

## Chapter 14

## ZEN BUDDHISM

While most schools of Buddhism cite particular scriptures in support of their own special form of Buddhist practice, the Zen school, in contrast, rejects claims of scriptural authority and embraces many different practices. Its legitimacy rests on claims to an exclusive ancestral lineage that has been passed from teacher to disciple in an unbroken succession from Shākyamuni, the historical Buddha, down to the present day.

Zen legend says that one day on Vulture Peak, Shākyamuni Buddha preached a sermon not with words but by holding up a flower. Mahā Kāshyapa was the only one of Shākyamuni's many disciples who grasped the true significance of this wordless teaching, which he expressed by a slight smile. Mahā Kāshyapa thereby inherited Shākyamuni's robe and lineage as the second Zen ancestor. The Zen lineage was faithfully transmitted in India through twenty-eight generations until Bodhidharma (J: Daruma) brought it to China sometime in the sixth century. According to Zen teachers, certification in this lineage ensured that Zen monastics and their disciples practiced Buddhism correctly as living embodiments of the Buddha's awakened wisdom. Thus, regardless of whatever types of Buddhist practices Zen monks performed, they always would have more religious power than the exact same practices engaged in by other monks not affiliated with Zen. Because Zen orthodoxy rests on the teacher-disciple lineage alone, instead of issues of doctrine or practice, Zen clerics have

historically enjoyed great flexibility in adapting a wide variety of activities, from tantric (esoteric) rituals to Pure Land chanting, to their Zen practice.

The development of the Zen lineage is difficult to determine on the basis of the extant historical evidence. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), several competing Zen (Ch: Chan) lineages emerged, each with distinct unilinear genealogical claims and each seeming to advocate a different approach to Buddhist practice. Regardless of the relative importance any particular lineage afforded meditation exercise (the literal meaning of *zen* or *chan*), scriptural study, or other monastic routines, each insisted that all of their ancestors and teachers had attained full awakening to the wisdom of the Buddha Mind. Some of these Tang-dynasty lineages were transmitted to Japan, most notably by Saichō (767–822), the founder of the Tendai establishment on Mount Hiei. But in Heian-period Japan, when any accomplished practitioner of meditation or esoteric rituals could be called “Zen master” (*zenji*), teacher-disciple Zen lineages were not maintained.

During the Song dynasty (960–1279), a more comprehensive vision of the Zen lineage became dominant, a multibranching one encompassing five or more family lines to which almost any ordained cleric could find affiliation. Hagiographical compendiums, known as “flame records” (*tōroku*),<sup>1</sup> compiled during the Song dynasty, depicted the Zen ancestors of all lines as expressing the activity of Buddha awakening in novel ways, with shouts or gestures and strikes and with enigmatic and sometimes impious language. Collections of these individual episodes, known as *kōan* (Ch: *gongan*),<sup>2</sup> were compiled so that they could be studied as guidelines for Buddhist practice. Song-dynasty records explained the significance of these seemingly bizarre stories in a pithy verse, attributed to Bodhidharma, which summarizes the Zen message: “A special transmission outside the scriptures, not relying on words or letters; pointing directly to the human mind, seeing true nature is becoming a Buddha.”

It is important to note that this emphasis on going outside the orthodox scriptures did not displace the traditional Buddhist monastic practices of chanting, meditation, and scriptural study. Rather, it revitalized them and changed them with increased soteriological significance by insisting that they must be performed as meaningful expressions of individual awakening realized in the here and now. The effectiveness of Zen rhetoric in promoting strict monastic practice was recognized by the Song government when it officially designated most state-recognized monasteries (i.e., public institutions, open to any legally

1. The term *tōroku* is commonly rendered as referring to the “transmission of the lamp,” but the basic metaphor is one in which the flame of wisdom burning in one lamp is used to ignite other lamps. It is the flame that is transmitted, not the lamps.

2. Literally, “public cases” but better understood as “test cases.”



ordained monk, that offer prayers for the long life of the emperor) as being Chan (Zen) cloisters. These temples housed the monastic elites, the monks with the best education (in both Buddhist scriptures and Confucian classics), the most sincere religious motivation, the strictest discipline, and the strongest ties to powerful political patrons. It was natural, therefore, that Japanese monks who traveled to Song-dynasty China in search of a new model of Buddhist vitality, as well as Chinese émigré monks who subsequently came to Japan, would identify themselves with the Zen lineage.

