

Extended Notes for Ho-kyo Zan-mai

The *Hokyo Zanmai* sutra was given by master *Dongshan Liangjie Sama* of *Dongshan* mountain (Jap: *Tozan Ryokai*, 807 - 869), the author, to his disciple *Caoshan Benji* of *Caoshan* mountain (840 - 901), as the latter was taking his leave (*Lu K'uan Yu* (Charles Luk), "Ch'an and Zen Teaching", Vol.2, pp 149 – 154, Pub: Weiser, Maine, (1993).) These two patriarchs were the founders of the *Caodong* (Jap: *Soto Zen*) Sect. *Benji* was a patriarchal *Dharma* heir of master *Liangjie Sama*, and this poem represents *Liangjie's* final instructions for the safe keeping of the Sects's *Dharma*. Translation and syntax of the Chinese Kanji was made by Graham Healey, Dept. East Asian Studies at the University of Sheffield (U.K), and *Shindo Gensho* (Richard Jones), ArrivingHome, Sheffield (U.K) < <http://www.arrivinghome.co.uk> >. Where necessary further interpretation was made by *Gensho*, who was influenced by the interpretations found in the references below.^{1, 2, 3} We have tried to remain faithful to the original Chinese *Kanji* where possible. However, it is hard not to be influenced by the Japanese texts and the generations of connection that have existed with the Chinese text. Square brackets in the translation, are used to denote an added interpretation (e.g. ... [of a target from] ...). These have been added by the interpreter to enhance understanding where it is believed to be necessary, and do not come directly from the Chinese Kanji (found together with the line numbers to the right of each line.). They can also be left out, if the reader wishes the translation to be more like the original Chinese poetical form. We hope the reader will forgive the inclusion of the square-bracketed, interpretations, because it is difficult, if not impossible, to remain true to the original form and convey full meaning in English. As is usual with Chinese Buddhist texts there are manifold layers of meaning. In particular the sutra can be read as a guide to true Enlightenment, for all followers of the Way, as well as the more personal patriarchal instructions for the conditions of inheritance. The sutra generally reads in couplets, which are then combined into large groupings. The notes below refer to the corresponding lines of the Chinese text. References in normal print (e.g. ... triple-base set.⁴) refer to the author references listed at the end of the text. Referenced, abbreviated, capitals (e.g. CZT),¹ are used to refer to the interpretations of other translators. The abbreviated capitals are also to be found at the respective references in bold capitals (e.g. [CZT]). The symbols ☉ and • represent the positions, of the large and small bell chimes, respectively.

- 1 This line is written as 'the Law of Such-ness' and not 'such is the Law', which is in keeping with the Buddhist interpretation of Tathagate.
- 2 Intimately here implies person to person without interruption in an unbroken line of succession.
- 5,6 Lines 5 and 6 are similes for Form (snow, egret) and Essence (silver bowl, bright moonlight), which are carefully chosen.
- 8 'know [the] place'. Know the connection, relationship or difference.
- 14 Lines 13 and 14 could be interpreted as suggesting that the absolute is to be likened to the form of a great mass of fire, notably (CZT – 'For it is like a great mass of fire.').¹ However, since the author is fond of using similes after a statement, it is much more likely that he meant 'like a great fire - one would be a fool to ignore it and also to try to touch it'. It is difficult to believe that he would be reducing the Absolute even to the form of a great fire-mass.
- 18 Lines 17 and 18 are often interpreted to mean the light is seen at night but not at dawn, or in the day time. The literal translation of line 18 is 'day/sky dawns no dew' and as the author is fond of placing similes after statements, we take this to be a simile for line 17, in that the light dawns, during night-time realization, without the material sun-dawn, which is accompanied by dew.
- 22 Although line 9 and lines 15 are intimating that words cannot be used to contain Absoluteness, here, line 22, suggests that they can be used, by a skilled master, to point/elucidate the way to its realisation.
- 25 This line consists of four characters, which translate as 'you are are-not the-other-side'. The Japanese version tries to avoid the difficulty of 'are/are-not' by reading the second character with one of its other meanings 'this' i.e. 'You this are-not the-other-side', which

hardly makes any more sense, because if 'you' is defined 'this' is not required. The original Chinese version says 'you negative-are the-other-side' meaning 'you are-not the reflection'. What appears to have happened is that the phrases 'bu-shi' and 'fei', which both mean 'are-not', have found their way into the line together and then the character 'bu' has been mistakenly edited out instead of 'fei'. Fortunately, the Japanese rendering gives the correct interpretation.

26 Lines 23 to 34 are describing your Original-Self/Buddha-Nature as seen through *Samadhi*. Although in ultimate reality there is no separate 'you' (form) or 'other-side' (reflection) they are used here for descriptive purposes.

28 Some translators interpret 'aspects' to mean the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feeling), but if this were so in Buddhism there are six senses, because 'consciousness' is also included as a sense. It is more likely that the author was referring to the five Skandhahs (form, feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness). In either case the intimation is that, the baby, or 'Original-Self/Buddha-Nature' that it is a simile for, is already complete at birth.

34 They are not correct, because they have not yet taken form in this Original-self-nature.

35 'Real' Li (30, ) and 'seeming,' Chung Fu (61, ) hexagrams.^{1,5}

37,38 Three trigrams are used to build up the five positions, which are also grouped into a triple-base set.¹ Also three of the five positions are hexagrams. It is not exactly clear which Master Liang Chia Sama is talking about in line 37, it is more likely that he is talking about the trigrams, because this makes sense with the two previous lines (35, 36), although then the triple-basis would not be mentioned. The five positions are; 1 Host

 or ; 2 guest  or ; 3 Host coming to light  or ; 4 guest returning to Host  or ; 5 Host in Host  or .

