

**THE PLATFORM SUTRA OF
THE SIXTH PATRIARCH**

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BDK English Tripiṭaka Series

**THE PLATFORM SUTRA
OF THE SIXTH PATRIARCH**

Translated from the Chinese of Zongbao
(Taishō Volume 48, Number 2008)

by

John R. McRae

**BDK America, Inc.
2000**

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First Printing, 2000
ISBN: 978-1-886439-13-9
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-75770

Published by
BDK America, Inc.
1675 School Street
Moraga, California 94556

Printed in the United States of America

A Message on the Publication of the English Tripiṭaka

The Buddhist canon is said to contain eighty-four thousand different teachings. I believe that this is because the Buddha's basic approach was to prescribe a different treatment for every spiritual ailment, much as a doctor prescribes a different medicine for every medical ailment. Thus his teachings were always appropriate for the particular suffering individual and for the time at which the teaching was given, and over the ages not one of his prescriptions has failed to relieve the suffering to which it was addressed.

Ever since the Buddha's Great Demise over twenty-five hundred years ago, his message of wisdom and compassion has spread throughout the world. Yet no one has ever attempted to translate the entire Buddhist canon into English throughout the history of Japan. It is my greatest wish to see this done and to make the translations available to the many English-speaking people who have never had the opportunity to learn about the Buddha's teachings.

Of course, it would be impossible to translate all of the Buddha's eighty-four thousand teachings in a few years. I have, therefore, had one hundred thirty-nine of the scriptural texts in the prodigious Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon selected for inclusion in the First Series of this translation project.

It is in the nature of this undertaking that the results are bound to be criticized. Nonetheless, I am convinced that unless someone takes it upon himself or herself to initiate this project, it will never be done. At the same time, I hope that an improved, revised edition will appear in the future.

It is most gratifying that, thanks to the efforts of more than a hundred Buddhist scholars from the East and the West, this monumental project has finally gotten off the ground. May the rays of the Wisdom of the Compassionate One reach each and every person in the world.

NUMATA Yehan
Founder of the English
Tripiṭaka Project

August 7, 1991

Editorial Foreword

In January 1982, Dr. NUMATA Yehan, the founder of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), decided to begin the monumental task of translating the complete Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka (Buddhist canon) into the English language. Under his leadership, a special preparatory committee was organized in April 1982. By July of the same year, the Translation Committee of the English Tripiṭaka was officially convened.

The initial Committee consisted of the following members: (late) HANAYAMA Shōyū, (Chairperson), BANDŌ Shōjun, ISHIGAMI Zennō, KAMATA Shigeo, KANAOKA Shūyū, MAYEDA Sengaku, NARA Yasuaki, SAYEKI Shinkō, (late) SHIOIRI Ryūtsu, TAMARU Noriyoshi, (late) TAMURA Kwansei, URŪZU Ryūshin, and YUYAMA Akira. Assistant members of the Committee were as follows: KANAZAWA Atsushi, WATANABE Shōgo, Rolf Giebel of New Zealand, and Rudy Smet of Belgium.

After holding planning meetings on a monthly basis, the Committee selected one hundred thirty-nine texts for the First Series of translations, an estimated one hundred printed volumes in all. The texts selected are not necessarily limited to those originally written in India but also include works written or composed in China and Japan. While the publication of the First Series proceeds, the texts for the Second Series will be selected from among the remaining works; this process will continue until all the texts, in Japanese as well as in Chinese, have been published.

Frankly speaking, it will take perhaps one hundred years or more to accomplish the English translation of the complete Chinese and Japanese texts, for they consist of thousands of works. Nevertheless, as Dr. NUMATA wished, it is the sincere hope of the Committee that this project will continue unto completion, even after all its present members have passed away.

It must be mentioned here that the final object of this project is not academic fulfillment but the transmission of the teaching of the Buddha to the whole world

in order to create harmony and peace among humankind. To that end, the translators have been asked to minimize the use of explanatory notes of the kind that are indispensable in academic texts, so that the attention of general readers will not be unduly distracted from the primary text. Also, a glossary of selected terms is appended to aid in understanding the text.

To my great regret, however, Dr. NUMATA passed away on May 5, 1994, at the age of ninety-seven, entrusting his son, Mr. NUMATA Toshihide, with the continuation and completion of the Translation Project. The Committee also lost its able and devoted Chairperson, Professor HANAYAMA Shōyū, on June 16, 1995, at the age of sixty-three. After these severe blows, the Committee elected me, Vice President of Musashino Women's College, to be the Chair in October 1995. The Committee has renewed its determination to carry out the noble intention of Dr. NUMATA, under the leadership of Mr. NUMATA Toshihide.

The present members of the Committee are MAYEDA Sengaku (Chairperson), BANDŌ Shōjun, ICHISHIMA Zennō, KAMATA Shigeo, KANAOKA Shūyū, NARA Yasuaki, SAYEKI Shinkō, TAMARU Noriyoshi, URYŪZU Ryūshin, YUYAMA Akira, and Kenneth K. Tanaka. Assistant members are WATANABE Shōgo and YONEZAWA Yoshiyasu.

The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research was established in November 1984, in Berkeley, California, U.S.A., to assist in the publication of the BDK English Tripiṭaka First Series. In December 1991, the Publication Committee was organized at the Numata Center, with Professor Philip Yampolsky as the Chairperson. To our sorrow, Professor Yampolsky passed away in July 1996. In February 1997, Dr. Kenneth K. Inada became Chair and served in that capacity until August 1999. The current Chair, Dr. Francis H. Cook, has been continuing the work since October 1999. All of the remaining texts will be published under the supervision of this Committee, in close cooperation with the Editorial Committee in Tokyo.

MAYEDA Sengaku
Chairperson
Editorial Committee of
the BDK English Tripiṭaka

Publisher's Foreword

The Publication Committee shares with the Editorial Committee the responsibility of realizing the vision of Dr. Yehan Numata, founder of Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism. This vision is no less than to make the Buddha's teaching better known throughout the world, through the translation and publication in English of the entire collection of Buddhist texts compiled in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, published in Tokyo in the early part of the twentieth century. This huge task is expected to be carried out by several generations of translators and may take as long as a hundred years to complete. Ultimately, the entire canon will be available to anyone who can read English and who wishes to learn more about the teaching of the Buddha.

The present generation of staff members of the Publication Committee are Diane Ames, Marianne Dresser, Eisho Nasu, Koh Nishiike, and Reverend Kiyoshi Yamashita, president of the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, California. The Publication Committee is headquartered at the Numata Center and, working in close cooperation with the Editorial Committee, is responsible for the usual tasks associated with preparing translations for publication.

In October 1999, I became the third chairperson of the Publication Committee, on the retirement of its very capable former chair, Dr. Kenneth K. Inada. The Committee is devoted to the advancement of the Buddha's teaching through the publication of excellent translations of the thousands of texts that make up the Buddhist canon.

Francis H. Cook
Chairperson
Publication Committee

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Translator's Introduction

The Buddha-nature Needs Nothing

There are eternal truths in the *Platform Sutra*. The primacy of the buddha-nature, the identity of meditation and wisdom, the “formless” approach to repentance and the precepts, the *samādhi* of the single practice—all these are religious principles that are valid beyond the limits of this one brilliant scripture. The most resounding truth, of course, is the doctrine that status, education, cultural or racial origin, and even spiritual training have nothing to do with the realization of perfect enlightenment. The only criterion of any significance whatsoever is the experience of “seeing the buddha-nature,” realizing one’s innate status as an enlightened being. This truth is embodied in the person of Huineng.

The protagonist of this convivial scripture, Huineng of Caoqi, is a living manifestation of the buddha-nature. As an illiterate “barbarian” from the far south, the impecunious son of a disgraced official, Huineng became the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Chan Buddhism with none of the usual prerequisites of recognition as a religious master. He was not even a monk, but was treated—and accepted his treatment—as a *déclassé* temple menial. His only virtue was that he achieved an instantaneous and totalistic vision of the buddha-nature, the unsullied brilliance of understanding immanent within us all.

“Achieved” is perhaps too strong a word, since there is no indication in the text that he worked for this moment of realization in any way. Huineng may have been diligent in cutting and selling firewood to support his widowed mother—an expression of filiality beyond all others in Chinese culture—and in hulling rice for the monastery at Huangmei, but the *Platform Sutra* never depicts him spending a single moment in meditation or religious ritual, let alone intoning or studying the holy texts. As a character, Huineng is absolutely static, neither laboring mightily for insight nor effusing with the newfound bliss of divinity; never was there a religious figure less transformed by his insight. In Hu Shi’s famous phrase, this was truly a “Chan that was no *chan* at all.”

It is the “mind-verses” submitted by Huineng and his alter ego, Shenxiu, that are of course the very heart of the message. According to the story, the earnest and learned Shenxiu concocts an elegant blend of metaphors to express a religious ideal of complete devotion to spiritual practice. And Huineng's response? It is to blast apart the very terms in which Shenxiu's message is phrased, to undercut the very foundation of religious practice itself.

This is not where the message ends, of course. The balance of the text would seem to imply that this “Chan that was no *chan* at all” was indeed something that spiritual aspirants should strive to achieve. Indeed, the overall force of the text is paradoxically emphatic: although visualizing a goal to be grasped for and achieved is absolutely forbidden, meditation training is something that must assuredly be undertaken, the highest imaginable goal of human existence. I will let the reader determine how successfully the *Platform Sutra* articulates this permutation of the bodhisattva ideal.

Creative Realities and Historical Fictions

However grand its doctrinal contents, the *Platform Sutra* is not a statement of an undifferentiated perennial philosophy. This was a text very clearly molded by its specific origins within the early Chan movement. Indeed, the characters that appear in this important book are all literary creations, pious fabrications. A journalist would say that the entire work is a web of lies.

It would be unfair to discount the *Platform Sutra* in this fashion; rather, it is the fictional quality of the text that renders it important, that makes it true. To be sure, almost all the details of the text's charming story are untrue, but the fact that it was the product of a fertile literary imagination—and that it was enthusiastically adopted by centuries of Chinese Buddhists—implies that it was more representative of the deepest religious sensibilities of the Chinese people than a journalistically accurate account could have ever been.

The historical Huineng (638–713), for example, is almost totally unknown. He probably taught a style of meditation practice based on the idea of sudden enlightenment, but this was really nothing exceptional for his day. Although he lived in Shaozhou in the far south, where he probably came from a locally prominent family (meaning that he was almost certainly not illiterate), he seems to have had cordial relations with other meditation masters. There is no reliable evidence whatsoever that he was designated the sole successor of his teacher,

Hongren of Huangmei, or that he received Bodhidharma's robe and bowl from Hongren. There is only the slightest of possibilities that he was ever invited to the imperial court in Changan.

In contrast, the biography of Shenxiu (606?–706) is extremely well known. This was perhaps the most important historical personage in all of early Chan: invited to court by Empress Wu in 700, he and his immediate disciples were responsible for an explosion of interest in what became Chinese Chan. They generated the basic formulations of Chan doctrine and wrote the earliest and most fundamental works of the new religious movement. Incidentally, Huineng and Shenxiu were not at Huangmei at the same time, so they could not have participated in a versification contest with each other.

Texts and Contexts

The earliest extant version of the *Platform Sutra* was written around the year 780 and was preserved among the treasures of Dunhuang in Chinese Central Asia, where the products of a medieval copyists' center were preserved until this century in a walled-up cave.

The original version of the text was written to resolve a conflict in early Chan that had been fomented by Shenhui (684–758), who carried out a vigorous campaign on behalf of his teacher Huineng's "Southern school" and against the so-called "Northern school" of Shenxiu's students. By the time of the *Platform Sutra*, interest in factionalist rivalry had passed, and the goal was to unify the burgeoning Chan movement under the standard of Huineng. Why Huineng? Not because he was an important historical figure, or even a well-known teacher. Rather, Huineng was an acceptable figurehead for Chinese Chan precisely because of his anonymity. Anything could be attributed to him as long as it would fit under the rubric of subitism. And since the "Northern school" was never the sort of institutional entity that might work to defend its own existence, there was nothing to stop the author of the *Platform Sutra* from using its representatives as straw men that he could criticize in order to elucidate his own teachings.

The text that is translated here, of course, is the mature version of the text, a composite of Yuan dynasty editions. It is substantially longer than the Dunhuang version; at one point its editor admits freely to adding dialogues and clarifications not in any of the texts he worked from. In addition to these accretions, this

version of the *Platform Sutra* is notable for its elaborate set of opening and closing flourishes—an encomium by the famous Qisong (1007–1072) and epitaphs by the Tang literati-officials Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi being the most significant. It is interesting to note the extent to which these figures accept the image of Huineng presented in the text as a historical certainty, as well as the efforts they take to justify the nontransmission of the robe and bowl to Huineng's successors. Even more ironic, perhaps, are the efforts by Qisong and the editor Zongbao to qualify the *Platform Sutra* as equivalent to scriptures spoken by the Buddha, but at the same time to suggest that it is somehow other than the “words” to which the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, said we must not cling.

Here, then, is a religious text filled with the wisdom of the ancients, rife with practical import for moderns, and delicious in its own inner contradictions. Let it speak to you in its many voices!

A Note on Interpolated Material

Three types of interpolated and explanatory material appear in either parentheses or brackets in this book, indicating that they are not part of the original text:

1. Words or phrases that appear within parentheses and in italics indicate explanatory notes, comments, and interpolations made by the original compiler/editor of this volume and the writers of the various ancillary materials (Preface, Encomium, and Appendix sections). For example, see the sentence beginning, (*“Perfected Man” refers to the Sixth Patriarch. . .*) in the first paragraph on page 7.
2. The English-language translator of this volume has in some cases provided the romanized Chinese or Sanskrit terms for certain words or phrases; these appear in italics and in parentheses immediately following the corresponding word or phrase in the text. Glosses, simple definitions, and the English equivalents of certain terms or names also appear (without italics) in parentheses immediately following the corresponding word or phrase in the text. For example, see the sentence beginning, The sage is said to be wise (*ming*, i.e., “brilliant”). . . in the first paragraph on page 7.
3. Editorial interpolations to clarify certain passages, made by the English-language translator of this volume, appear within brackets. For example, see the sentence beginning, “Deluded” is to be transformed [into ignorance]. . . in the first paragraph on page 7.

