

# TRANSLATION

## Selections from Suzuki Shōsan

TRANSLATED BY  
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### *The Teaching of Suzuki Shōsan*

Since the literary remains of Suzuki Shōsan consist of roughly a half-dozen pamphlet-length "books" on diverse topics, and of some collections of sayings brought together by his disciple Echū, no one piece would give a balanced view of his thought. Hence the following translations come from seven different works and are here grouped in terms of subject-matter.

Shōsan's literary activity extended over most of his thirty-six years as a monk. In fact his first work, *Mōanjō* ("A safe staff for the blind"), a tract written for a fellow-soldier to convince him that Buddhism was superior to Confucianism, was written in 1619 while he was still on garrison duty and a year or so before his tonsure. It was published in 1651. In 1627 he began a collection of "true" stories of the workings of inexorable karma; others probably completed the work. It was entitled *Inga monogatari* ("Tales of cause-effect") and was published in 1661.

In 1631 while living in Wakayama in the house of a Kanō family, he wrote *Bushi nichiyō* ("For the daily use of the samurai"), the centerpiece as it were of a larger work (*Bammin tokuyū*) assembled shortly before his death and

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\* All translations were done with the assistance of Fujiyoshi Jikai, Professor, Hanazono University. Quotations and references are from *Suzuki Shōsan dōnin senshū* ("Complete collected works of Suzuki Shōsan, Wayfarer"), ed. Suzuki Tenshin (Tokyo 1962). Shōsan's works are indicated as follows: *Sakihai dōnin gōgōki* (S), *Mōanjō* (M), *Bammin tokuyū* (B), *Fumoto no kusawake* (F), *Ha kirishitan* (H), and *Nembutsu zōshi* (N), with page number. *Roankyō* (R) references, however, will be made to part and item number.

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considered by him to be his crowning achievement in writing. Shortly after this, in 1632-5, he wrote *Ninin bikuni* ("Two nuns"), modeled after a work of Ikkyū (1394-1481), in which a young war widow finally gains emancipation from her grief by the contemplation of death and decay, and nembutsu recitation. During the same period and also in Edo, at the request of Matsuko Dono, mother of Matsudaira Izumi-no-kami, of a Tokugawa-related family, he wrote *Nembutsu zōshi* ("Nembutsu notes"). This is a fictionalized dialogue between a monk (Shōsan's alter ego) and a nun, in which the monk gives instruction in basic Buddhism and the proper use of the nembutsu. The first of these works was published in 1647 but the second not until 1711.

*Fumoto no kusawake* ("Parting the grasses at the foot of the mountain") is an instructional manual written for newly-ordained monks. It was written in 1636 at Zuigan-ji in the Tamba area at the request of his friend Ban'an, a Sōtō Zen monk. From 1642-4, while living with his younger brother Shigenari, who was then the shogunate's administrator of the Amakusa area (in Kyushu) where some years previously the "Christian" revolt had taken place, Shōsan wrote his *Ha kirishitan* ("Refutation of Christianity"). He had a copy placed in each of thirty-two temples thereabouts to counteract the Christian heresy's influence. It was published in 1661.

In 1650 he wrote *Sanbō tokuyū* ("Meritorious use of the Three Treasures") at Jūshun hermitage in Yotsuya, Edo, built for him by a Morikawa-shi. In it he demonstrated how the power of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha could be applied to daily activities. In 1652, just three years before his death, he wrote *Shugyō no nangan* ("Determination to practice") in the Ryōshin hermitage in the Tentoku-in temple compound at Ushigome in Edo. At some time before, not known to us, he had written companion pieces to the *Bushi nichiyō* for farmers, artisans, and merchants respectively. These four, plus *Sanbō* and *Shugyō*, were put together by him a little before his death into *Bammin tokuyū* ("Meritorious way of life for all men").

The *Roankyō* ("Donkey saddle-bridge") is a three-part collection of his sayings by Echū, published in 1660. *Hogo shū* ("Collected scraps of paper"), of the same general character as *Roankyō* and bringing together miscellaneous notes in Shōsan's writing found at Sekihei-zan along with items collected (by Echū?) from the Mikawa area, was first published in 1671. But not till 1696 did Echū's biography of Shōsan, *Sekihei dōnin gyōgō-ki* ("Narrative of the life-practice of the Sekihei wayfarer") come to publication.

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### I. SHŌSAN'S RELIGIOUS UNIVERSE

Japan is the land of the gods (*kami*)! It would be an evil matter indeed if we, who have been born in this "*kami* country" should not reverence them.  
(H, 132)

[*Question:*] "I have understood what you have said, namely, in Japan [Buddha] has revealed himself as gods (*kami*) for the welfare of men in this *present* world. But then must not the divine favors of the gods become an enemy to man?"

He answered: "Because in our time the minds of men are foolish and they have no enlightenment, the *kami* as Amida's manifestations first bestow benefits [upon men] in the present, thus calming their minds. He afterwards rouses up faith [in the Dharma] and by this skillful device (*hōben*) leads them into the Way of the Buddha. When men have so little mind for the Buddha way that they have no faith even in the gods, it is completely impossible for them to enter the way of the Buddha. In any case the "*kami*" and the "Buddha" differ as waves from water. They are both the single, ultimate [Buddha] essence. First, Amaterasu ōmikami, the ruler of Japan, and the Kumano manifestations are the primordial Amida Buddha. . . . The moon in the form of Seishi Bosatsu, the sun in the form of Kannon, and also the [kami] who is worshiped as the war god Hachiman the Great Bodhisattva, are the primordial Amida Buddha."<sup>1</sup>  
(N, 112)

The Buddha's eyes are like the waters of the four great oceans, and are clear blue-white in color. The radiant light shining from his whole body is like that of Mt. Sumeru. The halo of this Buddha is equal [in size] to a hundred times ten millions of the 3,000 world universes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amaterasu ōmikami: the sun-deity from whom the Imperial line is said to have descended. Kumano manifestations: the manifestations of various great deities at the three great Kumano shrines on the Kii peninsula. Seishi Bosatsu: right-hand attendant of Amida Buddha; Kannon: left-hand attendant. Hachiman: war god deification of the eighth-century Emperor Ōjin.

<sup>2</sup> From the *Meditation Sutra*, a Pure Land sutra.

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This passage is quite clear. His stature is 60,000 times 10 millions of nayutas of yojanas—as many yojanas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River. The hairs in the middle of his forehead equal five Mt. Sumerus, and his eyes are as large as the waters of the four great oceans.<sup>3</sup> Is there any Buddha [i.e., Deus or Divine Being] greater than this? The three-thousand worlds compared to the size of Amida's body are not equal to one hair among nine bulls!

