

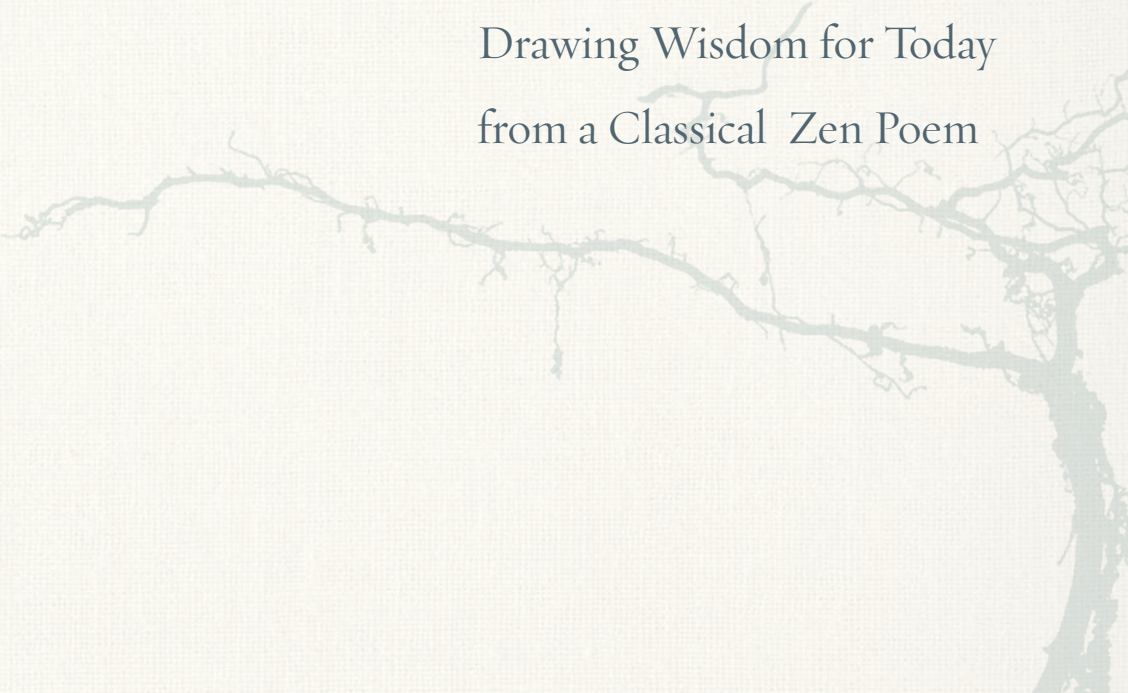
十玄談

原田雪溪普說

SEKKEI HARADA

UNFATHOMABLE DEPTHS

Drawing Wisdom for Today
from a Classical Zen Poem



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Sekkei Harada

TRANSLATED BY
Daigaku Rummé
and Heiko Narrog



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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

FOR THE FIRST TIME in English, this book presents—in tandem with a modern-day exposition offered by the Japanese Zen master Sekkei Harada—the *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth*, a tenth-century Chinese poem composed by the Zen master Tong'an Changcha. Readers seeking background information on the poem itself and its relationship to the modern Dharma talks will find these matters discussed in detail in the accompanying commentary. The remainder of this preface, however, will focus on Sekkei Harada's exposition and its significance for contemporary Zen practitioners worldwide.

Master Harada's Dharma talks (*teishō*) were offered during *sesshin* (periods of intensive sitting practice) between 1998 and 1999 at the temple Hosshinji, an official training monastery of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in Obama, Japan. They were transcribed from tape recordings and edited by Keiko Kando for publication in Japanese in 2002. This English edition is translated from the Japanese book written by Daigaku Rummé and Heiko Narrog. Hongliang Gu of East China Normal University helped greatly when it came to translating the original Chinese poems as well as the Chinese source materials cited in the commentary.

Dharma talks, such as those from which this book is drawn, are usually based on a classic text and serve to illuminate matters of practice and teaching related to the present circumstances of the listeners. Although they involve preparation, they represent essentially spontaneous speech and are attuned to the audience present at the occasion. In this case, the addressees were chiefly monks and nuns practicing at the monastery where Master Harada is abbot. The lectures were conducted either in the Zen hall (*zendō*) with the audience in zazen position facing the wall and continuing their zazen during the talk or in the main hall of the monastery where sesshin participants had assembled with the express purpose of listening to the lecture. The Dharma talks were not

followed by a public question-and-answer period, but listeners were instead encouraged to visit the master and to ask about the Dharma in one-on-one encounters (*dokusan*).

Despite the intimate setting of these talks, there has been a long tradition in Zen of recording and publicizing a master's lectures and sayings in order to make teachings available beyond the immediate setting of the monastery or temple and to preserve those teachings for posterity. Massive amounts of such records (Chin. *yulu*; Jap. *goroku*) have been produced in China and Japan, exceeding the textual output of any other denomination of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To date, only a tiny fraction of this output has been translated into English or into other Western languages.

Although on the one hand “transmission outside of the teaching” and “independence from anything written”¹ are important tenets of Zen, both the written and the spoken word have been amply used as tools for propagating the teaching and stimulating and guiding students. A metaphor frequently cited in connection with this phenomenon is the “finger pointing at the moon.” Sekkei Harada himself puts the ambiguous relationship between verbal communication and Zen as follows: “All of the 84,000 Dharma teachings, as well as the words of the ancestors, are fingers pointing at the moon. If we do not act in accord with them, it will not be possible to see the moon. However, when you have seen the moon, then they are no longer necessary, and this is to have returned to your original, essential Self.”²

Besides trying to convey timeless truth, every new record also appeals to, and thus reflects, the sensitivities of the time and the social and religious landscape within which it is situated. In Zen Buddhism, doctrines are essentially viewed as an expedient, or “skillful means,” to be used flexibly and to be constantly transformed in ways that correspond to the needs of one's audience. Thus, every new record is also a window to the circumstances under which it originated. This metaphor also applies to the talks preserved in this book.

Sekkei Harada is one of the best-known and most widely acknowledged masters of contemporary Sōtō Zen in Japan. He was born in 1926 in Aichi prefecture and ordained in 1951 at Hosshinji in Obama, Fukui prefecture, by the abbot Harada Sessui. From 1953, he practiced

with Master Inoue Gien at the temple Ryūsenji in Hamamatsu, and he received Dharma transmission (*inka shōmei*) in 1957. In 1974, he was selected as abbot of Hosshinji, one of twenty-five current training monasteries of the Sōtō sect. He became vice chairman of the Sōtō Sect Conference of Zen Teachers in 1996, acted as senior teacher (*seidō*) at the sect's main monastery Sōjiji from 1998 to 2002, and he then served as Director of the Sōtō sect in Europe from 2002 to 2004. Seven records of his talks have been published in Japanese. One of them, *The Essence of Zen*, has appeared in English, French, German, Indonesian, and Italian translation.

