



SOTO ZEN JOURNAL

# DHARMA EYE

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## **A New Director is Appointed for the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office**

**Rev. Soho Kakita**

Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism  
Europe Office

In 1991, I was a monk at Daihonzan Eiheiiji. At that time, Eiheiiji had an overseas training program in which one of the trainee monks was selected each year and sent to temples and institutions related to Soto Zen Buddhism in North America, Europe, and other countries to deepen exchange between Eiheiiji and the sanghas in those countries through participation in Sesshins and other activities. Thankfully, I was chosen as an overseas *Ango* trainee that year and was able to visit various sanghas within about three months from July to October.

Specifically, I was able to stay at Jakkoji in Germany, La Gendronniere in France, Wakozenji in Spain, and Fudenji in Italy for about two weeks each to participate in Sesshins, and, although it was not planned in advance, I was also able to attend zazen meetings of small groups in the UK and France.

During this period, I was struck by the great sincerity with which the people of these places were engaged in zazen, especially the leaders of each dojo, who put their lives on the line to make Soto Zen their own and to make it take root locally, and who faced various obstacles that do not exist in Japan.

Thirty-three years later, January 1 of this year,

I was appointed to the position of the director of Soto Zen Buddhism Europe office. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to be in a position to promote Zen together with European sangha members, and at the same time I am acutely aware of the weight of my own responsibility.

Thirty-three years ago was the year the Gulf War broke out, and the year Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union. As we all know, these two major events continue to have a profound impact on those of us living in the year 2024. History is a continuous chain. In this constantly shifting and chaotic world of today, the role of Soto Zen is by no means small.

When I think about world peace, I always think of “*Shobogenzo Shoaku Makusa.*” I quote some of the passages from the chapter below.

*Among the “evils”, there are similarities and dissimilarities between the evils of this world and the evil of other worlds; similarities and dissimilarities between prior and later times; similarities and dissimilarities between the evil of the devas and the evil of humans. Even greater still is the divergence between what is called “evil”, what is called “good”, and what is called “indeterminate” in the way of the buddhas and the secular world. Good and evil are temporal, but time is neither good nor evil.*

Dogen Zenji explains here that the way we understand good and evil differs depending on the era and region, and similarly, evils in the Buddha’s world and evil in the general world may be the same or different. As disciples of Buddha, we naturally must do good and not do

evil in the Buddha's way.

*We should realize that hearing "do no evil" is the true dharma of buddhas. This [phrase], "do not do evil," is not something first created and made to be like this by the common person; we hear it like this when we hear the teaching that is bodhi become talk. What we hear like this is speech that is unsurpassed bodhi in words. Since it is the words of bodhi, it is the bodhi of words. Being turned by what is heard when unsurpassed bodhi becomes talk, we aspire to "do no evil" and continue practicing "do no evil." And where evils are no longer done, the power of practice suddenly appears.*

These words "do no evil," become the teaching of *Mujo-bodai* (ultimate bodhi), and guided by this teaching, we pray not to do evil, and go on to practice. As we do so, we will learn not to do all kinds of evil. That's when the power of our practice suddenly appears.

*Just such a person at just such a time, though staying or traveling in places where evil might be done, or encountering situations in which evil might be done, or mixing with friends who do evil, can no longer do evil: for there appears the power of "do no."*

Dogen Zenji says that a person who has manifested the power of practice will never do evil, even if he/she is in an environment where it would be natural for him/her to do evil. If you try to make constant efforts not do evil, you will gradually come to stop doing evil naturally without having to try very hard. That's what Dogen Zenji calls "the appearance of the power of practice."

The same can be said for tackling the problems of contemporary society, including war. At the beginning, it is important to strive with the mind that there should be no war. We need to keep that in mind at all times and reflect on what we do. In the meantime, the power of practice will surely emerge, and only then will there be a real solution to these problems.

I believe that to become such a person who cannot do evil even if he wants to is a goal of Buddhism and Zen, and it is our practice to keep making efforts accordingly.

Also included in "*Shoaku Makusa*" is a famous dialogue between the Tang poet Bai Juyi and Choka Daolin Zenji.

One day, Bai Juyi asked Daolin Zenji, "What is the important meaning of Buddhism?". Daolin Zenji's answer was, "To do no evil, practice good." When Bai Juyi heard this, he said, "Even a three-year-old child can say that." In response, Daolin Zenji replied, "Even a three-year-old child may be able to say this, but it's difficult for an eighty-year-old man to do it." Bai Juyi could not reply to this, and he bowed his gratitude and went away.

As Bai Juyi said, everyone knows what not to do. Even if you understand it, it is difficult to put it into practice. To put this into practice, it is necessary to always keep it in mind, act, and reflect. As you do this, you will begin to develop what Dogen Zenji called "power of practice", and you will become a person who cannot do evil. True peace will be achieved when every one of us is able to overcome all evil in the true

sense of the word.

As an example, I cited a portion of “*Shoaku Makusa*”. Although Dogen Zenji’s teachings were preached in the 13th century, they still serve as valuable guidelines for us today.

Now that I have been appointed Director of the Soto Zen Europe office, I would like to become more familiar with zazen with people in Europe, and to learn and deepen Soto Zen together. Thank you for reading to the end.

Note: The italicized texts are quotations from “*Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*” published by Sotoshu Shumuchō.