Purity rises up and becomes the heavens; impurity descends to become the earth, thus separating into yin-yang. The heavenly part administers yang, and the earth embodies yin. From the opening up of the world (into created forms), all existing things have Heaven as their father and the earth as their mother. In the combining of yin and yang all creation comes into being. This is the efficacious action of the One Buddha. (H, 135)

All the Buddhas of past, present, and future who manifest themselves in the world, show directly that human beings are Buddhas. It is with the eye that we see forms, with the ear that we hear voices, with the nose that we smell odors, and with the mouth that we speak: all these enable us to think freely. So too there is the freedom of hands and feet [to move voluntarily]. All these are just the freedom of Buddha [in each man].

Therefore in hoping for the next life, trust in the self is fundamental; and if you are a man who earnestly desires true Buddhahood, then you must simply have faith in your self. If the self is indeed the Buddha, then "trusting in one's self" must be trusting in the Buddha Mind. Now in the Buddha there is no mind of greed, no mind of anger, no mind of ignorance, no birth or death, no mind of "good" or "bad," no passion-ruled mind, no evil things. (B, 70)

When one arrives at death's evening hour and fearsome demons come to greet him, even though he thinks "I wish that I could live a little longer in order to pray for Buddhahood," how can the demons of hell allow it? And even if one repents it will be of no avail.

Going out on to the perilous precipices of the mountain road of death with hell's demons torturing us, in that hour we will be alone. Neither

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<sup>3</sup> One nayuta equals 100 ayutas, one ayuta equals 100 koti, one koti equals from ten million to a hundred million, and one yojana is anywhere from 64 to 120 kilometers. Mt. Sumeru is the great central earth-mountain around which are ringed the continents and oceans.

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beloved parent, child, husband nor wife can accompany us. Is this not deplorable? And when we reach the River of the Three Crossings,<sup>4</sup> the demons will attack from behind, and before us in the river great serpents wait to swallow us—so where can we escape? . . . The man who does not dread this, even though he has the form of a human, has a mind that is no different from that of a beast . . . The Buddha has explained that it is harder to be born as a human being than for a thread let down from heaven to pass through the eye of a needle upright on the bottom of the ocean.<sup>5</sup> If this present life be lived in vain, in what other world then *can* we be saved? (N, 109)

### II. WORLD DHARMA AND BUDDHA DHARMA ARE IDENTICAL

*Comment:* Using the *Avatamsaka Sutra* statement, "The Buddha Dharma is not different from the world dharma, and the world dharma is not different from the Buddha Dharma" (B, 61), as a basis, Shōsan strongly asserted that the Buddha Dharma can serve as the inspiration and for the regulation of the secular world—not just as a means of emancipation from it. Those best serve the world who are free from it, and *every* vocation can become Buddha-work.

If there are no discriminative thoughts when one is engaged with the world dharma, then the world itself is the Buddha Dharma. (N, 121)

The Buddha Dharma is making good use of one's mind just as it now is; it is a matter of exerting the mind for *present* use. (R-I: 77)

If the truth of attaining Buddhahood by means of the world-dharma is not put to use, then no one will know anything of the intention of the Buddha. . . . If the world, just as it is, is not put to use by the Buddha Dharma, then it is not the Buddha Dharma. (R-II: 88)

The Buddha Dharma and the World Dharma are not two; for it is said in the words of the Buddha that when one enters [genuinely] into the world nothing that can be called "the transcendent world" remains

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<sup>4</sup> Every person who dies must cross the River of Death. He will pass through the river at the shallow, middle, or deep ford depending on his degree of goodness.

<sup>5</sup> A Buddhist parable of indeterminate source.

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[over and above this one]. For both the Buddha Dharma and the World Dharma are nothing other than conforming to truth, acting morally, and putting the way of uprightness into practice [here and now]. (B, 64)

### *Farming*

Farm work itself is Buddha-activity. Only when your purposes are evil is it mean and shameful. When your faith-mind is strong and secure, [your work] is the work of a Bodhisattva. It is mistaken to think "If we had leisure we would dedicate it to the next life." The man who thinks that he can certainly attain Buddhahood, and the man who trains his body and mind with a heart that is greedy for happiness and prays for a future life [in the Pure Land] cannot attain to Buddhahood even in thousands of ages. Now you, as you work with bitter suffering in the extremes of cold and heat, using plow, hoe, and sickle, think of the rank thickets of the passions of the body and mind as your enemies. Dig them up and cut them down! Concentrate the mind, train incessantly; *thus* should you do your farming. When one has leisure the thickets of the passions grow luxuriantly in the body. (But) when you train your body and mind by the doing of your harsh and toilsome work, then in this same mind there are no disturbances or troubles. Why indeed should the farmer, who carries on Buddha-activity throughout the four seasons, have a desire for *other* Buddhist practice? . . . .

Now the person who is carrying on farm work, even without his being conscious of it is (already) endowed with merit. Reverencing the Three Treasures, worshiping the gods (kami), maintaining the life of the masses of the nation—just *this* is the merit-work of the farmer. Even the domestic beasts and other creatures will be the recipients of this merit. Will not this special meritwork of yours be rewarded? . . .

For you to have been born as a farmer is to have received from Heaven an official appointment to be one who nurtures the world. Therefore earnestly and with reverence entrust this body of yours to the way of Heaven. Do not concern yourself even temporarily with your body's welfare. Perform your work as a public service in the Righteous Way of Heaven.<sup>6</sup> Producing the five cereal grains, worship the Buddha and the

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<sup>6</sup> For Shōsan, "Heaven" was a somewhat Confucian concept. It embodied the general, all-pervasive order of rightness in the universe that punishes evil and rewards good—along with the gods and the Buddhas.

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gods. Making a great vow to sustain the life of all men and to give alms even to the insects and other such creatures, recite "Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu" with every stroke of the hoe. Concentrate on every single stroke of the sickle with no other thoughts. When you do your farm work in this way your rice paddies and fields will become undefiled earth, the five cereal grains<sup>7</sup> become pure and as medicine for the destruction of the passions of those who eat them. Will not Heaven give its protection to such a man? (■, 69)

### *Merchandizing*

The man who sells and buys should make his primary and necessary concern for the increase of profit, into Buddhist practice, since this concern is not a different matter [*from Buddhist practice*]. Dedicating your self and your life to the Way of Heaven, you should study the path of honesty with all your heart. For the honest man the blessings of Heaven are abundant; he has the protection of Buddha and the gods; calamity is far from him; his good fortune increases naturally; all men love and respect him, and all his expectations are soon fulfilled. . . . You should be settled in your mind that it is from Heaven that you have received your occupation as the official producer of conveniences for the country. Entrusting this self of yours to the Way of Heaven, abstaining from the thought of [private] profit, and observing the principle of honesty as a merchant, you will become like the rising up of the flame of fire and like the flowing down of water. . . .