Hosshinji, Sekkei Harada's monastery, has a unique history. It was founded in the sixteenth century by the local feudal lord Takeda Motomitsu (1494–1551), a figure who used the temple as a residence from where he would conduct political affairs as a monk. Undergoing several cycles of decline and restoration, Hosshinji gained religious importance especially in the twentieth century under the guidance of its twenty-seventh abbot, Harada Sogaku (1871–1961). Harada Sogaku was one of the most influential and prolific Japanese Sōtō Zen masters of the twentieth century, a fact borne out by the vast number of prominent disciples to whom he laid claim and by the steady production of books based on his lectures. In addition to a revival of kōan practices in Sōtō Zen, he opened monastery doors to lay men and women alike, allowing foreigners as well as locals to participate in monastery training. Hosshinji is therefore renowned as a place where pioneering Westerners went to study Zen Buddhism throughout the post-war era.

When Sekkei Harada became the thirtieth abbot, he likewise encouraged the attendance of laymen and laywomen, foreign and local alike—a phenomenon that remains even now an exception in training monasteries in Japan. Since the 1980s he has regularly traveled abroad to lead sesshin in India and throughout the West, particularly in Europe, but also in the U.S. He speaks with a critical voice on the current state of Zen Buddhism in Japan, particularly epitomized by the rote formalization of Dharma transmission. He expresses this concern about the current state of Zen Buddhism in Japan, combined with strong appeals to his audience to preserve what he understands to be genuine Dharma transmission, throughout his talks.

In addition to Harada Roshi's commentary, Heiko Narrog has created a series of tables that provide information about the people, texts, places, and quotations to which he refers throughout the book. We are fully aware that alternative translations of various terms and, in some cases, entire verses are possible. We have aimed, however, to be consistent and to make the most appropriate choices in light of the particular contexts of these poems and talks.

Finally, but most importantly, we wish to express our deep gratitude to Sekkei Harada Roshi and to the editor of the Japanese edition, Keiko Kando, who enabled us to work with these wonderful texts. We also wish to thank Josh Bartok for generously giving this book a place within Wisdom Publications and Andy Francis for his marvelous work editing this book.

Acknowledgments by Daigaku Rummé

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Acknowledgments by Heiko Narrog and Hongliang Gu

We would like to thank the Harvard-Yenching Institute that provided the opportunity for us to cooperate on these translations at Harvard during the 2010–2011 academic year. Heiko Narrog would further like to thank James Robson and Francis X. Clooney (both Harvard University) and James Robson's 2011 graduate seminar for their valuable support and suggestions to this project.

Unfathomable Depths

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原田雪溪普說

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The publisher gratefully acknowledges the generous contribution of the Hershey Family Foundation toward the publication of this book.

TEN VERSES OF UNFATHOMABLE DEPTH

1. *The Mind Seal*

I ask you, “What does the Mind Seal look like?”
And “What sort of person dares to transmit it?”
Throughout the ages, it has remained firm and unshaken.
As soon as you call something the Mind Seal, it is already
meaningless.
You must know that in essence all things originate from
infinite emptiness.
You can compare it to a lotus flower in a red-hot kiln.
Don’t say that a free and empty mind is the Way;
A free and empty mind is still separated from it by a great
barrier.

2. *The Mind of the Enlightened Ones*

This mind is like emptiness, but it isn’t empty.
How could the unfathomable function ever degenerate to
being the result of achievement?
The bodhisattvas at the three stages of wisdom have still not
clarified this.
And how can the higher ranks of bodhisattvas ever reach it?
The golden carp that has passed through the net remains
trapped in the water.
But the stone horse still on the way leaves its sand cage
suddenly.
Why have the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the
West explained in every detail?
Don’t ask about the coming from the West, nor about
the East.

3. *The Unfathomable Function*

You cannot rely on looking far ahead to the end of the universe.
And why would you tie yourself down to tainted worldliness?
Essentially, the miraculous body is not bound anywhere.
It is already throughout the whole body, so what other traces
could there be?
A single efficacious word transcends the multitudes.
It is far beyond the Three Vehicles and does not require
cultivation.
Shake off your hands and get away from the sages of all ages.
Then your path of return will resemble an ox in the midst
of fire.

4. *The Transcendent within Dust and Dirt*

That which is impure is impure by itself; that which is pure is
pure by itself.
Highest wisdom and delusion are likewise empty and even.
Who could say that nobody can appreciate Bianhe's jade?
I say that the jewel of the black dragon shines everywhere.
Only when the myriad dharmas disappear does the whole thing
appear.
The Three Vehicles split up and assumed only provisional
names.
Truly outstanding people have determination that knows no
bounds.
Do not try to go where the buddhas have already gone.

5. *The Buddhist Teaching*

The Three Vehicles spoke golden words one after another.
But the buddhas of the past, present, and future only declared the
same thing.
In the beginning, when they expounded the reality of skandhas
and then complete emptiness, everyone grew attached to it.

Later, when they negated both reality and emptiness, everyone
discarded it again.
The complete treasury of sutras in the Dragon Palace is meant to
be prescriptions.
Even the Buddha's last teaching does not reach the
unfathomable.
If even one deluded thought arises in the world of true purity,
This already means spending eight thousand years in the world
of human beings.

6. *The Song of Returning Home*

Don't be distracted by the King of Emptiness when you are
still on the Way.
You must drive your staff forward, moving on until you
reach home.
If you travel for a long time like clouds and water, don't get
attached to it.
Even in the deep recesses of snowy mountains, don't forget
your mission.
Ah! I regretted that in past days my face was like jade.
And I lamented that at the time of my return my hair had
turned white.
Returning to my old home with dangling arms, there was
no one who recognized me.
Also, I had nothing to offer my parents.

7. *The Song of Not Returning Home*

Having the intention of going to the source, of returning
to the origin, is already a mistake.
Essentially, there is nowhere to settle down, no place to call
one's home.
The ancient path through the pines is covered with deep snow.
The long range of mountain peaks is furthermore blocked
by clouds.

When host and guest are tranquil and serene, everything is
incongruous.
When lord and vassal are united, there is wrong in the midst of
right.
How will you sing the song of returning home?
In bright moonlight, the dead tree is blooming in front of
the hall.

8. *The Revolving Function*

It is still dangerous even inside the castle of nirvana.
Strangers come across each other without appointment.
People call someone who provisionally puts on a dirty robe
“a buddha.”
But if someone wears precious clothes, what should you
call him?
In the middle of the night, the wooden man puts on shoes and
leaves.
At dawn, the stone woman puts on a hat and goes home.
An ancient emerald pool, the moon in the empty sky.
Screening and filtering over and over to catch the moon, for
the first time you will really know.

