

## On the Himitsu-Shobogenzo

**From Carl Bielefeldt** (Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation, from footnote 33 on p. 153):

Menzan's prejudice against the *koan* inherits and develops the position of Dogen's Heian disciples Senne and Kyogo, whose *Shobogenzo kikigaki* and *Shobogenzo sho* include several comments against "a bunch calling themselves Zen masters" who advocate "simply bearing in mind a *koan*" (SSZ.Chukai, 1:223a; see also 543b and 2:459b~460a. For a discussion of the passages, see Ito Shuken, "Koan to shikan taza," SK 22 [3/1980], 101-6.), but theirs was hardly the prevailing view in the subsequent literature of the school. In fact, whatever we may say of his interpretation of Dogen, Menzan's version of the pristine tradition of *shikan taza* has had a disastrous effect on the historical understanding of medieval Soto; for it led him and his epigones to dismiss as unworthy of serious attention the considerable corpus of esoteric *koan* manuals (*monsan*) the secret initiation into which formed one of the most characteristic features of Muromachi Soto religion. Perhaps the earliest such text, known as the *Himitsu shobo genzo sho*, is based on a collection often cases probably put together by Keizan himself. (See Ishikawa Rikizan, "Himitsu Shobo genzo saiko," SK 21 [3/1979], 173-78. Ishikawa has been a leader in the recent rediscovery of the medieval Soto esoteric literature [styled *kirigami*] initiated by Sugimoto Shunryu's *Tojo shitsunai kirigami oyobi sanwa kenkyu* [ 1941 ]. For some bibliography on the Soto vernacular *koan* commentaries known as *kana sho*, see Hiwatari Noboru, "Hoon roku shohon to sono honbun o megutte," SK 24 [3/1982], 58-64.)

**From William Bodiford** (Soto Zen in Medieval Japan, pp 150-151):

In some cases koan manuals authored by Rinzai monks apparently did become confused with the writings of Soto patriarchs. Two texts in particular, the *Kenshoron* (Treatise on Perceiving Reality) attributed to Dogen and the *Himitsu Shobo genzo* (Secret *Shobo genzo*) attributed to Keizan appear to have originated in the Hotto line of the Rinzai monk Kyo-o Unryo. Kyoo obtained access to the writings of Dogen and Keizan when he served as abbot of Daijōji (see chapter 5). Biographies state that Kyoo also authored several Zen texts, including *Kana kenshoshō* (Japanese-Language Treatise on Perceiving Reality) and *Shobo genzōgo* (*Shobo genzo* Koans). It cannot be proved that Kyoo's texts are the same as the ones now attributed to Dogen and Keizan, but a recently discovered manuscript (copied ca. 1486) suggests that they are probably related. This text quotes Hotto-line monks such as Shinchi Kakushin and Bassui Tokusho as well as various Chinese masters on techniques for concentrating on koan in ways that will arouse doubt (*gidan*) and induce an insight into reality (*kensho*). It also includes an essay attributed to Dogen, titled *Kenshoron*. This essay, still attributed to Dogen, also has been preserved at various Soto temples, but under the same title as Kyoo's treatise, *Kana kenshoshō*.

A similar example of confusion over titles and authorship appears in the biography of Keizan Jokin compiled by the Rinzai monk Mangen Shibān, which states that Keizan wrote a text titled *Shobo genzōgo* – again the same title as Kyoo's text. Soto records mention no such title. But Keizan is cited as the author of a commentary on ten Chinese koan titled *Himitsu shobo genzo* (Secret *Shobo genzo*). Significantly, this *Himitsu shobo genzo* was found among the Hotto-line manuscripts just mentioned. Also significant is the fact that not all versions of this text cite Keizan as author. Some Soto lineages secretly transmitted copies of the same set of ten Chinese koans under the title *Jusoku shobo genzo* (Ten-Koan *Shobo genzo*), but without any reference to Keizan.

These examples suggest that koan texts passed from one *rinka* lineage to another. The outside origin of these teachings, however, could not be acknowledged. Instead, the texts borrowed respectability associated with the names Dogen and Keizan. A similar process of borrowing the authority of ancient patriarchs can be observed in most of the secret koan literature passed down within medieval Soto. This literature defies easy summation, but it cannot be ignored. It presents us with a gold mine of information regarding what Soto monks studied and how; what institutional, pedagogical, and ritual structures mediated the koan experience; what religious or doctrinal interpretations were applied to koan; and the general flow of monastic rituals at medieval institutions.

