

TRANSLATIONS

“One Bright Pearl” Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō Ikka Myōju*

NORMAN WADDELL & ABE MASAO

INTRODUCTION

Ikka Myōju was delivered by Dōgen on the eighteenth day of the fourth month, 1238 at Kōshō-ji, the small temple at Uji south of Kyoto he had occupied since moving from nearby Anyō-in in 1233.¹ He was then thirty-nine years old, in the midst of a brilliant career of teaching and writing that had already seen the completion of *Bendōwa* (1231), and two fascicles of *Shōbōgenzō*—*Makabannya-haramitsu* and *Genjōkōan* (both 1233)—in addition to *Fukanzazengi* (1233) and *Gakudōyōjinsbū* (1234).² In the short fifteen years that remained of his life, besides giving close attention to guiding his disciples, he busied himself writing and editing the remainder of what is now included in the *Shōbōgenzō* collection.

Through the centuries *Shōbōgenzō* has been the treasured property of the priests of the Sōtō sect, which claims Dōgen as founder, and it is they who are responsible for its transmission to the present day.³ In modern times it has in addition attracted an ever increasing share of attention from those interested

¹ “One Bright Pearl” is a rendering of *Ikka Myōju*. *Ikka* 一顆 is a counter used for round objects. *Myōju* 明珠 appears with some frequency in Buddhist literature. *Myō* is bright, clear: *shū* or *jū* is jewel, gem, pearl (it has been translated as crystal as well); *Maṇi*, which is in Buddhism a symbol for truth. We have chosen to render it pearl in this case for the qualities of roundness and preciousness implied in the words *Ikka Myōju*.

² See *Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. IV No. 1, pp. 124-127.

³ *Ibid.*

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in the study of Japanese thought and literature, with philosophers, literary critics, and cultural historians all attesting to its importance and originality. One eminent modern Japanese philosopher has written, “I am struck by the profundity and thoroughness of Dōgen’s thought.... He gives one the impression that, at a very early date, he has already penetrated and declared the goal of the systematic thought of today’s philosophy. It is only natural that he occupies a special niche in the history of Japanese thought.”⁴ Such high evaluation has come from other quarters as well, such is Dōgen’s position in the modern Japanese intellectual world. Although “One Bright Pearl” is one of the shorter works of *Shōbōgenzō*, it lacks none of the individuality, sinewy eloquence, intellect, and spiritual insight for which this great thirteenth century Zen master has become noted in the minds of his twentieth century admirers.

The title *Ikka Myōju* (“One Bright Pearl”) derives from the words of the late T’ang Zen master Hsüan-sha (Japanese, Gensha), “All the universe is one bright pearl.” Dōgen makes this the nucleus of the work. He begins with some brief biographical information about Hsüan-sha, designed to emphasize the humble circumstances of his upbringing as the son of an indigent family of fishermen, and relates his subsequent arising of faith, practice, and enlightenment under the tutelage of his master Hsüeh-fêng. This leads into a *mondō* or dialogue between Hsüan-sha, then a Zen master in his own right, and a monk, in which the above-mentioned saying appears in diverse contexts. The work continues with the exchanges in this *mondō* taken up one after another and commented upon by Dōgen in his own characteristic manner. In the remaining third of the work he gives a general exposition of the entire dialogue.

In *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen carries the non-dualistic position of Mahayana Buddhism to its logical conclusion. In *Ikka Myōju*, he undertakes to give particular expression to this position. Against an understanding of enlightenment that would place it beyond illusion, Dōgen takes even a state usually rejected in Zen, “living in the Black Mountain’s Cave of Demons,” as a manifestation of ultimate reality. This is not a naive affirmation of actuality but a radical realism based on his own religious awakening.

⁴ Tanabe Hajime, *Shōbōgenzō no tetsugaku shikan* (“Personal Philosophical Reflections on *Shōbōgenzō*”), Tokyo, 1939, p. 11.

