

On Buddhist Scriptures

(*Bukkyō*)

Translator's Introduction: In this discourse, Dōgen uses the word 'Scripture' to refer not only to the Scriptural writings of Buddhism but also to individual persons, as well as to all things in the universe, since each in its own way embodies the Dharma.

Dōgen proceeds to launch a highly charged attack on the founding Ancestors of two of the five traditions of Chinese Zen Buddhism, namely, those founded by Rinzai and Ummon, though he spares the tradition established by Ōbaku, who was Rinzai's Master. One can only speculate that the emotional tone of this attack arose from his desire to keep his disciples from trying to incorporate the practices of those traditions into their own practice and training.

Dōgen then extends his attack by taking on the so-called Chinese tripod theory, which was current in his day. According to this theory, Chinese culture and civilization are like a sacred vessel which gains its stability by being supported by three 'legs', namely, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The theory was originally put forth by some Buddhists in an attempt to counter the argument that only Taoism and Confucianism were truly Chinese since these teachings were indigenous to China, whereas Buddhism was a foreign religion and therefore something superimposed on the Chinese culture. Dōgen argues against this by saying that if Taoism and Confucianism needed Buddhism to maintain cultural stability, then it would follow that Chinese Buddhism would also need Taoism and Confucianism because it likewise could not stand on its own. Therefore, those Buddhists who wanted to introduce Taoist or Confucianist elements into their training were not strengthening it, but diluting it with elements irrelevant to Buddhist practice.

Within the Buddhist Scriptures, there are methods for teaching bodhisattvas* and there are methods for teaching Buddhas. Both of these methods are tools of the Great Truth. These tools comply with their Owner, and the Owner uses His tools. Accordingly, the Buddhas and Ancestors in both the western land of India and in the eastern land of China were persons who, of necessity, followed some good spiritual friend or followed what the Scriptures taught, with never a gap in Their giving rise to the intention to realize Buddhahood, Their doing Their training and practice, and Their realizing the fruits thereof. In giving rise to Their intention to realize Buddhahood, They relied on Scriptural texts and spiritual friends, and in

* See *Glossary*.

Their doing the training and practice, They relied on Scriptural texts and spiritual friends, and in Their realizing the fruits of Their practice, They also relied on Scriptural texts and spiritual friends. Our giving rise to our first spiritual intention and then later encountering the words of the Scriptures is likewise in harmony with Scriptural texts and spiritual friends. And if, amidst our giving rise to our intention, Scriptural verses arise within us, this too is in harmony with Scriptural texts and spiritual friends.

Spiritual friends, of necessity, have thoroughly penetrated the Scriptural texts. ‘Thoroughly penetrated’ means that they have made the Scriptures their homeland, and they have made Them their body and mind. They have set up the Scriptures for the sake of others and have made the Scriptures their parents and their offspring. Because spiritual friends have made the Scriptures into what they practice and understand, they have thoroughly explored Them. And a spiritual friend’s washing his face and drinking his tea is also an ancient Scripture. And the saying, “Scriptures give birth to spiritual friends,” describes, for instance, Ōbaku’s bringing about the birth of a monastic offspring by giving him thirty blows with his staff. It also describes the three strikes that Daiman Kōnin gave which brought about the Transmission of the kesa* along with the Dharma.¹ And these two are not the only cases. There is the monk who awoke to the Truth upon seeing peach blossoms, and the monk who awoke to the Truth upon hearkening to bamboo being struck by a stone, and the One who awoke upon seeing the morning star—all are good examples of Scriptures giving birth to spiritual friends. And there have been ‘skin bags and fisted ones’ who, having first opened their Eye, benefited much from Scriptural texts. And there are also ‘wooden ladles and jet-black buckets’ who, having learned a great deal from Scriptural texts, then opened their Eye.²

What we call Scriptures is precisely the whole universe in all directions. There is no time or place that is not a Scripture. Some Scriptures make use of the language of Ultimate Reality, whereas others make use of the language of secular reality. Some make use of the language of celestial beings, whereas others make use of the language of human beings. Some make use of the language that animals