So then by means of the power of your desire to make your work of selling and buying into undefiled-delusionless good, adhere to the truth of the illusory nature of phenomena and invigorate the heart of faith. As you convey your goods from one province to another, bring goods back from another province to your own, or deliver them to a distant village in a distant province, vow that you will measure up to the expectations of everyone (i.e., all your customers).

As you go round from province to province, fix your mind on the [Buddhist] discipline that will exhaust your karma. As you cross over this mountain and that, train body and mind; as you cross over rivers big and little, "immerse" the mind. And when you launch your ships on the vast

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<sup>7</sup> The five cereal grains: buckwheat, wheat, beans, rice, and millet.

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ocean, "abandon" this body of yours, and say the nembutsu, contemplating the fact that one life is but the taking of a journey in a transitory world.  
(B, 71-2)

The nun asked: "Should one who says that everything in the world is fleeting and vain become an enemy to the world while he is abandoning it?"

He answered: "When it is taught that this world should be abandoned and the next life desired, this is in order that this world should be made better and this very earth become the Pure Land. In the final analysis the man who really considers this world important forsakes it. (N, 125)

### III. SPECIAL THEMES

#### *Dōgen*

In the *Gakudō yōjin shū*<sup>8</sup> it is said: "And even the lovely countenance of the king's concubine Seishi<sup>9</sup> is as the morning dew before the eye."

The Master said: " 'Even the lovely countenance of the king's concubine Seishi is as the morning dew' is an unexpectedly weak-soft manner of speaking. I would like to say, 'The *Buddhas* of past, present, and future, and the successive patriarchs and teachers, are all like the morning dew.' "

Then a monk said: "Is not this a helpful device for releasing one from his bondage to sound and form, (if used) according to a man's ability?"

The Master said in reply: "Even so, why didn't he say, 'Even the lovely countenance of the King's concubine is nothing more than dung, hot with impure odor'? I don't want to talk about it at all. The *Gakudō yōjin shū* or like works should have been written from the beginning directly on how to use the mind." (R-II: 15)

*Question:* "The head of Eihei-ji (Dōgen) said on the evening of the 15th of August when he was at Kitano Shrine:

So much did I want to see it again—  
The full moon of autumn—  
How can I sleep tonight under this one,  
Even more beautiful?

<sup>8</sup> A work by Dōgen giving ten rules as a guide for Zen beginners.

<sup>9</sup> A famous beauty of fifth-century BC China. Born of humble parents, she was trained in courtly graces which she used to debauch the prince of Wu.

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This (sort of poem) is not suitable for a man of the Way, is it? Has he not left behind him a poem of a moon-attached mind?"

The Master replied: "That is not the case. Dōgen wrote in this way because he was a skilled poet. When one's emotions are moved by the moon or a flower, he *should* write thus. All of you seem to think that the only good way to talk is to say, 'Don't be deluded!' or 'Cast it down!' and thus pick it (the poem) up and throw it out." (R-II: 61)

You may think that for one like Dōgen Oshō there had been an opening up (i.e., awakening), but he was not yet in the sphere of Buddhahood. It is not easily attained. (R-III: 121)

### *Fuke's pre-eminent spiritual attainments*

In this same collection of writings (*Rinzai roku*) it is related:

One day Rinzai was sitting with Kayō and the elder monk Mokutō by the fireplace in the temple hall. He said: "Every day Fuke<sup>10</sup> walks about the street in his eccentric way. Who knows whether he is an ordinary man or a holy man?" Before he had finished speaking, Fuke himself came in among the group.

Rinzai asked him: "Are you an ordinary man or a holy man?"

Fuke retorted: "You tell *me* first! Am I an ordinary man or a holy man?"

Rinzai then shouted: "*Katsu!*"<sup>11</sup>

Pointing at each of them in turn with his hand, Fuke replied: "You, Kayō, are a new bride. You, Mokutō, are an overkind Zen grandmother. And you, Rinzai, are a small bothersome child. But you do have *one* discerning eye."

A monk asked: "Were these three elder monks truly enlightened men?"

The Master said: "On the contrary, when one sees with Fuke's eye, every one of them must have been sightless." (R-II: 30)

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<sup>10</sup> Fuke (d. 860), a non-monastic, eccentric Zen monk whom Shōsan highly esteemed as having, perhaps alone of all men since Sakyamuni's time, attained to the Buddha's sphere of enlightenment. Cf. R. F. Sasaki, tr., *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto, 1977), pp. 41-42.

<sup>11</sup> *Katsu*, a meaningless syllable made famous by Rinzai. It is suddenly and vigorously shouted to awaken and stimulate the meditator.

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### *Women*

*Comment:* All of Shōsan's comments on this subject should be taken in the context of the Buddhist tradition that only men can become enlightened, that women are the sensuous sources of man's most dangerous temptation (lust), and with the male-oriented attitude of the Tokugawa era taken for granted.

Women basically have distorted natures. . . . To speak thus does not signify the abandonment of women [as hopeless for salvation]. . . . Never slander women for they are the mothers of all the Buddhas. (M, 57)

As to the matter of the near impossibility of women attaining Buddhahood: Their minds are deeply deluded; they do not understand the truth of things; their discrimination of "other" and "self" is strong; their attachments to things are intense. Because of these (factors) they envy others, complain of their own lot, and their minds are not clear. As a consequence it is almost impossible for them to attain Buddhahood. . . . (But) among human beings who with all their hearts desire soon to be welcomed and caught up by Amida (into the Pure Land), there is no difference between men and women. (N, 112)

The nun asked: "(Women) are very fearful of chanting such a blessed name as the nembutsu when they are impure because of the defilement of the menstrual flow, the three nights after marriage and the like. Should this disturb them?"