Dōgen's holograph of *Ikka Myōju* is not extant. Modern editions of the work consist of collations of later manuscripts, chief among them that of a ninth generation head-official of Eihei-ji, the head temple of the Sōtō Zen sect, named Sōgo, made during the second half of the fourteenth century. The Sōgo text derives in turn from the manuscript copy of the fifth head-priest of Eihei-ji, Giun (d. 1333), dating from the end of the Kamakura period. The Giun manuscript, an important redaction that also contained fifty-nine other fascicles of *Shōbōgenzō*, was lost in a temple fire in 1473. The still extant Sōgo manuscript thus has played a very important role in *Shōbōgenzō*'s textual transmission, representing an early and apparently highly accurate version of much of Dōgen's original text. The first printed appearance of *Ikka Myōju* was in the woodblock printed "Honzan" edition of *Shōbōgenzō* published by Eihei-ji in the late eighteenth century. In the recently published *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* ("The Complete Works of Dōgen Zenji")⁵, on which the present translation is based, the editor uses the text in the Sōgo manuscript as the basic text for *Ikka Myōju*, collating it by means of several later redactions.

It would be impractical to list all the commentaries consulted in translating the text and preparing the footnotes, but of the older, religiously oriented commentaries Nishiari Bokusan's *Shōbōgenzō Keiteki* should be mentioned; of those stressing the recent scholarly, or literary approach, helpful in tracing the numerous quotations and allusions in which *Shōbōgenzō* abounds, several editions by Nishio Minoru have been of great help.⁶ We wish also to thank Professor Nishitani Keiji for the benefit of his invaluable advice in the final stages of translation.

Parts of the text will always defy final interpretation or definitive translation. With this in mind, and in order to reflect Dōgen's highly peculiar and interesting literary style as well, we have attempted as far as possible to make the translation a literal one, and not to add anything unwarranted by the original Japanese. The original is extremely difficult, and although commentaries and translations into modern Japanese do exist, when it comes to the more difficult passages there is almost universal disagreement. We only hope some faint gleam of this pearl's original brilliance has been allowed to filter through into an alien tongue.

⁵ Edited by Ōkubo Dōshū (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969).

⁶ *Eastern Buddhist op. cit.*, p. 127.

TEXT

Tsung-i Ta-shih of Hsüan-sha mountain in Fu-chou, great Sung China, this world of suffering,⁷ had the religious name Shih-pei and the secular name Hsieh.⁸ Before he entered the priesthood, he was fond of fishing, and he drifted in a boat in the Nan-t'ai river in the manner of many other fishermen. No doubt he did not even expect the Golden Fish that comes of itself without fishing for it.⁹

At the beginning of the Hsien-t'ung period of the T'ang,¹⁰ there arose in him the sudden desire to leave the world. Giving up his boat, he went into the mountains. He was then thirty years old, having awakened to the uncertainty of the transient world and realized the Buddha Way's eminence and nobility.

He finally went to Hsüeh-fêng mountain¹¹ and placed himself under the guidance of Chên-chüeh Ta-shih, negotiating the Way day and night. One day, to visit masters widely in other areas and perfect his practice, he took up his travelling pouch and was leaving the mountain, when he struck his toe hard on a rock. Blood appeared, and amid intense pain, he had an abrupt self-realization. Saying “This body does not exist. Where is the pain coming from?” he returned immediately to Hsüeh-fêng.

⁷ Tsung-i Ta-shih 宗一大師 (Sōi Daisu or Sōichi Daishi) is the title of the monk Shih-pei 師備 (Shibi), better known as Hsüan-sha 玄沙 (Gensha: 835-908) after Hsüan-sha mountain where he lived many years, actually during the T'ang, not Sung, dynasty. “This world of suffering”—*shaba* 娑婆 (Sk. *sabā*), the world of birth-and-death.

