

The King of Samadhis Samadhi

(*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 *paryāṅka*), 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* 只管打坐) 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 Shobo-genzo* (1986); and Tanahashi, *Beyond Thinking* (2004).

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 Samadhis Samadhi

(Zanmai ō zanmai)

TRANSLATION

驀然として盡界を超越して、佛祖の屋裏に大尊貴生なるは、結跏趺坐なり。外道魔黨の頂[寧+頁]を蹈翻して、佛祖の堂奥に箇中人なることは、結跏趺坐なり。佛祖の極之極を超越するは、ただこの一法なり。このゆゑに佛祖これをいとなみて、さらに餘務あらず。

Abruptly transcending all realms, to be greatly honored within the quarters of the buddhas and ancestors—this is sitting with legs crossed. Trampling the heads of the followers of alien ways and the legions of Māra, to be the one here within the halls of the buddhas and ancestors—this is sitting with legs crossed. Transcending the extreme of the extremes of the buddhas and ancestors is just this one dharma. Therefore, the buddhas and ancestors engage in it, without any further task.¹

まさにしるべし、坐の盡界と餘の盡界と、はるかにことなり。この道理をあきらめて、佛祖の發心修行菩提涅槃を辨肯するなり。正當坐時は、盡界、それ豎なるか、横なるか、と參究すべし。正當坐時、その坐、それいかん。翻筋斗なるか、活鱗鱗地なるか、思量か、不思量か、作か、無作か。坐裏に坐すや、身心裏にすや、坐裏身心裏等を脱落して坐すや。恁麼の千端萬端の參究あるべきなり。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。

We should realize that there is a vast difference between all realms of sitting and all other realms. Clarifying this principle, we confirm the aspiration, the practice, the bodhi, and the nirvāṇa of the buddhas and ancestors. We should investigate: at the very moment we are sitting, are all realms vertical? Are they horizontal? At the very moment we are sitting, what about that sitting? Is it a flip? Is it “brisk and lively”? Is it thinking? Is it not thinking? Is it making? Is it without making? Are we sitting within sitting? Are we sitting within body and mind? Are we sitting having sloughed off “within sitting,” “within body and mind,” and so on? We should investigate one thousand points, ten thousand points, such as these. “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.”²

先師古佛云、參禪者、身心脱落也、祇管打坐始得。不要燒香禮拜念佛修懺看經。

My former master, the old buddha, said,

“Studying Zen is body and mind sloughed off. You get it only by just sitting; you don’t need to burn incense, make prostrations, recollect the buddha, practice repentance, or look at scripture.”³

あきらかに佛祖の眼睛を出しきたり、佛祖の眼睛裏に打坐すること、四五百年よりこのかたは、ただ先師ひとりなり、震旦國に齊肩すくなし。打坐の佛法なること、佛法は打坐なることをあきらめたるまれなり。たとひ打坐を佛法と體解すといふとも、打坐を打坐としれるいまだあらず。いはんや佛法を佛法と保任するあらんや。

For the last four or five hundred years, clearly my former master is the only one who has plucked out the eye of the buddhas and ancestors, who sits within the eye of the buddhas and ancestors. There are

few of equal stature in the land of Cīnasthāna. It is rare to have clarified that sitting is the buddha dharma, that the buddha dharma is sitting. Even if [some] realize sitting as the buddha dharma, they have not understood sitting as sitting — let alone maintained the buddha dharma as the buddha dharma.⁴

しかあればすなはち、心の打坐あり、身の打坐とおなじからず。身の打坐あり、心の打坐とおなじからず。身心脱落の打坐あり、身心脱落の打坐とおなじからず。既得恁麼ならん、佛祖の行解相應なり。この念想觀を保任すべし。この心意識を參究すべし。

