



Tokugawa Zen Master Shidō Munan

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TOKUGAWA ZEN MASTER SHIDŌ MUNAN

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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Abstract

Shidō Munan (至道無難, 1602-1676) was an early Tokugawa Zen master mostly active in Edo. He was the teacher of Shōju Rōjin, who is in turn considered the main teacher of Hakuin Ekaku. He is best known for the phrase that one must “die while alive,” made famous by D.T. Suzuki. Other than this, his work has not been much analyzed, nor his thought placed into the context of the early Tokugawa period he inhabited. It is the aim of this work to analyze some of the major themes in his writings, the *Jishōki* (自性記), *Sokushinki* (即心記), *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo* (龍沢寺所藏法語), and the *Dōka* (道歌). Special attention is paid to his views on Neo-Confucianism, Pure Land thought, and Shinto- traditions which can be shown through their prevalence in his writings to have placed Zen on the defensive during this time period. His teachings on death are also expanded on and analyzed, as well as some of the other common themes in his writing, such as his teachings on kōan practice and advice for monastics. In looking at these themes, it is possible to both compare and contrast him from some of his better-known contemporaries, such as Bankei and Suzuki Shōsan. Additionally, selected passages from his writings are offered in translation.

Introduction

Shidō Munan (至道無難) was born in Sekigahara in Mino province in 1602 and died in Edo in 1676.¹ As a Japanese Zen master, Shidō's place in history is secured by being the Dharma heir to Gudō Tōshoku of Myōshinji, and in turn giving transmission to Dōkyo Etan, also known as Shōju Rōjin,² and in being the “grandfather in the Dharma” to Hakuin Ekaku. Heinrich Dumoulin states that while both Shidō and Dōkyo Etan “certainly do not rank among the greatest figures of Japanese Zen,” they still “set the stage for a reform of Rinzai Zen” through their connection to Hakuin.³ Dumoulin also notes that the “structure and internal logic that governs (Shidō Munan's) writings call for a specialized study,” which this writing will hopefully contribute to.⁴

D.T. Suzuki wrote of Shidō Munan as notable for his statement that one must die while alive.⁵ A quick search online of Shidō under what Ichihara Toyota says is his incorrect name reading, “Bunan,” leads to numerous sites having only his quote on death as his teaching.⁶ Even the print entry for Shidō Munan in the University of Hawaii Press's *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* reads “Bunan,” and states that he “is best known for his teaching that the best approach to Zen would be to ‘die while you are alive’.”⁷ It then goes on to state that after briefly meeting Gudō as a boy he decided to follow him to Edo, where he was “given the name Bunan, meaning ‘no problem.’”⁸ This is the only source that states Shidō was a boy when he became Gudō's attendant and is likely incorrect.⁹ He was actually in his fifties and had been a

¹ Ichihara Toyota. *Nihon no zen-goroku: Munan Shōju*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1979, p.9. Some sources say 1603.

² Heinrich Dumoulin. *Zen Buddhism: A History- Japan*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, p.310.

³ Dumoulin, p. 331

⁴ 330

⁵ Daisetz T. Suzuki. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1959, p.102, n9. He mentions Shidō Munan when discussing the concepts of *ri* (“universal principle”) and *ji* (“a particular object or event”). He equates the poem of Shidō saying one must die while alive with the state achieved when *ri* and *ji* are “in harmonious co-operation,” which, psychologically, “is the unconscious breaking into the field of consciousness when consciousness loses itself, abandoning itself to the dictates of the unconscious. Religiously, it is dying to one's self and living in Christ... In the case of a swordsman, he must free himself from all ideas involving life and death, gain and loss, right and wrong, giving himself up to the power which lives deeply in his inner being.”

⁶ Regarding his name, more on that below. Some of the websites would be: “Shido Bunan- Die While You Are Alive” (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xt2o7q_shido-bunan-die-while-you-are-alive_creation), “The Sooner you die.. Die, and do what you wish. (Shido Bunan).” (<https://tulsidal.wordpress.com/2011/07/28/the-sooner-you-die-die-and-do-what-you-wish-shido-bunan/>), and “The Headless Way: Shido Bunan Zenji (1603-1676)” (<http://www.headless.org/Biographies/bunan>).

⁷ James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo, eds. *Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture: Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*. Honolulu, HI, USA: University of Hawaii Press, 2011, p.190.

⁸ Heisig, Thomas, and Maraldo, p.190.

⁹ Mark L. Blum wrote the short biography of Shidō in *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, but the book gives no further textual source for the biography, as opposed to the translation sections, which are from Waddell and Sōhaku's translation of the *Sokushinki*. Toyota's claim that Shidō was in his fifties when he was ordained and became Gudō's attendant seems to be from his main source, Kuden Rentarō's *Shidō Munan Zenji-shu* (至道無難禪師集, Shōwa 43).

lay-disciple of Gudō for years before he was ordained a monk and became Gudō's attendant.¹⁰ It also translates poorly the monastic name he received, which is a reference to Zhao Zhou's words in the second case of the *Hekiganroku*.¹¹ The wording is more clearly rendered by Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary as: "The Ultimate Path is *without difficulty*; just avoid picking and choosing."¹²

That Toyota concludes the correct reading of his name is Munan, and not Bunan as he is widely known, is based on an entry in the *Sokushinki*, one of Munan's major works, in which he refers to himself that way in the hiragana script.¹³ As a Zen phrase, the phrase is read as *bunan* instead.¹⁴ The point of outlining these corrections is to note that Shidō Munan is not very well-known, and so deserves a closer look. Rather than defining him by one quote, it is the aim of this thesis to take a closer look at his thought through his writings, as found in the *Jishōki* (自性記), *Sokushinki* (即心記), *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo* (龍沢寺所藏法語), and his poetry in the *Dōka* (道歌). It is also a goal to cast him as a "product of his times," by placing him in historical context and by comparing his thought to that of some of his well-known contemporaries. Further, it will be possible to see in Shidō Munan's views a Zen priest's defensive posture that reflects the perceived need to respond to changes in the status and challenges posed by Neo-Confucianism, Pure Land thought, and Shinto in the early Tokugawa period.

A brief look at his biography would be a good place to start putting him in historical context. Shidō Munan was born Osakabe Tarō (刑部太郎) to the Miwa family.¹⁵ His life spans the early Tokugawa period, more precisely the rule of the second through fourth Tokugawa shoguns. His father was the owner of a rest station in the Tōkaidō road connecting Kyoto and Edo, where important travelers stayed.¹⁶ As such, it is not surprising that he became acquainted with the important Rinzai master Gudō, who held "a number of posts in Kyoto," while also "directing affairs for the Rinzai school in Edo," and who thus went on "many trips along the Tōkaidō," staying at Shidō's family's inn.¹⁷ This political shift eastward creates a parallel with Hakuin, of whom Yampolsky notes:

He was a Kantō man (that is, he came from an eastern district closer to Edo than to Kyoto), and although he turned back to Kyoto Zen for his teaching, he remained always an independent,

¹⁰ Toyota, p.15, 115, 187

¹¹ 15

¹² Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary, trans. *The Blue Cliff Record*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2005, p.10. Italics added.

¹³ Toyota, p.85, note; Toyota 15; Dumoulin 328 argues the same point without explaining his reasoning.

¹⁴ 15

¹⁵ His "true name" (諱) being Chikaaki, 親明 (ちかあき).

¹⁶ 9

¹⁷ Dumoulin, p.327

active proponent of the popular-type, mass-appeal Buddhism that had arisen with such men as Shidō Bu'nan and Suzuki Shōsan.¹⁸

Shidō's family was thus relatively well-off, and he himself well-educated. Toyota notes he was known in his youth for his skill at writing.¹⁹ This places him in the "educated minority" with access to "wealth and education," which are "both necessary prerequisites for a successful career as a Zen monk."²⁰ Although it is true that Shidō, in his later years, refused "all offers to serve at large and important temples, and (focused) his teaching effort toward the lay community," his connection to Myōshinji should not be forgotten.²¹ His teacher, Gudō, "served as abbot at Myōshin-ji for three separate terms," and it is this temple, along with its fellow Ōtōkan lineage temple Daitokuji, that in "the beginning of the Tokugawa period... eclipsed" the other Kyoto "gozan Zen temples, which had been the dominant force in Rinzai Zen in earlier centuries."²²

As stated previously, after studying under Gudō as a layman, Shidō fled his family and business obligations and was ordained by Gudō in 1654 at 51 or 52 years old, becoming his attendant.²³ Whether he was given his monastic name of Shidō Munan at this time or whether this had already happened earlier, is not entirely clear. The first part of his new name, Shidō (至道), refers to the great depth or greatness of the Way.²⁴ He eventually left Gudō's side, took up residence at the Tōhoku-ji in Edo as a teacher, and eventually retired to the sub-temple Shidō-an.²⁵

Toyota cites two interesting anecdotes about Shidō as a teacher, the first one found in Kuden Rentarō's *Shidō Munan Zenji-shu*.²⁶ Shidō visited a merchant family one day. While in conversation with the head of the household, a messenger from another merchant family brought some money over to the man. The money was found to be missing after Shidō had left, and when the man went to inquire about it, Shidō handed over the same amount of money. It was several days later that the man found the actual misplaced money (in its original wrapping) and quickly returned Shidō's money, who did not make a fuss of the situation. The story is from Matsubayashi Gyōshin, a friend of Shidō's famous Neo-Confucian scholar relative, Miwa Shissai.²⁷

¹⁸ Philip B. Yampolsky, trans. *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, p. 12.

¹⁹ Toyota, p.9

²⁰ Helen J. Baroni. *Obaku Zen: The Emergence of the Third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu, HI, USA: University of Hawaii Press, 2000, p.70.

²¹ Norman Waddell, trans. *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Zen Master Hakuin*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc.: 1999, p.149.

²² Baroni, p. 128, 43.

²³ Dumoulin, p.327 says 51, Toyota, p.15 says 52. They agree on the year.

²⁴ Toyota, p.15; Dumoulin, p.328 notes that the phrasing for the name is from the *Shinjinmei*, attributed to the third Patriarch, Seng-ts'an.

²⁵ Dumoulin, p.328, 331; Toyota, p.16.

²⁶ Toyota, p.17

²⁷ 17

The second anecdote is described by Toyota as a “tale from Kamakura.”²⁸ A rich man was told that a woman in his household had become pregnant from a priest who had secretly visited her. Thinking it Shidō, he angrily accused him of it, as a result of which Shidō left his hermitage to stay with someone he knew. Eventually the woman confessed as to who had actually impregnated her, and the man tearfully went to apologize to Shidō, who only smiled and was able to return to his hermitage.²⁹ It is quite possible that these stories are, like the tale of layman Shidō quitting alcohol when Gudō found him drunk and ordered him to have the last drink of his life with him, just “hagiographical legend.”³⁰ Still, the two cited are of particular interest because they sound suspiciously similar to the better-known tale of Hakuin being falsely accused of something (fathering a child), and accepting the blame (along with the child!) without argument until the truth was eventually found out, and his saintly reputation restored.