9. *Changing Ranks*

Growing hair and horns, you enter town,
Resembling a blue lotus flower blooming in the midst of fire.
All afflictions become like rain and dew in the vast sea.
All ignorance becomes like clouds and thunder on a mountain.
You completely blow out the furnace below the cauldron
of hell,
Smashing to pieces a forest of swords and a mountain of
daggers with a single shout.
Even golden chains cannot hold you back at the entrance.
Going into the realm of other beings, you transmigrate
for a while.

10. *Before the Rank of the Absolute*

In front of many dead trees and steep boulders, there are
many wrong tracks heading off course.

Those travelers who have reached this place all trip and
stumble.

A crane stands in the snow but does not have the same color.
The bright moon and the flower of reeds do not really resemble
each other.

“I’m finished, I’m finished, I’m finished!” When you think so,
you cannot really be finished.

If you say, “This is it! This is the ultimate source!” you also
need a good shout.

From the bottom of your heart, you play a melody on the
harp with no strings.

How would it be possible to grasp the moonlight shining in
the empty sky?

I. Introduction

HEIKO NARROG & HONGLIANG GU

十玄談
原田雪溪普說

THE TEXT

THE *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* were a highly regarded text in premodern China, Korea, and Japan, but they are not part of the small canon of poems still regularly employed in Zen teaching and practice in Japan and abroad. They are therefore unfamiliar to all but specialists. This introduction will, therefore, serve to provide basic information on the poem for those curious about its historical, religious, and philosophical background and its relationship to the following commentary given by the modern Japanese master Sekkei Harada.

The Ten Verses are themselves undated. But if the attribution of their authorship to Tong'an Changcha is correct, they must have been written in the first half of the tenth century, no later than about 960. They were first published posthumously in the twenty-ninth volume of the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, which is a collection of texts foundational for the self-understanding and history of Chan/Zen Buddhism.

Although the earliest Chan records stem from the sixth century, the tradition of composing texts with the purpose of establishing Dharma transmission lineages and a history of schools only began in the ninth century with the text called *Transmission of the Treasure Grove*. Such records were not based on a concept of precise historiography as modern Western scholarship imagines it but were rather tools created to establish legitimacy and orthodoxy in an age where these became increasingly precious commodities. As Buddhism flourished, numerous Buddhist sects and groups within sects across China competed for authority, followers, and official recognition. The Dharma lineages of prominent Zen masters were often the subject of serious controversy. Consequently, the lineages claimed in the *Jingde Era Record* sometimes differ from those claimed in earlier records.

While the *Transmission of the Treasure Grove* was only temporarily canonized, and the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*, an important

successor dated 952, failed to be included in the Chinese Buddhist canon, the *Jingde Era Record*, completed in 1004, was admitted to the imperial Buddhist canon in 1011 and has been included in the Buddhist canons ever since. Despite the canonization of numerous other transmission records compiled at the same time or later than it, the *Jingde Era Record* gained the status of authority and orthodoxy due to its historical position and has since been regarded as the most representative transmission record. The *Jingde Era Record* is the ultimate source known to us for many of the stories contained in more popular Chan records, such as the *Blue Cliff Record*. Yet the Record has never been fully translated into a modern language. The volume containing the Ten Verses has not been translated, to our knowledge, either.

Transmission records also served to collect extant material for the purpose of preserving them against being scattered and lost. Of course, these texts were also important tools for teaching. This is especially true of the twenty-ninth volume of the *Jingde Era Record*, which contains the Ten Verses. Unlike the preceding twenty-eight volumes, it is not concerned with establishing lineage history but contains a collection of writings that the editors found worthy of preservation as teachings for students of Chan.

We do not know the original form of the *Jingde Era Record*. In fact, the textual history of this work stands out for its complexity even among ancient Chinese Buddhist texts. The original edition is lost, and the earliest extant version of the text is an abridgment edited under a different title: *Precious Flowers of the Lamp Transmission*. At least twenty major editions of the work itself are known, but the content of many of these vary. According to Nishiguchi, the editions can be roughly divided into two lineages, the Sibū-Yanyou text lineage and the Dongchansi-Ming text lineage.³ Although the Dongchansi-Ming text lineage claims the oldest known extant complete edition, being dated to 1080, the Sibū-Yanyou lineage may actually represent an older and more reliable stage of the text. However, even the older extant editions of the *Jingde Era Record* lack some material and seem considerably sloppy in their execution. This is especially true of the Ten Verses, which appear in the early Song edition in an abridged form of only eight verses and are represented in the *Precious Flowers of the Lamp Transmission* in only one verse. It is furthermore not clear whether the original edi-

tion of the *Jingde Era Record* even contained a faithful rendering of the poems. We know for example that the text of the *Jingde Era Record* as a whole was subject to censorship and interfered with for various purposes even prior to its first publication.⁴ Therefore, we may never know the original version of either the poems or of the record as a whole, and it is difficult to even establish an earliest or most accurate version of the work.

The abridgment of the Ten Verses in the Song edition of the *Jingde Era Record* was criticized. The monk Mu'an Shanqing, editor of the Buddhist encyclopedia called *Chrestomathy from the Ancestors' Hall* (1108), may have played the decisive role in the eventual restoration of the full version. In the *Chrestomathy* he reports that he visited Tong'an temple, the monastery where Master Changcha had resided, where he retrieved from the memorial hall of the temple the previously ignored preface and a version of the text itself, to which he added comments. Shanqing's account has been widely accepted as truthful.⁵ The preface retrieved, as well as the title of the poems, are generally ascribed to Fayan Wenyi, the Dharma lineage grandfather of Ying'an Daoyuan, the primary editor of the *Jingde Era Record*. The preface reads as follows:

These Verses of Unfathomable Depth are marvelous. They far surpass the three vehicles. No longer are they entangled in origination through circumstance, nor are they independent.

When put into practice they resemble the bright moon and illuminate the sky. But if times change and the opportunity is lost, they resemble a bright jewel hidden in the depths of the sea.

Moreover, while students of the Way have different levels of ability, the wondrous truth is infinite. Very few have reached it and many are confused about its source.

These verses are an exceptionally bright light on all phenomena and things. This means that both principles and phenomena recede with them, and names and words are defeated. Thus, they kindheartedly point at the moon, without missing the tiniest things.

If you don't get lost searching for the needle in the water, the treasure already held in your fist waiting to be opened will be bestowed on you.

I have given these small words, in brief, as a preface to demonstrate the gist of the poems.

Since this preface, cited in the *Chrestomathy from the Ancestors' Hall*, is found practically unaltered in later editions of the *Jingde Era Record*, we may assume that the manuscript as found by Shanqing influenced these later editions as well. Nevertheless, we do not know which edition would most faithfully reflect possible amendments to the verses, so we also do not know the shape of the poems in which Shanqing found them.