THE PLATFORM SUTRA
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Preface to the *Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch*

by Bhikṣu Deyi of Guyun¹

Empty and mysterious is the wondrous Way and inconceivable, forgetting words and attaining the meaning, in the end enlightened and wise. Therefore, the World-honored One shared his seat before the Stupa of Many Sons and held up the flower at the assembly on Vulture Peak. Like fire gives fire, mind is sealed with mind. 345c6

The four sevens of the western transmission (i.e., the twenty-eight Indian patriarchs) came down to Bodhidharma, who came east to this land to point directly at the minds of human beings [so that they might] see the nature and achieve buddhahood (*zhi zhi renxin jianxing chengfo*). There was Great Master [Hui]ke, who in the beginning became enlightened upon [hearing Bodhidharma's] words and at the end bowed three times and attained the marrow [of Bodhidharma's teaching]. Receiving the robe and succeeding to the patriarch [Bodhidharma], he opened forth the correct doctrine (*zhengzong*).

In three transmissions [the teaching] arrived at [Hongren of] Huangmei. Although there were seven hundred eminent monks within the assembly, the only one [appropriate to receive the transmission] was the layman of the pestle (i.e., Huineng).² With a single verse the robe was transmitted, and he became the Sixth Patriarch. Escaping south for more than ten years, one morning at the encounter of neither the wind nor the banner moving did he touch and open Yinzong's correct eye [of the Dharma]. Thus did the layman cut his hair³ and ascend the [ordination] platform. This was in response to the prediction of [Guṇa]bhadrā. [Huineng] opened forth the East Mountain teaching, and Lord Wei⁴ ordered the Chan monk [Fa]hai to record his words. They are titled *Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure*.

Great Master [Huineng] finally went to Caoqi for the first time in the fifth year, and he preached the Dharma for thirty-seven years. Beyond recording is the number of those who were enriched by the taste of the sweet dew [of his teaching], who entered the sagely and transcended the ordinary.

Those who are enlightened to the doctrine of the mind of the Buddha (*wu foxin zong*) and whose practice and understanding are in correspondence [with the truth] are great spiritual compatriots. They are called carriers and transmitters of the lamp. It was Nanyue [Huairang] and Qingyuan [Xingsi] who attended [upon Huineng] the longest, completely attaining [a state of] unconditionality.⁵ Therefore it was that Mazu and Shitou proceeded from [Qingyuan and Nanyue]. The wisdom of these men was perfect and bright, like a mysterious wind great in its quaking.⁶ And then did appear the towering figures of the Linji, Guiyang, Caodong, Yunmen, and Fayan [lineages]: surpassing all were their Way and their virtue (*daode*), steep were [the roads to their] front courtyards. The revelation is of the heroic monk, who aroused his ambitions and struck the barrier. By profoundly entering [any] single gate [one realizes] that the five factions share the same source. Passing throughout the forge, extensive and great is its scale. Originally the essential teachings (*gangyao*) of the five houses all derived from the *Platform Sutra*.

The *Platform Sutra* is simple in words and rich in meaning, brilliant of principle and provides all [that is necessary]. It is replete in the immeasurable teachings of the buddhas. Each and every teaching is replete in the immeasurable wondrous meanings; from each and every wondrous meaning emanate the immeasurable wondrous principles of the buddhas. It is the interior of Maitreya's pavilion, the interior of Samantabhadra's pores. He who well does enter it is identical to the youth Sudhana, who in a single moment of thought [achieved] merit perfect and complete. He is equivalent to Samantabhadra; he is equivalent to the buddhas.

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How unfortunate, the great abbreviation of the *Platform Sutra* by later people! One cannot see the great entirety of the Sixth Patriarch's purport. In my youth, [I,] Deyi, once saw an old copy, which I sought everywhere for the next thirty years and more. Recently Superior One Tong has found the complete text, which is now being published by the Idle Leisure Chan Retreat in Wuzhong (Wu Xian, Jiangxi). It is identical to that used by the various superior masters. My only wish is that you will open this scroll, raise your eyes [to the text], and enter directly into the ocean of the great perfect enlightenment. Let the life of the wisdom of the buddhas and patriarchs continue without cease! Thus will my earnest wish be complete.

Recorded on a spring day in the twenty-seventh hexagenary (i.e., sixty-year calendrical cycle) year, the twenty-seventh year of the Zhiyuan (“Reaching the Origin”) [period, or 1290].

Encomium of the *Platform Sutra* of the *Dharma Treasure of the* *Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch*

by Qisong, Great Master Mingjiao of the Song⁷

To praise is to announce, to open up the sutra and widely announce. The *Platform Sutra* is that by which a Perfected Man (*zhiren*) revealed his mind. (“*Perfected Man*” refers to the Sixth Patriarch, just as in the text.) What mind? The wondrous mind transmitted by the buddhas. How great, this mind! The initial source of all transformations, yet it remains ever pure. Whether ordinary person or sage, whether hidden or revealed, there is nowhere that it does not exist of itself.⁸ The sage is said to be wise (*ming*, i.e., “brilliant”), and the ordinary person is said to be deluded (*mei*, i.e., “obscure”). “Deluded” is to be transformed [into ignorance], and “wise” is to return [to original wisdom].⁹ Although transformed and returning differ, the wondrous mind is one.

In the beginning was Śākyamuni Buddha, who transmitted it (i.e., the mind) to Mahākāśyapa. The thirty-three generations of Mahākāśyapa’s transmission transmitted it to Great Mirror (Dajian, i.e., Huineng). (*The Sixth Patriarch’s posthumous title is Great Master Great Mirror.*) Great Mirror transmitted it, and it was transmitted on even further.

In the first place, the ways of speaking of [the mind] are varied. Fundamentally, there are names that are identical even though the reality varies; fundamentally, there are many meanings even though the mind is one. It is called “mind of flesh and blood,” it is called “mind of dependent cognition,” it is called “mind of correlation and activating,” and it is called “mind of firm reality.”¹⁰ Since mental states (*xinsuo*) are [often referred to as the] mind, there is an even greater [variety of usage]. These are cases where the names are identical even though the reality varies. It is called “mind of suchness,” it is called “mind of generation and extinction,” it is called “mind of the afflictions,” and it is called “mind of *bodhi* (*bodhicitta*).” Those of this category found in the various sutras could hardly be counted! These are cases where the meanings are many even though the mind is one.

Of meanings, there is the meaning of enlightenment (*jue*) and the meaning of nonenlightenment (*bujue*). Of minds, there is the true mind (*zhenxin*) and the false mind (*wangxin*). All of these are [just different] distinctions of the correct mind (*zhengxin*). Of course, the mind referred to in the *Platform Sutra* is, of [the two] meanings, the meaning of enlightenment and, of [the two] minds, the true mind (*shixin*).

346b In the past, when the Sage [Śākyamuni] was about to secret himself [in nirvana], he commanded Mahākāśyapa to transmit the essential Dharma outside the teachings.¹¹ Thinking that people then were stagnating in traces and would forget to return [to the fundamental], he deeply wanted those of later times to behold the fundamental and correct the implications. Therefore does the *Nirvana Sutra* say, “I have an unsurpassable correct Dharma, which I bestow entirely on Mahākāśyapa.”

The Way of heaven resides in change, the Way of earth resides in selection, and the Way of the sages¹² resides in the essential (*yao*). The essential is a term for the most wondrous. The essential is the Way of the sages, and is therefore the hinge-pin of the gate of the *dharmadhātu*, the meeting of the immeasurable doctrines, the unembellished [original] vehicle of the Mahayana. How could the *Lotus [Sutra]* not but say, “You should understand that the wondrous Dharma is the essential secret (*miyao*) of the buddhas.” How could the *Flower Garland [Sutra]* not but say, “With a bit of expedient means, quickly does one achieve *bodhi*.” The essential, then—how great is its benefit in the Way of the sages!

Therefore, the central doctrine (*zong*) of the *Platform Sutra* is the honoring of the essential of the mind (*xinyao*). The mind is as if bright, as if dark, as if empty, as if numinous, as if serene, as if awakened. It possesses things and is without things. Say it is a single thing, and it originally extends over the ten thousand things. Say it is the ten thousand things, and it is originally unified in a single thing. A single thing resembling the ten thousand things, the ten thousand things resembling a single thing: such descriptions [imply that the mind] is conceivable, but it can neither be thought of nor conceived of.

The world (*tianxia*) calls it the mysterious understanding (*xuanjie*), they call it the divine comprehension (*shenhui*), they call it beyond relativities (*juedai*), they call it the silent essence (*moti*), they call it the obscure penetration (*mingtong*). Transcend all of them, do away with them, do away with

them, and away again! Furthermore, how could one reach such [a state]?¹³ Were it not ultimately attained by solitary transmission from the Perfected Man, who could sincerely embody it?¹⁴ Inferring, he explicates it, and there is nowhere he cannot go. Probing, he resolves it, and there is nowhere he is not correct.

Applying it to realization of the nature,¹⁵ his views are perfectly intimate. Applying it to cultivation, his proceedings are perfectly correct. Applying it to the elevation of virtue and the discrimination of illusions, the true and the false¹⁶ are easily manifested. Applying it to transcendence of the world,¹⁷ the enlightenment of buddhahood is quickly achieved. Applying it to saving the world, the enervating defilements are easily ended. This is the central doctrine (*zong*) of the *Platform Sutra*, which may be disseminated throughout the world without opposition [from anyone].

Those who say [the dictum] “the mind is buddhas” is shallow do not know the extent [of their own minds]! It is as if they were to measure the earth with a broken auger and call the earth shallow; it is as if they were to probe heaven through a hole in the back corner of a roof and call heaven small.¹⁸ How could heaven and earth be so! Therefore, although the [masters of the] hundred houses may be a little better than this, they are not like [the perfection of the *Platform Sutra*]. The Perfected Man penetrates and permeates it, and his determination [of the truth] is seen to be in accord with the scriptures.¹⁹ The Perfected Man transforms and penetrates it, being unembodied in names (i.e., words) and inscrutable.

Therefore, there is moral and meaning in [Huineng’s] manifest preaching; there is no beginning or end of his secret preaching. Those whose natural abilities are sharp will attain it profoundly; those whose natural abilities are dull will attain it shallowly. Could it be described? Could it be expressed? If one were constrained to approximate it,²⁰ then it is equivalent to the perfect and sudden teaching, the Supreme Vehicle, the Pure Chan of the Tathāgata, the Correct Doctrine of the Bodhisattvas’ Storehouse. Those who discuss it call it the Learning of the Mystery (*xuanxue*), and is this not exactly the case? The world refers to it as a school (*zongmen*), and is this not appropriate?

When the *Platform Sutra* says, “Meditation and wisdom are the fundamental,” [it is because] these are the beginning of one’s progress to enlightenment (*dao*, the “Way”). Meditation is tranquility, and wisdom is illumination (*ming*).

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Illuminating, one contemplates; tranquil, one pacifies. Pacifying the mind, one understands the mind (*tixin*). Contemplating the Way, one may speak of the Way.

The “*samādhi* of the single practice” (*yixing sanmei*) is a term for the one characteristic of the *dharmadhātu* (*fajie yixiang*). Although the ten thousand forms of good are said to be different, they are all within the single practice.

“The formless is the essence” (*wuxiang wei ti*) is to honor the great precepts. “Nonthought is the doctrine” (*wunian wei zong*) is to honor the great meditation. “Nonabiding is the fundamental” (*wuzhu wei ben*) is to honor the great wisdom. Precepts, meditation, and wisdom constitute the Way penetrated by the three vehicles. The wondrous mind (*miaoxin*) is the great source²¹ of precepts, meditation, and wisdom; with the single wondrous mind one unifies the three Dharmas. Therefore, it is called great.

The “formless precepts” (*wuxiang jie*) are to constrain one so as to definitely attain correct realization. The “four great vows” (*si hong yuan*) are to vow salvation—salvation from suffering; to vow eradication—the eradication of the accumulation [of the afflictions]; to vow learning—to learn the Way; and to vow attainment—attainment of serene extinction (i.e., nirvana). Extinction is without anything that is extinguished, and therefore there is nothing that is not extinguished. Enlightenment is without anything one is enlightened to, and therefore there is nothing that is not saved.

The “formless repentances” (*wuxiang chan*) are to repent that which is not to be repented. The “three refuges” are to take refuge in the One. The One is the source of the three treasures. To explain *mahāprajñā* (great wisdom) is to refer to the very center of the mind. *Prajñā* is the expedient means of the Sage, the great wisdom of the Sage.

Fundamentally, it can be tranquilized, illumined, made provisional, and actualized. The people of this world use its tranquilization to subjugate a host of evils; the people of this world use its illumination to collect a host of goods; the people of this world use its provisionalization to make great their conditioned [activities of teaching]; the people of this world use its actualization to make great their unconditioned [attainment of nirvana]. How ultimate, this *prajñā*! The Way of the Sage, without *prajñā*, would not be illuminated and would not be attained. The tasks of those under heaven, without *prajñā*, would

not be appropriate and would not be correct. The Perfected Man's actions [of teaching] use *prajñā* to elicit [interpretations]. Is this not abstruse?²²

[Huineng says that] “my Dharma is preached for those of the highest abilities” because he appropriately [matches person and Dharma].²³ To make heavy use of those [capable of only] light loads would be unsuccessful, and to bequeath the great method to those of small [capacities] would be an error.²⁴ That which has been transmitted silently and bequeathed from the past is a secret teaching. “Secret” is not to imply one's own realization without speaking but to [base oneself on] suchness while [practicing] in secret. To not understand this Dharma and revile it readily, to eradicate one's seeds of buddhahood for a hundred eons and a thousand lives, is to lose the [fundamental] mind even as one [attempts to] protect the people of this world.

