage], “When you meet someone good, think to equal him”?<sup>33</sup> Do not regret “reaching old age.”<sup>34</sup>

This life is hard to understand: is it living or is it not living?<sup>35</sup> Is it old age or is it not old age? As the four views are not the same, the views of different types are not the same.<sup>36</sup> We should just work on pursuing the way, making a single practice of our determination. We should study that this resembles seeing life and death in our pursuit of the way; it is not pursuing the way in life and death. It is extremely stupid of people today to give up on pursuing the way when they reach their fifth decade or sixth decade or reach their seventh decade or eighth decade.<sup>37</sup> While we may perceive how many years there have been since our birth, this is just the life of the human spirit, not the circumstances of our studying the way. Do not consider whether you are youthful or aged; we should be solely set on studying the way and thoroughly investigating it. We should be of equal stature with Venerable Side.

Do not excessively lament the pile of dust in the cemetery; do not excessively pay it attention. If you do not set yourself solely on your deliver-

ance, who will take pity on whom? When the masterless skeleton is randomly scattered in the fields, we should view this correctly as if seeing it with our own eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Sixth Ancestor was a woodcutter from Xinzhou; he could hardly be called learned.<sup>38</sup> While still very young, he lost his father and was raised by his mother. He made a living to support his mother by his work as a woodcutter. Upon hearing a line of a sūtra at a crossroad, he abruptly abandoned his old mother and set off in search of the great dharma. He was a great vessel, rare through the ages; it was an outstanding pursuit of the way. To cut off an arm is easy, but to cut off his love must have been very hard; casting aside his obligation could not have been done lightly.<sup>39</sup> Committing himself to the community of Huangmei, he pounded rice day and night, without sleep, without rest, for eight months.<sup>40</sup> In the middle of the night, he received the direct transmission of the robe and bowl. After attaining the dharma, he continued to carry a stone mortar and pounded rice for eight years.<sup>41</sup> Even when he appeared in the world and preached the dharma to deliver people, he did not set aside this stone mortar — a sustained practice rare in the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mazu of Jiangxi sat in meditation for twenty years.<sup>42</sup> This received the secret seal of Nanyue.<sup>43</sup> It is not said that he set aside sitting in meditation when he was transmitting the dharma and saving people: when students first



went to him, he invariably had them secretly receive the mind seal.<sup>44</sup> Where there was communal labor, he invariably went first; and, when he grew old, he did not rest from it. The present-day Linji [monks] belong to the Jiangxi lineage.<sup>45</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Reverend Yunyan and Daowu studied together under Yaoshan and, making a vow that their sides would never touch the seat for forty years, investigated with a single mind.<sup>46</sup> Their dharma was transmitted to Great Master Wuben of Dongshan.<sup>47</sup> Dongshan said, "Seeking to become one piece, I have already sat in meditation and pursued the way for twenty years."<sup>48</sup> Now, his way has been disseminated everywhere.<sup>49</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Great Master Hongjue of Mount Yunju, when long ago he was staying at the Sanfeng Hermitage, was sent food from the kitchens of the devas.<sup>50</sup> Once, the Great Master visited Dongshan, ascertained the great way, and then returned to the hermitage. The emissary of the devas, once again sending food, sought the Master for three days but was unable to see the Master. No longer dependent on the deva kitchens, he took the great way as his basis. We should give thought to his spirit that confirms [the way].

\* \* \* \* \*

From the time when Chan Master Dazhi of Mount Baizhang served as an acolyte under Mazu, right up to the evening that he entered

extinction, there was not a single day in which he did not work for the sangha and for people.<sup>51</sup> Thankfully, he left us the legacy, "a day without working is a day without eating."<sup>52</sup> That is, Chan Master Baizhang was already an elder with seniority; still, where there was communal labor, he worked as hard as a youth. The assembly was pained by this, and people took pity on him; yet the Master did not stop. Finally, at work time, they hid his work tools and would not give them to the Master; so, for that entire day, the Master did not eat. By this, he showed his regret that he had not taken part in the work of the assembly. This is called the legacy of Baizhang's "a day without working is a day without eating." The dark style of Linji that today has spread throughout the Land of the Great Song, as well as the monasteries in all quarters, are mostly engaging in the sustained practice of the dark style of Baizhang.<sup>53</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

When Reverend Jingqing was abbot of a cloister, the autochthonous deity was never able to see the Master's face; for he could get no sign of him.<sup>54</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Chan Master Yizhong of Mount Sanping long ago was sent food from the kitchens of the devas. After he met Dadian, when the devas searched for him, they could not see him.<sup>55</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Reverend Hou Dawei said,<sup>56</sup>

For twenty years, I stayed at Weishan, eating Weishan's rice and shitting Weishan's shit. I didn't study Weishan's way; I just managed to herd a single water buffalo, everywhere exposed all day long.