Shidō Munan and Confucianism

Writing about Shidō’s better-known books, *Jishōki* and *Sokushinki*, Dumoulin states that “(n)either of these works can rightly be called a masterpiece” because of the “aphoristic character of the statements and verses... (which) often follow one another somewhat disjointedly.”³¹ Still, Shidō’s thought is consistent throughout his writings, taking into account intentional Zen-like contradictions, and his approach to Neo-Confucianism bears some comparison to that of other Zen masters at the time, as well as some placement in its historical context. Dumoulin notes that it was “Zen monks during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods who brought back to Japan from the mother country (China) a large body of Confucian ideas and literature, which the monks then propagated staunchly.”³² In part, Zen monks’ interest in Neo-Confucianism was undoubtedly related to their own school’s influence on it, since “the main Buddhist influence during the Sung period (on Neo-Confucianism) came from Zen. At some point in their lives all the significant Neo-Confucian thinkers during the Sung period had more or less strong contacts with Zen Buddhists.”³³ However,

it was particularly painful for Zen when Confucian scholars at the beginning of the Tokugawa period consciously began to remove Confucianism from the embrace of the Zen school. The Zen monks tried to make up for the loss by carrying on the pursuit of Chinese learning... Although the Zen monks could no longer be considered the main advocates of Confucianism, they continued to preserve and carry on the Confucian heritage among the common people.³⁴

²⁸ 鎌倉での話, Toyota, p.18

²⁹ 18

³⁰ Dumoulin, p.328

³¹ 329

³² 273

³³ Heinrich Dumoulin. *Zen Buddhism: A History- India and China*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p.268.

³⁴ Dumoulin (1990), 273-4

The way Helen Baroni frames it is that “Buddhists living at the beginning of the Edo period had, by necessity, to come to grips with Neo-Confucian thought, as it permeated and dominated the intellectual discourse of the secular world.”³⁵ In a specifically political sense, the role of Zen monks who “served as advisors to various Japanese rulers because of their education and literary ability in written Chinese, the language of official discourse,” faced change “in the early Tokugawa period (when) Confucian scholars began to fill the roles previously held by Zen monks.”³⁶

Before reviewing how Shidō Munan addressed the challenge of Confucian/Neo-Confucian thought, it would help to see how some of Shidō’s Zen contemporaries also dealt with it. Suzuki Shōsan (1579- 1655) was previously mentioned as a contemporary Zen master similar to Shidō Munan in his promulgation of a “popular-type, mass-appeal Buddhism.”³⁷ Although Dumoulin argues that he is responsible for “substantial contributions to the history of Japanese Zen,” Baroni clarifies that he was “an independent, one might even say marginal figure in the Zen tradition; he did not function within the bounds of institutional Zen, and his ideas had little or no influence on other Zen Buddhist masters of the day.”³⁸ Still, his thought is a good mirror to Shidō’s.³⁹

Arthur Braverman writes that Shōsan “felt that Confucianism had its place in Japanese society, (but) believed that that it should be considered subordinate to Buddhism, and that only then could it fulfill its true potential.”⁴⁰ As a result he “wrote the *Mōanjō* to convince a fellow samurai of his error in believing that Confucianism was more useful than Buddhism.”⁴¹ Still, he was “a true product of traditional Japan and its feudal social values. He never doubted the validity of the four classes of people (samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants)”.⁴² This way of thinking led Shōsan to write, for example, that he called the “‘true Mind’... ‘the mind that makes use of the five (Confucian) relationships’ because people were saying that Buddhism did not include these relationships.”⁴³

Braverman places Shōsan and Shidō Munan with the better-known Bankei Yōtaku (1622-1693) as members of a “seventeenth century... period of revival for Zen.”⁴⁴ While Bankei admits that as a youth, his concern with understanding the notion of “clarifying bright virtue” (明明德) from the *Great Learning* eventually led him to Zen, his collected sermons do not refer

³⁵ Baroni, p.119

³⁶ 142

³⁷ Yampolsky, p.16

³⁸ Dumoulin (1990), p.341; Baroni, p.114

³⁹ Coincidentally, Arthur Braverman notes that while still a warrior, Shōsan visited Gudō, among several other masters. Arthur Braverman, trans. *Warrior of Zen: The Diamond-hard Wisdom Mind of Suzuki Shōsan*. New York, NY: Kodansha America, Inc., 1994, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Braverman, p.8-9

⁴¹ 9

⁴² 11

⁴³ 109

⁴⁴ 6

to much from Confucianism.⁴⁵ In one sermon, however, he does say that if one fails one's responsibility to one's master, one turns the "Buddha-mind" one was "born with into an evil thing," and is at the same time also being unfilial to one's parents.⁴⁶

A third contemporary of Shidō worth looking at in this regard is Takuan Sōhō (1573-1645), who was more of a "*gakusō* ("learned monk" or "monastic scholar")", in whose "life the monastic element to all appearances took second place to scholarship."⁴⁷ Dumoulin explains that Takuan "was mainly concerned with Confucianism, attempting to use his Zen Buddhist perspective to present Neo-Confucian doctrine in a more intelligible form."⁴⁸ It will become apparent below that in some respects Shidō's approach is closest to Takuan's. As for Takuan's goal of trying to "foster harmony," Dumoulin gives as example his attempt to define the relationship between *ri* (理) and *ki* (氣), wherein:

Ri (also called *mukyoku*) is the foundation that evolves and becomes *ki*, or the universe of the myriad things (*taikyoku*). Takuan stresses the return of the *taikyoku* to its final ground in the *mukyoku*, which he identifies as the emptiness (Skt., *sūnyatā*; Jpn., *kū*) of Mahāyāna metaphysics. According to Zen teaching, the myriad things of the cosmos are not different from emptiness (*kū*) or from nothingness (*mu*).⁴⁹

Additionally, like "most Japanese Zen Buddhists of the Edo period, Takuan taught a Confucian ethic" in which he "admonishes the four classes" of people "to practice the social virtues."⁵⁰ This is in order to counter the Confucian accusation that Buddhists were too concerned with "metaphysical speculations (so) that they had little to say that was meaningful for daily life."⁵¹

Like Bankei, Shidō tells us he was educated in such Confucian texts as the *Doctrine of the Mean* when he was young.⁵² Like Bankei, Shōsan, and Takuan, Shidō framed his Buddhist teaching as applicable to social order:

When one faces one's lord one feels loyalty. When one faces one's parents one feels filial piety. Husband and wife, older and younger brother, and mutual friends, when they face each other, each aim to carry out their various paths (道) correctly. This is mind's (心) original purpose (本意).⁵³

⁴⁵ Norman Waddell, trans. *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei- 1622-1693*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984, p. 43.

⁴⁶ 83

⁴⁷ Dumoulin (1990), p.274

⁴⁸ 279

⁴⁹ 279

⁵⁰ 281

⁵¹ 281

⁵² Toyota, p.13

⁵³ 109-110, translations from the *Nihon no zen-goroku* henceforth are mine.

Like the aforementioned Zen masters, Shidō ultimately refers to concepts such as mind or emptiness as the source of proper order. In another section, after explaining that the evil behavior of emperor, lord, or parent leads to the suffering of those below them, Shidō writes that “if the emperor carries out the Buddhist Way, he will restore the world, and consider (the people) of the world without exception as his children. The people of the world (in turn) will venerate him as a parent.”⁵⁴ He then goes on to state that it is a “great mistake” for people to assume that Buddhism is only concerned with the after-life. (死して後の事).⁵⁵

Even in his earliest book, in the *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo*, Shidō writes that: “If there is no self, one serves one’s lord, fulfilling loyalty, and serves one’s parents, (fulfilling) filial piety.”⁵⁶ The same sentiment is expressed in one of his poems, addressed to someone who asked about the Confucian concept of benevolence (仁): “When looking from the (point of view of the) mind to which there is not one thing, a lord is (worthy of) reverence, parents are exalted.”⁵⁷

Takuan was a great promoter of the notion of *zankyō itchi* (三教一), that the three teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintō are one (though in China the original understanding was that Taoism replaced Shintō).⁵⁸ Some of Shidō’s statements point in this direction, though there is no ultimate sectarian equality, but a transcendent understanding that is in the realm of Zen enlightenment.⁵⁹ Shidō writes under the heading of Mind (心): “Buddha, kami, and the Way of Heaven all differ in name, but they actually all point to the mind of nothingness” (なにもなき心).⁶⁰ In a similar passage, Shidō is asked about Buddhism, and says:

It is getting rid of the self (身をなくする). In the self are 84,000 evils (悪). If the self disappears then there is great joy (大安楽). That is precisely kami. That is precisely Heaven (天). In my sect (我家) it is called Buddha.⁶¹

Shidō’s concern with addressing Neo-Confucian thought is particularly evident in the *Jishōki*, where he expends great effort to discuss various Confucian texts and interpret them from the Zen perspective. He has complete admiration for Confucius. In a passage in which he discusses the distinction between original Confucianism and the revival that was the result of the Cheng brothers, he concludes by firmly stating that: “Facing all things with a mind like Confucius’, is to not be deluded.”⁶² Shidō analyzes the first verse of *The Analects*, praising the initial statement (“To study and at due times practice what one has studied”) by saying: “This

⁵⁴ 144

⁵⁵ 144

⁵⁶ 211

⁵⁷ 一物もなき所より見るときは主はおそれおやはたうとし。217-8

⁵⁸ Dumoulin, p.280; Baroni, p.119

⁵⁹ More on Shidō’s approach to Shinto later.

⁶⁰ Toyota, p.78

⁶¹ 91

⁶² 孔子の心を似て万事とに向へは、まよふ事なし。P.142.

one phrase corresponds to all things, and are truly the words of a sage.”⁶³ In the later part of the passage, Shidō explains the line “To remain unsoured when his talents are unrecognized, is this not a *junzi*?” with the Buddhist notion that it is ego (我), if present, that causes people to be resentful, or “soured.”⁶⁴

Shidō continues this kind of line-by-line commentary, similar to the notation appended to kōan texts such as the *Hekiganroku*, with passages from other Neo-Confucian texts. It should be noted that it is not obscure works he chose, showing perhaps that Shidō’s knowledge of Neo-Confucian texts was confined to only the basics. However, the texts chosen are important ones. Shidō comments on the first line from the *Great Learning* (“The way of great learning consists in manifesting one’s bright virtue”) by saying that “It is manifesting the Mind.”⁶⁵

When Shidō analyzes the concept of the “investigation of things,” he also states that: “This is the original mind” (本心).⁶⁶ A similar equation begins with Shidō referring to the famous line from *The Analects*- “To know when you know something, and to know when you don’t know, that’s knowledge”:⁶⁷

What Confucius called not-knowing is called the original mind. Zisi (子思) called it the nature of the Mandate of Heaven (天命の性), and Zengzi (曾子) expounded it as the investigation of things. (They are) each original mind and original nature. (本心本性).⁶⁸

Shidō also dedicates a large passage to line-by-line Buddhist interpretations of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. In response to the line “to lead by our nature is called the Dao,” Shidō writes that: “Where there are no thoughts of the self is nature.”⁶⁹ In response to the line “Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered” (中, the “mean”), Shidō equates the mean with the deepest symbols for him: “Nothingness is referred to as nature, it is referred to as mind, and it is also referred to as the mean.”⁷⁰ Again, Shidō is not an impartial proponent of “the unity of Confucianism and Buddhism (*jubutsu itchi*).”⁷¹ The mean may be important: “Centered: this is the great root of the world” (天下).⁷² However, Shidō adds to that: “Nothingness is the form of the universe” (天地).⁷³

As for Shidō’s relations with Confucians, two specific cases are mentioned in his writings aside from the various nameless Confucian questioners that start several question-

⁶³ Toyota , p.45; Eno, p.2015, p.1 for the translation of *The Analects*.