## **Report on the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony for the 700th Anniversary for the Daihonzan Sojiji’s Founder of Taiso Keizan Jokin Zenji in 2023**

### **The Soto Zen Text Project**

Zen Master Keizan Jokin, who is revered as the Great Ancestor of the Soto School, was born in 1264. At the age of eight, he was taken to Eihei-ji by his mother, Ekan Daishi. At the age of thirteen, he received ordination from the second abbot of Eihei-ji, Kōun Ejo Zenji. Keizan Zenji devoted his life to the propagation of the true transmission of the Buddhadharma and the training of his disciples until 1325, the year of his death.

Please refer to the series of articles on Keizan Zenji starting from Issue No. 51 of this newsletter.

In April 2024, Daihonzan Sojiji will hold the 700th anniversary of the death of Keizan Zenji to commemorate his legacy. Prior to this event, preliminary memorial ceremonies were held in 2023 in nine districts in Japan and four international districts outside of Japan. This report describes the Preliminary Memorial Ceremonies that were held outside of Japan.

### **Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office**

Date: May 6 and 7, 2023

Place: Busshin-ji (Sao Paulo, Federative Republic of Brazil)

The first Preliminary Memorial Ceremony held outside of Japan took place at Busshin-ji, the South American branch of the Two Head Temples.

Busshinji is located in the center of Sao Paulo, Federative Republic of Brazil, in an Asian neighborhood called Liberdade. The main Dharma Hall, with its wooden floor and tatami mats, was rebuilt in 1995. It has an atmosphere that Japanese visitors feel nostalgic about. The temple is a place where daily services as well as monthly memorial services are held. The temple has close ties not only with Japanese immigrants but also with the local community.



Prior to the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony, practice for the various memorial ceremonies, as well as the annual conference for *Kokusaifukyoshi* (International Teacher of Sotoshu) in South America were held on the mornings of May 5th and 6th respectively. There are currently sixteen *Kokusaifukyoshi* working in the South American region who are committed to missionary work in Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, and other regions of South America.

At 7:00 p.m. on May 6th, a Special Decoction Offering Ceremony was officiated by Rev. Choho Seino, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism South America Office, with nearly 100 people, mostly members of Busshinji, in attendance.

On the following day, May 7th, the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony was conducted in a solemn atmosphere with Rev. Taiyu Kurauchi,

Director of the Publications Department of the Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism in Tokyo, as the officiating priest. The ceremony was followed by the Prayer Ceremony with revolving reading of the Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra to pray for the further development of international missionary work in South America, and also a memorial service in memory of those who have been involved in International Activities in South America.



### **Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office**

Date: May 26 and 27, 2023

Place: Zenshuji (Los Angeles, California)

The Preliminary Memorial Ceremony in North America was held at Zenshuji Temple in Los Angeles, California about three weeks after the South American Preliminary Memorial Ceremony. The Preliminary Memorial Ceremony was held in conjunction with the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen in North American Celebration. Many participants from Japan, including the tour from Japan for the celebration, the members of the Soto Zen Assembly in Japan, as well as the priests who assisted in the preparations for the event.

Please refer to Issue No.52 of this newsletter

for details on the 100th Anniversary of Soto Zen in North America.



On May 25 and 26, the conference and workshop in North America was held with the participation of about sixty priests. Rev. *Bunryu Oyama, Ino* (rector) at Daihonzan Sojiji, was invited to give a lecture about Keizan Zenji, and also, took also took charge of practice for the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony, as well as performing *Ino* during the Preliminary ceremony. This was an excellent opportunity for the participants who were mainly Zen priests from the North American district to learn how to chant the Sutras and the Dedication for the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony. In addition, Specially Dispatched Baika Teacher Rev. Shinryu Okuma and Rev. Shinko Yokoyama led the participants in chanting “*Sanbo-go-wasan*” (*Hymn in Praise of the Three Treasures*) in English in the Baika lecture.

On May 26th in the main hall of Zenshuji temple, Rev. Gengo Akiba, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office, officiated the Special Decoction Offering Ceremony, which was attended by more than 100 people, including parishioners and members of Zen centers and temples in the North America. On May 27th, Rev. Shusei Hattori, President of the Administra-

tive Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism, officiated the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony.

The main hall of Zenshuji is lined with pews like the benches in a Christian church, and the area that corresponds to the inner sanctum (*Daima*) and the inner sanctuary (*Naijin*) of a Japanese Zen temple are on a stage. Participants looked up at the scroll of Keizan Zenji hanging above the stage and quietly offered incense in Peace.



### **Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office**

Date: October 7 and 8, 2023

Place: La Gendronniere (Blois, France)

The Preliminary Memorial Ceremony in Europe was held at La Gendronniere which is in the suburbs of Blois, France. La Gendronniere is about a three-hour drive from Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office in Paris, so it is not easy to get there from Paris. Therefore, it was necessary for the staff of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office to go with the staff of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center to La Gendronniere to inspect the site beforehand to determine what Buddhist ritual implements were missing and

what work was needed to perform the ceremonies. Since the Dharma Hall at La Gendronniere is designed differently from Japanese-style Dharma Halls, and because the ceiling is remarkably high, there was no place to hang the scroll with the image of Keizan Zenji, so with the help of local people, the scroll was hung from the ceiling by tool made by our hands.



As of February 2024, there are fifty-one *Kokusaifukyoshi* (international Soto missionaries) in Europe. More than 150 Priests from various parts of Europe gathered for the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony. Some of them traveled more than ten hours by bus from as far away as northern Italy to attend this event. On Feb. 4th, various priests gathered earlier than the other participants to clean every corner of the Dharma Hall and practice for the ceremonies. On the morning Feb. 6th and 7th, all the priests participated in practicing for the ceremonies.

