

Chapter 16

Keizan Jōkin and His Thought



Shūdō Ishii

1 Keizan's Biography

KEIZAN Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1264–1325) is the fourth generation patriarch of the Japanese Sōtō School after Eihei Dōgen (1200–1253), Ko'un Ejō 孤雲懷莽 (1198–1280), and Tetsū Gikai 徹通義介 (1219–1309). The Japanese Sōtō School is an independent religious institute that established the “*ryōso*” 兩祖 and “*ryōdaihonzan*” 兩大本山 systems. Dōgen, known as “*jōyōdaishi*” 承陽大師 or “*kōso*” 高祖, founded Eiheiji 永平寺 in Fukui prefecture; and KEIZAN Jōkin, known as “*jōsaidaiishi*” 常濟大師 or “*taiso*” 太祖, revived the Sōjiji 總持寺 of Tsurumi in Kanagawa prefecture. The temple, which was originally located in Noto, is called Soin 祖院. Today, the Sōtō School is based on the idea of two patriarchs in one body as well as the idea of “*funiryōzan*” 不二兩山, which regards the founding figure *kōso* as father and the reviving figure *taiso* as mother. Generally speaking, Keizan's contribution to the development of the Sōtō School is well recognized; however, he did not receive adequate attention from academia. In my work *Dōgen zen no seiritsushiteki kenkyū* 道元禪の成立史的研究, I compare Keizan with Dōgen. My analysis is that in contrast to the “true

Ching-yuen Cheung is a Lecturer of Japanese Studies in Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interest is in Japanese philosophy, especially the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, post-Fukushima philosophy, and philosophy of pilgrimage. He is an Editor of the *Tetsugaku Companions to Japanese Philosophy* and an Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Japanese Philosophy*. His research publications include *Globalizing Japanese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline* (co-edited with Kevin LAM Wing-keung) and a *Xitian xiduolang: Kua wenhua shiye xia de riben zhixue* (Nishida Kitarō: *Japanese Philosophy from a Transcultural Perspective*).

This chapter was translated by Ching-yuen Cheung (Chinese University of Hong Kong).

S. Ishii (✉)
Komazawa University, Tokyo, Japan
e-mail: soishii@komazawa-u.ac.jp

dharma” (J. *shōbō* 正法) constructed by Dōgen, who overcomes the “silent illumination Zen” (J. *mokushōzen* 默照禪), Keizan sees the characteristics of the Sōtō School (which is a rival of the Rinzai School) as a return to the tradition of the Silent Illumination Zen. It follows that Keizan supported *satori* 悟り by experience, which is rejected by Dōgen. Apart from general research such as mine, there are new attempts to understand Keizan such as Bernard Faure’s *Vision of Power—Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1994), in which Keizan is regarded as the one who established a Zen teaching combining Dōgen’s orthodox Zen with various Zen elements in local religion, schools, and rituals. This was a significant undertaking that deserved positive appraisal. It is worth noting that Zen as a whole came from the Sōtō tradition of *kirigami* 切紙. *Kirigami*, a small piece of paper used in in-house religious ceremonies such as funerals, functions as “seal” (J. *inka* 印可), i.e., as written proof of succession. A collection of *kirigami*, which can be classified as the oldest *kirigami* of the Sōtō School, is held in the Yōkōji 永光寺. An ambitious analysis of the collection can be found in the work by ISHIKAWA Rikizan 石川力山, *Zenshū Sōden Shiryō no Kenkyū*, in which *kirigami* is seen as the inner idea supporting the Sōtō School after Keizan.

There is no comprehensive ancient document with Keizan’s biography. For example, as a representative intra-sectarian biography of the Sōtō School, there is the record, “Biography of Master Keizan of Sōjiji” (SZS 1).¹ However, it was written 400 years after Keizan’s death. Other widely read records are the biography in *Nihon Tōjō Rentōroku* 日本洞上聯燈録, published in 1742, as well as similar biographies based on ten other documents. The current research is based on descriptions in the biography and record in the *Tōkokuki* 洞谷記, published in the *Sōgaku Kenkyū* in 1974, and referred to in Bernard Faure’s research focusing on the topic of dreams in Keizan’s works. In addition, I refer to “Tōkoku kaizan oshō jiyaku Saimon” 洞谷開山示寂祭文 (ZSZS) published by Daihonzan Sōjiji in 1974.