### ZEN IN JAPAN

Japanese Zen tradition customarily cites Eisai (aka Yōsai, 1141–1215) and Dōgen (1200–1253) as the first teachers of Song-dynasty Zen in Japan and as the founders of the Rinzaï (Ch: Linji) and Sōtō (Ch: Caodong) Zen lineages, respectively. Certainly Eisai and Dōgen were important Zen pioneers who laid the foundation for subsequent developments, but their Zen teachings had little immediate impact. Even the wave of Chinese émigré Zen teachers who fled to Japan from the advancing Mongol armies and found new patrons among the military rulers of Kamakura immediately before and after the first Mongol invasion attempt of 1274 remained largely isolated from cultural currents. These Chinese monks provided the Hōjō regents and the new military government with a cosmopolitan aura otherwise lacking in the provincial town of Kamakura. But overall, the Kamakura warlords continued to sponsor established Buddhist schools and to join Pure Land and Nichiren movements as well. It was not until the second- and third-generation Japanese disciples of this first wave of Zen pioneers found new patrons among rival warlords and among members of the royal family that Zen became prominent in Japan.

Eisai was a Tendai monk who traveled to China twice (in 1168 and from 1187 to 1197). He was especially impressed by the resolute discipline of Chinese monasteries, which contrasted markedly with the moral laxity so common among Japanese clerics. Eisai believed that Zen would breathe new life into Japanese Tendai by reviving strict observance of the Buddhist precepts and the norms of monastic decorum. But Eisai's agenda was opposed by the Tendai establishment on Mount Hiei. He also had to contend with competition from the Darumashū, a rival Zen group founded by another Tendai monk named Nonin, who never went to China but who had received mail-order certification in a Chinese Zen lineage. The Darumashū (named after Bodhidharma) promoted ideas completely opposite from Eisai's goals. They taught that no monastic discipline was required, since Buddha awakening could be expressed in any activity. In 1194, the court in Kyoto banned the Zen teachings of Eisai and the Darumashū. Eisai's most important work, the *Propagation of Zen for the Protection of the State* (*Kōzen gokokuron*, 1198), is an eloquent defense of Chi-

nese Zen training that shows how it differs from normative Japanese Tendai and Darumashū practices.

Dōgen also began his monastic career in Tendai but soon switched to Zen under the guidance of one of Eisai's disciples. Dōgen spent four years in China (1223–1227), but unlike Eisai he was not edified by what he saw as political corruption in Song monasticism. Upon returning to Japan, he did not try to reform Tendai or promote Zen among the ruling elite. Instead, he established a small Zen temple on the outskirts of Kyoto. After a group of former Darumashū monks joined his community, Dōgen moved deep into the wilderness of Echizen (Fukui Prefecture), where his potential audience was even smaller. Although Dōgen died in relative obscurity, in modern times his writings have achieved wide recognition as works of religious and philosophical genius. His *How to Practice Buddhism* (*Bendowa*, 1231) remains to this day a widely studied primer for Zen practice. And his *True Dharma Eye Treasury* (*Shōbōgenzō*, unfinished) is celebrated for the novel ways in which it analyzes *kan* stories to express the wordless truth of Zen awakening in language.

Eisai's and Dōgen's very limited success at propagating Zen illustrates a crucial issue in our understanding of medieval Japanese religion. The religious life of the age often has been explained almost exclusively in terms of the so-called New Buddhism of the Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen traditions that first appeared during the Kamakura period and remain the dominant forms of Japanese Buddhism to this day. Recent scholarship has emphasized, however, that these new schools for a long while remained relatively marginal movements with little political power or cultural influence compared with the orthodox mainstream of mixed esoteric and tantric (*kennimitsu*) Buddhism represented by the major landholding monasteries of Nara, Kyoto, and Mount Hiei. This Esoteric Buddhism was a dominant force in all aspects of medieval Japanese culture: politics, economics, literature, arts, and religion, including the worship of local gods (i.e., the *honji suijaku* forms of Shinto). To survive, the new forms of Kamakura Buddhism either had to move into the countryside beyond the reach of Esoteric Buddhist control or compromise with the preexisting Buddhist power structure or both.

Japanese Zen developed along both lines. Zen found a home in the state-recognized Buddhist establishment in the form of the Five Mountain (Gozan) temple networks of Kamakura and Kyoto. Although the title "Five Mountain" had been awarded to some Zen temples by the Hōjō regents, initially it was just an honorary designation. Through the political machinations of, first, Emperor Go-Daigo (1288–1339) and, subsequently, the Ashikaga military rulers, the Five Mountain system eventually consisted of some three hundred Zen monasteries, ranked into three tiers, that provided crucial income to the royal family and the military rulers. At the top tier were the large urban monasteries in Kyoto that performed tantric rites for the benefit of the state, sponsored foreign trade with China, managed the military government's estates, and, most of all, pro-



master-to-disciple transmission of the Zen lineage preserves the correct forms of monastic discipline as well as strict adherence to the precepts. He further attacks the Darumashū as false Zen, defends Zen's rejection of language, and attempts to show how Zen practice will reform wayward Japanese Buddhist monasticism.