He answered: "There is a scripture text<sup>12</sup> in which we read: 'Without discussing impurities, without discussing unbalanced minds, just be mindful of Amida, and you will be able to achieve rebirth (*ōjō*).'<sup>13</sup> The text purports to say that if one but single-mindedly repeats the nembutsu, then he will achieve *ōjō*. Amida's Vow is all inclusive. Not having any abhorrence for the wicked man, how can he possibly have any aversion for (mere) impurities?" (N, 121)

Man'an Oshō was the senior monk while living in Kinzan, Mujaku [a woman who lived at the monastery] was not a nun,

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<sup>12</sup> Source of this quotation is unknown.

<sup>13</sup> Nembutsu *ōjō*: rebirth (*ōjō*) in the Pure Land by virtue of the nembutsu.

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and Daie was the occupant of the chief monk's quarters. Man'an as usual was scolding Daie [about Mujaku's presence]. Daie said: "Even though she is but a woman, she has great attainments." Man'an said nothing, but Daie ordered him to see her. Thus Man'an was compelled to have an interview.

Mujaku asked: "Is this to be an interview in Buddha Dharma style or worldly style?"

Man'an answered: "It is to be a Buddha Dharma interview."

Mujaku said: "Ask the attendants to leave and come in alone."

When Man'an came to the curtain, he saw Mujaku lying on her back on the floor mat, without a thread of clothing.

Man'an pointing (to her pubic area) said: "What's this—that leaving-place there?"

Mujaku said "All the Buddhas of past, present, and future, and the six successive patriarchs, and all of the venerable head monks under heaven have submitted themselves to coming forth from this place."

Man'an asked: "Is it possible for an old monk [like me] to enter there again or not?"

Mujaku answered: "Here in this place neither donkeys nor horses are saved." Man'an said nothing. Mujaku said: "The personal interview is now over," and turning her body around she looked [directly] at him. Man'an, filled with shame, left.

Shōsan said to the monks: "Now what would *you* have said in Man'an's place upon hearing that 'all of the venerable head monks under heaven have submitted themselves to coming forth from this place?' " No one said a word. He answered for them; "Is there any use referring to Buddhas and patriarchs? Were I to speak according to reason I would answer: 'The lotus submits itself to the mud and comes forth from it, fresh and beautiful; picking the lotus I do not take the mud.' " (R-U: 8)

### IV. SHŌSAN'S SPIRITUAL METHODOLOGY

*Comment:* Because of his mixture of nembutsu chanting, Niō zazen, and the use of koan, Shōsan's meditational "method" has been somewhat of a puzzle and may seem to be inconsistent—especially for a Sōtō monk. But there is a roughly-defined progression, an existentially-determined ordering of means and stages.

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One should use all (of his energy) vigorously, and if he thus applies his energy, let it be on just one thing—koan, dharani, or nembutsu. Just use your unflagging energy on this single thing. (R-I: 135)

One day he said in explanation: “What we call discipline or practice is just this: the capacity for valor. For one who does not have this spirit of valor, no matter what his sort of system of training may be, or what kind of virtuous heart he may have, his practice is useless.” (R-I: 81)

### *Keep up the level of ki!*

*Comment:* *Ki* 機 is Shōsan’s word for the individual’s primal energy, centered in the *hara* (abdomen). It is deeper and more visceral than the *ki* 氣 of temper, mood, or attention. His usage seems to be a combination of Taoist, Zen, and samurai elements. Whether there is herein an *implicit* sense of the “original nature” of Zen, is perhaps a moot point.

One day the Master explained: “By whatever means, the beginner in the Way should arouse the genuine will to practice. Practices which are extreme, such as very intensive zazen, should not be undertaken before the genuine will to practice has been aroused. By irrationally drawing forth his root energy and performing all sorts of severe austerities, one exhausts his spirit, and his energy (*ki*) runs low—all without any advantage to him. . . . The practice of meditation is a matter of developing and establishing energy. . . . Indeed you must not waste your energy. . . . (The beginner) should just push ahead with determination and awaken the genuine will to practice.” (R-I: 7)

### *Maintain the valorous mind!*

*Comment:* Shōsan wrote at first of the “buoyant” or “free-floating” mind to indicate the ability to deal triumphantly with all circumstances. Later, feeling that “buoyant” was being misunderstood as “casual, easy-going,” he shifted to the “valorous” or “courageous” mind—of the warrior. It is *ki* at full tide and in vigorous action; a calling forth all one’s basic visceral energy in support of an intensive concentration on the matter at hand.

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However, the man who would practice the way of the Buddha without first having a courageous heart will find it impossible. He cannot enter the way of the Buddha with a timorous, fearful spirit. Without a strict watch [over his mind] and a strong resolute practice, he will be at the mercy of his passions and must accept suffering (as his lot). The Way farer is one who overcomes all things with a firm, resolute spirit.

(B, 65)

The valorous mind is the essence of the buoyant mind that achieves victory in all circumstances: (1) It is a mind that is always aware of life-death, (2) knows its obligations, (3) is always in the vanguard, (4) understands the truth of cause and effect, (5) contemplates delusion and impermanence, (6) knows the body to be impure, (7) makes prudent use of time, (8) has faith in the Three Treasures, (9) sacrifices the body for one's lord, (10) maintains guard over itself, (11) watches over [its own] self-abandonment, (12) knows its own evil, (13) waits humbly in the presence of the nobles and lords, (14) fulfills its social responsibilities, (15) gives attention to the words of the Buddhas and the patriarchs, (16) is righteous and compassionate, and (17) concerns itself with the sole purpose of the Buddha's appearance (i.e., emancipation).

Because these mental qualities issue from the valorous, steadfast mind, one becomes free from every attachment, and floats victorious over all circumstances. Therefore when the warrior maintains his buoyant mind, even though he suddenly goes forth [into battle] and dies, his suffering will be slight. The man who would maintain this frame of mind should firmly keep in mind images such as the Diamond Vajra<sup>14</sup> and that of Fudō:<sup>15</sup> these images manifest in bodily form the overcoming of the evil demons. . . . This courageous mind that keeps itself as an impregnable fortress without cessation, has free, unhindered merit-power. (B, 66-67)

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<sup>14</sup> Vajra: originally a weapon of extreme hardness used by warriors, in Mahayana Buddhism it became a diamond or diamond hardness, a symbol of the power of the Buddha to destroy illusion.

<sup>15</sup> Fudō, the Immovable One, the "angry" Buddha figure found in many temples in Japan, is the manifest form of Dainichi Nyorai, the supreme Buddha of esoteric Buddhism.