This being the case, there is the sitting of the mind, which is not the same as the sitting of the body. There is the sitting of the body, which is not the same as the sitting of the mind. There is the sitting of the body and mind sloughed off, which is not the same as the sitting of the body and mind sloughed off. To be like this is the accordance of practice and understanding of the buddhas and ancestors. We should maintain this thought, idea, and perception; we should investigate this mind, mentation, and consciousness.⁵

釋迦牟尼佛、告大衆言、若結跏趺坐、身心證三昧、威德衆恭敬、如日照世界。除睡懶覆心、身輕不疲懈、覺悟亦輕便、安坐如龍蟠。見畫跏趺坐、魔王亦驚怖、何況證道人、安坐不傾動。

The Buddha Śākyamuni addressed the great assembly, saying,

When sitting with legs crossed,
Body and mind realizing samādhi,
One's majesty, the multitudes respect,
Like the sun illumining the world.
Removed, the lethargy clouding the mind,
The body light, without pain or fatigue;
The awareness similarly light and easy,
One sits calmly, like the dragon coiled.
King Māra is startled and fearful
On seeing depicted [one] sitting with legs crossed,
How much more [on seeing] one who realizes the way,
Sitting calmly without stirring.”⁶

しかあれば、跏趺坐を畫圖せるを見聞するを、魔王なほおどろき、うれへおそるるなり。いはんや眞箇に跏趺坐せん、その功德、はかりつくすべからず。しかあればすなはち、よのつねに打坐する福德無量なり。

Thus, King Māra is startled and frightened to perceive the depiction of [someone] sitting with legs crossed — how much more [someone] actually sitting with legs crossed; the virtue cannot be fully reckoned. This being the case, the merit of our ordinary sitting is measureless.⁷

釋迦牟尼佛、告大衆言、以是故、結跏趺坐。復次如來世尊、教諸弟子應如是坐。或外道輩、或常翹足求道、或常立求道、或荷足求道、如是狂狷心、沒邪海、形不安穩。以是故、佛教弟子結跏趺坐直心坐。何以故。直身心易正故。其身直坐、則心不懶。端心正意、繫念在前。若心馳散、若身傾動、攝之令還。欲證三昧、欲入三昧、種種馳念、種種散亂、皆悉攝之。如此修習、證入三昧王三昧。

The Buddha Śākyamuni addressed the great assembly saying,

Therefore, [the Buddha] sits with legs crossed. Further, the Thus Come One, the World Honored One, instructs his disciples that they should sit like this. Factions of the outsiders seek the way while always keeping [one] leg raised, or seek the way while always standing, or seek the way with their legs on their shoulders. Thus, their minds are crazed, sinking in the sea of falsity, and their bodies are ill at ease. Therefore, the Buddha instructs his disciples to sit with legs crossed, to sit with mind upright. Why? Because, when the body is upright, the mind is easily corrected. When one's body is sitting upright, the mind will not slacken. With straightforward mind and correct attention, one fastens thought in front of one. If the mind wanders, if the body leans, one controls them and brings them back. Wishing to realize samādhi, wishing to enter samādhi, one collects the multiple wandering thoughts, the multiple distractions. Training in this way, he realizes and enters the king of samādhis samādhi.⁸

あきらかにしりぬ、結跏趺坐、これ三昧王三昧なり、これ證入なり。一切の三昧は、この王三昧の眷属なり。結跏趺坐は、直身なり、直心なり、直身心なり、直佛祖なり、直修證なり。直頂[寧+頁]なり、直命脈なり。

Clearly we know that sitting with legs crossed is the king of samādhis samādhi, is realization and entrance. All the samādhis are the attendants of this king samādhi. Sitting with legs crossed is upright body, is upright mind, is upright body and mind, is upright buddha and ancestor, is upright practice and realization, is upright head, is upright vital artery.⁹

いま人間の皮肉骨髓を結跏して、三昧中王三昧を結跏するなり。世尊つねに結跏坐を保任します、諸弟子にも結跏趺坐を正傳します、人天にも結跏趺坐ををしへますなり。七佛正傳の心印、すなはちこれなり。