How great, the appearance of the *Platform Sutra*! Its fundamentals are correct and its traces effective. Its cause is true and its results unerring. Previous sages and later sages have thus generated it, have thus manifested it, and have thus returned to it. Vast and surging, it is like the flowing of a great river, like the omnipresence of space, like the illumination of sun and moon, like the lack of contact between form and shadow, like the ordered flight of geese. Wondrous to attain it—and it is called the fundamental; extrapolate and make it function—and it is called the traces. Begin that which is without beginning—and it is called the cause; attain that which cannot be attained—and it is called the result. The result is not different from the cause—and it is called the correct result; the cause is not different from the result—and it is called the correct cause. The traces [of the teaching] must consider the fundamental—and this is called the great function; the fundamental must consider the traces—and this is called the Great Vehicle. “Vehicle” is the Sage's metaphor for the Way; “function” is the Sage's generation of the teaching. The Way of the Sage does not approach the mind [that is the source of the teachings]; the teaching of the Sage does not approach [the actual practice of spiritual] cultivation. To regulate the spirit and enter the Way (i.e., enlightenment) does not approach the concentration and insight [meditation] of the single characteristic [that is without characteristics];²⁵ to pattern oneself on good and attain virtue does not approach the *samādhi* of the single practice. To accept all the precepts does not approach that which is without characteristics; to make correct all the meditations does not approach nonthought; to penetrate all the

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wisdoms does not approach nonabiding. To generate good and extinguish evil does not approach the formless precepts; to expand on the Way and elicit virtue does not approach the four great vows. Well to contemplate transgressions does not approach the formless repentances; to correct one's tendencies does not approach the three refuges. To correct the great essence and resolve the great function does not approach great *prajñā*; to generate the great faith and toil at the great Way does not approach the great ambition. [The attempts of people] under heaven to exhaust principles and eliminate the natures [of things] does not approach the silent transmission; to want one's mind to be without transgression is not better than to not revile [Buddhism]. To make meditation and wisdom the beginning is the foundation of the Way; the *samādhi* of the single characteristic is the origin of virtue. The central doctrine of no-mind is the expression of emancipation; the fundamental of nonabiding is the expression of *prajñā*; and the essence of the formless is the expression of the *dharmakāya*. The formless precepts are the utmost of the precepts; the four great vows are the zenith of vows; and the formless repentances are the ultimate among repentances. The precepts of the triple refuge are [to take] refuge in [ultimate] truth. Great wisdom is the great model for the ordinary person and sage; what is preached for those of highest abilities is the straightforward teaching. The silent transmission is the ultimate of transmissions; to constrain against revilement [of Buddhism] is the appropriate [task of] the precepts.

The wondrous mind is not formed through cultivation, nor is it illumined through enlightenment; it is formed fundamentally.²⁶ Those who are deluded as to wisdom (*ming*, i.e., “illumination”) return to wisdom and are thereby enlightened; those who have turned their backs on its formation return to that formation and therefore cultivate [the mind]. It is cultivated through noncultivation, and hence it is called correct cultivation; it is illumined through nonillumination, and hence it is called correct enlightenment.²⁷ The Perfected Man was reticent and did not reveal [the grandeur of] his department, but he formed virtue and performed practices that were luxuriant [throughout the world]. The Perfected Man was decrepit and seemed unable to maintain any [teaching], but his Way is manifest [everywhere] under heaven. Presumably, he cultivated with correct cultivation and was enlightened with correct enlightenment. In this regard [there are those who] say, “there is no cultivation

and no enlightenment, no cause and no result,” boring away at trivia and vying to offer their own explanations; [such people are] mistaken as to the teachings of the Perfected Man. Ah, they abandon the precepts, meditation, and wisdom and hence necessarily drift off into murky space, and there is nothing I can do about them! 347b

How utterly unfortunate, those sentient beings who inundate their minds and float along with their consciousness, consciousness and action driving each other, following the various directions (i.e., modes of existence) with no stop from the [very] beginning. They become phenomena, they become forms, they are born along with humans and [the myriad] things, rampant throughout heaven and earth, so numerous they could never be counted.²⁸ Those who attain human form are truly only one in a hundred million, and those who as humans are able to become enlightened are virtually nil. The Sage [Śākyamuni] pondered this and generated a great variety [of teachings], but there are still those under heaven who have not attained wisdom. The Sage, in order to save such as these, used many methods to heal them, but there are still those under heaven who have not awoken. The clever have disrupted themselves with wisdom, the fools have hung themselves with stupidity, and the average people have beclouded themselves in blankness.²⁹ They are moved to respond to things, becoming happy at them and angry at them, sad about them and pleased about them, and their impediments increase by the myriad. Like [those] walking in the dark of night, they know not where they go. Hearing the words of the Sage, they speculate upon them and become aggrieved by them, as if they are trying to look afar through a fog. They talk about being and talk about nonbeing, they talk about not being and talk about not nonbeing, [and then] they talk about being again and talk about nonbeing again. But they only become more obscured by their improper views,³⁰ and until the end of their days they never understand. The ocean is what it is because there is water, and the fish and dragons who live and die in the ocean do not see the water. The Way is what it is because of the mind, and such persons speak of the Way all the time but never see the mind. How sad!

The mind is fundamentally subtle and wondrous, abstruse and remote, difficult to illuminate and difficult to reach. Thus it is [not easy to understand].³¹ The Sage [Śākyamuni] has secreted himself [in nirvana], and for a hundred generations, even though there were written transmissions, [the people of this

world] under heaven were not able to understand and experience [the enlightenment of which they speak]. Therefore the central doctrine of the *Platform Sutra* specified and straightforwardly described the mind, so that all under heaven were for the first time able to render correct their [fundamental] natures and [karmically endowed] life forces. It is as if you eliminate the clouds and mists and see the great sky, or as if you climb Mount Tai and can see all around without restriction.

According to Wang [Wenkang], who borrowed from a profane text to say, “With a single change [the mantle] passed from Qi to Lu, and with a single change it changed from Lu to the Way.”³² This saying is close [to the truth]. The *Nirvana [Sutra]* says, “From the Deer Park in the beginning to the Ajivatā River at the end, for fifty years [the Buddha] never spoke a single word.” The manifestation of the Dharma is not done in words, and this saying is to prevent us from seeking his message in words. [The *Nirvana Sutra* also] says, “Rely on the Dharma, do not rely on the man”—this is because the Dharma is true and the man (i.e., Śākyamuni) is provisional. It says, “Rely on the meaning, do not rely on words”—this is because the meanings are real and the words provisional. It says, “Rely on wisdom, do not rely on knowledge”—this is because wisdom is the ultimate and knowledge is false. It says “Rely on sutras that are comprehensive in meaning, do not rely on sutras that are not comprehensive in meaning”—this is because
347c sutras that are comprehensive in meaning exhaust the principles [of things]. And as Bodhisattva [Mahākāśyapa] said, “this is the preaching of the great nirvana,” meaning that his own preaching was identical to that [of the Buddha] in the sutra.

As the Sage [Śākyamuni] said, “These four persons (i.e., the four reliances) have appeared in the world to maintain and protect the correct Dharma, and you should realize them [as such].” Since [the Buddha said] “you should realize them [as such],” the Perfected Man [Huineng] extrapolated from the fundamental to correct the derivative. Because [Kāśyapa said] “My preaching is the same as [the Buddha’s in] the sutra,” the Perfected Man’s preaching of a sutra is identical to a sutra. Because [the *Nirvana Sutra* says] “Rely on meanings” and “rely on sutras that are comprehensive in meaning,” the Perfected Man has preached openly and was in accord with the meanings and in accord with the sutras [of the Buddha]. Because [the *Nirvana Sutra*

says] “Rely on the Dharma” and “rely on wisdom,” therefore the Perfected Man has preached secretly, transforming and penetrating, but not becoming stagnated in the slightest. Because “the manifestation of the Dharma is not done in words,” the central teaching³³ of the Perfected Man reveres the silent transmission.

The Sage was like the spring, gently bringing forth, and the Perfected Man was like the autumn, cleanly maturing. The Sage commanded, and the Perfected Man effected. The Perfected Man is therefore the one great in marvelous virtue and outstanding heroism of the school of the Sage. That perfected one began in insignificance, revealing that he did not understand the words of this world. And what did he achieve! With only a single preaching, he revealed the Way and saved the world, quite identically to the achievements of the Great Sage. Fundamentally, with mysterious virtue and superior wisdom, he understood things innately. Wanting to demonstrate the Dharma, he manifested illiteracy!

It has been almost four hundred years since he died, and his Dharma has flowed into the four seas without cease. Emperors and kings, sages and wise men, have for thirty generations sought out his Way and have become increasingly reverential. If he had not attained that which had been attained by the Great Sage, heaven would long ago have come to despise him. [If so], how could it have become like this?

I, [Qisong,] am a stubborn [narrow-minded] person—how could I have exhausted his Way? Fortunately, even a mosquito drinking from the ocean knows its taste. Thus do I dare to bow my head and disseminate it, bequeathing it to students to come.

Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch

Compiled by Bhikṣu Zongbao, successor to the patriarch
and abbot of Baoen Guangxiao Chansi (“Retribution of
Grace and Refulgence of Filiality Meditation Monastery”),
[where occurred the incident involving] the wind and the banner

Number One: Account of Origins

When the Great Master arrived at Baolin[si] (“Treasure Grove Monastery”), Prefect Wei (whose given name was Qu) and his official staff entered the monastery and invited the master to come to the lecture hall at Dafansi (“Great Purity Monastery”) within the city, where he could tell his story and preach the Dharma for those assembled. After the master took his seat, the prefect and official staff, more than thirty in number, the Confucian scholars, more than thirty in number, and the monks, nuns, and laypeople, more than a thousand in number, simultaneously did obeisance³⁴ to him and beseeched him to relate the essentials of the Dharma.

The Great Master told the assembly, “Good friends,³⁵ *bodhi* is fundamentally pure in its self-nature. You must simply use this mind [that you already have], and you will achieve buddhahood directly and completely. Good friends, listen well! This is the story of how I³⁶ practiced and attained the Dharma. 348a

“My father was a native of Fanyang (Zhuo Xian, Hebei), but he was banished to Lingnan and became a commoner in Xinzhou (Xinxing Xian, Guangdong). I have been unfortunate: my father died early, and my aged mother and I, her only child, moved here to Nanhai.³⁷ Miserably poor, I sold firewood in the marketplace.

“At one time, a customer bought some firewood and had me deliver it to his shop, where he took it and paid me. On my way out of the gate I saw someone³⁸ reciting a sutra, and as soon as I heard the words of the sutra my mind opened forth in enlightenment. I then asked the person what sutra he was reciting, and he said, ‘The *Diamond Sutra*.’ I also asked, ‘Where did

you get this sutra?’ He said, ‘I have come from Dongchansi (“Eastern Meditation Monastery”) in Huangmei Xian in Qizhou (Qizhun, Hubei). The Fifth Patriarch, Great Master Hongren, resides at and is in charge of instruction at that monastery. He has over a thousand followers. I went there, did obeisance to him, and received this sutra there. Great Master [Hongren] always exhorts both monks and laymen to simply maintain the *Diamond Sutra*, so that one can see the [self]-nature³⁹ by oneself and achieve buddhahood directly and completely.’

“My hearing this was through a karmic connection from the past. Someone then gave me ten *liang* of silver to pay for my aged mother’s food and clothing and told me to go to Huangmei to do obeisance to the Fifth Patriarch. I then left my mother for the last time and departed. In less than thirtyodd days I arrived at Huangmei, where I did obeisance to the Fifth Patriarch.

“The patriarch asked me, ‘Where are you from, and what is it you seek?’ I replied, ‘Your disciple is a commoner from Xinzhou in Lingnan, and I have come this far to pay reverence to you. I wish only to achieve buddhahood and do not seek anything else.’ The patriarch said, ‘If you’re from Lingnan, then you must be a hunter.⁴⁰ How could you ever achieve buddhahood?’ I said, ‘Although people may be from north or south, there is fundamentally no north and south in the buddha-nature. Although this hunter’s body is different from Your Reverence’s, how can there be any difference in the buddha-natures [within]?’

“The Fifth Patriarch wanted to speak further with me but, seeing that his followers were gathered all around, he told me to go with them to work. I said, ‘If I might address Your Reverence, your disciple constantly generates wisdom in my own mind. To not transcend the self-natures⁴¹ is equivalent to the field of blessings. I wonder what work Your Reverence would have me do?’ The patriarch said, ‘Some Glao barbarian!⁴² You’re very sharp! Don’t say anything else! Go to the work shed.’⁴³ I then retired to a chapel in the rear [of the monastery].

“A practitioner had me break up kindling and tread the hulling pestle.⁴⁴ After more than eight months of this, the patriarch came unexpectedly one day to see me. He said, ‘I thought your views might have been of use, but I was afraid there were evil people who might have harmed you. That was why I haven’t spoken to you. Do you understand this?’ I replied, ‘I understood

your intentions. I have not dared go by the main hall,⁴⁵ so as to not remind people.’⁴⁶

“One day the patriarch called all of his followers together [and addressed them, saying], ‘I preach to you that life and death is the great concern for people of this world. But you spend all your time seeking only the fields of blessings, rather than seeking to escape the ocean of suffering of birth and death! If you are deluded as to the self-natures, how can you be saved by blessings? You should each go reflect upon your own wisdom. Taking the essence of *prajñā* within your own fundamental minds, you should each compose a verse and come show it to me. If you are enlightened to the great meaning, I will transmit the robe and Dharma to you and make you the patriarch of the sixth generation.

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“Go quickly—this is an emergency, and you must not delay! Thinking is of no use—he who is to see the [self]-nature will see it immediately upon hearing these words! If there is such a one here, he will see it even if encamped on top of a circle of knives!’⁴⁷ (*This is a metaphor for one of excellent abilities.*)

“The assembly [of followers] received these instructions and retired, saying to each other, ‘We followers do not have to purify our minds and work to compose verses. What advantage would there be in showing anything to His Reverence [Hongren]?’⁴⁸ Elder Shenxiu is now our instructor, and he will certainly attain [the rank of sixth patriarch]. If ones such as us tried to compose verses, we would only be wasting our energies.’ The others heard these words, and all of them gave up [working on the problem]. They all said, ‘Afterward, we will rely on Master Shenxiu. Why trouble to compose verses?’

“Shenxiu thought, ‘They are not going to submit verses, thinking that I am their instructor. I must compose a verse and submit it to His Reverence. If I do not submit a verse, how will His Reverence know the profundity of understanding within my mind? If I submit a verse with the intention of seeking the Dharma, it would be good. But if I am seeking to become patriarch, it would be bad. How would that be any different from one with an ordinary mind usurping the sagely status? But if I don’t submit a verse, I’ll never attain the Dharma. What a problem! What a problem!’

“There was a hallway three bays in length in front of the Fifth Patriarch’s hall, where Auxiliary Lu Zhen⁴⁹ was to be asked to paint episodes⁵⁰ from the

Laṅkāvatāra Sutra and a diagram of the Fifth Patriarch's lineage, [all for] wider dissemination and offerings.⁵¹ When Shenxiu had finished making up his verse, he tried several times to go to the front of the hall [to offer his verse in person]. But his mind was in a daze and his body covered with sweat, and he was unable to submit [his verse]. Over the space of four days he tried thirteen times to submit his verse but couldn't. He thought, 'It would be better to write it in the hallway. After His Reverence sees it, if he says it is good, I will come forward and bow to him, saying that it was mine. If he says it is unacceptable, I will have wasted several years at this monastery. I will have received the obeisance of others, but what Way⁵² will I have cultivated?'