On Feb. 7th, at 5:30 p.m., Rev. Shoten Minegishi, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism Europe Office, officiated the Special Decoction Offering Ceremony, and at 9:00 a.m. on the 8th,

Rev. Tenyu Fukagawa, Director of the Education and Dissemination Department, Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism, officiated the Preliminary Memorial. The morning zazen and morning service on the Feb. 8th were performed by more than 150 Soto Zen priests. This was a wonderful opportunity to experience firsthand the spread of Soto Zen in Europe.



### **Soto Zen Buddhism Hawaii Office**

Date: October 21 and 22, 2023

Place: Shoboji (Honolulu, Hawaii)

The last Preliminary Memorial Ceremony held outside of Japan took place at the end of October at Shoboji, Hawaii, in the heat of the tropics, with a refreshing breeze blowing like early summer in Japan. Although there are not as many *Kokusaifukyoshi* and priests in Hawaii as in other international regions, there are many Japanese immigrants. There are also many temples that are rooted in the local community, just like temples in Japan. We also had a few Japanese priests volunteer to help perform the ceremonies.

On Oct. 20th, Hawaii Soto Zen Conference was held with about ten *Kokusaifukyoshi* from

all over the state of Hawaii, and on Oct. 21st, all the gathered priests exchanged greetings with each other in Japanese and English and then practiced for the various ceremonies. The participants felt that it was a good opportunity for them to learn from each other in English and Japanese without the use of an interpreter. On the morning of Oct. 21st, Rev. Konjin Godwin, Director of the Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, gave a lecture for the 120th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism in Hawaii, which was about the spread of the Soto Zen teachings from Japan to Hawaii and then to North America. About thirty people, both priests and parishioners, attended this event.



On Oct. 21st, Rev. Shinko Miura, *Godo* of Kasuisai monastery in Japan, officiated the Special Decoction Offering Ceremony, and on Oct. 22nd, Rev. Tenyu Fukagawa, Director of the Education and Dissemination Department, Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism, officiated the Preliminary Memorial Ceremony. Rev. Miura has experience teaching Baika-style singing in Hawaii, and a group from Kasuisai monastery also attended the service, mainly from the Baika group. When Rev. Miura entered and exited the hall, the hall was filled with the beauty of the harmony of the chanting by the

local Baika group and the Baika group from Kasuisai monastery.

**Lastly, we would like to conclude with a few words.**

The Preliminary Memorial Ceremonies for the 700th Anniversary of Daihonzan Sojiji's Founder Taisho Keizan Jokin Zenji in 2023, which were held outside of Japan were successfully completed. In April 2024, the Great Memorial Ceremony will finally be held at Daihonzan Sojiji for a total of twenty-one days. The Soto Zen Buddhism International Center, in cooperation with the four international regional Offices and the International Department of the Administrative Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism, is planning a tour from April 21 to 23, 2024 for Soto Zen priests and practitioners from outside Japan to visit both Ryodaihonzan Eiheiiji and Sojiji, and to have ceremony and sutras at Daihonzan Sojiji. About 100 people will participate in this event. They will have the good fortune to be able to participate in the 700th Anniversary of the Founder of Daihonzan Sojiji, the Great Ancestor Keizan Zenji. We look forward to seeing you all in Japan in April.





## The Life and Great Work of Keizan Zenji (3)

**Rev. Ryuken Yokoyama**  
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In this installment, I would like to give an overview of the human image of Keizan Zenji (1264-1325) as found in the Chronicles of *Tokoku Monastery* (*Tokokuki*) and related materials. The portrayal of Keizan Zenji found in religious writings such as the *Record of the Transmission of Illumination* (*Denkoroku*) (a record of Keizan Zenji's lectures) is truly that of "A founder of the Soto school" and a "religious figure." On the other hand, looking at Keizan Zenji's diaries and notes preserved in the *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*, a different aspect of Keizan Zenji as an individual living in the medieval era emerges, distinct from the typical image of a "religious figure."

### Keizan Zenji as a Medieval Figure

Reading through the Chronicles of *Tokoku Monastery*, one notices that Keizan Zenji and those around him frequently experienced mysterious dreams, and numerous divinations took place. For instance, arhats or native Japanese deities appeared in the dreams of Keizan Zenji and his disciples, delivering messages. When strange events occur, Keizan Zenji used divination to determine their auspicious or inauspicious nature. Also, when deciding on an auspicious date for important activities, he consulted divination. While these aspects of Keizan Zenji may seem to deviate from the realm of "Bud-

dhism" or "Zen" as understood by contemporary individuals, they are considered to be the real aspects of Keizan Zenji as an "individual" who lived in the medieval era in Japan.

In modern times, when a person wakes up haunted by nightmares, there are times when feelings of anxiety overwhelm them. Popular television programs and magazines invariably feature horoscope columns, and if you visit a bookstore, you will find numerous books related to divination on display. Additionally, during celebratory or mourning occasions, people may choose auspicious dates using the "Rokuyo"<sup>1</sup> method or avoid certain days and directions to ensure safety. In this way, dreams and divination hold a certain value for those of us living in the present day. However, for many, dreams remain just dreams, and divination is ultimately just divination. This is because dreams and divination are not considered a part of our reality.

However, for people in the medieval period, the prophetic messages of dreams<sup>2</sup> and the results of divination served as communications from transcendent beings (gods or buddhas) and held such power that they could constrain reality. Keizan Zenji stated, "Relying on the dream's profound message, make decisions accordingly<sup>3</sup>," suggesting that if there were prophetic dreams, one would act in accordance with them. Moreover, when undertaking significant tasks such as constructing a temple, individuals would use divination to choose auspicious days to ensure smooth progress. Let's explore specific examples from the *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery* to see how divination and dreams were employed during this time.