These problems with the text are somewhat mitigated by the fact that the differences in wording in the various editions do not significantly alter the meaning of the text but remain variations of expression. The most salient variations can be found in the titles given to the individual poems, which are believed to have been given by the author himself but later revised by the editors of the various editions of the *Jingde Era Record*. These variations were of considerable concern to contemporary monks and scholars of the Chan tradition, but from a modern perspective few of them lead to significantly different interpretations of the poems. Among all premodern editions of the Ten Verses which we have access to, the edition in the Korean canon version has clearly been the most carefully edited. It contains no apparent inconsistencies or misspellings, and no abridgments, which is quite remarkable for an ancient manuscript. The Ming edition seems to contain the most errors of any edition.

After the *Jingde Era Record*, the second major classical record containing the Ten Verses was the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School* (*Zongmen liandeng huiyao*), produced about 180 years later. The inclusion of the Ten Verses in this compilation demonstrates the status of the text during the Song period, since the fourteen poems published therein were chosen by the editors as a selection of the most important poems of the Chan tradition going back to its beginning. The collection also includes most of the few poems from that era that are still part of Zen teaching and practice nowadays.

THE AUTHOR

THE TEN POEMS are attributed to a Chan master active in the first half of the tenth century with the Dharma name “Changcha of Tong’an Temple.” The dates of his birth and death are unknown. We are not aware of any writing within the Buddhist tradition or any research that contests the attribution of the Ten Verses to Master Changcha. As will be seen below, sectarians would gain little by attributing the poems to Changcha as opposed to somebody else. If the editors of the *Jingde Era Record* had intended to further aggrandize the figure of Changcha’s contemporary, Fayan Wenyi, whose Dharma heir, Daoyuan, was the central editor of the Record, they could have done so. But they did not. In any case, it is safe to assume that Tong’an Changcha was the actual author of the poems.

Not much is known about the life of Tong’an Changcha, as the biographical information available on him in extant Chan records is sparse. The minimum that such records preserve is a master’s Dharma name, lineage, and the temple where he resided. Beyond this, they may provide his birthplace, secular name, and those dialogues and sayings attributed to him that demonstrate his spiritual achievement. Many of such dialogues may also be taken up as kōans. The number and degree of detail exhibited in dialogues will vary greatly depending on the master and the importance assigned to him. Finally, records may also preserve further biographical or hagiographical elements, which show such things as the master’s devotion to Buddhist practice from an early age or his first encounter with Buddhist teaching, for example. Modern scholarship unaffiliated with the Buddhist sects generally disputes the historicity of the records because of the presence of sometimes quite egregious inconsistencies between various records, and because records may contain what are clearly nonhistorical elements, such as descriptions of supernatural phenomena or the appearance of bodhisattvas as

actors in a master's life, alongside elements that are likely historical, such as verifiable personal and place names.

We have found mention of Tong'an Changcha in at least twenty-two records of the Buddhist canon, in addition to the records that exist in the historically important but noncanonical *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*. Not all of these twenty-two incidences are equally relevant. First of all, earlier sources contain more original material, whereas subsequent sources largely repeat material that exists in the earlier ones. Secondly, there are some records that are simply considered more authoritative and influential within the Chan/Zen tradition than others. Given that the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* and the *Jingde Era Record* have historically been the most significant records, and that the *Record of Equanimity*, the *Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp*, and the *Empty Hall Anthology* have been records of particular importance and authority within the tradition, we thus choose to focus our examination of the person of Tong'an Changcha on the entries preserved in these texts. We will mention other records only where relevant.

We present below translations of the relevant portions of each of these records in chronological order. It is not always clear in the dialogues if one person is asking the master on one occasion or if different people are asking on different occasions. The same question-and-answer sequence that appears to indicate a single questioning monk on a single occasion in one record sometimes seems to indicate multiple questioners on multiple occasions in another. We have chosen to end our translations where there seems to be a natural break in the flow of represented conversation.

Collection from the Ancestors' Hall, vol. 12 (952)

The *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* was composed during the time of Tong'an Changcha and is therefore most likely to contain historically accurate information. The editors of the *Jingde Era Record* either did not know of its existence or intentionally ignored it.⁶ Subsequent Chinese and Japanese Chan records, beginning with the *Jingde Era Record*, have basically been composed independent from the *Collection from*

the Ancestors' Hall since the latter was eventually lost in China and only survived in Korea. The passage regarding Master Changcha in the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* runs as follows:

The priest of Tong'an inherited the Dharma from Jiufeng. He lived in the Jianchang county in the Hong region. His master title was Changcha. He was a person from Changxi county in the Fuzhou region. His family name was Peng. He took the precepts when he came of age, then left Fujian province to study with Jiufeng. He received transmission, reaching the final gate, and then settled at the Phoenix mountain range.

A monk asked: "How is the condition at the Phoenix mountain range?"

The master replied, "In what place are you right now?"

The monk asked, "How is what has been passed down from above?"

The master answered, "What has been passed down does not work."

The monk said, "So what should I do from now?"

The master replied, "Even ten thousand people won't be able to tell you." (1)

Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp,
vol. 17 (1004)

The *Jingde Era Record*, written fifty years later, preserves an account similar to but more lengthy than the one from the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*:

Master Changcha of Tong'an temple at the Phoenix mountain of Hong region.

A monk asked, "Although this is the home of the phoenix, why is there no house style?"⁷

The master replied, “We don’t welcome visitors, and we don’t treat anyone as a guest.”

The monk asked, “Then, for what purpose do we visit all places between the four seas?”

The master replied, “If there is a plate for sacrifice, there will always be someone who gives.” (2)

A monk asked, “How is the condition at Phoenix mountain range?”

The master replied, “The thousand mountain peaks line up beautifully. The ten thousand cliffs do not know when spring comes.”

The monk asked, “How about the person under these conditions?”

The master replied, “He sits on lonely cliffs and high boulders, his mind being as high as the white clouds.” (3)

The “house style” mentioned in the first dialogue refers to differences in the style of Chan/Zen that depend on particular masters or their lineages. The question of house style in relation to Tong’an temple is raised in a frequently quoted dialogue from the first abbot of the temple, Tong’an Daopi (?–905), recorded in the sixteenth volume of the *Jingde Era Record*. The dialogue runs as follows:

A monk asked, “What is your house style?”

The master said, “The golden hen carries its son and returns to heaven. The pregnant jade rabbit enters the heavenly palace.”

The monk asked, “If I suddenly encounter a guest coming, how should I treat this guest respectfully?”

The master replied, “The golden fruit—early in the morning the ape plucks it and takes it away. The jade flower—after dusk the phoenix comes holding it in its mouth.”