Keizan is a Buddhist name. His original name was Jōkin and his child name was Gyōshō 行生. His father was RYŌKAN Jōza 了閑上座, his grandmother was MYŌCHI Wubai 明智優婆夷, and his mother was Ekan 懷觀. Myōchi was a pupil at Dōgen’s Kenninji 建仁寺. Both Myōchi and Ekan were devout believers of Kannon Bodhisattva. When Keizan’s mother was 37, she prayed to the 11-faced Kannon and gave birth to her son at Tane 多禰 of Echizen (Maruokachō 丸岡町 of Sakaigun 坂井郡, or Hoyamachō 帆山町 of Takefushi 武生市) in 1264. The strong faith of his mother and grandmother influenced Keizan’s religion. According to his Autobiography, Keizan suggests that in his former life he was once Vipasyin Buddha (J. *bibashibutsu* 毘婆尸仏) of the seven buddhas. He was a *kuvala* (J. *kubara* 鳩婆羅) deity with the head of a dog, the body of an owl, and the stomach and tail of a snake with four legs. He lived with the fourth of the sixteen *arhats* Abhedā in the snowy mountains of Uttarākuru. By the destiny of the North, he was born as the Ujiko 氏子 of Hakusan 白山. In this story, Faure notices the implied dualism of local religion represented by the *Ujiko* of Hakusan, which is not an orthodox Zen idea.

¹ “Biography of Master Keizan of Sōjiji” is included in the 1649 *Tangen Jichō* 湛元自澄 (*Nichiiki tōjō shosoden* 1914).

In 1271, when Keizan was eight, he became a follower of Tetsū Gikai 徹通義介 (1219–1309), the third generation patriarch of Eihei-ji, and shaved his head and became a monk. In 1280, at the age of 17, he became a Buddhist priest ordained by Ko'un Ejō (1198–1280), the second generation patriarch of Eihei-ji. In the same year, Ejō passed away on August 24. After the death of Ejō, Keizan followed Jyakuen 寂円 who belonged to the same school as Dōgen. Jyakuen was an admirer of Dōgen and later built a monastery called Hōkyō-ji 宝慶寺. Keizan was influenced by Jyakuen in the understanding of the Chinese Caodong (J. Sōtō) 曹洞 School. According to *Nihon Tōjō rentoroku*, at that time Keizan also followed TŌZAN Tanshō 東山湛照 (1231–1291), HAKU'UN Egyō 白雲慧曉 (1228–1297), and SHINCHI Kakushin 心地覺心 (1207–1298) of Hottōha 法燈派. In 1291, he became the chief priest of Jōman-ji 城万寺 of Kaifu 海部 in Awa 阿波 at the age of 28. After a year, he returned to Eihei-ji and was allowed to become a monk by fourth generation patriarch Gien 義演. In 1272, Gikai left Eihei-ji and lived in Yōbodō. Later in 1293, he moved to Daijō-ji in Kaga. Daijō-ji used to be Shingonin 真言院, a temple built by CHŌKAI Ajyari 澄海阿闍梨 who was a monk of Hakusan Tendai. Two years later, in 1295, Keizan visited Gikai in Daijō-ji again and was enlightened. Gikai was impressed by Keizan, who mentioned Zhaozhou's 趙州 "the ordinary mind is the Way" and the answer "the Way does not belong to knowing or not knowing." Keizan was asked to spread Dōgen's teaching. In 1298 he became the second generation patriarch of Daijō-ji, where he published his major work, *Denkōroku*, in 1300.

Gikai passed away in 1309, and Keizan passed Daijō-ji to MEIHŌ Sotetsu 明峰素哲 (1277–1350) in 1311. One year later, he began the founding of Yōkō-ji 永光寺 in Tōkokusan, his most important project. During Keizan's later years, he founded another temple, Sōjiji, in Noto Peninsula. This temple used to be a school in Kannon's image. Jōken 定賢, the principal of the school, was impressed by Keizan's Zen teaching and changed the school into a Zen temple. In the history of the Japanese Sōtō School, Sōjiji became an important temple. On July 7, 1321, he passed the priesthood of Sōjiji to GASAN Jōseki 峨山韶碩 (1276–1366). On August 8, 1324, he passed the priesthood of Yōkō-ji to Meihō. On the 15th of the same month, he died at age 62.