### Preface

So great is Mind! Heaven's height is immeasurable, but Mind goes above it. Earth's depth is unfathomable, but Mind extends beneath it. The light of the sun and moon cannot be outdistanced, yet Mind reaches beyond them. Galaxies are as infinite as grains of sand, yet Mind spreads outside them. How great is the empty space! How primal is the ether! Still Mind encompasses all space and generates the ethereal. Because of it, Heaven and Earth treat us with their coverage and support. The sun and moon treat us with their circuits, and the four seasons treat us with their transformations. The myriad things treat us with their fecundity. Great indeed is Mind! Of necessity we assign it names: the Supreme Vehicle, the Prime Meaning, the True Aspect of Transcendental Wisdom [Paiñā], the Single Dharma Realm of Truth, the Unsurpassed Awakened Wisdom [Bodhi], the Heroic Concentration [Shūrangama samādhi], the True Dharma Eye Matrix, the Marvelous Mind of Nirvāna. All scriptures of the Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel and eight canons, as well as all the doctrines of the Four Shāla Trees and Five Vehicles fit neatly within it.<sup>3</sup>

The Great Hero Shākyamuni's having conveyed this Mind Dharma to his disciple the golden ascetic Mahā Kāshyapa is known as the special transmission outside the scriptures. From their facing one another on Vulture Peak to Mahā Kāshyapa's smile in Cockleg Cave, the raised flower produced thousands of shoots; from this one fountainhead sprang ten thousand streams. In India the proper succession was maintained. In China the dharma generations were tightly linked. Thus has the true dharma as propagated by the Buddhas of old been handed down along with the dharma robe. Thus have the correct ritual forms of Buddhist ascetic training been made manifest. The substance of the dharma is kept whole through master-disciple relationships, and confusion over correct and incorrect monastic decorum is eliminated. In fact, after Bodhidharma, the great master who came from the West, sailed across the South Seas and planted his staff on the banks of the East River in China, the Dharma-eye

Zen lineage of Fayan Wenyi was transmitted to Korea and the Ox-head Zen lineage of Niudou Farong was brought to Japan. Studying Zen, one rides all vehicles of Buddhism; practicing Zen, one attains awakening in a single lifetime. Outwardly promoting the moral discipline of the Nirvāna Scripture while inwardly embodying the wisdom and compassion of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Scripture is the essence of Zen.

In our kingdom the sovereign shines in splendor and his honor extends far and wide. Envoies from distant fabled lands pay their respects to his court. Ministers conduct the affairs of the realm while monastics propagate the path of renunciation. Even the dharma of the Four Hindu Vedas finds use. Why then discard the five family lineages of Zen? Nonetheless, many malign this teaching, calling it the Zen of blind trance. Others doubt it, calling it the evil of clinging to emptiness. Still others consider it ill-suited to this latter age of dharma decline, saying that it is not needed in our land. Or they disparage my capacity, saying that I lack sufficient power. They belittle my spiritual ability, saying that it is impossible for me to revive what was already abandoned. Whoever attempts to uphold the Dharma Jewel in such a way destroys the Dharma Jewel. Not being me, how can they know my mind? Not only do they block the gateway through the Zen barriers, but they also defy the legacy of Saichō, the founder of Mount Hiei. Alas, how sad, how distressing. Which of us is right? Which of us is wrong?

I have compiled an anthology of the Buddhist scriptures that record the essential teachings of our lineage for consideration by today's pundits and for the benefit of posterity. This anthology is in three fascicles consisting of ten chapters, and it is entitled *Propagation of Zen for the Protection of the State* in accordance with the basic idea of the Sutra for Humane Kings. As my humble fictive words accord with reality, I ignore the catcalls of ministers and monastics. Remembering that the Zen of Linji benefits his later generations, I am not embarrassed by their written slanders. I merely hope that the flame of wisdom transmitted in Zen verse will not be extinguished until the arrival of Maiteya and that the fountain of Zen will flow unimpeded until the future eon of the Thousand Buddhas.

[Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 8-9, WB]

### ZEN AND PRECEPTS

QUESTION: Some criticize you, asking what makes you think this new Zen lineage will cause Buddhism to flourish forever?

ANSWER: Moral precepts and monastic discipline cause Buddhism to flourish forever. Moral precepts and monastic discipline are the essence of Zen. Therefore, Zen causes Buddhism to flourish forever. Zhiyi's *Calmness and Contemplation* states: "Worldly desires of ordi-

3. The Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel correspond to the Flower Garland Scripture (Buddhāvataṃsaka), the provisional scriptures, and the Lotus Scripture (Saddharma puṇḍarīka). The "eight canons" is a catchall term for all genres of Buddhist scripture. The Four Shāla Trees, a reference to the four trees among which Shākyamuni passed away into nirvāna, symbolize impermanence. The Five Vehicles refer to Buddhist practices that lead to human rebirth, heaven, or the spiritual attainments of the *arhat*, solitary Buddha, or bodhisattva (i.e., full Buddha realization).



many people are denounced by all the holy ones. Evil is destroyed by pure wisdom. Pure wisdom arises from pure Zen. Pure Zen arises from pure precepts."

[Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 35-36; WB]

#### THE DARUMASHŪ

QUESTION: Some people say that the Zen teaching of "not relying on words and letters" means the evil of clinging to emptiness and the practice of blind trance. If so, then Tendai opposes it. In Zhi-yi's *Calm- ing and Contemplation*, where it explains contemplation of the inconceivable object, it says: "This cannot be known by the Zen teachers of blind trance or the dharma masters of scriptural chanting." In Zhi-yi's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Scripture* it says: "If those who contemplate Mind think that their own mind is it, equate themselves with the Buddha, and ignore the scriptures, then they fall into the error of arrogance. It is like holding a torch so as to burn oneself." Likewise, Zhanran's commentary on this passage says: "Grasping the torch of blind trance burns the hand of cavalier mediator." How do you respond to these criticisms of not relying on words and letters?

ANSWER: This Zen lineage despises teachers of blind trance and hates people who practice the evil of clinging to emptiness. They are as repugnant as corpses sunk to the bottom of the ocean. We solely rely on the Perfect Teaching, cultivating the perfect and the sudden. Outwardly we observe the precepts to eliminate vice, inwardly we employ compassion to benefit others. This is called the Zen teaching. This is called the Buddha dharma. Those who practice blind Zen and cling to evil not only lack our teaching but are thieves of the dharma. Yongming Yanshou's *Zen Mirror Record* says: "Principle truly responds to conditions. No practice obstructs principle. Practice rests on principle. No practice exists without principle. Those people who do not enter the Perfect Teaching but disparage others as being beneath them and regard themselves as spiritually advanced have not only lost the practice but completely lack principle. One must merely awaken to the essence of the One Mind free from all obstructions, in which principle and practice fuse together naturally, in which the worldly and the ultimate merge completely. If one clings to practice and mistakes principle, then one sinks into eons of *samsāra*. If one awakens to principle but neglects practice, then one lacks perfect realization. How can principle and practice not be products of the mind? How could essence and appearance not correspond? If one enters the Zen

Mirror and suddenly awakens to the True Mind, then even the words 'principle' or 'practice' do not exist, much less the clinging to principle or practice. But after attaining the fundamental, one must not abandon perfect cultivation. How can those practitioners of the Zen of blind trance even know of the Six Identities between Buddha and Humans? How can the crazed chanters of the scripture even be aware of the One Mind?" ...

QUESTION: But what about those who mistakenly refer to the Zen lineage as the Darumashū? They teach: "There is nothing to practice, nothing to cultivate. Originally afflictions (*klesha*) do not exist. From the beginning, afflictions are *bodhi*. Therefore, moral precepts and monastic rituals are of no use. One should merely eat and sleep as needed. Why must anyone labor to recall the Buddha (*nembutsu*), to worship relics, or to observe dietary restrictions?" What about their teaching?

ANSWER: There is no evil that such people will not do. They are the ones the scriptures denounce as nihilists. One must not talk with such people nor even sit with them. One must avoid them by a thousand *yojana* [about 8,500 miles].

[Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 39-41; WB]

#### LANGUAGE

"Scriptures," or "Zen" are merely names. "Investigate," or "study" likewise are merely provisional designations. "Self," "other," "living beings," "*bodhi*," "*nirvāṇa*," and so forth are just words, without any real existence. Similarly, because the dharma preached by the Buddha is just such words, in reality nothing was preached.

For this reason Zen lies beyond the details of words and letters, outside mental conditions, in the inconceivable, in what ultimately cannot be grasped. "So-called Buddha dharma consists of the dharma that cannot be preached." So-called Zen is exactly the same. If anyone says the Buddha's Zen exists in words, letters, or speech, then that person slanders the Buddha and slanders the dharma. For this reason our ancestral teachers did not rely on words and letters, pointed directly at the human mind, saw nature, and became Buddhas. Such is Zen practice. Whoever clings to words loses the dharma, whoever clings to appearances becomes topsy-turvy. Fundamentally inactive, without a thing to grasp, is seeing the Buddha dharma. The Buddha dharma consists of merely walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. Adding even a single fine hair to it is impossible. Subtracting even a single fine hair from it is impossible. Once one attains this understanding, then expend not even the least effort. With even the slightest attempt at being clever, one has already missed it. Therefore, ac-



tivity gives rise to *samsāra* while quietude leaves one in a drunken stupor, and avoiding both activity and quietude displays ignorance of Buddha nature. If one does none of the above, then what? This point lies outside clarification of doctrine. It cannot be fathomed through words. Look ahead and see! Get up and go! Once the arrow leaves the bow, there is no art that can bring it back. Even the thousand Buddhas could not grab it. As long as it has not hit the ground, no matter how much one might rue the crooked shot, one merely seizes air. Even if one tried until the last days of one's life, there is no grasping it.

[Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 62–63; WB]

#### TEN FACILITIES FOR ZEN MONASTICISM

Facilities for Zen Monasticism consist of ten items, which I describe in accordance with the *Pure Rules for Zen Cloisters* and other Chinese standards.

First, the monastery: Monasteries can be large or small, but all should conform to the layout of the Buddha's Jetavana Vihāra (Gion Shōja) in India. Along the four sides there are walls without side gates. There is only one main gate, which the gatekeeper shuts at dusk and opens at dawn. Nuns, women, and inauspicious people must not be allowed to stay the night. The decline of the Buddha dharma always results from women.

Second, ordinations: The distinction between Hīnayāna precepts and Mahāyāna precepts exists only in the hearts of men. Because one must merely embody sentiments of great compassion for the benefit of others, Zen does not choose between Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna precepts but merely focuses on living a pure life.

Third, observing the precepts: After ordination, if one violates the precepts, it would be the same as obtaining a precious jewel only in order to smash it. Therefore one must strictly observe the two hundred fifty *bhikṣu* [monk] precepts, as well as the bodhisattva's three groups of pure precepts, ten major precepts, and forty-eight minor precepts. Twice each month during the *uposatha* ceremony, these precepts must be reviewed as explained in the precept scriptures. Anyone who violates the precepts must be kicked out. Such a one can be likened to a corpse cast into the ocean.

Fourth, academic study: Learning that spans the entire Buddhist canon and conduct that accords with the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna precepts as well as proper monastic decorum constitute being a field of merit for gods and men. Inwardly embodying the great compassion of the bodhisattvas constitutes being a benevolent father to all living beings. In this way we become a valued jewel to the sovereign and a good physician to the country. To these goals we must aspire.

Fifth, ritual conduct: monastics observe dietary restrictions, practice chastity, and obey the Buddha's words. The schedule for each night and day are as follows: At dusk all monks assemble in the Buddha Hall to offer incense and worship. At evening they practice sitting Zen (*zazen*). During the third watch of the night (about 2:00 A.M.) they sleep. During the fourth watch they sleep. At the fifth watch they practice sitting Zen. At cockcrow they assemble in the Buddha Hall to offer incense and worship. At dawn they eat morning gruel. At the hour of the dragon (about 8:00 A.M.) they chant scriptures, study, or attend elder monks. At midmorning they practice sitting Zen. At noon they eat their daily meal. Afterwards they bathe or wash. During midafternoon they practice sitting Zen. Late afternoons are free time. The four periods of sitting Zen must be diligently practiced. Each moment of sitting Zen repays one's debts to the state; each act commemorates the sovereign's long life. These rituals truly cause the imperial reign to long prosper and the dharma flame to shine forever.

Sixth, monastic decorum: Old and young must always wear full robes. When they encounter one another, they must first place the palms of their hands together and then bow their heads to the ground in harmonious expressions of respect. Also, all meals, all walking exercises, all sitting Zen, all academic study, all chanting, and all sleeping must be performed as a group. Even if a hundred thousand monks are together inside one hall, each of them must observe correct monastic decorum. If someone is absent, the group leader (*inō*) must investigate and must not forgive even the slightest transgression.

Seventh, robes: Both inner and outer wear should conform to Chinese designs. These imply circumspection. One must be prudent in all affairs.

Eighth, disciples: Those who embody morality and wisdom without lapse should be admitted to the assembly. They must possess both mental and physical ability.

Ninth, economic income: As they say, "Do not cultivate the fields, since sitting Zen leaves no time for it. Do not hoard treasures, since the Buddha's words alone suffice." Aside from one cooked meal each day, eliminate all other needs. The dharma of monks consists of being satisfied with as little as possible.

Tenth, summer and winter retreats: The summer retreat begins on the fifteenth day of the fourth moon and ends on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon. The winter retreat begins on the fifteenth day of the tenth moon and ends on the fifteenth day of the first moon. Both of these two retreats were established by the Buddhas. Do not doubt it. In our land these retreats have not been practiced for a long time. In the great land of Song-dynasty China, however, not a single monk fails to participate in the two retreats. From the standpoint of the Buddha dharma, the Japanese practice of calculating one's monastic seniority in terms of the retreats without actually participating in them is laughable.

[Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 80–83; WB]



ESSENTIALS FOR MONASTICS (*SHUKKE TAIKŌ*)

Unlike *Propagation of Zen for the Protection of the State*, which was directed toward a wide audience of court officials and ecclesiastical officials, Eisai wrote this treatise for his own followers as a guide to the proper lifestyle for Buddhist monks and nuns. In it, he confesses that before his trip to China he had, like most other Japanese monks, ignored the Buddhist prohibitions against eating meat and drinking alcohol. Eisai's vigorous advocacy for observing the Buddhist precepts is remarkable not just because it goes against the currents of Japanese Buddhist history but also because it stresses such elementary points (e.g., the distinctions between Buddhist robes and secular clothing) that the reader is left with the impression that clerics of Eisai's time completely lacked any firsthand knowledge of traditional Buddhist monastic norms. The opening section gives an overview of the treatise.

