

The Oral Transmissions of the 52 Soto Zen Buddhist Ancestors

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

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INTRODUCTION

Shakyamuni Buddha founded the path of the successive 52 Soto Zen Ancestors when he awakened to the Way. The transmissions of the teachings to the 52 Ancestors in Zen Buddhist Tradition were never meant to reach the eyes of laymen. 'The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light' was originally written only for the eyes of Zen monks.

There were a total of 52 Ancestors in the Zen Buddhist Tradition of the Denkoroku. The 52 Ancestors in the Zen Buddhist Tradition are often also referred to as 'Patriarchs.' Keizan Zenji is credited with not only preserving but reviving the line of Soto Zen ancestors that up until his time were almost forgotten.

The translator of 'The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light' felt its meaning would be lost to lay readers. Shasta Abbey's late Abbess, Jiyu Kennett, often said that the long sentences used in Zen would likely annoy American readers. But she made the decision to share some of the deeper teachings of Zen with the lay public even if they were

unable to penetrate into the deeper meaning of the words.

The transmission of the deep underlying truth of Zen has been compared to a jade running through a golden needle. The practice, understanding and transmission of Zen has been compared to holding a point in stillness by many of the Ancestors.

Part One

The Story Behind the Transmission of the 52 Soto Zen Buddhist Ancestors

Shakyamuni Buddha

It is not necessarily a well-known point that the originator of all Buddhism and the Soto Zen Buddhist line of Patriarchs and Ancestors, Shakyamuni Buddha himself, received the teachings and the transmission of the Way through others who came before him also seeking the Way. But it is in the writings of the Buddha where this practice of long sentences used to capture indefinable concepts seems to have originated in Zen. It is said in *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*, written by the Master Keizan Zenji, that it is a mistake to look upon Shakyamuni Buddha as standing out from the rest of humanity in his realization of enlightenment. Although the Buddha's incarnation marks the beginning of the formal religion and scriptures of Buddhism, ascetics sought the way from beginningless time. Through the practice of extremes in wealth and subsequent asceticism, he was able to awaken to the middle way which is the foundation stone of all Buddhism.

Shakyamuni Buddha was the originator and Master in the line of 52 Ancestors or Patriarchs - as they have been called - in the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. Each successive ancestor represents a generation of the

teaching of the UNBORN and how it was passed down to each successive Master in the line of the transmission. Although not much is known about the lives of many of these great Patriarchs, the moment of transmission was preserved due to the diligent efforts of the Master Keizan Zenji when in 1300 he began writing *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* to record each moment of enlightenment for future generations of monks.

Shakyamuni Buddha is reported to have awakened to the Way as he looked upon the morning star (*The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*, By Master Keizan Zenji). After he had lived in the palace secluded from the hardships of the world during his childhood, it is said that he finally left the gates of the palace one day and found in the streets of the city illness, suffering and death. At that moment, he became obsessed with uncovering the remedy for this condition which was later generated as the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.

Keizan Zenji records in *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*, that after leaving the palace to become a profound ascetic, Shakyamuni Buddha discovered the middle way – the path of no extremes. It was at this time that he propounded the Four Noble Truths. These four truths are 1.) The Truth of Suffering, 2.) The Truth of the Origin of Suffering, 3.) The Truth of the Extinction of Suffering, and 4.) The Truth of the Path that Leads to the Extinction of Suffering. This path is found by practicing Right

Understanding, Thought, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* records the line of ancestors in the Zen Buddhist tradition back to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Origination of Soto Zen Ceremonies

Most of the religious ceremonies used in the Soto Zen Tradition were written by the Master Keizan Zenji who was author of many works including the *Sankon-Zazen-Setsu* and *Denkoroku*.

The Preservation of the Lineage

It was the Great Master Keizan Zenji who realized that the lineage of the Zen Ancestors could be lost if it were not recorded. He began writing *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* in the 14th century with a special emphasis on preserving the moment that each of the Zen Ancestors received enlightenment.

Master Keizan Zenji entered the monastery Eiheiiji at a very young age. He was born in Fukui Prefecture in 1267 and entered as a young boy. Learning from two great contemporaries of his time – Koun Ejyo and Tettsu Gikai, he has become one of the most beloved Zen Masters.

Writing many works in his life, he is best known for having originated and written most of the religious ceremonies utilized today in Soto Zen Buddhism, but

he is also credited with the *Sankon-Zazen-Setsu* and *Denkoroku*.

Fifty Two Patriarchs

It was not an easy task to do, but Master Keizan Zenji recorded the moment of transmission between Master and Disciple for each of the Fifty Two Patriarchs. These Patriarchs are most often referred to as the Ancestors of Zen, and in Buddhism there is a great deal of respect accorded to the sequence of the teachings. It is not unlike the Apostolic Succession in Catholic Christianity.

Keizan Zenji

Born in Fukui Prefecture in 1267, Master Zenji entered a monastery – Eihei-ji – and learned from Koun Ejyo and Tettsu Gikai. He became one of the greatest of the Soto Zen Ancestors and became Chief Abbot of Shogaku-ji in 1321 shortly thereafter renaming the temple Shogaku-zan Sojiji which later was made one of the two primary temples in Japan for the Soto Zen Church.

Zenji wrote many works including the *Sankon-Zazen-Setsu*, *Denkoroku* and most of the religious ceremonies used in the Soto Zen Tradition.

Becoming Chief Abbot of Shogaku-ji Monastery in 1321, he'd lived a life of great devotion to reach this great pinnacle. In 1267, he was born in the Fukui Prefecture. Entering a monastery in Eihei-ji, he learned

from Koun Ejyo and Tettsu Gikai. He became one of the greatest of the Soto Zen Ancestors with his greatest work having been to document the line of the transmission of the Way all the way back to Shakyamuni Buddha. The Shogakuji Monastery was later made one of the two primary temples in Japan for the Soto Zen Church.

Transmission of the Way

Before the Great Master Keizan Zenji began recording the transmission of the Way in 1300 in a book entitled *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*, Soto Zen had remained in only a few isolated monasteries in Japan. Because of the Great Master Keizan Zenji's work in revitalizing the line of the Ancestors in the Zen Tradition, it eventually became the largest Buddhist church in Japan and other Asian countries. Later in the twentieth century when Master Jiyu Kennett came to the task of translating the work into English, she made the difficult decision to release the work from behind monastery walls and allow the general public to read some of Zen Buddhism's most sacred writings. Shakyamuni Buddha originated the line when he became enlightened and passed the transmission of his own great awakening to Makakoshyo, the First Ancestor.

Recording the actual moment in which the Way was transmitted from one successive generation of Masters to the next *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* shows the continuum of Zen Transmission for 52 generations. Every story contains

the exact narrative on record as to the exact manner in which each of the great ancestors and patriarchs received the TEACHING and understood the UNBORN.

Denkoroku

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light was written by the Master Keizan Zenji starting in the first lunar month of 1300. The purpose of *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* was to commemorate and remember the line of ancestors in the Zen Buddhist tradition all the way back to Shakyamuni Buddha who had received the transmission of the teachings directly from the previous patriarch and experienced enlightenment.

The Denkoroku records the moment when the Way was transmitted from teacher to disciple for each of the fifty two patriarchs. In each story, there is a narrative of the moment the student received the Way, short biographical information and a set of verses summarizing that particular Patriarch's teaching.

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light, written by the Master Keizan Zenji, is considered to be highly intuitive according to his contemporaries and counterparts. In about the year 1300, Zenji realized that the stories of Soto Zen Buddhist transmission from Patriarch to Patriarch would be lost if it were not set to writing. It was then that he set his pen to record as much as could be recovered from

the lives, and more importantly, the actually moment of Zen Transmission from Master to disciple. These disciples were to become the Masters of the following generations, and would, too, need to find a deserving pupil to transmit the Way before their own death was to occur.

The Moment of Enlightenment

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light has the profound task of keeping for all eternity the records of the moment between Master and Disciple wherein the Master and current ancestor prepares the new disciple to take the torch of the Way to the next generation. Each moment is unique and profound.

Master Dogen

In modern Zen Buddhist Monasteries today, including the Shasta Abbey Zen Buddhist Monastery which was home to the late Abbess Rev. Jiyu Kennett, the writings of another in the lineage of ancestors also bears great study. The *Shobogenzo-zuimonki* and *Moon in a Dewdrop* were written by the Fifty First Ancestor, the Great Reverend Master Eihei Dogen and are considered of equal importance in the studies of a Zen Buddhist monk or priest as the *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*.

Abbess Rev. Jiyu Kennett was a great scholar on the work of Master Dogen and her teachings have been preserved in recorded form for future generations. But it was the Fifty First Ancestor, Koun Ejo, who we

owe the recording of Master Dogen's lengthier teachings and dialogues with Koun Ejo in the *Shobogenzo-zuimonki*.

Zen Aphorisms and Master Dogen

It is in *Moon in a Dewdrop* where the shorter teachings of the Master Dogen are recorded as Zen Aphorisms, concise statements which hold within them volumes of truth. This similarity between *Moon in a Dewdrop* and *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* cannot go unnoticed; because it is in the short exchange between Master and Disciple, past and future ancestors, that these Zen Aphorisms come to life and bear meaning.