The core biographical information on Master Changcha given in the *Jingde Era Record* is identical to the information given in *Collection*

from the Ancestors' Hall. Given that the *Jingde Era Record* is presumably independent of the Collection, the fact that the two concur would seem to support the information that these records provide. The twenty-third volume of the *Jingde Era Record* and the eighth volume of the *Record of the Correct Lineage of the Dharma Transmission* both note a single Dharma heir for Changcha by the name Lianggong. No further information is provided on this figure, except that he settled at Mt. Yangshan in what is now Jiangxi province and had no Dharma heir of his own.

Record of Equanimity (1223)

The *Record of Equanimity* is about three centuries removed from the time of Master Changcha, yet it has a special status in the Sōtō Zen tradition as its most prominent kōan collection, comparable to the *Blue Cliff Record* or the *Gateless Barrier* in the Rinzai Zen tradition. The key dialogue with Master Changcha found in this collection runs as follows:

COMMENTARY ON CASE 80

A monk asked Tong'an Changcha, "How is it if there are no weapons?"

Changcha said, "You cannot hang a sword into an empty space. The jade hare in the moon cannot wear body armor." (4)

Besides this short dialogue, the *Record of Equanimity* also quotes the first line of the tenth verse of Changcha's Ten Verses when commenting on case 35 and quotes the third and fourth lines of the third verse when commenting on case 68.

Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp, vol. 6 (1252)

Lineage histories proliferated after the successful canonization of the *Jingde Era Record*. The composition of lineage histories provided

sectarian scholars a welcome opportunity to record their version of religious history, even while the Chinese state retained control and authority over Buddhism through the system of canonization. The proliferation of records led to the need for compendia that would systematize the information contained in the various versions. The *Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp* is probably the best recognized and authoritative of these compendia. It mainly brings together material from five preceding canonical lineage histories: namely the *Jingde Era Record* (1004), the *Record of the Extensive [Transmission of] the Lamp* (1036), the *Jianzhong Jingguo Era Continued Record of the [Transmission of the] Lamp* (1101), the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School* (1183), and the *Jiatai Era Comprehensive Record of [the Transmission of] the Lamp* (1204).

The first incident of material on Master Changcha in the *Assembled Essentials* was faithfully adopted from the *Jingde Era Record* and we will therefore not repeat it here. The remaining material can be traced back to the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School*, while the rest cannot be identified in any other texts available to us. We translate each of the passages here in order of their appearance in the *Assembled Essentials* and indicate allusion to the Ten Verses in boldface type:

A DIALOGUE OF UNCLEAR PROVENANCE

A monk asked, “What is the difference between **Zen mind**⁸ and the general Buddhist teaching?”

The master said, “The iron dog barks at the stone cow. The magician watches the moonlight.”

The monk asked, “How about the person who has **grown hair and put on horns**?”⁹

The master replied, “With a woven rush raincoat and a bamboo hat you sell gold. How many don’t greet each other when they meet?” (5)

DIALOGUES PRESERVED FROM *ESSENTIALS OF THE UNITED*
[RECORDS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF THE] LAMPS OF OUR
SCHOOL

A monk asked, “I am not yet clear about the right opportunity for enlightenment. Please give me instruction.”

The master replied, “In the uneven pine and bamboo grove, the fog is thin; because of the many layers of mountains, the moon comes out late.”

The monk intended to say something else, but the master said, “Before using your sword and armor, your body has already been exposed.”

The monk asked, “What do you mean?”

The master replied, “The good knife does not cut the bamboo before the frost comes. The ink painting can only praise the dragon on the sea.”

The monk circled the master’s seat and then left.

The master said, “If you close your eyes and eat a snail, it will at once be sour, tart, and bitter.” (6)

A SECOND DIALOGUE OF UNCLEAR PROVENANCE

The monk asked, “Returning to the origin, returning to the source, how is it?”¹⁰

The master replied, “Even if the cicada has broken out of its shell, it still cannot avoid clinging to the cold branch.”

The monk asked, “What about a very strong-willed and powerful person?”¹¹

The master answered, “The stone ox¹² step by step goes into the deep pool.¹³ The paper horse shout by shout cries out in the fire.” (7)

FIVE DIALOGUES PRESERVED FROM THE *ESSENTIALS*
 OF THE UNITED [RECORDS OF THE TRANSMISSION
 OF THE] LAMPS OF OUR SCHOOL

A newly arrived monk held a tin staff and circled the master three times, he shook the staff once and asked, “Master, please tell me the place that neither the ordinary nor the saints reach.”¹⁴

The master snapped his fingers three times.

The monk said, “Today you are scared, so you are at a loss for words.”

The master replied, “Where is your point of departure?”

The monk bowed and walked out.

The master said, “The monk who has already traveled a lot of places; the Zen monk with the staff. If you don’t really reach up to me, you won’t be able to cast off your doubts.”

The monk turned around and said, “Hearing from afar is not as good as seeing with your own eyes.”

The master said, “Because you are eager for one cup of wine, you loose a whole ship full of fish.”

The monk asked, “How is the person who has eliminated all regrets?”

The master answered, “I have already seen this sort of business.”

The monk asked, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West?”¹⁵

The master replied, “The rhinoceros grows a horn because it plays with the moon’s arc. The shine enters the elephant’s tusk because it is scared by the thunder.”

The monk asked, “How is the person that always looks into the future?”

The master replied, “The cicada in fall clings to the barren tree¹⁶ without leaves and keeps chirping without turning its head.”

The monk asked, “How is the person who has returned?”¹⁷

The master replied, “He is outstanding like a reed flower in the fire.¹⁸ You meet him in spring but it looks like fall.”

The monk asked, “How is the person who has neither come nor gone?”

The master answered, “The stone sheep meets the stone tiger. They look at each other and sooner or later they stop fighting.” (8)

The head monk asked, “The three vehicles¹⁹ and twelve teachings, I know them roughly. But I don’t know which Dharma you are teaching.”

The master replied, “I teach the one vehicle.”²⁰

He asked, “So how is the one vehicle?”

The master replied, “Several clouds appeared from the top of the mountain; the spring water resounds when it hits the stone.”

The monk said, “I didn’t ask about that. I asked what the one vehicle teaching is.”

The master replied, “You would better be a little smarter.”²¹ (9)

The master, after looking at the night sky, said to a monk, “How strange, how strange! The stars and the moon are both so bright,²² and they can still both be seen. Why does it deviate from the Way like this?”

The monk said, “How is the Way?”

The master answered, “If you try it out you will see.”

The monk said, “If someone has no wound, don’t injure him!”

The master replied, “If you carry book bags and tackle study, don’t rest your bow and arrows.” (10)

The master asked a monk, “Where did you go recently?”

The monk replied, “To Jiangxi province.”

The master asked, “How does the Dharma of Jiangxi resemble the one here?”

The monk replied, “Luckily you asked me. If you asked somebody else, misfortune would come of it.”

The master said, “I see I was rash right now.”

