

# TRANSLATION

## Sokushin-ki (II)

SHIDŌ MUNAN ZENJI

TRANSLATED BY KOBORI SŌHAKU

### DHARMA TALKS

WHAT is outside the self is Buddha. It is just like empty space. Therefore, when you die, "returned to emptiness" is written on your mortuary tablet.<sup>1</sup>

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Always to think nothing is the Buddha-practice.

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All things are right when they come from what thinks nothing.

While alive, be dead;  
Thoroughly dead.  
Do as you will,  
And all is right.<sup>2</sup>

What this poem means is:

All is transient  
Is the law of arising and perishing.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibai* 位牌.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Suzuki Daisetz.

Where birth-and-death cease completely  
Is blissful nirvāna.<sup>3</sup>

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To a person who asks about Shinto.

Takamagahara<sup>4</sup> is the self of man. That the kami<sup>5</sup> dwell in you means your mind is clear.

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To a person who asks about Confucianism.

What is ordered by heaven is called nature.<sup>6</sup> What is outside the self is heaven. [Confucianists say] that there being nothing in one's mind originates in the order of heaven; that is, it is man's nature. Living according to this nature in you—that is called the Way.

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To a person who asks about the Buddha Way.

[It consists in] eliminating your self. There are 84,000 evils in the self. When there is no self there is great repose. Just this is kami. This is heaven. In Buddhism, it is called Buddha.

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To a person who asks about priesthood and *sbōjin*.<sup>7</sup>

The reasons for a priest's *sbōjin* are: (1) the five pungent roots,<sup>8</sup> alcoholic drink, and meat are so stimulating that purity of mind is impossible if one eats

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<sup>3</sup> From the *Nirvana Sutra*; lines known by heart by all Buddhists.

<sup>4</sup> The abode of the gods; the Japanese Olympus.

<sup>5</sup> Kami 神 has no acceptable Western equivalent; it refers to the Sacred in general, as well as the specific objects of worship in Shinto.

<sup>6</sup> Nature is *shō* (性), the nature or fundamental quality behind the manifestation. Cf. *Chung-yung* (The Doctrine of the Mean): "The heavenly order (天命) is called 性."

<sup>7</sup> *Sbōjin* 精進 (Skt. *virya*) originally means zeal, unchecked progress, progress through exertion in the Buddha Way. This gradually came to refer as well to the dietary regimen undertaken by Buddhist practitioners.

<sup>8</sup> Five pungent roots forbidden to Buddhists: garlic, three kinds of onion, and leeks.

them. (2) All living things are our friends. Who can know if one's lord or attendant, parent or child, husband or wife, brother or sister, or friend, might not transmigrate into fish or bird? For these reasons, we abstain from such foods.

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A person said to one who asked how to gain the people's trust. "Giving them water when they are thirsty, food when they are hungry, clothes when they are cold, should gain their trust."

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A man entrusted with high governmental rank said to his eldest son as he prepared to hand over his rank and property to him: "First, compassion; second, no desire; third, impartiality in all things. Rule the land in accord with these three maxims." Though he was not a learned man, his words show he had attained clarity of mind.

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Rare it is to be born a daimyo or high official.<sup>9</sup> One who performed deeply compassionate and meritorious deeds in prior existence will be born to such high positions in his present existence. This changeableness manifests the law of cause and effect. Chancing to be born a daimyo, a man gives himself up to his selfish inclinations, commits various evils, and therefore is bound to be worse off than he was before. It is pathetic.

Someone asked me if it were really true that man is reincarnated. I asked him, "Where were you born?" "In the west country," he replied. "Right now, try to go where you were born," I said. "All right," he replied, "I have gone there. My former home is before my eyes." "Have you your own self at this very moment?" I asked. His reply was, "I have nothing." I said, "Remember here that the moment your self dies, you abide wherever you wish. Thought<sup>10</sup> reaches to the west country in the snap of the fingers."

"Now why are you here?" "In order to seek the Dharma," he answered. I said, "For the Dharma one goes to a temple. For sexual pleasure one goes to a prostitute. If one has an impure mind, he will always be reborn as an animal.

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<sup>9</sup> *Kōke* 高家; master of Court Ceremony, a high shogunal office.

