

# 感應道交

kannō dōkō

## Mystical Communion

kan: feel, perceive, intuit /ō: response /dō: way, path, method /kō: intersect, exchange, communicate, join

### translations:

mutual affinity and interaction, response to affinity (Tanahashi)

mystical communication of the Way (Nishijima, Cross)

empathy and response (Swanson)

mutual resonance between stimulus and response (Donner, Stevenson)

sympathetic resonance (Sharf)

mutual attraction between buddhas and sentient beings (Yasutani)

divine response, spiritual communion, mystical communion

**Zhiyi / Chih-i** (538-597) (founder of Chinese Tiantai School):

● Fahua Xuanyi (Lotus Sutra's Inner Meaning) (p. 207, Foundations of T'ien-T'ai Philosophy, Swanson):  
“The subtlety of empathy and response (kanno) refers to the empathy [of the believer] and response [of the Buddha in four phases (hidden capacity 機 and hidden response 應, hidden c and manifest r, manifest c and hidden response, manifest c and manifest r)... The water does not rise, nor does the moon descend, yet the one moon in a single instant is manifest in all [bodies of] water. The Buddhas do not come, and the sentient beings do not go [yet they are united through the “empathy” or capacity of the believer and the “approach” or power of the Buddha]. The power of the capacity of goodness and compassion is to be perceived in this way. Therefore it is called subtle empathy and response.”

● Moho Zhiguan (Maha Shamatha-Vipashyana) (p. 147, Great Calming and Contemplation, Donner):  
“Question: Does the practitioner himself arouse the thought of enlightenment, or does someone else arouse it in him through the act of teaching? Answer: [Such distinctions of] self and other, together or separately really do not apply here. We are discussing the arousing of the thought of enlightenment only in the sense of the mutual resonance between stimulus [on the part of the practitioner] and [the Buddhadharma's] response (kanno doko). It is comparable to a child falling into water or fire and his parents frantically rescuing him... [A Buddha or bodhisattva] moves [the immovable] mountain of dharma-nature and enters the sea of samsara [to save beings]... This is what is meant by arousing the thought of enlightenment through stimulus and response (kanno).”

**Jizang / Chi-tsang** (549–623) (founder of Chinese Madhyamika) (p. 122, Coming to Terms w/CB, Sharf)  
“Stimulus-response (kanno) is the great tenet of the buddha-dharma, the essential teaching of the many sutras. To “stimulate” means to bring or summon forth, and to “respond” means to go forth and meet in welcome. As all sentient beings possess [the seeds of] goodness, they may induce the Buddhas to descend and take shape in front of them, and [the Buddhas] will meet them in welcome. The principle [is such that they] neither deviate nor overshoot [the mark]. This is called stimulus and response. The common person stimulates but does not respond; the Buddhas respond but do not stimulate; and bodhisattvas both respond and stimulate.”

**Guifeng Zongmi / Tsung-mi** (780–841) (p. 131, Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism, Sharf)  
“Bodhidharma came from the west only in order to transmit the mind dharma. Thus he himself said: “My dharma is transmitted from mind to mind and does not depend on words or letters.” This mind is the pure and original awakening of all sentient beings. It is also known as buddha-nature or numinous awakening. If you wish to seek the Way of the Buddhas, you must awaken to this mind. Therefore, the generations of patriarchs in this lineage transmit only this. If there is a sympathetic resonance (kanno) and reciprocal tallying [between master and disciple], then although a single flame may be transmitted to a hundred thousand lamps, there will be no difference between them.”

**Tiantong Rujing** (1163-1228) to Dogen in Hokyoki, verse attributed to Ennin (Jap. Tendai 793-864)  
“Bower and bowed to are naturally empty and still; mystical communion (kanno doko) is inconceivable. ... You should understand the significance of mystical communion. If there were no mystical communion, the buddhas wouldn't have appeared in the world and Bodhidharma wouldn't have come from the West.”

## Eihei Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō:

- Shinjin Gakudō (Body-and-Mind Study of the Way):  
“After mystical communion (kanno doko) and arousing the aspiration for awakening, take refuge in the great Way of buddhas and ancestors and devote yourself to the practice of Way-seeking mind.”
- Hotsu Bodaishin (Arousing the Aspiration for Awakening, Bodhichitta):  
“In mystical communion (kanno doko), the aspiration for awakening arises. It is not given by buddhas or bodhisattvas, and it is not created by oneself.”
- Kie Sanbō (Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures):  
“The act of taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is achieved through mystical communion (kanno doko). Whether you are in a deva realm, human realm, hell realm, hungry ghost realm, or animal realm, when you have mystical communion with Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you invariably take refuge in them.”