Jades Running through Golden Needles

There are a few jades running through a golden needle (celebrity standouts) in the line of 52 Soto Zen Buddhist Ancestors and Patriarchs. Although the remnants of most of the ancestors lives remain sketchy, there are three who remain well remembered today and whose writings are still extant: Nagyaarajunya (commonly referred to as Nagarjuna), Bodaidaruma and the Master Eihei Dogen, author of the *Shobogenzo-Zuimonki* and *Moon in a Dewdrop*, both profound Soto Zen Buddhist texts which remain studied in monasteries and by Buddhists the world over today.

Keizan Zenji and Reverend Master Abbess Jiyu Kennett

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light was translated into English by the late Rev. Master Jiyu Kennett of the Shasta Abbey Zen Buddhist Monastery from the original writings of Master Keizan Zenji. Master Kennett, a late twentieth century Buddhist Master, felt that the long sentences of Buddhist writings would be difficult and annoying for many English readers, but she refused to apologize for these insisting that it was within those long sentences that the many facets and degrees of stillness could be found.

Although it was the Great Master Keizan Zenji who revived the stories of the transmission of the Way between Ancestors in 1300 in *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*, we owe our gratitude to the late Abbess Rev. Jiyu Kennett of the Shasta Abbey Zen Buddhist Monastery for making it available not only in English, but to lay men and women interested in the deeper mysteries of Zen. Kennett struggled with this decision to make a text that was previously only known to the monastic community available to the general public, but in the end decided that it would be useful even if not fully understood.

When Shasta Abbey Zen Buddhist Monastery decided to undertake the task of translating *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light* recorded by the

Great Master Keizan Zenji in the 1300's, they assumed the average person would not understand it. It was initially intended for members of the Zen Buddhist priesthood engaging in serious and intensive training of the mind. It was understood that some of these Zen Aphorisms would make no sense to a Western born reader. It would require a penetration of sorts into the true core of what Zen is.

Master Keizan Zenji, born in Fukui Prefecture in 1267, would probably have been surprised to find his work administered in many languages to a lay population. The *Sankon-Zazen-Setsu*, *Denkoroku* are just two of the great works attributed to the Master Zenji. Most of the religious ceremonies still used today in Soto Zen tradition were penned by him.

Part Two

The Transmission of the 52 Soto Zen Buddhist Ancestors

Shakyamuni Buddha, The Awakened One

“Upon seeing the morning star, Gautama became Shakyamuni Buddha when He was, is and will be awakened to His TRUE SELF and said, says and will say, ‘I was, am and will be enlightened, together with the whole of the great earth and all its sentient beings, simultaneously.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Born to the Indian Nisshu line, his clan traced their lineage back to the sun. After living a very sheltered life inside the palace as the king’s son protected from death, suffering, old age and disease, he was taken aback when he escaped the palace walls one day to be suddenly face to face with death, suffering, old age and disease. Escaping over the palace walls, he shaved his head and spent six years as an ascetic. After years of meditation on both the extreme life of opulence he had lived in the palace and the extreme life of asceticism he’d lived since leaving the palace, Shakyamuni Buddha discovered what he called *The Middle Way*. In essence, he stated that the Way is not achieved in either extreme, but by living in the middle – a life of moderation.

“Unsurpassed in the beauty of its graceful form
is the old Plum Tree;
Its spiny branches, when the season is ripe,
Will burst forth in bloom.”

*Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Shakyamuni
Buddha*

Saint Makakashyo, The First Ancestor

“One day, the World-honoured One offered up a flower with a twinkle in His eye; Makakashyo’s face broke out in a smile. The World-honoured One said, “I have the EYE AND TREASURY OF THE TRUE LAW, the wondrous HEART of nirvana, which I Transmit to Makakashyo.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*. Since that time, the offering up of a flower has been passed during the transmission from ancestor to ancestor .

His Indian name, Kasyapa, meant ‘He of the Tortoise of the the Black-Toothed Clan,’ but he was renamed as Makakashyo meaning ‘The Victorious and Esteemed Drinker of Light.’ He was given this name because at the time of his birth, a profound light entered the room and poured into Makakashyo’s mouth.

“Ever do I abide on Vulture Peak

As well as in my other dwelling places;

Come the time when sentient beings see the aeon spent

And great fires consume the world,

This land of Mine will be safe and peaceful,

Filled with heavenly beings and humans”

Makakashyo

“Know that hidden deep within
the cloud-enshrouded valley

There still remains the SACRED PINE

Enduring through the chill of time.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Makakashyo

Saint Ananda, The Second Ancestor

“Ananda asked Makakashyo, ‘My elder brother in the Dharma, when the World-honoured One Transmitted the kesa of gold brocade to you did He pass on anything else?’ Makakashyo called out, ‘Ananda!’ When Ananda acknowledged the call, Makakashyo said, ‘Chop down the flag pole in front of your temple gate!’ and Ananda awakened to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Ananda was Shakyamuni Buddha’s cousin and a member of the warrior-nobles caste in Rajagriha. Ananda means ‘He Who Is a Delight’ or ‘He Who Is a Joy,’ and he was born on the same night that his cousin, the Buddha, achieved enlightenment. He was known to be very good looking and handsome and his name was given to him for this reason. He attended to the Buddha himself for twenty years.

“When the vines have withered,
the trees have fallen
and the mountains have crumbled away,
The valley stream, in cascades,
Will gush beyond its banks
And the very rock will pour forth fire.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ananda

Saint Shonawashyu, The Third Ancestor

“When Shonawashyu asked Ananda, ‘What kind of thing is the fundamental UNBORN NATURE of all things?’ Ananda pointed to the corner of Shonawashyu’s kesa. Then, when he again asked, ‘What kind of thing is the fundamental NATURE OF THE ENLIGHTENED WISDOM of all the Buddhas?’ Ananda took hold of the corner of Shonawashyu’s kesa and gave it a pull. At that moment Shonawashyu had great awakening to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Shonawashyu’s name means ‘He of Hempen Clothing’ and was from Mathura. His previous name had an interesting story behind it. His name was Shanaka, meaning ‘He Who Is Naturally Clothed.’ He was called this because he was born ‘fully clad.’ His natural clothing was said to be cool in the summer and warm in the winter. At that time that he arose to enter the monastery, his natural clothing spontaneously changed into a kesa.

“From atop an eighty-thousand-foot cliff
the WATER WITHOUT SOURCE,
Piercing through rock, sweeping away clouds,
Comes seething and gushing forth;
Though scattering the snow and flower petals,

making them fly in wild disorder

This CLOTH-LIKE STRIP, pure white as cotton,

Is beyond the drab world of dust.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Shonawashyu

Saint Ubakikuta, The Fourth Ancestor

“Ubakikuta attended Shonwashyu for three years before he shaved his head and became a mendicant monk. One day, Shonawashyu asked him, ‘Did you leave home to become a monk in body or in mind?’ Ubakikuta answered, ‘I truly left home to become a monk in body.’ Shonawashyu said, ‘What does the wondrous LAW of the Buddhas possibly have to do with body or mind?’ whereupon Ubakikuta had a great awakening to TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Ubakikuta’s name means ‘The Concealed One.’ From the kingdom of Dali, he was born into the serving caste. He began his training at the age of fifteen and became a monk at seventeen years of age. Ubakikuta was known for his special gifts in spiritual warfare against the demons, and was said to inspire terror in Mara – the Buddhist Evil One – and all of his dominions and powers. He brought many monks to the monastic life. At the time of his death, he was so well respected that he became referred to as ‘The Excellent Buddha Who Shows Not One of the Major or Minor Marks.’ This is in reference to the ‘signs’ spoken of in Buddhist scripture of the unique signs and marks that one can expect to show up on the body of a potential Buddha. But Ubakikuta had none of these marks and was considered to be of similar holiness to the great Shakyamuni Buddha.

In one of the many infamous spiritual battles attended by Ubakikuta, Brahma was quoted as saying to him, "If, due to the mundane, you fall, then, by means of the mundane, must you rise."

"With the house demolished and the self-o'erthrown,
no inside or outside remains

So where, pray, are body and mind

To conceal their forms?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ubakikuta

Saint Daitaka, The Fifth Ancestor

“Daitaka said, ‘The one who leaves home to become a monk has no attachment to a self or to a world of selves; his Original Nature is not born does it perish, this is the way things are in truth. All the Buddhas are also just like this; their Original Nature has not form or characteristics and their bodies are no different.’ Bauaikuta said, ‘You must awaken to your own TRUE SELF; you must penetrate all the way to IT!’ whereupon Daitaka had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Born under Auspicious circumstances, Ubakikuta’s father claims that he had dreamt that a golden sun shone forth from his house illuming the heavens and the earth with its splendour. At the same a mountain of great size covered in many kinds of jewels burst through, as a mountain spring gushed forth in massive amounts trickling off into four directions. Saint Daitaka had his own interpretation of this vision:

“The towering mountain,
bejeweled with the seven gems,
Ceaselessly gives forth
A spring of discerning wisdom;
Flowing out,

Its flavour is that of the true Teaching

Whose power liberates

All who are karmically drawn to it."

Daitaka

"Reach the VERY MARROW

and you will know the splendour and clarity

of THAT which you have realized;

Even so, the master artisan Lun-pien

Encountered such wondrous subtleties

That they lay beyond his expression.