The monk said, “I’m not an infant, but you only use candy to stop me from crying.”

The master replied, “Hurting the turtle or releasing it, killing it or letting it live, is in my power.” (11)

Changcha asked a monk, “Where have you come from?”

The monk replied, “From Mt. Wutai.”

The master asked, “Did you also see the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī?”

The monk spread out his arms.

The master asked, “You are spreading out your arms so much. So who has really seen the Bodhisattva?”

The monk replied, “If you’re out of breath, it kills you.”

Changcha asked: “If you don’t see the wild goose in the clouds, how can you know the coldness of the desert?”

The monk said, “Please let us go quickly to the master’s room, and tell me there!”

Changcha replied, “The disciples of Sunbin²³ only talked about divinations.”²⁴

The monk said, “Yet his reputation was not wasted.”

Changcha replied, “Go away and have some tea!”

The monk bowed goodbye.

The master said, “Even if you have earned victory in one battle, you still get your legs cut off.” (12)

TWO DIALOGUES OF UNCLEAR PROVENANCE

As the master read a sutra, there came a monk who asked something.

The master replied, “**The buddhas of the past and present have all taught the same thing.**”²⁵

The monk asked, “So how about you?”

The master slapped him.

The monk said, “That’s it! That’s it!”

The master said, “This idiot!”

The monk said, “The present and past buddhas are all like this.”

The master said, “I wanted to slay a dragon, but I met a dead tiger.”

The monk said, “You really radiate.”

The master replied, “Standing by a tree stump and holding your breath waiting for hares to clash against it, who would do this if not you?”

The monk said, “You are deaf!”

The master said, “The barbarian sheep went to Chu. Feeling wronged they returned home.” (13)

The master asked a monk. “When it is all dark around your eyes, how can you see?”

The monk replied, “The Northern star turns to the East, and the Southern Star moves to the West.”

The master said, “Master, you can enter the big ancestor temple.”

The monk said, “Like this, in the school of Tong’an the Way dies out and the disciples get dispersed.”

The master said, “Carrying the baby horizontally,²⁶ I wanted to show you the Buddhist teaching.” (14)

A DIALOGUE FROM THE *ESSENTIALS OF THE UNITED*
 [RECORDS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF THE] *LAMPS OF OUR*
SCHOOL

The master heard the sound of a magpie and said to the assembly, “If a magpie [auspicious bird in Ancient China] cries on the cold juniper [auspicious tree],²⁷ it means that the Mind Seal is going to be transmitted.”²⁸

A monk came forward and asked, “What difference does it make?”

The master said, “Among the monks there is a certain person.”

The monk said, “In the school of Tong’an, the Way will cease to exist and the disciples will be dispersed.”

The master said, “The barbarians of Hu drank the milk but they blamed the good doctor.”²⁹

The monk said, “Just take a break!”

The master said, “The old crane entered the dry pond but could not see the traces of fish.” (15)

Empty Hall Anthology, *vol. 4* (1295)

The last dialogue translated here is furthest removed from Master Changcha’s lifetime, but it became the most popular of the dialogues and was repeatedly quoted in subsequent records. The passage reads as follows:

CASE 64

A monk asked Master Tong’an Changcha: “How is the teacher of gods and men?”³⁰

Changcha replied, “His head is bald, and his body is hairless.”³¹ (16)

We may note a few things about the dialogues presented here. First of all, those that appear in records that are historically closest in proximity to Master Changcha himself are quite terse. These, namely the *Collection from the Ancestors’ Hall*, likely compiled during his own lifetime, and the *Jingde Era Record*, compiled a few decades after his death, we may consider most likely to reflect actual biographical facts. We may also note that the further removed records become from his lifetime, the lengthier and more detailed they become. It is also of interest that the most famous Chan dialogue that involves Master Changcha was recorded more than three hundred years after his death. This pattern is not terribly surprising, as we see very similar patterns surrounding other well-known figures in Chan history as well—most famously with Bodhidharma and the sixth ancestor, Huineng. We know practically nothing for sure regarding the historicity of these two figures, but a vast body of stories and lore has grown up around them over time.

For critically minded scholars, such patterns of increasing elaboration of records in subsequent generations are almost certainly evidence of the nonhistorical nature of such records. However, defenders of the Chan records as historically valuable argue that there are valid reasons that historical material might only have appeared decades or centuries after the fact. First, ancient societies relied on oral transmission much more than have modern societies, where the capacity for printing is cheap and widespread. Second, we know that sects in China and Japan have historically kept important material secret, only choosing to record such material when it becomes threatened with loss or becomes otherwise obscure. Third, records that may have been written down earlier might simply have been lost.

In the end, however, the question of historicity is of little relevance for the tradition itself when compared to the question of whether a story or dialogue truthfully conveys the mind of Chan and effectively transmits its Dharma message. For the Chan tradition, the biographical information preserved in records establishes claims of lineage, and stories and dialogue raise problem consciousness in students and communicate points of practice—that is, they function as *kōans*. In fact, we do find later masters taking up such dialogues as teaching points in their own lectures.

The twelfth-century master Mi'an Xianjie, for example, comments on two of the above presented dialogues. With regard to the sequence that begins, “Changcha asked a monk, ‘Where have you come from?’” Mi'an comments:

Punch for punch, kick for kick, punching and kicking by turns. Who loses, who wins? Nodding his head and wagging his tail, the monk passes the prison gate. Who would really believe the master's word of cutting off his legs? But still, if there is just a small error, everyone will pick it up and examine it.

He later takes up the dialogue that begins, “The master heard the sound of a magpie,” commenting:

They are moving the strings and singing a different tune. One sings and the other responds. The one who sings the tune sings increasingly high, and the one who responds is increasingly harsh. When they perform, they emulate the cacophony of Zhen and Wei. Although it looks chaotic, the five tones, the six rhythms, and their beat are in order.

On the surface these dialogues may seem to indicate that the master defeated the monk, but Mi'an reads them as Dharma battles between equals. Mi'an's reason for choosing these dialogues was clearly to encourage his audience to have no fear of embarrassment or defeat, but to boldly challenge even their master, without consideration of their own inferior position. In this sense, the enigmatic dialogues became a rich source of Dharma instruction for the teachers who took them up.

It is also of interest to note that only the two oldest records refer to Master Changcha's monastery and the places associated with the master, whereas many of those recorded subsequent to them do not speak of location but refer instead to the Ten Verses, the work most closely associated with the master. This likely reflects the fact that prior to publication of the Ten Verses in the *Jingde Era Record*, Master Changcha's most prominent feature as a figure of the Chan pantheon was his association with Tong'an temple. The temple was renowned because of the spectacular natural landscape in which it was situated and because of its first abbot, Daopi.