⁶⁴ Toyota, p.45; Eno, p.1

⁶⁵ ころをあきらむるなり。Toyota 46; Muller for the translation of *the Great Learning*.

⁶⁶ Toyota, p.158

⁶⁷ Eno, p.7

⁶⁸ Toyota, p.158

⁶⁹ 身の念なき所、性也。Toyota 158; Eno 2010, p.2 for the translation of *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

⁷⁰ 何もなき所を性と云、心と云、中ともいふなり。Toyota 160; Eno 2010, p.2.

⁷¹ Dumoulin (1990), p.280

⁷² Eno 2010, p.2

⁷³ 中也者天下の大本也 and 無一物は天地のかたち也。Toyota, p.161

and-answer sections. In the *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo*, his earliest book, Shidō seems to gloat by noting that a Confucian is unable to answer him when he asks about the Mandate of Heaven (天命).⁷⁴ He also laments that “for selfish reasons” different Buddhist sects experience rivalry, and that Confucians condemn Buddhism.⁷⁵ That he does not mention Buddhists attacking Confucians may reflect bias, or perhaps the changing fortunes of Zen monks in relation to Neo-Confucians in terms of temporal power. At the end of the *Jishōki*, written several years later, Shidō relates that a Confucian acquaintance once insultingly asked how he could be taken in by the Buddhist notion that “the highest (thing) is emptiness, and all things do not have substance.”⁷⁶ Shidō answers: “I have looked at the writings of the (Confucian) sages, and they won’t praise themselves, and won’t scold others. Why is it that your words differ from the sages’ words?”⁷⁷

Shidō Munan and the Pure Land

Shidō’s treatment of Pure Land practices merits a careful evaluation of its place in Japan at the time. Shidō was a contemporary of Ingen Ryūki (Yīnyuán Lóngqí, 1592-1673), and though he does not address the Zen of Ingen explicitly in his writings, must have been influenced in his views by his teacher, Gudō.⁷⁸ Though Ingen is the founder of the Obaku sect in Japan, Baroni reminds us that:

Most treatments of Obaku’s characteristics begin with a discussion of its combination of Zen and Pure Land practices. Although such a combination certainly sets Obaku apart today and has led to its identification in the popular mind as “Nembutsu Zen,” this is not the dominant theme found in the early writings of the members of the sect. Nor, as it happens, did outside commentators make much of Obaku’s inclusion of Pure Land elements in the early decades of the sect’s development in Japan.⁷⁹

The combination of Pure Land and Zen practices was not an innovative thing in Japan either. Suzuki Shōsan was a strong advocate of the nenbutsu, saying you should do it “with all your energy... (so) your deluded thoughts will naturally cease.... As the fruits of this effort grow, you will acquire the energy of zazen.”⁸⁰ He frames the practice in Zen terms in other ways. For example, he writes: “Just recite the *nenbutsu* so completely that you are released from your self. By being released from your self, I mean that... you study death. Death opens up and is

⁷⁴ 192

⁷⁵ 211

⁷⁶ 仏道高虚、而都無実。188

⁷⁷ 188

⁷⁸ This omission of any explicit mention of Ingen or of the related political problems involving his teacher, along with his refusal to accept high positions at temples later in life, led Dr. Jiang Wu to comment to me that Shidō may have “received some good advice.”

⁷⁹ Baroni, p.87

⁸⁰ Braverman, p.46

clarified.”⁸¹ In response to someone critical of his use of the *nenbutsu*, Shōsan tells the person he has “the wrong idea about it. When I say *Namu Amida Butsu Namu Amida Butsu*, I am saying: ‘Throw away attachments, throw away attachments.’”⁸²

Shōsan’s views would have been rejected by most mainstream Zen monks, though. When talking to a questioner about *kōan* practice, he says: “Nowadays, those who have the experience of seeing into their own nature (*kenshō*) are generally harmful to others. You should just become as earth and practice the *nenbutsu*.”⁸³ He again dismisses the traditionally important focus on enlightenment in Zen when he says: “It is a big mistake when beginners easily experience *satori*- when we allow the light to break through for them in a short time... I prefer simply to have students recite the *nenbutsu*, as in the Pure Land sects.”⁸⁴ We should remember, then, that Baroni dismisses Shōsan’s status at the time as “marginal.”⁸⁵

We already know that Shidō spent years as Gudō Tōshoku’s disciple, both as a layman and after he was ordained. Taking a closer look at Gudō’s particular relationship and influence on what would become the Obaku school can perhaps provide an indirect window into Shidō’s own views in regards to Pure Land practice. Ingen Ryūki arrived in Japan in 1654.⁸⁶ This was the same year that Shidō left lay-life to become Gudō’s personal attendant.⁸⁷ Gudō was leader of a faction at Myōshinji that favored a “less literal interpretation” of the monastic rule.⁸⁸ This faction came into conflict with the opposing faction when the opposing group wanted to invite Ingen to Myōshinji with the eventual aim of installing him as abbot.⁸⁹ Gudō succeeded in blocking Ingen’s invitation to Myōshinji, which “led to the founding of Mampuku-ji, and with it the establishment of Obaku as an independent sect.”⁹⁰ The start of the building of Mampuku-ji, and the move of Ingen and his followers there, was in 1661, the same year Gudō died.⁹¹

Baroni notes that in 1665, the Myōshinji monks formally defrocked Ryōkei Shōsen, the head of the faction that opposed Gudō, when he became Ingen’s Dharma heir, and that “(r)elations between the two temples remained tense for many years, and monks from Myōshin-ji continued to compose texts critical of Obaku and its monks.”⁹² Although neither Toyota nor Dumoulin provide a specific year for when Shidō left Gudō’s side, it is clear that

⁸¹ 47

⁸² 65

⁸³ 51

⁸⁴ 61

⁸⁵ Baroni, p.114

⁸⁶ Baroni, p.11. Waddell notes that Bankei studied with Dōsha Chōgen (Tao-che Ch’ao-yuan, 1600?-1661?), a Chinese master who was persecuted by Ingen’s group. Bankei studied with him after first trying to meet Gudō to have his enlightenment experience confirmed, but Gudō was gone in one of his frequent trips. Bankei was supposedly not impressed by Ingen when he first saw him. Waddell (1984), p. 11-12, 55.

⁸⁷ Dumoulin (1990), p.327; Toyota, p.15

⁸⁸ Baroni, p.44

⁸⁹ 46-7

⁹⁰ 47

⁹¹ 53, 131

⁹² 132, 134

Shidō was present from Ingen’s arrival in Japan and exposed to his master’s friction with the Chinese monk and his supporters. On the other hand, we know that much of Shidō’s training under Gudō was before these events, when he was a lay student.

As for Gudō’s own views, he “objected to the inclusion of Pure Land elements in Obaku practice,” and was reputed to have said in regards to Ingen’s use of the nenbutsu: “Even were I to fall to the lowest of the 80,000 hells, deep down I would still adhere to Patriarch Zen.”⁹³ This was in spite of the fact that Ingen gave the “*nembutsu kōan*” of “Who chants the *nembutsu*?” to those who already practiced the nenbutsu, while not apparently recommending it “to any of his Zen followers, lay or monk.”⁹⁴ Baroni uses this to compare Ingen to Hakuin, who, though critical of “dual practice in the Zen monastic setting... took a much softer, more conciliatory tone when writing to Pure Land believers,” even if he “did not believe that the two practices were equally beneficial by any means.”⁹⁵

Shidō’s earliest text, the *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo*, is dated to 1666, and his other major works in the 1670s, not long before his own death in 1676.⁹⁶ That is, Shidō’s earliest text was written after the formal falling out between Myōshinji and Mampukuji, and after Gudō’s death. As for Shidō’s views on the nenbutsu, he is, as expected, often critical. He tells a practitioner of the nenbutsu that the word “Buddha” was the result of people being “at a loss regarding what (actually) has no name.”⁹⁷ He also criticizes Pure Land priests who say that if one recites the nenbutsu they will become a Buddha, the proof against it being that there are so many people out there who already recite it.⁹⁸ He suggests to someone that they recite the nenbutsu, if all they hope for is happiness in a future life.⁹⁹

However, Shidō’s attitude ends up not being as rigid as Gudō’s. It seems closer to Ingen’s and Hakuin’s. He recounts an old nun who practiced the nenbutsu seeking advice from him, to whom he taught:

There is no other thing called Buddha, other than the nenbutsu you always intone. When you recite *Namu Amida Butsu*, the No-Mind (that chants) is (what is actually) called Buddha. Certainly, if you recite the nenbutsu without neglect, and do so gratefully and with No-Mind, that is no other than the Buddha.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ 130

⁹⁴ 115-6

⁹⁵ 116

⁹⁶ Toyota, p.107, 113, 188, 212; Dumoulin (1990), p.329 says 1760 for the *Sokushinki*, which, even though he likely meant 1670, does not correspond to the dates of 1672 for the first edition and 1676 for the second with additions at the end in the post-scripts written by Shidō in Toyota.

⁹⁷ Toyota, p.226

⁹⁸ 62

⁹⁹ 200

¹⁰⁰ 190-1

This limited acceptance of the nenbutsu is expressed when he writes: “The nenbutsu is a sharp sword. Removing one’s (bad) karma (身の業) is useful. However, one must certainly not think one can (thus) become a Buddha. As for what is called a Buddha, not becoming is the true Buddha.”¹⁰¹

Thus, Shidō’s belief is that which had already been developed in China in previous centuries as the Chan or Zen interpretation that “the ‘Pure Land (is) only in the mind’ (*yuishin jōdo*) and ‘the Amida (is) within the self’ (*koshin no Mida*).”¹⁰² Shidō frames his thoughts on the Pure Land this way. It should be noted that the following quotes are from the *Jishōki* and *Sokushinki*, Shidō’s later works, while the critical quotes above are mostly from the earlier *Ryūtakuji Hōgo*, perhaps reflecting an evolution in Shidō’s tolerance. Shidō clearly states that the Pure Land is in one’s mind, and Amida in one’s body.¹⁰³ He also writes this phrase out as a heading: “The self that is Amida, the Pure Land in the mind.”¹⁰⁴ At the beginning of another passage, he writes: “Mind (心) is referred to as mysterious (妙). It is referred to as the letter A (阿). It is referred to as Amida. It is referred to as enlightenment (悟). This is without a doubt.”¹⁰⁵

Shidō Munan and Shinto

In many respects, Shidō’s approach to Shinto is very similar to his approach to Pure Land practices. Unlike Bankei or Shōsan, who do not really mention it in their writings, Shidō makes frequent reference to kami and to those who pray to them. A system of Shinto thought developed by Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511?) several centuries before had become “an orthodoxy cum orthopraxy of sorts during the Tokugawa period.”¹⁰⁶ In this line of thought, “both Buddhism and Confucianism are second-hand versions of ‘Shinto’... Kanetomo stated that Buddhism was the fruit of the great religious tree of Asia, that Confucianism and Taoism were its branches and leaves, and that Shinto was its root.”¹⁰⁷

In one specific passage Shidō is rather critical of those who dedicate themselves to the kami. In the *Jishōki*, he lists the kinds of errors people make. In between the overly-intellectual and the drunks, he says of Shintoists:

¹⁰¹ 54

¹⁰² Baroni, p.111.

