

The King of Samadhis Samadhi  
*Zanmai ō zanmai*

NOTES

1. **“All realms”** (*jinkai* 盡界): Could also be rendered “the entire world” but typically an abbreviation for “all realms in the ten directions” (*jin jippō kai* 盡十方界) — i.e., all world systems of Buddhist cosmology. (The ten directions are the four cardinal and four ordinal directions, plus the zenith and nadir.)

**“Greatly honored”** (*tai sonki sei* 太尊貴生): The Chinese envelope construction *tai . . . sheng* 太生 here functions as an intensive (see Iriya 入矢 and Koga 古賀, *Zengo jiten* 禪語辭典, 285b).

**“Within the the quarters of the buddhas and ancestors”** (*busso no okuri* 佛祖の屋裏): One of Dōgen’s favorite expressions, appearing many times in the *Shōbōgenzō*, for the authentic tradition of Zen. The term *okuri* (also written 屋裡) can be understood as a reference either to the “house” (i.e., lineage) of the buddhas and ancestors or to their “rooms” (i.e., innermost dwelling place). See **Supplemental Note 1**.

**“Sitting with legs crossed”** (*kekkaifu za* 結跏趺坐): A standard Buddhist term for the traditional meditation posture (Sanskrit *paryāṅka*) sometimes called the “lotus position” (*padmāsana*).

**“Followers of alien ways and the minions of Māra”** (*gedō matō* 外道魔黨): The former expression, the “outsiders” or “other paths,” refers to members of non-Buddhist traditions; Sanskrit *tīrthika*; the latter expression indicates the followers of Māra the Evil One (*pāpīyān*), lord of the sixth heaven of the realm of desire (*kāma-loka*), who seeks to obstruct Buddhist enlightenment.

**“The one here”** (*kochūnin* 箇中人): A fairly common Zen expression for the true person, the real or accomplished person.

**“Within the halls of the buddhas and ancestors”** (*busso no dōō* 佛祖の堂奥): Another extremely common expression in the *Shōbōgenzō*, virtually synonymous with *busso no okuri*, above.

**“The extreme of the extreme of the buddhas and ancestors”** (*busso no kyoku shi kyoku* 佛祖の極之極): An unusual expression, not found elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, presumably suggesting the “highest reaches” or “outermost limits” of Zen — an image in contrast to the innermost recesses of the “quarters” and “halls” in the previous two sentences.

**“This one dharma”** (*kono ippō* この一法): Or “this one method,” “this one truth,” or simply “this one thing”; as is so often the case in Buddhist usage, the term *hō* 法, translated here as “dharma,” is multivalent.

2. **“All realms of sitting”** (*za no jinkai* 坐の盡界): The translation seeks to preserve Dōgen’s repetition here of *jinkai* (rendered as “all realms” above), but one might well take this expression simply as “the world of sitting.”

“**We confirm**” (*benkō* 辨肯す): A predicate, common in Dōgen’s writing, carrying the sense “to discern and assent.” The grammatical subject is unclear in the original and could be taken not as “we” (or “one”) but as the “buddhas and ancestors.”

“**The aspiration, the practice, the bodhi, and the nirvāṇa**” (*hosshin shugyō bodai nehan* 發心修行菩提涅槃): I.e., the spiritual career of the bodhisattva, from her initial aspiration for enlightenment (Sanskrit *cittotpāda*), through training on the path and the attainment of buddhahood, to final extinction. The point here would seem to be that, when one clarifies the principle of sitting, one comprehends the entirety of the Buddhist spiritual life.

“**At the very moment we are sitting**” (*shōtō za ji* 正當坐時): It is unclear whether this adverbial phrase governs the verb “to investigate” (*sankyū* 參究). Hence, though the form of the following passage suggests otherwise, the sentence could also be parsed, “At the very moment we are sitting, we should investigate: are all realms vertical? Are they horizontal?”

“**A flip**” (*honkinto* 翻筋斗); “**brisk and lively**” (*kappatsupatsuchi* 活鱻鱻地): Two terms, common in Chan texts, expressing unimpeded freedom and vigorous energy. See **Supplemental Note 2**.