Two of the above dialogues (numbered 14 and 15) allude to the fact that Changcha's lineage died out quickly. These dialogues must have been composed by writers of later generations who knew that Changcha's lineage actually died out quickly. In these and in the dialogue numbered 13, Master Changcha receives a somewhat unkind treatment. Another salient feature of most dialogues in the *Assembled Essentials* is that even if the questioning monks use ordinary language, Master Changcha speaks only in rich literary metaphors. On the one hand, these metaphors are less likely to have been produced in spontaneous speech than in premeditated writing, which points again to the fact that the dialogues were probably the product of creative writing.

(Of course, this observation does not apply only to dialogues involving Tong'an Changcha.) On the other hand, the dialogues stress the master's erudition, and he projects a certain aloofness.

Overall, then, we may say that many of the later dialogues, especially those in the *Assembled Essentials*, seem to represent a reconstructed image of Master Changcha as he might have been imagined based on the sparse biographical information available in the *Jingde Era Record* and based on what character might be gleaned from the Ten Verses. Namely, he appears to be an eminently erudite and enlightened person but not particularly successful as a teacher. At least part of the dialogues, especially those in the *Assembled Essentials*, may thus be seen as playful inventions by later writers who were catering to the curiosity and imagination of a community of Chan students who only knew Changcha's famous poems and were eager for further stories about his life.

In contrast, the historically accurate core of information about the master—to the extent that we can say that there is any—is most likely limited to what is found in the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*. The dialogue here represents a relatively innocent and straightforward question-and-answer session between a Way-seeking monk and a master, rather than a highly stylized and sophisticated Dharma battle, such as those we find in the *Assembled Essentials*. The two dialogues from the *Record of Equanimity* and the *Empty Hall Anthology* are, again, quite different in their succinctness.

In conclusion, the biographical information available to us regarding Master Changcha that we might consider reliable is quite sparse. The many dialogues involving the master that emerged in later Chan records are likely of little value in terms of the image of the master that they provide. However, they do indirectly tell us something about the high esteem afforded to Master Changcha's Ten Verses by subsequent generations in the Chan community. What we may reliably say about Master Changcha is that he was a very modest figure, the head of an apparently minor temple, that his lineage ended in the generation following his own with a practically anonymous Dharma heir, and he thus had very little impact on the history of Chan lineages. Those entries related to the master in contemporary records were brief and

rather stiff. Under normal circumstances, he would have ended up as a historical footnote in later records. We have no other plausible explanation for the later proliferation of stories about Master Changcha than the fame afforded him by the Ten Verses, the content of which we will now explore.

*II. Commentary on the Ten Verses
of Unfathomable Depth*

SEKKEI HARADA

十玄談
原田雪溪普說

PROLOGUE: MASTER TONG'AN AND THE VERSES OF UNFATHOMABLE DEPTH

THESE *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* are found in a book called the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde chuandenglu*), compiled by Master Ying'an Daoyuan. They were written by Master Tong'an Changcha and represent a work of pure Sōtō Zen. The first five verses set forth the principles of Sōtō Zen, while the second five are concerned with matters of practice. Thus, taken together, these verses encapsulate the whole teaching of Sōtō Zen. However, most people—even those who have been practicing Zen for a long time—may not be familiar with them.

The name Tong'an Changcha means “Master Changcha from Tong'an temple.” We know that Tong'an Changcha was an outstanding master by the fact that he is mentioned in many important kōan collections, such as *Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp* and *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, as well as in many biographical writings. He was the fortieth in the line of Zen patriarchs that began with Śākyamuni Buddha's disciple Mahākāśyapa. Having lived approximately 980 years ago, Master Tong'an represents pure Sōtō Zen. Generations before him, Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth great master in the lineage descended from Mahākāśyapa, brought the Buddha's Dharma to China from India. Through Bodhidharma's successors, the teachings were passed down to the sixth master, Dajian Huineng. Thereafter, Zen split into the precursors of today's Sōtō and Rinzai sects. The Sōtō lineage began with Master Qingyuan Xingsi, whose tradition Master Changcha would eventually inherit.

The term “Dharma transmission” means the inheritance of the Dharma from one's master. This must mean that someone has awakened to the fact that he or she him- or herself *is* the Dharma. However, if true transmission were taken seriously and practiced only in this way,

we would have no priests to fill the temples. The religious organization of Zen as such would disappear. These days Buddhist priests in Japan are primarily regarded as funeral directors. Most of their efforts are spent bestowing precepts on the deceased at funerals so that they might in turn give the deceased a posthumous Dharma name. Only someone who has been ordained and has received the precepts himself can do this. Thus, it is the duty of someone who has received transmission to bestow precepts and confer Dharma names upon the living and upon the dead. In order to continue this tradition, Dharma transmission has become an almost automatic formality.

In contrast to masters nowadays, for the great masters of the past, Dharma transmission wasn't something done only on paper. They really inherited the Dharma that is transmitted from mind to mind. Master Tong'an was such a person, but since he did not have a big temple where one hundred or two hundred monks practiced, his splendid work was unfortunately scattered and lost. Although Zen is known for "special transmission outside the teaching"⁴⁶ and "no dependence on words and letters," numerous records of the old masters were preserved. Rinzai Zen, in particular, has historically collected many such records because it places great emphasis on the study of kōans, which are preserved in them. Thus, later, when people were concerned about the fate of Master Tong'an's work, it was put together again in the form of the *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth*.

Many of the works that were collected and preserved by previous generations of students of Zen have become core texts of our tradition today. Central to the Rinzai Zen tradition are, first of all, the so-called "books of the front side":

- *Records of Master Xutang*
- *Blue Cliff Record*
- *Records of Master Linji*
- *Gateless Barrier*
- *Letters of Master Dahui Pujue*
- *Poem Collection of All Schools of Zen*
- *Collection of Texts for Ceremonial Purposes in Zen*

There are also the “books of the reverse side”:

- *Miscellaneous Records by Master Kuya*
- *Record of Anecdotes from Lake Luo*
- *Record from the (Chan) Groves*
- *Mixed Records from the Mountain Hermitage*
- *Master Dahui Pujue’s Chan Arsenal*
- *Glorious Matters from the Chan Monasteries*
- *Anecdotes from a Hermitage Resting on the Clouds*
- *General Discussions from the Chan Monasteries*

And central to the Sōtō lineage there are:

- *Shōbōgenzō (Eye and Treasury of the True Dharma)*
- *Record of Equanimity*
- *Clarification of the Five Ranks*
- *Comments on the Clarification of the Five Ranks*
- *Records of the Masters Sōzan and Tōzan*

Hardly anyone involved in contemporary Zen Buddhism knows these records, and the day is approaching when nobody will even be able to read them. Anyone who plans to pursue a serious Zen practice should get hold of and study these important books. It is truly difficult to imagine Dharma transmission in the absence of any real awareness of these important teachings that have been handed down to us.