Keizan's death scene was recorded in Yōkō-ji's *Tōkoku goso gyōjitsu shiden* (SZS 1: 596) as follows:

(August 1324) On the 15th day of the month, Keizan called a meeting of all monks and said, "Do not think about anything on good and evil. Thinking is a violation of the Way. Therefore, ancient people said, 'Consciousness is a disease. Not continuing is the cure.'" He also gave the teaching, "Farm in unused land. Sell old land and buy new land. Innumerable seedlings will grow and become seeds again. Bring the hoe to the temple and look for man." He threw the pen and passed away.

Keizan had two outstanding pupils, Meihō and Gasan. However, according to *Tōkoku* he actually had six pupils. The other four are MUGAI Chikō 無涯智洪 (d. 1351), KOAN Shikan 壺庵至簡 (d. 1341), KOHŌ Kakumyō 孤峰覺明 (1271–1361), and CHINZAN Genshō 珍山源照. Kakumyō's teacher was SHINCHI Kakushin (1207–1298), the Hottō Kokushi and the founder of Kōkoku-ji in Yura 由良. Kakushin studied in Song China and followed WOMEN Huikai 無門慧開 (1183–1260), who collected and commented on the *kōans* of *The Gateless Gate* (J.

Mumonkan 無門関) and is associated with the *Hottōha* 法燈派, a lineage within the Rinzai School. As mentioned earlier, Keizan also followed Kakushin. After Kakumyō received the dharma from Kakushin, he went to Yuan China and followed ZHONGFENG Mingben 中峰明本. Later, Kakumyō followed Keizan and founded Unjūji in Izumo. During 1321–1324, he converted Emperor Godaigo 後醍醐天皇 to Buddhism and earned the posthumous title “National Teacher who saves the Country” (J. Kokusai kokushi 国济国師).

We should not overlook the exchange between Sōtō and Rinzai Schools when we consider the characteristics of Keizan’s Zen.

2 Keizan’s Thought

Here, I will mention eight points on the characteristics and meaning of Keizan’s thought.

First, I will mention the establishment of *gorōhō* 五老峰 (Five Masters’ Peaks). According to the *Tōkokusan jinmiraisai okibumi* 洞谷山尽未来際置文, Keizan’s “thought” (J. *shisō* 思想), Gikai’s *shiso*, Ejō’s *Blood Sūtra*, Dōgen’s bone, and a collection of Dōgen’s teacher Nyojō’s (C. Rujing 如淨) sayings are located in the mountain behind Yōkōji. This is why it is called the Five Masters’ Peaks. The importance of this place is related to the question of the Japanese *Darumashū* 日本達磨宗. The Japanese *Darumashū* is a Zen School founded before Dōgen’s time by Dainichibō Nōnin 大日房能忍 (d. 1196), who achieved enlightenment on his own. Since he did not have a teacher, he sent his followers Renchū 練中 and Shōben 勝弁 to China in order to receive a dharma seal from FOZHAO Deguang 仏照德光 (1121–1203). As a result, there is a Rinzai genealogy as follows: Dahui Zonggao – Fozhao Deguang – Dainichibō Nōnin – Kakuan – Ekan (Kakuzen) – Gikai (Gikan) – Keizan Jōkin. Ejō, the second generation of Eihei, was also a follower of Kakuan. Reading *To Master Jōkin* (J. *Ji jōkin chōrō* 示紹瑾長老), written by Gikai at the age of 88, it becomes clear that Gikai possessed both the dharma seals from Dōgen of the Sōtō School as well as from Dainichibō Nōnin of the Rinzai School. Notably, he called himself “Gikai, the former monk of Daijōji” (DBS 409). Furthermore, according to *The Proof of Shisō* (a collection of Kōfukuji in Tamana City, Kumamoto Prefecture), Keizan also possessed the dharma seal of the Japanese *Darumashū*. Through Gikai, Keizan possessed the dharma seals from both Sōtō and Rinzai. However, the establishment of the *gorōhō* confirmed his affiliation with the Sōtō School. This is significant for the independence of the Sōtō School.