⁸ 謝

⁹ “The Golden Fish that comes of itself without fishing for it” is an allusion to enlightenment that is self-realization. With the words “he did not even expect it” Dōgen emphasizes the suddenness and completely unanticipated nature of Hsüan-sha's self-awakening.

¹⁰ 咸通 (860-873). Hsüan-sha was thirty years old the fifth year of the Hsien-t'ung period.

¹¹ Hsüeh-fêng shan is a mountain in Fu-chou (modern Fukien province), famous as the dwelling place of Hsüeh-fêng I-ts'un 雪峰義存 (Seppō Gison; 822-908); Hsin-chüeh Ta-shih 真覺大師 (Shinkaku Daishi) is the title granted him by the T'ang emperor I-tsung (r. 860-873).

Hsüeh-fêng asked him, "What is this mendicant Pei?" Hsüan-sha replied, "I will never deceive others." This answer greatly pleased Hsüeh, who said, "There is no one who does not harbor those words. Yet no one could utter them [but Pei]." He continued, "Mendicant Pei, why aren't you going on pilgrimage?" Hsüan-sha replied, "Bodhidharma did not come to the East. The second patriarch did not go to the West." This gained Hsüeh-fêng's special praise.

Since he had been long a fisherman, even in his dreams he had seen none of the multitude of sutras and commentaries. But since he set deep resolve above all else, an aspiration appeared in him which excelled that of his fellows. Hsüeh-fêng considered him a superior monk, and praised him as standing pre-eminent among his disciples.

He used cloth of simple weave for his robe, which, as he wore it without change, was pieced together patch upon patch. His underclothing was of paper; he also used mugwort cloth.¹² Aside from his practice under Hsüeh-fêng he followed no other master. Still, he attained the ability to succeed to his master's Dharma without deviation.

After he had finally attained the Way, he would say, in order to instruct people, "All the universe is one bright pearl."¹³

Once, a monk asked him, "I hear you have said all the universe is one bright pearl. How can I gain an understanding of that?" The master said, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?"

The next day the master himself asked the monk, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What is your understanding of it?" The monk answered, "All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?" "I know now," replied Hsüan-sha, "that you are living in the Black Mountain's Cave of Demons."¹⁴

¹² Dried, pounded mugwort was crudely woven and inserted inside the robe for added warmth. In the *Chuang-tze* ("Lieh Yü-k'ou") there is mention of a poor family that makes its living by weaving things out of mugwort.

¹³ "All the universe" is literally "All the ten directions of the universe," that is, the eight points of the compass and the nadir and zenith. This sentence may be found in *Ch'ing-tê ch'uan-têng lu* 景德傳燈錄 18 (*Keitoku dentōroku*).

¹⁴ According to Buddhist mythology, a mountain of utter darkness inhabited by demons that receives neither moonlight or sunlight, located at the farthest reaches of the universe which has Mt. Sumeru at its center. Zen uses it in describing unenlightened*

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The uttering of *All the universe is one bright pearl* first appeared with Hsüan-sha. Its essence is that the entire universe is not vast and large, not minute and small, or square, or round; not the mean, not right, not “the lively vigor of leaping fish,” not “unbared and distinct all around.” Moreover, because it is not birth and death, coming and going, it is birth and death, coming and going. This being so, it is the past gone from here; it is the present come from here. As for its ultimate negotiation, who is there to ascertain it as being fragmentary, or to perceive it as immovable?

All the universe is the unceasing process of pursuing things and making them the self, pursuing the self and making it things. The utterance “separated” in response to [a monk’s] “when sensations arise one is separated from wisdom,” is a turning of the head or a changing of the face, a laying open of things and a seizing of opportunity.¹⁵ Because of the pursuing of things and making them the self the universe in its entirety is unceasing. And because its own nature is prior to such activity, it is beyond grasp even through the essence of the activity.

One bright pearl is able to express Reality without naming it, and we can recognize this pearl as its name. One bright pearl communicates directly through all time; being through all the past unexhausted, it arrives through all the present. While there is a body now, a mind now, they are the bright pearl. That stalk of grass, this tree, is not a stalk of grass, is not a tree; the mountains and rivers of this world are not the mountains and rivers of this world. They are the bright pearl.