"On that night, in the third watch (about 1:00 A.M.) so that no one else knew, [Shenxiu] took a lamp and wrote his verse on the wall of the south corridor, submitting [to the patriarch] the viewpoint of his mind. The verse read:

The body is the *bodhi* tree;
The mind is like a bright mirror's stand.
Be always diligent in rubbing it—
Do not let it attract any dust.

"After Shenxiu finished writing his verse, he returned to his room, without anyone knowing. Shenxiu thought, 'Tomorrow, if the Fifth Patriarch sees my verse and is pleased, it will mean I have a karmic connection with the Dharma. If he says it's unacceptable, it will mean I am deluded by the layered barriers of past karma and am not fit to attain the Dharma. The sagely intention is difficult to fathom!' He remained in his room, thinking, but unable to rest either sitting or lying down.

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"When it came to be the fifth watch (about 5:00 A.M.), the patriarch knew that Shenxiu had not been able to enter the gate and had been unable to see the self-nature. When morning came, Hongren called Auxiliary Lu to come paint the lineage and episodes on the wall of the south corridor. Unexpectedly seeing the verse, he announced, 'There is no need for you to paint anything. I am sorry we have troubled you to come so far. The [*Diamond*] *Sutra* says, "All that which has characteristics is false." We should just leave this verse here for people to recite. By cultivating in reliance upon this verse, they will avoid falling into the unfortunate modes of existence. To cultivate according to this verse will be greatly beneficial!'

“[Hongren then] commanded his followers to burn incense and do obeisance [to the verse, saying], ‘All who recite this verse will be able to see the nature.’ The followers recited it, all of them sighing at how excellent it was.

“But in the third watch [that night] the patriarch called Shenxiu into the hall and asked him, ‘Is the verse yours?’ Shenxiu said, ‘Yes, it is mine, but I am unable to seek the status of patriarch. I seek Your Reverence’s compassion. Do I have some small wisdom or not?’

“Hongren said, ‘When you composed this verse you had not seen the fundamental nature. You have come only as far as outside the gate; you have not yet come inside. With understanding such as this you will not be able to attain the unsurpassable *bodhi*. The unsurpassable *bodhi* is to be able, at these very words, to recognize your own fundamental mind and to see that your own fundamental nature is neither born nor extinguished. It is to see this naturally in every moment of thought and at all times: the myriad *dharma*s are without obstruction; the one is true and all are true.⁵³ The myriad realms are naturally thuslike, and the thuslike mind is the true. If what you see is like this, then it is the self-nature of the unsurpassable bodhisattva.

“Go now, and meditate upon this for a day or two. Compose another verse and bring it to me. I will see from your verse whether you have been able to enter the gate and whether I should transmit to you the robe and Dharma.’ Shenxiu bowed and went out. But even after several days he was unable to create another verse. His mind was in a daze and his spirit was disturbed, as if he were in a dream, and he could take no pleasure in either walking or sitting.”

[Huineng continued,] “After a couple of days an acolyte passed by the hulling room reciting the verse. Upon hearing it, I immediately knew that [the author of] the verse had not seen the fundamental nature. Although I had never received any instruction, I had already recognized the great intention [of the sages], so I asked the acolyte, ‘What verse is it you’re reciting?’ The acolyte said, ‘What a [disgusting] hunter you are! Don’t you know that Great Master [Hongren] has said that life and death is the great concern for people of this world, and, wanting to transmit the robe and bowl, he commanded his followers to compose verses and show them to him? If there were one who was enlightened to the great intention, he would transmit the robe and Dharma and make that one the sixth patriarch. Elder Shenxiu wrote a formless

verse on the wall of the south corridor. Great Master [Hongren] has commanded us all to recite it, [saying that] if we cultivate on the basis of this verse, we will avoid falling into the unfortunate modes of existence, that it will be very beneficial to cultivate on the basis of this verse!’

“I said, (*One text has “I also want to recite this, in order to make certain my conditions for rebirth.”*) ‘Holy One, I have been treading the pestle here for more than eight months, and I’ve never even gone past the front of the hall. I would like you to take me to this verse so that I might do obeisance to it.’ The acolyte took me to the verse so that I could do obeisance to it. I said, ‘I am unable to read. Holy One, would you read it for me?’ At the time Zhang Riyong, Administrative Aide⁵⁴ of Jiangzhou, was there, and he read [the verse] to me aloud.

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“After hearing it I said, ‘I also have a verse, and would like the Administrative Aide to write it for me.’ The Administrative Aide said, ‘You’ve composed a verse? How unusual!’ I said to the Administrative Aide, ‘If you wish to study the unsurpassable *bodhi*, you should not make light of beginners. The lowest of the low may have the most supreme wisdom, and the highest of the high may be without [spiritual] intention or wisdom. To make light of others is a transgression unlimited and infinite.’

“The Administrative Aide said, ‘Just recite your verse. I will write it for you. If you attain the Dharma, you must save me first (i.e., before teaching anyone else). Don’t forget what I say!’

“My verse went:

Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing—
Where could any dust be attracted?

“After I finished this verse everyone around there became agitated and couldn’t help sighing with amazement. They all said to each other, ‘How strange! You just can’t go by looks alone! Why is it always that people like that are living bodhisattvas!’⁵⁵ Seeing that they were getting excited and worried that someone might harm me, the patriarch rubbed out the verse with his sandal and said, ‘This [person] too has not seen the nature.’ Those present accepted this.

“The next day, Hongren secretly came to the hulling room, where he saw me with a rock on my back pounding rice and said, ‘He who seeks the Way forgets his body on behalf of the Dharma. Is that how it is [with you]?’ He then asked, ‘Is the rice ripe yet?’ I replied, ‘The rice has been ripe for a long time. It only lacks sifting [the hulls from the grain].’ The patriarch struck his staff on the pestle three times and left. I understood what he meant—that I should enter his room at the third drum (i.e., the third watch of the night, about 1:00 A.M.).

“The patriarch kept his robe (*kaṣāya*) hidden and would not let anyone see it. He preached the *Diamond Sutra* for me. When he reached the words ‘responding to the nonabiding, yet generating the mind’⁵⁶ I experienced a great enlightenment, [realizing that] all the myriad *dharmas* do not transcend their self-natures. I thereupon informed the patriarch of this, saying, ‘No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally and naturally pure. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally neither generated nor extinguished. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally and naturally sufficient unto themselves. No matter when, the self-natures are fundamentally without movement. No matter when, the self-natures are able to generate the myriad *dharmas*.’

“Knowing that I had been enlightened to the fundamental nature, the patriarch said to me, ‘If one does not recognize the fundamental mind, studying the Dharma is of no benefit. If one recognizes one’s own fundamental mind, one sees one’s own fundamental nature. This is to be called a great man, a teacher of humans and gods, a buddha.’

“At the third watch of the night I received the Dharma. No one knew of this. He then transmitted the sudden teaching and the robe and bowl, saying, ‘You have become the patriarch of the sixth generation. You should maintain your own mindfulness well,⁵⁷ and you should save sentient beings extensively. Do not allow the dissemination [of the Dharma] to be cut off in the future. Listen to my verse:

Sentient beings cast their seeds;
Because of the earth the fruits are born.
Insentient objects have no seeds,
No natures, and no birth.

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“The patriarch went on, ‘When Great Master [Bodhi]dharma came to this land long ago, people did not yet come to rely upon him. Therefore he transmitted this robe as the embodiment of reliance [upon him]. It has been handed down for generation after generation. The Dharma, moreover, is the transmission of the mind with the mind. [The mind] must always enlighten itself, emancipate itself. From ancient times, the buddhas have only transmitted the fundamental essence; the masters have secretly handed on the fundamental mind.

“‘The robe [however] has become the focus of conflict, and beginning with you it should not be transmitted. If you transmit this robe, your life expectancy will be like a hanging thread. You should go quickly! I fear people will harm you!’ I addressed him, ‘Where should I go?’ The patriarch said, ‘When you encounter destruction (*huai*), you should stop. When you come upon a group (*hui*), you should secret yourself.’

“In the third watch I took the robe and bowl and said, ‘I am from south China and do not know the mountainous roads around here. How do I get to the mouth of the [Yangzi] River?’ The Fifth Patriarch said, ‘Do not be disheartened, I will see you off.’ The patriarch accompanied me as far as Jiujiang station, where he had us get on a boat. The Fifth Patriarch took the oar and rowed [the boat] himself. I said, ‘Your Reverence, please sit. Your disciple should row!’ Hongren said, ‘I should take you over [to the other shore].’ I said, ‘When one is deluded, one thinks teachers take [sentient beings over to the other shore], but when one is enlightened, one realizes one crosses over by oneself. Although “cross over” is only a single term, its uses are varied. Since I was born in a border region, my pronunciation is not correct. I have received transmission of the Dharma from you, Master, and I have now become enlightened. Can it be anything other than that the self-natures have crossed themselves over?’

“The patriarch said, ‘So it is, so it is. In the future, Buddhism will flourish greatly because of you. Three years after you go, I will depart this world. You should go now. Make an effort to go south, and don’t be in a hurry to preach [the Dharma]. It is difficult to propagate Buddhism!’

“After I left the patriarch, I started out walking toward the south. In the second month [of traveling] I reached the Dayu Mountains.⁵⁸ (*Hongren returned [to the monastery] and for several days did not go into the hall.*

The assembly [of followers] was in doubt about this and proceeded to him to ask, "Is Your Reverence ill or discomforted in some small way?" He said, "I am not ill. The robe and Dharma are in the south." They asked, "To whom have you transmitted them?" He said, "One who is able has received them." Thus did the assembly learn of it.)

"Coming after me were several hundred people, who wanted to take away the robe and bowl. One monk, of the lay surname Chen and named Huiming, had previously been a general of the fourth rank. He was coarse and excitable by nature, and he really wanted to find me. He reached me before the rest of the group chasing me. I threw the robe and bowl down on a rock and said, 'This robe emblemizes reliance [upon the patriarchs]. How can you struggle for it?' I hid in the underbrush, and Huiming tried to lift it without success. Then he called to me, saying, 'O practitioner, O practitioner! I have come for the Dharma, not for the robe.' I then came out and sat on the rock.

"Huiming bowed to me and said, 'I wish that you would preach the Dharma for me.' I said, 'You say you've come for the Dharma. [If so], you must eliminate the various conditions and not generate a single thought. [If you do], I will preach the Dharma for you.' Huiming was quiet for a time. I said, 'Do not think of good, and do not think of evil. At just such a time, what is Elder Huiming's original face?' At these words, Huiming [experienced] a great enlightenment. He then questioned me again, saying, 'Other than the secret words and secret intention [you expressed] just now, is there any other secret intention?' I said, 'What I have preached to you is not secret. If you counter-illuminate [your own original face you will realize that] the secret was on your side.'

"Huiming said, 'Although I was at [Hongren's monastery in] Huangmei, I actually never thought about my own [original] face. To receive your instructions now is like a man who drinks water knowing [immediately] whether it is cold or warm. Now you are my teacher.'

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"I said, 'If this is the case, then we share the same teacher of Huangmei. Well should you protect and maintain [the teaching]!' Huiming asked further, 'Where should I go now?' I said, 'When you encounter ampleness you should stop, when you come upon munificence you should reside.'⁵⁹ Huiming bowed and left. *(Huiming returned to the foot of the mountain. He addressed the*

group that had come after me, saying “I just climbed this mountain of boulders, and there was no trace of him. We should try searching by another road.” The group of those chasing [Huineng] all did as he said. Huiming later changed [his name] to Daoming, in order to avoid the first character of his teacher’s name.)

“After this I went to Caoqi. There too I was beset by evil people searching for me and so fled to Sihui [Xian],⁶⁰ where I spent fifteen years in all [living] with a group of hunters.⁶¹ During this time I preached the Dharma to the hunters when the occasion arose. The hunters had always had me guard their nets, but whenever I saw living animals in them I set them free. Whenever it was mealtime, I put vegetables in the pot for boiling the meat. They asked me about this sometimes, and I would answer, ‘These are just vegetables to go with the meat.’

“One day I realized that the time had come to disseminate the Dharma, that I could not hide forever. Accordingly, I left [the mountains and] went to Faxingsi (“Monastery of the Dharma-nature”) in Guangzhou, where I encountered Dharma Master Yinzong lecturing on the *Nirvana Sutra*.

“At that time the wind was blowing and the banner [announcing the lecture] was moving. One monk said that the wind was moving, while another monk said the banner was moving. They argued on and on, so I went forward and said, ‘It is not the wind that is moving, and it is not the banner that is moving. It is your minds that are moving.’ Everyone listening was amazed. Yinzong had me brought up to the dais, where he examined me on the import of what I had said. Hearing me say that the discrimination of the truth did not depend on written words, Yinzong said, ‘You are certainly an extraordinary person. Long ago I heard that the robe and bowl of Huangmei had come south—might you be the one [who received them]?’ I said, ‘In all modesty, [I am].’

“At this Yinzong bowed to me and asked me to bring forth the robe and bowl to show to the assembly. He questioned me further, saying ‘What instructions did you receive at Huangmei?’ I said, ‘I received no instructions. [Hongren and I] only discussed seeing the nature, we did not discuss *samādhi* and emancipation.’ Yinzong said, ‘Why did you not discuss *samādhi* and emancipation?’ I said, ‘Because the dualistic *dharmas* are not Buddhism. Buddhism consists of nondualistic *dharmas*.’

“Yinzong also asked, ‘How is it that Buddhism consists of nondualistic *dharmas*?’ I said, ‘You lecture on the *Nirvana Sutra*’s elucidation of the buddha-nature, which is a nondualistic *dharma* of Buddhism. Just as when Bodhisattva King of Lofty Virtue asked the Buddha, ‘Do those who break the four major prohibitions and commit the five perverse transgressions, as well as the *icchantikas*, eradicate their good roots and buddha-natures?’ The Buddha said, ‘There are two types of good roots. One is permanent and the other is impermanent. The buddha-nature is not permanent and not impermanent.’ Therefore, not to eradicate is said to be nondual. One type [of roots] is said to be the good, and the other is the nongood. The buddha-nature is not the good and not the nongood. This is called nondual. The *skandhas* and sensory realms are seen as two by ordinary people, but the wise comprehend their natures to be nondual. The nondual nature is none other than the buddha-nature.

“When Yinzong heard this explanation, he joyfully held his palms together and said, ‘My lecturing on the sutra was like a [worthless piece of] roof tile or rock, while your explanation is like gold.’ At this, he administered the tonsure for me and asked to serve me as his teacher.