“**Is it thinking? Is it not thinking?**” (*shiryō ka fushiryō ka* 思量か不思議か): Likely an allusion to one of Dōgen’s favorite dialogues about seated meditation, a conversation between a monk and the Chan master Yueshan Weiyān. See **Supplemental Note 3**.

“**Is it making? Is it without making?**” (*sa ka musa ka* 作か無作か): Possibly an allusion to another of Dōgen’s favorite sources on seated meditation, a conversation between the Tang-dynasty masters Mazu Daoyi and Nanyue Huairang. See **Supplemental Note 4**.

“**We should do the sitting with legs crossed of the body; we should do the sitting with legs crossed of the mind; we should do the sitting with legs crossed of the body and mind sloughed off.**” (*shin no kekkaфуza subeshi shin no kekkaфуza subeshi shinjin datsuraku no kekkaфуza subeshi* 身の結跏趺坐すべし心の結跏趺坐すべし身心脱落の結跏趺坐すべし): Or “The body should sit with legs crossed; the mind should sit with legs crossed; the body and mind sloughed off should sit with legs crossed.” Dōgen is here playing with the elements in the expression “body and mind and sloughed off” (*shinjin datsuraku*) from the saying attributed to Rujing that he will quote immediately following this passage.

3. “**My former master, the old buddha**” (*senshi kobutsu* 先師古佛): A reference to Dōgen’s teacher Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (1163-1228); an epithet for Rujing occurring often in Dōgen’s writings.

On the source of this saying by Rujing, see **Supplemental Note 5**.

“**Body and mind sloughed off**” (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落): An unusual expression, much favored by Dōgen and subsequent Sōtō tradition. For its sources, see **Supplemental Note 6**.

“**Just sitting**” (*shikan taza* 祇管打坐; also written 只管打坐): An expression occurring several times in Dōgen’s writings — especially, as here, in conjunction with the phrase *shinjin datsuraku*. While not used in Chinese Chan texts, *shikan taza* functions as a technical term in Sōtō teaching, in reference to the particular “objectless” (*mushotoku* 無所得) zazen expounded by the tradition.

**“Burn incense, make prostrations, recollect the buddha, practice repentance, or look at scripture”** (*shōkō raihai nenbutsu shusan kankin* 燒香禮拜念佛修懺看經): Standard Buddhist devotional practices. In Dōgen’s day, recollection of the buddha (*nenbutsu*) typically referred to the recitation of the name of a buddha, especially the Buddha Amitābha. The term *kankin*, translated here as “look at scripture,” is used in Chan and Zen to refer either to the reading or the chanting of texts.

4. **“Equal stature”** (*seiken* 齊肩): Literally “to match shoulders”; a common expression, used most often with a negative.

**“Land of Cīnasthāna”** (*shintan koku* 震旦國): A Buddhist term for China derived from the transliterated Sanskrit name.

**“Realize”** (*taige* 體解): A loose translation for a binome suggesting something like “to understand with one’s body” — i.e., to have direct personal experience. The only instance of its use in the *Shōbōgenzō*.

**“Maintained”** (*honin* 保任; also read *hōnin*): One of Dōgen’s favorite verbs, appearing often throughout his writings; carries the sense, “to protect and sustain,” “to take care of.”

5. **“To be like this”** (*ki toku inmo naran* 既得恁麼): Dōgen here uses the Chinese phrase *de renmo*, (literally, “get such”), often encountered in Chan texts in casual reference to spiritual attainment — as in the well-known saying attributed to the ninth-century master Yunju Daoying 雲居道膺:

“If you want to get such a thing, you have to be such a person; if you’re already such a person, why worry about such a thing?” (*yu de renmo shi xu shi renmo ren ji shi renmo ren he chou renmo shi* 欲得恁麼事、須是恁麼人。既是恁麼人、何愁恁麼事). (JDCDL, T.51:335c19-20.)

**“The accordance of practice and understanding of the buddhas and ancestors”** (*busso no gyōge sōō* 佛祖の行解相應): I.e., the unity of practice and theory, or action and understanding, achieved (or taught) by the buddhas and Chan masters.