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*Know the body for what it is and cast it aside!*

*Comment:* The meditator by whatever means should always be aware of the true nature of the body, and make that awareness the background-awareness of all his practicing. It is a passion-ridden, corruptible body-of-death in Shōsan's view. Shōsan's uncompromising denunciation of the body springs in general from the Buddhist view of the body as one's impacted karma from the past, and as a major source of attachment to worldly existence. It was intensified by his battlefield experiences, and by his own inner-personal experience of feeling himself bound to birth-death through his body.

Hence if one will love this foul-smelling flesh, there can be no emancipation [for him]. A wise man said that such a one is like a prisoner in a dungeon. Now the man who has not yet attained to the meaning [of this] must concentrate solely on the renunciation of the body, clench his teeth, fix his eyes, and make direct use of the attitude of one whose head is about to be cut off, keeping an intensive watch over birth-death. Or else he should have the attitude of one who has become a corpse and has been put into a coffin resting upon the blazing firewood. Or again he should maintain the attitude of one who has leapt into a great fire and is now in the midst of it. Or yet again he should have the attitude of one who must gallop into the midst of a thousand or even ten thousand enemy horsemen in order to take the head of their commander. Unless the body is thus (firmly) renounced, one will be completely unable to practice the way of emancipation. (F, 84)

So then consider this bag of worms to be your enemy and destroy it by saying the nembutsu. This is the (proper) meditation discipline for cutting off the root of thoughts. (R-I: 10)

If one who practices the nembutsu perceives his body as a dream and an illusion, then the body's suffering of birth, aging, sickness, and death is negligible. (N, 121)

My way of praying for rebirth (in the Pure Land) is to make a great vow that I must extinguish every thought that treasures this bag of excrement and repeat the nembutsu day and night with all my strength. . . . There-

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fore, thinking "What a mortifying, humiliating thing!" . . . put forth all your strength, set your back teeth, clench your fists, beat your chests, pinch your bodies, and (with the thought) "What an abominable bag of dung," glare at it while you repeat "Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu."  
(R-III: 71)

### *Death-awareness*

*Comment:* Closely related to body-awareness as a background for all meditative practice, is death-awareness. For Shōsan this was the pre-eminently effective device—both as an all-pervasive consciousness, and as a kind of "master koan"—for producing the necessary vigor of meditational practice. Shōsan's strong death-awareness was not only methodological, but was intensified by his samurai training and experiences.

The word that I must teach you is: Make the one character "death" lord within your bosom and, casting everything [else] aside, guard it!  
(R-I: 101)

Two or three old women came and asked him about the essence of Buddhism. The Master said: "I do not know anything that I can teach you." After a while he said, suddenly: "You will die, you will die. Never forget the fact of dying and say the nembutsu."  
(R-I: 161)

I have a nature that never, from the beginning, has forgotten death; wherever I am I dare not be unprepared. I surpass others only in having a nature that detests death. As a consequence I have used the piercing glare of the samurai.  
(R-I: 37)

One day the Master said: "Since I passed the age of sixty I have had a certain change of mental attitude. When I am conducting a funeral service, there is in my mind a strong feeling of the acceptance of death and a feeling that I am conducting my own funeral. . . . Usually when I go to conduct a funeral service for a man who has died, immediately there springs up this energy of a samurai about to fight in a duel."  
(R-I: 68)

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The Master said: "Even if you do not seek to become a Buddha after death, right now while you are living, practice dying freely (i.e., without fear or anxiety). Men in these times, being ignorant of this, hope only to attain Buddhahood after death and do not practice dying right now."  
(R-II: 38)

Talking to a group at dawn one day he said: "Not continuously, but often, death-energy becomes acutely oppressive. Indeed, regularly every dawn, the Great Matter rising from below the navel and obstructing my chest, makes it impossible for me to breathe easily."

Then a monk asked: "Are you now speaking of the Great Matter of Birth and Death (i.e., how to free oneself from *samsāra*)?"

The Master said: "There is nothing *called* the 'Great Matter,' it simply *is* the Great Matter."  
(R-I: 56)

One day a hermit came to inquire about methods of practice in meditation. The Master explained it thus: "Cast away and leave behind everything; just train for death by dying. By continually doing death-training, thus opening up death to the understanding, when death really comes you should not be dismayed. . . . Just become as earth itself, and using the nembutsu do death-training."  
(R-I: 10)

[The phrase] "One should learn to abide always in a state of *samadhi*" means that you should never allow your essential energy to escape. If you reach such an extreme point that [you feel] you will die tomorrow, then by no means can you lose your energy. It is because death is forgotten that this energy escapes; so you must set your teeth, fix your eyes, and concentrate on the phrase, "I am dying right now!" At any rate, in the ordinary state there is a tendency to lose [this energy].<sup>16</sup>

(R-III: 108)

### *Nembutsu*

*Comment:* Shōsan was reared on the nembutsu and never forsook it as a useful training device for himself or others, especially for beginners and for those, like himself, trained in its use. However, as the follow-

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<sup>16</sup> This is perhaps an adverse comment on the quietist tendency inherent in Sōtō Zen or upon *shikantaza*, objectless meditation.

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ing selections indicate, he crossed it with Niō-zazen energy, gave it a body-of-death underpinning, and used it like a koan to cut off miscellaneous thoughts.

The Master was always saying the nembutsu. . . . (R-I: 162)

Now men who are not of developed minds, conceiving the nembutsu ōjō to be a slight and shallow thing, think that other ways are more profound. This is because they do not understand the genuine Truth.

From ancient times "sitting meditation," "seeing into one's mind," and "seeing into the Dharma" have been used. Do these differ from the nembutsu ōjō? In the Zen sect it is taught: Project your meditational concentration into everything [that you think or do], and make everything subject to meditational concentration. But in none of these teachings is there any more or other than meditative seeing into the Dharma. And one who practices nembutsu ōjō is in accord with the energy of Zen without being conscious of it. (N, 110)

The man who disregards this transient world, fixing his mind only on Buddhahood, and repeats the nembutsu, even though he has but few roots of goodness, achieves great merit which will become the (karmic) condition for Buddhahood. This is called undefiled goodness. (N, 109)

First of all, the man who is repeating the nembutsu should exert forceful energy as he chants "Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu." If he so practices, delusive thoughts will naturally cease without his knowing when they pass away. For example, if one is busy in his home, even though a guest may come, the guest will soon depart. Just so, even if delusions spring up, when one is strongly exerting himself (in practice) and has no dealings with them, they will soon be extinguished. Therefore when thoughts arise one should work with his eyes fixed and pay them no attention as he practices. When effortful practice is piled up, one will come into possession of the energy of zazen. He will also realize the energy possessed by the Niō. (R-I: 35)