We should realize that the water buffalo was herded by the sustained practice of "twenty years staying at Weishan." This master had once practiced in Baizhang's community. We should quietly think on the circumstances during those twenty years; do not forget them. While there are those who studied Weishan's way, a sustained practice that "didn't study Weishan's way" is rare.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reverend Congshen, Great Master Zhenji of the Guanyin Cloister in Zhaozhou, first resolved to bring forth the mind [of bodhi] and seek the way at the age of sixty-one.<sup>57</sup> Taking his water flask and staff, he traveled on foot and traversed all quarters, always saying, "A seven-year-old child who surpasses me, I'll inquire of him; a hundred-year-old elder who doesn't reach me, I'll teach him."<sup>58</sup>

In this way, his concentrated effort to study the way of Nanchuan was twenty years.<sup>59</sup> Only when he reached the age of eighty did he take up residence at the Guanyin Cloister east of Zhaozhou City, where he guided humans and devas for forty years.<sup>60</sup> He never sent a single letter to his *dānapati*.<sup>61</sup> The samgha hall was not large, lacking both front shelving and back shelving.<sup>62</sup> Once, the leg of his platform broke off.<sup>63</sup> Splicing a charred piece of wood to it with twine, he continued practicing on it as the months and years passed; when the stewards

sought to change the platform leg, Zhaozhou would not permit it. We should listen to the house style of this old buddha.

Zhaozhou took up residence in Zhaozhou after his eighth decade, following his dharma transmission. It was the direct transmission of the true dharma. People called him an "old buddha." Others that have not received the direct transmission of the true dharma must be less significant than the Master; others that have yet to reach eighty must be more robust than the Master. How can we, who are youthful but insignificant, be equal to one who is a respected elder. We should strive to pursue the way and engage in sustained practice. For forty years, [his monastery] accumulated no worldly treasure, and its stores had no rice. Sometimes, they would collect chestnuts or beechnuts to use as food; sometimes, they would take turns cooking.<sup>64</sup> Truly, it was the house style of the dragon elephants of antiquity, conduct we should cherish.<sup>65</sup>

Once, he addressed the assembly, saying, "If for a lifetime you don't leave the grove and don't talk for ten years or five years, no one will call you a mute; after that, even the buddhas won't know what to make of you."<sup>66</sup>

This expresses sustained practice.

We should realize that one who "doesn't talk for fifteen years" may look stupid, but even though one does not talk, when it is based on the concentrated effort of "not leaving the grove," one is not "a mute." The way of the buddhas is like this. One who does not hear the "voice of the way of the buddhas," lacks the truth that "not talking" is "not a mute."<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the greatest wonder of sustained practice is "not leaving the grove"; "not leaving the grove"

is complete talk that is sloughed off.<sup>68</sup> The greatest fools do not know that they themselves are “not a mute” nor let it be known that they are “not a mute.” Though no one prevents them, they do not let it be known. Those who do not hear that being “not a mute” is “getting such,” who do not know it is “getting such,” are selves to be pitied.<sup>69</sup> We should quietly engage in a sustained practice of the sustained practice of “not leaving the grove.” Do not go east and west with the winds of east and west. Although the spring winds and autumn moons of “ten years or five years” are not noticed, they have words transcending sounds and forms.<sup>70</sup> Its sayings, we do not know, we do not understand. We should study that an inch of shadow of sustained practice is a sad thing.<sup>71</sup> Do not doubt “not talking” as merely empty. Entering is one grove; leaving is one grove; the “road of the bird” is one grove; the realms everywhere are one grove.<sup>72</sup>

To be continued

### Notes

1. **sustained practice** (*gyōji*): A term appearing often in Dōgen’s writing. While in other contexts, it might better be rendered “observance” (as in “to observe” the Buddhist precepts), the translation here reflects the common interpretation of Dōgen’s use as “practice that is constant or enduring.”

**the way circling round** (*dōkan*): An unusual expression occurring several times in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

**bringing forth the mind [of bodhi], practice, bodhi, and nirvāna** (*hosshin shugyo bodai nehan*):

A standard set of terms summarizing the spiritual path of the bodhisattva, from the initial aspiration for bodhi through final nirvāna.

2. **sustained practice that has never defiled** (*fuzō zenna no gyōji*): Likely reflecting the remark of Nanyue Huairang (677-744), recorded in the *shinji Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5:178, case 101) and alluded to throughout the *Shōbōgenzō*, to the effect that he is “not defiled” (*fuzenna*) by Buddhist practice and verification.

3. **maintains the self and maintains the other** (*ware o hōnin shi, ta o hōnin su*): Although this might be taken as a reference simply to “oneself and others,” the context suggests a more metaphysical sense: “the self and the world.”

