

ZEN FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE

The various schools and sects that have developed and, in some cases, disappeared over the history of Buddhism have not occurred in a simple linear progression. New movements have arisen among existing schools, and, if they are to succeed, it is necessary that they distinguish themselves from their contemporaries. In order to gain followers, patrons and, especially, royal sanction, new schools have needed to proclaim both their authenticity (typically portrayed in terms of lineage) and their benefits. Such benefits usually include not only the attainment of enlightenment, but other, perhaps more mundane, rewards to those who offer their support.

Zen was one of the last major schools of Buddhism to become established in Japan. Contact with China, from which the previous schools of Japanese Buddhism had derived, had diminished by the time the Tendai monk Eisai (1141–1215), whose previous training had focused on tantric practice, visited China at the age of twenty-eight. His visit was brief, and he returned with sixty volumes of Tiantai texts. However, while in China, he had observed the popularity of Chan (the Chinese term translated into Japanese as Zen). Some twenty years later he sailed to China again, this time hoping to travel to India. Prohibited from doing so, he remained in China, studying at a Chan monastery,

where he received permission to transmit the Zen teachings. His study also included the vinaya, which had been denigrated in his Tendai sect as a Hīnayāna practice. After four years in China, he returned to Japan.

Zen teachings were not unknown in Japan prior to Eisai's return. The teachings of Bodhidharma were known and practised within Tendai, but previous efforts to establish Zen as an independent school were met with disfavour, both by the established schools and the imperial court. Eisai therefore needed to establish his own authority as a Zen master, and to seek imperial approval. He did so in his major work, written in 1198, entitled, significantly, Promote Zen to Protect this Kingdom's Rulers (Kōzen gokokuron), excerpts from which appear here. He submitted it to the military dictatorship based in Kamakura.

Here he defended Zen as an authentic teaching of the Buddha, recounting the story of the 'mind-to-mind transmission' from the Buddha to Mahākāśyapa, and then tracing the lineage of Zen from India to China and, eventually, to himself. He defends Zen as an appropriate teaching for the degenerate age and for Japan, citing sūtras to support his argument. He also answers the charges that Zen practice is little more than attachment to emptiness.

But he is equally concerned to demonstrate the importance of monastic discipline. It was believed that the security and prosperity of Japan depended on a variety of deities who had the power to protect the islands from natural calamity and foreign invasion. In order to maintain the favour and support of these deities, the appropriate offerings and prayers had to be performed. The efficacy of such rituals depended on

the purity of those who performed them; Eisai argued that the ethical discipline of Zen monks made them the most potent practitioners of the rituals for the protection of the state.

Eisai is best remembered in Japan, however, for something else he brought back from China: tea, which Chinese monks drank to stay awake during their hours of meditation. Eisai wrote a two-volume treatise called Drink Tea for Health (Kissa Yōjōki).

Promote Zen to Protect this Kingdom's Rulers

Preface

... The great hero Śākyamuni's [holding up a flower and thereby] conveying his mind *dharma* to the golden *dhuta* [ascetic; i.e., to his disciple Mahākāśyapa] is known as the special transmission outside the teachings. Beginning with their turned heads on Vulture Peak [Gṛdhrakūṭa] and their smiling faces inside Cockleg Cave [where Śākyamuni and Mahākāśyapa conducted the *dharma-transmission* ceremony], Śākyamuni's raised flower has blossomed into thousands of offshoots and the mystical fountainhead has filled ten thousand streams. In India and China this Zen lineage is known for its tightly linked succession of proper *dharma* heirs. Thus has the true *dharma* propagated by the buddhas of old been handed down along with the *dharma* robe. Thus have the correct ritual forms of Buddhist ascetic training been made manifest. The substance of the *dharma* is kept

whole through master–disciple relationships, and confusion over correct and incorrect monastic decorum is thereby eliminated....