## Keizan and Divination – Rokugonichi (Six Combination Days)

In the *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery* there are records related to the construction of Yokoji Temple. Let's examine the records regarding the construction of the Saishoden (Butsuden Hall) in the year 1322. The *Chronicles* mention the following events: 1) the laying of the cornerstone on April 3rd,<sup>4</sup> 2) the placement of foundation stones on April 18th, 3) the setting up of pillars on April 26th, 4) the placement of the ridgepole on August 8th, and 5) the topping-out ceremony on August 16th<sup>5</sup>. Among these, events 1 through 4 were performed on the “rokugonichi” (auspicious days determined by the combination of the zodiac signs of the birth year) of Sonin-ni (Yokoji's biggest donor) and her daughters.

The “Rokugonichi” is a method of determining auspicious days based on the zodiac sign of one's birth year, and it is a form of divination influenced by the concepts of yin and yang. According to the explanation in the “Kichijitsu Koi Hiden,” reportedly compiled during the Muromachi period by Kamo no Motonori (1412-1479), the following combination of zodiac signs is used to derive Rokugonichi<sup>6</sup>:

### 【Combination of Ten Stems (Kan干)】

甲 (Kan) 己 (Ki) 乙 (Otsu) 庚 (Ko) 丙 (Hei)  
辛 (Shin) 丁 (Tei) 壬 (Jin) 戊 (Bo) 癸 (Ki)

### 【Combination of Twelve Branches (Shi支)】

子 (Shi) 丑 (Chu) 寅 (In) 亥 (Gai) 卯 (Bo)  
戌 (Jutsu) 辰 (Shin) 酉 (Yu) 己 (Shi) 甲 (Shin)  
午 (Go) 未 (Bi)

An Example For a person born in the 6th year of Reiwa (2024): → The 6th year of Reiwa is

represented by “ko 甲 and shin 辰.” Therefore, the Rokugonichi for someone born in the 6th year of Reiwa is the combination of the “ko 甲” Kan stem, which pairs with “ki 己,” and the “shin 辰” Shi branch, which pairs with “yu 酉.” In this case, it becomes “ki 己 yu 酉.” In the 6th year of Reiwa, there are six occurrences of the day “ki 己 yu 酉,” which fall on February 15th, April 15th, June 14th, August 13th, October 12th, and December 11th. These days are considered auspicious for individuals born in the 6th year of Reiwa.

In this way, auspicious days can be easily calculated by remembering one's zodiac sign and the combinations of heavenly stems (Kan合) and earthly branches (Shi合). While only the auspicious days of the nun Sonin-ni were mentioned in example ①, examples ② to ④ not only referred to the auspicious days of Sonin-ni's daughters but were also considered auspicious days in other divination practices. For instance, example ② was not only the auspicious day of one of her daughters but was also considered a favorable day in the esoteric divination method called “Honmyo Shuku.”

Furthermore, in the case of the “topping-off ceremony” mentioned in example ⑤, where various divination methods are employed, the date August 16th, Xin-Si, was a day on which auspicious days overlap in no less than eight different divination methods<sup>7</sup>. Relying on various divination techniques, Keizan Zenji carefully selected this significant day<sup>8</sup> for the construction of the temple, emphasizing the auspiciousness of the occasion. Keizan Zenji's meticulous approach in choosing this important

day for the construction of the temple, by using a variety of divination methods, is well acknowledged.

### **Keizan and Dreams – Power to Pioneer the Future**

From the process of constructing the Butsuden Hall, we can observe Keizan Zenji's attitude of using divination to choose auspicious days. Looking at it from the reverse perspective, Keizan Zenji, in his actions, tried to avoid things that were not auspicious – that is, unfavorable days or inauspicious matters. As an example of avoiding inauspiciousness, let's refer to the construction process of the Goroho (the grave of the five venerable ancestors: Nyojo Zenji, Dogen Zenji, Ejo Zenji, Gikai Zenji, and Keizan Zenji). There, due to the ominous remarks made by a certain individual, construction was brought to a temporary halt.

Construction of Goroho began on April 8th, 1323<sup>9</sup>, in the third year of Engo. On this day, the Buddha's birthday celebration ("Kotan-e") coincided with an auspicious day. Once again, an auspicious day was chosen. Right after the commencement of construction, someone made a critical remark saying, "If the pagoda's head (Goroho) is higher than the main temple, the lineage of the school will be severed." (Goroho is located at a higher position than the central structure of Yokoji). The cessation of Dharma heirs signified the interruption of the vital lineage of Soto Zen, an extremely ominous occurrence. Therefore, Keizan Zenji decided to determine the validity of this criticism through a dream divination. The result of the dream divination was obtained on June 4th.

Around 4 a.m. on June 4th, Keizan Zenji experienced an auspicious dream and spontaneously composed the following poem within the dream:

"I live in the mountains of Nasaka<sup>10</sup>,  
Where people have trodden countless times,  
The path is solidified by their steps.  
Even after I die and rest under the tomb  
(beneath the moss),  
People will continue to come to Yokoji seeking teachings."<sup>11</sup>

In the dream, he expressed his conviction through this poem, stating that even if Goroho was erected at a higher location, akin to the well-trodden path on Mount Nasaka, people would continue to seek teachings at Yokoji even if after his passing he was buried beneath the moss.

Keizan Zenji, inspired by the auspicious dream and his own poem, reaffirmed his belief that his Dharma heirs would prosper. As a result, he decided to continue with the construction of Goroho at its elevated location.