The Buddha dharma is the boat that ferries one across the sea of death, the chariot that traverses the roads of delusion, the good medicine that cures our eternal afflictions, the torch that illuminates our long night. The depth of its merit cannot be fathomed. Now that the degenerate and evil age has finally arrived, our ability to know suffering must develop. Now that we have entered the beginning of the latter five hundred years, the number of people who study precepts must increase. The Great Perfection of Wisdom Scripture's prophecy that it will be propagated in northeastern lands during the latter age must refer to today's Japan. Likewise, how could the Nirvāṇa Scripture's goal of promoting moral discipline during the latter age have been intended for any other time? The same applies to the Lotus Scripture's four peaceful practices for the evil age and to the *Calmness and Contemplation's* encouragement of *samādhi*. What is essential for this age is merely to follow the Buddha's own words, namely, "promoting moral discipline by preaching the permanent."

The life essence of the Buddha dharma is moral purity. You must comprehend this life essence. The five-thousand scrolls of scriptures are called the Buddha dharma. How can you chant them without practicing what they teach? The sixty scrolls of Zhiyi's commentaries are known as the Tendai Perfect Doctrine. How can you discuss them without following their principles? You must know that Buddha dharma consists of the Buddha's wondrous decorum. Only a person who knows the Buddha dharma's meaning, who understands its principles, and who practices its decorum can be called a Buddhist.

In this treatise I outline the practice of Buddhist decorum in order to save people during this latter age. The Buddhist canon of discourses, discipline, and treatises resembles a contract. They record the principles of the threefold study (meditation, morality, and wisdom) of the Buddha dharma. For example, contracts for estates (*shōen*) are preserved in a ledger to show how much profit can

be derived from planting, weeding, and harvesting a piece of land. Similarly, chanting the discourses, discipline, and treatises and practicing their teachings show you how to rectify body and mind and how to follow the Buddha's footsteps.

The *Seven Past Buddhas' Precept Verse* says: "Refrain from all evil; Perform every manner of good; Purify your own mind; This is the teaching of all Buddhas." All the doctrines preached by the Buddha throughout his teaching career are summed up in this one verse. How can you rely on the Buddha's teaching to leave your home as a renunciant monk, yet not follow the Buddha's admonition? The time to uphold the precepts has arrived. How can you imagine that observing the precepts is tiresome? Isn't the wheel of suffering around your neck more bothersome? When impermanence strikes you in the face, don't be caught lackadaisically napping.

When I, Eisai, was in Great China, I studied the holy scriptures, recorded the main points of the discipline, and then returned to Japan. Once here, I knew that the time was ripe and that people's spiritual capacities were ready for me to promote the precepts. When so many monks responded to my encouragement, I experienced joy a thousand times over. Since my twenty-first year until my fiftieth year, I have trained as a Buddhist monk in Japan and in China for a full thirty years. During that time I never before experienced any miracles. Now, however, I have the miracle of all of you following me. Based on the notes that I took in China, I have written this treatise on precepts for the latter age. Anyone who wishes to attain moral purity should follow its exhortations. The essentials for monastics are written herein.

Maintaining moral purity consists of two main types of practices. The first concerns robes and meals. The second concerns practice and decorum. First, robes cover the body while meals nourish the body. Second, practice means observing the Buddhist precepts while decorum means proper etiquette. Each of these consists of two types. There are secular robes and dharma robes. There are invitations to banquets and begging for food. There are *bhikṣu* precepts and *bodhisattva* precepts. There are secular forms of etiquette and the universal norms of the Way. . . .

[from the 1789 woodblock edition]

## DŌGEN: HOW TO PRACTICE BUDDHISM (BENDŌWA)

Dōgen wrote this treatise in 1231 at the beginning of his ministry as a basic introduction to Zen Buddhism. In the following excerpts, Dōgen argues that true Buddhism has been preserved only by members of the Zen lineage and can be learned only by studying under a fully initiated Zen teacher. True Buddhism consists of practicing sitting Zen (*zazen*), which Dōgen identifies as self-actualizing *samādhi* or, in other



words, the concentration that transforms both self and the world experienced by self into its original state of awakened Buddha activity. According to Dōgen, other Buddhist practices lack this kind of spiritual efficacy.

After arousing dharma-seeking mind, I traveled throughout our kingdom searching for a good teacher. Finally I met Master Myōzen at Kenninji monastery. I followed him for nine swift years as I heard about the Rinzaï family lineage. Master Myōzen was the foremost disciple of ancestor Eisai, from whom he alone received correct transmission of the supreme Buddha dharma. No one else compared to Myōzen.

