

# TRANSLATION

## Shōbōgenzō Buddha-nature

### Part II

TRANSLATED BY

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*When the Sixth Chinese Patriarch Ta-chien Ch'an-shih<sup>1</sup> of Ts'ao-hsi shan first went to practice under the Fifth Patriarch of Huang-mei shan, he was asked, "Where do you come from?" He answered, "I am a man of Ling-nan."<sup>2</sup> The Fifth Patriarch said, "What have you come for?" "I've come to become a Buddha," he replied. The Fifth Patriarch said, "People of Ling-nan have no Buddha-nature. How could you attain Buddhahood?"*

This utterance does not mean that people of Ling-nan have no Buddha-nature, or that they do have a Buddha-nature; he means, "man of Ling-nan, you are no-Buddha nature."<sup>3</sup> *How could you attain Buddhahood?* means "What

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\* This is the second part of a translation of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Busshō* (Buddha-nature). For general introductory remarks see Part I, *Eastern Buddhist* VIII, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Ta-chien Ch'an-shih 大鑑禪師 (638-713); the posthumous title of Hui-neng (Enō), the Sixth Zen Patriarch. This dialogue is found in the *CTL*, *chūan* 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ling-nan (Reinan); a remote hinterland south of the Nan-ling mountain range dividing central and southern China, considered backward and uncultured.

<sup>3</sup> Again Dōgen bends the Chinese to give priority to religious meaning over normal grammatical syntax (see introd., Part I), reading the passage: "Man of Ling-nan, you are no-Buddha-nature" ("you are no" instead of "have no"). This indicates: this person from Ling-nan present right here before me is himself a manifestation of Buddha-nature beyond any sense of "having" or "not having." It is sufficient to recognize his presence as such without relating him to anything such as Buddha-nature. Hence the utterance "you *are* no-Buddha-nature." The idea of "no-Buddha-nature" is the theme of the next ten paragraphs.

buddha are you expecting to attain?"<sup>4</sup>

Overall, the truth of the Buddha-nature has been truly clarified by few in the past. It is not something that can be understood by those of the Hinayana or by scholars of the sutras and commentaries. It is solely transmitted one to another by descendants of the buddhas and patriarchs.

As for the truth of the Buddha-nature:<sup>5</sup> the Buddha-nature is not incorporated prior to attaining Buddhahood; it is incorporated upon the attainment of Buddhahood. The Buddha-nature is always manifested simultaneously with the attainment of Buddhahood. This truth should be deeply, deeply penetrated in concentrated practice. There has to be twenty or even thirty years of diligent Zen practice. It is not something clarified even in the higher stages of Bodhisattvahood.<sup>6</sup> It is this truth that articulates, "Sentient beings are Buddha-nature, sentient beings are no-Buddha-nature." The right way is to study that it is a Dharma incorporated upon the attainment of Buddhahood.

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<sup>4</sup> In keeping with his reading of the previous passage emphasizing that Hui-neng is Buddha-nature as he stands, Dōgen interprets the rhetorical question "How could you attain Buddhahood?" (which read at face value would suggest the impossibility of his attaining Buddha-nature) positively: there is no necessity to attain Buddha-nature because it is already attained.

<sup>5</sup> This crucial passage of "the truth of the Buddha-nature" refutes the notion of Buddha-nature as something originally possessed, which would be a conceptualization of Buddha-nature devoid of actual commitment and attainment. It thus stresses the dynamic oneness, at the very moment of enlightenment, of Buddha-nature and its attainment, in which Buddha-nature is manifested simultaneously with attainment. This in turn also implies refutation of the idea of Buddha-nature as something that is not originally possessed and is actualized only through attainment, which also would conceptualize the Buddha-nature as a mere objective goal. The words "manifesting simultaneously" (*dosan* 同參) are refutation of these two ways of conceptualizing Buddha-nature, and stress the actual manifestation of Buddha-nature at the very moment of attainment.

<sup>6</sup> *The higher stages of Bodhisattvahood* (*jūshū sangan* 十聖三賢). In Mahayana Buddhism, there are 52 stages of discipline practiced by Bodhisattvas before they reach Final Enlightenment. They are divided into five groups of ten steps each, and the final two steps that belong to supreme enlightenment. *Jūshū* ("ten classes of sages") refers to stages 41 through 50, the ten highest stages of Bodhisattvahood prior to supreme enlightenment: *sangan* ("three groups of wise men") refers to stages 11 through 40.

If your study is not like this, it cannot be called the Buddha Dharma. If it had not been studied like this, the Buddha Dharma would never have continued to the present day. Unless you clarify this truth, Buddha-attainment will not be clear to you, and you will not experience it. For this reason, when the Fifth Patriarch spoke to teach the Sixth Patriarch, he said, “man of Ling-nan, you’re no-Buddha-nature.” When one first encounters a buddha and hears the Dharma, what is extremely difficult to understand, to really grasp is, “all sentient beings are no-Buddha-nature.” Whether it comes from a good master or from the sutras, that which cannot help giving joy when heard, is “all sentient beings are no-Buddha-nature.” One whose total experience is not filled to overflowing with “all sentient beings are no-Buddha nature” has not yet experienced the Buddha-nature. When the Sixth Patriarch sought with all his effort to attain Buddhahood and the Fifth Patriarch brought it about in him, there were then no other utterances, no other skillful means; all he did was to say, “man of Ling-nan, you’re no-Buddha-nature.”