¹⁰³ Toyota, p.185

¹⁰⁴ 己身弥陀唯心淨土. Toyota, p.19

¹⁰⁵ “Mysterious” referring to a Buddhist term important in the Lotus Sutra-centered sects, the letter A referring to an important Shingon/Tantric concept, and enlightenment, or satori, being the Zen sect’s focus. Toyota 110.

¹⁰⁶ Allan G. Grapard. (Spring, 1992). “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo.” *Monumenta Nipponica*. Vol. 47, No.1 p.45. Perhaps Shidō’s own argument of “Mind” as the source and various religious traditions’ misguided relabeling of it was influenced by this.

¹⁰⁷ Grapard, p.45

Saying that “The way of the kami (神道) is an important matter,” morning and evening altering their appearance, repeatedly doing some thing or other (何やらんくとくとしく), not showing people (secret writings), reciting incantations, slandering the Buddhist Way and the Confucian Way, and praying to the kami because of the impressiveness of their remarkable (miracles): There are (lamentably) also some (people) like this.¹⁰⁸

In another section Shidō lists the kinds of things Shintoists pray for, bringing up the criticism that the kami only help in this world. He writes:

I asked a man who prayed fervently to the kami, about his wishes. Even if one happens to be born in this world, to not suffer from want, and also the suffering of not having descendants, he said. And there is praying for prosperity in wealth and rank, and that one’s descendants flourish. So there are various good things, and also bad things.¹⁰⁹

Shidō more often writes about Shinto in symbolic terms, reinterpreting it in much the same way as he does the Pure Land and Amida. In one passage he is challenged by someone who tells him Japan is rightly “the country of kami,” and that adopting Buddhism “has been a great error.”¹¹⁰ He replies that the kami are actually Mind, and adds a poem that “As long as one’s mind is in agreement with the true way, even if (one) does not pray, the kami will be kind enough to protect (one).”¹¹¹ He follows up with an allegory that plays on the notion of Takamagahara (高天原), the heaven where kami reside: “Takamagahara is a person’s body. Where kami reside, is clearly in one’s breast. This is the heart/mind (心).”¹¹²

A similar play on body/egoic-self (身) versus heart/mind (心) is used by Shidō when he taught someone who was “having difficulties with Shinto stories.”¹¹³ Shidō summarizes the famous story of the trouble-making kami Susano-o-no-Mikoto (すさのをのみこと) being driven away so Amaterasu Omikami (天照大神) could take her place as the ruler of Japan, which he equates with the enlightened state:

Susano-o-no-Mikoto is an allegory (たとへたり) for the self/body (人の身). When thoughts of the self arise (身のねん), one does not reflect on death and great evils are committed. If there is no

¹⁰⁸ Toyota, p.147. Toyota’s modern translation specifies that “altering the appearance” refers to changing their clothing or robes (衣服), and that what they do not share are “written things” (書いた物),

¹⁰⁹ 147-8

¹¹⁰ 143

¹¹¹ 143

¹¹² 143, *Sokushinki*. This is also repeated in the *Jishōki*: Toyota 20.

¹¹³ 185

self, then there is always plenty. Amaterasu Omikami is (thus) an allegory for people's mind.¹¹⁴

One area where Shidō seems to be influenced by Shinto thought is in his frequent use of notions of purity and pollution in describing spiritual and moral conditions.¹¹⁵ In this regard, Shidō does seem to fit into Yampolsky's definition of him as an "active proponent of... (a) popular-type, mass-appeal Buddhism."¹¹⁶ To be clear, Shidō does not consciously identify his choice of words (いさきよき, 清浄, けかす) as being related to Shinto, but it can perhaps be seen as a way Zen was made distinctively Japanese. He also commonly frames the distinction as one between an enlightened understanding of no-self or nothingness as opposed to being deluded by the self. That is, there is still a Buddhist framework within which he uses concepts of purity and pollution.

An example of this combination is found when he writes:

The ordinary person is, as they are, a Buddha, but because they do not know this, suffer because of the self. Be enlightened... This is called practice (修行). When you have *become pure*, you are a Buddha.¹¹⁷

Another example: "When various delusions (妄想) arise, you must firmly enter zazen. (You will) *become pure*. This is the merit (功德) of meditation."¹¹⁸ In one instance, Shidō claims that the "Sixth Patriarch said that the nature of Bodhi is originally pure."¹¹⁹ Toyota notes that in the actual text, it is "originally nothing" (本来無一物), but that Shidō has changed it to "originally pure" (本来清浄).¹²⁰

Shidō criticizes those who pray to the Buddhas while still harboring base thoughts. They will "pollute the mind... and cause suffering."¹²¹ He follows this with a poem: "Any person may enter the Buddha Way: They should purify their own mind."¹²² A similar warning is found when he writes: "Having evil thoughts in your own breast that pollute (any potential) Buddhahood, is proof that you will be (reborn as) a beast."¹²³ In defining Confucian cultivation, which he found praise-worthy, he writes: "Cultivation is not being *polluted* by the *evil of the self*. Pollution by the evil of the self is a dreadful thing."¹²⁴ Shidō, however, does have a typical Zen contradiction

¹¹⁴ 185

¹¹⁵ 20

¹¹⁶ Yampolsky, p.12

¹¹⁷ Toyota, p.148, italics added. The last line is いさきよくなる時、仏なり。

¹¹⁸ 149, italics added. The italicized line is 清浄に成る。

¹¹⁹ 152

¹²⁰ 152, note

¹²¹ 152, 心をけかしぬる

¹²² 153. The poem is 誰とても仏のみちにいる人はをのか心をいさきよくせよ。

¹²³ 174. けかす is the word used for polluting.

¹²⁴ 160, italics added. The italicized sentence is 養は身のあくを以てけかさぬなり。

to add about purity: “To be aware of yourself (as pure) is wrong. The state of not knowing is purity.”¹²⁵

Shidō Munan and the warrior class

Brian Victoria’s *Zen at War* has brought to light a disconnect between an image of pacifism around Zen in the West and historical events in the 20th century. As mentioned earlier, the Zen masters of the early Tokugawa we have looked at were often urban, and were advocates of a Japanese Confucian world-view in which the samurai class was at the top. As such, it is not surprising that they shaped their teachings to their audience.

Suzuki Shōsan, for example, instructed a samurai:

From the beginning, it’s best to do zazen in the midst of strife and confusion. A samurai, in particular, must be able to do zazen while uttering his battle cry. Guns are firing, lances are flying, and amid the confusion, you send up a battle cry.¹²⁶

He adds afterward: “All the arts, including war, are produced with the energy from meditation,” while he “mimicked someone holding a sword at the ready position.”¹²⁷ In a later passage, he discusses the merits of practicing as a layman or monk:

What’s more, most people’s energy is slack, and their minds tainted. But the samurai, serving his Master, has to maintain a strong centered energy. In addition, he naturally keeps watch over death. In short, nowadays, religious practice is for lay people.¹²⁸

Bankei takes a similar approach. In a sermon on self-control and the Unborn/Buddha-mind, he defends a samurai doing his duty by “cut(ting) down an adversary by rushing in front of his master to shield him from danger.”¹²⁹ Should a samurai kill someone for personal motives or flee a battle out of cowardice, then he would instead be turning his Buddha-mind into a fighting spirit (asura) or an animal, respectively.¹³⁰ Waddell also relates other encounters between Bankei and samurai, in which he teaches them on principle and practice when they bring up their “study (of) swordsmanship,” and an encounter in which he bests a samurai in a “duel,” declaring the samurai’s verbal hesitation to be proof that his own “blow has already fallen.”¹³¹

¹²⁵ 62. Following Toyota’s modern translation for the second line.

¹²⁶ Braverman, p.31

¹²⁷ 31

¹²⁸ 62

¹²⁹ Waddell (1984) , p.96

¹³⁰ 96-7

¹³¹ 145-6

Takuan Sōhō is well-known for his letters to a samurai friend on the art of swordsmanship. He develops a lesson on the use of a Zen-based, clear mind to perfect sword-fighting: “Give up all distinctions and plans! As soon as you see the moving sword, take action without a moment’s hesitation.”¹³² A warrior using no-mind will then be free to move as he pleases: “When the highest perfection is attained, hands, feet, and all bodily members move by themselves, without any intervention of the mind.”¹³³

It has already been mentioned that Shidō taught many laypeople, and his notes throughout his writings briefly describe his questioners and show that he had a wide audience. As the Dharma-heir to Gudō, it is not surprising that he also had high-status audiences, and Toyota notes that a number of *daimyo* became his disciples.¹³⁴ So he includes in his writings such things as advice for the successor of a general (少将) on what moral standards a country should be governed by, advice to someone on how to “win over the people” (民) by providing for their basic necessities, and in a relatively long passage explains how being born into “a *daimyo* or high-status household... illustrates (the principle of past good) karma.”¹³⁵

In regards to warriors, specifically, Shidō’s position is not one of censure. He says to “a man fond of the Way of the warrior: You must know that if you do not fully transcend life and death, then you will certainly err in the Way of the warrior as well.”¹³⁶ He repeats the same sentiment in one of his poems.¹³⁷ In one instance he is challenged by someone who says that Buddhism would actually weaken warrior households by making people meek and forget their traditions. Shidō replies: “Why do you say such a thing? The Buddha Way is certainly not different (from the way of warriors). It refers to the human mind. With a dutiful mind, the world and the country (天下国家) will be at peace.”¹³⁸ He then adds that: “Even in troubled times... a righteous general with a deeply compassionate mind will have many followers. As for (his use of) military strategy (軍法), he will not lose the assistance of Heaven.”¹³⁹

Still, Shidō could be critical of class. In one passage, he describes how he preached to an audience composed of both high and low-ranking people. Clapping his hands, he tells them that there is no difference in their hearing the sound, only a contrived one when they remember distinctions.¹⁴⁰ And in the end, Shidō notes elsewhere, in the matter of death there is no distinction for anyone.¹⁴¹

¹³² Dumoulin (1990), 285

¹³³ 286

¹³⁴ Toyota, p.4

¹³⁵ 92-3

¹³⁶ 74

¹³⁷ 231

¹³⁸ 177

¹³⁹ 177

¹⁴⁰ 206

¹⁴¹ 215

Shidō Munan and death

As noted at the beginning, Shidō is particularly known for his dramatic description of the enlightened state as one of having died. It is also possibly the germ to Hakuin's term "Great Death" (大死).¹⁴² However, ignoring Zen and Buddhism's long history of concern with death, even during Shidō's time his analogy was not entirely unknown.

