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正法眼藏柏樹子第四十

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma
Number 40

The Cypress Tree
Hakujushi

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with the 2007 Seminar in Japanese Buddhist Texts, Stanford:
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INTRODUCTION

This text was composed in 1242, at Kōshōji 興聖寺, Dōgen's monastery just south of the capital at Heian-kyō (present-day Kyoto). It occurs as number 40 in both the 75-fascicle and 60-fascicle redactions of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

The text takes its title from a saying by the famous Tang-dynasty Chan master Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778-897). Rather than launching directly into his comments on this saying, Dōgen devotes the first half of his essay to a treatment of the figure of Zhaozhou himself, as revealed in his biography and poetry. He tells here the story of Zhaozhou's encounter with his master, Nanquan Puyuan 南泉普願 (748-834), and goes on to praise the strict austerity of his later life as abbot of Gyanyin yuan 觀音院, where he served till his death at the remarkable age of 120.

Dōgen then turns to the title theme of the essay, the meaning of Zhaozhou's mysterious remark, "the cypress tree at the front of the garden," in response to the question of why Bodhidharma brought the Chan tradition to China. He goes on to discuss a second saying of Zhaozhou, that the cypress tree has the buddha nature and will become a buddha "once space falls to the ground." Dōgen's comments in this section are sometimes quite difficult to interpret and may well leave some readers asking the question with which the essay closes: "what is it?"

This translation is based on the text appearing in Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道, *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集, volume 1 (1991), pp. 436-442. Other English versions can be found in Kōsen Nishiyama and John Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō*, volume 2 (1977), pp. 29-32; Yuho Yokoi, *The Shobo-genzo* (1986), pp. 489-495; and Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Book 2 (1996), pp. 227-235. The translator expresses his debt to the members of the 2007 Seminar in Japanese Buddhist Texts, with whom he read the text at Stanford.