You should know, the very uttering and hearing of “no-Buddha-nature” was itself his immediate passage to Buddha-attainment. Since it was, right at the very time of “no-Buddha-nature” he became a buddha. To have not yet experienced or articulated “no-Buddha-nature” is to have not yet attained Buddhahood.

The Sixth Patriarch said, “Though men have souths and norths, Buddha-nature does not.”<sup>7</sup> You should take this utterance and deeply concentrate yourself on its inner meaning. His words about south and north must be scrutinized directly with mind unbarred, for this utterance has fundamental significance. There is a side to it with the implication: although man attains Buddhahood, Buddha-nature does not. I wonder, was the Sixth

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<sup>7</sup> “*Men have norths and souths...*” These words, which follow upon the quotation from *CTL* cited at the top of page 87, ordinarily signify: men from the south may be different culturally from men of the north, but they have no difference in the Buddha-nature. Going beyond this, Dōgen’s understanding adheres undeviatingly to the very time and place of “What is this that thus comes” (see Part 1, p. 97, fn. 5); there, a southerner is just a southerner and, as such, he is the Buddha-nature beyond designations of south or north. All this is exemplified in the actual presence of Hui-neng.

Patriarch aware of this implication?<sup>8</sup>

Buddhas such as Kashyapa Buddha and Sakyamuni Buddha, inheriting the capacity the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs' utterances "no-Buddha-nature"<sup>9</sup> have to totally restrict [ordinary understanding of the Buddha-nature],<sup>9</sup> have the capacity when they attain Buddhahood and preach the Dharma to articulate the utterance, "whole being-Buddha-nature."<sup>10</sup> So how could the being of *whole being* not succeed to the nothingness of absolute nothingness! Therefore, the words "no-Buddha-nature" reverberate far from the chambers of the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs. Had the Sixth Patriarch been a true man at this time, he would have concentrated all his effort on these words, "no-Buddha-nature." He should have just set aside the nothingness of "being and nothingness" and asked, What is this Buddha-nature? He should have sought, What sort of thing is this Buddha-nature? People of today as well, when they hear "Buddha-nature," never question what this Buddha-nature is. They seem to speak only about the meaning of such things as the existence or non-existence of Buddha-nature. That is rash and ill-considered.

Therefore, the nothingness of various nothings must be learned in the nothingness of no-Buddha-nature.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Buddha-nature from the start is no different from Buddha-attainment, so there is no way it could become it. Dōgen wonders whether Hui-neng was aware that Buddha-nature is Buddha-attainment and Buddha-attainment Buddha-nature, when he said, "...Buddha-nature does not [have south or north]."

<sup>9</sup> The expression "no-Buddha-nature" keeps people from fixing on any false objective understanding that would determine Buddha-nature as being this or that. Cf. "The moment I said it was 'this,' I'd miss the mark completely" (Part 1, p. 97, fn. 5).

<sup>10</sup> The capacity of Kashyapa and Sakyamuni and any other buddha to "utter" (*dōroku* 道得) "whole being-Buddha-nature" (for the significance of this phrase see Part 1, p. 95) is grounded in the capacity of the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs to articulate "no-Buddha nature." Since Sakyamuni is placed at least 1000 years prior to the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs, and Kashyapa prior to Sakyamuni, this is chronologically impossible, but in Dōgen's understanding the realization of no-Buddha nature explicitly articulated by the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs was already implicit in their predecessor Sakyamuni's utterance "whole being-Buddha-nature," because this realization is fundamental in the authentic Buddha Way and thus has always been present throughout the history of Buddhism.

<sup>11</sup> Since the nothingness of no-Buddha-nature is the fundamental source of all possible kinds of negation, to gain their real meaning the latter must return to it. In the Ōkubo\*

As for the Sixth Patriarch's utterance, "Men have norths and souths, Buddha-nature does not," you should dip deep within it again and again over a long time, and you must have the capacity to take it in. You must quietly ponder this utterance in all its facets. Foolish people imagine that the Sixth Patriarch has said, "Since man has substance, he has a south and north; but since the Buddha-nature is devoid of substance and is all-pervading, there is no sense to speak of it having a south or north." That would be an unmitigated stupidity. You must cast aside this mistaken understanding and apply yourself assiduously without a moment's delay.

*The Sixth Patriarch taught his disciple Hsing-ch'ang, "Impermanence is in itself Buddha-nature. Permanence is, as such, the (dualistic) mind which discriminates all dharmas, good or bad."*<sup>12</sup>

The "impermanence" the Sixth Patriarch speaks of is not the impermanence deduced by the non-Buddhists and Hinayanists. Their patriarchs and the descendants that have succeeded them preach impermanence, but they cannot plumb its full extent.