Shōsan tells someone that claimed not to fear death that his own practice was able to progress because he "wanted to be a living corpse."¹⁴³ Although Shōsan usually just told his disciples to be mindful of the inevitability of death, death as an allegory is possibly brought up again in a conversation he had not long before dying.¹⁴⁴ When asked about his deteriorating condition, he laughed and said: "Shōsan attended to his *own* death more than thirty years ago."¹⁴⁵ Braverman notes, however, that it is possible Shōsan is either referring to a previous serious illness or to his having become a monk, which was also seen as "dying to this world."¹⁴⁶

Bankei framed most of his teachings around the concept of the Unborn (不生). In one passage he describes this equivalent to Buddha-mind or Mind by saying: "There can be no death for what was never born, so if it is unborn, it is obviously undying."¹⁴⁷ Though not exactly the same as Shidō's usage of death, Waddell notes that these concepts, such as "*unborn, undying,*" appear in the *Heart Sutra* and in Nagarjuna's writings.¹⁴⁸ These examples all help place Shidō's teachings in the context of a religious environment where death and its transcendence were a common concept.

To be fair, Shidō does make specific, frequent references to death as spiritual transformation in this life throughout his writings. For example, it is at the beginning of the *Jishōki* that Shidō relates a dialogue:

A man asked about Hell. I said: You criticizing yourself. (せめらるる) (He) asked what Heaven is. (I said:) Not criticizing oneself. (He) asked what is Buddha? (I said:) No mind and no body/self (身心ともになし). He said: That is the same as a dead person. I said: It is dying while alive.¹⁴⁹

In a later passage, he describes how an ideal monk is supposed to be. This passage is perhaps the most detailed explanation of what he means by being "dead while alive":

¹⁴² Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo, , p.190

¹⁴³ Braverman, p.57

¹⁴⁴ 61, 62, 75

¹⁴⁵ 77

¹⁴⁶ 126

¹⁴⁷ Waddell (1984), p. 36

¹⁴⁸ 109

¹⁴⁹ 生きながら死人になるをいふ。Toyota, p.108

It is as if a dead person were to come back to life. A dead person no longer desires things, does not romantically attach oneself to others, does not hate others, perfects the Buddha Way, understands the right and wrong of others, and so it is said, can make others enter into the Buddha Way.¹⁵⁰

Reaching this state allows one to transcend ordinary moral norms: “To be always non-thinking is the practice of the Buddha Way. Because of non-thinking, (freely) doing anything is alright. Completely become a dead man while alive, and behaving as you please becomes alright.”¹⁵¹ In a later passage Shidō relates death-awareness like Shōsan advocated to the state of dying while alive:

It is to die that you came into this world. It is from thinking that you (just) came to live that you agonize over death. People who always think about the matter of death strive in regard to the serious matter of death, and when they look into what it is that dies, and what it is that lives, their mind attains unity with emptiness (こくう), and they transcend life, death, and all things (生死万物). One is (then both) living and dead.¹⁵²

In a line in the *Sokushinki*, Shidō includes an inscription he wrote “(a)bove a picture of the ascetic Shakyamuni: When the body/self (身) completely dies, what is left is called a Buddha.”¹⁵³ Typically, one hears in Buddhist thought of the starved, ribcage-showing Shakyamuni as an example of ascetic practices taken to an unhealthy extreme. It is what Shakyamuni Buddha tried without success before finding the Middle Way. With this line, however, Shidō has transformed this negative image into a crucial step before enlightenment. In effect, the ascetic Shakyamuni can be reinterpreted as a dying-resurrection archetype, and a symbol of the connection between death and Zen enlightenment.

Shidō Munan’s Zen-style and themes

A few of the other common themes of Shidō’s writings should be mentioned to avoid giving a distorted view of the importance of the topics covered so far. Braverman notes that Shōsan, “like other reformers of his time, became skeptical of kōans and seemed to employ them sparingly, if at all.”¹⁵⁴ Bankei, as well, criticizes them for being in a language (Chinese) “we have difficulty using,” and refers to them variously as “old tools” and “worthless old

¹⁵⁰ 72

¹⁵¹ 90. Toyota explains that “non-thinking” means not being attached to things. This is also the poem D.T. Suzuki quotes.

¹⁵² 182.

¹⁵³ 82.

¹⁵⁴ Braverman, p.98

documents.”¹⁵⁵ Chōon Dokai (1628-1695), a first generation Japanese Obaku master, regarded kōan practice as “formalistic and debased, dismissing it as a form of ‘counting practice’”¹⁵⁶

In this regard, Shidō is not at all like his contemporaries. As the Dharma-heir to Gudō, and in the mainstream of Rinzai Zen, Shidō placed heavy emphasis on kōan practice. In one section of his writings, he provides comments to several famous kōan cases. Regarding Zhao Zhou’s *Mu*: “Saying *Mu* is, regrettably, a word-obstruction (詞のさはり). When not even *Mu* is thought of, does it become *Mu*. (Even) Zhao Zhou’s saying *Mu* is an uncertain thing. No matter what you do it can’t be known.”¹⁵⁷ Regarding another famous case: “When asked what is Buddha, the answer given was three *kin* of flax. Whatever one may call Buddha, there is nothing it does not correspond to.”¹⁵⁸

In the *Ryūtakuji Shozō Hōgo*, one section lists a series of encounters Shidō had with students where they either ask about a kōan or pose a similar question, to which Shidō gives an answer and a blow with his stick. Only an “old monk” is able to escape his presence before being hit.¹⁵⁹ As to why a section in his writings with such an unusual style, portraying Shidō as a classical Chinese master, is only found in Shidō’s earlier writings but not his better-known later works, one can only speculate. Given that the later *Jishōki* and *Sokushinki* have many more question-and-answer sections, as well as longer passages with Shidō’s explanations of the Dharma, perhaps the brief, overly-physical exchanges seemed crude, or a poor attempt by Shidō to portray himself a certain way.

In another section of the same book, Shidō is challenged by someone who points out that Kanzan Egen, the 14th-century founder of Myōshinji, was enlightened through one kōan case, while people need to study 300 cases in the present age. Shidō justifies the need for kōan study by blaming the practitioners: “Though they eat rice morning and evening, people who know its flavor are rare. If there is a person who knows, they are a person who does not (need to) eat (any longer).”¹⁶⁰ An additional thing to note would be Shidō’s frequent reference to kōan cases from the *Hekiganroku*, but not the *Rinzairoku*. This would support Yanagida Seizan’s argument that “(b)efore the introduction of Obaku Zen, the *Hekigan roku* had been the more influential text in Japanese Rinzai, but, following Yin-yuan’s (Ingen’s) lead, the Japanese rediscovered the original text.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Waddell (1984), p. 54, 56, 70

¹⁵⁶ Baroni, p.81. Baroni also notes that Japanese Rinzai masters at the time saw a “basic problem” in the koan system in use, which valued mastery of the “literary content” over an “enlightenment experience.” Subsequently, “one of the reforms attributed to the eighteenth-century Rinzai master Hakuin was the revitalization of the koan system,” p.141.

¹⁵⁷ Toyota, p.88

¹⁵⁸ 88

¹⁵⁹ 189

¹⁶⁰ 205

¹⁶¹ Baroni, p.86

Shōsan says that living in the mountains “is symptomatic of a pretentious mind,” and reverses a poem someone tells him to state instead that living around people is better than living in the mountains because one is forced to deal with the difficulties of people.¹⁶² Shidō, an urban teacher in Edo, shares much the same view, and repeats it frequently. He advises a man who wanted to retreat into the mountains: “Even if you are deep in the mountains, you are not outside this transient world. If you do not distance yourself from worldly and irrelevant thoughts, you will only have changed your place of dwelling.”¹⁶³ He follows this with a poem: “There is no mountain you can enter that is outside the mind, make your hiding place the place beyond thinking.”¹⁶⁴ Shidō also believes that practicing in the mountains causes one to “look down on the people of the world,” and is only a symptom of not having a good teacher to work with.¹⁶⁵ A poem he writes for someone after advising them to experience enlightenment before running off into the mountains: “A person going into the mountains without having experienced enlightenment (さとり), is an omen of becoming a beast (in a future life).”¹⁶⁶

In fact, Shidō also makes frequent reference in his writing to rebirth in lower states. Almost always, it is a symbolic use of the concept of transmigration to denote states of mind instead. Shōsan speaks much the same way when he answers a questioner on reincarnation: “All these people who don’t stop the movement of the mind are ghosts clinging to trees and grasses *right now*.”¹⁶⁷ Bankei similarly explains that ignorance causes one to turn the Buddha-mind into lower forms “through a single thought.”¹⁶⁸

Shidō says that if people do not make an effort in the Way, then “while alive, they become oxen and horses.”¹⁶⁹ In his poems, Shidō writes about zazen: “As for proof of becoming a beast while one is alive: Not being on the floor (doing) zazen. Similarly, as for proof one has become a Buddha while alive: Not being on the floor (doing) zazen.”¹⁷⁰ Toyota clarifies in his modern translation of the passage that the second line implies one can get stuck in meditation to one’s detriment. There are also, however, passages where Shidō seems to speak of literal rebirth and his belief in it.¹⁷¹

Another common Zen theme is criticism of intellectualism or cleverness (智慧). Shōsan, for example, says: “Don’t allow your energy to dwindle from constant study... I haven’t seen even one person who achieved worth through scholarship.”¹⁷² Shidō writes in one case: “Those who know the Buddha Dharma (intellectually, 知) earn punishment. Those who put into

¹⁶² Braverman, p.46, 104

¹⁶³ Toyota, p.69

¹⁶⁴ 69

¹⁶⁵ 117, 119

¹⁶⁶ 176. Other references to the topic are in 129, 130, 204, and 208.

¹⁶⁷ Braverman, p.100

¹⁶⁸ Waddell (1984), p. 38. Also 103.

¹⁶⁹ Toyota, p.118

¹⁷⁰ 216. Other references to the topic are in 125, 145, 190, and 214.

¹⁷¹ 166, 184

¹⁷² Braverman, p.72. Also 19 and 49.

practice (行) the Buddha Dharma will certainly earn merit in their life.”¹⁷³ In another poem to someone “compelled to read books,” he writes: “Evidence that after you die you will certainly become a book worm is being deeply attached to letters (文字).”¹⁷⁴

Another common topic for Shidō is special instructions and advice for monks. He holds his monastic followers to a higher standard, saying that: “Monks are the most evil (people) in the world. They get by in the world without labor. They are great thieves (大盗人也).”¹⁷⁵ He outlines rules for the monks at his hermitage, such as not treating even small sums of money lightly, accepting abuse from others, and never missing appointments, regardless of the weather.¹⁷⁶

Shidō has two interesting poems about the role of monastic robes. A poem written to a priest: “When putting on priestly vestments, become emptiness (こくう) and then wear them. If a ‘priest’ puts them on, he will receive divine punishment.”¹⁷⁷ The other poem reads: “(People) do not know, that the stole (けさ) and robes (衣) worn on the form of a beast (the human body), are Heaven’s binding rope.”¹⁷⁸

A final note regarding Shidō’s word choice should be noted. This paper has covered Shidō’s use of the terms “dying” and “being pure” as religious activity. It is the case, however, that even more common than this choice of words is the usage of such terms as “leaving behind the self” (身をのこす) or “removing one’s karma” (身の業を除去する, 去る, 除き去る), as well as realizing nothingness (無一物). However, these frequently used words and their related variants are not used in isolation, but usually combined with such concepts as death, purity, Mind, Buddha, etc.