In the year of the horse, on February 18 at Kenshōji, a samurai asked about the manner of saying the nembutsu. The Master fixed his eyes, clenched his fists, and swelling out his chest said, "Namadabu, Namadabu,

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Namadabu—thus should you say it. If you do not always do it this way it will be useless.” (R-III: 78)

One day a samurai came and asked about the manner of saying the nembutsu. The Master explained, saying: “While you are engaged in carrying out the duties of a samurai, as you stand in front of your enemies who are ready to defend themselves, leap into the midst of them, repeating with concentration: ‘Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu.’ Thus you should repeat the ‘leaping nembutsu’ to such a degree that you will be able to freely enter into their midst.” (R-III: 36)

Even in the recitation of the nembutsu there are two (types of) actions: There is the one in which you hope to become a Buddha by reciting the nembutsu; it is a karmic work of transmigration. Actually the truly right action is in hoping to extinguish all of the passions by means of the nembutsu. So then, if you abandon everything, repeat “Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu” as you gasp in your breath, and always train for death, there can be nothing but an easy death. You must use only a vigorous nembutsu; a weak nembutsu repetition will not do.

(R-I: 87)

The nun asked: “If every single thing that is thought or said except for Namu-amida-butsu is illusion, then should not the true practitioner of the nembutsu refrain from speaking any other words at all?”

He answered: “Such a question as yours is asked because of the weakness of your nembutsu. Even though the words in one’s mouth have to do with worldly matters and relate to the evils of this impure world, if only your mind itself becomes Namu-amida-butsu, then *whatever* is said is the Name.” (N, 120-1)

### *Niō-zazen*

*Comment:* This is Shōsan’s best-known method. In some sense it was the heart of his own practice, a kind of samurai zazen. Perhaps, however, it is not quite accurate to call it a “method.” It was rather a quality of fierce determination and concentrative intensity to be used in building up a firm, unwavering will to practice meditation, applicable equally to dharani, koan, sutra chanting, and nembutsu.

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In the practice of the Way of the Buddha there is just the one important matter: to appropriate and exercise the immense, firm energy of the Niō and of Fudō, to drive the body-mind to the point of destruction by the use of this energy—other than this I know of no special Buddha Dharma. Let the man who would enter into my method rouse up his own energy, fix his eyes, and appropriate the energy of the demon-conquering forms of Niō and Fudō. (R-II: 3)

Keep the torso straight, settle your energy below the navel, fix the eyes firmly, and thus recite the sutras. If you do it in this manner, you will be able to call forth your energy in your practice, by means of sutra chanting. (R-I: 11)

As for me, when—as though not able to see—I try to direct my basic energy towards myself, the energy is always there to set my teeth, fix my eyes, and scowl (at my body). . . . Set (your teeth) firmly together, fix your eyes, and steadily, steadily there comes the energy of the warrior's piercing glare. This way of working is called the warrior's piercing-eye zazen. (R-III: 109)

In the practice of the way of the Buddha, you should use the Buddha image as a model. However, with respect to Buddha images, the beginner in meditation should not fix his eyes upon the Nyorai Buddha image; he is not capable of Nyorai zazen. Rather he should fix his eyes upon such images as those of the Two Kings (Niō) and Fudō and do Niō-zazen. To begin with, the Niō can be thought of as the entrance gate to the Buddha Dharma, and Fudō as the first of the Buddhas. . . . If you will appropriate their energy and power you can overcome the worldly passions. There is nothing else, no substitute, for simply and wholeheartedly making use of the intense forceful mind. . . . Nevertheless, in these days, because there is no one who (thus) uses his living energy, the Buddha Dharma is dying out. (R-II: 2)

Observe the significance of the building that contains the Buddha image: The images of the vajra-bearing kings (Niō) have been placed in the gateway<sup>17</sup>; inside the main room of the temple are the twelve guardian

<sup>17</sup> Niō, the Two Kings, are the fierce deities on guard at either side in a Buddhist temple gate in Japan.

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gods ("branch" or zodiac gods),<sup>18</sup> the sixteen beneficent deities,<sup>19</sup> the eight vajra deities,<sup>20</sup> the kings that guard the four quarters (*shitenno* or directional gods), and the five greatly honored deities.<sup>21</sup> Each one vibrates with power and energy, and all lined up in order, they wear armor, and carry spears, swords, staves, bows, and arrows.

Now the man who practices the Dharma and does not penetrate to the significance [of this arrangement] will have great difficulty in quelling the six robber-senses and the worldly passions. . . . It is therefore my wish that you should practice by fastening your eyes upon the images in the Buddha hall. And I hope that you will carefully consider the order of the images, appropriate their energy and practice with this order as your model . . . you should appropriate these gods as (your own) energy.

(R-II: 88)

The Niō represent the level of mind that works by facing in one direction only (i.e., with fierce, simplistic beginner's energy). The twelve gods are gentler [than the Niō] and represent the slightly more mature mind. Each of the stages of the Bodhisattva images and the Nyorai image represents the level to which the mind is matured and is used accordingly. The twelve gods bearing the twelve time-symbols upon their heads indicate the practice of the discipline during the twelve periods of the (twenty-four-hour) day. The four heavenly gods trample on the demons of heaven whom we bear on our heads.<sup>22</sup>

(R-I: 148)

### *Koan, zazen, and satori*

*Comment:* As a man brought up with the nembutsu, and later becoming something of a Sōtō-type monk, Shōsan perhaps had a certain

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<sup>18</sup> Each god bears one of the twelve zodiac animals (i.e., rat, tiger, sheep, monkey, etc.) on his head to indicate the respective two-hour periods into which the twenty-four-hour day is divided.

<sup>19</sup> Sixteen beneficent deities, the demon-spirits pledged to guard the keepers of the Prajñāpāramitā way.

<sup>20</sup> Eight vajra deities, another term for the eight great vidyā-rājas, who are the dependents of Fudō.

<sup>21</sup> Five greatly honored deities, actually Buddha incarnations, are vigorous chastizers of evil in the Fudō group.

<sup>22</sup> The order and number of these gods varies from temple to temple, but Shōsan's main point is clear: There is to be a spiritual progression from intense, single-minded energy that develops meditative power, on to the quieter, more mature practice which reaches its apex in Nyorai.

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prejudice against koan and the koan-induced satori. But his basic criticisms were far deeper and more existential than a Sōtō-nembutsu prejudice.