Thus, preaching, practicing, and realizing of impermanence by the impermanent themselves all must be impermanent. In manifesting themselves now to save others,<sup>13</sup> they are manifesting themselves [in their impermanence] and preaching Dharma—just this is Buddha-nature.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, they sometimes manifest a long Dharma-body and sometimes a short Dharma-body.<sup>15</sup>

\*text (p. 20) the word "Buddha" 仏 appears following "whole being" 悉有. We follow the variant reading, found in most other editions, which omits it.

<sup>12</sup> The complete episode from which this comes is given beginning on p. 103.

<sup>13</sup> An illusion to a passage in the *Lotus Sutra* (Fumon bon) which describes Avalokitesvara manifesting 33 transformations to save sentient beings.

<sup>14</sup> The impermanence Hui-neng speaks of can be grasped only by becoming one with it, not by any conceptual approach. Since he himself is impermanent, his preaching of impermanence is impermanence preaching itself, and all is thus totally impermanent.

<sup>15</sup> Long things as long things, short things as short things, are equally the Dharma-body. Cf. Question: "What is this 'long Dharma-body'?" Answer: "The staff is six feet long"; Question: "What is this 'short Dharma-body'?" Answer: "The divining block is three inches short." *P'u teng lu* 普燈錄 *Futōroku*, *chūan* 2.

The “permanent” saint is impermanent; the “permanent” unenlightened man is impermanent. Were saints and ignorant men permanently so, that would not be the Buddha-nature.<sup>16</sup> It could be only the foolish thoughts of small minds, limited knowledge spun from discriminatory speculation. “Buddha” would thus come to be a small, limited body, and “Nature,” narrow, restricted activity. Hence the Sixth Patriarch articulated that impermanence is the Buddha-nature.<sup>17</sup> “Permanence” is prior to turning [into enlightenment. But] “prior to turning” [in its authentic sense] is never connected with the aftertraces of coming and going, even though [Buddha-nature] turns to severing Wisdom, or becomes the worldly passions being severed. Thus it is said to be permanent [in the sense of Buddha-nature as impermanence].<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> An understanding that takes the distinction between a saint and ordinary man as permanently fixed is contrary to a true understanding of Buddha-nature, in which one is free of such limited views and realizes that because impermanence in itself is the Buddha-nature the situation of “permanent” saint and “permanent” unenlightened man can be changed.

<sup>17</sup> The accepted Buddhist teaching that Buddha-nature is permanent and changeless (exemplified in the words of the *Nirvana Sutra*: “Permanently abiding is the Buddha-nature; generation and extinction is all dharmas”) may breed a false, doctrinaire understanding of Buddha-nature as something fixed and immutable that transcends the changing world. It is neither immutable being nor empty nonbeing, and cannot be found apart from the impermanence of the world. It is realized at every point of time in the unceasing process from being to nonbeing, nonbeing to being, i.e., the process of becoming. It is this ceaseless process that Dōgen, with Hui-neng, indicates by “impermanence is Buddha-nature.” Cf. “To understand when you hear [Buddha] nature that water cannot flow and trees do not flourish and fade, is not Buddhist. Sakyamuni Buddha said, ‘Form as it is is [Buddha] nature as it is,’ and thus flowers blossoming, leaves falling are, as such, [Buddha] nature as it is. Yet foolish people think that in the realm of the Dharma-nature there can be no flowers opening or leaves falling.” *SBGZ Hosshō, Ōkubo*, p. 417.

<sup>18</sup> A baffling crux. We follow the syntactical order of the Ōkubo text, which seems at least to present a consistent way of reading the text: “Permanence” in a fixed sense (“permanent” saint, etc.) represents an understanding prior to “turning into” enlightenment (awakening to Buddha-nature). The Buddha-nature itself, however, is free from all vestiges of its activity, even when it is manifested as wisdom *prajñā* that severs the worldly passions obscuring the Buddha-nature, etc. It is thus said to have “permanency,” though only in the sense of “true permanency” in which permanence is at once impermanence.

Therefore, the very impermanency of grass and tree, thicket and forest, is the Buddha-nature. The very impermanency of men and things, body and mind, is the Buddha-nature. Nations and lands, mountains and rivers, are impermanent because they are Buddha-nature. Supreme and complete enlightenment, because it is the Buddha-nature, is impermanent. Great Nirvana, because it is impermanent, is the Buddha-nature. Those holding the various narrow views of the Hinayanists, and Buddhist scholars of the sutras and śāstras and the like, will be suspicious of, surprised and frightened by these words of the Sixth Patriarch. If so, then they belong in the ranks of the devils and heretics.