Conclusion

It is the hope of this writer that one gains a more nuanced view of who Shidō Munan was, as opposed to knowing him only through a single radical sentence on “dying while alive.” Placing him in the dynamic historical setting he occupied and comparing him to his peers will hopefully make his thought and views more comprehensible to the reader.¹⁷⁹ In some respects,

¹⁷³ Toyota, p.153

¹⁷⁴ 229. “Book worm” is 蠹, so possibly a moth, bark beetle, or silverfish. Other references to the topic are in 65, 97, 107, 139, 147, 171, 187, 204, 213, and 223.

¹⁷⁵ 96

¹⁷⁶ 96

¹⁷⁷ 79

¹⁷⁸ Toyota, p.225. Other references to the topic of monastics are in 99, 100, 122, 171, 177, 190, 196, 197, 205, 218, and 219.

¹⁷⁹ I am willing to use the term dynamic regarding Buddhism for the following reasons: 1. The changes religious institutions had to face with the establishment of the Tokugawa government and its efforts to regulate them. 2. The arrival of Ingen. 3. The rise of Zen masters like Bankei who promoted a popular style of Zen. Baroni p. 3 notes that the typical view of Tokugawa Zen as “degenerate” may have more to do with posthumously elevating Hakuin’s status as a reformer than with actual historical conditions.

Shidō was part of a wave of teachers during his time who focused on spreading Zen to the masses. On the other hand, Shidō was in the transmission line of a major figure of the most important Rinzai monastic complex at the time, and his teachings reflect that mainstream status. For example, he did not reject kōans or neglect the specialized education of Zen monks.

His concern with Confucian thought and catering to the warrior and upper classes of his time reflect the urban, early Tokugawa setting he found himself in and its changing power dynamics. His approach to Pure Land thought is complex and perhaps even contradictory, but also must have been influenced by his close teacher Gudō. It may have also influenced his similar approach to Shinto. At the same time, a native streak of Shinto emphasis on purity and pollution seems to have been a preferred method of formulating Zen practice for the common people.

In his response to the rising influence of Neo-Confucianism, the appearance of Pure Land thought mixed with Zen in the establishment of the Obaku sect, and in the growing acceptance of Yoshida Kanetomo's thoughts regarding Shinto, Shidō Munan's concerns as a Zen teacher reflect the changing historical circumstances the Zen sect as a whole faced in the early Tokugawa period. It would not be long after this that reforms would be brought about in both Rinzai and Sōtō Zen. Finally, though Shidō frequently used death as an allegory for Zen enlightenment, it should be remembered the concern with death and its meaning has a long history in the tradition.

Appendix: Translation Selections

The sections below are from the Ryūtakuji Hōgo, Shidō Munan's earlier (1666), less famous work, which Toyota notes was found in Shidō's handwriting in a temple built by Hakuin. It was given to an unknown disciple of his, Fusen (孚仙).¹⁸⁰ First is the section cited above, in which the master portrays himself as a classic Zen master in the koan collection style.

A certain Buddhist priest came and asked: What kind of thing is "This very mind is the Buddha?" (即心即仏) I gave him (a blow with) a stick, and said: What kind of thing is "This very mind is the Buddha?" He paid homage and left.

An old woman asked: What happens after death? I said: There is no dying (不死). Again she asked: Where were we born from? I said: From nothingness (一物もなし). The old woman did not answer. I gave her (a blow with) a stick, she paid homage and left.

An old monk came and asked: Originally there is the perfectly enlightened Buddha (within), so how is it you became as you are now (enlightened)? I said: I do not know. Do you understand, monk? I intended to hit him with a stick. I took the stick. The old monk left. I also left.¹⁸¹

If you are thinking of advising others in the Way, you should make compassion (しひ) first and foremost. No matter how foolish the person in front of you may be, include compassion in your teaching.¹⁸²

Regardless of sex, first let them experience kensho (見性), and then you should make them do zazen. When they have arrived at the point where they are capable of kensho, then you should teach them how to deal with all things.¹⁸³

On (a portrait of) Bodhidharma: The people who look on this (picture) are every one of them deluded. If nothing were drawn on it, it would be the original Bodhidharma.¹⁸⁴

A certain person, intending to become a priest, asked me (various questions), and I spoke to him in detail. First and foremost, make discarding the self fundamental. (This is) to make oneself abandon (the transient world. Not eating meat is for the sake of quelling ardors (in oneself). Fish and birds have from the beginning been our friends. We do not know if fish and birds were our parents and siblings (in a previous life). Because of these three (reasons), priests detest (eating meat).¹⁸⁵

The sections below describe at least one dream and what are perhaps makyō, what Yasutani rōshi describes in Kapleau's The Three Pillars of Zen as hallucinations resulting from meditation.

¹⁸⁰ Toyota, p.189

¹⁸¹ 189

¹⁸² 190

¹⁸³ 191

¹⁸⁴ 195

¹⁸⁵ 196

One time, I was very sleepy, and using my elbow as a pillow, for a short time dozed off. In my dream the brightness of the moon and sun filled the home. I opened my eyes, but there was nothing.

(I saw) on the folding screen there was a monkey, and it cried. I then woke up. “What a very odd dream I woke up from, wasn’t it?” I said to myself.

From inside a torn futon a white-haired old man came out and bowed. He asked what I was up to, and I said I was doing zazen.

A long time ago, I was doing zazen, and a very beautiful woman appeared and came close to me. My zazen was interrupted like a dream.

One time, a beautiful child related that there is no such thing as enlightenment, which I thought very exalted. And (another time), a priest said that our sect (わか家) are (those who) make enlightenment the foundation, which is truly exalted.¹⁸⁶

A certain person said (to me) it seems that one cannot know before one was born, nor after one dies. I asked him: What is your mind like at all times? He said: I wish for various things, but they do not come true. I said: If they were to come true, to what extent would you be happy anyway? He said: That is so, (isn’t it?). I taught him: Be without thinking. He practiced not-thinking, opened his eyes wide, and strived with great effort. Later when he truly became a person who (attained) non-thinking, I asked him if he (still) had any wishes, and he answered in the negative. (I said:) Well now, (your previous) wishes have been fulfilled, and it is very felicitous. He nodded.¹⁸⁷

A certain person was asking honest questions. I taught him: Who is the master (ぬし) asking those questions? He said: I do not know. I asked further: Who is that one that does not know? He said: There is no one. I spoke again: Who is it that changes in various ways? He said: Originally there is nothing (at all). I said: There is no other (thing that can be called) Buddha. That is, in other words, Buddha. “Buddha” is the name of non-being.¹⁸⁸

How is it the people of this world can be this deluded? I move my arms and legs, and I say things, and (so) I look for the master (ぬし) of my body, and yet there is nothing (at all).¹⁸⁹

A certain person detested relations between men and women. I said: (That is) not the Buddha Way. Men and women are relationship creatures (ましはる物).

A certain priest came and said: People of the Great Way (大道人), even if they are involved in relations between men and women, are not hindered by it. I said: Do not speak of things that have nothing to do with my Way.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ 198-9

¹⁸⁷ 200

¹⁸⁸ 201

¹⁸⁹ 201-2

A young priest was asking about whether good and evil (善悪) were the same or not the same. When he was about to speak, I gave him (a blow with) a stick, and said: What right or wrong (邪正) is there? He was enlightened.¹⁹¹

A sutra (-reading) priest said: I have not (attained) enlightenment at all, so (perhaps) by at least reading the sutras I can be saved. Snatching the unrolled (sutra), I said: You must know that the ten thousand dharmas (万法, all things) are completely nonexistent, and struck him, but he did not understand.

A certain person asked what kind of thing self karma is (身の業). I said: Leave behind that (kind of) deluded questioning.

A certain poor person said in suffering: (It is because of) self karma. I said: Leave behind that suffering.

A certain wealthy and high-status person rejoiced (in saying) that it was his past karma. I said: Leave behind that rejoicing.

What is casting away all things (万法)? Casting (them) away in this life, and casting (them) away completely. After casting them away, when casted away things have disappeared (completely), (then) ask me about it.

Casting away all things is being without deluded thoughts (lit. “doing no thought-no mind.” 無念無心にして), and becoming like a rock or tile.¹⁹²

The below are some poems listed under 道歌 by Toyota.

About the principle of the Great Way: The very mind that has nothing to say or to do, is the essential point of all the sutras.¹⁹³

On a picture of a skull decapitated from a body: Both the decapitator and the decapitated, (have a) skull which, briefly, wears the skin of the transient world.¹⁹⁴

Zazen:

As for proof of becoming a beast while one is alive: Not being on the floor (doing) zazen.

Similarly, as for proof one has become a Buddha while alive: Not being on the floor (stuck doing) zazen.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ 205

¹⁹¹ 206-7

¹⁹² 207-8

¹⁹³ 213

¹⁹⁴ 214

When asked about my daily living: Evidence of (my) enlightenment to the fundamental (本来) manifests, as my very self being entirely extinguished.¹⁹⁶

To a person who said people of the Way (道人) speak as they please, yet are not harmed by other people: Because they come from nothingness, the things they do do not bring them harm.

To a person who asked about the Great Way: What obediently keeps the Way is the mind. What violates the Way is the self.¹⁹⁷

To a priest: Preaching that one cannot become a Buddha, (will result in) one falling into hell and calling on one's companion (to the same fate).¹⁹⁸

To a person who intended to attain Buddhahood by reading the sutras: All the sutras are the Buddha's teaching, (but) zazen is directly (being a) Buddha.¹⁹⁹

When one hears a voice asking what Buddha is, it feels for certain as if one's ear has become dirty.²⁰⁰

Again and again correct the sins of your self. There is no enemy greater than your self.²⁰¹

From the Sokushinki (即心記):

Once, I said the following to a disciple. If you are unable to complete your practice by any means, it is alright to give up being a monk and return to lay-life. If you are a lay-person, your sins (罪) are light. If you are in the body of a priest and have a lowly heart, then there is no doubt you will become a beast. In this world there is only a brief amount of time. The time passes by quickly no matter what. Even if they receive the retribution for their evil, it is light for laypeople. It is incomparable to the weight of a monk's retribution.²⁰²

There are two kinds of "not existent" (*Mu*, 無). To do bad things and then say that there is "no" sin is the wrong kind of "no." (To know) that good and bad, right and wrong are all equally nonexistent and to not be attached to this is Shakyamuni's dharma (and the correct *mu*).²⁰³

As for sins, there are light and heavy ones. A fish's sins are heavier than an insect's. A bird's sins are heavier than a fish's. A beast's sins are heavier than a fish's. A man's sins are heavier than a beast's.²⁰⁴(Toyota explains that this is because of man's greater capacity and responsibility.)