Why then [do Buddhists in this kingdom] discard the five family lineages of Zen? Many malign this teaching, calling it the Zen of blind trance. Others doubt it, calling it the evil of clinging to emptiness. Still others consider it ill-suited to this latter age of *dharma* decline, saying that it is not needed in our land.... [To refute them,] I have compiled an anthology of the Buddhist scriptures that record the essential teachings of our lineage for consideration by today's pundits and for the benefit of posterity. This anthology is titled *Promote Zen to Protect this Kingdom's Rulers* in accordance with the basic idea of the *Benevolent Kings Sūtra*.... It consists of ten chapters: (1) causing the Buddha's *dharma* to abide for ever, (2) protecting this kingdom's rulers, (3) resolving doubts, (4) evidence that ancient worthies [practised Zen], (5) my spiritual bloodline, (6) scriptural evidence to increase faith, (7) basic tenets that encourage Zen practice, (8) establishing Zen facilities, (9) Zen legends from the continent, and (10) transferring merit and making vows.

Causing the Buddha's Dharma to Abide For Ever

... The *Storehouse of Buddhist Morality Sūtra* [Japanese: *Butsuzōkyō*] says: 'The Buddha preached, "Śāriputra! That kind of person has discarded the unsurpassed *dharma* jewel and fallen into perverse views. That kind of *śramaṇa* [Buddhist ascetic] has become a *caṇḍāla* [untouchable]. Śāriputra! My pure *dharma* will gradually

disappear because of such circumstances. The *dharma* of *bodhi* [wisdom], for which I long transmigrated in *saṃsāra* and endured every suffering in order to perfect, will be destroyed in the [future] age of such evil people. I would not permit them to receive even a drop of water.” ’ The *Brahmā Net Bodhisattva Precept Sūtra* says: ‘Whoever violates the proper moral precepts must not be allowed to receive any offerings from *dānapati* [patrons], must not be allowed to walk on the king’s land, and must not be allowed to drink the king’s water. Five thousand great demons always obstruct such a one’s way. The demons say, “You great thief! If you set foot in a room, in a town, or in a house, we will sweep your footprints away.” ’ And so forth, down to the words: ‘One who violates the Buddhist precepts is a beast.’... *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* says: ‘Śāriputra! After I pass into *nirvāṇa*, during the latter five-hundred-year periods, the profound *prajñā* [i.e., perfection of wisdom] *sūtras* will cause Buddhism to flourish in north-eastern regions [i.e., in China, Japan and Korea]. Why should this be so? Because it is what all *tathāgatas* profoundly value and what they protect in their memory. They will prevent this *sūtra* from disappearing in that region.’ The above passages clarify the principle that it is the Zen *dharma* of promoting the *vinaya* that causes the buddha-*dharma* to endure...

Protecting this Kingdom’s Rulers

The *Benevolent Kings Sūtra* says: ‘Buddhas entrust *prajñā* to all present and future kings of small kingdoms as a secret kingdom-protecting jewel.’ The *prajñā* mentioned in this passage is the essence of Zen (*zenshū*).... The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* says: ‘The Buddha preached, “Ānanda! Uphold these four moral rules [i.e., against sexuality, stealing, killing and falsehoods] so that you will be as pure as white snow. Wholeheartedly chant my *Handara* [White Parasol] magical spell. Select a morally pure person to be your leader. Wear new, clean robes. Light incense and seclude yourself. Chant this magical spell, which has been revealed by buddha-mind itself, one hundred and eight times.... Whoever chants this spell cannot be burned by fire and cannot be drowned in water. And if the chanters attain mental absorption, then no malicious spells or unlucky stars can cause any evil to arise.... Within a radius of twelve *yojana*, not a single disaster or calamity could ever occur.” ’ Zen temples constantly practise the White Parasol *dharma* taught in this text. It is our ritual for protecting our kingdom’s rulers....

Resolving Doubts

Question [one]: Some people say that during the latter five-hundred-year periods, people have become dull and stupid. Who can practise this doctrine? Answer:... The *Lotus Sūtra* says: ‘Later, during the final age when the *dharma* is about to disappear, whoever receives and upholds this *Lotus Sūtra* should arouse a mind of great compassion towards both lay-people and monastics. They should

arouse a mind of great compassion towards whoever is not a *bodhisattva*.’ And so forth, down to the words: ‘[They should vow that] when I attain *bodhi* [awakening], regardless of where those people might be, I will use the magical power of my wisdom to lead them to abide in the *dharma*.’ The passages cited above all concern the last age. Moreover, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* all teach techniques for contemplation by sitting Zen. If this practice was not suitable for people in the last age, then the Buddha would not have taught it in these texts. For this reason, Zen is practised throughout the Great Song Empire [i.e., China]. Only people who are not aware of that fact can think that Zen practice is not characteristic of the age when the buddha-*dharma* disappears.