Jokin's Esoteric Shobogenzo  
秘密正法眼藏書 Himitsu-Shobogenzo-Sho  
compiled by Keizan Jokin translated by Thomas Cleary

**Citation 1:**

At the assembly on Vulture Peak, before hundreds of thousands of beings, the World-Honored One raised a flower and blinked his eyes. Mahakashyapa broke into a smile. The World-Honored One said, "I have the treasury of the eye of the true teaching, the inconceivable mind of nirvana, the formless adamant form, and the subtle, ineffable teaching of truth. It is communicated outside of doctrine and does not establish verbal formulations. Today I personally entrust this to Mahakashyapa. Continue to teach in my stead." And he also commended Ananda to transmit it as it is, continuing from successor to successor without letting it be cut off.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

At the meeting on the holy mountain long ago, all without exception were the circumstances of this "raising a flower" and "smiling." Just as the World-Honored One raised the flower, what was the circumstance? And when Kashyapa smiled, what was the circumstance?

If one perceives it directly, past and present are simultaneously penetrated. One may say, "Without relying on today's situation, how can one speak of last night's dream?"

Later the zen teacher Seiryō of Mt. Kei said, "The World-Honored One had a secret saying – spring lingers on the ancient ford; Kashyapa did not keep it hidden – falling flowers float on the stream."

Also zen master Chikan of Setcho said, "The World-Honored One had a saying, but Kashyapa did not keep it hidden; a night of flowers falling in the rain, water is fragrant throughout the city."

These are models of men of old citing the ancient to illumine the present. I ask you people; at that time, what flower did he raise? What flower did he smile at? Say it straight out now! (Striking a blow) You've stumbled past. Do you understand? There is only one indestructible esoteric body, wholly manifested in the dusts. Look!

**Citation 2:**

Ananda asked the venerable Kashyapa, "Elder brother, you received the golden robe of the World-Honored One; what else was transmitted besides this?"

Venerable Kashyapa said, "Ananda!"

Ananda responded.

Venerable Kashyapa said, "Take down the monastery banner."

Ananda greatly awakened.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

Kashyapa calls "Ananda!" Immediately it is perfectly clear; do not harbor any doubt or hesitation. Ananda responds; what sound is this in actuality? If one awakens on the spot, what would there be of any of this?

A man of old said, "Elder brother calls and younger brother replies, revealing the shame of the house; not the province of night and day, this is a separate spring."

As soon as Kashyapa calls on Ananda, he is off the track; the immediate reply is off the track. At this very moment, how do you understand?

(Striking) What season is this? Do you understand? It's right at hand; immediately concentrate your eye and see. Investigate!

**Citation 3:**

Emperor Bu of Ryo asked the great master Bodhidharma, "What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?"

The great teacher said, "Empty; nothing is holy."

The Emperor said, "Who is replying to me?"

The great teacher said, "I don't know."

The Emperor did not understand.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

"Empty; nothing holy" does not establish real or provisional, does not discuss doctrine or contemplation. Even the buddhas of the three times cannot see it; even the six generations of patriarchs could not transmit it. This is the time when the land is quiet.

And it was said, "Who is replying to me?" A good scene, but do you see? The great teacher said, "I don't know." Why does he not know? Not knowing is the public affair that is now manifest (genjo koan). As for the "manifestation," mountains are really mountains, rivers are really rivers. Wrong! Mountains cannot know mountains, rivers cannot know rivers. Like so the Whole Body manifests; there is no further entry point.

And ultimately? "I only know allow The Old Barbarian's knowledge: I do not allow his understanding." Investigate!

**Citation 4:**

A monk asked zen master Gyoshi of Seigen, "What work does not fall into stages?"

The master said, "Even the holy truths are not practiced."

The monk bowed.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

The place clear, the time obvious, there are no stages or tracks. Leave it to fate, leave it to fate, always like this.

Sekito made a verse in praise of Yakusan:

Though we've been dwelling together, I don't know his name;

Abandoned to fate, we go along as ever.

Even the great sages since the remote past do not know him;

How could the later rabble understand him?

If you would understand the words, "Even the noble truths are not carried out," you should seek out the intent of this verse.

Ultimately, how is it? "A patchrobed monk sits with shrouded head, not knowing aught of cool or warmth." Investigate!

**Citation 5:**

Our ancestor, the great teacher Gohon of Tozan, asked Ungan, "Who can hear inanimate objects preaching the Dharma?"

Ungan said, "The inanimate can hear."

Tozan said, "Why do I not hear?"

Ungan raised his whisk and said, "Do you hear?"

Tozan said, "I do not hear."

Ungan said, "You do not even hear my preaching; how could you hear the preaching of the inanimate?"

Tozan thereupon had an insight; he then chanted a verse:

Wonderful! Wonderful!

The sermon of the inanimate is inconceivable:

If one uses the ears to hear, it will be after all impossible to understand;

Only by hearing with the eyes can one know.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

This is the time of great awakening and thorough penetration. If you hear Mount An discussing wisdom, how could you doubt Mount Ju's talk of true suchness? The pillar and the lamp are also thus.