¹⁹⁵ 216

¹⁹⁶ 223

¹⁹⁷ 226

¹⁹⁸ 227

¹⁹⁹ 228-9

²⁰⁰ 230

²⁰¹ 231

²⁰² 53-4

²⁰³ 54

When I was young, a child that served a warrior came to see me, had left his master and asked me to take him on as a disciple. I thought it was a pitiable thing he said, so asked how he had come to think this way. He surprised me by answering that if he became a monk, getting by in the world would be pleasant. If this child had become a monk with this mind, there is no doubt that he would certainly become a beast. To straightforwardly aspire to the Buddhist Way from the initial awakening (初發心), is already the conduct of a bodhisattva. Even for a little to care about getting by in the world, is, without a doubt, to become a beast.²⁰⁵

If people are lost in delusion, they are used by their own body (and what it dictates). If they are enlightened, they are able to use their own body.²⁰⁶

Those deep in attachment are beasts. Those weak in attachment are human. Those without attachment are Buddhas.²⁰⁷

If one's conduct is disordered, certainly one will incur punishment from Heaven. To the lord of the world, the world is a home (家). To the lord of a country (国), the country is a home. Irrelevant of size, the wrongdoing in one's home is the master's sin/blame (とが). If one is incapable of ordering one's home, one will receive calamities from Heaven.²⁰⁸

It is said enlightenment is extinguishing irrelevant thoughts. Because there are irrelevant thoughts there is a self. If one is enlightened, even while being alive, one's self dies.²⁰⁹

Once someone said those who carry out the Great Way become able to do anything. I said, that is because the Great Way is the source of all things. Knowing that source, you decide the conduct of your own home.²¹⁰

A man who always strived to carry out the Great Way of Buddhism asked what he should do, and I answered as follows: The ordinary person is Buddha, and Buddha is the ordinary person. Essentially they are the same. To be conscious of carrying out the Way is to be an ordinary person, to carry it out without being conscious of it is to be a Buddha.

To a man who asked what dreams are: In this world one dreams while asleep and dreams even while awake. To not be conscious of dreams is to awaken from them.²¹¹

To someone who said the Buddha Way was blessed: I wonder about those who attach themselves to the Dharma, that teaches one must not attach oneself to things.²¹²

²⁰⁴ 55

²⁰⁵ 57-8

²⁰⁶ 59

²⁰⁷ 61

²⁰⁸ 62

²⁰⁹ 63

²¹⁰ 65

²¹¹ 73

²¹² 74

To one who asked about the principle of the Great Way: If one practices “no thinking,” even “no thinking” disappears. If one thinks of something, then one becomes attached to it.

To someone who heard the Great Way but did not practice it: Hearing the Dharma preached may cause the mind’s flower to start to open, but the people who then turn that into a fruit are rare.²¹³

To a Confucian: Being loyal to a lord and filial to one’s parents, is sincere if done without consciousness.

Directly seeing and directly hearing, a person who sees, hears, is enlightened, and knows without self-consciousness (主なくて), is called a living Buddha.

To a person who said enlightenment could not be attained: If one does not attain enlightenment, one is fully severing karmic relations with the Buddha, even if one reads through all the sutras.²¹⁴

To a priest who preached the Dharma: Kill it, kill the self, kill it completely. When there is nothing left, become a teacher to others.

Teaching the Way: What moves a puppet is a person who controls it. What moves a person is nothingness.

Mind: Buddha, kami, and the Way of Heaven all differ in name, but they actually all point to the mind of nothingness.²¹⁵

As for the man who always guards the mind of nothingness, calamities brought on by the self vanish completely.²¹⁶

Above a portrait of Master Rinzai: You, for being a precept-breaking monk, (will face) punishment for killing the Buddhas and patriarchs.²¹⁷

To someone deep in delusion: I fear that not knowing your self-bewitching (self-delusions), you will be bewitched by fox spirits and raccoon-dogs.²¹⁸

Above a portrait of the ascetic Shakyamuni: When the body/self (身) completely dies, what is left is called a Buddha.²¹⁹

To a priest: Even if you’ve experienced satori, if you tie up the mind in the self, (while) being tied up in that bondage is the same as being a common person.²²⁰

²¹³ 75

²¹⁴ 76

²¹⁵ 78

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²¹⁷ 80

²¹⁸ 81

²¹⁹ 82

When teaching about the Way: You must not be deluded by what is called the “way.” You must know that what you do from morning to evening (is it).²²¹

To someone who had asked many people about the Way: Hearing various teachings (you) become deluded in the Dharma Way. Not knowing leads to the original person.²²²

To someone who asked about life and death: What I have certainly realized about being alive, is that whether weeping or laughing, there is merely nothing at all.

What I have certainly realized about after death, is that not only is there merely nothing at all, but also no “not being.”²²³ (*A passage similar to the one on in the Rinzaïroku where the answer to whether a dead man in a casket is dead or alive is “I won’t say dead, I won’t say alive.”*)

A man asked about the Way: Sew the wind among the pines into (your) flaxen robes, (make) the moon into your pillow and the waves into your narrow straw mat.

If asking what is Buddha, there is no one who is not deluded. I wonder if there are any who know it is one’s own mind.²²⁴

To a man who asked about the Way of Confucianism: The Mandate of Heaven is (the essential) nature. What is other than the self is Heaven. When in one’s breast there is nothing, that is when the Mandate from Heaven has been carried out. That is called (essential) nature. To follow this nature is called the Way.

To a monk who asked about (why there is) monastic vegetarianism: As for why monks observe vegetarianism, were they to consume the five odorous vegetables, alcohol, or the flesh of animals, their blood would thicken, and their breasts would become impure. This is one (reason). Living beings are all our friends. This is the second reason. (Whether) lord and vassal, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and mutual friends, we do not know that anyone may be reborn as a fish or a bird. Because of these (reasons) we detest (eating meat).²²⁵

To a man who asked about how to win over the people, I said: If you give water to the thirsty, clothing to the cold, and food to the hungry, the people will take to you.²²⁶

Those who practice the Way, are (only) one out of many people (that is, few). Even (among) those who know the Way, there are none who make it their own. Even if there are some who make it their own, there are none who (can) then discard it.

²²⁰ 83

²²¹ 84

²²² 84-5

²²³ 85

²²⁴ 89

²²⁵ 91

²²⁶ 92

Being born into a *daimyo* or high-status household is a rare thing in the world. Acting very compassionately in the past (or previous lives), performing meritorious acts, and (so) then being in a *daimyo* or high-status household in this world (or lifetime), illustrates the (principle of) karma.²²⁷

Rules to be Observed by the Monks at my Hermitage:

(1) Monks are the most evil (people) in the world. They get by in the world without labor. They are great thieves.

(2) When a person completes his practice and intends to become a teacher, this is an important treasure to the world. (However) there are many teachers who are merely trying to get by in the world, and (true) teachers of the Great Way are rare.

(3) As for a small sum (of money), do not treat it lightly.

(4) In your normal activities, be moderate in regards to yourself. Do not do anything for your own sake. The enemy of the Dharma and the enemy of the Buddha is the self.

(5) You must think of things received from others as poison. When (one) has completed the practice of the Great Way, then one must accept what people lavish on one. This is because it becomes helping those very people (karmically).

(6) When engaged in practice, (even) when you are struck and stepped on (by others), you must (realize) that your karma created in the past by yourself is being exhausted, and become joyful.

(7) Even if you stay (only) one night, do not borrow the clothing of the host. You should sleep in the corner (of the room). You should place your usual objects in a folding cloth, and carry them with you when you go. On days when you have an appointment, even if it rains or snows you must go.

(8) While you have not yet completed (the practice of) the Great Way, you must not associate with women.

(9) You must not stay at houses without (Buddhist) aspirations.²²⁸

To strive in the Great Way, you must leave bad friends (behind).

A man asked about the source of delusion: Knowing (distinguishing) right and wrong is its source.

A man asked about the source of enlightenment: Knowing right and wrong is its source.

To a man who asked how to see (know) his own mind: To the extent that the mind is fond of passions, earnestly change your thinking to ask: Who is it that sees? Who is it that hears?²²⁹

²²⁷ 93

²²⁸ 95-7

The mind of Shakyamuni Buddha is called the mind of the Way (道心). His form (was that of) a monk. His conduct was begging. That the Buddha Dharma will completely die out is only natural: Monks of low rank in the temple are (nowadays) called *doushin* (道心), and begging is (considered) a thing of beggars and outcasts. These two names for the Buddha (beggar and *doushin*), are transmitted to lowly people who cannot even write these words with a brush. What is now only called a “monk” (出家), is (supposed to be one who) has no self. One wonders if there are any who have (actually) lost the self in this world.

Those who wear a (monk’s) robes, must certainly not go near women. Even if one does not stray (from his vows), his mind can be moved (towards women). Therefore if one approaches women, this is certainly the practice (of becoming) a beast. This old monk’s (Shidō’s) detesting women is because the mind of a beast still remains (in him).²³⁰

In China, a neighbors’ house collapsed, and (because) the woman of this house was cold, (the neighboring man) let the woman into his robes and slept this way. Because in China there was such a renowned man, this was written down. When it was time for my master to bathe, a woman washed him from back to front without exception. I think this might also be a rare thing in this country.²³¹

If, for example, one plants a chestnut, a chestnut tree will grow. The seed of humans is white dew (sperm). Therefore even if one grows old, if there is no aspiration for the Dharma, the mind (of passions) is unceasing.²³²

From the Jishōki:

I was born in Sekigahara in the land of Mino, and was a station worker. I became Master Gudo’s attendant, and when we went together to Edo, the master felt pity (for me), and showed me that originally “mind is empty.” I felt grateful, and for 30 years practiced. Directly I (came to understand) “there is not one thing.” Thanks to the master’s kindness, I recognized (my) indebtedness to the Buddha, and taught the Buddha Dharma to people, (which has been) a truly precious (thing).²³³

A certain man once related: For two or three years (getting by) in the mountains of Kamakura eating things like pine needles, occasionally going into town, and begging for food, is a lifestyle observed (by some), which is difficult for worldly people to attain. (Even though) at night wolves’ eyes glisten everywhere, and there are various poisonous insects, these Buddhist priests are not bothered by it. One’s striving like this, even though it extend for twenty years, is

²²⁹ 98

²³⁰ 100

²³¹ 101-2

²³² 102

²³³ 115-6

not in someone's best interest. What can be done about this? I said: It is because one has not met a skillful teacher. Working by oneself does not lead to heaven.²³⁴

A certain man asked me: Those who keep the mind of the Way (the bodhisattva mind, according to Toyota) though they be trampled and beat down, do not mind. What kind of thing is this? I said: That is the original purpose of the mind of the Way. First, ask how to extinguish the sins (罪) of past, present, and future. When even though one is slandered and thought badly of by others one rejoices, one's sins instantly become extinguished. If one cannot feel joy, then feeling nothing also extinguishes one's sins. If, like ordinary people, one gets angry, one's sins will increase and won't be extinguished. If one does not make an effort like this, then one is a beast as they are. While alive, (people like this) become oxen and horses. Those who aim to achieve the mind of the Way, should hold fear (of this) in their minds, and remove their (bad) karma. If one donates to people even a little food, or other things, (bad) karma will (also) be removed.²³⁵

Being reborn as beast and birds, not moving on past it for endless kalpas, is (the consequence for) monks and nuns (indulging in) sexual desires.