4. **around the earth and throughout the heavens** (*sōchi manten*): A fixed expression for “everywhere”; common in Chinese texts but not used elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

5. **do buddha-abiding, do buddha-denying, do buddha-minding, do buddha-attaining** (*butsujū shi, buppi shi, busshin shi, butsujō shite*): An awkward attempt to render an odd string of four compound terms, each beginning with “buddha,” used as verbs.

6. **secondary and primary recompense** (*eshō*): A standard Buddhist term for the results of past karma reflected respectively in the circumstances into which one is born and the mental and physical makeup of the person.

**four elements and five aggregates** (*shidai goun*): I.e., the four primary forms of matter (S. *mahābhūta*) — earth, water, fire, and wind, of which

the physical world is composed; and the five “heaps” (S. *skandha*) — form, sensation, perception, formations, and consciousness — into which the psychophysical organism can be analyzed.

7. **Although sustained practice is not what the worldly love** (*gyōji kore sejin no aisho ni araza-redomo*): Perhaps recalling a line, alluded to elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, from the poem *Caoan ge*, by Shitou Xiqian (700-790): “What the worldly love, I don’t love” (*sejin aisho ga fu ai*).

8. **The sustained practice that manifests the self** (*ware o genjō suru gyōji*): A convoluted sentence perhaps to be understood, “we do not understand what occurs to bring about the sustained practice that manifests the self, because the practice and our understanding of it are not separate from each other.”

9. **conditioned arising is sustained practice, for sustained practice does not arise from conditions** (*engi wa gyōji nari, gyōji wa engi sezarū ga yue ni*): I.e., sustained practice is not conditioned; rather, conditioned phenomena arise from the practice.

10. **polishing the mirror and breaking the mirror** (*makyō hakyō*): Whether Dōgen had specific sources in mind here is unclear. The metaphor of spiritual practice as “polishing the mirror” (*makyō*) of the mind is not uncommon in Buddhist literature; in Zen lore, it is perhaps best known as the theme of the famous poetry contest to choose the Sixth Ancestor, in which Huineng questions the practice of polishing a mirror on which there is no dust. “Breaking the mirror” (*hakyō*) as an act of abandoning one’s

presuppositions can be found in the popular expression “break the mirror and I’ll meet you” (*taha kyō rai yo ni shōken*).

11. **those who think to set aside sustained practice** (*gyōji o sashiokan to gi suru wa*): The logic of this complicated sentence would seem to be that, since we are engaged in sustained practice even when we try to escape it, to try intentionally to produce it is to go astray from it.

**impoverished son** (*gūji*): Reference to the famous parable in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:16b25ff) of the man who wanders as a beggar, unaware that he is the son of a rich man.

12. **winds and waters during our wanderings** (*reihei no toki no fūsui*): The sentence could also be read as referring to the wanderings of the son in the *Lotus Sūtra* story.

13. **after a buddha’s lifespan of nineteen years** (*jūkyū sai no butsuju yori*); **reaching a buddha’s lifespan of thirty years** (*sanjissai no butsuju ni itarite*): This somewhat odd way of expressing the Buddha’s age plays on usage in scriptural discussions of the length of a buddha’s life. The tradition that Gautama left home at age nineteen and achieved awakening at age thirty is found in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T.2076.51:205b12-24; the more common version of the Buddha’s life has him leaving his father’s palace at age twenty-nine and awakening under the bodhi tree at age thirty-five. In his “*Shōbōgenzō sansui kyō*” as well, Dōgen gives the Buddha’s period of training as twelve years, rather than the usual six.

14. **mountains and forests** (*sanrin*); **gardens and parks** (*shōran*): Presumably, indicating the loca-



tions, respectively, of Gautama's practice before and after he became a buddha. *Shōran* (elsewhere translated “monastic complex”) is an abbreviation of *shōja garan*, used to render *S. ārama, vihara*, etc.

15. **He used as his robe a hemp *samghātī*** (*fu sōgyari o eji shi*): The *samghātī* is the most formal of the traditional three robes (*kesa*; *S. kāsāya*) of the monk, sewn in nine to twenty-five pieces. The term *fu* can refer to hemp, linen, cotton, or other fabrics made from plant fiber (as opposed to silk or wool).

**he never lived in solitude** (*dokusho suru koto nashi*): I.e., he never had a place of his own.

16. **He did not refuse the idle offerings of humans and devas** (*ninten no kan kuyō o ji sezu*): The term *kan kuyō* 閑供養 is generally understood to be “unnecessary offerings” — i.e., offerings not needed by the recipient but, of course, bringing merit to the donor.

17. **Eighth Ancestor, Venerable Mahākāśyapa** (*daihasso Makakashō sonja*): An unusual designation for Mahākāśyapa, traditionally treated as the first ancestor of the Zen lineage. The standard set of seven ancient buddhas ending with Buddha Sākyamuni is here treated as the first seven ancestors of Zen, thus making Sākyamuni's disciple Mahākāśyapa the eighth.

