

⊕ **Shi Gu Sei-gan ō**
 四弘誓願
 Four Encompassing Vows

Shū jō mu hen sei gan do

1. 眾 生 無 邊 誓願 度。

Masses [of] creatures, without-bounds, [I/we] vow to save [them all].

Bon nō mu jin sei gan dan

2. 煩 惱 無盡 誓願 斷。

Anxiety [and] hate, [delusive-desires] inexhaustible, [I/we] vow to cut [them all].

Hō mon mu ryō sei gan gaku

3. 法 門 無 量 誓願 學。

Dharma gates beyond-measure [I/we] vow to learn [them all].

⊕ **Butsu dō mu jō sei gan jō**

4. 佛道 無 上 誓願 成。

Buddha Way, nothing-higher, [I/we] vow to accomplish [it].

Translated into English by Shindo Gensho, 'ArrivingHome', Sheffield, UK;

<http://www.arrivinghome.co.uk/>. Kanji from http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhisattva_vows.

Square brackets are used to note additional interpretation. ⊖ = bell position for chanting.

1. Title: The kanji 弘 (Gu), in the title, means wide in the sense of encompassing, not great. There is a special kanji for great (大). The left hand radical of gu means a bow, like an instrument bow, as though someone had traced out a wide arc with their finger. The vows are encompassing, because they cover all of the Bodhisattva vows.
2. Line 1: The kanji 邊 (hen) means boundaries, regions etc. Perhaps, since sentient beings are numberless anyway, the Chinese were probably saying 'without delineation', i.e. not excluding slithery things, or those vandals over the border who want to wage war. Also, it is not strictly sentient beings, but 'Masses [of] creatures'.
3. Line 2: The kanji 煩 (Bon) means anxiety, while that of 惱 (nō) means hate. They were probably meant to be taken separately as extremes of wanting and not-wanting, i.e. the fires of delusive-desires. Literally translated they are inexhaustible/endless (無盡) and need to be cut (斷) constantly, in order to be free from suffering.
4. Line 3: Some interpretations leave out 'gates' probably, because they have done the koan 'Mu', or read Mumonkan. The kanji for 'gates' (門) is definitely present, and beyond measure, or not measurable (無量). Hence, this statement, like the other three vows, is addressing the relative mind-state, the one that needs to be addressed, rather than our Essence-of-mind. The kanji 學 (jō) is used to indicate that we learn the 'Dharma-gates', when they are seen, or penetrated, by right-view.
5. Line 4: The Buddha Way is to be accomplished, or completed (成), by unending practice. The route to the unending practice can be completed, but never attained, i.e. reached as an end, or a possession.