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1. The most notable Dharma heir of Ōbaku was Rinzai, the ‘monastic offspring’ referred to here. Daiman Kōnin Transmitted to Daikan Enō the bowl and kesa believed to have belonged to Shakyamuni Buddha.
 2. ‘Skin bags’ is a metaphor for ordinary human beings. ‘Fisted ones’ is a metaphor for trainees whose Master raises a fist to show that the Ultimate is beyond words or concepts. ‘Wooden ladles’ refers to those who are trying to awaken to the Truth, and ‘jet-black buckets’ is a metaphor for monks who are ignorant of the essence of Buddhism.

speak, whereas others make use of the language that asuras* speak. Some make use of the words that sprout up like hundreds of grasses in a field, whereas others make use of the words that flourish like the thousands of trees in a woodland. Thus it is that what is long or short, square or round, as well as what is blue, yellow, red, or white, all of which are arrayed throughout the whole universe like ever so many trees in a forest, are the words of a Scripture; they are what appears on the surface of a Scriptural text. They serve as the tools of the Great Truth, which comprise what a Scripture is in Buddhist traditions. Such a Scripture can spread out and cover the whole of time, and It can flow out and cover all lands. It opens the gateway to teaching human beings without forsaking anyone anywhere. It opens the gateway to Scriptural matters and rescues all manner of beings everywhere. In teaching Buddhas and bodhisattvas, it becomes the whole of the earth, indeed, the whole of the universe. It opens the gateway to skillful means and the gateway to abiding in one's True Place. And, without forsaking a single person, or even half a one, It points to the true Real Form. The great intention of each Buddha and bodhisattva right now is to obtain much benefit from these Scriptures, even though this may not be something done intentionally by means of one's discriminative thinking and conscious endeavor, or by means of one's going beyond discriminative thinking and conscious endeavor.

The time of positively procuring a Scripture is beyond 'past and present', because past and present are simply moments in the time of 'procuring a Scripture'. What is manifesting right now before our very eyes is the whole universe in all ten directions. This is what 'procuring a Scripture' really means. In that such a Scripture has already been read, recited, and thoroughly penetrated, the Wisdom of Buddha, along with our natural innate wisdom and the wisdom acquired without a teacher, have already fully manifested before the arising of our own mind and body. At the moment when we encounter a Scripture, we do not doubt that we have entered a special state that is new to us. When this Scripture has been accepted by us and then passed on to others by our reading or reciting It, we can say that the Scripture has made full contact with us. This state of affairs quickly becomes a scattering of flowers and a making of garlands. At first we see only the words embedded within phrases, but there is 'something indescribable' to be found between the lines.

We call such Scriptures 'the Dharma'. They contain an accumulation of eighty-four thousand expressions of the Dharma. Within these Scriptures are such words as 'the Buddhas who have fully realized Universal Truth', 'the Buddhas who have appeared and are residing in the world right now,' and 'the Buddhas who have arrived and entered nirvana'. 'The One Who Comes in This Way' and 'The One Who Goes in That Way'—that is, the Tathagata—are both terms that appear in

these Scriptures and are expressions of the Dharma within the Dharma. ‘Raising aloft the flower, with eyes atwinkle’ and ‘his face breaking into a smile’³ are old Scriptures that have been accurately Transmitted from the Seven Buddhas.* And ‘standing in the snow and severing one’s arm’ as well as ‘respectfully bowing and securing the very Marrow of the Way’ are expressions which encapsulate old Scriptures about Master and disciple truly hearing each other.⁴ Ultimately, the Transmitting of the Dharma and the kesa to Daikan Enō was nothing other than the arrival of the moment when all the Scriptures were spread out and entrusted to him. The three strikes on the mortar by Daiman Kōnin and the response of three siftings of rice in the winnowing basket by Daikan Enō brought about a Scripture holding out His hand to a Scripture, whereby a Scripture made a Scripture His legitimate heir.

In addition, Enō’s saying, “Who is this One that comes thus?” is a thousand Scriptures for teaching Buddhas and tens of thousands of Scriptures for teaching bodhisattvas. And Nangaku’s reply, “For me to explain what even one thing is would not hit the mark,” does well to account for the accumulation of the eighty-four thousand expressions of the Dharma, as well as the twelve divisions of the Mahayana* canon. And even more, a Master’s fist and heel, his traveling staff* and ceremonial hossu,* are ancient Scriptures and new Scriptures, as well as Scriptures on what has limits and Scriptures on That which is without limits. From the first, doing one’s utmost in training within the Sangha and diligently doing seated meditation are Buddhist Scriptures, and they are Buddhist Scriptures right to the end. They are Scriptures written on leaves from the Bodhi tree; they are Scriptures written upon the vast expanse of sky.