At the time that the inanimate preach the Dharma, what are the circumstances? If you understand, then communities are preaching, beings are preaching, all in the three times are simultaneously preaching. They are always preaching, clearly preaching, without pause.

Layman Toba studied with Shogaku and gained entry into the Way, whereupon he expressed his inner experience:

The sound of the valley is an immense tongue;

Is not the color of the mountains the pure body?

Since evening, eighty-four thousand verses –

How could I recite them to others?

Already he has cited them all. Also he said,

The valley sound; an immense tongue;

The mountain colors; a pure body.

Eighty-four thousand verses;

Later I recite them to others.

Before he said, "How to express them to others?" Here he says, "I express them to others." Are these the same or different? If one can hear the content of the sermon of the inanimate, it rests with him; where does he not express to others?

Tell me, how is it when one hears it expressed to people? Ungan and Tozan, Shogaku and Toba, have their nostrils pierced all at once. But do you understand? (Silence) Speechless speech is true speech. Investigate!

**Citation 6:**

Zen master Kakuun Doju asked a monk, "Speaking, silent, not speaking, not silent: wholly so, wholly not so' – how do you reply?" The monk had no answer. The master then hit him.

**Jokin's Reflections:**

Speech, silence, motion, stillness; wholly so, wholly not so. Outside this group, in what manner could one respond? The monk did not reply – "who knows the law fears it." After all, he has realized a little bit. As the first blow of the staff, the effort was not made in vain.

I ask you people, when the six senses are inoperative and the seven consciousnesses are not present, what will you use to answer? Why do you not bow and leave?

Kyogen's story of 'up in a tree' may also be seen in the same way as the phase beyond the six propositions. If you can express the matter of the tree, then you understand the single phrase beyond the six propositions.

But say; without setting up either 'the tree top' or 'that which is beyond the six propositions,' coming directly to this point here, how will you turn around and show some life? (striking) Look!

(Note on Kyogen's story: he said, "Suppose a man climbs a tree and is holding on to a branch with his mouth, his hands not holding any limb, his feet not standing on the trunk: under the tree there is someone who asks about the reason why Bodhidharma came from the West; if (the man in the tree) doesn't answer, he is ignoring the question, but if he does answer, he still loses his body and life. At this moment, how would you answer?" The 'six propositions' are speech, silence, etc., as mentioned in the citation.)

#### **Citation 7:**

Zen master Goso asked a monk, "The girl Sei split her spirit; which one is real?" The monk had no reply.

#### **Jokin's Reflections:**

This is the situation which is beyond the reach of 'lord and vassal,' 'biased and true,' It is not the wonderful principle of the zen way or to the Buddhist teaching.

If one is already two, how could they be one? If you say the two are one, why are they not two? Try to say which is real.

Shakyamuni Buddha manifests a hundred-thousand million emanation bodies; the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is endowed with so many hands and eyes: are they the same or different?

Thus it is said, "Above to the summit of the heavens, below to the deepest hells, all is as yellow gold." Thus there are no signs of self and others, of society and individual. Such is this situation; which is Shakyamuni, which is Avalokiteshvara?

Also, Manjushri spent summer retreat in the wineshops, brothels, and butcher shops: Kashyapa, wanting to drive him away, reached for him with a staff when suddenly he saw hundreds of millions of billions of Manjushris. Shakyamuni said, "Kashyapa, which Manjushri would you drive out?" Kashyapa had no reply. This is the same situation: which is Manjushri? Which is Kashyapa? Which is the real one? Try to say.

There's an echo in Shakyamuni's words when he says, "Which Manjushri would you drive out?" If you can understand this saying, then you should be able to see the saying "Sei split her spirit." Goso's "Debt of gratitude to the elixir of eternal life" is based on this saying.

Therefore it is said, "Before me, no you; here, no me." Why is it like this? Because mind and body are one suchness. A living man's tongue is a dead man's mouth; a dead man walks on a living man's road. At this moment it is indescribably perfect; it is not concealing or revealing. Illuminating the whole body, alive and unconstrained; the great function is not in the image of man – behold its visage, clearly manifest; there is no Buddha Way, no ancestral path. Knowledge of all knowledge, pure and clear, absolutely unique, it is without duality and without separation, because it has no gap.

Ultimately how is it? The girl Sei split her spirit; which is the real one? Investigate!

(Note: this koan refers to the story of a young woman named Sei who took to a sickbed when her betrothed went away without her. As her betrothed was going, however, he saw Sei coming after him; thus reunited, they spent five years together before the man decided to return. When they got back, the man found that Sei had been seen lying on her sickbed for these five years: when he brought the 'Sei' he had been living with to the sickbed where the pining 'Sei' lay, the two 'Sei's merged into one. Goso asks, "Which is the real one?")