<sup>10</sup> *Nen* 念.

## SOKUSHIN-KI

If one has a pure, compassionate mind, he will be reborn as a man. Never doubt this. Thought prevails everywhere, the self is its lodging place. Buddha is that which neither goes there, nor stays here, that which has not a single thought, or a self, that which is simply one with the Void (*śūnya*).” He left with good understanding.

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Around fire we are hot. Around water we are cool. When we approach a great man of the Way, the evils of our self vanish. This is a man of the Way. Careless use of this name is a fearful thing.

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### INTERDICTIONS FOR MY DISCIPLES

*Priests are the worst in heaven and earth. They pass their lives without working. They are great robbers.*

*When one becomes a teacher of men after having mastered the Buddhist practice, he is a precious treasure of the universe. Everywhere, there are only those who teach in order to make a living. Teachers of the great Way are very rare.*

*Waste not a single scrap of paper, nor half a sen.<sup>11</sup>*

*Always be modest, and do nothing for your own self. The enemy of the Dharma and of Buddha is your self.*

*Consider as poison what you receive from others. When you have reached the ultimate of the great Way, you may receive what others treasure, because it will be of aid to them.*

*While undergoing practice, should you be struck or insulted by another, you should rejoice, for you are thus using up karma from prior existences.*

*Should you stay the night at someone's house, do not borrow any bedclothes from him, but sleep propped in a corner. You should carry what you need in your travelling pouch. On the day promised, you must leave whether it is raining or snowing.*

*Until you have mastered the great Way, you should not go near a woman.*

*Do not stop in the house of one who is unsympathetic to Buddhism.*

You should always abide by the above nine rules. Others will be found in the sayings of the eminent masters of old.

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<sup>11</sup> A hundredth part of a yen.

## THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

There is something difficult to teach others: that walking, stopping, sitting and lying are all nothing other than the great Way. Unthinking people think that it is easy. Though they sometimes do see their mind, their inclination to follow their former ways is always strong.

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There is a type of person difficult to teach: he who is too wise in worldly wisdom.

Another who is difficult to teach is one who is fond of wealth and honor.

To concentrate in following the great Way, you should rid yourself of bad companions.

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A man asked the cause of illusion. I told him it is caused by knowing good and bad.

A man asked the cause of satori. I told him it is caused by knowing good and bad.

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To one who asked how it is possible for him to see his mind.

Instead of sensual matters,  
Think only  
Who is it that sees?  
Who is it that hears?

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It is a thing to be thankful for, that while even people from the lower classes are designated as *in* (院), the word "king" is avoided.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This seems to mean that everyone may gain the appellation *in* (*in* means temple or sub-temple, but here Munan is probably referring to the priests themselves, who are sometimes referred to as *in* as well, after the name of their temple); no one uses the appellation "king." All are the same once they take the tonsure; in Buddhism, there are no kings.

It is best to go to one who is wise in the way you seek to know. Laymen choose between good and bad priests, priests speak of good and bad laymen. Such matters may be knowable to some extent, but certain knowledge of them is not possible. Judging from what I heard long ago as a young man, even stirrups have innumerable designations. It is thus difficult for a samurai to know fully of the matters of his own profession, not to mention things outside of it.

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My disciple asked me about performing services for the spirits of the dead. I told him first to eliminate his body and mind, and to complete his Buddhist training; that his attempts would then bring peace to the spirits. An old priest, though he has no sensuous thought himself, will be unable to exorcise spirits as long as such thoughts are reflected on his mind. If one performs services for the spirits of the dead in a firm state of no-thought, even evil spirits are certain to be laid to rest. Such exorcism is a sure sign one has attained the Buddha Way. Coming upon such a person, both men and women will have their evil thoughts extinguished. He is called a man of the Way.

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The mind of Śakyamuni Buddha is called *dōshin* (the Way-mind).<sup>13</sup> His figure is that of priest. His manner of life is that of beggar. It is little wonder the Buddha Dharma has so degenerated: we call the bonze of lowest rank, the temple attendant, *dōshin*, and speak of the outcasts<sup>14</sup> as beggars. We have thus relinquished two noble names to men ignoble beyond description. Now only one name remains to us, that of priest (*shukke*),<sup>15</sup> which we interpret as being one who has no self. In the whole world, is it possible there is anyone who has not his own self?