In the previous quotation, where the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* mentions ‘northeastern regions’, it refers to China, Korea and Japan. Zen already has been transmitted to China and the Fayen lineage of Zen has already been transmitted to Korea. When National Teacher Deshao [Japanese: Tokushō, 891–972] of the Tang Empire sought missing Tiantai [Japanese: Tendai] texts from Korea and Japan, Zen was flourishing in Korea. It continued to flourish in Korea for three hundred years after his death. In Japan, during the Tenpyō Period, Daoxuan [Japanese: Dōsen, 702–760] came from Tang China and taught Zen to the *upādhyāya* Gyōhyō (722–787) at the Temple of Great Peace [*Daianji*].... I, Eisai, lament that Daoxuan’s Zen lineage died out in Japan. Based on my faith in the Buddha’s true teaching

concerning the latter five-hundred-year periods, I want to revive this lost Zen lineage. In terms of both geographic region and temporal period, it accords with the Buddha's predictions. How can you say that it is not suitable [for present-day Japanese]?...

Question [two]: Some people say that because Zen does not rely on words and letters it cannot be trusted. If it lacks scriptural basis, then a king cannot have faith in it. Moreover, you are a bastard. Why should you be permitted access to the sovereign's ear? Answer: The *Benevolent Kings Sūtra* says: 'Right now with my five kinds of vision I clearly see all kings of the past, present and future. Every one of them became king by means of past *karma* generated by having served five hundred buddhas....' From this passage know that all kings upon hearing the true *dharma* will accept it and have faith in it. Kings who already worship the Buddha are even more likely to have faith. What king has ever first sought proof and only afterwards donated alms?... The great kings who rule over the lunar regions [i.e., India] hear of three monks being distressed and immediately build a *saṅghārāma* [monastery] for them. Is the holy king of the solar region [i.e., Japan] going to allow the complaints of one monk to prevent him from issuing a single-page proclamation [promoting Zen]? Your criticisms are the kinds of circumstances that destroy the buddha-*dharma* and destroy the kingdom. Don't say such things!... The Buddha has already entrusted the unsurpassed true *dharma* of *prajñā* to the kingdom's rulers. They can decide for themselves what to promote. Why should your extreme jealousy

prevent them? Because I want to revive the expired Zen lineage, you try to find fault with me. Even if I am a bastard, how can that be a fault of Zen?...

Question [ten]: Some criticize you, asking what makes you think this new Zen lineage will cause Buddhism to flourish for ever?

Answer: Moral precepts and monastic discipline cause Buddhism to flourish for ever. Moral precepts and monastic discipline are the essence of Zen. Therefore, Zen causes Buddhism to flourish for ever....

Question [sixteen]: What about those who mistakenly refer to the Zen lineage as the 'Dharumashū'? They teach: 'There is nothing to practise, nothing to cultivate. Originally afflictions [*kleśa*] do not exist. From the beginning afflictions are *bodhi*. Therefore, moral precepts and monastic rituals are of no use. One should merely eat and sleep as needed. Why must anyone labour to recall the buddha [*nembutsu*], to worship relics, or to observe dietary restrictions?'

What about their teaching? Answer: There is no evil that such people will not do. They are the ones the *sūtras* denounce as nihilists. One must not talk with such people nor even sit with them. One must avoid them by a thousand *yojana*....