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of DaitakaUbakikuta

Saint Mishaka, The Sixth Ancestor

“One day, Daitaka said, ‘The Buddha said, ‘When one pursues the supernormal powers of a rishi or devotes himself to the study of the Lesser Vehicle, he becomes like someone entangled in, and dragged along by, a rope.’ Know for yourself that, when you leave such rivulets behind, you immediately arrive at the GREAT OCEAN; by all means, confirm the UNBORN for yourself.’ Mishaka, as a result, had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Mishaka’s name means ‘He Who Knows Pain.’ He was the leader of thousands of rishi or Indian holy men who spent move of their time working on and cultivating their psychic power. They lived away from other men as hermits. He had a profound understanding of Zen Buddhism and was known to say to his disciples, “Nothing fetters you so what need is there to be released?”

“Even though there may be an every-day purity,

silt-clear as a river’s water in autumn,

How can it possibly compare with a luminous spring night,

The moon softened by haze?

Many are the houses where people yearn thus

For a spotlessly clean life

But, however much they sweet this way and that,

Their hearts are still not emptied and clear.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Mishaka

Saint Bashumitsu, The Seventh Ancestor

“Bashumitsu placed his wine cup before Mishaka, prostrated himself and then arose whereupon Mishaka asked him, ‘Is this VESSEL yours or mine?’ Whilst Bashumitsu was reflecting on this, Mishaka said, ‘If you consider the cup to be mine, it is your Original Nature; if, on the other hand, the vessel is yours, it is fitting that you receive my Teaching.’ Upon hearing this Bashumitsu awoke to his UNBORN ORIGINAL NATURE.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Bashumitsu’s name means ‘He Who is an Excellent Friend.’ He was from Northern India and a member of the Harada (‘Those as Swift as a Skylark’) clan. Known for fancy dressing, he was always singing and whistling as he walked about through towns and villages dressed to the nines. Bashumitsu carried his wine cup with him everywhere to utilize in his own transmission of the teaching to others of the Way.

“He is like the bell at the break of an August morning
which, being struck, reverberates and echoes forth
On such a ‘Festival for the Dead’ as this,
who needs an empty wine cup?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Bashumitsu

Saint Butsudanandai, The Eighth Ancestor

“Upon meeting Bashumitsu, Butsudanandai said, ‘My reason for coming here today is to debate with you as to what ‘Truth’ is.’ Bashumitsu responded, ‘Good sir, when there is a debate, then there is no TRUTH; where there is TRUTH, then there is nothing to debate. If you propose to debate as to what TRUTH is, then there cannot be a debate.’ Realizing that Bashumitsu’s TRUTH had bested him, Butsudanandai awoke to the principle of the UNBORN.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Butsudanandai’s name means ‘He Who is the Joy of the Buddha’s.’ He was from Kamala and belonged to the same clan as the Buddha, the Gautama clan. Both Shakyamuni Buddha and Butsudanandai had fleshly protrusions on the top of their head. Butsudanandai was well known for his debating skills before his enlightenment, but his process changed afterwards. Reverend Priest Tozan wrote about Butsudanandai, “Truly I should not seek for the TRUTH from others for then IT will be far from me. Now I am going alone. Everywhere I am able to meet HIM; HE is ME now, I am not HIM. When we understand this, we are instantaneously with the TRUTH.”

“Subhuti and Vimalakirti

did not reach IT through their conversations

And Moggallana and Shariputra saw IT as though blind.

If anyone personally wishes

To understand the meaning of this,

When will a pinch of salt to season the experience

not be suitable?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Butsudanandai

Saint Fudamitta, The Ninth Ancestor

"Fudamitta heard Butsudanandai say in verse,

'When your speech is congenial with the LORD of
your heart,

Even the tender affection of parents cannot begin to
compare with it;

When your actions are in accord with the WAY,

The hearts and minds of all the Buddhas will be so
also.

Should you seek outside yourself for some flesh-and-
blood Buddha,

He will bear no resemblance to you;

Should you wish to perceive your own BUDDHA
NATURE,

IT will be neither comparable to, nor separate from,
His.'

Thereupon Fudamitta had a great awakening to his
TRUE SELF."

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Fudamitta's name means 'He Who is a Friend of the
Buddhas.' He was from a merchant family in Deiga.

He honored the closeness of family and was once known to have said, "If my father and mother are not the closest to me, with whom then would I be the closest? If the Buddhas are not those with whom I should tread the Way, with whom then am I to congenially tread the path?"

"Do not say that speech or silence

is the way to manifest the wondrousness of the
HEART

For how can your sense organs and their objects

Ever possibly defile your own SELF NATURE?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Fudamitta

Saint Barishiba, The Tenth Ancestor

“Barishiba faithfully attended on Fudamitta for three years without ever resting. One day Fudamitta was reciting a Scripture and lecturing on the UNBORN; upon hearing this, Barishiba realized enlightenment.”
The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Barishiba's name means 'He Whose Ribs Remain Upright.' He was from Central India and was originally known as Nansho or 'He Whose Birth was Difficult.' His father had an auspicious dream before his birth wherein he dreamed of a jeweled white elephant with an ornamental seat on its back. In the center of the seat lay a beautiful and perfect pearl which emitted light. That light awakened monks, laity, male and female. The moment he awoke from this auspicious dream, he learned of his new son's birth.

Barishiba had been called 'He Whose Birth was Difficult' because he had 'been in the womb for 60 years' and was a very old man when he began to seek enlightenment. It is likely that 'being in the womb' at the time meant that he lived in his parents home. When told he was much too old to become a monk, he was heard to say, "I have left home to become a monk; until I have thoroughly studied and mastered the Three Treasure Houses of the Canon and have realized the three types of spiritual clarity, I will not let my ribs touch my mat," thus leading the way for

him to receive his new name ('He Whose Ribs Remain Upright.')

"Turning page after page,

oh how many volumes of Scripture there are!

Dying here, being born there,

Is but chapter and verse."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Barishiba

Saint Funayashya, The Eleventh Ancestor

“Whilst Funayashya stood in gassho before Barishiba, the latter asked, ‘Where do you come from?’ Funayashya answered, ‘My mind travels nowhere.’ Barishiba then asked, ‘Where do you reside?’ Funayashya replied, ‘My mind resides nowhere.’ Barishiba asked, ‘Then things are not settled for you?’ Funayashya said, ‘It is just as it was for all the Buddhas.’ Barishiba said, ‘You are not ‘all the Buddhas’, moreover it is a mistake to refer to anyone as ‘all the Buddhas.’” Hearing this statement, Funayashya trained diligently with it for three weeks until he recognized for himself the DHARMA NATURE OF THE UNBORN; he then announced to Barishiba, ‘It is a mistake to regard anyone as ‘all the Buddhas’ and to regard you as a ‘Sainted One’,” Barishiba approved of this and Transmitted the True Teaching to him. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Funayashya’s name means ‘He of Virtuous Renown,’ and was a member of the Gautama clan from the country of Patna.

“MY ORIGINAL NATURE is not the Buddha nor is IT you,

And all my comings and goings abide therein.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Funayashya

Saint Anabotei, The Twelfth Ancestor

"Anabotei asked Funayashya, 'I want to know Buddha but what precisely is Buddha?' Funayashya said, 'So you want to know what BUDDHA is; THAT which does not know is BUDDHA.' Anabotei asked, 'Since Buddha does not know, what knows what Buddha is?' Funayashya responded, 'Since you do not know BUDDHA, what knows that it does not know?' Anabotei said, 'This is what 'being like the teeth in a saw' means.' Funayashya said, 'This is what 'being a felled tree' means' adding, 'What does 'the teeth in a saw' mean?' Anabotei replied, 'That you and I are lined up together as equals, Master. What does 'the felled tree' mean?' Funayashya said, 'You have been sawn free by me.' Anabotei awoke at once to his TRUE SELF. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Anabotei was also known as 'He Who Is Superior in Meritorious Effort' because of his single mindedness in performing good works and was from Harana.

"In the country village the peach blossoms

did not know that they were red

Yet they taught Ling-yun

How to arrive at certainty."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Anabotei

Saint Kabimora, The Thirteenth Ancestor

“One day Anabotei was speaking about the OCEAN OF BUDDHA NATURE, saying ‘Mountains, rivers and the great earth all arise in accordance with IT; the three forms of clarity and the six spiritual powers manifest themselves by proceeding from IT.’ Kabimora, upon hearing this, awoke to the TRUTH. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kabimora’s name means ‘He Who Is as the Bodily Excretions of a Monkey,’ and was from Patna. No reason is given in the histories for the unusual meaning of his name, but it is known that he was a non-Buddhist teacher of profoundly scholarly credentials in non Buddhist doctrines with well over 3,000 disciples before he came to be a Buddhist Master. Whether or not this has anything to do with his unusual name is unclear.

He became the thirteenth ancestor when the twelfth ancestor, Anabotei, exclaimed in Kabimora’s presence, “This is no common, ordinary person for there is certainly something different about him.”

“Upon the vast expanse of water

the billowing waves are set free

to dash up and meet the sky;

Always immaculate

Is the water of this OCEAN!