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A man who would wear priestly robes should never go near a woman. However faultless he may keep himself, she will be reflected in his thought. To

<sup>13</sup> 道心

<sup>14</sup> *Hinin* 非人. Those at the bottom of the social scale, below the four social classes.

<sup>15</sup> 出家

approach a woman, therefore, is surely the practice of a beast. I abstain from contact with women because the mind of a beast still remains in me.

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Man ascends to high rank by means of fame and fine costume. Hideyoshi<sup>16</sup> was the child of a poor family that lived in a thatched cottage in Nakamura, a village of about thirty houses a short distance from the Atsuta shrine in Bishū. He is a man without compare in India, China, or in Japan. [His appearance] was truly auspicious. Hideyoshi, knowing nothing of soldiery or military tactics, dispersed powerful foes as the wind blows over the grasses. I thought it quite true when a person of high rank said Hideyoshi should be worshipped as the samurai's diety.<sup>17</sup>

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In China, when a neighboring house fell down, a man made the woman of that house sleep with him to prevent her from becoming cold. Such is this man's reputation among the Chinese people that his deed has been recorded in a book. Once when my master<sup>18</sup> was bathing, a woman washed him back and front, all parts of his body. I feel this to be a rare event among our own people.

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For example, if you plant a chestnut, a chestnut tree grows up. Man's seed is white dew.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, though a man grows old, unless he is mindful of the Dharma, [concupiscence] will not cease in his mind. The purpose of avarice is to embellish sensual matters. When avarice is extreme, surely one may even kill his lord or parents.

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The laymen Yuima<sup>20</sup> enlightened two or three hundred people at a time. The sixth patriarch of the T'ang dynasty<sup>21</sup> sold firewood for a living, and it is well-known even today, when he heard someone recite the Tathāgata's

<sup>16</sup> Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536-1598).

<sup>17</sup> *Ujigami* 氏神.

<sup>18</sup> Gudō Tōshoku 愚堂東庵 (1579-1661). See the "Biography of Shidō Munan Zenji," *Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. III, No. 1 (June, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> 白露; semen?

<sup>20</sup> Vimalakirti.

teaching, that the mind that issues from nothing is good for all things, his mind was immediately opened. In that case, I thought, we can do without any knowledge, and I esteemed the mind of nothingness. Then, deeply reflecting, I was reminded that the Tathāgata told us it is the self that cherishes concupiscence and purposelessly pursues wealth. Accordingly, he spread a teaching that reveals how to eliminate the self. Although men had thought that it would be only after the death of the self that the self is eliminated, now everyone has come to know that he is always without a self. When I tell others about the Buddha's teaching, thinking it rather plain and easy to understand, those of much knowledge do not want to know anything of it. They ask how one can do without learning. But those who are sensible are gratified and rejoice.

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There is a strange story. In former times, a man, I don't know who, was given a rare object when he appeared before the shogun in Kamakura. While on his way back, a group of children gathered around him and asked for his treasure. He gave it to them, and went on.<sup>22</sup> This inimitable performance cocked heads, furrowed brows, and had chins nodding.

As I was admiringly reflecting on this with some friends, a rather young fellow came up to us, asking what it was that had impressed us so. He produced some rice cakes from his kimono and gave them to us. Since my stomach was full, I put mine in my sleeve. Afterwards, a figure appeared, asking for food, saying he would eat anything. I brought out the rice cake and gave it to him. He was greatly pleased, and I felt good as well. At that time, the idea really stuck me, that an act which issues from the mind of nothingness is thought good by others and by oneself as well. Is this Buddha? I don't know.

(To be continued)

<sup>21</sup> Hui-neng 慧能 (J. Enō, d. 713). According to Zen tradition, Hui-neng one day heard someone reciting the lines of the *Diamond Sutra*, "Arouse the mind without resting it anywhere." Munan's "the mind that issues from nothing is good for all things," is his interpretation of this.

<sup>22</sup> This is a well-known episode concerning the poet Saigyō Hōshi 西行法師, who is said to have been given a silver statue of a cat by Minamoto Yoritomo. He thought so little of it he gave it to the first child he saw.