

正法眼藏六十六三昧王三昧  
Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma  
Book 66  
The King of Samādhis Samādhi  
*Zanmai ō zanmai*

Translated by  
Carl Bielefeldt

with the 2006 Stanford seminar in Japanese Buddhist Texts:  
Brenda Cooper, Chiew Hui Ho, Andrew Keaveney, Jason Protass, Sayoko Sakakibara, Xiang Wang

INTRODUCTION

This work was composed early in 1244 at Kippōji 吉峰寺, the monastery where Dōgen taught in the period from his arrival in Echizen (present-day Fukui prefecture) till the opening of Daibutsuji 大佛寺 (later renamed Eiheiji 永平寺). The text appears as number 66 in the seventy-five-fascicle redaction of the *Shōbōgenzō*, as well as number 10 in the so-called “secret,” (*himitsu* 秘密) twenty-eight fascicle redaction held at Eiheiji.

The notion of a samādhi (i.e., state of mental concentration) that is the king of samādhis (Sanskrit *samādhi-rāja-samādhi*) occurs with some frequency throughout the Buddhist literature, without consistent reference to a specific spiritual practice or state of mind. Dōgen’s essay here draws on a passage from the famous *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (Chinese *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論), a commentary, traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna, on the 25,000-line *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*. A line in the sutra reads, “At that time, the World Honored One spread his lion seat and, sitting with legs crossed, straightening his body and binding his thoughts before him, entered into the king of samādhis samādhi, in which all samādhis are included.” The commentary on this line in the *Treatise* extols the spiritual advantages of cross-legged sitting and goes on to explain that this samādhi is first among samādhis because it is “freely able to take innumerable dharmas as its object.”

Dōgen’s own comments here focus especially on the practice of sitting with legs crossed (*kekkaifu za* 結跏趺坐; Sanskrit *paṇḍita*), the posture sometimes known as the “lotus position” (Sanskrit *padmāsana*). This practice, he associates with a famous teaching he attributes to his Chinese master, Rujing 如淨, that the study of Zen is “just sitting,” (*shikan taza* 禪管打坐) with “body and mind sloughed off” (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落). Through this association, Dōgen is able to claim that sitting with legs crossed is itself the king of samādhis, is itself the complete practice and teaching of the Buddha, is itself the spiritual lineage of the first Zen ancestor, Bodhidharma. The emphasis on such claims makes this short text one of the more important sources for understanding Dōgen’s approach to zazen practice.

The present translation is based on the edition in Kawamura Kōdō 河村孝道, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集, vol. 2, pp. 177-181. It has been published, with reduced annotation, in *Dharma Eye* 18 (Autumn 2006). Other English translations of this fascicle can be found in Nishiyama and Stevens, *Shōbōgenzō* (1977); Yokoi, *The Shōbo-genzo* (1986); and Tanahashi, *Beyond Thinking* (2004).