In short, the one moment of movement and the two moments of stillness which the Buddhas and Ancestors have exhibited, as well as Their holding on and Their letting go are, naturally enough, the unrolling of Buddhist Scriptures. Because They have explored through Their training that the ultimate standard is that there is no absolute ultimate, They have inhaled and expelled the Scriptures through Their nostrils and They have absorbed and expelled the Scriptures through

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3. This is a reference to Shakyamuni Buddha’s Transmitting the Dharma to His smiling disciple Makakashō by holding an udumbara flower aloft.
 4. The reference to cutting off one’s arm is to the Second Chinese Ancestor, Taiso Eka, who is said to have cut off his arm in order to find the Truth. This ‘severing’ may refer to giving up one’s attachments rather than to a literal, physical act. Dōgen fully explores the reference to respectful bowing in Discourse 10: On ‘Respectful Bowing Will Secure for You the Very Marrow of the Way’ (*Raihai Tokuzui*).

Their toes. ‘Before “father” and “mother” had yet been born’,* there was a taking in and expelling of Scriptures, and before the Lords of Awe-inspiring Voices appeared, there was a taking in and expelling of Scriptures. We receive Scriptures and give expression to Scriptures by means of the whole earth with its mountains and rivers, and we receive Scriptures and give expression to Scriptures by means of the sun, moon, and stars. Some Buddhas and Ancestors have held to the Scriptures by means of the Self that existed before the kalpa* of emptiness, and Some have held onto the Scriptures by means of the body and mind that They had before They had a countenance. Scriptures like these were brought into view by Their breaking open a dust mote or by Their breaking open the whole universe.



Our great Twenty-seventh Ancestor, the Venerable Hannyatara,⁵ once said:

In my humble way, what I breathe out does not conform itself to external conditions and events, and what I breathe in does not take up residence in the realm of my skandhas.* The Scriptures that I recite are always like this, for they are comprised of hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of scrolls, not just one or two scrolls.

Hearing what our Ancestral Master said in this way, we should explore through our training that she caused the Scriptures to revolve with her every exhalation and inhalation. To understand ‘revolving the Scriptures’ in this way is to know wherein the Scriptures reside. Because she could revolve Them and there was something to revolve, which was her revolving the Scriptures and the Scriptures revolving her, she must have totally understood and recognized what They are.⁶



My late Master was constantly saying:

Here in my temple, you should simply sit in meditation without having recourse to burning incense, making bows, reciting the name of Buddha, confessing your shortcomings, or reciting Scriptures. Just do your utmost to practice the Way and drop off body and mind.

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5. There is a long-standing Indian tradition which holds that Hannyatara was a female monk renowned for her extraordinary spiritual prowess.
 6. Dōgen has an extensive commentary on Hannyatara’s remarks in Discourse 20: On Reading Scriptures (*Kankin*).

Few are the folks who understand a remark like this. And why? Because if they were to take the phrase ‘reciting Scriptures’ literally, they would be violating its intention, and if they were not to take the phrase ‘reciting Scriptures’ literally, they would be turning their back on his words. We cannot have words for It and we do not lack words for It. So, quick, quick! Speak, speak! You must explore this fundamental principle through your training! Because this principle exists, a Master of long ago said, “To read Scriptures, you will need to be equipped with an Eye for reading Scriptures.” By all means you need to realize that if there had not been Scriptures in the past and in the present, there could not be such a statement as this. You need to explore through your training that there is the reading of a Scripture called ‘dropping off’ and there is the reading of a Scripture called ‘without having recourse’. Since this is so, each person—or even half a person—who does the training will, without question, receive the Transmission and become a child of the Buddha, so do not foolishly study the false views of non-Buddhists. Because the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching, which is now fully manifesting before your very eyes, is what the Buddhist Scriptures are, every Buddhist Scripture is the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching. They are beyond being the same or different, beyond being self or other. Keep in mind that because the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching is ever so abundant, none of you will be able to illumine It completely.⁷ And even so, you will be able to expound upon the Treasure House of the Eye of the True Teaching without ever failing to trust in It. And so it will be with the Buddhist Scriptures. Though the Scriptures are ever so many, you need but trust and accept Them, and put into practice a single verse or phrase from Them. You need not fully comprehend all eighty-four thousand of Them. Just because you cannot be expert in all the Buddhist Scriptures, do not be rash and say that the Buddhist Scriptures are not the Buddha Dharma. Even though you may hear others call themselves the very bones and marrow of the Buddhas and Ancestors, when we look with straightforward eyes at those who speak this way, we see that they are simply present-day trainees who are stuck on words. While some of them may be as good as those who accept and keep to a single phrase or a single verse, there may also be those who do not measure up to them. Do not insult the Buddha’s True Teaching by relying on this superficial understanding of theirs. Nothing in the world of sound and form is more spiritually meritorious than the Buddhist Scriptures. Sounds and forms may delude you if you are still greedily chasing after them. However, the Buddhist Scriptures will never delude you, so do not mistrust or slander Them.