Furthermore, the auspicious dream that Keizan Zenji experienced around 4 a.m. (the hour of the tiger) corresponds to dawn or daybreak. The time of dawn, as the night begins to give way to daylight, is considered a "sacred time"<sup>12</sup> in the world of folklore, where the visible world and the invisible world intersect. Seeing an auspicious dream at such a special time, dawn, provides a glimpse into the medieval world in which Keizan Zenji lived.

In any case, it is presumed that approxi-

mately two months passed from receiving the criticism from someone until experiencing the auspicious dream. During this period, it is believed that the construction was put on hold. Subsequently, Keizan Zenji initiated the construction of Dentoin, a hall dedicated to the founder of the temple. In the construction of the Dentoin, the selection of significant dates was not based on divination but rather on the memorial days associated with the ancestors enshrined in the hall. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on August 22nd, which was two days before the auspicious day of the death anniversary of Ejo Zenji. The topping-off ceremony on September 13th occurred on the eve of the memorial day for Gikai Zenji. The completion of the Dentoin on September 28th coincided with the memorial day for Dogen Zenji.

The case of Goroho, where the project was halted due to inauspicious remarks and resumed after confirming the exclusion of unfavorable elements through dream divination, vividly demonstrates the avoidance of inauspicious events in medieval society. It also reflects the perceived binding force of divination results (in this case, the resumption of Goroho construction) on reality. This suggests that in medieval society, there was a tangible belief in avoiding inauspicious occurrences and attaching significance to the outcomes of divination.

In addition, it is intriguing that Keizan Zenji himself sought to verify whether the inauspicious criticisms regarding the location of Goroho were accurate. If there were experts in divination, such as onmyoji (divination experts) or miko (female shamans), in his vicinity, he could

have consulted them. However, he did not choose to do so. For example, Kyogaku (1395-1473), a monk affiliated with the Hosso sect, serving at Kofuku-ji Temple, expressed concern about the auspiciousness of an incident when a snake emerged from a melon beside a straw bale in June of the fourth year of Bun'an (1447). He sought the advice of an acquaintance who was a divination expert and, upon receiving an explanation that it was an auspicious event, felt relieved, as recorded in his diary<sup>13</sup>.

It can be inferred that Keizan Zenji did not have a divination specialist, as Kyogaku did, whom he could consult readily. Therefore, Keizan Zenji himself took on the role of a divination practitioner. He engaged in dream divination, confirmed the exclusion of unfavorable elements, and then proceeded to forge the future, paving the way for the completion of Goroho.

If we consider it in this way, even if Keizan Zenji used various esoteric divination techniques at that time, it would have been a natural practice in the broader society, including both the clergy and laity, as a means of “warding off inauspicious elements.” This should not necessarily be conflated with Keizan Zenji’s personal religious beliefs. While there is often a discourse that says “Soto Zen adopted esoteric practices through Keizan Zenji,”<sup>14</sup> that observation is not considered to be accurate or well-founded.

## **A Human Portrait of Keizan Zenji ① —Overcoming the Temperament of Youth—**

So far, we have traced the image of Keizan Zenji as a medieval person. In the following, I would like to approach the human image of

Keizan Zenji known from the descriptions in the *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*.

In the previous section on Keizan Zenji, it was mentioned that at the age of nineteen, Keizan Zenji had a spiritual turning point, attaining the position of “unwavering resolve” under the guidance of Jakuen Zenji. A crucial transformation occurred in Keizan Zenji’s disposition. He described his previous nature as wrathful and easily irritated<sup>15</sup>. “Wrathful” refers to anger, not as being quick-tempered, but indicating a strong sense of justice combined with fastidiousness. In other words, there was a lack of tolerance. Although Keizan Zenji, known as a “compassionate person,” later dedicated himself to the welfare of others, in the initial stages of his practice, he possessed a temperament opposite to compassion. An event symbolizing this temperament is recorded in “Entsu Tsuki” (included in the *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*.)

“At the age of 19 (1282), particularly in the autumn, I earnestly sought the Buddha’s Way. Eventually, [under Zen master Jakuen at Hokoji Temple,] I was appointed to Ino and excelled in temple duties. People universally praised me. However, there was one person who vehemently criticized and slandered me. Anger welled up in my heart, and I even contemplated committing a grave sin. At such a moment, I suddenly reflected deeply.

“Since my childhood, I have possessed exceptional talents, and now, with a sincere aspiration for the bodhisattva way, I am assigned to the position of Ino (Head monk).

My desire is to become a leader in Buddhism, guiding all sentient beings. This is my great aspiration. If I were to commit wrongdoing, my life would become utterly meaningless. Henceforth, I will never let anger arise.” As a result, my heart naturally became compassionate and gentle. Now, at the age of 59 (1322), I have become a respectable leader. This transformation is not only due to my own repentance but also the power of prayers from my beloved mother (Enkan Daishi 1228-1314), and elder sister.<sup>16</sup>

Through the transformative reflection that followed the brink of committing a mistake, Keizan Zenji underwent a profound change, becoming a “person of compassion.” It was this transformation that attracted many disciples and patrons to gather around him. Keizan Zenji had already specified the attire and colors disciples should wear at his funeral, <sup>17</sup>a testament to his compassionate nature and meticulous consideration that remained unchanged until his final moments.

### **A Human Portrait of Keizan Zenji ②—Keizan Zenji as Seen by His Disciples—**

How did Keizan Zenji’s disciples perceive his character? Fortunately, the funeral eulogies read at Keizan Zenji’s funeral have been preserved, providing insight into this question. I would like to quote them below.