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“Thus did I, under the *bodhi* tree, reveal the East Mountain teaching. After receiving the Dharma at East Mountain, I experienced all kinds of suffering, and my life expectancy was like a dangling thread. Today I have been able to join this assembly of the prefect, government staff members, monks, nuns, and laypeople—could it but be the karmic result of successive eons? Also, that you have been able to hear the sudden teaching just given and have gained the cause for attaining the Dharma can only be because in past lives you cultivated good roots identical to those of the buddhas. The teaching is that which has been transmitted by the former sages; it is not something known to myself [alone]. I wish you would all listen to this teaching of the former sages: you should all purify your minds, and after hearing it you should all eradicate your doubts. You are no different from the former generations of sages.”

The entire assembly, after hearing this Dharma, joyfully did obeisance and dispersed.

Number Two: *Prajñā*

The next day Prefect Wei asked [Huineng] to benefit [sentient beings by lecturing on the Dharma]. The master ascended the [lecture] seat and informed

the assembly, “You should all purify your minds and concentrate on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (*mahāprajñāpāramitā*).”

[Huineng] continued, “Good friends, *bodhi* is the wisdom of *prajñā*. People of this world possess it fundamentally and naturally. It is only because your minds are deluded that you are unable to become enlightened yourselves. You must rely on a great spiritual compatriot to show you how to see the nature. You must realize that there is fundamentally no distinction between the buddhanatures of the foolish and the wise—it is only because of delusion and enlightenment that [you think they are] different and that there are foolish and wise.

“I will now explain the teaching of the Great Perfection of Wisdom for you, so that you will all attain wisdom. Listen well and attentively, and I will explain this for you!

“Good friends, people of this world always recite *prajñā* with their mouths, but they don’t recognize the *prajñā* of the self-natures. This is like talking about eating, which doesn’t satisfy one’s hunger. If you just talk about emptiness with your mouths, you won’t be able to see the nature for a myriad eons. Ultimately, this is of no benefit at all.

“Good friends, ‘*mahāprajñāpāramitā*’ is a Sanskrit word; here we say ‘great wisdom going to the other shore.’ This must be practiced in the mind, not recited by the mouth. To recite it orally without practicing it in the mind is [as unreal] as a phantasm or hallucination, [and as evanescent] as dew or lightning. To recite it orally and practice it mentally is for mind and mouth to correspond. The fundamental nature is buddha. There is no other buddha apart from this nature.

“What is ‘*mahā*’? *Mahā* means ‘great.’ The ratiocination of the mind is vast, like space, which is boundless. [Space] is also without square and round, large and small. It is also neither blue, yellow, red, nor white. It is also without above and below, long and short. It is also without anger and without joy, without affirmation and without negation, without good and without evil, without beginning and end. The fields of the Buddha are all identical to space. The wondrous natures of people of this world are empty, without a single *dharma* that can be perceived. The emptiness of the self-natures is also like this.⁶²

“Good friends, don’t listen to me explain emptiness and then become

attached to emptiness. The most important thing is not to become attached to emptiness. If you empty your minds and sit in quietude, this is to become attached to the emptiness of blankness.

“Good friends, the space of this world embraces within itself the myriad things and [all] the images of form. The sun, moon, and stars; and the mountains, rivers, and earth; the springs and streams that enrich the plants and forests; bad people and good people, bad *dharmas* and good *dharmas*; the heavens and hells; all the great oceans and the mountains, including Sumeru: all of these exist within space. The emptiness of the natures of the people of this world is also like this. Good friends, that the self-natures can embody the myriad *dharmas* is ‘great.’ The myriad *dharmas* are within people’s natures. If one perceives the goodness and badness of people without ever grasping or rejecting [their goodness and badness], one will not become tainted or attached. For the mind to be like space is called ‘great.’ Therefore, it is said [to be] ‘*mahā*.’

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“Good friends, the deluded speak with their mouths, but the wise practice with their minds. Furthermore, there are deluded people who empty their minds and sit in quietude without thinking of anything whatsoever, claiming that this is great. You can’t even speak to these people, because of their false views!

“Good friends, the ratiocination of the mind is vast and great, permeating the *dharmadhātu* (i.e., the cosmos). Functioning, it comprehensively and distinctly responds [to things]. Functioning, it knows everything.⁶³ Everything is the one [mind], the one [mind] is everything.⁶⁴ [With mind and *dharmas*] going and coming of themselves, the essence of the mind is without stagnation. This is ‘*prajñā*.’

“Good friends, all *prajñā* wisdom is generated from the self-natures. It does not enter us from outside. To not err in its functioning is called the spontaneous functioning of the true nature. When the one [mind] is true, all [things] are true.⁶⁵ When your minds are considering the great affair, you will not practice the small path. Do not be always speaking of emptiness with your mouth without cultivating the practice in your minds! That would be like an ordinary person claiming to be a king! You will never attain anything [this way. Such persons] are not my disciples.

“Good friends, what is *prajñā*? In Chinese, it is called wisdom. To always practice wisdom in all places, at all times, and in all moments of thought,

without stupidity—this is the practice of *prajñā*. A single moment’s stupidity and *prajñā* is eradicated, a single moment’s wisdom and *prajñā* is generated. The people of this world are stupid and deluded and do not see *prajñā*. They speak of *prajñā* in their mouths but are always stupid in their minds. They always say to themselves, ‘I am cultivating *prajñā*.’ In every moment of thought they speak of emptiness, without recognizing true emptiness. *Prajñā* is without shape or characteristics, it is the mind of wisdom. To have such an understanding is called the wisdom of *prajñā*.

“What is ‘*pāramitā*’? This is an Indian word; in Chinese it is ‘arriving at the other shore.’ If one understands the meaning [of Buddhism,] one transcends samsara; if one is attached to one’s sensory realms, samsara is activated,⁶⁶ just as waves [arise on] water. This is called the ‘other shore,’ therefore it is said to be ‘*pāramitā*.’

“Good friends, the deluded person recites with his mouth, and he does so with falsity and error. To practice in every moment of thought is called the true nature. To be enlightened to this Dharma is the Dharma of *prajñā*, to cultivate this practice is the practice of *prajñā*. To not cultivate this is to be an ordinary [unenlightened] person. To cultivate this in a single moment of thought is to be equivalent to the Buddha in one’s own body.

“Good friends, ordinary people are buddhas, and the afflictions are *bodhi*. With a preceding moment of deluded thought, one was an ordinary person, but with a succeeding moment of enlightened thought, one is a buddha. To be attached to one’s sensory realms in a preceding moment of thought is affliction, but to transcend the realms in a succeeding moment of thought is *bodhi*.

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“Good friends, ‘*mahāprajñāpāramitā*’ is the most honored, the supreme, the primary. It is without abiding [in the present], without going [into the past], and without coming [from the future]. It is from this that all the buddhas of the three periods of time emerge. One should use this great wisdom to destroy the enervating defilements of the afflictions of the five *skandhas*.⁶⁷ Those who cultivate in this fashion will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood, transforming the three poisons into morality, meditation, and wisdom.

“Good friends, in this teaching of ours⁶⁸ eighty-four thousand wisdoms are generated from the one *prajñā*. Why? Because the people of this world have eighty-four thousand enervating defilements. If they were without these

enervating defilements, wisdom would always be manifest and they would not depart from the self-natures. To be enlightened to this Dharma is to be without thought. To be without recollection, without attachment, to not activate the false and deceptive—this is to allow one’s self[-suchness]-nature to function. To use wisdom to contemplate all the *dharmas* without grasping or rejecting is to see the nature and accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood.

“Good friends, if you wish to enter into the profound *dharmadhātu* and the *samādhi* of *prajñā*, you must cultivate the practice of *prajñā* and recite the *Diamond Sutra*. Thus will you attain seeing the nature. You should realize that the merits of this sutra are immeasurable and unlimited. They are clearly praised within the sutra; I cannot explain them fully here. This teaching is the Supreme Vehicle: it is preached for those of great wisdom, it is preached for those of superior capacities. Those of small capacities and small wisdom who hear it will generate doubt. Why? It is likened to rain poured down by the great dragon onto Jambudvīpa: it washes away all the cities, towns, and villages as if they were floating plants. But rain falling on the ocean causes it neither to increase nor to decrease. If a person of the Mahayana or a person of the Supreme Vehicle hears this explanation of the *Diamond Sutra*, his mind will open forth in enlightened understanding. Therefore, you should understand that your fundamental natures have in themselves the wisdom of *prajñā*. Allowing this wisdom to function of itself in constant contemplation, one therefore need not rely on the written word. It is likened to rainwater, which does not derive from heaven. Fundamentally, this [rainwater] is engendered by the dragon, and it causes all living beings, all plants, all those sentient and insentient beings to be enriched. But the hundred streams flow together into the ocean, where they become one. The wisdom of *prajñā*, which is the fundamental nature of sentient beings, is also like this.

“Good friends, those of small capacities who hear this sudden teaching are like plants whose capacities are small. Beset by a great rain, they all collapse and are unable to grow. People of small capacities are also like this. They possess the wisdom of *prajñā* fundamentally, no differently from those of great wisdom. So why do they hear the Dharma without being able to become enlightened? Because of the profundity of their false views and layered afflictions! Just as if great clouds are blocking the sun, unless a wind blows [them away], the light of the sun will not be visible.

351a “There is also no great and small in the wisdom of *prajñā*; it is only that the delusion and enlightenment of the minds of all sentient beings differ. Those with deluded minds appear to be cultivating and seeking buddhahood, but they are unenlightened to their self-natures. Hence are they of small capacities. If one is to be enlightened to the sudden teaching, one cannot cultivate externally (i.e., superficially): one should just constantly activate correct views in one’s own mind, and the enervating defilements of the afflictions will be rendered permanently unable to defile one. This is to see the nature.

“Good friends, one should not reside within or without, and one’s going and coming should be autonomous. One who is able to eradicate the mind of attachment will [attain] penetration unhindered. Those who are able to cultivate this practice are fundamentally no different from [what is described in] the *Prajñā Sutra*.

“Good friends, all the sutras and all their words, the two vehicles of great and small, and the twelve divisions of the canon—all these were established because of people, and could only have been established because of the wisdom nature. If there were no people in this world, all the myriad *dharma*s would be fundamentally and naturally nonexistent. Therefore, you should realize that the myriad *dharma*s were fundamentally generated because of people. All the sutras and texts exist through being preached because of people.

“Because some people are stupid and some are wise, the stupid being the small and the wise being the great, the stupid ask questions of the wise and the wise preach the Dharma for the stupid. When a stupid person suddenly becomes enlightened, his mind opening forth, he is no different from a wise person.

“Good friends, if one is unenlightened, then the buddhas are sentient beings. When one is enlightened for [even] a single moment, then sentient beings are buddhas. Therefore you should understand that the myriad *dharma*s are all within your own minds. Why can’t you suddenly see the fundamental nature of suchness from within your own minds? The *Sutra of the Bodhisattva Precepts* says, ‘I am fundamentally pure in self-nature.’ If you recognize your own mind and see the nature, you will definitely accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood. The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* says, ‘He then unexpectedly retrieved the fundamental mind.’

“Good friends, when I was with His Reverence Hongren, I became enlightened as soon as I heard him speak. I suddenly saw the fundamental

nature of suchness. Therefore, I am disseminating this teaching so that you who study the Way⁶⁹ may become suddenly enlightened and [achieve] *bodhi*. You should each contemplate your minds and each see the fundamental nature. If you do not become enlightened by yourself, then you must seek a great spiritual compatriot, someone who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle, to indicate directly the correct path for you. This spiritual compatriot will have a great background and will, so to speak, lead you to the attainment of seeing the nature. This is because the spiritual compatriot is able to manifest the causes of all the good *dharmas*. All the buddhas of the three periods of time and the twelve divisions of the canon are fundamentally and naturally immanent within the natures of people, but if you cannot become enlightened yourself, you must seek a spiritual compatriot's instructions in order to see [the nature].

“If you can become enlightened yourself, don't rely on external seeking—don't think I'm saying you can only attain emancipation through [the help of] a spiritual compatriot other than yourself. This is not the case! Why? Within your own minds there is a spiritual compatriot [who will help you] become enlightened by yourself! If you activate the false and deluded, you will become all mixed up with false thoughts. Although some external spiritual compatriots may be teachers, they cannot save you. If you activate the correct and true and contemplate with *prajñā*, in a single instant [all your] false thoughts will be completely eradicated. If you recognize the self-nature, with a single [experience of] enlightenment you will attain the stage of buddhahood.

“Good friends, in wisdom's contemplation both interior and exterior are clearly penetrated, and one recognizes one's own fundamental mind. If you recognize your fundamental mind, this is the fundamental emancipation. And if you attain emancipation, this is the *samādhi* of *prajñā*, this is non-thought.

“What is nonthought? If in seeing all the *dharmas*, the mind is not defiled or attached, this is nonthought. [The mind's] functioning pervades all locations, yet it is not attached to all the locations. Just purify the fundamental mind, causing the six consciousnesses to emerge from the six [sensory] gates, [causing one to be] without defilement or heterogeneity within the six types of sensory data (literally, the “six dusts”), autonomous in the coming and going [of mental phenomena], one's penetrating function without stagnation. This is the *samādhi*

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of *prajñā*, the autonomous emancipation. This is called the practice of non-thought.

“If one does not think of the hundred things in order to cause thought to be eradicated, this is bondage within the Dharma. This is called an extreme view.

“Good friends, to be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is for the myriad *dharma*s to be completely penetrated. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to see the realms of [all] the buddhas. To be enlightened to the Dharma of nonthought is to arrive at the stage of buddhahood.

“Good friends, those who attain my Dharma in later generations will see and practice according to this sudden teaching exactly as I have explained.⁷⁰ Because they will generate the vow [to attain buddhahood] and maintain it just as if they are serving the Buddha, they will not regress during their entire lives and will definitely enter the stage of sagehood. But they must transmit that which has been silently transmitted from before, imparting it without obscuring the true Dharma. If they do not see and practice as I have explained, but [operate] within [the context of] another Dharma, the transmission will not occur and they will do a disservice to (literally, “harm”) their predecessors. Ultimately, this would be of no benefit [to sentient beings]. I fear that stupid people will not understand and will revile this teaching, for which they will eradicate their seeds of buddhahood for a hundred eons and a thousand lives!

“Good friends, I have a formless verse, which you should all listen to. Whether you are a householder or one who has left home, you should simply cultivate in reliance on this. To not cultivate [enlightenment] yourself, but merely to memorize what I say, would be of no benefit at all. Listen to my verse:

The penetration of preaching and the penetration of mind
Are like the sun located in space.
I transmit only the Dharma of seeing the nature;
I have appeared in the world to destroy the false teachings.