7. That is, realizing enlightenment does not mean becoming omniscient.

Even so, over the last couple of centuries or so in Great Sung China, certain mistaken, smelly skin bags have said, “There’s no need for you to keep the sayings of the Ancestral Masters in mind, much less is there any need for long study of Scriptural Teachings or for your trying to make use of Them. Simply, make your body and mind like a dead tree or cold ashes, like a broken wooden ladle or a bottomless tub.” Folks like these have become a type of non-Buddhist or celestial demon, and to no good purpose. They seek to make use of things that are useless, and accordingly, they twist the Teachings of the Buddhas and Ancestors into wild and perverted teaching. What a pity! How terribly sad! Even ‘broken ladles’ and ‘bottomless tubs’ have been ancient Scriptures for some Ancestors of the Buddha. Rare has been the Ancestor of the Buddha who has completely tallied the number of texts of these Scriptures. Those who say that the Buddhist Scriptures are not the Buddha Dharma have not studied the occasions when Ancestors of the Buddha have made use of Scriptures, nor have they explored through their training the occasions when Ancestors of the Buddha have revealed their True Nature through their reliance on Scriptures, nor do they know how to gauge the level of intimacy between the Buddha’s Ancestors and the Buddhist Scriptures. Careless folks like these are as common as rice and flax seeds, bamboo canes and reeds. They ascend the Lion Throne* and establish monasteries everywhere, passing themselves off as teachers of gods and humans. Because the inaccurate have studied with the inaccurate, their principles are likewise inaccurate, and because they are ignorant, they fail to seek what is reliable, but simply pass from darkness into darkness. How pitiful! And because they have not realized the Body and Mind of Buddha Dharma, they do not know what the deportment of body and the behavior of mind should be. Since they have not clarified what lies at the heart of either existence or emptiness, if someone should ask them a question about this, they may arbitrarily raise a fist, but they are really in the dark as to what it means to make such a gesture. Since they have not clarified which paths are genuine and which are false, if someone should ask them a question about this, they hold up a ceremonial hossu, but they are not clear as to the significance of holding it up. Or, in a misguided attempt to offer a helping hand for someone’s sake, they may cite Rinzai’s *Four Perspectives* or his *Four Relations Between Reflecting and Acting*, or quote Ummon’s *Three Phrases* or Tōzan’s *Three Paths* or his *Five Relative Positions* as standards for study of the Way.⁸

8. Dōgen’s apparently negative view of Tōzan’s two treatises in the present context is clarified later in this discourse.

My late Master, the monk of Tendō, was always laughing at this and would say:

How could ‘learning what Buddha is’ possibly be like that? We have clothed both our body and our mind with the Great Truth that the Buddhas and Ancestors have authentically Transmitted. In exploring this through our training and in aiming at mastering it through and through, we have no time to spare. What free time do we have for including the dubious remarks of modern-day trainees? Truly, you need to realize that old senior monks all over Great Sung China are lacking in the Truth, and it is clear that they are not exploring through their training what the Body and Mind of the Buddha Dharma is.

This is how my late Master pointed out the Matter* to his assembly.



To tell the truth, in the case of Rinzai, he was a newcomer in Ōbaku’s assembly. Ōbaku had already used his staff to inflict sixty blows on Rinzai before the latter left to make a formal call on Daigu, with whom he had a meeting to discuss the mind of a certain old woman. This Dharma conversation helped to illumine matters in his daily conduct and, as a consequence, he returned to Ōbaku. Because those who heard this account were deeply impressed by it, they believed that Rinzai and he alone had received Ōbaku’s Buddha Dharma, and, moreover, they even fancied that Rinzai had surpassed Ōbaku. But this is simply not so.