Now crossing the legs of the human skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, one crosses the legs of the king of samādhis samādhi. The World Honored One always maintains sitting with legs crossed; and to the disciples he correctly transmits sitting with legs crossed; and to the humans and gods he teaches sitting with legs crossed. The mind seal correctly transmitted by the seven buddhas is this.¹⁰

釋迦牟尼佛、菩提樹下に跏趺坐しまして、五十小劫を經歷し、六十劫を經歷し、無量劫を經歷します。あるひは三七日結跏趺坐、時間の跏坐、これ轉妙法輪なり、これ一代の佛化なり。さらに虧缺せず、これすなはち黄卷朱軸なり、ほとけの、ほとけをみる、この時節なり。これ、衆生成佛の正當恁麼時なり。

The Buddha Śākyamuni, sitting with legs crossed under the bodhi tree, passed fifty small *kalpas*, passed sixty *kalpas*, passed countless *kalpas*. Sitting with legs crossed for twenty-one days, sitting cross-legged for one time — this is turning the wheel of the wondrous dharma; this is the buddha's proselytizing of a lifetime. There is nothing lacking. This is the yellow roll and vermilion roller. The buddha seeing the buddha is this time. This is precisely the time when beings attain buddhahood.¹¹

初祖菩提達磨尊者、西來のはじめより、嵩嶽少室峰少林寺にして面壁跏趺坐禪のあひだ、九白を經歷せり。それより頂[寧+頁]眼睛、いまに震旦國に遍界せり。初祖の命脈、ただ結跏趺坐のみなり。初祖西來よりさきは、東土の衆生いまだかつて結跏趺坐をしらざりき、祖師西來よりのちこれをしれり。しかあればすなはち、一生萬生、把尾収頭、不離叢林、晝夜祇管跏趺坐して、餘務あらざる、三昧王三昧なり。

Upon coming from the west, the First Ancestor, the worthy Bodhidharma, passed nine autumns in seated meditation with legs crossed facing a wall at Shaolin monastery at Shaoshi Peak. Thereafter, his head and eyes have filled the world of the land of Cīnasthāna till now. The vital artery of the First Ancestor is just sitting with legs crossed. Prior to the First Ancestor’s coming from the west, beings in the eastern lands had not known sitting with legs crossed; after the ancestral master came from the west, they knew it. Therefore, for one life or ten thousand lives, grasping the tail and taking the head, without leaving the “grove,” just sitting with legs crossed day and night, without other business — this is the king of samādhis samādhi.¹²

正法眼藏三昧王三昧六十六

Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma
The King of Samadhis Samadhi
Number 66

爾時寬元二年甲辰二月十五日在越宇吉峰精舍示衆

Presented to the assembly fifteenth day, second month, second year of Kangen (*kinoe-tatsu*) at Kippō hermitage, region of Etsu.¹³

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” (*kekkaфу za* 結跏趺坐): A standard Buddhist term for the traditional meditation posture (Sanskrit *pariyāika*) 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* 活鱗鱗地): 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* 思量か不思量か): 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 kekkafuza subeshi shin no kekkafuza subeshi shinjin daturaku no kekkafuza 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* (or *kangin*), 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* 釋迦牟尼佛告大衆言): 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). Lamotte (tome 1, p. 433) translates “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” (*fō* 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* 如是狂獗心没邪海): 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” (*kekkaifu 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* 直命脈): 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 vermillion 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 *Shitsuho*] *Shōrinji* 嵩嶽少室峰少林寺): Monastery in the present Chengfeng district 澄封懸 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* 把尾收頭): 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* 越字吉峰精舍): 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.

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

1. Dōgen’s reference to the one who is “**greatly honored within the quarters of the buddhas and ancestors**” may reflect Dongshan Liangjie’s 洞山良价 description of the “greatly honored” (*tai zungui sheng* 太尊貴生) official (*guanchashi* 觀察使), without name or duties, who simply remains within his chambers (*langmu* 廊幕), never going in or out. (*Dongshan dashi yulu* 洞山大師語錄, T.47:509a26-b6.)