#### **【The Funeral Eulogy given for Keizan Zenji by Meiho Sotetsu Zenji】**

*“Oh, I am perplexed by the multitude of kindnesses received from the Master. I try to speak without desire or attachment, but the deep*

*kindness received as a disciple from his master is beyond words.*"<sup>18</sup>

**【The Funeral Eulogy given for Keizan Zenji by Chinzan Gensho Zenji】**

*“Having devoted myself diligently without sparing my body and mind, how can I repay the virtues of kindness I received from Keizan Zenji, who nurtured me with love? I am now overwhelmed with sorrow, but I will never forget his constant kindness.”*<sup>19</sup>

**【The Funeral Eulogy given for Keizan Zenji by Gasan Joseki Zenji】**

“From morning till night, I pursued Dongshan’s five ranks (five ways of classifying the manifested world of enlightenment). The virtues of Keizan Zenji are deeper than the ocean, higher than Mount Tai, when thinking about the received kindness. ... Oh, for over twenty years, I have diligently served him day and night. The strict but encouraging guidance that continued throughout the day has now come to an end.”<sup>20</sup>

From the statement of Gasan Joseki Zenji, it is known that Keizan Zenji’s training hall was known for rigorous practices throughout the day. Despite this, the disciples collectively expressed their gratitude for the deep kindness received from Keizan Zenji and praised his virtues, portraying the image of Keizan Zenji as a compassionate and considerate instructor during his time as a Zen master. Keizan Zenji had many disciples and lay supporters, and his compassion and meticulous consideration remained unchanged until the final moments.

**The Human Portrait of Keizan Zenji ③—The Salvation of Women—**

Among the disciples of Keizan Zenji, records indicate the presence of notable women figures such as Enkan Daishi, Sonin-ni, Enkan Myosho, Kinto Ekyu, Shozen-ni, En’i Shami-ni, Shimyo, Shinsho, Jonin, and Ninkai, to name a few. Additionally, expressions like “Jojuji Sho Ni Shu”<sup>21</sup> suggest the presence of a considerable number of nuns. While other Zen masters like Dogen Zenji and Kangan Giinoin Zenji had nuns among their disciples, the number appears to be significantly fewer compared to those who gathered under Keian Zenji.

Among them, Kinto Ekyu, who inherited the Dharma from Keizan Zenji, is known to have reached a high spiritual level. In a poem dedicated to the nun Shozen-ni, Kinto Ekyu sang her praises as follows:

“In the spring of Keiun 3 (1340), Shozen-ni passed away. Thereafter, I deeply grieved over her, and in sorrow, I composed a poem for her. The disciples were pleased, and they had an image of the nun, but they did not inquire about it. I longed for the nun as well.”

“On December 22, the first year of the Genko era (1321), I (Keizan Zenji) asked Sonin-ni, “The year is coming to an end, and a new spring is about to come. How does it appear?” Sonin-ni responded, “Is there, within the truth of this world, something like a tree without shadows and with branches that have transcended relative distinctions? Should there be relative phenomena such as time and seasons within the boundaries of undifferen-

tiated absoluteness?” This is Sonin-ni’s initial excellent verse. I have recorded it for future reference.<sup>22</sup>

From these examples, it is evident that many of the nun disciples who joined Keizan Zenji were not “goke amas” (nuns who formally entered monastic life to memorialize their husbands or families) but rather nuns who actively engaged in Zen practice with the goal of enlightenment.<sup>23</sup> Accepting the aspirations of these nun practitioners, Keizan Zenji provided guidance without distinction based on gender.

Accepting such a large number of nun disciples, it is believed that Keizan Zenji’s unique philosophy of rescuing women played a significant role. In the later years, on May 23, 1325, in the second year of Shochu, Keizan Zenji made a vow for the salvation of women.

“In this current life, as the son of the compassionate mother Enkan Daishi, I, Keizan, earnestly pray for the realization of her wish for the salvation of women. She was a bodhisattva dedicated to the salvation of women. Therefore, I dare not deceive or betray her will. Entrusting myself to her bequeathed command, I shall uphold this vow.”<sup>24</sup>

According to the quoted text, it is known that the redemption of women was a directive from his mother, Enkan Daishi. Enkan Daishi passed away in the third year of Showa (1314), and subsequently, in the first year of Bunpo (1317), Keizan Zenji entered Yokoji Temple. Most of the nun disciples mentioned earlier became disciples

during his time as the head priest of Yokoji Temple. In other words, after entering Yokoji Temple, Keizan Zenji steadily implemented the directive from his mother, who had passed away just before the founding of Yokoji Temple.

In the second year of Genko (1322), on June 18th, the Entsuin Temple (a temple within Yokoji Temple) was completed and handed over to the founding nun, Sonin-ni. This temple, designated by Keizan Zenji as the “place of prayer for the compassionate vow of Enkan Daishi to save women,”<sup>25</sup> served as a concrete institution for the relief of women. Additionally, to commemorate and pray for the salvation of Enkan Daishi, Keizan Zenji established the Ho-o-ji Temple, a nunnery in Kaga. For Ho-o-ji Temple, he also donated temple lands such as fields, showing special consideration to ensure that the nun practitioners at Ho-o-ji Temple could engage in their practices without economic concerns.