How can IT ever possibly change?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kabimora

Saint Nagyaarajyuna, The Fourteenth Ancestor

“One day, when Kabimora paid a visit to the Lord of the Naga-dragons at the latter’s invitation, he received the wish-fulfilling Nyoi Pearl. Nagyaarajyuna said to him, ‘This Pearl is the most treasured thing in the world; does it have a form or is it formless?’ Kabimora replied, ‘You only know what ‘having form’ or ‘not having form’ is; you do not understand that the PEARL has neither form nor is without form, furthermore, you have not yet grasped that the PEARL is not a pearl.” Upon hearing this, Nagyaarajyuna was profoundly enlightened to TRUTH. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*.

Nagyaarajyuna was also known as ‘He with the Strength of a Naga-dragon’ and ‘He Who Has Overcome the Naga-dragons’ and was from Western India. Nagyaarajyuna is considered an ancestral master to both the Shingon and Tendai traditions, along with that of Soto-Zen.

Nagyaarajyuna was sought out by Kabimora after he was led to find him from a vision he had in a cave.

“ITS solitary light, wondrously vast,

is never darkened

For the wish-fulfilling MANI-JEWEL

Shines forth illumining everywhere.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Nagyaarajyuna

Saint Kanadaiba, The Fifteenth Ancestor

“This is what happened when Kanadaiba had his first audience with Nagyaarajyuna, the Noble One. No sooner had Kanadaiba entered the gate than Nagyaarajyuna realized what an astute person he was so he dispatched his jiisha to fetch a bowl filled to the brim with water and place it in front of where they were sitting. Nagyaarajyuna gazed at it, held up a needle which he plunged into the water and then offered the bowl to Kanadaiba. Their eyes met and Kanadaiba, in great joy, realized his ORIGINAL NATURE. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kanadaiba’s name meant ‘The Single-eyed Deva and was from Southern India, the merchant caste. As a result, before his encounter with Nagyaarajyuna, he sought after wealth and the persuasion of others for his own monetary gain.

Nagyaarajyuna had come to this village filled with merchants to teach of the Way and was asked, “Is this Buddha Nature something large or something small?” He replied, “BUDDHA NATURE is neither large nor small, broad nor narrow; IT is beyond profit or recompense and IT is undying and unborn.” Kanadaiba was present and accepted when Nagyaarajyuna offered him a seat to continue his teaching.

“Once the SINGLE NEEDLE has fished up

all the sky-blue waters of the ocean,

The FIERCE DRAGON, wherever HE may go,

Will not conceal HIMSELF."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kanadaiba

Saint Ragorata, The Sixteenth Ancestor

“Ragorata was attending on Kanadaiba when, upon hearing about karmic cause from a past life, he experienced his ORIGINAL NATURE . . . Kanadaiba replied, ‘Long ago your family gave alms to a monk but the monk vainly consumed the alms from the faithful without having succeeded in opening his Enlightenment-seeking Eye . . . Many of past and present, who have awakened to their enlightenment, have drawn upon what is happening in this story to admonish those who vainly enter the pure stream of monastic life whilst lacking a sense of shame or embarrassment when idly accepting alms from the faithful without any sense of awareness, or comprehension of what they are doing. *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kanadaiba went on to explain that monks have to give up their families to enter the Way, and therefore, wherever they may live, whatever they eat, whatever they wear . . . is not their own. When a monk enters into the Way, but does not open the Enlightenment-seeking Eye, he is then reborn to return the alms from the faithful. But if a monk does pierce to the PRINCIPLE, he is properly doing the job of a monk in seeking his ORIGINAL NATURE and the alms he utilizes are used faithfully and carry no karmic impetus.

Kanadaiba’s name meant ‘He Who Has Been Seized’ and was from Kapilavastu.

“How sad that his Enlightenment-seeking Eye
was not clear and bright!

Deluded as to TRUE SELF, he sought to repay others
and, in recompense, is ceaselessly born
again and again.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ragorata

Saint Sogyanandai, The Seventeenth Ancestor

"One day Ragorata gave instruction to Sogyanandai in verse,

"Because I am already beyond self,

You should see the WE

For, if you take me as your master,

You will know that 'I' is not this WE."

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Sogyanandai was from the city of Shravasti, born to the King Hosogon whose name meant 'He Whose Treasures are Magnificent.' Having spoken from birth, Sogyanandai discoursed constantly on the pastimes of the Buddha. Despising worldly pleasure to such a degree by the world of seven he begged his parents thus:

"I humbly bow to you,

my most compassionate father,

And reverently make gassho to you,

Mother of my blood and bones

I would now leave home

To become a monk

And pray that, from your pity,

You will so permit me.”

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Because his parents refused his requests, he finally stopped eating. They made an agreement that they would allow him to become a monk, but only if he remained in the palace. It was at this time that he received the name Sogyanandai which means ‘Friend of the Sangha.’

“The mind machine persuasively

calls itself the way mind is

And, as a result, how many times

has the WE come forth

wearing a different face?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Sogyanandai

Saint Kayashyata, The Eighteenth Ancestor

“Once, whilst Kayashyata was serving as a jiisha to Sogyanandai, they heard a sound as the wind blew a temple bell. Sogyanandai asked Kayshyata, ‘Is that the souls of the bell or the sound of the wind?’ Kayashyata answered, ‘Neither the wind nor the bell, merely the sound of TRUE NATURE?’ Kayashyata responded, ‘The REASON why all alike are silent and still.’ Sogyanandai exclaimed, ‘Excellent! The disciple to inherit my Way is none other than you!’ Accordingly he gave the Treasury of the Law to Kayashyata.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kayashyata was from the clan of Udraka Rampautra of Magadha. His father was known as Tengai, ‘A Heavenly Canopy of Light,’ and his mother was known as Hosei, ‘Saintly in all Ways.’ When Kayashyata was born, his body was perceived to have the luster of porcelain and even before given a bath he always smelled clean and sweet smelling. He was known to have the gift of the ‘Completely Perfect Mirror’ which followed him everywhere. Comfortable with quietude and unmoved by worldly attachments. When he would sit down the Perfect Mirror was always there, and within it he could see the activities of the Buddhas of every age float across it.

“Silent and still ORIGINAL NATURE resounds

reverberating in a myriad ways

Sogyanandai and Kayashyata

As well as wind and bell.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kayashyatai

Saint Kumorata, The Nineteenth Ancestor

"Kayashyata pointed out the following to Kumorata,' Long ago the World-honoured One Prophesied that, a thousand years after His entry into nirvana, a great scholar would appear in Tokhara who would pass on the Marvelous Transmission. Your meeting me at the present time fulfills this most propitiously.' As a result of hearing this, Kumorata awakened his ability to see his former lives." *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*.

Kumorata's name means 'The Youthful One' and was from Tokhara, a Brahman family. A story is related of Kayashyata traveling through Tokhara while on a preaching tour of several towns. Noticing a distinct air about a Brahman's abode, he approached. Kumorata asked from inside, "Who's follower are you?" Kayashyata replied, "I am a disciple of the Buddha." Kumorata slammed the door in fear at the mention of the Buddha's name. Kayashyata knocked again and Kumorata shouted, "No one home!" To this, Kayahyata asked, "Who then is this that replied, 'No one!'" At these words, Kumorata opened his door to Kayshyata and began to remember his past lives.

"Clinging to a body from a past life

made ever so remote by the passage of time,

We suddenly meet face to face

With the ONE from ancient days.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kumorata

Saint Shyyata, The Twentieth Ancestor

“One day Kumorata pointed out to Shyyata, ‘Although you already believe in the three types of karma, you still have not awakened to the fact that karma is born from confusion, that confusion results from consciousness, that consciousness depends on the sleep of ignorance and that the sleep of ignorance depends on ORIGINAL MIND, ORIGINAL MIND is naturally pure and unstained, IT is not born nor does IT die, IT does not concoct things, IT does not reward or punish, IT does not gain or lose anything’ IT is utterly still and utterly vital. If you enter this gate to the Dharma, you can be the same as the Buddhas. All good and evil deeds, whether intentional or unintentional, are like dreams and fantasies.’ When Shyyata heard these words, he grasped their import and realized the wisdom that was stored up from his past lives.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Shyyata’s name means ‘The Victorious One’ and was from Northern India.

“The camphor tree, as of old,

grows up into the sky;

Its branches and leaves, roots and trunk

Flourish beyond the clouds.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Shyyata

Saint Bashyubanzu, The Twenty First Ancestor

“One day Shyyata said to Bashyubanzu, ‘Even though I may not seek after enlightenment, I do not act contrary to it; even though I may not be doing prostrations before the Buddha, I am not spiritually negligent; even though I may not be sitting in meditation, I am not lazy; even though I may not eat just one meal a day, I am not gluttonous; even though I may not know what is enough, I am not covetous. In my heart there is nothing that *seek*; call this the Way.” When Bashyubanzu heard this, he realized the WISDOM that is free from all defilements and desires.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Bashyubanzu was from Rajagriha and his family was from the Bishagi or ‘the clan of Viahskha,’ Shakyamuni Buddha’s leading female lay disciple’s clan.