[Back to Note 1.](#)

2. “A flip” (*honkinto* 翻筋斗; also written 翻筋斗) or “somersault” appears in Chan texts in expressions like, “a flip in space” (*xukong fanjindou* 虚空翻筋斗), “a flip at the top of a temple pole” (*chagan toushang fanjindou* 刹竿頭上翻筋斗), “a flip in shit” (*shili fanjindou* 屎裡翻筋斗); Dōgen uses it at *Eihei kōroku* 3:218: “Old man Śākya does a flip” (*Shaka rōkan honkinto* 釋迦老漢翻筋斗) (DZZ.3:146).

“Brisk and lively” (*kappatsupatsuchi* 活鱗鱗地) is a loose translation of a Chinese idiom expressing the quick, powerful movements of a fish, especially of the carp as it leaps from the water; the elements *patsupatsu* 鱗鱗 (Chinese *popo*) are likely onomatopoeic. While the graph *di* 地 in the Chinese suggests an adverbial construction, Dōgen tends to use the phrase as a nominal.

Back to Note 2.

3. “Is it thinking? Is it not thinking?” (*shiryō ka fushiryō ka* 思量か不思量か): These questions doubtless are meant to evoke the well-known words of Yueshan Weiyuan 藥山惟儼 (751-834).

師坐次有僧問、兀兀地思量什麼。師曰、思量箇不思量底。曰、不思量底如何思量。師曰、非思量。

Once, when the Master was sitting, a monk asked him, "What are you thinking of, [sitting there] so fixedly?"

The master answered, "I'm thinking of not thinking (*siliang ge busiliang di* 思量箇不思量底)."

The monk asked, "How do you think of not thinking?"

The Master answered, "Nonthinking (*fei siliang* 非思量)."

This passage, sometimes known as "Yueshan's not thinking" (*Yakusan fu shiryō tei* 藥山不思量底), appears in Yueshan's biography in *JDCDL* (T.51.311c26ff) and elsewhere, as well as in Dōgen's *shinji Shōbōgenzō* (DZZ.5,196,case 129). The passage is one of the prime sources for Dōgen's meditation teachings: it forms the core of his description of *zazen* in his (vulgate) *Fukan zazen gi* (DZZ.5.6), *Shōbōgenzōzazen gi* (1.224), and *Bendō hō* (DZZ.6.40), and is cited several times in the *Shōbōgenzō* and *Eihei kōroku* (fasc 5, DZZ.3.238, entry 373; fasc. 7 DZZ.4.104, entry 524).

Back to Note 2.

4. “Is it making? Is it without making?” (*sa ka musa ka* 作か無作か): While one need not assume a specific source for these questions, given the juxtaposition elsewhere in Dōgen's writing of “Yueshan's not thinking” with the story known as “Nanyue polishes a tile” (*Nangaku ma sen* 南嶽磨甎), they are suggestive of the famous episode involving Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-788) and his teacher, Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677-744). The story has several variants; here is the version appearing in the *JDCDL*, (T.51.240c18ff).

開元中有沙門道一(即馬祖大師也)住傳法院、常日坐禪。師知是法器。往問曰、大德坐禪圖什麼。一曰、圖作佛。師乃取一磚、於彼庵前石上磨。一曰、師作什麼。師曰、磨作鏡。一曰、磨磚豈得成鏡耶。坐禪豈得成佛耶。一曰、如何即是。師曰、如人駕車不行、打車即是打牛即是。一無對。師又曰、汝學坐禪為學坐佛。若學坐禪禪非坐臥。若學坐佛佛非定相。於無住法不應取捨。汝若坐佛即是殺佛。若執坐相非達其理。一聞示誨如飲醍醐。

During the Kaiyuan [era], there was a śramaṇa Daoyi (i.e., Great Master Mazu), who lived at the Chuanfa Cloister and always practiced seated meditation. The master [Nanyue], knowing that he was a vessel of the dharma, went to him and asked, “Great Worthy, what are you figuring to do, sitting there in meditation?”