**“Thoughts, ideas, and perceptions”** (*nen sō kan* 念想觀); **“mind, mentation, and consciousness”** (*shin i shiki* 心意識): A paired set of six types of mental activity appearing elsewhere in Dōgen’s writings and — contrary to his injunction here to “maintain” and “investigate” them — dismissed as irrelevant to zazen. See **Supplemental Note 7**.

6. A slightly variant version of a verse appearing in the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論. For the text, see **Supplemental Note 8**.

**“The Buddha addressed the great assembly, saying”** (*shakamuni butsu koku daishu gon* 釋迦牟尼佛告大眾言): Dōgen’s introductory clause here is not in the original passage, which does not in fact represent the words of the Buddha but occurs in the commentary on a line in the *Dapin banruojing* 小品般若經.

“**Realizing samādhi**” (*shō zanmai* 證三昧): Or “verifying samādhi,” “experiencing samādhi.” Note that Dōgen’s version substitutes this expression for the *Dazhidu lun*’s more familiar “enter samādhi” (*ru sanmei* 入三昧).

“**The lethargy clouding the mind**” (*suiran fuku shin* 睡懶覆心): Or “the mind covered by drowsiness and listlessness.”

“**Awareness**” (*kakugo* 覺悟): Although sometimes understood as “awakening,” the term here probably indicates merely the state of one’s consciousness (as opposed to one’s body). Lammotte (tome 1, p. 433) translates “1’ intelligence.” But c.f., *Shōbōgenzō monge* 聞解, at CKZS.8:171.

“**One who realizes the way**” (*shōdōnin* 證道人): As above, here again Dōgen has substituted the predicate “realize” in the *Dazhidu lun*’s phrase “one who has entered the way (*rudaoren* 入道人; i.e., “practitioner”).

“**Without stirring**” (*fu keidō* 不傾動): Literally, “without leaning or moving.”

7. “**Perceive**” (*kenmon su* 見聞す): Literally, “to see and hear”; regularly used in the generic sense “to experience (through the senses).”

“**Our ordinary sitting**” (よのつねに打坐): The exact implication is not clear; presumably, the routine practice of the monk sitting with legs crossed.

8. Dōgen is here quoting (with some variation) the prose following the *Dazhidu lun* verse cited above, note 6. Again, he has added the line, “The Buddha Śākyamuni addressed the great assembly saying,” to what in the original is part of the commentary.

“**The Thus Come One, the World Honored One**” (*nyorai seson* 如來世尊): Dōgen’s version departs from the *Dazhidu lun* text, which gives simply “the Buddha” (*fo* 佛) here. It is unclear whether we are to take the subject as singular or plural.

“**Factions of the outsiders**” (*gedō hai* 外道輩): Reference to non-Buddhist ascetics.

“**Thus, their minds are crazed, sinking in the sea of falsity**” (*nyo ze kōken shin motsu jakai* 如是狂狷心沒邪海): Or, “Crazed like this, their minds sink into the sea of falsity.”

“**Sit with mind upright**” (*jiki shin za* 直心坐): The *Daizhidu lun* text has “sit with body upright” (*zhi shen zuo* 直身坐).

“**With straightforward mind and correct attention, one fastens thought in front of one**” (*tan shin shō i kei nen zai zen* 端心正意繫念在前): Variation on the description given in the sutra passage on which the *Dazhidu lun* is commenting; a standard expression describing meditation practice that appears widely throughout Buddhist literature.

“**Wishing to realize samādhi, wishing to enter samādhi**” (*yoku shō zanmai yoku nyū zanmai* 欲證三昧欲入三昧): The *Dazhidu lun* version has here only “because he [i.e., the Buddha] wishes to enter samādhi” (*yu ru sanmei gu* 欲入三昧故).

“**Training is this way, one verifies and enters the king of samādhis samādhi**” (*nyo shi shujū shōnyū zanmai ō zanmzai* 如此修習證入三昧王三昧): The *Dazhidu lun* text has here “binding his thought in this way, he [i.e., the Buddha] enters the king of samādhi samādhis” (*ru ci xi nian ru sanmei wang sanmei* 如此繫念入三昧王三昧).

9. “**Sitting with legs crossed is the king of samādhis samādhi**” (*kekkaфу za kore zanmai ō zanmai nari* 結跏趺坐これ三昧王三昧なり): Dōgen’s remarks here may be compared with the *Dazhidu lun* passage immediately following the section he quotes; see **Supplemental Note 9**.