Later I journeyed to the Great Song-dynasty China and visited various good teachers along both sides of the Qiantang River, where I learned the ways of the five family lineages of Zen. Finally, I met Zen Master Ruijing on the Great White Peak of Mount Tiandong and completed the great goal of my lifelong study. Thereafter, I returned home in 1227 to save living beings by propagating the dharma. I felt as if I shouldered a heavy responsibility.

Yet I put aside my burden, and waiting for a favorable opportunity, I moved about like a cloud or tumbleweed, all the while wanting to teach in the style of my former mentor. I thought there must be a few student monks unconcerned with fame and fortune who consider the Buddha Way of first importance in their sincere study. What if they were led astray by false teachers who obscure correct understanding and thereby became self-deluded or sunk in *samsāra*? When would they ever sprout the true seeds of Prajñā [awakened wisdom] and attain the Way? As long as I move about like a cloud or tumbleweed, how can they cross the mountains or rivers to visit me? Out of concern for these monks, I have written about the practices that I saw and heard in the Zen monasteries of Great Song-dynasty China and about the abstruse import that my good teacher [Ruijing] taught me. I dedicate this treatise to all students devoted to the Way so that they may know the true dharma. Here is the genuine initiation.

We teach: The Great Master, Lord Shākyamuni, atop Vulture Peak in India transmitted the dharma to Mahā Kāshyapa. Correctly transmitted from ancestor to ancestor, it subsequently reached the venerable Bodhidharma. Venerable Bodhidharma traveled to China and transmitted the dharma to Master Huike. Thus was the Buddha dharma first transmitted to China.

In this same manner the dharma was directly transmitted to Huineng, the sixth ancestor, also known as Great Mirror Zen Master. From him the authentic Buddha dharma spread throughout China without divisions. He produced two fabulous disciples: Nanyue Huairang and Qingyuan Xing-ci. Both of them transmitted and preserved the Buddha-mind Seal (*mudrā*), and both were teachers of gods and men. From these two disciples, five family lineages emerged: the Fayen line, the Guiyang line, the Caodong line, the Yunmen line, and the Linji line. Today in Song-dynasty China only the Linji lineage is widespread. Although the five family lineages differ, there is just one Buddha-mind Seal.

In China, since the Later Han dynasty [first century], various Buddhist scriptures had been translated repeatedly, but no one could separate the grain from the chaff. When Bodhidharma came from the West, he cut through the confusion, and since then the single pure Buddha dharma spread everywhere. We must try to do the same in our land.

We teach: For all the Buddha dharma-preserving Zen ancestors and Buddhas, sitting upright in the practice of self-actualizing (*jīnyū*) *samādhi* [concentration] is the true path of awakening. Both in India and in China, all who have attained awakening did so in this way. Because in every generation each teacher and each disciple intimately and correctly transmitted this marvelous art, I learned the genuine initiation.

In the correctly transmitted Zen lineage we teach: This directly transmitted, authoritative Buddha dharma is the best of the best. Once you start studying under a good teacher, there is no need for lighting incense, worshipful prostrations, recalling the Buddha (*nembutsu*), repentance, or chanting scripture. Just sit (*shikan taza*) and slough off body-mind (*shinjin datsuraku*).

If you, for however short a while, imprint all your activities with the Buddha-mind Seal by sitting upright in *samādhi*, then all things in the entire dharma realm become imprinted with the Buddha-mind Seal, and the entire cosmos becomes awakening. Thereupon all Buddhas and Tathāgatas increase their fundamental essence of dharma joy, and the adornments of the way of awakening are revitalized. Moreover, at this very moment all living beings in the six courses of rebirth throughout all dharma realms of the ten directions simultaneously purify their body-minds, realize great liberation, and discover their original faces. All things realize complete awakening, all creatures access Buddha bodies, transcend the boundaries of awakening, sit as Buddhas at the base of the tree of awakening, and simultaneously turn the incomparable Dharma Wheel that expresses deep, ultimate, unconditioned Prajñā.

Because the Fully Awakened Ones [Buddhas] provide mysterious assistance, when you practice sitting Zen, you will definitely slough off body-mind, eliminate habitually defiled thought patterns, and realize divinely genuine Buddha dharma. You will aid all Buddha activity in all Buddha wayfaring sites as infinite as atoms. You will encourage the aptitude for practicing beyond Buddha and promote the dharma beyond Buddha. At that moment all lands, plants, fences, and roof tiles throughout the dharma realms of the ten directions also engage in Buddha activity, causing everyone to obtain the Buddha's inconceivable mysterious assistance in attaining awakening as easily as they receive natural blessings like wind and water. Just as everyone makes use of water and fire, so too you will circulate the innate realization of Buddha deliverance so that everyone living or talking with you will all embody inexhaustible Buddha-virtue. As it unfolds and widens without end, without break, the inconceivable, infinite Buddha dharma will flow throughout the entire cosmos and beyond. The fact that the one who practices sitting Zen is unaware of the Buddha's mysterious



assistance is because it is direct realization of nondeliberative quiescence. If, as ordinary people suppose, cultivation and realization are two separate processes, then it would be possible to be aware of each in isolation. But what interacts with our awareness cannot be fundamental realization because fundamental realization is beyond deluded human thoughts.