*The sage Ryūju, the Fourteenth Patriarch, is called in Sanskrit Nagarjuna. In China he is called Lung-sbu, Lung-sbeng, and also Lung-meng.<sup>19</sup> A native of western India, he went to southern India where many of the people believed that man's deeds could bring him good fortune.<sup>20</sup> Nagarjuna preached the wondrous Dharma to them, and those who heard it said to one another, "Having good fortune is for man the greatest thing in the world. He speaks emptily of a Buddha-nature. Who has ever seen it?" Nagarjuna said, "If you want to see the Buddha-nature, first you must eliminate your self-egoism."<sup>21</sup> They asked, "Is the Buddha-nature large, or is it small?" Nagarjuna said, "The Buddha-nature is neither large nor small, broad nor narrow. It is not happiness, or reward for something. It is undying and unborn." Learning the preeminence of the truth embodied in his teaching, all of them turned from their original belief.*

*At another time, Nagarjuna manifested a body of absolute freedom while sitting—it was just like the round full moon. The whole assembly heard only the Dharma sound. They did not see the master's form. Among the gathering was Kanadeva.<sup>22</sup> He spoke to them, "Do you discern his form or not?" They answered, "Now, our eyes do not see it.*

<sup>19</sup> Lung 竜; shu 樹; sheng 勝; meng 蒙. Different Chinese renderings of Nagarjuna's name. The entire passage quoted here is found in the CTL, *chüan* 1, the section on Nagarjuna. In the Zen school Nagarjuna is regarded as the 14th patriarch.

<sup>20</sup> *fukugō* 福業.

<sup>21</sup> *self-egoism* is a literal rendering of *ga-man* 我慢; a trans. made necessary by Dōgen's character by character treatment of the word below.

<sup>22</sup> Kanadeva, better known as Aryadeva. Lived in southern India in the 3rd century. Regarded in the Zen school is the 15th patriarch.

## THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

*Our ears bear nothing. Our minds discern nothing. Our bodies experience nothing.” Kanadeva said, “That itself is the form of the sage Nagarjuna manifesting the Buddha-nature. With it, he is teaching us. How do I know this? Because the form of Formless Samadhi is like the full moon. The meaning of the Buddha-nature is vast emptiness, open, clear, and bright.”*

*When Kanadeva finished speaking, this round shape disappeared, and Nagarjuna was sitting on his seat as before. He recited a verse:*

*My body manifests a round moon shape,  
Expressing thereby the original body of buddhas;  
Preaching the Dharma, no form,  
Expounding it, no sight, no sound.*

You should know, true expounding is not something directly manifested in sound or sight; true Dharma preaching has no form. Nagarjuna widely preached the Buddha-nature, and his sermons are countless. Here, I shall present only a brief account of one small part of them.

*If you want to see the Buddha-nature, you must first eliminate your self-egoism.*<sup>23</sup> You must without fail discern and affirm the essential significance of this. It is not the absence of seeing. The seeing is in itself eliminating self-egoism. Self is not a single self; egoism exists in much variety; eliminating is of great diversity; nevertheless, all are seeing Buddha-nature. You must accustom yourself to your own ordinary seeing.

Do not associate an utterance such as “*Buddha-nature is neither large nor small*” with the ordinary words of the unenlightened or the Hinayanists. To think

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<sup>23</sup> Here again Dōgen tries to interpret the sentence so as to reject dualistic implications in the words “see the Buddha-nature” and “eliminate your self-egoism,” and to give emphasis to the fact that Buddha-nature is not something “seen” *after* self-egoism is eliminated. It is being manifest right in the “seeing”—nonrelative seeing—in one’s “self-egoism,” and in the act of the “eliminating.” This is because, for Dōgen, Buddha-nature is totally revealing itself here at this very moment. His way of reading these words is closely analogous to his interpretation of the quotation from the *Nirvana Sutra* that appeared earlier: “If you wish to know the Buddha-nature’s meaning, you should watch for temporal conditions” (Part 1, p. 102).



distortedly of the Buddha-nature as mere great vastness is to be possessed of an illusory notion. Now you should think just in the same way you hear, this truth which is totally tied up in the utterance "*It is neither large nor small*" that is being made right here and now. That is because you are employing hearing which is not different from thinking.

Now let us attend to the verse uttered by Nagarjuna. "*My body manifests a round moon shape, Expressing thereby the original body of buddhas.*"<sup>24</sup> Because his manifesting body is, as such, "thereby expressing" all buddha-bodies, it is the shape of the round moon. Therefore, we should learn in his manifesting body all lengths and all forms. To be heedless of [the true nondualistic relation between] "body" and "manifesting" is to be ignorant of the shape of the round moon. But not only that, it is not the original body of buddhas either. The foolish think, "He is temporarily manifesting a Transformation body, and that is what is meant by 'the shape of a round moon.'" An illusory notion, held by those who have not properly succeeded to the true Buddha Way. Where, and when, could one manifest another body not his own?

Know without any doubt, Nagarjuna at that very time was merely sitting on the high seat. The form in which he manifested his body was just the same as that of any one of us sitting here right now. This very body of ours is manifesting a round moon shape.

<sup>24</sup> A literal interpretation of the first two lines of Nagarjuna's verse: "I express the body of buddhas by manifesting a round moon shape with my body," which suggests somewhat dualistically that the round moon shape is a temporarily manifested Transformation body, and that the body of buddhas and Nagarjuna's body are not immediately one, is rejected by Dōgen, who wants to emphasize that Nagarjuna's actual body itself is the body of buddhas (therefore it is described as the manifesting of a round and perfect moonlike shape). This round moon shape is therefore not a temporary manifestation of a Transformation body and is neither round, square, fine, rough, revealed or concealed. In this context Dōgen uses the expression 以表, which may be said to have slightly dualistic undertones when read as it usually is according to the Japanese way of reading Chinese (i.e., *moite byōsu*; "to express [something] by means of"), in a special way as a kind of technical term, reading it as one word *ibyō* (here translated "thereby expressing"), in an attempt to better stress the non-dualistic relation between the actual body being manifested and the body of buddhas (cf. "Because his manifesting body is, as such, 'thereby expressing' all buddha bodies, it is the shape of the round moon").