*clinging to sensations and discriminations, especially those concerning emptiness.

¹⁵ This is a simplification of the following *mondō* recorded in the *Lien-têng bui-yao* 聯燈會要 25 (*Ren-tō eyō*): “A monk asked, ‘I have heard it has been said that when sensations arise one is separated from wisdom, that when thoughts change substance is different. But what of the time before the arising of sensations?’ The master said, ‘Separated!’”

A turning of the head, etc., is a change of appearance, a new aspect of Reality. Sensations and wisdom, illusion and enlightenment are not two different things, but two aspects of the one bright pearl. The master’s reply, “Separated!” rebuts his disciple’s dualistic view.

Again, a disciple’s presentation to his master (‘a laying open of things’) and the master’s response (‘seizing the opportunity’) as well are different aspects of one and the same bright pearl.

How can I gain an understanding of that? This utterance makes it seem as if this monk's karmic consciousness is at play,¹⁶ yet it is the manifestation of the great function, which is the great law.¹⁷ Proceeding,¹⁸ you can raise up steep foot-high water, foot-high waves; that is to say, a ten-foot pearl, a ten foot brightness.

What Hsüan-sha says—a case of uttering an utterance¹⁹—is, *All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?* This is an utterance whereby buddha succeeds buddha, patriarch succeeds patriarch, Hsüan-sha succeeds Hsüan-sha. Were they to try to escape this succession, they would not be without places to escape. Yet even if they did clearly escape it for a while, the very fact of their utterance is the unmitigated occasion of the [bright pearl's] manifestation.

The next day the master himself asked the monk. "All the universe is one bright pearl. What is your understanding of it?" This expresses "Yesterday I spoke the established Dharma. Today I breath using two [aspects of the Dharma]. Today I speak the unestablished Dharma, thrusting aside yesterday and smiling today."²⁰

¹⁶ Karmic consciousness (*gossbiki*; 業識) is consciousness that works rooted in karma. For Dōgen, the question "How can I gain an understanding of that?" though still not free from karmic consciousness, is nevertheless the bright pearl. This applies to the following passages as well.

¹⁷ "Great function" 大用 refers to absolute freedom not subject to any law. Dōgen here gives a twist to the well-known phrase of the Zen master Yün-mên (Ummon): "The manifestation of the great function knows no laws." 大用現前不存執則

¹⁸ "Proceeding . . ." refers to continuing beyond, transcending the manifestation of the great function (Dōgen elsewhere refers to this as *butsukōjō* 仏向上; "going beyond buddha"), not abiding in it. Cf. "Bendowa" *Eastern Buddhist* Vol. IV No. 1, p. 35, fn. 47.

¹⁹ *Dōtoku* (道得; "utterance") and *dōsbu* (道取; "uttering") appear frequently in *Shōbōgenzō*. It is obvious from the way Dōgen uses them that he reads special significance into them. In brief, for him the *dō* of these compounds usually implies "to utter (or express) the Dharma (Truth)," "utterance of the Dharma." Its similarity with the Greek *logos* has been noted more than once. *Dōtoku*, then, might perhaps here be rendered, "to be able to utter [the Dharma]," "to have the capacity to express or utter [the Dharma]," or perhaps "an utterance [of the Dharma]." *Dōsbu* appears to refer to the *act* of uttering this Dharma-utterance, the actual expressing of the Dharma.