I told a disciple I was with: Your self is your archenemy. Don't even momentarily neglect this.²³⁶

Money is for the purpose of removing cold and hunger. Enlightenment is for the purpose of removing the evil of the self.

A certain person asked: In the past and the present it has been difficult to attain enlightenment, it is said, so how can one be enlightened? I said: Among the Sixth Patriarch's disciples were 40 people and among Patriarch Ma's disciples were 130, that were greatly enlightened. Again he asked what enlightenment is like. I said: It is the original mind. He asked what the original mind is like. I said: There is not one thing. Again he asked what kind of thing was this "not one thing." I remained silent.²³⁷

A certain person asked: What reason is there to keep the 5 precepts? I said: Taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and drinking alcohol. These are sins that are all in us. If you are enlightened, then there is nothing.

A certain person asked about the five organs. I said: The five visceral organs are what are called the five wisdom Buddhas. The six intestinal organs are called the six (forms of) Jizo. The 7 feelings are called the seven Buddhas of the past. The original mind manifests like this.²³⁸

²³⁴ 117

²³⁵ 118

²³⁶ 122

²³⁷ 123

²³⁸ 125

Money is a worldly treasure. When evil people have it, they harm others, and they also harm themselves. When good people have it, they help others, and also enjoy themselves.²³⁹

The following two anecdotes would fit well into the setsuwa genre of Buddhist morality tales, though they are presented as hear-say by Shidō.

A certain person who had taken up the tonsure related the (following) tale: When I passed the provincial palace of Kaga Province, I lodged at a certain place. The host told me some stories. It became night, when I heard a sound two or three times. I inquired the host about it and he said: "I am having you stay over because I wanted to show you this. Please go look." I went into the back and saw a young man of about twenty, with two snakes wrapped around his neck, their heads facing each other. When these snakes would contort around his neck, because it hurt, he would cry out in pain. I asked what had happened, and the host said: "This is my son. He took a wife, but was then involved with the maidservant employed by his wife. One time, the wife took the maidservant with her, and when they were crossing a river, in the middle of the river, (the wife) pushed the maidservant into the river. The maidservant clung to the wife's sleeve, and they both died together. After this, this man here was washing his feet in the crossing area. The two snakes came, and wrapped themselves around his neck." (This) he related to me. A very sad affair.²⁴⁰

A certain rōnin was lodging on Gojō street (五条) in the capital, in a single room. In the 12th month, he had a dream in which a child appeared, (and said): "If you desire money, go quickly to the bridge on Gojō street, and there is some at the foot of the bridge. Pick it up." He told his wife this, who told him to go quickly and look. The moon was shining, the frost was white, and it was cold at that particular time, so it would have been hard to get up (and go out). He gave in to the wife's insisting, went to check and found a leather bag which he picked up and brought back. He told the wife: "Here it is," and she was also pleased. Saying he was grateful, he quickly opened it to look inside. A broken piece of a cup, a splinter of tile, pebbles, and other such things were wrapped in paper. "Well, what can we do about it," he said, and tossed it into the bushes. Night fell, and from the husband rose a cry. Before the couple had appeared a feast, and the husband exclaimed it was a treat of good fortune. They heard a sound, and (noticed) the mouth of the leather bag had opened and silver coins had fallen out. The rōnin had related this event to the (afore-mentioned) host. If some people hear this, (that because someone) quickly opened a leather bag, fortune helped (these) people, to each it relates different things. There are no people who lament that (bad fortune) is due to their own bad (karma), that are ashamed of their own bad (behavior) directed at others, that remove their own evil, and that

²³⁹ 126

²⁴⁰ 132-3

strive in the Buddha Way. There are no people who know their past karma. This is a wretched and sad matter.²⁴¹

A certain person asked about enlightenment. I answered: Enlightenment is the Buddha's eyes, the Buddha's marrow, directly becoming a Buddha, and great joy. At all times, there is no not getting one's own way. Even though it is a blessed thing like this, enlightenment is (also) the enemy of Buddhahood. This is without a doubt. When one is enlightened and is disengaged from all things, and holds on to this kind of belief (erroneously), and (so) is not concerned with all things, this is the killing of one's parents, the killing of one's lord, and deferring to one's own selfish will. (So it is that) the enemy of Buddhahood is enlightenment.²⁴²

Recently, the samurai of a certain country's lord, serving as a magistrate of the common people, died suddenly. The wife's lamenting was unbearable. When the issue of settling the accounts was of particular concern, a young maidservant was suddenly possessed by a spirit. She jumped on the husband's seat and said: "I died without settling the accounts, and the suffering of my wife and children is great, so I have come to settle the accounts." There were also many (other) strange things that occurred. It was reported to the authorities that this was not just a matter of the individual (clan's) reputation. Starting with the chief retainer at that time, a number of people gathered at the magistrate's house. This maidservant called on many of the servants and when she interviewed them one by one, the servants did not obey her. She became angry, scolded them so, and flew (or ran or leapt, ambiguous) into the back (of the house). She produced an old bill and said "Even this they will say is strange." This surprised the servants. She directly faced those who were alive, raised a knee, sat up respectfully, and finished up the accounts. She took the bills, and handed them to the family. (This) certainly (happened).²⁴³

From thinking deeply about practice and viewing it as important (arise) many mistakes. You must know (everything as) original emptiness. This is disposing of the thoughts of the mind.²⁴⁴

Those who know the Buddha Dharma (intellectually) earn punishment. Those who put into practice the Buddha Dharma will certainly earn merit in their life.²⁴⁵

In ancient China there was a man named Boya (伯牙) who was skillful at playing the zither. There was a man named Ziqi (子期) who would listen to the zither. One time, (Ziqi) went to Boya's place and listened to (Boya) playing the zither, then returned home. When asked why he had returned, he said he had heard in the sound of the zither the killing of something, so he returned home. When Boya was asked about this, he said that he had seen in the garden a bee (or perhaps wasp, 蜂) hanging from a spider's web, and thought it was a dangerous situation, and that may have come out through the sound of the zither. My disciple would

²⁴¹ 133-4

²⁴² 135-6

²⁴³ 145-7

²⁴⁴ 151

²⁴⁵ 153

listen to the pealing of the bells. When they rang and nothing had happened, the sound would peal in the sky, and devils would withdraw, he would say. When they would ring for a reason, the sound would be a bad one. Then the devils would come, he would say. When you ask the person who rings the bells, (there would be times when) he rang the bells with things on his mind, and also times when he would ring them with no thought in his mind.²⁴⁶

A certain person asked: All living beings have various forms, but do they originally have a fixed source? I said: There is a source. (Every) mind is of one unity with the universe. He said: What is the evidence for unity? (I answered:) Looking at the moon, looking at flowers, listening to a bell. Who differs (in these activities)? This is evidence of unity. (*Shidō then goes on to outline the four traditional kinds of birth, through womb, egg, dew, and metamorphosis, as well as their connection to one's karmic/mental state.*)²⁴⁷

To a certain person: As for the medicine to the arising of various delusions, there is nothing quite like meditation.²⁴⁸

To a certain person: One who ordinarily observes the precepts (too) firmly will end up (instead) becoming a precept-breaking monk.²⁴⁹

Over a portrait of Bodhidharma: The blessed teaching of the true Dharma- Make "I don't know" your own.²⁵⁰ (*A reference to Bodhidharma's famous meeting with the Emperor Wu.*)

Practitioners should stay away from male and female relations. Flames will dull even swords.²⁵¹

There is nothing as pitiable as human beings. They face the Buddhas and kami, and ask for wealth and honor. They do not know that if they put an end to the mind that seeks there will be wealth and honor.

Better than enjoying rare food, (people) do not know that eating when one is hungry improves it.

Better than wanting good things to come to oneself, if one does not think of oneself one will be calm.²⁵²

When a woman was possessed by spirits, but then later recovered, a certain person asked: In the correct Dharma (Buddhism) there are no strange wonders. Then what do you make of this wonder? I said: In the correct Dharma there are (indeed) no wonders. A person with a

²⁴⁶ 162-3

²⁴⁷ 165

²⁴⁸ 170

²⁴⁹ 171. This fits with Baroni, p.129 stating that Shidō's teacher Gudō, and therefore we can conclude Shidō as well, were part of the Myōshinji faction that "opposed a strict interpretation of the precepts."

²⁵⁰ 172

²⁵¹ 177

²⁵² 178

composed mind being possessed by spirits is a wonder. Afterward she became her original self again. After all there was no wonder (and this ordinary mind is the correct Dharma.) He nodded in agreement.²⁵³

To a person who asked about (the Mahayana quote): “The passions are themselves enlightenment (Bodhi)” (煩惱即菩提), I said: That is indeed in agreement with the Buddha’s preaching. He said: Even if the deeds of an ordinary person like myself are (supposed to be) enlightenment, it does not mean they are the Buddha Dharma. I said: That is the truth. Buddha is Mind. As for the deeds the Mind does, “The passions are themselves enlightenment. Life and death are themselves nirvana” (煩惱即菩薩、生死即涅槃). This is without a doubt. But as for people who do not practice, enlightenment is itself the passions. If thoughts of the self arise, there can be no good deeds at all.²⁵⁴

I met an old woman. (I asked her:) Because you are investigating koan cases, which case are you on? The old woman said: The “Who” case. (*Toyota explains it is the 3rd case in the BCR, where Bodhidharma is asked “Who is this standing before me” by Emperor Wu.*) I said: I will teach you thoroughly. There is something Shakyamuni and Maitreya equally make use of. Come here, I said, (and she directly moved there.) I said: What made use of your body just now? The old woman said: Nothing (無一物). I said: It is the nothingness that used the old woman (you), that various names are appended to. That is what the koan speaks of. Not knowing this, one seeks it somewhere else, and because of this one is deluded. The old woman said: Thank you very much. How can I (further) cultivate (the mind)? I said: Not having the evil of the self pollute (one) is referred to as practice.²⁵⁵

I taught this to a certain person: It is to die that you came into this world. It is from thinking that you (just) came to live that you agonize over death. People who always think about the matter of death strive in regard to the serious affair of death, and when they look into what it is that dies, and what it is that lives, their mind attains unity with emptiness, and they transcend life, death, and all things. One is (then both) living and dead.²⁵⁶

A long time ago I thought that after one died, there was nothing, and so being alive was a particularly important matter. (However) I thought about the dead person who possessed a woman and completed his affairs, and also of (the women who) became snakes and wrapped themselves around a (man’s) throat, and I was surprised (to conclude) that after death something remaining must be certain. I thought that a Buddha was born in a paradise, and that there it earned great joy, (but now I see that) if in this world there is no evil of the self, that is (also) great joy. So, there is no place one must go to. There is also no one that is here.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ 180-1

²⁵⁴ 181

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²⁵⁷ 183

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