18. **twelve *dhūta*** (*jūni zuda*): A set of ascetic practices mentioned throughout Buddhist literature; the number is sometimes given as thirteen, and the members of the set vary somewhat with the source. The definitions of the twelve *dhūta* that follow in the next section are taken from the

*Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* (T.1470.24:919b6-18). Mahākāśyapa was described by the Buddha as the best of his disciples in the practice of the *dhūta*.

19. **this is termed *sengjiasengni*** (*sunkasunnai*): This Chinese transliteration of an Indic word occurs only in the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* (T.1470.24:919b11). It has been suggested that it is an error for *yigiasengni*, intended to represent the Sanskrit *ekāsanika* (“having a single seat”) — i.e., eating a day's provisions in a single sitting.

20. **This is termed *sengnishazheyu*** (*sunnaisashakyū*): Another Chinese transliteration found only in the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* (T.1470.24:919b12). Judging from the definition here, the Sanskrit original would appear to be *naisadika* or *naisadyika*, “one who sleeps in a sitting posture.”

21. **“sangha food”** (*sōjiki*): I.e., food provided by the sangha to its elderly and infirm members. An account of Mahākāśyapa's refusal to abandon the practice of begging can be found, e.g., in the *Ekottarāgama* (*Zengyi ahan jing*, T.125.2:570b3-18). The source for Dōgen's version, told here in Japanese, is unknown.

22. **offered him a co-seat** (*hanza o yuzurimashimasu*): The story of the Buddha's sharing his seat with Mahākāśyapa is quite old and occurs in various sources in the Buddhist literature; see, e.g., the *Samyuktāgama* (*Za ehan jing*, T.99.2:302 a1ff).

23. **The Tenth Ancestor, Venerable Pārśva** (*daijisso Harishiba sonja*): A renowned Indian scholar-monk, affiliated with the Sarvāstivāda school, active during the early second century

CE. Dōgen has here reverted to the standard numbering of the ancestors, beginning with Mahākāśyapa.

**“his side never touched the seat”** (*kyō fushi seki*): A fixed expression for the *dhūta* practice of not reclining to sleep.

24. **The Venerable was sixty years in the womb** (*sonja no zaitai rokujū nen nari*): This and the following two sentences reflect a passage in Zhanran’s (711-782) *Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue* (T.1912.46:146a26-28).

25. **“Venerable Side”** (*Kyō sonja*): I.e., *Pārsva*, meaning “side,” or “flank.”

26. **with which he took hold of the dharma of the sutras** (*i shū kyō hō*): Zhanran’s text here (*Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue*, T.1912.46:146a28) has only, “with which he took hold of the sūtras.” Dōgen seems to have punctuated the passage after the initial glyph, *fa* (“dharma”), of the following sentence: “His hands emitted light, with which he took hold of the sūtras. His dharma was transmitted to Punyayasas.”

27. **When Venerable Side reached nearly eighty years of age** (*Kyō sonja shō nen hachijū sui*): This section is taken from Xuanzang’s *Datang xiyu ji* (T.2087.51:880b21-c2). Dogen’s version has transposed the order of the predicate in Xuanzang’s text here (*nian chui bashi*).

**abandoned the home and dyed the robes** (*shake zen’e*): A fixed expression for joining the Buddhist order.

28. **Youths in the city ridiculed him** (*jōchū shōnen ben shō shi*): Reading *shō* (“to ridicule”)

for *shō* (“to invite”).

29. **clear stream** (*seiryū*): I.e., the Buddhist order.

30. **three collections** (*sanzo*): I.e., the tripitaka, the Buddhist canon.

**three realms** (*sangai*): I.e., the threefold world of samsara.

**six spiritual powers** (*roku jinzū*): I.e., the paranormal knowledges (S. *abhijñā*) accessible to advanced meditators.

**eight liberations** (*hachi gedatsu*): A traditional set of eight meditations leading to freedom from desire.

31. **fearing the days were not enough** (*yui hi fusoku*): Variant of a fixed idiom for a sense of urgency.

**walked, sat, stood and thought** (*kinhin enza, jūryū shiyui*): I.e., he engaged in meditation while walking, sitting, and standing. “To stand still and think” (*jūryū shiyui*) is a fixed expression.

32. **wisdom of the three knowledges** (*sanmyō chi*): I.e., a standard set of three of the six spiritual powers, said to have been acquired by Buddha Sākyamuni on the night of his awakening: (1) *divya-caksus* (*tengen*; “the deva eye”), (2) *pūrva-nivāsānusm ti* (*shukumyō chi*; “recollection of former lives”), (3) *āsrava-ksaya-jñāna* (*rojin tsū*; “knowledge of the elimination of the contaminants”).

33. **“When you meet someone good, think to equal him”** (*ken ken shi sei*): A common saying, quoted elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, from the Lunyu 4 (KR.1h0005.002.14b): “When you meet someone good, think to equal him; when you meet

someone not good, then look within yourself.”