“**Upright head**” (*jiki chōnei* 直頂[寧+頁]); “**upright vital artery**” (*jiki meimyaku* 命脈): The “head” (or “crown of the head”) is often used for the pinnacle or best of something; *Shōbōgenzō monge* (173) identifies it here with the “unsurpassed truth” (*mujō dōri* 無上道理). The “vital artery” is a common term, much favored by Dōgen, for the lineage, or “blood line,” of the buddhas and ancestors.

10. “**The mind seal correctly transmitted by the seven buddhas**” (*shichi butsu shōden on shin’in* 七佛正傳の心印): “The seven buddhas” refers to the series of ancient buddhas ending with the Buddha Śākyamuni. “The mind seal” (or “buddha mind seal,” *foxinyin* 佛心印) is a common Chan expression for the state of mind of a buddha transmitted from master to disciple or for the verification of that transmission.

11. “**Fifty small kalpas**” (*gojū shōkō* 五十小劫); “**sixty kalpas**” (*rokujū kō* 六十劫); “**countless kalpas**” (*muryō kō* 無量劫): Allusion to descriptions of the Buddha’s meditations given at various places in the *Lotus Sutra*.

“**Twenty-one days**” (*san shichi nichi* 三七日): Literally “three [times] seven days”; reference to the legend that the Buddha sat for three weeks under the bodhi tree at the time of his enlightenment.

“**Turning the wheel of the wondrous dharma**” (*ten myōhō rin* 轉妙法輪): I.e., the promulgation of the buddha dharma.

“**Yellow roll and vermilion spindle**” (*ōkan shujiku* 黃卷朱軸): Reference to the paper and spindle of a roll of text; i.e., a scripture, by extension here, the teachings of the buddha.

“**Beings attain buddhahood**” (*shujō jōbutsu* 衆生成佛): The exact implication is unclear; perhaps an oblique reference to the notion, found in Chan texts, that all beings “attained the way” (*cheng dao* 成道) at the time of the Buddha’s enlightenment. (See, e.g., Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō hotsu bodai shin* 發菩提心, DZZ.2:164.)

12. “**Nine autumns**” (*kyūhaku* 九白): Literally, “nine whites”; a somewhat unusual expression in which “white” seems to carry the sense of “autumn” from its association with this season in the Chinese system of the five phases (*wuxing* 五行).

**“Shaolin monastery at Shaoshi Peak on Mt. Songyue”** (*Sōgaku Shōshippō* [or *Shitsuohō*] *Shōrinji* 嵩嶽少室峰少林寺): Monastery in the present Chengfeng district 澄封縣 of Henan prefecture, where Bodhidharma is said to have resided.

**“Seated meditation with legs crossed facing a wall”** (*menpeki kafu zazen* 面壁跏趺坐禪): Reference to the famous legend that, upon arriving at Shaolin, Bodhidharma sat for nine years “facing a wall.” The question of whether the term *menpeki* should be taken literally or metaphorically (as, for example, sitting with a “wall-like mind”) is debated.

**“Head and eyes”** (*chōnei ganzei* 頂[寧+頁]眼睛): Terms often used in Chan texts as synecdoche for a Chan master’s wisdom or essential message.

**“Grasping the tail and taking the head”** (*ha bi shu tō* 把尾収頭): I.e., “from head to tail,” “entirely.”

**“Without leaving the grove”** (*furi sōrin* 不離叢林): “The grove” is a common idiom for the monastic institution.

This final sentence likely reflects a saying of Zhaozhou; see **Supplemental Note 10**.

13. **“Second year of Kangen (*kinoe-tatsu*)”** (*Kangen ninen kinoe-tatsu* 寬元二年甲辰): I.e., 1244, the year of first (wood) “stem” and fifth (dragon) “branch” in the sixty-year calendrical cycle.

**“Kippō hermitage, region of Etsu”** (*Etsuu Kippō shōja* 越宇吉峰精舍): The monastery in the province of Echizen (present Fukui prefecture) where Dōgen resided following his departure from the capital area in the summer of 1243.