There are no sudden and gradual in the Dharma,
It is delusion and enlightenment that are slow or fast.
It is only this teaching of seeing the nature
Which stupid people cannot comprehend.

Although there are a myriad ways to explain it,
Those which are reasonable all revert to the one.
Within the dark house of the afflictions
There always lives the sun of wisdom.

The false comes, and the afflictions arrive [too].
The correct comes, and the afflictions are eliminated.
Allowing neither false nor correct to function,
In purity, one arrives at the remainderless [nirvana].

Bodhi fundamentally is the self-nature.
Activate the mind, and [all is] false.
Purify the mind within the false.
Just be correct in being without the three hindrances.

If people of this world cultivate the Way (i.e., enlightenment),
They will not be hindered by anything at all.
Always see one's own errors, and
Be in accord with the Way.⁷¹

The categories of form have their own ways, and
They do not hinder or afflict each other.
If one seeks the way apart from the Way,
One will never see the Way.

If one passes one's life in prevarication,⁷²
One will ultimately only cause oneself grief.
If you want to see the true Way,
Practice the correct, and this is the Way.

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If one's eyes have no aspiration for the Way,
One will practice in obscurity and will not see the Way.
If one is a true cultivator of the Way,
One will not see the transgressions of the world.

If one sees the errors of others,
One's own errors will rather be augmented.⁷³
If one considers others to be in error and not oneself,
One's errors will automatically embody a transgression.

Simply eliminate any inclination to see errors and
Smash away the afflictions.
Repugnance and attraction have nothing to do with the mind.
Stretch out both legs and lie down.

If you want to teach others,
You must have expedient means yourself.
Do not make them destroy their doubts—
This is what allows the self-nature to become manifest.

Buddhism's being in the world
Is not separate from the awareness of the world.
To seek *bodhi* apart from the world
Is like searching for the horn of a hare.

Correct seeing (or views) is called to escape the world,
False seeing is [to be in] the world.
When false and correct are completely destroyed,
The nature of *bodhi* is just so.

This verse is the sudden teaching.
It is also called the ship of the great Dharma.
In delusion one can listen to the sutras for eons, but
Enlightenment occurs in a moment.

The master spoke again, “Now at Dafan Monastery I have preached this sudden teaching. I hope that all sentient beings throughout the *dharmadhātu* will at these words see the nature and accomplish buddhahood.”

At that time everyone listening to the master's preaching—Prefect Wei, the government staff, and the ordained and lay followers—all experienced enlightenment. Simultaneously they bowed and sighed, “How excellent! Whenever has a buddha appeared in the world in Lingnan!”

Number Three: Questions

One day Prefect Wei held a large vegetarian feast on behalf of the master. When the feast was over, the prefect invited the master to ascend the dais [to give a sermon]. The government staff, scholars, and commoners respectfully bowed once again and asked, “It was truly inconceivable (i.e., wonderful) for

us to hear Your Reverence explain the Dharma, but now we have some slight doubts. We wish that, in your great compassion, you would make a special effort to explain these for us.” The master said, “If you have doubts, then ask, and I will explain them for you.”

Lord Wei asked, “The doctrine Your Reverence has preached—it must be that of Great Master Bodhidharma?” The master said, “So it is.” Wei asked, “I have heard that when Bodhidharma first taught Emperor Wu of the Liang, the emperor asked, ‘Throughout my entire life I have constructed monasteries, had monks ordained, and held vegetarian feasts. What merit is there in these?’ Bodhidharma said, ‘In fact, these are without merit.’” [Wei said,] “Your disciple does not understand the principle of this, and I ask you to explain it for me.”

The master said, “‘In fact, these are without merit’—do not doubt the words of the former sage. Emperor Wu was heterodox in mind and did not understand the correct Dharma. To build monasteries, have monks ordained, and hold vegetarian feasts is to seek blessings, but one cannot convert blessings into merit. Merit exists within the *dharmakāya*, not within the cultivation of blessings.”

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The master also said, “‘Seeing the nature is ‘effort,’ and universal sameness is ‘virtue.’ To be without stagnation in successive moments of thought, to always see the fundamental nature, [to possess] the wondrous functioning of the true and actual—this is called ‘merit.’ To be humble in the mind within is ‘effort’; to practice ritual without is ‘virtue.’ For the self-nature to establish the myriad *dharmas* is ‘effort’; for the mind-essence to transcend thoughts is ‘virtue.’ To not transcend the self-natures is ‘effort’; for one’s responsive functioning to be undefiled is ‘virtue.’ If you would seek merit and the *dharmakāya*, just rely on this, and [you will create] true merit. Those who cultivate merit must be without disparagement in their minds but always practice respect for all. Those whose minds always disparage others will not eradicate their own [false views of the] self and are themselves without ‘effort.’ [Those who consider the] self-natures to be empty and false are themselves without ‘virtue.’ It is only because they consider themselves to be great that they always disparage everyone else.

“Good friends, to be without any suspension of one’s continuous thoughts [of inner humility, etc.] is ‘effort’; for the mind to practice universal directness

is 'virtue.' To cultivate the nature oneself is 'effort'; to cultivate the body oneself is 'virtue.'

“Good friends, merit must be seen within the self-natures, it cannot be sought in donations and offerings. Therefore, blessings and merit are different. Emperor Wu did not understand the truth of this, it was not that our patriarch [Bodhidharma] was wrong.”

Prefect [Wei] asked further, “Your disciple always sees monks and laypeople [practicing] mindfulness of Buddha Amitābha and wishing for rebirth in the Western [Paradise]. Please explain this, are they reborn there or not? Please eliminate my doubts.”

The master said, “Your Lordship, listen well! I will explain this for you. When the World-honored One was in Śrāvastī, he taught about the Western [Paradise in order to] entice [the sentient beings of Śrāvastī to practice Buddhism]. The text of the scripture is very clear [in saying that the Western Paradise] ‘is not far from here.’ If you wish to discuss it, then the ten ten-thousands and eight thousands of *li* [from here to the Pure Land] are the ten evils and eight heterodoxies within the body.

“This is the explanation of [the Pure Land] as distant. The explanation of it as distant is done on behalf of those with inferior capacities, while the explanation of it as close is for those of superior capacities. Although there are two types of people, there are not two different Dharmas. Although deluded and enlightened [people] are different, [it is only that] there is slow and fast in seeing. The deluded person recites the Buddha’s [name] and seeks for rebirth in that other [location], while the enlightened person purifies his mind. Therefore the Buddha said, ‘As the mind is purified, so is the buddha land purified.’

“Your Lordship, you are a person of the East: if only your mind is pure, you will be without transgression. But persons of the West are impure of mind and are in error. When a person of the East commits a transgression, he may recite the Buddha’s [name] and seek rebirth in the Western [Paradise]. But when a person of the West commits a transgression, in what country should he seek rebirth when reciting the Buddha’s [name]? Stupid ordinary people do not comprehend their self-natures, and they do not recognize that the Pure Land is within their own bodies. Whether you wish for East or West, the enlightened person is the same in either location. Therefore the Buddha said,

‘always in joyful repose wherever one is.’ Your Lordship, just have your mind-ground be without that which is not good, and the Western [Paradise] will not be far off. If you harbor that which is not good in your mind, it will be impossible to attain rebirth [in the Western Paradise] by reciting the Buddha’s [name].

“I exhort you now, good friends, to first eliminate the ten evils is to go the ten ten-thousand [*li*]. To later eliminate the eight heterodoxies is to pass beyond the eight thousand [*li*]. Seeing the nature in successive moments of thought and always practicing universal directness is to gain a vision of Amitābha in the snap of a finger. Your Lordship, just practice the ten [types of] good. Why would you want to be reborn [in the Pure Land]? If you do not eradicate the ten [types of] evil from your minds, what buddha will come to escort you [to the Western Paradise]? If you are enlightened to the sudden Dharma (teaching) of birthlessness, seeing the Western [Paradise is a matter of] a mere instant. If you recite the Buddha’s [name] and seek rebirth [in the Pure Land] without being enlightened, how will you ever be able to travel such a long road?

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“I will move the Western [Paradise] for you in an instant, so you will be able to see it right in front of you. Do you all want to see it or not?”

Those in the assembly all bowed their heads to the ground and said, “If we could see it here, how could we then want to be reborn there? We ask that in Your Reverence’s compassion you manifest the Western [Paradise] for us all to see!”

The master said, “[All of you in this] great assembly, [understand that] the very form-bodies of people in this world are the city walls [of the Pure Land]. Your eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates [of the Pure Land]. Externally, you have five gates, and within is the gate of the sensory mind. The mind is the ground, and the nature is the king. The king resides on the mind-ground, and the nature exists just as a king exists. When the nature goes, the king is absent. When the nature is present, the body and mind continue. When the nature departs, the body disintegrates. ‘Buddha’ acts within the nature—don’t look for it outside your bodies! When one is deluded as to the self-nature, one is a sentient being, but when one realizes the self-nature, one is a buddha.

“Compassion is Avalokiteśvara, joy and equanimity are Mahāsthama-prāpta, the ability to purify is Śākyamuni, and universal directness is Amitābha.

The self is Sumeru, desire is the ocean's water, and the afflictions are the waves. The poisons are the evil dragons, the falsenesses are the ghosts and spirits, the enervating defilements are the fishes, lust and anger are the hells, and stupidity is the animals.

“Good friends, if you always practice the ten [types of] good, you will go to heaven. By eliminating the [false conception of the] self, Sumeru will fall; by destroying desire, the ocean's waters will dry up; by eliminating the afflictions, the waves will be extinguished; by eradicating the poisons, the fishes will be extirpated.

“The Tathāgata, who has realized the nature in his own mind-ground, releases a great refulgence and illuminates the six gates without; its purity can destroy all the heavens of the six desires. By illuminating the self-nature within, the three poisons are eliminated, and all the transgressions [leading to] the hells are dissolved in an instant. Clearly penetrating within and without, it is no different from the Western [Paradise]. If you do not cultivate in this fashion, how could you ever arrive there?”

When those in the great assembly heard this explanation, they all saw their natures. They all bowed and sighed, “How excellent!” They cried out, “We wish that all the sentient beings throughout the *dharmadhātu* could all become enlightened instantaneously!”

The master said, “Good friends, if you wish to cultivate this practice, you may do so either as a householder or in a monastery. Householders who are able to practice this are like those persons of the East whose minds [harbor] good. Those in the monastery who do not cultivate it are like those people of the West whose minds [harbor] evil. It is only that the mind should be pure—then it is the Western [Paradise] of the self-nature!”

Lord Wei asked further, “How can householders cultivate this practice? I hope you will teach us this.” The master said, “I will recite a formless verse for this great assembly. Just cultivate according to this, doing exactly as if you were always with me. If you do not cultivate according to this, what benefit would it be to take the tonsure and leave home [to become a monk]?” The verse goes:

With the mind universally [the same], why labor to maintain
the precepts?

With practice direct, what use is it to cultivate *dhyāna*?
Gratitude is to be filial in supporting one's parents
Righteousness is to have sympathy for those above and below.

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Self-subordination is to honor the lowly and the familiar.
Forbearance is not to approve of the various evils.
If one is able to rub sticks to create a fire,
The red lotus blossom will certainly grow from the mud.

That which causes the mouth suffering is good medicine.
That which offends the ears is loyal speech.
By reforming transgressions one will necessarily generate wisdom.
To defend shortcomings within one's mind is not wise.

In one's daily actions one must always practice the dissemination
of benefit [for others].
Accomplishing enlightenment does not depend on donating money.
Bodhi should only be sought for in the mind.
Why belabor seeking for the mysterious externally?

If you hear this explanation and practice accordingly,
The Western [Paradise] is right in front of you.

The master said further, "Good friends, you should all practice according to this verse. See your own natures and directly accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood!

"I cannot wait any longer, and you should all disperse [now]. I am returning to Caoqi. If anyone here has doubts, then come and ask me about them." At that time the prefect and government staff, as well as all the good men and faithful women in the assembly, all attained enlightenment and accepted and respectfully practiced [Huineng's teaching] with conviction.

Number Four: Meditation and Wisdom

The master addressed the assembly, "Good friends, our teaching takes meditation and wisdom as its fundamental. Everyone, do not say in your delusion that meditation and wisdom are different.

Meditation and wisdom are of one essence, not different. Meditation is the essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. At times

of wisdom, meditation exists in that wisdom; at times of meditation, wisdom exists in that meditation. If you understand this doctrine, this is the equivalent study of meditation and wisdom. All you who study the Way, do not say that they are different, with meditation prior to and generating wisdom or with wisdom prior to and generating meditation. If your view of them is like this, then the Dharma would have two characteristics. This would be to say something good with your mouth but to have that which is not good in your minds. It is to make meditation and wisdom falsely existent to consider them as not equivalent.

“If there is good in both mouth and mind and if internal and external are identical, then meditation and wisdom will be equivalent. One should understand oneself that spiritual cultivation does not exist in argumentation. If you argue about which is prior and which secondary, then you are just like [all the other] deluded people. Not to desist from competition is to increase the illusion of selfhood. One will not transcend the four characteristics [this way]!

“Good friends, how is it that meditation and wisdom are equivalent? It is like the light of a lamp. When the lamp exists, there is light; when there is no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the essence of the light, and the light is the function of the lamp. Although the names are different, in essence they are fundamentally identical. The Dharma of meditation and wisdom is just like this.”

The master addressed the assembly, “Good friends, the *samādhi* of the single practice⁷⁴ is to always practice the single direct mind in all one’s actions, whether walking, standing still, sitting, or lying down. The *Vimalakīrti [Sutra]* says, ‘The straightforward mind is the place of enlightenment, the straightforward mind is the Pure Land.’ Don’t allow your mental practices⁷⁵ to become twisted while merely speaking of straightforwardness with your mouth! If you speak of the *samādhi* of the single practice with your mouth, you will not practice the straightforward mind. Just practice the straightforward mind, and be without attachment within all the *dharmas*.

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“The deluded person is attached to the characteristics of *dharmas* and grasps onto the *samādhi* of the single practice, merely saying that he always sits without moving and without falsely activating the mind and that this is the *samādhi* of the single practice. To have an interpretation such as this is

to be the same as an insentient object! This is rather to impede the causes and conditions of enlightenment!

“Good friends, one’s enlightenment (one’s Way, *dao*) must flow freely. How could it be stagnated? When the mind does not reside in the *dharmas*, one’s enlightenment flows freely. For the mind to reside in the *dharmas* is called ‘fettering oneself.’ If you say that always sitting without moving is it, then you’re just like Śāriputra meditating in the forest, for which he was scolded by Vimalakīrti!