The “manifesting body” is not square or round, not existing or nonexisting, not revealed or concealed, not a compound of countless skandhas—it is just a body manifesting.

The “round moon shape” is spoken of, but “Where do you think you are, speaking of the fineness or roughness of the moon!”<sup>25</sup>

Since with this “manifested body” self and ego are from the first eliminated, it is not Nagarjuna; it is the body of all buddhas. Since it is “thereby expressing,” it breaks through beyond all buddha-bodies; because of that, it is completely free of Buddhahood. Although clearly and distinctly embodying the form of the full moon-Buddha nature, it is not a round moon shape set out on display. And, of course, the preaching is not a sound or a sight; the manifesting body is not form or mind; it is not a “skandha,” a “base,” or an “element.”<sup>26</sup> Though it is identical with skandha, base, and element, it is “thereby expressing,” it is the original body of all buddhas, it is a Dharma-preaching skandha. It has no fixed form, and when no-fixed form is Formless Samadhi as well, it is the “manifesting body.”

That the assembly is now looking at the full moon’s shape and yet “*their eyes do not see it,*” is due to the dynamic working of the Dharma-preaching

<sup>25</sup> This sentence derives from the following episode: The Zen master Huang-po went before the statue of the Buddha and made obeisance before it. The clerk of the monastery [the future Emperor Suan Tsung] approached him and said, “We are not to seek it in Buddha, in the Dharma, in the Sangha. Why, Master, do you need to make bows?” Huang-po immediately slapped him in the face, and said, “I do not seek it in Buddha, in the Dharma, or in the Sangha. I am just bowing as I always do.” When he finished speaking he gave the clerk another slap. The clerk said, “You’re being too rough!” Huang-po said, “Where do you think you are now, talking on about ‘rough’ and ‘fine’?” He then gave him another slap. Dōgen quotes this dialogue and comments on it in *SBGZ Gyōji* (Ōkubo, p. 138).

<sup>26</sup> *Skandha, base, element* 蘊處界: reference to the 5 *skandhas* or 5 kinds of aggregates into which all dharmas physical and mental are classified; 12 *bases* (or *places*), all dharmas viewed from the point of sensory cognition, composed of the 6 internal bases, the organs of sense, and the 6 external bases, the 6 sense data that enter for discrimination; 18 *elements*, the 6 consciousnesses added to the above internal and external bases. Taken together, these three are a way of representing the whole world as the field of sense perception including man himself.

skandha, is due to the no-sight, no-sound of the absolutely free body being manifested. Now veiled, now revealed, it is only a step backward or forward of the same round shape. Just at the very time *he is sitting and manifesting a body of absolute freedom, the entire assembly hears only the Dharma sound. They are not seeing the master's form.*

Kanadeva, the legitimate successor to Nagarjuna, clearly recognized the full moon's shape, knew the perfect round moon shape, knew the body manifesting, knew all Buddha-natures, knew all buddha-bodies. Even though many entered Nagarjuna's inner precincts and received his truth as water is transferred from one vessel to another, none of them could bear comparison with Kanadeva, the spiritual leader of the assembly of followers, the worthy sharer of his master's Dharma seat and fully qualified to occupy it by himself. He rightly transmitted the supreme, great Dharma, the treasure of the right Dharma eye, just as Mahakashapa did, who occupied the foremost seat at the Vulture Peak.

Before Nagarjuna had converted to the Buddha Way, when he was following a non-buddhist teaching, his disciples were numerous, but after he entered the Buddha Way, he gave them all their leave. After Nagarjuna became a buddha-patriarch it was to Kanadeva alone, the legitimate heir to take and pass on his Dharma, that he rightly transmitted the treasure of the great Dharma eye. This is the personal one-to-one transmission in the supreme Buddha Way.

In spite of this, pernicious imposters have frequently professed, "We too are the rightful Dharma heirs of the great teacher Nagarjuna." They have authored treatises and put together commentaries, passing them off as Nagarjuna's; but they were not written by Nagarjuna himself. These fellows formerly forsaken by Nagarjuna thus delude and confuse both men and devas. Disciples of Buddha should know without any doubt that unless something is transmitted by Kanadeva, then it is not the utterance of Nagarjuna either. [Knowing] this in itself is the attainment of right faith. In spite of this, even though they are aware they are spurious, there are many who accept and transmit these writings. We must pity and deplore the stupidity and ignorance of sentient beings who would defame the Buddha's prajñā wisdom.