40 It appears that the *Vajra*-sceptre was used to expound the five positions as follows; 'Host (1)' and 'guest (2)' positions at one end, 'Host coming to light (3)' in the middle and 'guest returning to Host (4)' and 'Host in Host (5)' at the other end.¹

41 Since this line is typically followed by a simile line (42), we take 'precise and middle' to mean form (or the seeming), and Essence (or the Real) respectively. These then are marvellously embraced. However, no other translations appear to make this interpretation.

42 Drumming and singing are taken to be similes for 'precise' and 'middle' in the previous line (41). There is also nothing to distinguish between singing and chanting, the same Kanji character could be used for both. Hence, the analogy is probably of drumming and chanting within Zen-Buddhist services, because drumming is precise and mono-tonic chanting becomes quite formless.

43 The Kanji 宗 (shu), originally meant essence or origin, it was used to describe the main-point of something and, hence, later became used to symbolise 'religion'. In the preceding, (41-42) and succeeding lines the author is referring to the 'origin/essence' meaning, whereas prior to lines (35-40) he had been talking in terms of 'religion'. This line could be taken to embrace both parts of the meaning of this Kanji.

44 Literally: 'Hold in belt/girdle, hold in path'. This is most likely a reference to holding the truth in Tanden, many Japanese monks have a large band/girdle support tied over their abdomen. No other interpreters have taken this meaning from the line and interpretations vary.

56 It is most likely that the author was using shu-shu here for the sudden and gradual states of mind e.g. shu (宗) – sudden-teachings for quick aptitudes and propensities; and shu (趣) – approaches for gradual aptitudes and propensities. SPMS agrees with this interpretation.³

60 '[perceived]' is used here because the author is talking about perceived truth-realization. Truth endlessly flows anyway (Tathagate).

62 This line is a paired simile for the preceding line (61), using the idea of a feathered horse and a trembling mouse to represent stillness outside and trembling inside, respectively.

64 'Danda' - originally a stick or staff [sometimes] acquires the meaning of a rod as an instrument of punishment [Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Trans. Bhikhu Nanamoli and Bhiku Bodhi, MN 56, note 579, Pali Text Society, 2002]. The word is the

- same in Sanskrit. The 3rd (dan) and 4th (do) Kanji in line 64 are therefore, taken to be Chinese/Japanese approximations for the syllabic sounds for *Danda*.
- 65 The inversion of the wrong view, in this case, that stillness has to be presented falsely by a non-still state of mind, rather than being found naturally at the centre of being.
- 73 Previous interpretations for this line differ; SPMS has - Like a battle-scarred tiger;³ SSS has - Like a tiger that has tattered ears;² CZT has - like a tiger leaves behind (a portion of) its prey;¹ the latter is probably right, because the image of a tiger returning for a portion of its prey implies a high degree of concentration.⁷⁴
- 74 There are various interpretations for this line; SPMS has - like a horse with shanks gone grey;³ CZT has - (and) a horse (indifferent to) a left hind leg that's white;¹ SSS has - Or like a hobbled-horse.² The latter interpretation is more in keeping with the radicals for the Kanji. However, the dictionary and the other interpretations agree roughly in definition, but not interpretation. It is most likely, as with other parts of the sutra, that the images are similes for the ideas given in previous lines. In this respect, line 72 has two ideas, contemplation (concentration, because this is a sutra from a *Dhyana* school), and time (aeons), which would be fulfilled by the tiger returning for a portion of its prey and the horse being old and indifferent to time, respectively.
- 76 SSS has – jewelled table and ornate robes;² SPMS has - : 'jewelled table ornate robes';³ however, the original Kanji is less specific, and by way of an example to the previous line (75), is best interpreted as given here – 'treasure tables, rare-esteemed'.
- 78 These are similes for the 'amazing uncommon capabilities' of line 77. The kanji 狸 (ri) is a tanuki, a racoon like animal, which is cunning and clever. This is coupled with the Kanji 奴 (nu), which means a manservant, or lower-class person. Together, there is no direct translation and we represent this as 'raccoon-dog'. The other paired kanji (白 牯, byakko) is a white-oxen, an animal with solid obedient strength when trained. Together these animals represent the qualities Master Liang Chiai Sama believed were necessary in those of 'amazing uncommon capabilities' and would respond well to 'sudden teachings'. Similarly, SSS has – cats and white-oxen,² however, there is no direct reference to cats in the Kanji.
- 82 SSS has – how could it be a matter of skill;² However, Master Liang Chiai Sama is probably saying at this point - testing is complete, you have found your match (Enlightened and/or future Patriarchal Mind).
- 83/84 This is a continuation of the theme in line 82. Lines 83 and 84 are similes for; the wooden man (Zen student) - now singing (Enlightened). The stone woman (Zen master) gets up to dance, because he is overjoyed in certifying that his student is now ready.
- 92 Appearing like a stupid-fool [in foolish company].
- 93 SSS has – just to continue in this way;² The present interpretation has been left open, because there probably is a double meaning in the instruction i.e. working uninterruptedly, and also for the succession of the sect.
- 94 The last of the five stages 'Host in Host'.

References

1. Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk), "Ch'an and Zen Teaching", Vol.2, pp 149 – 154, Pub: Weiser, Maine, (1993). [CZT]
2. *Soto Shu Sutras, by Soto Shu Shumucho (Soto Zen Buddhism)/Kinko printing Co. Tokyo, (1986 & 2001). [SSS]*
3. URL: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/hz/hz.htm> ; Visited June 2005. [SPMS]
4. URL: <http://sped2work.tripod.com/dongshan.html> ; Visited June 2005.
5. 'I Ching or Book of Changes', Trans. R. Wilhelm, C. F. Baynes; Pub Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London, (1975).