Daoyi said, "I'm figuring to make a buddha."

The master thereupon took up a tile and rubbed it on a stone in front of his hermitage. Daoyi said, "Master, what are you making?"

The master said, "I'm polishing this to make a mirror."

Daoyi said, "How can you produce a mirror by polishing a tile?"

[Nanyue replied,] "How can you produce a buddha by sitting in meditation?"

Daoyi said, "Then what should I do?"

The master said, "If someone is driving a cart, and the cart doesn't go, should he beat the cart or beat the ox?"

Daoyi did not respond.

The master continued, "Are you studying seated meditation or are you studying seated buddha?" If you're studying seated meditation, meditation is not sitting or reclining. If you're studying seated buddha, the buddha is not fixed marks. In a nonabiding dharma, there should not be taking or rejecting. If you are a sitting buddha, this is killing buddha; if you grasp the mark of sitting, this is not reaching its principle."

When Daoyi heard this instruction, it was like drinking *ghṛta* ("ghee").

Dōgen records a variant version of the story in his *shinji Shōbōgenzō* (fascicle 1, case 8; DZZ.5:128-30) and comments on it in *Shōbōgenzō kokyō* (DZZ.1:237ff) and *Shōbōgenzō zazen shin* (DZZ.1:105ff). The vulgate version of his *Fukan zazen gi* famously alludes to Nanyue's remarks in its warning, "Do not figure to make a buddha, much less seize on sitting or reclining (*maku zu sa butsu ki kō zaga ko* 莫圖作佛豈拘坐臥乎)" (DZZ.5:4).

Back to Note 2.

5. This saying of Rujing has no known source in extant Chinese texts and is generally assumed to be the private recollection of Dōgen. A similar passage, unattributed to Rujing, appears in Dōgen's early work, the *Bendō wa* 辨道話 (DZZ.2:538).

宗門の正規にはく、この單傳正直の佛法は、最上のなかに最上なり。參見知識のはじめより、さらに焼香・禮拜・念佛・修懺・看經を不用、唯だ専ら打坐して身心脱落する事を得よ。

In the right standard of the school, it is said that this buddha dharma, singly and directly transmitted, is the supreme among the supreme. Once we have encountered a "friend," we do not employ burning incense, making prostrations, recollecting the buddha, practicing repentance, or examining scriptures. Solely by sitting, attain the sloughing off of body and mind.

Slightly variant versions are attributed to Rujing at *Shōbōgenzō gyōji* 正法眼藏行持(下) (DZZ.1:198) and *Shōbōgenzō bukkyō* 正法眼藏佛經 (DZZ.2:178), as well as at *Hōkyō ki* 寶慶記 (DZZ.7:18-20).

Back to Note 3.

6. "Body and mind sloughed off" (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落): In several places, Dōgen attributes this expression to Rujing (see Supplemental Note 5, above; also *Eihei kōroku* 永平廣錄, DZZ.4:10;

4:240); but the phrase *shenxin tuoluo* 身心脫落 does not appear in the two redactions of the latter's recorded sayings preserved in Japan (*Nyōjō goroku* 如淨語錄, T.48:No.2002A and 2002B). One of these two includes a postscript attributed to Dōgen that records the famous story of his hearing these words from Rujing (T.48:No.2002B:136c3-9; see also DZZ.7:246).

師因入堂懲衲子坐睡云、夫參禪者身心脫落只管打睡作麼。予聞此語豁然大悟。徑上方丈燒香禮拜。師云、禮拜事作麼生。予云、身心脫落來。師云、身心脫落脫落身心。予云、這箇是暫時伎倆、和尚莫亂印。師云、我不亂印爾。予云、如何是不亂印底事。師云、脫落脫落。予乃休。

Once, when the master entered the hall, he said to a lazy robed one who was sleeping while sitting, “Studying Chan is body and mind sloughed off. How can you just sleep?”