The sage Kanadeva at that time pointed to Nagarjuna's manifesting body and declared to the assembly, "*This is the shape of Nagarjuna manifesting the*

*Buddha-nature. With it he is teaching us. How do I know this? Because the form of Formless Samadhi is like a full moon. The meaning of the Buddha-nature is vast emptiness, open, clear, and bright.*" Now among those of the past and the present who have seen and heard the Buddha Dharma and permeated the deva realms and the realm of man and all the great billion worlds, who has uttered, "The shape of the body manifesting is the Buddha-nature"? In all the great billion-world universe Kanadeva alone has made such an utterance. Others say only that the Buddha-nature is not seen with the eye, heard with the ear, discerned with the mind, and so forth. They do not know the manifesting body is the Buddha-nature, and that is why they have not said that it is. It is not because the patriarchal teachers begrudged them [the knowledge]. They could not see or hear it because their eyes and ears were obstructed. Their bodies had yet to experience it, so they were unable to discriminate it. When gazing and bowing reverently before the plenilune form of Formless Samadhi *their eyes do not see it. It is, the Buddha-nature's meaning is vast emptiness, open, clear, and bright.*

The manifesting body preaching Buddha-nature is therefore open, clear, and bright—vast emptiness. The "preaching Buddha-nature" bodily manifesting is thereby expressing the original body of all buddhas. Nowhere is there even one buddha not making this "thereby expressing" his buddha-body. The buddha-body is the manifesting body, and there is always a body manifesting Buddha-nature. Even buddhas' and patriarchs' capacity of uttering and understanding that the four great elements and five skandhas [are Buddha-nature]<sup>27</sup> is a moment-to-moment expression of the manifesting body.

Once "buddha-bodies" are spoken of in this way, skandhas, bases, and elements are thus manifesting the buddha-body. All merits of every kind are in fact this very merit. The merit of a buddha is this manifesting body's all-pervading, all-encompassing activity. The working of all infinite and boundless merits is but a single moment of this manifesting body.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. A monk asked, "I've heard you've said that when the world perishes its nature will not. What is this nature?" Chao-chou said, "Four elements, five skandhas." The monk said, "That's what perishes. What of its nature?" Chao-chou said, "Four elements, five skandhas." *Lien-teng hui-yao (Rensō eyō)*, chūan 6.

However, in the ages after the master and disciple Nagarjuna and Kanadeva, there have been many throughout the three countries (India, China, Japan) who have studied the Buddha Dharma, yet there has never been anyone who could make the utterances they did. How many scholars of the sutras and commentaries have gone astray from the Way of the buddha-patriarchs!

From long in the past in the land of the Sung they have tried to depict this episode in pictures, but they have been unable to paint it in bodies, paint it in minds, paint it in the sky, paint it on walls. Painting it vainly with a brushtip, they depict a round circle like a mirror on the Dharma seat, and make that out to be the moon-round shape of Nagarjuna's manifesting body. Hundreds of years have now come and gone, and it has been as gold in men's eyes blinding them, and yet no one has called it an error. How sad that everything has been allowed to slip past like this! If you understand that the round moon shape manifested by the body is an all-round shape, it is really but a painted rice-cake. To take pleasure in playing around with that would be extremely ludicrous.

How sad it is, throughout the land of the Sung not a single layman or priest has heard or understood Nagarjuna's words, has regarded or become familiar with Kanadeva's words; much less have any of them really been one with the manifesting body. They are blind to the round moon, and the full moon they eclipse. This comes from neglect in "searching out the ancient ways," from insufficient "yearning for the past."<sup>28</sup> Old buddhas! New buddhas! Encounter the real manifesting body! Do not waste your time admiring a painted rice-cake!

In painting the form of the body manifesting a round moon shape, know that there must be the form of the manifesting body on the Dharma seat. There must be eyebrows directly and authentically raised, eyes directly and authentically blinked. Skin, flesh, bone, and marrow, the treasure of the right Dharma eye, must without fail be sitting immovably in zazen; this transmits Kashapa's smile, for it is becoming a buddha, becoming a patriarch. If this picture is not the shape of the moon, there is not the shape of such-

<sup>28</sup> Two proverbial expressions: the former (*keiko* 稽古) derives from the opening words of the *Book of History*; the latter (*bako* 慕古) appears in the *Later Han History*.

ness; it does not preach the Dharma, and it makes no sight, no sound, no sermon. If you would seek the manifesting body, you must trace the shape of the round moon. When you trace the shape of the round moon, you can only trace the shape of the round moon, because the body manifesting is the shape of the round moon. When you are going to paint the round moon shape, you must trace the full moon shape, you must manifest the full moon shape.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, not painting the body manifesting, not painting the round moon, not painting the full moon shape, not tracing the original body of buddhas, not becoming "thereby expressing," not tracing the preaching Dharma, vainly tracing a picture of a rice-cake—what use is that!

Set your eyes on this, now, quickly! Who right here cannot eat his fill and satisfy his hunger?

The moon is the round form; the *rondure* is the body manifesting. When you study the *rondure* do not study it as a round coin, or equate it with a rice-cake. The shape of the body is the round moon body. The form of suchness is the full moon form. A round coin, a round rice-cake, must be studied in this *rondure*.<sup>30</sup>

My Zen pilgrimage took me to the land of the Sung, where, in autumn of the 16th year of Chia-tung,<sup>31</sup> I made my first visit to the Kuang-li Ch'an

<sup>29</sup> Throughout this section *to trace* (■する *zusuru*) has two meanings; to trace or draw, and to plan or intend. The translation of the similar *to draw* for ■する (*gasuru*) does not have the latter sense; it means to paint, to depict, etc.