²⁰ "Once, the World-honored One was asked by a non-Buddhist, 'Yesterday what Dharma did you preach?' 'I preached the established Dharma.' 'Today what Dharma do★

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The monk said, “All the universe is one bright pearl. What need is there to understand it?” We could say this is mounting the robber’s horse to chase the robber. In the case of the old buddha [Hsüan-sha] preaching for his disciple’s sake, it is a matter of practicing within a creature different from himself.²¹ Just turn your light inward and reflect, how many “What need is there to understand it?” can there be? I might, provisionally, say seven pieces of cheese or five bean-cakes, but this is teaching and practice in the northern Hsiang and southern T’an.²²

Hsüan-sha said, “I know now that you are living in the Black Mountain’s Cave of Demons.” You must be aware that the face of the sun and the face of the moon have not changed from antiquity. Since the sun’s face appears together with the sun’s face, and the moon’s face appears together with the moon’s face, if I say in the sixth month [my name is] “Right Now” that does not mean my name is “hot.”²³

*you preach? ‘I preach the unestablished Dharma.’ ‘Yesterday it was the established Dharma. Why today is it the unestablished Dharma?’ ‘Yesterday’s [Dharma is] established. Today’s is not.’” *Lien-têng hui-yao* 1.

²¹ I. e., unenlightened.

²² There are in fact an infinite number of “What need is there to understand it?” Although Dōgen might say provisionally five of this or seven of that, that would be teaching and practice as the one bright pearl, or, as the gold described in the poem from the *Pi yen chi* 碧巖集 (*Hekiganshū*), Case 18, that Dōgen here alludes to: “In the southern Hsiang [River] and the northern T’an [River] is gold that fills the land from end to end.”

²³ This is based on the following *mondō*: Li Ao (Ri Ko) asked Yüeh-shan (Yakusan), “What is your name?” Yüeh-shan answered, “Right Now.” Li Ao, not understanding, asked the head of the temple, “A while ago I asked Yüeh-shan what his name was, and he said, ‘Right Now.’ Just what is his name?” The temple master said, “Well then [since it is now winter], his name is Han.” [Han 韓 is Yüeh-shan’s secular name as well as a homophone for “cold” 寒] Yüeh-shan, when he heard of this, said, “If that’s all he understands of the distinctions between things, if it were summertime he would say my name was ‘hot.’” *Wu-têng hui-yüan* 五燈會元 5 (*Gotōegen*). The sun’s face is in itself the one bright pearl and the one bright pearl is in itself the sun’s face; thus the sun’s face is unchangeable. For Yüeh-shan, every time is *Right Now*, the Right Time, which is the one bright pearl. Therefore, to say his name is cold or hot according to the season is to look only at the changing aspect, and to overlook the true, unchanging aspect, that is, his original nature—the one bright pearl.

Here we follow the Sōgo text. *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* has “. . . my nature 性 is hot.”

Therefore, the reality and beginninglessness of the bright pearl are beyond grasp. *All the universe is one bright pearl*—we do not speak of two pearls or three pearls. Your whole body is one right Dharma eye. Your whole body is the Real body. Your whole body is One Expression. Your whole body is a radiant light. Your whole body is Mind in its totality. When it is your whole body, your whole body knows no hindrance. Everywhere is round, round, turning over and over. Since the pearl's merit is thus manifested, there is, here and now, Kannon and Miroku seeing forms and hearing sounds;²⁴ there are old buddhas and new buddhas bodily manifested, preaching the Dharma.

Just when it is thus, it is suspended in emptiness,²⁵ it is attached within the lining of clothes,²⁶ it is found under the chin [of dragons],²⁷ and in the headdress [of kings]²⁸—all is the universe-encompassing bright pearl. It is its character to be attached within clothing. Make no utterance that attempts to attach it on the surface. It is its character to be found within headdresses and under jaws. Do not attempt to sport it on the surface. When you are drunk, there is a close friend who will give the pearl to you, and you, without fail, must impart the pearl to a close friend. When the pearl is attached to someone, he is, without exception, drunk.²⁹ It being thus, it is the one bright pearl—all the universe.

Thus, though its face seems to keep on changing, turning and stopping, it

²⁴ Kannon—Avalokiteśvara: Miroku—Maitreya.