*Question:* Which is superior, which inferior—to concentrate on a koan or to concentrate on death? The Master said: “To concentrate on a koan is no doubt ‘superior.’ Death, no matter how regarded, is a *kanbō*.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, anything in this impure world which is regarded as substantial and which one concentrates on, is included among *kanbō*.”

“Now on the other hand in such a saying as, ‘The eight-sided polished disc freely flies through the sky,’<sup>24</sup> the cutting edges are many and provide nothing for the mind. However, this type of Zen saying will be suitable or unsuitable according to the personal situation. For myself, ‘death’ has been naturally suitable.”

In this connection he said to the assembly: “Now then, what meaning can *you* give to ‘the eight-sided flying disc?’” They were uncertain how to answer.

The Master then said: “What (indeed) is the meaning of ‘Nothing, nothing, nothing?’” Then speaking very forcefully he said: “If you try to understand [such words as these], they are a white cloud 10,000 *ri* distant.” (R-II: 48)

There are what are called the “Three Treasures” (i.e., Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) so as a result there are monks, who are a “Treasure” for the people of the world; but if, instead (of being a Treasure) they give a useless thing (i.e., koan), they harm people. Yet we can do nothing about it. Now it is not that there is not such a thing as the penetration of a koan: but even if one *does* “penetrate” it, he cannot thereby stop the hungry ghost and beast mind [in himself].<sup>25</sup> (R-I: 57)

<sup>23</sup> *Kanbō*, the method of meditating on a more or less concrete object such as a mandala or Buddha image. In the technical sense it is a lower scale or grosser device than a koan. Shōsan seems here to suggest that death, as a concrete immanent fact of daily human experience, is such an objective type of meditation subject.

<sup>24</sup> Polished eight-sided disc, a weapon thrown through the air at the adversary. The use of it as some sort of koan perhaps arose from its presence in *Kidōroku*, T47, No. 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Hungry ghosts and beasts, traditionally the rebirth forms of evil and greedy men. Shōsan often uses the figure in reference to the inner psychic forces having this evil, greedy quality—especially in his own case.

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It is good for monks to practice meditation by concentrating on the old examples (i.e., koan). You should try Jōshū's *mu*. Strongly exerting your energy, you should concentrate on *mu*, *mu*, *mu* every hour of the day and in everything that occurs. Do not cease from this even in your dreams! But above all if you concentrate on death you make no mistake. (R-I: 6)

As for me, when—as though not able to see [anything else]—I try to direct my basic energy toward myself, the energy is always there to set my teeth, fix my eyes, and scowl [at my body]. From the time I was a child it has been thus with me. . . . Set [the teeth] firmly together, fix your eyes, and steadily, steadily there comes the energy of the warrior's piercing glare. This way of working is called the warrior's piercing-eye zazen. . . . When I make use of this energy there comes spontaneously a state where not a single thought is a hindrance to me. (R-III: 109)

From the very beginning I never allowed my self to practice according to the quiet and peaceful way of meditation. Therefore I have taught that you should make use of the middle of the Nihonbashi marketplace and do your zazen in the midst of noise. (R-II: 35)

This matter of meditation practice is a very difficult thing. For myself I find that there is now no hour of the day when I am not doing zazen.<sup>26</sup> For example, one should not hold back even a little (of his zazen energy) whether he mingles in great crowds, or is thrown down in wrestling, or no matter how madly he leaps in the odori (festival dance). (R-I: 15)

### *Kenshō and satori*

Even though I myself have also had a little something of kenshō,<sup>27</sup> it has never been of any use. (R-I: 57)

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<sup>26</sup> Shōsan here presents his idea of the right meditational method and his interpretation of authentic zazen states. They are those which apply to and can be experienced in an active life; they are *not* quietist states to be enjoyed in eremitic solitude.

<sup>27</sup> For Shōsan, both kenshō and satori as used in his day were suspect—applied to false, shallow “enlightenment” experiences, debased from their true traditional Zen significance of “seeing one's own original nature,” “understanding,” or “Buddha-enlightenment.”

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There is no special means (of enlightenment). The “enlightened statement” and the like are useless. . . . More than “enlightenment-gained shouts” or anything else of the sort, [it is essential] just to train with a bold, courageous spirit. The old song says: “The satori that is not a satori is [the real] satori. The satori that is a satori is a mere dream-satori.” Indeed the satori that is a satori is an uncertain thing. I like the satori that is not a satori. Hōnen’s nembutsu ōjō was a non-satori satori.

(R-III: 5)

Giving “satori” easily to the beginner and “awakening” him in a short time is a great sin. Nowadays there are many [instances] of this sort.

(R-I: 103)

And again, when satori is entered into, one thinks this to be the attainment of the Buddha state of consciousness—but this is not the case. Even if one has the proper answer (to his koan), he cannot use it freely. The Buddha’s state of consciousness is something exceptional. But even if one does not seek satori, one should simply practice hard and gain virtue and merit.

(R-I: 77)

It seems that when people settle down on Master Mumon’s Zen maxims or on Master Daie’s eight kinds of difficult ways and the like, they think that they are doing real practice and attaining the Dharma. Because they work at “empty” zazen they think that real No-thought, no-mind is to be completely entranced. This is a great mistake. This use of practice will diminish one’s capacities; he may become ill, even insane. No-thought, no-mind in Buddhism is a no-thought, no-mind that can work on everything. No-thought, no-mind is to be used when one is sad, when one is joyful, indeed on every occasion.

(R-I: 70)

The man spoke again: “When I perform zazen for a long time, a little light is manifested to me. When I told Mutoku of this experience he said that I was seeing the light of Dharma-kāya and that if I would put forth more and more strength, all my body would become light-filled. . . .”

The Master said: “Well now, this is very mistaken. As to the light that is due to the lessening of your powers. If you think this sort of thing is right, you are sure to become suddenly mad. Now do you recall that your powers were lessened?” The man said: “My powers have been very much

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lessened. I can not endure in my breast even the sound of things being rubbed [together] in a bowl."