Second, I shall mention the writing of *Denkōroku*, Keizan’s major work. It shows how the patriarchs, from the first Patriarch Mahākāśyapa to the 52nd Patriarch Eihei Ejō, pursued ultimate meaning in the teachings of the Buddha and summarizes how followers are to understand the life of “the patriarchs transmitting the lamp” (J. *dentō soshi* 伝燈祖師). Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō Busso* only gives the names of the patriarchs, but *Denkōroku* gives the teachings of Sōtō in detail. For example, the characteristics of Sōtō teaching can be seen in the chapter on “Kyōsonjya” 協尊者: When

practice arrives at the state of the enlightened mind overcoming human relations, one forgets the fatigue of the body. In this case the self can be preserved. The chapter is a comprehensive guide to practice. However, Keizan also emphasizes enlightenment through experience. According to records of the time, the Cao Dong School in China, named after DONGSHAN Liangjie 洞山良价 and CAOSHAN Benji 曹山本寂, was renamed Cao Dong School, after CAOXI Huineng 曹溪慧能 and DONGSHAN Liangjie 洞山良价. This change is consistent with the conventional claim in Dōgen's group that the Caodong School stems from DONGSHAN Liangjie 洞山良价 and was transmitted to YUNJU Daoying 雲居道膺. The naming of TŌKOKUSAN Yōkōji 洞谷山永光寺 is also mentioned in *Tōkokuki*: "I am the grandson of the 16th Dongshan Liangjie Patriarch. I follow his style, calling the mountain Tōkoku, and the mountain becomes valley as Caoxi becomes Caoshan. I am also the grandson of the 11th Taiyō (Jingxuan 警玄) Patriarch. Therefore, my eyes admire the sunlight. The temple is named as Yōkōji" (Ōtani 1974: 238). This shows his acceptance of Rinzai's FUSHAN Fayuan 浮山法遠, a figure falling between TAIYŌ Jingxuan 大陽警玄 and YIQING Touzi 投子義青. The emphasis on the Taiyō tradition is clearly a result of the awareness of the Sōtō School.

Third, I shall mention the emphasis on the temple-believer relationship. The development of a temple requires the protection of believers. According to *Tōkokusan Jinmiraisai Okibumi* 洞谷山尽未来際置文, the temple and the believers should be in a good relationship so that the Buddha's teaching can be passed to the next generation. In *Tōkokuki*, it is mentioned that "the monks of Yōkōji will follow Keizan's teaching and develop well" (Ōtani 1974: 235). The system they adopted is not the "open system of succession" (J. *jippōjūjisei* 十方住持制) but the system of "continuous succession" (J. *ichiryūsōjōsei* 一流相承制), also called "apprenticeship" (J. *tsuchiensei* 徒弟院制). As written in *Sōjiji Sanmon Jūjishokuji* 総持寺山門住持職事, GASAN Jōseki managed the temple by introducing a rotation of monks every five years and thus successfully prevented the temple from abolishment. As time passed, the duration of rotation was shortened, but the rotation system remained successful. In addition, the inner houses of Sōjiji (Fuzōin, Myōkōan, Tōsenan, Denpōan, Nyoian) were emphasized in a way that these five inner houses began a 75-day rotation in 1501. This contributed to the sustainable development of the Sōtō School.

Fourth, I shall mention Keizan's wishes for the salvation of women. According to *Tōkokuki*, on May 23, 1325, Keizan announced two wishes. The first wish was announced under HOKYŌ Jyakuen under whom he declared the importance of saving the lives of others. The second was for the salvation of women. These were final words for his mother Ekan. At that time, women had a lowly social status and were discriminated against. Keizan's wish for the salvation of women served as an important contribution, for which he actively worked throughout his life.