My Spiritual Bloodline

The blood lineage of Zen is the mind seal. From the seven buddhas of the past down to the present the mind seal of Zen has been

transmitted intimately without ever being interrupted. The *History of the Rise of Zen* [Japanese: *Zenshū kōyu*] says: ‘Regarding the Zen lineage, it began with the buddhas of the past countless aeons ago.’ The *Dirgha Āgama* [Long Discourses of the Buddha] says: ‘Since unknowable aeons ago, there have been one thousand buddhas who have appeared in this world.’ And so forth, down to the words: ‘The last three of these buddhas were the first of the past seven buddhas.’ Each of the seven buddhas entrusted the mind seal to the next.... [The seven buddhas are:] 1. Vipāśyin; 2. Śikhin; 3. Viśvabhū; 4. Krakucchanda; 5. Kanakamuni; 6. Kāśyapa; 7. Śākyamuni. During his forty-ninth year after attaining the way, on Vulture Peak [Gṛdhrakūṭa] in front of the many *stūpas* and before the great assembled audience, Śākyamuni promoted his disciple Mahākāśyapa to share his seat and announced: ‘I take the pure *dharma*-eye, the marvellous mind of *nirvāṇa*, the true form of no form, the subtle marvellous true *dharma* and entrust it with you. Keep it well.’...

The *Flower Hand Sūtra* [*Kuśala mūla saṃpari graha*] says: ‘The Buddha commanded, “Come well, Mahākāśyapa! For a long time we have known one another. Share half of my seat.” As the Buddha shifted his body, the earth shook three thousand ways. Mahākāśyapa said, “I could not even sit where the Buddha places his robe or his bowl. The Buddha is a great teacher. I am his disciple. Long ago you gave me your *saṅghāṭi* [monk’s robe], but out of deep respect I have never worn it. Since that time, I have never had a thought of desire. At the moment I took possession of my

lord's robe, I completed my learning [i.e., became a perfected *arhat*]. I followed the Buddha's teaching and received the *Tathāgata's* robe, but I never became high minded [i.e., arrogant]. I touch the robe only with my hands, never with any other part of my body. If I have not washed my hands, then I do not pick it up. I could not even use it as a pillow for my head. The king of the *dharma* [i.e., the Buddha], who attained complete awakening on his own without a teacher, cannot be likened to *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*." The Buddha replied, "Good! Good! It is as you say." The Buddha then said to Mahākāśyapa, "Sit here and question me about any doubts. I will preach for you." Mahākāśyapa thereupon rose from his seat, bowed his head at the Buddha's feet, and sat next to him.'... [The Zen ancestors of India are:] 1. Mahākāśyapa; 2. Ānanda; 3. Śaṇavāsa; 4. Upagupta; 5. Dhṛtaka; 6. Miccaka; 7. Vasumitra; 8. Buddhanandi; 9. Buddhamitra; 10. Pārśva; 11. Puṇyayaśas; 12. Aśvaghōṣa; 13. Kapimala; 14. Nāgārjuna; 15. Kāṇadeva; 16. Rāhukata; 17. Saṅghānandi; 18. Gayaśāta; 19. Kumārata; 20. Jayata; 21. Vasubandhu; 22. Manorhita; 23. Haklena; 24. Siṃha; 25. Basiasita; 26. Puṇyamitra; 27. Prajñātāra; 28. Bodhidharma.

The great teacher Bodhidharma, long ago during the Liang Dynasty, Putong period, year eight, junior fire year of the sheep, sailed across the south seas and arrived in Guangzhou. During the twelfth moon of that same year, he arrived in the city of Loyang. It was the Wei Dynasty, Taihe period, year ten. He resided at the

Shaolin Monastery. There he saw Huike and told him: ‘Since long ago, the embodiment of the true *dharma*-eye [*shōbōgenzō*] that the Buddha had entrusted with Mahākāśyapa has been passed down from generation to generation until it reached me. I now entrust it with you. Keep it well.’ He also bestowed his *kāśāya* [robe] on Huike as evidence of his *dharma* [lineage].... (The Zen ancestors of China are:) 29. Huike; 30. Sengcan; 31. Taoxin; 32. Hongran; 33. Huineng; 34. Huaizang; 35. Daoyi; 36. Huaihai; 37. Xiyuan; 38. Yixuan; 39. Cunjiang; 40. Huiyong; 41. Yenzhao; 42. Shengnian; 43. Shanzhao; 44. Chuyuan; 45. Huinan; 46. Zuxin; 47. Weiqing; 48. Shouzhao; 49. Jieshen; 50. Tanbi; 51. Zongjin; 52. Huaichang; 53. Eisai....