“The wind blows across the vast sky
making the clouds expose the mountain peak;
Worldly affairs and yearnings for enlightenment
Are both of no concern.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Bashyubanzu

Saint Manura, The Twenty Second Ancestor

“When Manura asked Bashyubanzu, ‘When Manura asked Bashyubanzu, ‘Just what is the enlightenment of the Buddhas?’ Bashyubanzu answered, ‘It is none other than your ORIGINAL NATURE.’ Manura then asked, “What is ORIGINAL NATURE like?’ Bashyubanzu replied, ‘The eighteen realms of the senses (i.e. all experiences) are void, unstained and pure.’ When Manura heard this, he understood enlightenment.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Manura’s name means Good for Mankind’ and came from the country of Nadi. The son of a King, his father’s name was King Jojizai whose name means ‘The Eternally Free One. He was thirty years old when he met Bashyubanzu and became the next in the line of the Soto Zen Ancestors.

Manura’s teachings could be summed up thus: “Even though this sight and hearing are not sight and hearing, even more is it impossible to present you with sound or colour. If you fully grasp that there is nothing whatsoever within these, what difference does it make whether you distinguish ULTIMATE REALITY from ITS functioning or not?” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

“The spirit of SHUNYATA

is neither inside nor outside

Seeing and hearing, sound and form,

Are all as the empty sky."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Manura

Saint Kakurokuna, The Twenty Third Ancestor

“One day Manura observed, ‘Here is the UNSURPASSED TREASURE OF THE GREAT LAW, hearken to IT, accept IT and in the future teach IT.’ Upon hearing this, Kakurokuna realized enlightenment.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kakurokuna’s name meant ‘Flock of Cranes’ and was from the kingdom of Kushana and a Brahman born to two holy parents who had an auspicious dream of his birth. His fathers name was Sensho, meaning ‘A Thousand Victories’ and his mother, Kinko, meaning ‘Golden Light.’ She had been left childless and so had taken leave of her husband to pray before a flag which portrayed the seven Buddha’s. In an auspicious dream, she saw a holy child atop Mount Sumeru and awoke to find that she was pregnant. Evidence of his unique birth started when he was only seven years old and had gone into a village to chastise the residents for worshipping a false god.

“A whitened wall breaks through the clouds,

snow on its massive crags;

Perfectly pure and without a blotch,

It stands out against the blue sky.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kakurokuna

Saint Shishobodai, The Twenty Fourth Ancestor

“Shishobodai asked Kakurokuna, ‘As I wish to Pursue the Way to enlightenment, how should I exert my mind in order to do it?’ Kakurokuna answered, ‘If you would pursue the Way, there is no situation where you need to exert your mind.’ Shishobodai asked, ‘If I do not exert myself, who will perform the work of Buddha?’ Kakurokuna replied, ‘If you are involved in exerting, there will be no merit or virtue; if you do not make yourself perform, then that is the work of the Buddha.’ A Scripture says, ‘The merit and virtue in what I perform is due to there being no ego centric ‘I’’. When Shishobodai heard these words he entered the Buddha’s WISDOM.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Shishobodai’s name meant ‘The Wisdom of the Lion’ and was a Brahman from Central India. Until he met Kakurokuna and obtained the wisdom of the Buddha, he was known for being a scholar in non-Buddhist teachings.

“If you want to manifest the ABSOLUTE,

do not conceal IT;

Indefinable in ITS emptiness, pure in ITS tranquility,

IT has been evident from the first.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Shishobodai

Saint Bashyashita, The Twenty Fifth Ancestor

“Shishobodai said to Bashyashita, ‘I am now Transmitting the EYE AND TREASURY OF THE TATHAGATA’S TRUE LAW to you; guard IT well that you may be able to make IT flourish everywhere in the future.’ Having had his inherent karmic cause from a past life revealed to him, Bashyashita received, unseen, the SEAL.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Bashyashita was a Brahman from Kashmir. Shishobodai was preaching in a village when approached by Bashyashita’s father. Bashyashita’s name at that time was Shita, which means ‘The Pure Bright One.’ His father said, ‘My son’s name is Shita. He was born with his left hand clenched in a fist and even now, when he has grown to boyhood, he still cannot open it. I beg you to reveal the karmic cause of this.’ Shishobodai had been looking upon Shita, and now ordered him to ‘Give me back the jewel!’ Opening his hands, Shita gave the monk a pearl. Shishobodai went on to explain that he had been a monk in a previous life and had a child attendant. He’d received the pearl as an alms gift which had been entrusted to the boy attendant. Because he had now returned the jewel to Shishobodai, he said, it would only be right for him to be given the Precepts which he proceeded to do immediately. He named him Bashyashita because of this karmic tie between the two of them.

“Whilst blossoming flowers and falling leaves

may display themselves directly,
the LORD of healing herbs and trees
ultimately possess no particular flavour or aroma.”
Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Bashyashita

Saint Funyomitta, The Twenty Sixth Ancestor

“When Funyomitta was a crown prince, Bashyashita asked him, ‘Since you wish to leave home to become a monk, what activities would you undertake to do?’ Funyomitta said, ‘Were I to leave home to become a monk, it would not be to do anything in particular.’ Bashyashita then asked, ‘What would you refrain from doing?’ Funyomitta answered, ‘I would refrain from pursuing worldly activities.’ Bashyashita asked him, ‘What activities ought you to do?’ Funyomitta replied, ‘I would undertake the activities of Buddha.’ Bashyashita then said, ‘Prince, your enlightened wisdom reaches the heavens; you are no doubt a descendant of the sages.’ Thereupon, Bashyashita permitted him to become a monk.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Funyomitta’s name means ‘A Friend of the Virtuous,’ and he was a crown prince in Southern India.

“The ORIGINAL GROUND, at all times,

is without even a single blade of grass;

Where do a monk’s personal explanations

Add or subtract anything?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Funyomitta

Saint Hannyatara, The Twenty Seventh Ancestor

“One day Funyomitta asked Hannyatara, ‘Do you recall any events from your past lives?’ whereupon Hannyatara answered, ‘I remember living in the same place as you during a distant aeon; you were expounding on ‘The Scripture of Great Wisdom’ as I was reciting from that most profound of Scriptures. To-day’s events undoubtedly tally with that ancient karmic cause.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Hannyatara’s was from Eastern India. Because he had lost his parents as an infant, when he was a child he didn’t even know his given name so had named himself Yoraku which means ‘Necklace. He would rush around the countryside begging alms as a child and was known as ‘The Necklace Child.’ Because of his hurried ways, people would ask him why he was in such a hurry to which he would reply, ‘Why are you going to slowly?’

Funyomitta recognized ‘The Necklace Child’ one day while riding in a carriage with a king. He told the king that this child was the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta and explained that he would be the next in the line of ancestors. Naming him ‘Hannyatara’ which meant ‘Pearl of Wisdom,’ he TRANSMITTED THE HOLY SEAL to the child.

"The light of the moon, reflected in the depths of the pool,

is bright in the sky;

The appearance of the water, as it flows toward the horizon,

Is thoroughly clear and pure;

Even though you trawl through IT again and again,

Knowing full well that IT does exist,

IT is so spacious and empty, yet discoverable everywhere,

That any attempt to grasp IT is completely futile."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Hannyatara

Saint Bodaidaruma, The Twenty Eighth Ancestor

“One day Hannyatara asked Bodaidaruma, ‘Amongst all things, which is without any characteristics?’ Bodaidaruma replied, ‘The NON-ARISING is without characteristics.’ Hannyatara asked, ‘Amongst all things, which is the greatest?’ Bodaidaruma answered, ‘The DHARMA-NATURE is the greatest.’”
The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Bodaidaruma was from Southern India of the warrior caste. His original name was Bodaitara, the third son of King Koshi. Bodaitara’s name means ‘The Pearl of Supreme Enlightenment. Hannyatara renamed him Bodaidaruma which means ‘He whose enlightenment Is All-Pervasive.’

Hannyatara instructed Bodaidaruma to begin his work in Southern India and to teach thus: “In traveling the road, you will traverse the waters and encounter a sheep. All by yourself, and agitated, you will cross the river in darkness. The most pitiable under the sun will be a pair – an elephant and a horse. Two young cinnamon trees will there be whose glory will prosper far into the future. Though China is vast, there is no other road for you. If you would have disciples follow in your footsteps; since the Golden Cock knows how to hold a grain of millet in his beak, he will nourish worthy monks in all ten directions.”
The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

“There is no location, boundary or surface,
So how can anything even as minute as autumn down
Possibly exist?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Bodaidaruma

Saint Eka, The Twenty Ninth Ancestor

“Whilst serving and training with Bodaidaruma, Eka one day told him, ‘I have by now severed all my karmic ties.’ Bodaidaruma said, ‘You are not denying the law of karma, are you?’ Eka answered, ‘No, I am not.’ Bodaidaruma asked him, ‘And how can you be sure of this?’ Eka replied, ‘Clearly, and beyond doubt, I have always known; words cannot approach IT.’ Bodaidaruma said, ‘This is the ORIGINAL NATURE which the Buddhas have apprehended; do not let yourself doubt IT ever again.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Eka’s name meant ‘He of the Light’ or ‘The Radiant One,’ and was from the Ki clan of the legendary Yellow Emperor. He was named such because his father prayed for a child because he and his wife were childless. One night, he saw a light overtake their bedroom illuminating the night in a strange way. His wife subsequently became pregnant.