²⁵ In the “Bodhisattva Necklace Sutra” (*P'u-sa ying-lo ching* 菩薩瓔珞經 *Bosatsu yōraku kyō*) is found reference to “a priceless pearl hanging suspended in emptiness.”

²⁶ In the *Lotus Sutra*, “Five Hundred Disciples” Chapter, the parable is related of a poor man who met a rich friend and drank with him until he fell unconscious. The friend had to leave on official business so he sewed a priceless pearl into the lining of his friend's robe, that he would not want for food or lodging, and then left. The poor man, not knowing what had happened, woke up and continued his difficult life as before. He only found out about the pearl when he chanced to meet his friend once again.

²⁷ This alludes to an anecdote in *Cbuang-tze* (“Lieh Yü-k'ou”) about a priceless pearl lying a very deep water under the jaws of a black dragon.

²⁸ The *Lotus Sutra*, “Peace and Happiness” Chapter, tells of a Cakravartin King who gave precious jewels to his commanders who helped him subdue all lands, but would never part with the bright pearl in his headdress.

²⁹ Drunkenness indicates illusion, which is the bright pearl; there is no enlightenment without illusion.

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is the same bright pearl. Knowing that the pearl is indeed like this—that is the bright pearl. The colorations and configurations of the bright pearl are encountered in this manner. When it is thus, there is no reason to doubtfully think that you are not the pearl because you perplexedly think, “I am not the pearl.” Perplexed thoughts, doubts, and man’s accepting or rejecting are but passing, small-scale notions. Moreover, this is only [the pearl] appearing as small-scale notions.

Should we not cherish such infinite colorations and brilliance? Each of the many facets of its radiant variegations are the merit of the entire universe—who could usurp it? Not a man in the marketplace could throw a tile away.³⁰ Do not trouble yourself about whether you will fall into the six paths’ chain of causality.³¹

Being essentially unobscured from first to last, the pearl is the original face and the enlightened eye. Yet both you and I, not knowing what the pearl is and what it is not, have had a great many thoughts and non-thoughts about it which have come to form positive notions. Yet, when thanks to Hsüan-sha’s words it is made known and clarified that even our bodies and minds are [from the beginning] the pearl, then the mind is not I. Should anyone be troubled with accepting generation and extinction as being or not being the bright pearl? Even if there is perplexed or troubled thinking, it is not apart from the bright pearl. It is not a deed or thought produced by something that is not the bright pearl. Therefore, both coming and going in the Black Mountain’s Cave of Demons are themselves nothing but the one bright pearl.

Delivered at Kannondōri-Kōshōhōrin-ji, Uji, Yōshū, the eighteenth day of the fourth month, fourth year of Katei (1238)³²

³⁰ The idea here seems to be that since all things—even the proverbially useless tile—are the bright pearl, they are beyond being accepted or rejected, picked up or thrown away. Man cannot usurp *or* throw away the bright pearl.

³¹ The six realms in which unenlightened beings transmigrate from one to another; the realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, men, and heaven. This question is the subject of the koan entitled “Po-chang’s Fox,” that appears as Case 8 in *T’ung-jung lu* 從容錄 (*Sbōyō-roku*) and Case 2 in *Wu-mên-kuan* 無門關 (*Mumonkan*).

³² Yōshū 雍州 is an old name for the Yamashiro region, so called after the Yung-chou district of ancient China. Kannondōri-Kōshōhōrinji is the name Dōgen gave to the new temple built for him on the site of the old Gokurakuji at Fukakusa in 1236.

A second, later colophon usually included in modern editions reads: "Transcribed the twenty-third day of the seventh month, the first year of Kangen (1243), at the temple master's quarters of Yoshimine-dera, Shihi-no-sō, Yoshida-gun, Etchū, by the attendant-monk Ejō." Yoshimine-dera is a small rural temple where Dōgen stayed while awaiting completion of his new temple, Daibutsuji (later renamed Eihei-ji), in what is now Fukui Prefecture. Ejō was a direct disciple of Dōgen.