34. **“reaching old age”** (*nen rōmō gyū*): From the line in a verse by the Song-dynasty poet Louyao (1137-1213): “Reaching old age and begging to go” (*nian laomao ji lü qiu qu*).

35. **This life is hard to understand** (*kono shō shirigatashi*): This sentence could also be read, “this birth is hard to understand: is it birth or is it not birth?”

36. **four views** (*shiken*): Undoubtedly, the so-called “four views of water” (*issui shiken*): what the human sees as water, the fish sees as a dwelling, the preta sees as pus and blood, and the deva sees as jewels.

37. **fifth decade or sixth decade** (*gojun rokujun*): I.e., one’s forties or fifties.

38. **The Sixth Ancestor** (*rokuso*): I.e., Caoxi Huineng. Xinzhou is located in present-day Guangdong province. The story here of Huineng abandoning his mother upon hearing the *Diamond Sūtra* is well known in Chan literature.

39. **To cut off an arm is easy** (*danpi tatoī yōi nari*): Doubtless an allusion to the Second Ancestor, Huike, who is famously said to have cut off his arm and presented it to Bodhidharma as a token of the urgency of his quest for instruction.

40. **the community of Huangmei** (*Ōbai no e*): I.e., the followers of the Fifth Ancestor, Hongren (602-675), on Mount Huangmei, in present-day Hubei Province.

41. **pounded rice for eight years** (*kome o tsuku koto hachi nen nari*): Presumably, a metaphor for Huineng’s practice as a layman during the period between his designation as the Sixth Ancestor and his taking the tonsure and launching his teaching career.

42. **Mazu of Jiangxi** (*Kōzei Baso*): I.e., Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-788), disciple of Nanyue Huairang.

43. **This received the secret seal of Nanyue** (*kore Nangaku no mitsuin o bonju suru nari*): The antecedent of “this” here is taken as Mazu’s practice of sitting, though the pronoun *kore* might also refer to Mazu himself.

44. **he invariably had them secretly receive the mind seal** (*kanarazu shin’in o mitsuju seshimu*): Presumably, meaning that he always taught them the practice of sitting he had himself received from Nanyue.

45. **The present-day Linji [monks] belong to the Jiangxi lineage** (*ima no Rinzaī wa, Kōzei no ryū nari*): Linji Yixuan (d. 866), founder of the Linji school, was a dharma descendant of Mazu in the third generation.

46. **Reverend Yunyan and Daowu** (*Ungan oshō to Dōgo to*): I.e., Yunyan Tansheng (782-841) and Daowu Yuanzhi (769-835), fellow students of Yaoshan Weiyang (751-834).

**their sides would never touch the seat for forty years** (*yonjū nen waki o seki ni tsukezu*): A standard trope in the literature. Dōgen’s source for the vow is unknown.

**investigated with a single mind** (*ichimi sankyū*)

su): The term *ichimi* (literally, “single taste”) could be taken here as indicating either single-mindedness or a single intention shared by the two.

47. **Great Master Wuben of Dongshan** (*Tōzan no Gohon daishi*): I.e., Dongshan Liangjie (807-869), successor to Yunyan Tansheng and founder of Dōgen’s Caodong lineage.

48. **“become one piece”** (*taijō ippen*): A fixed expression for the act of unifying or becoming unified. Dōgen’s source for Dongshan’s saying is unknown.

49. **Now, his way has been disseminated everywhere** (*ima sono dō, amaneku denpu seri*): This could also read, “now his words have been disseminated everywhere.”

50. **Great Master Hongjue of Mount Yunju** (*Ungoza Gukaku daishi*): I.e., Yunju Daoying (d. 902), disciple of Dongshan Liangjie. “Great Master Hongjue” is a posthumous title conferred by Emperor Zhaozong. The Sanfeng Hermitage is thought to have been on Mount Yunju, in present-day Jiangxi Province.

**sent food from the kitchens of the devas** (*tenchū sōjiki*): Dōgen’s source for this well-known story, told here in Japanese, is not certain; it seems closest to the version given in the *Bore shin jing zhujie* (ZZ.42:79a10-13):

Again, when Rev. Hungjue was living at a hermitage, the kitchens of the devas sent him offerings. After he visited the Rev. Dongshan, he returned to his hermitage. The deva spirits sent food to his hermitage for three days but did not see the hermit. The hermit was within the hermitage, so why did they

not see him? All who attain the perfect sudden dharma have the art of concealing the body; therefore, no spirits can see them.

51. **Chan Master Dazhi of Mount Baizhang** (*Hyakujōzan Daichi zenji*): I.e., Baizhang Huaihai (749-814), a disciple of Mazu. “Chan Master Great Wisdom” (*Dazhi chanshi*) is his title; Mount Baizhang is in Hongzhou, modern Jiangxi province.