#### **Citation 8:**

The zen master Tokusan Senkan one day left the hall carrying his bowl. Seppo saw him and said, "Old man, the bell has not yet rung, the drum has not yet sounded; where are you going with your bowl?"

Tokusan lowered his head and returned to his abbot's quarters.

Seppo brought this up to Ganto, who said, "That Tokusan has after all not yet understood the last word."

Tokusan had his attendant summon Ganto, whom he asked, "You do not agree with this old monk?"

Ganto silently expressed his meaning; Tokusan said nothing.

#### **Jokin's Reflections:**

Tokusan just accepts the flow, being as is. Ganto and Seppo scatter rubbish in the eye; playing at being adept, they turn out inept.

Tokusan lowered his head and returned to his abbot's room; what contrivance is there in this? If you try to approach it in terms of inside and outside, dependent and true, subject and object, or guest and host, you have not even seen it in dreams. Carrying the bowl, lowering the head, returning to the room – what ease or difficulty is there?

Seppo once said to his congregation, "We meet at the inn in Bo province, we meet at Vulture Peak, we meet in front of the monks' hall." Hofuku asked Gacho, "I do not ask about the monks' hall; as for the inn in Bo province or Vulture Peak,

where do we meet?” Gacho ran hurriedly back to his abbot’s quarters; Hofuku thereupon went into the monks’ hall. This is the time. What doctrine is this?

Where there is not the slightest breath, if you can understand this story, then you will see the story about Tokusan carrying his bowl.

Ultimately how is it? Be uniformly equanimous; of itself it disappears without a trace.

Also I say “Wrong!” There is still the final word. How do you see it? Investigate!

#### **Citation 9:**

Zen master Gyozan Ejaku was asked by a monk, “Can the Dharma-body also expound the Dharma?”

Gyozan said, “I cannot expound it, but there is another one who can.”

The monk said, “Where is the one who expounds the Dharma?”

Gyozan pushed forward a pillow.

Isan (Gyozan’s teacher) heard of this and remarked, “Mr. Ejaku is bringing out the action of a sword.”

#### **Jokin’s Reflections:**

This monk was not anxious for his life under the sword; he brought up a question, and Gyozan didn’t slip with his sword – he cut off the man’s head before he knew it.

Just when he pushes the pillow forward, there is a unique subtlety; can it be considered the one who replies? Or can it be considered a pillow? Can it be considered the act of pushing forward? Here, how will you understand? I push forth a cushion; do you people really see? (Making a whistling sound) Like this! Investigate!

#### **Citation 10:**

The zen master Kassan Zenne was asked by a monk, “What is the Way?”

Kassan said, “The sun floods the eye; not a fleck of cloud for ten thousand miles.”

The monk said, “I do not understand.”

Kassan said, “In the clear water, the wandering fish deludes itself.”

#### **Jokin’s Reflections:**

The One Great Matter has always been manifest; do not seek enlightenment, for fundamentally there is no illusion. Lucid, without obscurity, everywhere perfectly obvious; why do you not understand? People of today are as if riding an ox in search of an ox.

A monk asked Haryo, “What is the Way?” Haryo said, “A clear-eyed man falls into a well.” If the eye is clear, one should see the road and go directly on; why fall into a well? If you understand this story, then you will see the koan saying “In the clear water, the meandering fish deludes itself.”

Do you understand? The sky is clear, there is no rain; why do you not see the sun and moon? Investigate!

I have cited ten examples of the acts of the ancient worthies; pass through them one by one.

The first, the story of raising the flower and smiling, is the setting of the one great concern of all buddhas of the three times.

The second, the story of the banner before the monastery, is the model of the enlightenment of all the ancestors.

The third, the story of emptiness and not knowing, is the subtlety which the ancestors and buddhas neither transmit nor receive.

The fourth, the story of not even practicing the holy truths, is the point to which the historical ancestors actually attained.

The fifth, the story of the sermon on the inanimate, is the beginning of our ancestor’s understanding mind and awakening to the Way.

The sixth, the story of one expression outside of the six propositions, is that which all the monks in the world can neither swallow nor spit out.

The seventh, the girl Sei separating from her spirit, is the power of intrepid zeal of all buddhas and all ancestors.

The eighth, leaving the hall with bowl in hand, is the ancient’s way of letting go and accepting the flow.

The ninth, the story of the pillow, is the ancient worthies’ method of not grabbing the sword and cutting the hand.

The tenth, the story of not understanding the Way, is the aspect of the ancients extending their hands to save those enshrouded by ignorance.