Although it must be said that Rinzai had barely entered Ōbaku’s assembly and was as yet the juniormost monk at the time, nevertheless, when the venerable senior monk Chin prompted him to ask his spiritual question, Rinzai did not know what to say.⁹ Even though someone has not yet clarified what the Great Matter is, how could anyone who is committed to exploring It through their training fail to rise to the occasion while listening to the Dharma and simply be dumbstruck like that? You should realize that such a one is not foremost in ability. Further, Rinzai never had the ardor of his celebrated Master, and we have yet to hear of any

9. Chin was one of Ōbaku’s Dharma heirs and succeeded him as Abbot upon Ōbaku’s death. The situation described here probably refers to the question asked by the Abbot or a senior monk of someone who has come to a temple for the first time. It is usually ambiguous, thereby inviting the potential trainee to respond in a socially conventional way or to see the deeper, spiritual meaning embedded in the question, which calls for a spiritually focused response. Apparently, Rinzai was totally nonplussed and could not come up with a reply on either side, much less with a question.

sayings of his that surpass those of his Master. Ōbaku, though, did have ways of putting things which evinced a greater wisdom than that of his own Master. And he could put into words Teachings that even the Buddha had not yet uttered, and he had an understanding of the Dharma that even the Ancestors had not yet fathomed. Ōbaku was an Old Buddha who transcended both past and present. He was more highly esteemed than Hyakujō and was of even greater genius than Baso. Rinzai lacked such an eminent spirit. And why? Because he never made any remark, not even in his dreams, which had not already been expressed in the past or present. It is as if he merely understood the many and overlooked the One, or grasped the One and overlooked the many. How can we possibly think that his *Four Perspectives* partake of the flavor of the Dharma or that it serves as a compass that points the correct way to explore the Teaching?

Ummon was a member of Seppō's community. Even though he functioned as a great teacher for all manner of people, it must be said that he was still one of those who are stuck on erudition. Should you attempt to find the Source by relying on people like him, you would simply end up on some paltry tributary. In the times before Rinzai arrived and Ummon appeared, what, pray, did the Buddhas and Ancestors rely upon as Their standard for exploring the Way? Hence, you need to understand that within the houses of Rinzai and Ummon, the proper training of the Buddha's tradition was not passed on. Because they had nothing authoritative to rely upon, they recklessly put forth their own questionable teachings. Such fellows irresponsibly slandered the Buddhist Scriptures, so you people should not follow them in that. If the Scriptures are to be cast aside, then the teachings of Rinzai and Ummon should also be cast aside. If we cannot make use of the Scriptures, then we will have no water to drink, much less a ladle to scoop it up with.

Further, our founding Ancestor Tōzan's *Three Paths* and *Five Relative Positions*, which detail the Matter, are frankly beyond anything that the careless and inaccurate are able to understand. The underlying principle was accurately Transmitted to him and he forthwith pointed out what proper Buddhist conduct is. We should not presume to liken his teaching to that of other traditions.

Also, there are irresponsible people who say, "Although they are different to begin with, the teachings of Taoism, the teachings of Confucianism, and the Scriptures of Shakyamuni ultimately have the same goal. They are just different ways for entering the gate to Truth." Or they may say, "They are like the three legs of a tripod." This is at the heart of a hot debate among present-day monks in Great Sung China. When people speak like this, the Buddha Dharma has already been banished from the earth and perished for them. And we should also say that not even a smidgen of the Buddha's Teaching has ever come to them. People like this rashly attempt to express what Buddha Dharma is even though they are blocked

from penetrating It. They erroneously say that the Buddhist Scriptures are of no use because there is a separate Transmission in the tradition of our ancestral Master Bodhidharma.¹⁰ They are small-minded people who have not inquired into what the boundaries really are in the Way of the Buddhas. They say that one need not make use of Buddhist Scriptures, but what about our Master Bodhidharma's poem? Do they make use of it or do they feel that they do not need it? There are many instances of Teaching in what our Ancestor said that are just like what is in Buddhist Scriptures. Would they have us use his Teaching or discard It? Were they to say that our Ancestor's Truth is not the Buddha's Truth, who then would trust our Ancestor's Truth? Our Ancestral Master is an Ancestral Master because the Buddha's Truth was authentically Transmitted to him. If there were someone who had not received the authentic Transmission of the Buddha's Truth, who, pray, would call him 'my Ancestral Master'?