Keizan Zenji was born into this world through the earnest prayers of Enkan Daishi to Bodhisattva Kannon. After entering monastic life at Eiheiji Temple and renouncing worldly ties, Keizan Zenji, though having severed connections with the secular world, was continuously prayed for by Enkan Daishi to Bodhisattva Kannon, wishing for him to navigate all aspects of life smoothly.<sup>26</sup> Reflecting on the power of those prayers, Keizan Zenji expressed that it was thanks to the prayers that he was able to become a full-fledged monk. To repay the depth of a mother’s love and affection, even when physically distant, Keizan Zenji diligently worked towards the salvation of women. The philosophy of rescuing and respecting women seen in Keizan

Zenji originated from his acts of gratitude towards his compassionate mother, Enkan Daishi.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Chinese and Japanese calendars, there is a combination of ten heavenly stems (ko甲, otsu乙, hei丙, tei丁, bo戊, ki己, ko庚, shin辛, jin壬, ki癸) and twelve earthly branches (mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar) assigned to each year, month, day, and hour. These combinations (e.g., ko甲-shi子, otsu乙-chu丑, hei丙-in寅, and so on, totaling 60 combinations) are used. In modern Japan, the zodiac signs are commonly used only for years, but they are also assigned to each month and day. In the lunar calendar, as a month generally consists of about 30 days, the zodiac sign for each day completes one cycle every two months.

<sup>2</sup> Sakai, Norimi, *Dream Narratives and Dream Interpretation in the Middle Ages*, published by Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2021) p.156.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from an ancient manuscript: *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery (Tokokuki)* as referenced in the work “Shohon Taiko Yozan Zenshi “Tokokuki” (A Collection of Various Manuscripts: Zen Master Keizan’s *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*), published by Shunjusha, 2015. The quotes are in the original classical Chinese, and the source is a manuscript copied in the fourth year of the Eikyo era (1432). Quotes from *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery* in the rest of this article are taken from this publication.

<sup>4</sup> A prayer ceremony for safety performed when felling trees to procure construction materials.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> *Zoku Gunshoruiju*, 31. P.48.

<sup>7</sup> While some divination methods mentioned in this text are not explicitly detailed, the text notes the use of a divination system based on the Junishi and Junishi Hatsu Hachi Shuku for divination. The Junishi represents daily fortunes, and on August 16th, it corresponds to “Naru no Hi” (成の日), a day believed to be conducive to the fulfillment of things. The Nijuhachi Shuku represents the stars that the moon passes through during its approximately 27.32-day orbit around the Earth. Based on “Suku Shukyokyo”, Keizan Zenji used the Nijuhachi Shuku, excluding Gyushuku, to determine auspicious days.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 3, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 3, p.11.

<sup>10</sup> Near Yokoji, there is a slope called “Dan-tanna Nasaka-zaka. Whether there is a connection between this slope and the expression Mt. Nasaka is not clear.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 3, pp.11-12. The original poem was written in Manyoshu-kana.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 3, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Mizuno, Masayoshi. *Divination in Ancient and Medieval Japan: Encountering the Origin of the Soul*, published by Takashi Shoin, 2022. P.127.

<sup>14</sup> Hikariji, Eikaku’s article “Esoteric Considerations of Zen Master Keizan and Their Origins”

(published in *Shugaku Kenkyu*, 1960) and other places

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 3. From “Entsuin Engi”, found in *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*. p.10.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 3., p.10.

<sup>17</sup> This is found in *Chronicles of Tokoku Monastery*.

<sup>18</sup> “Words from the Memorial Service for the Founder of Tokoku Monastery.” *Zenrin Yujushu*. Aichigakuin Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan, 1999. P. 30.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.32.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. pp.30-31.

<sup>21</sup> “Eihei Daisan Daijo Kaisan Osho Senge Soji Kiki” in *The Collected Works of the Soto Sect Part II*, P.2.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 3. P.10.

<sup>23</sup> Ishikawa Rikizan. “On the Aspects of Nuns in Medieval Buddhism (Part 2) Focusing on Cases from the Early Soto Sect Religious Community.” Published in “Komazawa Daigaku Zen Kenkyujo Nenpo.” 1993, p.68.

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 3, p.4.

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 3, p.5.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote, p.10.



## **My Footnotes on Zazen (26)**

### **Viewing Zazen from the Perspective of the Alexander Technique (1)**

**Rev. Issho Fujita**

The first time I received lessons in the Alexander Technique was when I was at a Zen temple in Massachusetts. It was during a Sunday zazen session at Valley Zendo, where I was residing as the head priest. While discussing how to achieve the correct sitting posture, a participant from another state suggested, "Do you know about the Alexander Technique? If you are trying to do zazen with the thoughts you just shared, it will surely be helpful. Why not take a lesson? There must be Alexander Technique teachers in this area, so you should look for one." Hearing the name Alexander Technique for the first time, I was intrigued by the participant's enthusiastic recommendation. Since there was no internet at that time, I began asking around and eventually found an advertisement in a small magazine that read, "Alexander Technique lessons offered." After making a phone call, I learned that there was a studio near Mount Holyoke College, the oldest women's college in the United States, where my zazen lessons were conducted weekly in a tearoom.

I immediately made a reservation before the zazen lesson and went to the studio. There, I had my first lesson from an Alexander Technique teacher who was also a cellist. When I mentioned that I was a Zen Buddhist priest from Japan and had been recommended to try the

Alexander Technique in connection with zazen, he exclaimed, "Wow, that's wonderful! Welcome!" As the lesson began, he gently placed his hands behind my head and occasionally provided guidance such as, "Let the entire head and body move up and forward." He had me stand, sit on a chair, stand up from the chair, and walk around the room while giving instructions. Then he asked me to demonstrate my zazen posture. Sitting on a cushion on the sofa, he began gently touching my head, neck, shoulders, and back, making subtle adjustments. While I followed his instructions, he would occasionally say, "Yes" or "Good," though I couldn't understand what he meant. The one-hour session concluded with a lesson on lying on my back, bending my knees on a platform about the height of my hips. Contrary to my initial misconception that the technique involved manipulating the body like chiropractic or osteopathy, it turned out to be more of a "movement re-education," focusing on paying detailed attention to how I used my body with the help of the teacher.