Fifth, I shall mention the strong faith in Kannon. This is closely related to what I mentioned earlier, that his mother Ekan was a believer of Kannon, and Keizan called himself "*Hakusan no ko*" 白山の子 in his autobiography. *Hakusan myōri daigongen* 白山妙理大権現, a god of *Hakusan*, is a local Kannon figure who eventually becomes the *Dharmapala* 護法神 of the Sōtō School. Yōkōji was founded by the daughter of SAKAWANO Hachirō Yorichika 酒勾八郎頼親. Her husband was

Nobunao 信直 of Unno Saburō Shigeno 海野三郎滋野. Later, she became a Buddhist and was renamed Sonin 祖忍. In *Tōkokuki*, the relationship between Sonin and Keizan is compared to the relationship between magnet and iron. She was also viewed as the rebirth of Grandmother Myōchi. There is an 11-faced Kannon in Entsuin 円通院 of Tōkokusan, which Ekan kept her whole life. Entsuin is the place where Sonin became a master and prayed for women. Sōjiji, built by Gyōki 行基 (668–749), was also Kannon’s sacred place, which Keizan later redeveloped. Over the main temple gate (J. *Sanmon* 山門), there is a statue of Kannon Bodhisattva and one of Jizō Bodhisattva. They are named “bodhisattva who emit light” (J. *hōkō bōsatsu* 放光菩薩), a god to pray for safe delivery. There are other aspects of Keizan and the Kannon faith, but here their relationship is shown clearly.

Sixth, I shall mention the writing of *Keizan shingi* or *Nōshū tōkokusan yōkōji gyōji jijo*. According to *Gikaiden*, Ejō ordered Gikai to travel to Zen temples in Japan and China (especially Tian Tong Shan 天童山) to set up “precepts” (*shingi* 清規) for the reconstruction of the Sōtō temple after a fire damaged Kōshōji. It was said that he recited a prayer after having congee (J. *shukiha fugin* 粥罷諷經). However, there is no documentation of the details of the precepts. In fact, the precepts were set by Keizan who succeeded Gikai. Keizan’s precepts suited his time well and have been more influential on the present *Sōtō shingi* than the *Eihei shingi*. Meanwhile, the precepts show the independence of the Sōtō School from Rinzaï. According to the new precepts, practices were divided concretely into three categories: daily events, monthly events, and annual events. Details on funeral ceremonies and other esoteric Buddhist practices were introduced, which were crucial to the development of the Sōtō School. The good relationship between temple and believers had a significant contribution to the sustainability of the school.

Seventh, Keizan promoted *zazen*. It is well known that Dōgen promoted “sitting-only” (J. *shikantaza* 只管打坐). His first book after returning from Song China was a meditation manual, *Fukanzazengi* 普勸坐禪儀. Dōgen’s position of valuing *zazen* is followed by Keizan, who wrote the book *Zazenyōjinki* 坐禪用心記. In this book, Keizan introduced a method and frequency of breathing, which was not mentioned in Dōgen’s work. In another book *Sankonzazensetsu* 三根坐禪說, Keizan manifests a compassionate attitude towards practitioners with different abilities. This warm character of Keizan can be seen in his teaching of *zazen*.

Eighth, Keizan benefited from the foundation of human resource development. As is mentioned earlier, the Sōtō School claims that Keizan proclaimed to his two followers, *dharma* (J. *hō* 法) is to Meihō 明峰, *garan* 伽藍 is to Gasan 峨山. The development of a religion is dependent on firm belief and an institution. Keizan developed a well-constructed Sōtō School, in which faith was firmly structured and the place for practice efficiently managed. Keizan’s followers were key to the immense success of the Sōtō School. This success was due to Keizan’s human resource development. Keizan also shifted the location of the school from Eihei-ji, located in the mountainous area of Echizen, to Yōkōji and Sōjiji in the Nōtō Peninsula. At that time, water was the major means of transportation. Therefore, to start from the Nōtō Peninsula was the right decision for developing the religion into

a national one. As history shows, Gasan's followers also made contributions. However, their success was based on the contribution made by Keizan.

The eight points above are inter-related. They left their marks on the history of Sōtō. The founding Zen monk is Keizan Jōkin. Therefore, the Japanese Sōtō School reveres Dōgen and Keizan as the two founders of the school.

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Shūdō Ishii served as a Faculty of Buddhist Studies at Komazawa University for more than 40 years until his retirement. He currently is a director of Matsugaoka Bunkō. He received his Masters of Literature as well as his PhD in Literature from Komazawa University. In 1979, he was honored by the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies. He is a leading scholar in Dōgen and Sōtō studies. His publications include, among others, *Zengoroku*, *Dōgenzen no seiritsushiteki kenkyū* and *Chūgoku zenshūshiwa: Mana-shōbōgenzō ni manabu*.