Moreover, although both subject and object disappear and reappear during the practice of quiescent realization, because it is the realm of self-actualizing *samādhi*, they become expansive Buddha activity and profound, miraculous Buddha deliverance without moving a single speck of dust or blemishing a single image. All the lands and plants reached by this path of Buddha deliverance radiate great brilliance and preach the profound, wondrous dharma endlessly. Plants and fences sermonize for humans, for Buddhas, and for all living beings. Humans, Buddhas, and all living beings expound the dharma for the sake of plants and fences. Because this realm of self-awakening and awakening others is permeated with the quality of universal Buddha realization, fundamental realization occurs ceaselessly.

Therefore, whenever you practice sitting Zen, for however short a while, you mysteriously merge with all existence, you completely permeate all time, and throughout the infinite dharma realm, you eternally perform past, present, and future Buddha deliverance. Each and every one equally performs the same cultivation and the same realization. It is so not just during seated cultivation. Echoes of emptiness sound during the intervals both before and after the temple bell is struck because it continues to vibrate due to its marvelous resonance. In this same manner, the original cultivation of original face possessed by each one of the infinite individual beings reverberates beyond all measurable calculation.

Know that even if all the Buddhas as infinite as grains of sand used all their Buddha wisdom in an attempt to sum up the amount of merit generated by just one person practicing sitting Zen, they could never reach the end of it.

QUESTION: Now I know how immense must be the merit of sitting Zen.

But stupid people will doubt you by asking: "Since there are many different ways to practice Buddhism, why do you recommend sitting Zen alone?"

ANSWER: Because it is the main way to practice Buddhism.

QUESTION: Why is it alone the main practice?

ANSWER: Because the great master Śhākyamuni transmitted this marvelous art of attaining the Way, and because all Tathāgatas of the past, present, and future all attained the Way by sitting Zen. For this reason every generation transmits sitting Zen as the main practice. Not only that, but all the Zen ancestors of India and China attained the Way through sitting Zen. For this reason, I am teaching sitting Zen to gods and men.

QUESTION: This practice, whether correctly transmitted by the Tathāgatas or handed down by the Zen ancestors, truly is beyond the ability of ordinary people. Chanting scriptures or recalling the Buddha (*nembutsu*), however, easily leads to awakening. How can just sitting vainly without doing anything lead to awakening?

ANSWER: If you say that the *samādhi* of the Buddhas, the unsurpassed great dharma, is vainly sitting without doing anything, then you are a heretic who slanders the Mahāyāna. Yours is a very deep delusion, the same as someone in the middle of the ocean denying the existence of water. Fortunately for you, all Buddhas already sit in self-actualizing *samādhi*. Have you not benefited from their great merit? How pitiful you are, with your wisdom eye closed and your drunken wits.

The realm of the Buddhas is inconceivable. It is beyond our understanding. How could it be known by someone who lacks faith or intelligence? Only someone of proper faith and Mahāyāna aptitude can approach it. Those who lack faith will not believe even if taught, just like those who left Vulture Peak when Śhākyamuni was about to preach the Lotus Scripture. To generate a mind of proper faith, you must practice Buddhism and study Buddhism. If you cannot believe, then you should give up and merely regret your not having inherited any karmic link to the dharma from your previous lives.

Moreover, how do you know if you have acquired any merit from chanting the scripture or recalling the Buddha? How futile to think that the merit of Buddha activity can be produced merely by moving the tongue aloud. If you regard such practices as Buddha dharma, then you are far from the truth. You should open the scriptures only to clarify what the Buddha taught about the fundamentals of gradual and sudden cultivation and to practice in accordance with the teaching so as to attain realization. No intellectual deliberations could ever produce merit leading to *bodhi* [awakened wisdom]. To foolishly pursue the Buddha Way by chanting is like pointing your cart north while wanting to go south to the tropics. It is the same as trying to put a square peg in a round hole. To read the words without knowing the practice is the same as having the recipe for a medical prescription but forgetting to mix the medicine. Where is the benefit? Chanting without interruption resembles the frogs in the spring paddy fields croaking day and night. Ultimately it produces no merit. Those deluded by ambitions for fame and fortune cannot abandon chanting. Their greed runs too deep. As they were in ancient time, so they still are today. How pitiful!

Just know that the wondrous dharma of the past seven Buddhas is preserved and taught in its legitimate import only when there occurs the correct transmission between a student monk who merges his