The *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* is comprised, as its title suggests, of ten verses. The first five verses—called “The Mind Seal,” “The Mind of the Enlightened Ones,” “The Unfathomable Function,” “The Transcendent within Dust and Dirt,” and “The Buddhist Teaching,” respectively—deal with theoretical aspects of Sōtō Zen. The second five—called “Returning Home,” “The Song of Not Returning Home,” “The Revolving Function,” “Changing Ranks,” and “Before the Rank of the Absolute,” respectively—are concerned with practical matters.

The word “depth” (*xuan*) in the title, which is also found in Laozi’s *Daodejing* in the phrase “deepest depth, the gate to all wonders,”⁴⁷ signifies something very profound: a bottomless depth. This is not a depth that we can imagine. It is so deep that it can contain everything in the world and yet have room to spare. That is, each and every line of

this text is immeasurably profound and perfectly expresses the tenets of Zen. We can say that all of the teachings of all enlightened people, beginning with Śākyamuni Buddha over two thousand years ago, are included within the depths of this “depth.”

If, for example, we scoop up in our hands some water from Wakasa Bay, we can taste that it is the same ocean water as anywhere else in the world. Likewise, to the extent that we make the message of these ten verses our own, the full depth of the Dharma will reveal itself to us. Yet their depth is so great that I can only describe a tiny part of it, a portion no bigger than the tip of a needle, no matter in how much detail I explain the verses here. Therefore, if you really want to study the message of this text, you must actually sit, and you must also ask your teacher about the Dharma.

In Zen, we have a saying: “Old pines expound wisdom; birds in the forest whisper truth.”⁴⁸ In the same way, with regard to the Verses of Unfathomable Depth, their constitution is not a matter of who composed them or where and when they were written. Rather, wherever we are and whatever we see and hear comprises them. It is necessary for us to really accept and to agree with this here and now. As I’ve been known to say at tea before the beginning of *sesshin*, “Sesshin does not involve doing something special.” Rather, it involves simply accepting for oneself that “When tea is served, drink tea. When rice is served, eat rice.”⁴⁹ That is all there is. That is all there is, and yet there is a depth to it that cannot be limited to “that is all there is.” This is what the Verses of Unfathomable Depth express.

The same is true for the famous saying “Everyday mind is the Way.” Most people acknowledge this point superficially by saying, “Everything is just as it is,” and letting it end at that. The important thing here is that if a clear distinction is not made between the Dharma on the one hand and the person or human thought on the other hand, a serious mistake will be made. And such a mistake is actually being made. Some people say that when it comes to *shikantaza* nothing must be sought for and nothing attained. It is fine just to sit. But that is only true from the perspective of the Dharma. From the perspective of the person, it can never be accepted that someone has realized his or her true nature by just sitting in the proper position, however much they do that. Never-

theless, if someone with a big title or a well-known name tells us that it is fine just to sit, we accept that and do it. We think that this is the final point of the Buddha's Way. Then, without understanding anything at all, we receive Dharma transmission. As more and more people who do not understand the Dharma inherit the Dharma, it becomes more and more difficult to find someone who can truly and immediately testify to what the Dharma actually is.

These days, when Zen monks open their mouths they say, "Everyday mind is the Way." When you ask them about their zazen they will tell you that they get up at four o'clock every morning, sit, and do many periods of zazen until nighttime. The distinction between the Dharma and person is completely lost! To the contrary, all the things that the successive great masters have said are from the vantage point of a person who has actually attained the Dharma.

Whether one refers to a stone lantern in the garden or to a pillar, or to mountains, rivers, grasses, or trees, none of these things use words. Why, then, can it be said that old pines expound wisdom and birds in the forest whisper truth? If someone has not truly attained the Dharma and therefore cannot distinguish between the person and the Dharma, they can only give answers like a parrot repeating words. Their responses are simply repetitive statements of what they know, but such answers are fundamentally useless.

When asked why it can be said that old pines expound wisdom and birds in the forest whisper truth, a person who has actually attained the Dharma must unavoidably speak. But even then some will say, "It's better to speak quietly about that." They will instead talk about shikan-taza as "just sitting," wherein there is "nothing to realize and nothing to attain,"⁵⁰ and will say "Everything just as it is," as if everybody should already know about and understand these things.

The problem is that both parties—those who know absolutely nothing and those who know something—say "just," "just." So what are we to do? What is ultimately the truth? By "ultimately" I refer to this moment, right now: our sitting right now, our delusion, the thought "I've got to do something"—all of this is already the ultimate. When you can assent to this deeply, this means that "practice and realization are one"—that the person and the Dharma have become one—as we

say in the Sōtō sect. Practice and realization are, in short, inseparable. Until that point, even if you understand the Dharma, as a person you are still not in accord with it. So even if you say you have experienced enlightenment or have understood the Dharma, because you as a person are still there as the basis, an immense gap between yourself and the truth remains. Therefore, people who seek Zen must not approve of themselves easily and settle at some halfway point.

This also applies to the unfathomable depth. To put it simply, the “unfathomable depth” and “just” are the same thing. However, to actually reach that point is truly difficult. You must realize that there is no ultimate thing other than your condition right now. The emotions that arise and disappear, along with all those conflicts that play themselves out in your mind, are part of that condition. This means you must practice zazen in such a way that when you are conflicted, you totally become one with this conflict.

But because you cannot endure this state of being, we have you hold on to something that seems like “the Way of the Buddha” or like “practice.” These are the various methods of zazen such as shikantaza and kōan practice, including following and counting the breath. With your mind in a scattered condition, you must take up one of these methods as a way to concentrate.

In particular, sesshin is the practice of grinding up zazen by means of zazen. When I say, “Sit single-mindedly,” that means there must not be any zazen. One must completely grind up zazen and the method so that no trace remains. This is what it means to “sit single-mindedly.” If you are mistaken about this, you will acknowledge the existence of something like zazen and think that since your present condition isn’t satisfactory, you must increase your attempts to become one with it. Your practice will forever be one in which you end up judging your method in terms of good and bad, and you will go on thinking of zazen in these terms.

That’s definitely not how it should be. We must practice and do zazen in order to forget zazen, to forget practice, to forget the method, and to forget watching the breath. Why? You say that you are doing zazen following the breath, but actually nobody is conscious of his or her breath right now, and you still breathe perfectly. As long as we are

not trying to manipulate things with our ideas, everything is already perfectly in order.

Therefore, if you think that your present condition isn't good, don't make the mistake of trying to improve your condition through zazen. If you speculate that this or that condition is *samādhi*, and that you will eventually be able to forget yourself if you continue on in this condition, then you will always be seeking outside your present self for some better condition. I would like you to understand that if you think in these terms, all of your efforts will be in vain no matter how long you continue. In order for that not to happen, you must clearly understand the principles involved here as you continue with sesshin.