“Good friends, there are also those who teach meditation [in terms of] viewing the mind, contemplating tranquility, motionlessness, and nonactivation. You are supposed to make an effort on the basis of these.⁷⁶ These deluded people do not understand, and in their grasping become mixed up like all of you here. You should understand that such superficial teachings⁷⁷ are greatly mistaken!”

The master addressed the assembly, “Good friends, the correct teaching is fundamentally without either sudden or gradual—it is human nature that is either clever or dull. Deluded people cultivate gradually, while enlightened people suddenly conform⁷⁸ [to the truth]. If you recognize your own fundamental mind and see your own fundamental nature, there will be no such distinctions! Thus it is that sudden and gradual are posited as provisional names.

“Good friends, since the past this teaching of ours has first taken nonthought as its central doctrine, the formless as its essence, and nonabiding as its fundamental. The formless is to transcend characteristics within the context of characteristics. Nonthought is to be without thought in the context of thoughts. Nonabiding is to consider in one’s fundamental nature that all worldly [things] are empty, with no consideration of retaliation—whether good or evil, pleasant or ugly, and enemy or friend, etc., during times of words, fights, and disputation.

“Within continuing moments of thought one should not think of the previous [mental] realm. If one thinks of the previous thought, the present thought, and the later thought, one’s thoughts will be continuous without cease. This is called ‘fettered.’ If one’s thoughts do not abide in the *dharmas*, this is to be ‘unfettered.’ Thus it is that nonabiding is taken as the fundamental.

“Good friends, to transcend all the characteristics externally is called the formless. To be able to transcend characteristics is for the essences of the *dharmas* to be pure. Thus it is that the formless is taken as the essence.

“Good friends, for one’s mind to remain undefiled within the sensory realms is called nonthought. Within one’s own thoughts one should always transcend the realms, one should not generate the mind relative to the realms. If one does not think of the hundred things, then thoughts will be completely eliminated.

“It is greatly mistaken [to believe] that as soon as thought is eradicated, one dies and is born in some other location. Think on this, you who are studying the Way! If you cannot recognize your own mistakes regarding the meaning of Dharma, how much will you mislead others! To be deluded oneself and not see this is to slander the Buddhist scriptures! Thus it is that nonthought is taken as the central doctrine.

“Good friends, why is it that nonthought is taken as the central doctrine? If you depend merely on oral explanations of seeing the nature, [like a] deluded person you will have thoughts relative to the realms and you will even activate false views regarding those thoughts. And from this will be generated all the enervating defilements and false thoughts! There is in the self-nature fundamentally not a single *dharma* that can be perceived. To think that there were any would be a false explanation, a disaster, a false view of enervating defilements. Therefore, this teaching takes nonthought as its central doctrine.

353b “Good friends, what is negated by the ‘non’ (*wu*)? What kind of thing is ‘thought’? ‘Non’ means to be without the characteristic of duality, to be without the mind of the enervating defilements. ‘Thought’ is to think of the fundamental nature of suchness. Suchness is the essence of thought, thought is the function of suchness. Thought is activated in the self-nature of suchness—it is not the case that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are able to think, it is because of the self-nature⁷⁹ of suchness that thoughts are activated. If suchness were nonexistent, then eyes and ears, forms and sounds would be simultaneously destroyed.

“Good friends, thoughts are activated from the self-nature of suchness. Although the six sensory faculties possess perceptual cognition, they do not defile the myriad realms. And yet the true nature is always autonomous. Therefore, the sutra says, ‘When one is able to discriminate well the characteristics of the *dharmas*, this is to be unmoving within the cardinal meaning.’”⁸⁰

Number Five: Seated Meditation

The master addressed the assembly, “In this teaching of seated meditation, one fundamentally does not concentrate on mind,⁸¹ nor does one concentrate on purity, nor is it motionlessness. If one is to concentrate on the mind, then the mind [involved] is fundamentally false. You should understand that the mind is like a phantasm, so nothing can concentrate on it. If one is to concentrate on purity, then [realize that because] our natures⁸² are fundamentally pure, it is through false thoughts that suchness is covered up. Just be without false thoughts and the nature is pure of itself. If you activate your mind to become attached to purity, you will only⁸³ generate the falseness of purity. The false is without location; it is the concentration that is false. Purity is without shape and characteristics; you only create the characteristics of purity and say this is ‘effort’ [in meditation]. To have such a view is to obscure one’s own fundamental nature, and only to be fettered by purity.

“Good friends, if you cultivate motionlessness, just see all people: when⁸⁴ doing so, do not see the right and wrong, the good and bad, the transgressions and disasters of people. This is the motionlessness of the self-nature.

“Good friends, the deluded person may be motionless in body, but he opens his mouth and speaks of the right and wrong, the strength and weakness, the good and bad of others. This is to go against the Way. If you concentrate on the mind or concentrate on purity, this is to impede the Way (i.e., enlightenment).”

The master addressed the assembly, “Good friends, what is seated meditation (*zuochan*)? In this teaching, there is no impediment and no hindrance. Externally, for the mind to refrain from activating thoughts with regard to all the good and bad realms is called ‘seated’ (*zuo*). Internally, to see the motionlessness of the self-nature is called ‘meditation’ (*chan*).

“Good friends, what is it that is called meditative concentration (*chanding*; *samādhi*)? Externally, to transcend characteristics is ‘meditation’ (*chan*). Internally, to be undisturbed is ‘concentration’ (*dīng*). If one concentrates on⁸⁵ characteristics externally, internally the mind is disturbed. If one transcends characteristics externally, the mind will not be disturbed. The fundamental nature is naturally pure and naturally concentrated; it is only by seeing the realms and thinking of the realms that one is disturbed.

If one can see the various realms without the mind being disturbed, this is true concentration.

“Good friends, to transcend characteristics externally is ‘meditation.’ To be undisturbed internally is ‘concentration.’ Externally ‘meditation’ and internally ‘concentration’ is meditative concentration.

“The *Sutra of the Bodhisattva Precepts* says, ‘My fundamental self-nature is pure.’ Good friends,⁸⁶ within every moment of thought you should see yourself that your fundamental nature is pure. You should cultivate for yourself, practice for yourself, and accomplish for yourself the enlightenment of buddhahood.”

Number Six: Repentance

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At one time Great Master [Huineng], seeing that literati and commoners from all over the Guang[zhou and] Shao[zhou] areas had gathered at the monastery to hear the Dharma, ascended the dais and announced to the assembly, “Good friends, all of your coming here must have arisen out of your own identities.⁸⁷ At all times and in every moment of thought, you should purify your own minds. Cultivate for yourself, practice for yourself, and see your own *dharmakāya*, see the buddha within your own mind. This is only attained through being saved by one’s own self, by [taking the] precepts one’s own self—it does not depend on coming here. Hence in coming from afar and gathering together here, you all share in [the same karmic] connection. Now everyone should kneel upright,⁸⁸ and I will first transmit for you the five *dharmakāya* incenses of the self-natures; then I will bestow the formless repentances.”

The assembly all knelt upright and the master said, “First is the incense of the precepts, which is to have no error, no evil, no jealousy, no greed and anger, and no injury within one’s own mind. This is called the incense of the precepts.

“Second is the incense of meditation, which is to look on the realms and characteristics of the various types of good and evil with one’s mind undisturbed. This is called the incense of meditation.

“Third is the incense of wisdom, which is for one’s mind to be without hindrance, but always illuminating the self-nature with wisdom and never creating the various types of evil. Although one cultivates the myriad types

of good, one's mind does not become attached. One is respectful of superiors and mindful of inferiors, taking pity on those poor and alone. This is called the incense of wisdom.

“Fourth is the incense of emancipation, which is for one's mind to be without equivocation. Not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, one is autonomous and without hindrance. This is called the incense of emancipation.

“Fifth is the incense of emancipated perceptual understanding,⁸⁹ which is for one's mind to be without equivocation regarding good and evil. One must not become immersed in emptiness, protecting one's tranquility. One should study extensively and become learned [in the scriptures], recognizing one's own fundamental mind and attaining the various principles of Buddhism. When the softened refulgence touches things there is no self, no person. Just proceed to *bodhi*, the true nature of which is unchanging. This is called the incense of emancipated perceptual understanding.

“Good friends, these incenses will influence each of you internally. Do not seek outside of yourselves.

“Now I will bequeath to you the formless repentances, so that you may extinguish your transgressions in the three periods of time and render pure your three types of karmic activity (i.e., those of body, speech, and mind).

“Good friends, you should say the following in unison after me: ‘From our past thoughts to our present thoughts to our future thoughts, [so that] in every moment of thought we are not subject to the defilement of stupidity, we disciples repent all our transgressions of stupidity and evil actions from the past. We beseech that [our transgressions] all be instantly eliminated, never to arise again.

“‘From our past thoughts to our present thoughts to our future thoughts, [so that] in every moment of thought we are not subject to the defilement of deceitfulness, we disciples repent all our transgressions of deceitfulness and evil actions from the past. We beseech that [our transgressions] all be instantly eliminated, never to arise again.

“‘From our past thoughts to our present thoughts to our future thoughts, [so that] in every moment of thought we are not subject to the defilement of jealousy, we disciples repent all our transgressions of jealousy and evil actions from the past. We beseech that [our transgressions] all be instantly eliminated, never to arise again.’

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“Good friends, the above are the formless repentances. What is it that is called ‘repentance’ (*chan*)? What is it that is called ‘remorse’ (*hui*)? Repentance is to repent past licentiousness. One should repent completely for all one’s evil actions from the past, one’s transgressions of stupidity, pride and deception, jealousy, and so on, so that they will never arise again. This is called ‘repentance.’ Remorse is to have remorse for future errors, those from now on. Since you have become enlightened [to them] now, all one’s evil actions from the past, one’s transgressions of stupidity, deceitfulness, jealousy, and so on, are eradicated forever, never to be committed again. This is called ‘remorse.’ Therefore, it is called ‘repentance and remorse’ (*chanhui*).

“Ordinary people are stupid and only know they should repent for their past licentiousness—they do not know they should feel remorse for future errors. Because they do not have such remorse, their previous licentiousness is not extinguished and future errors continue to be generated. With previous licentiousness not extinguished and future errors continuing to be generated, how can this be called repentance?

“Good friends, now that we have done the repentances, I will express for you the four great vows. You should all listen closely: the sentient beings of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to save them all. The afflictions of our own minds are limitless, and we vow to eradicate them all. The teachings of our own minds are inexhaustible, and we vow to learn them all. The enlightenment of buddhahood of our own minds is unsurpassable, and we vow to achieve it.

“Good friends, why don’t we all say [simply] ‘sentient beings are limitless, and we vow to save them all’? How should we say it? Certainly it’s not me who’s doing the saving!

“Good friends, the ‘sentient beings of our own minds’ are the mental states of delusion, confusion, immorality,⁹⁰ jealousy, and evil. All these are sentient beings, and we must all [undergo] automatic salvation of the self-nature. This is called true salvation.

“What is ‘automatic salvation of the self-nature’? It is to use correct views to save the sentient beings of false views, afflictions, and stupidity within our own minds. Having correct views, we may use the wisdom of *prajñā* to destroy the sentient beings of stupidity and delusion, automatically saving each and every one of them. When the false occurs, it is saved by the

correct. When delusion occurs, it is saved by enlightenment. When stupidity occurs, it is saved by wisdom. When evil occurs, it is saved by good. Salvation such as this is called true salvation.

“Further, [with the vow] ‘the afflictions are limitless, and we vow to eradicate them all,’ one uses the *prajñā* wisdom of the self-nature to eradicate false and empty thoughts. And with ‘the teachings are inexhaustible, and we vow to learn them all,’ one should see the nature oneself and always practice the correct Dharma. This is called true learning. With ‘the enlightenment of buddhahood is unsurpassable, and we vow to attain it,’ one should constantly be able to practice the true and correct with a humble mind. Transcending delusion and transcending enlightenment, one should always generate *prajñā*. Eradicating the true and eradicating the false, one sees the buddha-nature. This is to accomplish the enlightenment of buddhahood upon hearing these words. Always mindful of one’s cultivation, this is the Dharma of the power of the vows.

“Good friends, we have now finished the four great vows. Next I will bestow upon you the formless precepts of the triple refuge. “Good friends, take refuge in the Two-legged Honored One of Enlightenment. Take refuge in the Honored One of the Correct Transcendence of Desire. Take refuge in the Honored One within the Pure Assembly. From today onward, call on realization as your teacher and do not take refuge any longer in the heretical path of the false demons, but be constantly in realization yourselves using the three treasures of the self-nature.

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“I exhort you, good friends, to take refuge in the three treasures of the self-nature. [The word] ‘Buddha’ means enlightenment. ‘Dharma’ means correct. ‘Sangha’ means pure. In your own minds, take refuge in enlightenment, so that the deluded and false is not generated. Know the sufficiency of decreased desires, and be able to transcend wealth and sensual pleasures: this is called the Two-legged Honored One (i.e., a buddha in human form). In your own minds, take refuge in the correct, being without false views in every moment of thought. If you are without false thoughts, then there is no self to become proud, lustful, or attached: this is called the Honored One Who Has Transcended Desire. In your own minds, take refuge in purity, [realizing] your self-nature to be completely unattached and undefiled by all the realms of the defiled laborings and the desires: this is called the Honored One within the Pure Assembly.

“If you cultivate this practice, this is to take refuge oneself. Ordinary people do not understand and from morning to night accept the three refuges, saying they are taking refuge in the Buddha. Where is the Buddha? If you do not see the Buddha, how will your entreaties for refuge reach him? Such words only create false [thoughts]!

“Good friends, you should each examine this for yourselves—do not go about this incorrectly.⁹¹ The sutras clearly say one should take refuge in the Buddha oneself, but they do not say to take refuge in some ‘other-buddha’ (*tafo*, i.e., a buddha other than oneself). If you do not take refuge in the ‘self-buddha,’ you will have no place of refuge [at all]. Today you are to become enlightened yourselves, and each of you should take refuge in the three treasures of your own minds. Internally regulating the mind-nature, externally one pays reverence to other people: this is to take self-refuge.⁹²

“Good friends, now that we have finished taking refuge in the three treasures of our own [minds], you should all concentrate your minds,⁹³ and I will explain for you the buddha of the self-nature in one essence and three bodies. I will make you see the three bodies and become comprehensively enlightened yourselves to the self-nature.

“Everyone should say after me: ‘Within my own physical body (literally, “form-body”), I take refuge in the pure *dharmakāya* buddha. In my own physical body I take refuge in the perfect and complete *sambhogakāya* buddha. In my own physical body I take refuge in the thousand billion *nirmāṇakāya* buddhas.’