“Empty yet resonant,
all earth-bound thoughts exhausted,
IT is, beyond doubt, alert and clear,
Always still and bright.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Eka

Saint Kanchi Sosan, The Thirtieth Ancestor

“Upon meeting Eka, Sosan asked him, ‘My body is riddled with disease; please, Reverend Priest, cleanse me of my defilement.’ Eka replied, ‘Bring me your defilement and I will cleanse you of it.’ Sosan thought long and hard about this, then said, ‘I have searched for my defilement but cannot find it.’ Eka replied, ‘I have cleansed you of your defilement. It is fitting that you dwell in accord with Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Kanchi Sosan’s birthplace remains unknown and his name means ‘The resplendent Jewel of the Sangha.’ His first encounter occurred with Eka when he was in his forties when Kanchi Sosan exclaimed “Today, for the first time, I realize that the true nature of defilement does not exist within or without or in-between; it is the same as ORIGINAL NATURE; Buddha and Dharma are inseparable.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

“The ORIGINAL NATURE of things

is void, unstained and pure,

without inside or outside,

Hence neither defilements nor virtues

Leave any traces therein.

ORIGINAL NATURE and BUDDHA

Are fundamentally the same;

Both DHARMA and SANGHA

are, in themselves, clearly wise."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Kanchi Sosan

Saint Daii Doshin, The Thirty First Ancestor

“Bowling before Great Master Kanchi, Doshin said, ‘Please, Reverend Priest, I beg you, from your compassion, to impart to me the Dharma Gate of liberation.’ Kanchi said, ‘Who is preventing you from entering?’ Doshin answered, ‘No one is preventing me.’ Kanchi said, ‘Then why do you seek liberation from me?’ At these words Doshin experienced a great awakening to his true self.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Daii Doshin’s name means ‘He Who Trusts in the Way’. He was from Kanai but later resided in Kishu.

A story is related of Daii Doshin that in 617 C.E. he and his followers arrived at Kichishu, a city that had been held in the grip of bandits for over seventy days. Taking pity on the residents of the city, Doshin instructed the residents to recite ‘The Scripture of the Great Wisdom.’ Later, the band of robbers approached the city, but many believed they saw what they called ‘phantom soldiers’ waiting for them at the gate. As a result, they realized a phenomenal saint was within and they should no longer attack. Withdrawing, Doshin stayed with the people until 624 when he returned to Kishu.

“ORIGINAL NATURE is empty, ITS unsullied wisdom

holds no thought of right or wrong;

Within ITSELF, IT recognizes nothing

as being fettered or free;

Even though we may distinguish five skandhas

and four elements

Sight and hearing, sound and form

Are ultimately nothing other than IT.s”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Daii Doshin

Saint Daimon Konon, The Thirty Second Ancestor

“When Konin encountered Doshin on the road to Obai, Doshin asked him, ‘What is your clan name?’ Konin said, ‘I have a NATURE but I do not have a conventional clan name.’ Doshin asked, ‘And what is IT?’ Konin replied, ‘It is the BUDDHA NATURE.’ Doshin queried, ‘So you have no clan name?’ Konin answered, ‘Because ORIGINAL NATURE is empty, I do not.’ Doshin fell silent realizing that Konin was a vessel for the Teaching and that it was to him that he would Transmit the Teaching and the Kesa.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Daimon Konin’s name means ‘He of Magnificent Endurance’ and was from Obal in Kishu. Daimon Konin was only seven years old when he left his mother to become a monk under the training of Doshin. Doshin recognized Konin as the reincarnation of an old man he had instructed to return to him in his next life. He would be waiting for him in order to teach him of the Way.

“The moon is so resplendent, the water so pure,

the autumn sky so clear;

How could there be even a whisp of cloud

To bespeck the GREAT IMMACULACY?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Daiman Konin

Saint Daikan Eno, The Thirty Third Ancestor

“One night, while Eno was hard at work in the rice shed at Obai, Daiman Konin entered and asked, ‘Is the rice indeed white?’ Eno replied, ‘It is white but it has not yet been winnowed.’ Daiman struck Eno’s rice pounding mortar thrice with his staff; Eno shook the rice in the winnowing fan three times then followed Daiman to his quarters.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light*.

Daikan Eno’s name means ‘The Able One’ and was of the Ro clan from Han’yo. Daimon Konin’s name means ‘He of Magnificent Endurance’ and was from Obal in Kishu. After Daiman Konin had transmitted the Way to Daikan Eno through the threshing of the rice three times in the middle of the night, he returned to his own monastery wherein nobody knew of the transmission that had occurred. When disciples came to Daimon Konin after this transmission, he was known to have said, ‘My Way is gone.’ Thus, sending them onto the next ancestor in the line of succession Daikan Eno.

“The mortar struck, its sound piercing high

beyond the empty blue;

The clouds are winnowed away,

The bright moon, deep in the night, shines clear."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Daikan Eno

Saint Seigen Gyoshi, The Thirty Fourth Ancestor

“Gyoshi, whilst training under Eno at Sokei-ji asked his master, ‘To what should I pay attention so that I do not fall into some category of spiritual attainment?’ Eno responded, ‘What were you doing before you came here?’ Gyoshi answered, ‘I was continually failing to put the Noble Truths into practice.’ Eno asked, ‘In what category are you now?’ Gyoshi replied, ‘Since I am still not putting the Noble Truths into practice, in what category does that place me?’ Eno had a deep feeling that Gyoshi was a vessel for the teaching . . . This is hearing what is hard to hear, meeting what is difficult to meet. Even when you cease from contrivances, a degree of holding on to a notion of self may persist and this is to make a mistake for you will surely have fallen into the deep pit called ‘liberation.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Seigen Gyoshi’s name means ‘Mindful of Practice’ and was of the Ryu clan from Anjo.

“A bird in its passage
leaves no traces of its flight,
So why look for stages
on that dark and solitary road

which leads deep within?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Seigen Gyoshi

Saint Sekito Kisen, The Thirty Fifth Ancestor

“When Sekito went to train with Seigen Gyoshi the latter asked, ‘Where do you come from?’ Sekito answered, ‘I come from Sokei Monastery.’ Gyoshi raised his fountain scepter and asked, ‘Do they still have this sort of thing at Sokei?’ Sekito replied, ‘Not only do they not have it at Sokei, it also does not exist in India.’ Gyoshi said, ‘But, my child, you have never gone to India, have you?’ Sekito said, ‘If I had gone, then it would be there!’ Gyoshi said, ‘That is not good enough; go on and say more!’ Sekito replied, ‘Reverend Priest, you should also take on half the talking; do not depend wholly on this neophyte!’ Gyoshi said, ‘I do not shirk from talking to you about IT, but I fear lest, afterwards, there will be no one to grasp what IT is.’ Sekito responded, ‘It is not that no one will grasp IT but that no one will be able to speak about IT!’ Gyoshi struck Sekito with the fountain scepter whereupon Sekito had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF.”

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Sekito Kisen's name means 'He Who Hopes for Improvement' and was of the Koan clan in Tanshu.

“A single raising of the fountain scepter

gave rise to everything possible,

Yet Sekito never climbed even a smidgeon
beyond the proper limits."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Sekito Kisen

Saint Yakusan Igen, The Thirty Sixth Ancestor

“When Yakusan went to train under Sekito he said to the master, ‘I have a rough understanding of the Three Vehicles and the Twelve Divisions of the Scriptures but I have heard that, in the South, they directly point to a person’s ORIGINAL NATURE so that he may see IT and become Buddha. I really do not comprehend this yet and beg, on bended knees, that you, Reverend Priest, out of your compassion, will point IT out to me.’ Sekito responded, ‘You will not find IT if I assert that IT is indeed like this,’ nor will you find IT if I assert that ‘IT is indeed not like this’ and you will certainly not find IT if I assert that ‘IT is and is not like this.’ What will you do to bring IT forth?” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Yakusan Igen’s name meant ‘Dignity Personified’ and was of the Kan clan in Koshu.

“That lively STRANGER

who is always so vigorous and bold;

Whenever you call to HIM, you make HIM be the ONE

Whose eyebrows raise and eyes blink.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Yakusan Igen

Saint Ungan Donjyo, The Thirty Seventh Ancestor

“Unga first trained, and served under, Hyakujo for twenty years. Later, after Hyakujo’s death, he went to train under Yakusan who asked him, ‘What Teaching did Hyakujo stress?’ Unga replied, ‘Once Hyakujo entered the meditation hall to give a lecture. The great assembly were standing there when, brandishing his staff, he all at once sent them scurrying out. He called them back and, as they turned their heads toward him, he said, ‘What is IT?’” Yakusan responded, ‘Why did you not say this sooner? To-day, thanks to you, I have been able to lay eyes on my elder brother Hyakujo.’ Upon hearing these words, Ungan had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Ungan Donjyo’s was of the Kensho clan in Shoryu and had a saying that he used to enlighten people. “All the hundred flavours are complete in themselves.” He would say.