<sup>30</sup> *Rondure*: the round moon shape is not Nagarjuna manifesting himself in a particular form in order to teach sentient beings, i.e., as a Transformation body. It is his actual body that is being manifested, and that is, as such, the original body of buddhas. The *rondure* of the round moon is a formless *rondure* beyond any round, square, or other configuration, so Dōgen says the *rondure* of the moon must be studied not in some roundly shaped object such as a coin; such objects must rather be studied in the formless *rondure* of the moon.

<sup>31</sup> In March 1223, at the age of 24, Dōgen left the port of Hakata in Kyushu and arrived in Ming-chou the end of April. He reached T'ien-t'ung-shan in July, though at that time Ju-ching was not head priest. Dōgen made a pilgrimage to masters at various different monasteries. The episode he relates here must have taken place during this pilgrimage.

temple on A-yu-wang shan.<sup>32</sup> There I saw painted on the walls of the western corridor of the main hall transformed images of the thirty-three patriarchs of India and China.<sup>33</sup> At that time, I did not comprehend them.

Later, during the summer retreat of the first year of Pao-ch'ing (1225), when I went there again, I was walking along the corridor together with Ch'eng-kuei of Shu, the monk in charge of guests and visitors.<sup>34</sup> [Coming before the image of Nagarjuna] I asked him, "What transformation is depicted here?"

He answered, "Nagarjuna's bodily manifestation of the round moon shape."

But the nostrils in the face that uttered those words were drawing no breath; the words themselves were hollow in his mouth.

I said, "Yes indeed, just like a picture of a rice-cake, isn't it?"

He gave a loud laugh, but there was no edge on it. It couldn't have broken through a painted rice-cake.

Then, while we went around to the Relic Hall and the six famous sights of the mountain, I brought the subject up several more times, but Ch'eng-kuei showed no signs of calling the matter into doubt. Several other monks ventured opinions on their own, but all their comments were completely off the mark too.

I said, "Let us ask the head priest about this." The head priest at that time was Ta-kuang.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> A-yu-wang shan 阿育王山 Aikuō-zan. Located in present Chekiang. One of the "Five Mountains" of Chinese Zen, along with T'ien-t'ung-shan 天童山 (Tendō-zan) where Dōgen stayed and studied under Ju-ching.

<sup>33</sup> *Transformed images* 變相 *bensō*. Usually these refer to pictures which give concrete representation to episodes from Buddhist scripture and tradition; depictions of the circumstances of the Pure Land, Hell, etc. Here it is apparently pictures of the 33 Zen patriarchs based on some episode associated with them. Nagarjuna was thus apparently painted as a round moon-like shape, in keeping with the previous story.

<sup>34</sup> Ch'eng-kuei of Shu 西蜀の成桂. *The monk in charge of guests and visitors: sbika* 知客, one of the official posts of the monastery.

<sup>35</sup> Ta-kuang 大光. Little is known of this priest. He is mentioned in the *Hōkyō-ki*, a record Dōgen made of his interviews with his Chinese master Ju-ching. In reply to Dōgen's question about a teaching he heard from Ta-kuang at 'A-yu-wang shan which he was doubtful of, Ju-ching remarked that Ta-kuang and all other Zen masters of the day "can only be called irresponsible." Ōkubo Dōshū, *Dōgen zenji zenshū* II, p. 379.

Ch'eng-kuei said, "He has no nostrils.<sup>36</sup> He couldn't answer. How could you learn anything from him!"

So I didn't ask Ta-kuang. Brother Kuei, despite the way he spoke, didn't have any understanding himself. Nor could any of the monks who heard us make any utterance. Past generations of head priests of A-yu-wang shan,<sup>37</sup> in looking at this picture, harbored no doubts about it either; they made no changes in it.

Moreover, things that are undepictable would best be left unpainted. If a thing must be painted at all, it can only be painted straight to the point. Although this is so, the body manifesting the shape of the round moon has never yet been painted.

Because they have not awakened from the mistaken view that the Buddha-nature is their present perceptions and discriminations, they are thereby depriving themselves of a gateway through which to penetrate either the words "Buddha-nature" or the words "no Buddha-nature." Even those being taught they must make some utterance are few and far between. You should know that this state of neglect stems from a corruption which is almost beyond hope. There are in many places even head priests of Zen temples who pass entire lifetimes without once uttering the words "Buddha-nature." Some of them say, "People who only listen to teachings of the Buddha Dharma may speak about Buddha-nature, but not monks who devote themselves to Zen practice." Such people are true animals. What a pack of devils, straying into our way of the buddha-tathagatas and defiling it! Is there only "listening to the teachings of the Buddha Dharma" in the Buddha Way? Is there only "devotion to Zen practice" in the Buddha Way? You must recognize that in the Buddha Way [distinctions between] listening to the Buddhist teaching and practicing Zen have never existed.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>36</sup> "To lack nostrils," is an expression which appears in different forms in Zen literature. Here it indicates lack of true understanding.