52. **“a day without working is a day without eating”** (*ichinichi fusa, ichinichi fujiki*): Baizhang was traditionally credited with creating the first Chan monastic regulations, and this saying was widely taken as expressing the spirit of the Chan monastery. See, e.g., *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui*, T.2025.48:1119b2. The source of Dōgen’s Japanese retelling here of the saying’s origin is uncertain. Here is the version given in the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* (ZZ.135:658a4-7):

The Master regularly participated in work periods and was first in the community to take on hard work. The community did not accept his working, secretly took away his tools, and asked him to stop. The Master said, “I have no virtue. Why not work with others?”

Looking everywhere for his tools without finding them, he did not eat. Therefore, there is the saying that circulates everywhere, “a day without working is a day without eating.”

53. **The dark style of Linji** (*Rinzai no genpū*): A syntactically awkward sentence, in which it would appear that “the dark style of Linji” and “the monasteries in all directions” are to be taken as compound subjects of the predicate “continuously practicing.”



54. **Reverend Jingqing** (*Kyōsei oshō*): I.e., Jingqing Daofu (864-937), a disciple of Xuefeng Yicun; he later resided at the Jingqing Monastery in present-day Zhejiang Province. Again, Dōgen’s source for the anecdote, told in Japanese, is uncertain; again, perhaps the nearest Chinese version is found in the *Bore shin jing zhujie* (ZZ.42:79a1-2): “Again, when Reverend Jingqing was abbot of a cloister, for three years the autochthonous deity of the cloister sought to see his face but could not.”

55. **Chan Master Yizhong of Mount Sanping** (*Sanpeizan Gichū zenji*): I.e., Sanping Yizhong (781-872), disciple of Dadian Baotong (732-824); he later lived on Mount Sanping in present-day Fujian Province. Dōgen’s source for this anecdote has not been identified.

56. **Reverend Hou Dawei** (*Go Daii oshō*): I.e., Changqing Da’an (793-883), disciple of Baizhang Huaihai. Da’an was given the nickname “Later Dawei” because he succeeded Weishan Lingyou (771-853) as abbot of the Tongqing Monastery on Mount Dawei in present-day Hunan Province. His words here, given in Chinese, represent an abbreviated, somewhat variant version of a passage found in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* (T.2076.51:267c6-10); that text, which is quoted more fully in “Shōbōgenzō kajō,” has Da’an on Weishan for thirty years.

57. **Reverend Congshen, Great Master Zhenji of Guanyin Cloister in Zhaozhou** (*Jōshū Kannon’in Shinsai daishi Jūshin oshō*): I.e., Zhaozhou Congshen (778-897). The Guanyin Cloister in Zhaozhou was in present-day Hebei. The temple was known as Yong’an Cloister from the South-

ern Song; the current name, Bailin Monastery, dates from the Ching.

**the age of sixty-one** (*toshi rokujūissai narishi*): Dogen repeats this and other information on Zhaozhou here in his “Shōbōgenzō hakujushi.” The source of his claim that Zhaozhou first undertook Buddhist practice at the advanced age of sixty-one is unclear; most biographies say he became a *srāmanera* as a youth.

58. **“A seven-year-old child”** (*shichisai dōji*): A vow found in the *Zhaozhou lu* (*Guzunsu yulu*, ZZ.118:304b9-10).

59. **Nanquan** (*Nansen*): I.e., Zhaozhou’s teacher, Nanquan Puyuan (748-835).

60. **he guided humans and devas for forty years** (*ninten o kedō suru koto shijū rainen nari*): Some versions read *kedō* and *nenrai* here.

61. **He never sent a single letter to his dānapati** (*imada katsute ippū no sho o mote danna ni tsukezu*): I.e., a letter to lay patrons (S. *dānapati*) seeking support for the monastery.

62. **lacking both front shelving and back shelving** (*zenka nashi, goka nashi*): The former term refers to shelves located in the outer section of the sangha hall (*sōdō*), used for food service; the latter refers to shelves in the lavatory behind the sangha hall, or by extension, to the lavatory itself.

63. **the leg of his platform broke off** (*jōkyaku oreki*): I.e., the leg of his seat in the sangha hall. An incident recorded in the *Zhaozhou lu* (ZZ.118:304b12-13), where the furniture in question is called a “cord bench” (*jōshō*), a standard term

for an individual monk's meditation platform.

64. **take turns cooking** (*sendenbonjiki*): An unusual term generally taken to indicate the practice of suspending the position of cook (*tenzo*) and having each monk prepare his own meal.

65. **dragon elephants** (*ryūzō*): A term for superior religious practitioners. Although originally used in reference to great elephants (S. *mah-ānāga* or *hastināga*), it is often interpreted as “dragons and elephants.”

66. **Once, he addressed the assembly** (*aru toki shu ni shimeshite*): A saying found in several Chan sources; see, e.g., *Zhaozhou lu*, *Guzunsu yulu*, ZZ.118:308a506.