“This solitary boat, without rocking and pitching

advances toward the moon;

If you but look back, behold,

the duckweed that floats beside the old shore

is still not moving!”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ungan Donjyo

Saint Tozan Ryokai, The Thirty Eighth Ancestor

“Whilst training under Ungan, Tozan asked him, ‘Who can hear the teaching of the Dharma by the non-sentient?’ Ungan replied, ‘The NON-SENTIENT can hear the teaching of the Dharma by the non-sentient.’ Tozan said, ‘Reverend Priest, do you hear it?’ Ungan said, ‘If I could hear it, you would not be able to hear my teaching of the Dharma.’ Tozan said, ‘If that is the way things are, then I, Ryokai, indeed do not hear the Reverent Priest’s teaching of the Dharma.’ Ungan said, ‘If you have not yet heard my teaching of the Dharma, how you possibly expect to hear the teaching of the Dharma by the NON-SENTIENT?’ Thereupon Tozan had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF and presented Ungan with a poem,

‘Wondrous, wondrous indeed!

The Dharma teaching of the NON-SENTIENT

Is beyond imagining or words;

Listening with your ears,

You will find IT hard to comprehend

But, hearing ITS sound with your eyes,

You can know IT directly!’

Ungan gave his approval to this." *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Tozan Ryokai's name meant 'The Good Servant' and was of the Yu clan in Shoryu from Kaikei.

"The humble TRUE CONSCIOUSNESS

is not emotional attachment

And every day of the week

It causes IT to teach energetically."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Tozan Ryokai

Saint Ungo Doyo, The Thirty Ninth Ancestor

“When Ungo went to train under Tozan, the latter asked him, ‘What, Doyo Acharya, is your name?’ Ungo replied, ‘Doyo (C. Tao-ying, ‘Sustainer of the Way’).’ Tozan said, ‘Look up higher and say something more!’ Ungo responded, ‘Were I to speak on a higher level, then I would not call myself Doyo.’ Tozan said, ‘When I was with Ungan my own respectful reply was no different.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Ungo Doyo’s name meant ‘Sustainer of the Way’ and was of the O clan in Yushu.

A story is related of Ungo Doyo upon his running into Tozan while walking upon a mountain. ‘Was that mountain fit to live on?’ Tozan asked Ungo. Ungo replied, ‘What mountain is not fit to live on?’ Tozan went on to say, ‘Well, then, you must have found the right roadway.’ To which Ungo replied, ‘There is no roadway.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

“Name or form IT has never come to assume

So how am I to speak of higher or lower levels?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ungo Doyo

Saint Doan Dohi, The Fortieth Ancestor

“Ungo once pointed out, ‘Since you wish to realize such a thing, undoubtedly you must such a person; since you are such a person, why fret about such a thing?’ Hearing this, Dohi spontaneously awakened to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Doan Dohi’s name meant ‘Distinguished in the Way’ and it remains unknown as to his clan or birthplace.

Dohi’s master Ungo once spoke in the meditation hall about this understanding of awakening. “When you members of our community begin to speak you give vent to your feelings. You should have a reason for speaking; do not give way to being neglectful. What sort of place is this here? How can you consider taking is easy? Whenever you ask about this matter, you be at least a bit discerning of what is right and wrong . . . First of all, do not bring anything along with you into your meditation; if you do, it will bear no likeness to that which you seek.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

“Empty handed, I sought IT on my own

and, empty handed, have returned;

Since, from the first, there was nothing to realize,

Now, being satisfied, I have realized!”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Doan Dohi

Saint Doan Kanshi, The Forty First Ancestor

“Whilst studying under Dohi, Kashi said, ‘Someone of old remarked, ‘I do not desire what worldly people desire.’ I wonder what you desire, Reverend Priest?’ Dohi replied, ‘I have already realized such.’ Upon hearing these words, Kanshi had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF . . . When Dohi was on the verge of death, he entered the meditation hall and said in verse,

‘In front of the Shrine of Many Sons

A child of our line towered above the rest;

Before the peak of the Five Elders

How does the matter go?’

Although he spoke this three times, still no one responded. Finally, Kanshi came forth and said in verse,

The night is bright outside the bamboo blind

Where they stand lined up in rows;

For ten thousand leagues their song reverberates

Expressing the GREAT TRANQUILLITY.’

Dohi said, "This donkey of a fellow will find IT first!"
The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Doan Kanshi's name meant 'He Who Examines His Intentions' and it remains unknown as to his clan or birthplace.

"The moon-like TRUE NATURE

and the blossoming in the eyes,

how fine their light and colour are!

They open outside the aeons of time

So who is there to take pleasure in them?"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Doan Kanshi

Saint Ryozan Enkan, The Forty Second Ancestor

“Whilst training, Ryozan attended on Kanshi. One day Kanshi asked him, ‘What is IT that is important that lies beneath a monk’s kesa?’ When Ryozan did not respond, Kanshi said, ‘It is most distressing if you have not reached this stage in your study of Buddhism. Put the question to me and I will tell you.’ When Ryozan asked him what is IT that is important that lies beneath a monk’s kesa, Kanshi answered, ‘The UNSEEN. The UNSEEN exists, the UNSEEN exists!’, whereupon Ryozan had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Ryozan Enkan’s name means ‘Observant of Circumstances’ and it remains unknown as to his clan or birthplace. Training with Kanshi for four years, he served as his attendant in charge of his robes and begging bowl.

“The water is clear through and through

down to its very depths:

Even without cutting and polishing,

The TRUE SELF is naturally lustrous and bright.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Ryozan Enkan

Saint Daiyo Kyogen, The Forty Third Ancestor

“Daiyo asked Ryozan, ‘What is the seat of enlightenment (‘Bodhimandala’) that has no characteristics?’ Ryozan pointed to a picture of Kannon and said, ‘This was painted by the retired scholar, Mr. Go (C. Su).’ Daiyo was about to speak when Ryozan suddenly demanded of him, ‘This one has characteristics; which is the ONE that has no characteristics?’ Upon hearing these words Daiyo awoke to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Daiyo Kyogen’s name means ‘He in Whom the Precepts are Deep’ and he was from the Cho clan from the region of Koka. He became a full monk at the age of nineteen, having left home years earlier to begin his training.

Ryozan joked with Daiyo Kyogen that the following words Kyogen had spoken to him would be engraved in his gravestone, although in the end it did not happen.

“Long ago, as a novice,

I wandered off onto the path of learning.

Across myriad rivers

And over thousands of mountains

I searched for tangible knowledge;
 Seeing the now clearly
 As well as discerning what has long passed
 Proved, in the end, too hard for me to comprehend,
 And direct talk of what is beyond mind
 Set my doubt spinning about even more.
 Then my Master gave me the ancient mirror of Ch'in
 Which he set up before me;
 Illumined in it I saw the time before the concept
 'father and mother' had been invented.
 Now that my pursuit has come to an end,
 What have I attained?
 Were you to set free into the night
 The silky black raven,
 It would fly off clothed in snow."

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

"The Perfect Mirror hangs high, Its brightness

clearly shining into every nook and corner:

The Vermilion trimmed Boat is so utterly beautiful

That no picture can truly capture It."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Daiyo Kyogen

Saint Tosu Gisei, The Forty Fourth Ancestor

“Gisei trained under Fuzan Enkan (C. Fu-Shan Yuan-chien) who had him look into the story about the non-Buddhist who said to the Buddha ‘Irrespective of whether there is a word for IT or not, What is IT?’ After three years had passed, Enkan asked one day, ‘Can you recall the story? Try to present what you have seen in it.’ Gisei was about to reply when Enkan covered Tosu’s mouth with his hand. Gisei opened up completely and was awakened to his TRUE SELF.”
The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Tosu Gisei’s name means ‘He Whose Faith Is Ever Green’ and he was from the Ri clan from the region of Seisha. He entered the monastery of Myosoji by the age of seven to study the scriptures and became a full monk at the age of fifteen.

Because Daiyo was advanced in years when Tosu Gisei was young, and Tosu Gisei was not ready to receive the transmission and pass it along, Daiyo left behind a verse from which Tosu Gisei would about ten years later achieve enlightenment:

“The Trees and bushes
 atop the sun-drenched mountain,
 Relying on their lord,
 await his developing their worth;

In the place where a variety of sprouts
grow in profusion,
Deep and hidden,
he strengthens their spiritual roots.”

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

“A ridge of rocky hills so many miles high
that birds can scarcely pass over it,
A sword blade and thin ice – who can tread on
them?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Tosu Gisei

Saint Dokai of Mount Fuyo, The Forty Fifth Ancestor

“Whilst training with Tosu Gisei, Dokai asked, ‘The words and phrases of the Buddhas and Ancestors are like ordinary, every-day tea and rice; apart from these, is there anything else that is particularly helpful to people?’ Tosu responded, ‘Tell me, when the emperor creates mandates from within the palace walls does he still avail himself of the authority of Yao, Shun, Yu and T’ang (i.e. the four ancient rulers during the Golden Age of Chinese history)?’ Dokai wavered. As he was about to respond, Tosu brushed across Dokai’s mouth with his fountain scepter as if brushing away crumbs and said, ‘When you intentionally let thoughts arise, forthwith you will get thirty blows!’ Thereupon Dokai awakened to his TRUE SELF.” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Dokai of Mount Fuyo’s name means ‘A Model of the Way’ and he was from Mount Iyo.