The Master said: "Quickly, quickly give it up. A man like Mutoku—what a dangerous man he is!" (R-III: 13)

A certain elder monk saying that he had satori, was very "liberal" and "free" in his actions, became deranged in mind, did many shameful things, and (finally) committed suicide. . . . Another monk whose aspiration was deep and who had hold of the truth, had his "enlightenment" approved by a mistaken teacher; as a result of this he became mentally deranged and tormented in mind. He traveled to western Japan and there killed himself. There have been others who, saying that they have satori, discard [all use of] the main [Buddha] image in temples, the scriptures, and mortuary tablets. Or, saying they have satori, and have achieved the highest state, they despise others. Or again, saying they have satori, they make it their main purpose to know no shame (i.e., to be completely free of all social-moral restraints). Or saying they have satori they do such things as living in the mountains and adopting eccentric mannerisms. There are many of these, who lead people astray in various ways. . . . And besides this, there are numberless instances of people who, having said they had satori and gone mad, have in various ways recovered their sanity. Since all these cases are those of people of recent times, I will not record their names.

Therefore the man who would practice the One Great Matter (i.e., concentrating on the existential significance of birth-death) must without exception understand the right and wrong methods. Now even though it may be said that there are many men who are detrimental to the Dharma, they can be divided into seven types:

- (1) There is the man who loves [his] saké;
- (2) There is the man who comments on and criticizes the world (but not himself);
- (3) There is the man who readily imparts [his approval of] satori;
- (4) There is the man who, being completely "free," neglects [Buddhist] religious practices;
- (5) There is the man of selfish mind;
- (6) There is the man whose desire for fame and recognition is strong;
- (7) There is the man who is fundamentally covetous.

In addition to these [counsels] you should keep your minds alert and shun

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evil companions. (Even) when you have only short periods of time, you should make yourself familiar with men who expound the Great Matter of birth-death and discuss "illusion and impermanence." The short mugwort growing among the [long] hemp is a mirror (i.e., an example) for us. (F, 88-9)

### V. SHŌSAN'S PROGRESS TOWARD ENLIGHTENMENT

*Comment:* It is difficult to speak confidently on this subject. Shōsan was a very honest man, ever tending to demean himself. The most that he would claim for himself was a "sight," but not a possession, of the Buddha's enlightenment; a short experience of Fuke's level of experience; and the possession of the "seed" of enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> Many lives remained before enlightenment could be attained. Echū, his disciple, seems to have had a different opinion (see below).

One day of my present practice is of more consequence than a whole year of my past practice. (I, 159)

Though I regretted that I could not stay in the mountains [as a hermit], now I think that it was fortunate. And the reason is this: If I had remained there in the mountains just like that, without my knowing it I would have become a "good man of the Way" and could not have known my own faults. But being always in the world, I am an ordinary man who knows his own faults. (R-III: 37)

I do not know anything good about Buddhism; I know only my own badness. If you should become my friend and should frequently visit me, I would reveal to you my sorrowful repentance over the hungry ghosts and beasts that dwell in my place (i.e., my heart). I truly know you don't know that I am sinking into hell. (R-I: 57)

Although I well realize the essential point and possess the seed, I have not gained [full] freedom. It is like this: You may have your eyes fastened

<sup>28</sup> The "seed" for Shōsan signifies the essence of enlightenment grasped momentarily in an incontrovertibly genuine experience. It is perhaps functionally similar to the momentary flash of nirvanic awareness that comes to the meditator who attains to Path-realization as one of the four levels of enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism. For Shōsan, the seed must become fully and continuously pervasive of all one's actions to be full enlightenment. He did not think of his own attainment as thus completed.

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upon some gold, but if it is not grasped in your hand, you can't use it.  
(R-II: 87)

On the third day of October in the year of the horse the Master said to a dying monk: "Even though you are dying it does not greatly matter. For even though you lived twenty or thirty years more and continued to carry on your practice, there could be no change [of basic spiritual attainment for you]. For me too, though I have lived to be [nearly] eighty, there has been no change. Nevertheless, I have assuredly obtained the seed. You too should thoroughly concentrate on the seed in order not to lose it. For me, or for any man, it is important not to lose the seed, but to practice again and again while going out [into a new birth]. . . . After all, one's life is subject to cause and effect; it is beyond our understanding. But [obtaining] the seed depends on one himself." (R-III: 107)

Even if one has reached the point of seeing his [original] nature, he will not then be in the Buddha's sphere of enlightenment. [In such a case] I do not know *what* it is that is to be certified (i.e., given *inka*, a Zen master's approval). . . . Even if the mind has been transformed, the Buddha's sphere of enlightenment will not be attained even in five or ten lives of practice. Indeed though many lives be passed, what a difficult matter it is to attain to the Buddha sphere of enlightenment! In this way I have certainly *perceived* the sphere of enlightenment of the Buddhas of past, present, and future. However, I cannot say that I have *arrived* at that sphere of enlightenment. (R-III: 16)

Again, after this, when I was sixty years old, at dawn at the hour of the tiger (3-5 AM), I was suddenly gripped by the mind of the Buddha [who said], "All beings in the three worlds are regarded by me as an only child." Truly at that moment when I looked at the situation of the ants, suffering and enjoying life, I had sympathy, and the desire that by some means or other they should be saved, penetrated to the very marrow [of my bones]. But this state of mind too was lost after three days. However, even now this is of value, since from that time on there has arisen some small mind of compassion [in me]. (R-III: 13)

Echū writes of another experience thus:

In the sixteenth year of Kan-ei (1639), on the 28th day of the

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eighth month at dawn, he serenely attained awakening. For a time he lived in complete and spontaneous freedom. After about a month he thought: 'Why should I continue to sit here in this enlightened state?' Then he abandoned it, and withdrawing from it, diligently worked at his practice. (s, 8)

Shōsan's own account follows:

Nor am I without a kenshō type of experience. This too [came] when I was sixty-one years old. On August 27th, at the dawning of the 28th, I effortlessly parted from birth-death (samsāra) and assuredly encountered my original nature. On that occasion I danced, shouting "Nothing, nothing!" and was of a mind to wish only that. Indeed at that time even if you had cut off my head, I would have thought "Truly this is nothing, nothing at all." Thirty days passed like this and then I thought: "No, this kind of thing is not suitable for me, for it can be only a passing emotional state." So I cast it away from myself and returning to my previous state, I thrust that [same old] death back into my bosom and practicing vigorously, carried on my discipline.

As I had expected, all such experiences are false and this bag of dung called Shōsan remains hidden. Again, after this, likewise I was certainly grasped by the mind of Fuke, and walked along the Way as far as some hundreds of yards. This has been of great benefit to me, for there rose in me the strong desire to devote myself, life after life and age after age, to becoming like Fuke. Furthermore, even though I too, just as I have said, have moved along step by step in completing my discipline, and—having cast even kenshō aside—returned to what I really am and worked at my practice, even now this bag of excrement can't give itself up.

(R-III: 13)