**the grove** (*sōrin*): A common idiom for the monastery or the monastic institution.

**mute** (*akan*): Used in Chan conversations for one unable to respond.

67. **“voice of the way of the buddhas”** (*butsudō shō*): This expression and the discussion that follows seem to reflect a verse (quoted in “Shōbō-genzō arakan”) in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T.262.9:18c20-21):

Now, we

Are truly sravakas;

Who cause all to hear

The voice of the way of the buddhas.

The sūtra is playing on the term *srāvaka* (“hearer”) as “one who causes to hear” the buddhas’ teaching of bodhi — the term rendered as *dō* (“way”) in Kumārajīva’s translation here.

68. **complete talk that is sloughed off** (*datsuraku naru zengo*): Or perhaps “whole talk that is

sloughing off.” An unusual expression not occurring elsewhere.

69. **“getting such”** (*toku inmo*): An expression often encountered in Zen texts in casual reference to spiritual attainment.

70. **they have words transcending sounds and forms** (*shōshiki tōdatsu no dō ari*): An unusual expression that could also be read “there are words through which sounds and forms are liberated.”

71. **an inch of shadow of sustained practice is a sad thing** (*gyōji no sun’in o kashakko nari*): Presumably to be understood “[the loss of even] an inch of shadow.” The term *sun’in* (“inch of shadow”) is a literary term for “a moment of time.”

72. **Entering is one grove; leaving is one grove** (*nyusshi ichi sōrin nari, shusshi ichi sōrin nari*): Likely reflecting a saying of Jingqing Daofu (*Liandeng huiyao*, ZZ.136:838b6-8):

The Master [Daofu] asked a monk, “Where did you come from?”

He said, “Three Peaks.”

The Master said, “Where did you spend the summer [retreat]?”

He said, “Five Peaks.”

The Master said, “I spare you the thirty blows.”

He said, “Where was my mistake?”

The Master said, “Because you left one grove and entered another grove.”

**“road of the bird”** (*chōro*): Likely an allusion to the “path of the bird” (*chōdō*), the first of the “three roads” (*sanro*) of Dongshan Liangjie, cited often in Dōgen’s writing.



## My Footnotes on Zazen (25) To Be Skillful on the Path of Connecting Thoughts (2)

Rev. Issho Fujita

(Continued from previous article)

This is also true of the “*Buddhacharita*.” The *Buddhacharita* was written by the Buddhist poet Ashvaghosha. This is an epic poem describing the life of Shakyamuni Buddha from his birth to his death. Let’s take a look at the state of “subduing the demon” that is described in what is considered to be the crowning achievement of Buddhist biography.

“A crowd of such monsters surrounded the Ashvattha tree from all sides, waiting for their master’s command to seize the sage and kill him. The great sage was not distraught or agitated, but sat like a lion in the midst of a herd of cattle. Something rained down from the sky, a heavy rain of coals, burning like the rising sun. However, when the rain of sparkling coals was scattered at the base of the Ashvattha tree, it became a rain of red lotus petals, thanks to the compassion practiced by the performed by the Supreme Sage. The other [monsters] became great clouds of lightning and terrible thunder, raining stones on the tree, which turned into a rain of beautiful flowers. .... Mara’s army, not rewarded for their hard work, lost their joy and fled in all directions, throwing down their rocks, clubs, and sticks, like an enemy army whose dependable general has been defeated by the enemy.”

This was Shakyamuni Buddha’s style of “defeating” the devil’s army. Even if attacked, he did not run away from them, nor did he fight back, but rather he simply sat quietly and calmly. The Buddha himself did not do anything, but his sitting had such power that the charcoal fire turned into lotus petals, the stones turned into beautiful flowers, and the army of demons “lost joy because they were not rewarded for their hard work” and fled away on their own. When we encounter the same sorts of unwholesome mind (anger, hatred, shame, guilt, self-condemnation, doubt, etc.) with awareness, instead of “gritting our teeth and pressing our tongues against our upper palates” in order to “defeat, shatter, and crush the ungodly mind,” the battle is not fought but unexpectedly “won” when we encounter it with lightness of body and mind and with awareness. When we meet such things with awareness, our body and mind are at ease, and the battle does not turn into a fight, but is unexpectedly “won.” In the painting of “defeating the demons and attaining the Way,” the demon army is “gritting their teeth .....,” tense and ready, while Shakyamuni Buddha is smiling calmly, relaxed, and seated with his body axis erect.