“There is no need for rouge or powder
for any ugliness would be hard to find;

Just love the lustrous radiance that adorns

The Body of the Heavenly Child within yourself.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Dokai of Mount Fuyo

Saint Tanka Shijyun, The Forty Sixth Ancestor

“When Tanka asked Fuyo, ‘What is the one phrase that all the sages have passed on from the beginning?’ Fuyo answered, ‘Were you to reduce IT to a single phrase, you would really bury the tradition of our line.’ Upon hearing this, Tanka had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF . . . IT, THE EMPTINESS THAT IS NOT EMPTY, is the TRUE PLACE to which all return; there has never been anyone who has not possessed IT fully and completely, however many students make the mistake of thinking that originally there was nothing at all, saying moreover that there is nothing that can be said about IT and nothing that the mind can conceive about IT. The ancients gave such people the name of ‘non-Buddhists who have fallen into vacant nothingness.’ . . . This is why we speak of it as ‘the one phrase that has been passed on.’” *The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Tanka Shijyun’s name means ‘Pure and Honest as a Child’ and he was from the Ko clan in Kenshu.

“Though a clear breeze swirls round and round,

stirring up the earth,

Who can grasp hold of it and show it to you?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Tanka Shijyun

Saint Choro Seiryō, The Forty Seventh Ancestor

“Seiryō trained under Tanka who asked him, ‘What is the SELF prior to the period of cosmic emptiness?’ Seiryō was just about to respond when Tanka said, ‘Since you are being so noisy, go away for a while.’ One day, whilst climbing Begging Bowl Peak (J. Hachi’uho; C. Po yun feng), Seiryō suddenly awoke to his TRUE SELF . . . The next day Tanka entered the meditation hall and said in verse,

‘The sun makes the solitary peak glow green,

The moon visits the valley stream so chill;

The dark and wondrous SECRET

of the Ancestors and Masters

Does not turn a trifling heart

to find a resting place.’”

The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Choro Seiryō’s name means ‘Clear in Intelligence.’ Shinketsu, meaning ‘Truly at Rest’ was his Buddhist name and Goku, meaning ‘The Enlightened Void’ was his title as a meditation master. It is not known where he was born and to which clan he was associated as a child.

“The old valley stream;
its icy spring is hidden from all eyes;
No traveler is permitted to penetrate
Its ultimate depths.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Choro Seiryō

Saint Tendo Sokaku, The Forty Eighth Ancestor

“Sokaku was Seiryō’s jiisha for a long time. One day Seiryō asked him, ‘How do you view the matter these days?’ Sokaku said, ‘I too would say that IT is ‘like this.’” Seiryō said, ‘Not yet it – go on further.’ Sokaku said, ‘Why is what I said not yet it?’ Seiryō said, ‘I did not say that you said is not yet it; it is that you are not yet familiar with THAT which is beyond.’ Sokaku said, ‘I can speak of THAT which is beyond.’ Seiryō said, ‘What is THAT which is beyond?’ Sokaku said, ‘Even supposing I could express THAT which is beyond, I could not begin to find for you, Reverend Priest, something with this to compare IT.’ Seiryō said, ‘You are really not able to say.’ Bowing humbly, Sokaku said, ‘Ask me and I will express IT.’ Sokaku said, “What is THAT which is beyond?” Seiryō, gesturing, said, ‘I too would say that IT is not ‘like this’!’ Hearing this, Sokaku awoke to his TRUE SELF and Seiryō gave him the Seal of certification.”
Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Tendo Sokaku’s name means ‘The Jewels of Our Line.’ It is not known where he was born and to which clan he was associated as a child.

“By analogy IT is just like a post

wedged in at top and bottom;

You cannot push it in farther

and you cannot pull it out!"

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Tendo Sokaku

Saint Setcho Chikan, The Forty Ninth Ancestor

“One day, when Sokaku was head of Tendo Monastery, he entered the meditation hall to lecture and said, ‘The World-Honored One had a hidden expression and Makakoshyo shared IT openly, heart to heart.’ Upon hearing this, Chikan immediately awoke to its deeper significance; as he sat there among the others, tears flowed down his cheeks. Involuntarily he blurted out, ‘Why have we not heard this before?’ When Sokaku had finished his lecture he summoned Chikan and asked him, ‘Why were you weeping in the Dharma Hall?’ Chikan replied, ‘The World-Honoured One had a hidden expression and Makakshyo shared IT openly, heart to heart.’ Gokaku gave his approval of this, saying, ‘You must be the one that Ungo Doyo Prophesied would appear.’”
Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Setcho Chikan’s name means ‘The Mirror of Wisdom’ and was born into the Go clan in Choshu.

“Were you to call IT an unseen Body,

indestructible as a diamond,

How immaculate, vast and radiant

Would such a Body be!”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Setcho Chikan

Saint Tendo Nyojyo, The Fiftieth Ancestor

“Whilst Nyojyo was training under Chikan the latter asked, ‘Disciple Nyojyo, how can THAT which has never been stained or polluted by purified?’ Nyojyo spent over a year on this when suddenly he became wide awake to his TRUE SELF and said, ‘I have hit upon THAT which is not stained or polluted.’ . . . He had not yet finished what he was saying when Chikan struck him. Nyojyo, the Water of the Spirit pouring through him, bowed before Chikan who then gave him his recognition.” *Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Tendo Nyojyo’s name means ‘He Who Is Like Purity.’ Nothing is known about his clan or where he was born. Tendo Nyojyo was known for saying “To practice meditation is to drop off body and mind.” *Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

“The winds of training fan far into the distance,
irresistible as a diamond is hard;
They circulate everywhere and, because of them,
The whole world is sustained.”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Tendo Nyojyo

Saint Eihei Dogen, The Fifty First Ancestor

“Dogen trained under Tendo Nyojyo. Once, during late night meditation, Nyojyo told the assembly, ‘To practice meditation is indeed to drop off body and mind!’ Upon hearing this, Dogen suddenly had a great awakening to his TRUE SELF; he arose immediately, went to the abbot’s quarters and offered incense. Nyojyo asked him, ‘Why are you making an incense offering?’ Dogen replied, ‘Body and mind have dropped off.’ Nyojyo said, ‘Body and mind have dropped off the dropping-off of body and mind.’ Dogen said, ‘This is a transitory ability; Reverend Priest, pray do not give me your Seal arbitrarily.’ Nyojyo said, ‘I am not giving you my Seal arbitrarily.’ Dogen said, ‘What is THAT which does not give the Seal arbitrarily?’ Nyojyo replied, ‘THAT which drops off mind and body.’ Dogen bowed in respect. Nyojyo said, ‘The dropping off has dropped off.’ Nyojyo’s jiisha, Kobyo (C. Huang p’ing) of Fukushu (C. Fuchou), then said, ‘For a foreigner to find such a state is truly no trifling matter.’ Nyojyo said, ‘Among those here, how many are up to a thump on the head? Having let go and dropped off body and mind, he is mild mannered, yet how the thunder roars!’”
Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.

Eihei Dogen’s name means ‘The Foundation of the Way’ and was born in 1200 as a ninth generation descendant of Emperor Murakami. Zen Master Dogen was credited for writing the *Shobogenzo-Zuimonki* and *Moon in a Dewdrop*. Both texts are deeply

studied by Soto Zen Buddhists today and Dogen is considered one of the greatest Masters in the Zen line, along with Bodaidaruma and Makakashyo.

“The bright, shining, pure PLACE

has neither inside nor outside

So how can there possibly be

Any body or mind to drop off?”

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Eihei Dogen

Saint Koun Ejyo, The Fifty Second Ancestor

“Ejyo trained under Dogen. One day, whilst receiving instruction, he heard Dogen use the expression, ‘A single hair pierces through a multitude of holes’ and was immediately awakened to his TRUE SELF. That night, after having made bows, he asked Dogen, ‘Apart from the single hair, what are the multitude of holes?’ Dogen grinned and said, ‘Completely pierced.’ Ejyo bowed respectfully.” *Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light.*

Koun Ejyo’s name means ‘The Great Hearted One.’ A fourth-generation descendant of the Imperial Minister of State, Fujiawara Tamemichi, he renounced the world and joined a monastery on Mount Hiei when he turned eighteen. Koun Ejyo was the final, 52nd ancestor in the Soto Zen Line which began with the glorious Shakyamuni Buddha.

“The spacious VOID, from the first,
 does not let even a needle pierce IT;
 Vast and still IT is, dependent on nothing,
 So who, pray, is there to dispute IT?
 Do not speak of IT as ‘the SINGLE HAIR
 Piercing a multitude of holes’;

IT is a REALM naked and without blemish,

Beyond any trace of anything."

Keizan Zenji summarizes the teaching of Koun Ejyo

Sources

*The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of
Light*, – Keizan Zenji, Translated by Reverend Jiyu
Kennett

The Oral Transmissions of the 52 Soto Zen Buddhist Ancestors

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

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Shakyamuni Buddha founded the path of the successive 52 Soto Zen Ancestors when he awakened to the Way. The transmissions of the teachings to the 52 Ancestors in Zen Buddhist Tradition were never meant to reach the eyes of laymen. 'The Denkoroku: The Record of the Transmission of Light' was originally written only for the eyes of Zen monks. Shasta Abbey's late Abbess, Jiyu Kennett, who translated the text into English often said that the long sentences used in Zen would likely annoy American readers. But she made the decision to share some of the deeper teachings of Zen with the lay public even if they were unable to penetrate into the deeper meaning of the words. This book gives you an overview and insight into a subject otherwise only understood through lengthy study.

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