## Other:

- Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, Daiun Sogaku Harada Roshi lectures (4 types of kanno doko, based on Zhiyi):  
“Since there is a mutual attraction (kanno doko) among buddhas, bodhisattvas, and ourselves, we might conclude that even without practice we will still become buddhas. But the fact is not so. Why is this so? The answer is very simple. The mutual attraction is not just between ourselves and buddhas but between ourselves and all existences. We respond to maras as well as to buddhas, to bad friends as well as to good ones... These different responses are just like the different wavelengths which are broadcast from radio and television stations... When we tune in our receiving to buddha's broadcasting we receive his teaching. When we tune in mara's channel we are persuaded to do evil. When one likes alcohol he finds himself in the company of drunkards... Those who like to do zazen are attracted to others who do zazen, and if one studies Buddhism he will be in touch with many students whose interest is the same.”
- Dainin Katagiri Roshi, *Returning to Silence* (p. 83): “The spiritual communion between the Buddha and the practitioner, the Buddha and you, is the interacting communion of appeal and response... When we look up to the sky and pray, we don't know what space is, but spiritually, in a deep sense, we understand what space is... Then, the response comes from the whole universe. If we feel this spirit of the universe completely and appeal for help, or appeal that we may come alive in our everyday life, very naturally, we can be one with the universe. This is response. In other words, if we reach out our hands to the universe, the universe sticks out its own hand to us. Then, the path of your life and the path of the universe cross each other, become one, interconnected. In Japanese, this is kanno doko. *Kan* means appeal, *o* is response, *do* is path, *ko* is to cross. Appeal and response cross very quickly. This is wholeheartedness, exactly.”
- Tenshin Anderson Roshi – Jan 20, 2008 Sunday lecture at GGF (4 types of kanno doko, based on Zhiyi)
- Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (ch. 2: Chinese Buddhism and the Cosmology of Sympathetic Resonance): Sharf says that “kanno” was an ancient important Daoist term that was adopted by early Buddhism in China to refer to the “response bodies” of Buddha—Sambhogakaya and/or Nirmanakaya. He only mentions the full term “kanno doko” in connection with Zhiyi's teaching.  
“The use of dharani, mantra, and images in the ritual invocation of buddhas and other deities in order to partake of divine blessings and supernatural powers—activities commonly associated with Tantra—was a staple of Chinese Buddhist monastic practice, regardless of one's institutional affiliation... The Chinese compound *kan-ying* (*kanno*), although not employed in the rendering of any specific Sanskrit term, occurs frequently in Chinese discussions concerning the workings of invocation. It also occurs in passages elucidating the term “*chia-ch'ih* (*adhithana*),” or empowerment (blessings); indeed, later Japanese Shingon exegetes explicitly identify the mechanism of empowerment with *kan-ying*. *Kan-ying* is the principle underlying the interaction between practitioner and buddha—the supplicant is said to “stimulate” or “affect” (*kan*) the buddha, an action that elicits the buddha's compassionate response (*ying/o*). In this context one encounters expressions such as “affect the buddha” (*kan fo*).”
- Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi (“the meaning is not in the words, yet it responds to the inquiring impulse” and “inquiry and response come up together”) – different characters but similar principle
- Book of Serenity, case 52 – Caoshan's Reality Body (this case only uses the character “ō”)

Caoshan asked elder De, "The buddha's true reality body is like space: it manifests form in response (ō) to beings, like the moon in the water' - how do you explain the principle of response?" De said, "Like a donkey looking in a well." Caoshan said, "You said a lot indeed, but you only said eighty percent." De said, "What about you, teacher?" Caoshan said, "Like the well looking at the donkey."

● Charles Muller Buddhist Dictionary: 感應 [py] gǎnyìng [wg] kan-yìng [ja] kan'ō: Moved to response through feelings. To feel and respond. The communion of the minds of the Buddha and practitioners. The mind of faith and/or good roots of sentient beings penetrate the buddhas and bodhisattvas and cause them to respond. Thus, it is the reception of our mind of faith by the Buddha, and his response to it. In Pure Land Buddhism, it refers to the awareness of Amitābha Buddha of the recitation of his name by sentient beings, and his response of saving them.