<sup>37</sup> Previous head priests at the A-yu-wang shan included such famous figures as Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089-1163) 大慧宗杲 and Cho-an Te-kuang (1121-1203) 拙庵德光.



## APPENDIX

*TRANSLATION FROM THE PLATFORM SUTRA (Taisbō 48: 359) See p. 91.*  
 The monk Chih-ch'ē was a native of Kiangsi. His secular name was Chang Hsing-ch'ang. In his youth he engaged in knight errantry. After the Zen school split into southern and northern factions, though the leaders of the two groups made no such discriminations themselves, rivalry between their followers gave rise to intense feelings of partiality. Followers of the northern faction arbitrarily put forth their leader Shen-hsiu as the Sixth Patriarch, and were thus envious of the fact that the transmission of the patriarchal robe to Hui-neng, leader of the southern group, was known to all the world. They enlisted the service of Hsing-ch'ang to murder Hui-neng. Hui-neng with the all-knowing power of his mind perceived what they were about. He placed ten taels of silver ready in his room. Then, one dark night, Hsing-ch'ang entered the room. He prepared to strike Hui-neng. Hui-neng stretched out his neck in readiness. Hsing-ch'ang struck three times but could not inflict any injury. Hui-neng said, "A just sword does not miss its mark; an unjust sword cannot strike true. I'll give you money, but not my life." Hsing-ch'ang fell over in a swoon. After a time, when he revived, he repentantly asked Hui-neng to pity him and begged at once to become a monk. Handing him the money, Hui-neng said, "You had best leave. I'm afraid my followers might try to take revenge. In the future you can disguise yourself and come here again. I will take you in then." Hsing-ch'ang followed his advice and escaped into the night.

Afterward, he went to a priest and had himself ordained. He received the full precepts and devoted himself to religious practice. One day, remembering Hui-neng's words, he travelled from far off to visit him. Hui-neng said, "You've been on my mind all this time. What has kept you so long?" Hsing-ch'ang said, "Before, you forgave my criminal behavior. Today I am engaged in austere discipline as a priest, but I have been unable to find any way to repay your kindness. I will just do all I can to transmit the Dharma for the sake of others. I am always studying the *Nirvana Sutra*, but I haven't been able to grasp the meaning of permanence and impermanence. Please, master, in your compassion, would you give me a brief explanation of this?" Hui-neng said, "Impermanence is the Buddha-nature. Permanence is the mind that discriminates all the various dharmas good and bad." "That's not at all what the Sutra says," replied Hsing-ch'ang. "I transmit the seal of the Buddha-mind. Why would I deliberately go against the Buddha's sutras?" said Hui-neng. "The Sutra preaches that the Buddha-nature is permanent, but you say it is impermanent. The

Sutra says all dharmas good and bad and even the mind of enlightenment are impermanent. You say they are permanent," said Hsing-ch'ang. "Those differences only deepen my doubt." Hui-neng said, "I once listened to the nun Wu Chin-tsang read the *Nirvana Sutra*, and I gave an impromptu commentary to it. Not a single one of my words or their meaning was in disagreement with the sutra's. It's just the same when I am teaching you—never do I say anything different from the sutras." Hsing-ch'ang said, "My powers of understanding are poor. Please, master, could you explain it in more detail for me?" "Do you know," said Hui-neng, "if the Buddha-nature were permanent, what would be the need on top of that to preach about all dharmas good and bad? Even in the elapse of an entire kalpa there would not be a single person who would ever raise the mind in quest of enlightenment. Therefore I preach impermanence, and just that is the way of true permanence preached by the Buddha. On the other hand, if all dharmas were impermanent, then each and every thing would merely have a selfhood and would take part in birth and death, and there would be areas to which true permanency did not reach. Therefore I preach permanence, and it is just the same as the meaning of true impermanence preached by the Buddha. Because of the unenlightened non-Buddhists' attachment to illusory permanence and the calculations of followers of the Two Vehicles that take permanence as impermanence, which together make up the Eight Topsy-turvy Views, the Buddha refutes these distorted, onesided views in his complete and perfect teaching of nirvana, while making explicit the teaching of true permanence, true pleasure, true self, and true purity. By relying only on words, you now go against their inner meaning. By mistaking the perfect and subtle words the Buddha spoke just prior to his demise as indicating nihilistic impermanence or lifeless permanence, even though you read the *Nirvana Sutra* a thousand times over, what benefit could you get from it? Hsing-ch'ang suddenly attained a great enlightenment. He made a verse:

Holding firmly to the mind of impermanence,  
 Buddha preached permanency.  
 Those unaware of his skillful means  
 Are just seizing upon one pebble in a spring pool.  
 Though I now give forth no effort,  
 Buddha-nature is right under my nose.  
 It is not received from my master,  
 And there is nothing for me to gain either.

## SHŌBŌGENZŌ BUDDHA-NATURE

Hui-neng said, "You have penetrated it now. I had better give you the name Chih-ch'e (lit. 'the aspiration penetrates')." Chih-ch'e bowed in thanks and then left.