Afterwards, I went to the tearoom on the university campus, as usual, and conducted a zazen session with college students. I immediately shared what I had learned, explaining my own discoveries about zazen, and walking meditation. Both I and the participants felt a fresh and profound interest, sensing a kind of deepening in the practice of zazen. Thinking, "This is interesting, let's learn more," I continued to take lessons from him several times.

Subsequently, based on my experiences of receiving lessons from various Alexander teachers in the United States and Japan, I developed a

conviction that if the fundamental principles of the Alexander Technique could be effectively translated into the practice of zazen, it could be a significant aid in opening the gateway to the "The Dharma Gate of Peace and Ease" and delving into its depths. Of course, reproducing the subtle sensations and insights of Alexander Technique lessons, guided by a teacher and focused on self-awareness, through written words is inherently impossible. Fortunately, Alexander Technique has gradually become known in Japan, and qualified teachers are increasing, so I strongly recommend those interested to seek out a teacher and experience actual lessons. Valuable insights for practicing zazen are sure to be gained. In this essay, I would like to discuss what insights can be suggested regarding the practice of zazen from the perspective of the Alexander Technique.

The Alexander Technique is a theory and technique developed by Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), an Australian, about the skillful use of the "self." In his early years, Alexander was a successful Shakespearean reciter. However, during performances, his voice would become hoarse or cease altogether. After ceasing to consult doctors, he began to thoroughly examine how he used his body. After nearly a decade of detailed observation, he noticed a characteristic that hindered him. It was a habitual pattern of muscle movement where, whenever he tried to move his body, he would invariably tense the back of his neck, tilt his head back, and push his chin up. This had become a habitual, unconscious movement pattern of muscles, causing him to unknowingly pull his head back, compress his throat, and

exert pressure on his vocal cords when trying to speak. Furthermore, he discovered that the more he tried to stop this tendency through simple exertion, the more it intensified ("Effort can only reinforce what you already know," F. M. Alexander). The Alexander Technique emerged from his efforts to address these challenging issues.

We often say things like, "My lower back is hurting," as if the "self" and the lower back were unrelated expressions. Alexander argues that this is a complete mistake. The root of the problem is not the lower back causing trouble independently of the self; rather, it is the self misusing the integrated body-mind that is the source of the trouble. In Alexander Technique terms, the misuse of the self is the real issue. Therefore, to resolve the problem, one simply needs to stop misusing oneself ("Stop doing the wrong thing, and the right thing will do itself," F. M. Alexander).

The term "use of the self" is an interesting expression. It is neither the use of the "body" nor the use of the "mind" but the use of the self as an integrated entity encompassing both body and mind. This involves questioning how the entire self, as an entity, responds to various situations in daily life. According to Alexander, every human being has a constantly changing dynamic relationship between the "head-neck-back (trunk)," and the overall use of the body-mind is determined by how this relationship is utilized. In other words, the use of the self depends on whether the balance between the head and neck is maintained, and further, it is determined by the influence of the head and neck on the spine. Alexander called this the "Pri-

mary Control."

Importantly, the Primary Control is not an artificial ability that must be acquired through effort. Vertebrates naturally possess the instinctive ability that when they have the intention to do something, the head leads, the spine moves, and the entire body starts moving. For example, the baby in this picture is not sitting with good posture by exerting effort and using muscles. On



the contrary, it is precisely because there is no such "effort" that the Primary Control is fully manifested, demonstrating excellent overall body coordination. It is necessary to stop interfering with the natural functioning of the head-neck-back (undoing the misuse of Primary Control). This emphasis on the importance of stopping incorrect movements (undoing) is a distinctive feature of the Alexander Technique.

Having learned the concept of Primary Control from the Alexander Technique, let's now examine zazen from this perspective. In everyday life, supported by the coordination of the entire body through the Primary Control, we

move our hands and feet and speak as needed. This can be described as a state where the Primary Control is in the background, and various movements and speech are in the foreground. In contrast, in zazen, all such movements are completely stopped, “marks the three modes of karma with the buddha seal” from *Bendowa*, (“Talk on Pursuing the Way”), crossing the legs, folding the hands, closing the lips, gently placing the tongue at the top of the mouth, and maintaining a stable yet non-rigid state of the head-neck-back, standing straight

against gravity. In other words, it can be said that in zazen, movements and speech are completely eliminated, and the Primary Control is fully expressed in the foreground. It is a state where the expression of the self, with the Primary Control fully exposed. In Alexander's terms, a wise way of living is using oneself skillfully. Therefore, it might be said that zazen, prioritizing the functioning of the Primary Control, polishes the skillful use of the self.

(To be continued)

## NEWS

### **October 6.7, 2023**

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

### **October 18·November 3, 2023, January 24, 2024**

South America Zen Workshop was held at Zoom

### **October 19~21, 2023**

Hawaii Zen Workshop was held at Shoboji in Hawaii, U.S.A.

### **October 20, 2023**

Hawaii Soto Zen Conference was held at Shoboji in Hawaii, U.S.A.

### **December 19, 2023**

South America Soto Zen Conference was held at Zoom

### **February 13~19, 2024**

Baika classes by Sotoshu Specially Dispatched Baika Teacher were held at three places in North America

### **February 24, 2024**

Hawaii Soto Zen Conference was held at Shoboji in Hawaii, U.S.A.



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