Hearing these words, I suddenly had a great understanding. I directly ascended to the abbot's quarters, burned incense, and made prostrations.

The master said, “Why are you making prostrations?”

I said, “Body and mind are sloughed off.”

The master said, “Body and mind sloughed off; sloughed off body and mind.”

I said, “This is just a quick trick. The preceptor shouldn't recklessly approve it.”

The master said, “I'm not recklessly approving you.”

I said, “What is it you're not recklessly approving?”

The master said, “Sloughed off, sloughed off.”

I withdrew.

In the discussion of this phrase in the *Hōkyō ki* (DZZ.7:18-20), Rujing responds to Dōgen's question about its meaning by saying,

身心脫落者坐禪也。祇管打坐時離五欲除五蓋也。

Body and mind sloughed off is zazen. When we just sit, we are free from the five desires [of the senses] and remove the five obstacles [to meditation: desire, aversion, torpor, agitation, and doubt].

Since we have no independent evidence supporting Dōgen's attribution of this expression to Rujing, some have suggested that the phrase “dust of the mind sloughed off” (*xinchen tuoluo* 心塵脫落; Japanese *shinjin datsuraku*), appearing in Rujing's recorded sayings, might have been Dōgen's source. (See T.48:No.2002A:130c19.)

Back to Note 3.

7. “Thoughts, ideas, and perceptions” (*nen sō kan* 念想觀); **“mind, mentation, and consciousness”** (*shin i shiki* 心意識): Though seemingly not a standard combination in Chan texts, these two lists appear together elsewhere in Dōgen's discussions of zazen. In his famous meditation manual, the *Fukan zazen gi* 普勸坐禪儀, he says,

放捨所緣、休息萬事。不思善惡、莫管是非。停心意識之運轉、止念想觀之測量。

Cast aside all involvements; discontinue all affairs. Do not think of good or evil; do not deal with right or wrong. Halt the revolutions of mind, mentation, and consciousness; stop the calculations of thought, idea, and perception. (DZZ.5:4, 10.)

A closely parallel passage occurs in the *Shōbōgenzō zazen gi* 坐禪儀 (DZZ.1:100). Similarly, Dōgen’s early work, the *Gakudō yōjin shū* 學道用心集, contains the lines,

齋行者可貴者從古雖多、悟道之者唯少。是乃調心甚難故也。聰明不為先、學解不為先。心意識不為先、念想觀不為先。向來都不用之而調身心以入佛道也。

From ancient times there have been many revered ascetics, but only a few have understood the way. This is because it is extremely difficult to regulate the mind. Intelligence is not primary; learning is not primary. Mind, mentation, and consciousness are not primary; thought, idea, and perception are not primary. Without using any of these, one enters the buddha way by regulating body and mind. (DZZ.5:26.)

The expression translated here “thought, idea, and perception” is not a common one in Chan and likely derives from the famous “Prajñā-pāramitā-stotra” (*banruobolomi ji* 般若波羅蜜偈) appearing in the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論):

般若波羅蜜、實法不顛倒
念想觀已除、言語法亦滅

The *prajñā-pāramitā*, real dharma, not inverted;
Thought, idea, and perception removed; the way of language extinguished. (T.25:190b.)

Here the phrase probably serves to indicate “discriminating cognition” (Skt. *vikalpa*). The three component terms of the phrase are also, of course, used to designate various contemplative exercises (as, e.g., by Chih-i 智顛 at T.46:626a29).

The expression translated here “mind, mentation, and consciousness” is a common one in Chan texts in general reference to “mental processes” — as, e.g., in sayings like, “The buddha dharma is not of the realm of mind, mentation, and consciousness” (*fofa fei xin yi shi jingjie* 佛法非心意識境界), or “study free from mind, mentation, and consciousness” (*li xin yi shi tsan* 離心意識參). In Buddhist technical usage, the three component terms can represent *citta*, *manas*, and *viññāna* respectively, and can stand together for the eight types of consciousness discussed in Vijñānavāda literature.