We venerate Bodhidharma as our First Chinese Ancestor because he was our Twenty-eighth Indian Ancestor. If we say that what our Ancestor said was apart from what the Buddha said, it would be difficult indeed to establish who our Tenth or our Twentieth Ancestor was! The reason that we revere our Ancestral Teachers who have received the Transmission in turn, heir after heir, is due to the importance of the Buddha's Truth. If there were one of our Ancestral Masters who had not had the Buddha's Truth authentically Transmitted to him, how would he be able to face either ordinary people or those in higher realms? And what would be more difficult still would be to turn aside from our most profound intention to realize Buddhahood in order to follow some teacher who had no connection with the Buddha's Way!

Untrustworthy crazies today vainly sneer at the Buddha's Truth because they are unable to determine which teaching is the Buddha's Truth. For them to compare, even for a moment, Taoist or Confucian doctrines with the Buddha's Teaching is not only pitiable folly, it is also the karmic* consequence of their wrongful deeds in past lives and signals the decline of their nation, because it belittles the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The paths of

10. This view, which Dōgen considered to be erroneous, derives from a misinterpretation of a poem attributed to Bodhidharma, which has been interpreted by some as a rejection of Scriptural texts. Dōgen's view is that the Scriptural texts and the pointing to the heart are two aspects of what is Transmitted. Bodhidharma's poem is as follows:

*The separate Transmission that is outside the Teachings
Does not depend on the written word;
It directly points us to our human heart,
So that we may see our True Nature and thereby become Buddha.*

Confucius and Lao-tzu are in no way the same as the path of an arhat,* to say nothing of the paths of those in the two highest states of bodhisattvahood! Confucius and Lao-tzu were barely able to read the great wonders of heaven and earth and see in them what the saintly saw and heard. It would have been hard for them to clarify in one lifetime, or even in many lifetimes, just what our Great Saintly Shakyamuni's law of causality is. They could just barely discern the sitting place of body and mind that is found within the activity of 'non-activity', but they were unable to clarify what the Universal Truth within the limitlessness of every moment truly is. In short, the Confucian and Taoist teachings are so inferior to the Teachings of the Buddha that the differences cannot even begin to be described by terms like 'the separation between heaven and earth'. To recklessly discuss them as all having one and the same principle is to slander the Buddha Dharma and to slander Confucianism and Taoism. Even though there are some accurate points in the teachings of those two, our present day veteran monks have not even clarified a fraction of those points, much less have they grabbed hold of the Great Handle even once in ten thousand tries! Although instruction and training can be found in the works of both of these, ordinary, run-of-the-mill scholars today cannot readily follow it. There is none in that bunch who could even try to do that training. They cannot even connect one bit of teaching with another. How much less could these present-day veteran monks possibly realize the profound subtleties of Buddhist Scriptures! Not having clarified what the other two are actually about, they just irresponsibly put forth their own questionable teachings.

In Great Sung China today, such fellows ascribe the title of master to themselves as proof that they are entitled to take up the profession. Without shame for past or present, and with a befuddled mind, they make a mishmash of what the Buddha said. It is difficult to acknowledge that they have received the Buddha Dharma. Monks like these all say, "The Buddhist Scriptures do not contain the original intention behind what the Buddha said. The Ancestral Transmission contains what His original intention was. In the Ancestral Transmission alone, that which is mysterious, unique, profound, and wondrous has been passed on."

Saying things like this is the extreme in silliness. It is what the deranged say. In the authentic Transmission of our Ancestral Masters, there is nothing mysterious or special that in any way differs in even one remark or half a verse from what is in the Buddhist Scriptures. The Buddhist Scriptures and the sayings of our Ancestors are both alike as to what has been authentically Transmitted, which has flowed out from Shakyamuni Buddha. But the Ancestral Transmission has been Transmitted only from heir to heir. Given that, how could such heirs possibly not know Buddhist Scriptures, or fail to clarify them, or fail to recite them? An ancient worthy once said, "You are deluding yourself with the Scriptures: the Scriptures

are not deluding you.” There are many stories about ancient worthies reading Scriptures.