Believe it or not, such things actually happen. The other day, at the Asahi Culture Center in Yokohama, I gave a collaborative lecture titled “Zazen and Breathing: Beyond Anger” with Mr. Takahide Kitagawa, a young practitioner of the Russian martial art of Systema. In his book *Why Do People Suddenly Get Angry?* (East New Books), a special discussion [between him and me] was held on how to overcome anger in Buddhism and Systema. In this discussion, Mr. Kitagawa demonstrated how,

when an opponent firmly catches you, you should not try to fight back, but rather relax and find a better posture that will make you feel more comfortable and move in that direction, and the opponent will collapse on his own. The person who had been forcefully grappling with the other person would fall down, as if to say, “What?” Then the person who has been knocked down feels that he or she has been knocked down voluntarily, not by force, so instead of getting angry, he or she laughs and says, “That’s weird.” Kitagawa said that the strongest way to deal with an attack is to keep oneself quiet, calm, and in a soft state of body and mind. The fifth method of dealing with an attacker, “to defeat, block, and crush the mind with awareness,” is in fact far from the image of a violent battle that this expression suggests. I would like to understand it that way, but what do you readers think about this?

Of course, one interpretation of the “gritting of teeth” in the *Vitakkasanthāna-sutta* (*The Removal of Distracting Thoughts Sutta* or *The Relaxation of Thoughts Sutta*) could be that the later disciples of the Buddha, who did not understand (or misunderstood) the Buddha’s true intentions, brought the suffering element back into the Buddha’s teachings when they were compiling this sutra. In other words, they chose not to adopt this part of the sutras as not having been said by the Buddha. Not all of the words of the sutras can be said with certainty to be the words of the Buddha. As Buddhism has become more “religious” and “institutionalized” over time, it is quite possible that what the Buddha did not say, or what he denied, has been incorporated into “Buddhism” as his words and teach-

ings. We have no choice but to make our own judgments based on the “eye of viewing sutras.”

The Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, referring to the passage from the “*Mahāsaccaka-sutta*” (the *Great Saccaka Sutta*) that I quoted earlier, said, “Before attaining enlightenment, the Buddha tried many ways to control the mind with the mind, but they did not work. As a result, he chose a method of practice that did not involve force.” He also critically comments that the fifth verse of the *Vitakkasanthāna-sutta*, “Gritting one’s teeth .....,” is quoted “with the opposite connotation of what the Buddha intended.”

I still think that “encountering thoughts in relaxation” is a consistent principle in the Buddha’s approach to dealing with unwholesome thoughts. It is a way to develop an attitude of relaxation, awareness, equanimity, and compassion that is completely different from the fight-or-flight reactions that we tend to bring up. Sitting upright in zazen is, in fact, only possible on the condition of deep relaxation of body and mind. The state of “thinking of not thinking” or “beyond thinking” is a state in which thoughts are flowing freely and naturally as thoughts without resistance or obstruction (a state in which “no chasing, no dispelling” or “letting go of thoughts” is achieved), and it is only under such conditions that it can become a reality. At the end of the *Vitakkasanthāna-sutta*, it is written, “(Such a) bhikkhu is called a bhikkhu who has mastered the path of thought connection. If he wants to think a thought, he thinks it; if he does not want to think it, he does not think it. He has overcome craving, shed his attachments,



and through correct insight into self-consciousness (pride), he has ended his worries and suffering.” Our zazen also aims not to overcome our thoughts as “enemies,” but to “train ourselves on the path where our thoughts are connected.”

Before concluding this essay, I would like to introduce a poem titled “The Guesthouse,” which is said to have been written by Rumi (1207-1273), a 13th century Islamic mystic (Sufi) poet, as a reminder of this point.

### “The Guest House”

Every human being is a guesthouse.  
Every morning a new guest arrives.  
Joy, melancholy, despondency, and even a  
moment’s awareness.

They come as unexpected visitors.  
Welcome and entertain all visitors.  
Even if it is a group of sadness  
Be as hospitable as possible.  
Even if it is a rough ride through an unfurnished house  
Perhaps the visitor is trying to refresh your spirit so that new joys can come in.  
Even if gloom, deceit, and sometimes malice come your way  
Greet them at the door with laughter and invite them in.  
Whatever comes, be thankful.  
They are all sent to your life  
As guides from far away.

(End of this section)

## NEWS

### **May 5, 2023**

South America Zen Workshop was held at Busshinji, in São Paulo, Brazil

### **May 6, 2023**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Busshinji, in São Paulo, Brazil

### **May 25, 2023**

Association of Soto Zen North America Conference was held at Zenshuji, in Los Angeles, U.S.A

### **May 25.26, 2023**

North America Zen Workshop was held at Zenshuji, in Los Angeles, U.S.A

### **June 20, 2023**

Europe Soto Zen Conference was held at Zoom

### **June 21~30, 2023**

Baika classes by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Baika Teacher were held at 6 places in South America.

### **August 21, 2023**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Peruvian-Japanese Cultural Center in Lima, Peru

### **September 14~26, 2023**

Dharma talks by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher were held at 6 places in North America

### **September 15~25, 2023**

Dharma talks by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Teacher were held at 8 places in South America

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