Back to Note 5.

8. Dōgen’s quotation here is based on the verse from the following passage in the *Dazhidu lun* (T.25:111b-c):

爾時世尊自敷師子座。結加趺坐、直身繫念在前。入三昧王三昧、一切三昧悉入其中。 . . . 問曰、多有坐法、佛何以故唯用結加趺坐。答曰、諸坐法中結加趺坐最安隱不疲極。此是坐禪人坐法。攝持手足心亦不散。又於一切四種身儀中最安隱。此是禪坐取道法坐。魔王見之其心憂怖。如是坐者出家人法、在林樹下結加趺坐。衆人見之皆大歡。知此道人必當取道。如偈說、

若結加趺坐 身安入三昧
威德人敬仰 如日照天下
除睡懶覆心 身輕不疲懈

覺悟亦輕便 安坐如龍蟠
見畫加趺坐 魔王亦愁怖
何況入道人 安坐不傾動

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, he entered into the king of samādhis samādhi, in which all samādhis are included. . . .

Question: There are many ways of sitting. Why does the buddha only use sitting with legs crossed?

Answer: Among the ways of sitting, sitting with legs crossed is the most comfortable, without pain. This is the way of the sitting of those who practice seated meditation. The arms and legs are gathered, and the mind does not disperse. Again, among all the four attitudes of the body, it is the most comfortable. This is the sitting that gains the way through seated meditation; when King Māra sees it, his mind is troubled and afraid. This sitting is the way of one who has left home, sitting with legs crossed beneath a tree; when the multitude see it, they all greatly rejoice and know that this practitioner will surely gain the way. As the verse says,

When sitting with legs crossed,
Body at ease, entered into samādhi,
One's majesty, the people honor,
Like the sun illumining the world.
Removed, the lethargy clouding the mind,
The body light, without pain or fatigue;
Awareness similarly light and easy,
One sits calmly, like the dragon coiled.
King Māra is startled and fearful
On seeing depicted [one] sitting with legs crossed,
How much more [on seeing] one entered on the way,
Sitting calmly without stirring.

Back to Note 6.

9. The *Dazhidu lun* passage on which Dōgen is commenting here continues with an explanation of the name “king of samādhis samādhi” that emphasizes not the seated posture but the power to comprehend all things.

云何名三昧王三昧。是三昧於諸三昧中最第一。自在能緣無量諸法。如諸人中王第一。王中轉輪聖王第一。一切天上天下佛第一。此三昧亦如是。於諸三昧中最第一。

Why is it called the king of samādhis samādhi? This samādhi is the very first among the samādhis, freely able to take countless dharmas as its object. As the king is the first among people, the wheel-turning king is the first among kings, and the buddha is the first in heaven above and earth below, so is this samādhi the very first among the samādhis.

Back to Note 9.

10. In his expressions “**for one life**” and “**without leaving the grove,**” Dōgen seems to be alluding to a saying of the famous Tang master Zhaozhou 趙州 (778-897), references to which appear several times in Dōgen's writings.

爾若一生不離叢林、不語十年五載、無人喚◆爾作啞漢、已後佛也不奈爾何。

If for a lifetime you don't leave the grove and don't talk for ten years and five, no one will call you a mute; after that, even the buddha can't do anything to you. (*Liendeng huiyao* 聯燈會要, ZZ.136:264.)

In his *Shōbōgenzō dōtoku* 道得, Dōgen uses a slightly modified version of the second clause that gives “sit solidly and don't speak for ten years and five” (*gotsuza fudō jūnen gosai* 兀坐不道十年五載). (DZZ.1:376; see also *Eihei kōroku, Juko* 頌古 13, DZZ.4:190.)