During the Song Dynasty, junior fire sheep year fourteen of the Chunxi period, I travelled to the Ten Thousand Year [Wannian] Zen Monastery on Mount Tiantai. I became a student of that temple’s abbot, Zen teacher Xuan Huaichang [Japanese: Koan Eshō], from whom I studied Zen and inquired of the way. He taught me the Linji [Japanese: Rinzai] tradition, the precepts of the *Four-Part Vinaya*, and the *bodhisattva* precepts [of the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*]. That is all. Finally, during autumn of Shaoxi two, junior metal year of the boar, seventh moon, I returned to Japan. When I took leave of my teacher, he wrote the following certificate of my mastery of Zen:

The *dharma*-master Eisai of the Cloister of a Thousand Lights [Senkōin], Kingdom of Japan, having been born with mystical bones [i.e., good karmic background], immediately abandoned the deep-rooted love and affection of the secular world. He became a tonsured follower of the buddha, donned a

saṅghāṭi, and strictly adhered to the Buddha's *dharma*. Thinking nothing of a thousand *li*, he crossed the sea to our Song Empire to seek religious truth. During the Gandao period, senior earth year of the rat [1168], he first visited Mount Tiantai. Seeing its landscape, its superior training halls and its purity, he was filled with spiritual joy. He donated pure treasures as alms for the *bodhisattvas* of the ten directions who study *prajñā* [i.e., for Zen monks]. Then he went to this mountain's stone bridge and, with offerings of incense and tea, worshipped the five hundred great *arhats* who abide in this world. Finally he returned to his own kingdom. For twenty years he dreamed and dreamed, never hearing a word of news, but always clearly remembering the old monks on this mountain. Now, out of fondness for his previous trip, he has repeated it. His karmic connections [to this place] are deep. His aspirations are profound. He is the type with whom one simply must share *dharma* instruction.

Long ago when old Śākyamuni was about to enter complete *nirvāṇa*, he took the marvellous mind of *nirvāṇa*, the embodiment of the true *dharma*-eye [*shōbōgenzō*], and entrusted it with Mahākāśyapa. Since that time it has been transmitted from generation to generation down to me. I now entrust it with you. Keep it well.

Take this ancestral seal back to your own kingdom to propagate Zen during the final age. Show it to living beings so that the life [i.e., Zen lineage] of the true *dharma* might continue. I also present you with my *kāṣāya*. Long ago, the great master Bodhidharma transmitted his robe as evidence of his *dharma* [lineage] and to show that originally there is not a single thing. The sixth ancestor, Huineng, however, ended the transmission of the robe and that custom died out. Now, as evidence of my *dharma* [lineage] in a foreign land, I will give you my *saṅghāṭi*. I also bestow the *bodhisattva* precepts, my staff, my eating bowls and my monkish implements without holding a single one back. Listen to my *dharma* transmission verse. [Text of verse omitted by Eisai.] From the time of the sixth ancestor, Huineng, this lineage gradually separated into branch *dharma* lineages, which now pervade all the lands

between the four seas. During the span of the twenty generations [which separate Eisai from Huineng], it has grown into five family lineages: the Fayen [Hōgen], the Linji [Rinzai], the Guiyang [Igyō], the Yunmen [Unmon] and the Caodong [Sōtō]. Today the only one that still flourishes is the Linji lineage. From the seven buddhas of the past to Eisai there have been a total of sixty generations. Each *dharma*-heir inherited this bloodline from a previous *dharma*-heir. Truly this lineage constitutes the official certification of the buddha-*dharma*. This chart [omitted from Eisai's text] shows all the generations in a single line with branch lineages indicated. It is called our clan's spiritual blood lineage [*kechimyaku*].

Translated by William Bodiford from *Kōzen gokoku ron*, in Ichikawa Hakugen, Iriya Yoshitaka and Yanagida Seizan (eds.), *Chūsei Zenke no shisō*, Nihon Shisō Taikō (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972,).