What I would like to say to those who are inaccurate is the following: “If it were as you say, then if you throw out Buddhist Scriptures, you will be throwing out the Buddha’s Mind, as well as His Body. If you throw out His Body and Mind, then you will be throwing out His disciples. If you throw out His disciples, you will be throwing out the Way of the Buddhas. If you throw out the Way of the Buddhas, will you not be throwing out the Way of the Ancestors? Were you to throw out both the Way of the Buddhas and the Way of the Ancestors, you would be just one more shaven head among a hundred others. Who could then say that you did not deserve a good thwack! Not only would you be at the beck and call of every lord and his retainers, you will also be called to account by Old Yama, Lord of the Dead.”

Old veteran monks in present-day China no sooner receive a note from some lord or retainer than they proclaim themselves to be the Abbot of a temple and, on that basis, go around mouthing wild words like those alluded to above. And there is no one to distinguish right from wrong. Only my late Master, and he alone, would break out into laughter over that bunch. None of the senior monks from other monasteries recognized what was going on.

As a rule, we should not think that just because monks come from foreign parts they must have a clearer understanding of the Way, or that because they are teachers of some emperor of a great nation they must invariably have penetrated the Matter. All foreigners do not necessarily have the makings of a monk: good people are good and wicked people are wicked. Within the three worlds of the universe, the potential of people will be the same.

Likewise, those who have realized the Truth are not necessarily the ones who are chosen to be teachers to emperors of great nations, since emperors also have difficulty in knowing who has realized the Way. They simply make their appointments on the basis of the advice they hear from their retainers. In past and present, there have been imperial teachers who have realized the Truth and imperial teachers who have not realized the Truth. It is the unenlightened person who gets appointed in corrupt times, just as it is the enlightened person who does not get appointed in those times. And why is that? Because there are times when ‘such a person’* is recognized and times when ‘such a person’ is not recognized. We should not forget the age-old example of Jinshū.¹¹ Jinshū became an imperial

11. Jinshū was the most outstanding monk in Daiman Kōnin’s huge assembly on Mount Ōbai. Only Daikan Enō, who was a lay laborer in the monastery at that time, was able to

teacher. He lectured on the Dharma while seated before the bamboo curtain of the emperor and he gave voice to the Dharma while seated before the gilded screen of the empress. And what is more, he held the highest seat among the seven hundred high-ranking monks of Kōnin's assembly. And at the same time, long ago on Mount Ōbai there was the temple laborer named Ro.¹² By changing his occupation from woodcutter to temple laborer, he freed himself from hauling firewood. Even so, he took up the occupation of pounding the temple's rice. Though some may feel sorry that he was of humble birth, he nevertheless left secular life behind him and even transcended monkhood, for he had realized the Dharma and had had the sacred robe passed on to him while still a lay person. This is something that was unheard of in the past, not even in India to the west, and it constitutes a remarkable precedent set in the eastern land of China. It is as if even the seven hundred high-ranking monks did not compare with him nor could the dragon elephants* of his whole nation follow in his footsteps. He is truly an heir of the Buddha who has taken his position as our Ancestor of the thirty-third generation after Shakyamuni. If our Fifth Chinese Ancestor Daiman Kōnin had not been a true spiritual friend and guide who was able to recognize 'such a person', how, pray, could this possibly have come about as it did? Quietly reflect on this principle and do not be hasty. We should desire to develop the ability to recognize 'such a one'. To fail to do so is a great sorrow for both oneself and others, a great sorrow for our whole nation. Broad knowledge and a superior view of things are not necessary. You need only to seek the Eye that recognizes 'such a person' and quickly develop your abilities to do so. Should you lack the ability to recognize 'such a one', you will sink into ages of darkness.

Hence, you need to realize that, beyond doubt, there are Buddhist Scriptures within the Way of the Buddha. You need to explore the extensive texts and the profound meaning of Their mountains and rivers, and you should make these Scriptures your standard for doing your utmost to train in the Way.¹³

Given to the assembly during the ninth lunar month of the first year of the Kangen era (October 1243) while residing at Kippō-ji Temple in the Yoshida district of Echizen Province.

demonstrate a deeper understanding of the Dharma, and he thereby became Kōnin's Dharma heir and the recipient of the bowl and robe of Bodhidharma.

12. Ro was the family name of Daikan Enō.

13. In this context, 'mountains and rivers' can be seen as aspects of movement and stillness within meditation practice. It can also describe obstructions that are encountered in our daily experience, and hence to the Scriptures' Teachings on how to overcome those obstructions.