“Good friends, the physical body is a house, but you can’t take refuge in it.⁹⁴ The three bodies of the Buddha just mentioned exist within the self-natures, and all the people of this world have them. It is only because one is deluded as to one’s own mind that one does not see the inner nature, but seeks externally for the Tathāgata in three bodies.⁹⁵ Thus one does not see that the three bodies of the Buddha exist within one’s own body. You should all listen to this explanation, and I will make you see the three bodies of the Buddha that exist within the self-natures in your own bodies. These three bodies of the Buddha are generated from the self-natures, they are not attained from any external [source].

“What is the pure *dharmakāya* buddha? The [self]-natures of the people of this world are fundamentally pure. The myriad *dharmas* are generated from

the self-natures. To think of all the evil things is to generate evil practices;⁹⁶ to think of all the good things is to generate good practices. Thus it is that the *dharmas* occur within the self-natures. Just as heaven is always clear and the sun and moon always bright—it may be that [the sky] above is bright and [the world] below is dark through being blocked by the floating clouds, but all at once a wind will rise up and blow the clouds away, so that above and below are both bright, and the myriad forms are all visible. The natures of the people of this world are constantly floating, just like the clouds in the sky.

“Good friends, sagacity is like the sun, and wisdom is like the moon. Sagacity and wisdom are always bright, but through being attached externally to sensory realms, the floating clouds of false thoughts block the self-nature, rendering it obscure. If you meet a spiritual compatriot and listen to the true and correct Dharma, you can eradicate the deluded and false within yourself, so that interior and exterior are penetrated by brilliance and so that the myriad *dharmas* within the self-nature are all manifest. Those who see the nature are like this. This is called the pure *dharmakāya* buddha.

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“Good friends, take refuge in the self-nature within your own minds. This is to take refuge in the true buddha. To take self-refuge is to eradicate all the unwholesome states of mind, jealousy, perversion, selfishness, delusion, disregard of others, deceitfulness, false views, pride, and the unwholesome practices of all the periods of time that exist in the self-nature. It is constantly to see one’s own errors and to refrain from speaking of the good and bad points of others. This is to take self-refuge. One should always be humble and practice reverence for all, so that one sees the nature penetratingly, without any hindrance. This is to take self-refuge.

What is the perfect and complete *sambhogakāya*? Just as a single lamp is able to eradicate a thousand years of darkness, so can a single [moment of] wisdom extinguish ten thousand years of stupidity. Don’t think of your previous errors, and don’t think constantly of [what may happen] later. With every moment of thought perfect and bright, see your own fundamental nature. Although good and evil are different, their fundamental natures are nondual. The nondual nature is called the true nature. To be undefiled by good and evil within the true nature: this is called the perfect and complete *sambhogakāya*.

“If a single thought of evil⁹⁷ is activated in the self-nature, it will extinguish ten thousand eons of good causes. If a single thought of good is activated in the

self-nature, one will attain the elimination of evils as [countless as] the sands of the Ganges River. To proceed directly to the unsurpassable *bodhi*, seeing naturally with each moment of thought and without losing the fundamental thought: this is called the *saṃbhogakāya*.

“What are the thousand billion *nirmāṇakāyas*? If you do not think of the myriad *dharmas*, the nature is fundamentally like space (or, “empty”). A single moment of thought is called a transformation. To think of evil means transformation into the hells. To think of good things means transformation into the heavens. Poison and injury are transformed into dragons and snakes. Compassion is transformed into bodhisattvas. Wisdom is transformed into the upper realms. Stupidity is transformed into the lower regions. The transformations of the self-nature are extremely numerous. The deluded person cannot understand this and activates evil in every moment of thought, constantly practicing the evil ways. But when he has a single thought of good, wisdom is generated: this is called the *nirmāṇakāya* buddha of the self-nature.

“Good friends, the *dharmakāya* [buddha] is fundamentally immanent [within all of us]. To see the self-nature yourself⁹⁸ in every moment of thought is the *saṃbhogakāya* buddha. The thoughts that derive from the *saṃbhogakāya* are the *nirmāṇakāya* buddha. To be enlightened oneself, and to cultivate oneself, the merits of the self-nature: this is true taking refuge.

“One’s skin and flesh is the physical body, and the physical body is a house, but you can’t take refuge in it. Just be enlightened to the three bodies of the self-nature, and this will be to recognize the buddha of the self-nature. “I have a formless verse, which, if you are able to recite⁹⁹ it, will cause you upon hearing these words to melt away in a single instant the delusions and transgressions of numerous eons. The verse goes:

Deluded people cultivate blessings but do not cultivate the Way,
Saying only that to cultivate blessings is the Way.
The blessings from charity and offerings may be unlimited,
But the three poisons¹⁰⁰ are originally created in the mind.

Attempting to cultivate blessings and wanting to extinguish their
transgressions,
They may attain blessings in later lives, but their transgressions will
still exist.

They should simply eradicate the conditions of transgression within their minds:

This is called true repentance within the self-nature.

Suddenly enlightened to the true transgression of the Mahayana, Eradicating the false and practicing the correct, they are without transgression. 355a

Studying the Way is to always contemplate the self-nature:

This is to be identical with all the buddhas.

Our patriarchs have transmitted only this sudden teaching,
And you should all vow to see the nature and be identical to them.
If you wish to see the *dharmakāya* in the future,
Transcend the characteristics of the *dharmas* and wash them out of your minds.

Make an effort to see for yourself, don't be despondent!

Later, in a single moment, you will suddenly cut off [your thoughts, thus] ending them forever.

If you would be enlightened to the Mahayana and see the nature,
Reverentially hold your palms together [in the *anjalimudrā*] and seek it in utter sincerity.

The master said, “Good friends, you should all recite this. If you practice according to it, you will see the nature through hearing these words. Although you may be a thousand *li* away from me, it will be as if you are constantly by my side. If you do not become enlightened through these words, then why have you gone to the trouble of coming a thousand *li* to see me? Take care in your going.”

Of the entire assembly who heard this teaching, not one did not achieve enlightenment and joyfully undertake this practice.

Number Seven: Encounters

After attaining the Dharma in Huangmei, the master [Huineng] returned to Caohou village in Shaozhou, where no one knew him.

(Another text says, “When the master left he went to Caohou village, where he stayed more than nine months. The master then said to himself, ‘In

less than thirty or so days I will go to Huangmei. This would be the utmost in seeking the Way; how could I hesitate? 'The time of his going [as given in this other text] is incorrect.')

There was a Confucian scholar [named] Liu Zhilue, whose ritual propriety was profound. Zhilue had an aunt who was a nun, named Wujin Zang (“Inexhaustible Treasury”), who constantly recited the *Great Nirvana Sutra*. When the master heard it for a bit, he understood its wondrous meaning and explained it for her. The nun, who was holding the text, asked about a word, and the master said, “I cannot read the words, but you can ask me about the meaning.” The nun said, “If you do not read the words, how can you understand the meaning?” The master said, “The wondrous principle of the buddhas has nothing to do with words.” The nun was amazed and informed the village elders, “This is a man in possession of the Way. You would do well to ask to make offerings to him.”

There was a great–great-grandson of the Wei [dynasty], Martial Lord [Cao Cao], named Cao Shuliang, who, along with the local residents, strove to come do obeisance [to the master]. At that time the old Baolin Monastery was in ruins, having been burned by soldiers at the end of the Sui [dynasty]. A new monastery was built once again on the old foundation. The master was invited to reside there, and he suddenly turned it into an abode of the treasure [of the teaching]. The master stayed there for more than nine months, when he was once again pursued by an evil mob. The master escaped to the mountain in front [of the monastery, and the mob] set fire to the forest [to force him out]. The master escaped by hiding in the rocks, and the rocks now show the marks of his knees and the design of his robe where he sat in the lotus position. Because of this, [the spot] is called Escape Rock. The master remembered the Fifth Patriarch’s prediction that he should stop and hide [upon encountering] sympathy and a group,¹⁰¹ and hid in two hamlets.¹⁰²

The monk Fahai was from Qujiang in Shaozhou. When he first went to study under the patriarch he asked, “The mind is buddha. Please favor me with your instructions.” The master said, “For the preceding thought not to be generated is mind, and for the succeeding thought not to be extinguished is buddha. That which creates all the characteristics is mind, and that which transcends all the characteristics is buddha. If I were to explain it completely,

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I could not finish in an eon! Listen to my verse, which goes:

With regard to the mind, it's called wisdom.
With regard to the Buddha, it's called meditation.
When meditation and wisdom are maintained equally,
All is pure within the consciousness.

If you are enlightened to this teaching
It is through your cultivation of the nature
Its function is fundamentally birthless;
The dual cultivation is correct.¹⁰³

Fahai experienced¹⁰⁴ a great enlightenment upon hearing these words.
He gave praise in verse, saying:

The mind is fundamentally buddha.
To be unenlightened to this is to subjugate oneself.
I understand the causes of meditation and wisdom.
By the dual cultivation one transcends all things.

The monk Fada was from Hongzhou. He left home [to become a monk] at age seven, [after which time] he constantly recited the *Lotus Sutra*. He came to do obeisance to Huineng, but did not touch his head to the ground. The master rebuked him, "To bow without touching the ground—can this be anything but irreverent? You must have something on your mind. To what are you disposed?"¹⁰⁵ [Fada] said, "I have recited the *Lotus Sutra* three thousand times." The master said, "Even if you recite it ten thousand times it won't help you understand the meaning of the scripture. You should practice along with me. You're undertaking this effort without understanding how wrong it is. Listen to my verse, which goes:

Reverence is fundamentally to bend the canopy of conceit,
So how can one's head not touch the ground?
Have [the illusion of] selfhood, and transgressions are generated;
Destroy merits, and one's blessings are beyond measure!

The master also said, "What is your name?" [The monk] answered, "Fada." The master said, "You are named Fada ("Dharma Penetration"), but when have you ever penetrated the Dharma?" He spoke another verse, which went:

Your name is now Fada.
You have diligently recited [the *Lotus Sutra*] without cease.
Reciting in vain, you have only been emanating sounds.
It is the wise mind that is called bodhisattva.

Since you have now had this connection [with me],
I will now explain [Buddhism] for you:
Simply have faith that the Buddha was silent,
That [only] lotuses came forth from his mouth.

After Fada heard this verse he said in gratitude, “From now on I will be deferential toward all. Your disciple has recited the *Lotus Sutra* without understanding its meaning, and my mind always harbored doubts. Your Reverence’s wisdom is vast, so would you please briefly explain the sutra’s meaning?”

The master said, “Fada, the Dharma is profoundly penetrating, but your mind has not penetrated it. The sutra is fundamentally without doubt; it is your mind itself that doubts. As you recite this sutra, what is its central doctrine?”

Fada said, “This student is dull of disposition and has always just relied on reciting the text. How could I understand its central purport?”

The master said, “I do not understand words, but try reciting the sutra for me once and I will explain it for you.”

Fada then recited the sutra aloud. When he came to the “Chapter on Parables” the master said, “Stop. The central doctrine of this sutra is fundamentally the causes and conditions and the appearance [of the buddhas] in
355c the world. There can be no parables that surpass this.

“What are the causes and conditions? The sutra says, ‘The buddhas and World-honored Ones only appear in the world through the causes and conditions of the one great affair.’ The one great affair is the perceptual understanding of the buddhas. The people of this world are delusively attached to characteristics externally and delusively attached to emptiness internally. If one is able to transcend characteristics within characteristics and to transcend emptiness within emptiness, this is to be undeluded both externally and internally. If you are enlightened to this teaching, your mind will open up [in enlightenment] in a single moment of thought. This is ‘to open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas.’

“‘Buddha’ [means] enlightenment. This may be divided into four teachings: to open the perceptual understanding of enlightenment, to manifest the perceptual understanding of enlightenment, to be enlightened to the perceptual understanding of enlightenment, and to enter the perceptual understanding of enlightenment. If one hears of opening and manifesting, one should be able to be enlightened and enter. Thus perceptual understanding of enlightenment is fundamentally the true nature becoming manifest. You should be careful not to misinterpret the sutra and have a mistaken view of some other path. Opening and manifesting, being enlightened and entering, are themselves the perceptual understanding of the buddhas. And [those in] our school are no different. To interpret [the sutra] the way you do is to revile the sutra and vilify the buddhas. That¹⁰⁶ [mind] is buddha, [fully] endowed with perceptual understanding. What use would there be of any further opening?

“You should have faith that the perceptual understanding of the buddhas is only your own mind. There is no other buddha. It is only that all the sentient beings obstruct their own brilliance by the sensory realms of desire. Externally conditioned and internally disrupted, they take hectic delight in sensation. Then they belabor other World-honored Ones to arise from their *samādhi* and use various harsh words to get them to stop! Don’t seek outside yourself—you’re no different from the buddhas! Therefore [the *Lotus Sutra*] says, ‘Open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas.’

“I also exhort all of you to always open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas within your own minds. The minds of people of this world are [given to the] false, and they stupidly commit transgressions. With good in their mouths and evil in their minds, they are lustful, angry, jealous, obsequious, and conceited, injuring people and damaging things. They open the perceptual understanding of sentient beings. If you are able to always generate wisdom in a correct [state of] mind, contemplating your own mind, stopping evil and practicing good: this is to open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas. You should open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas in every moment of thought; do not open the perceptual understanding of sentient beings. To open the perceptual understanding of the buddhas is to transcend the world. To open the perceptual understanding of sentient beings is to be in the world. If you only struggle to grasp at thoughts as your task [in life], how would this be any different from a yak loving [its own] tail?”¹⁰⁷

Fada said, “If this is so, then should one just understand the meaning and not bother to recite the sutras?”

The master said, “Can the sutras be in error? How could they impede your mindfulness? It is just that delusion and enlightenment are in the person, that harm and benefit depend on oneself. To recite with the mouth and practice in the mind is to turn the sutra. To recite with the mouth without practicing in the mind is to be turned by the sutra. Listen to my verse, which says:

Deluded in mind, one is turned by the *Lotus*.
Enlightened in mind, one turns the *Lotus*.
To recite the sutra without ever understanding
Is to be an enemy of its meaning.

Be without thought and one’s thoughts are correct;
Be with thought and one’s thoughts become false.
If one considers neither with nor without,
And one will always ride the cart of the white bull.

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Hearing this verse, Fada unwittingly cried tears of compassion, and upon hearing the words he experienced a great enlightenment. He told the master, “From long ago until the present I have actually never turned the *Lotus*, but have been turned by the *Lotus*.”

Fada announced further, “The sutra says, ‘All the great *śrāvakas* and bodhisattvas, even though they think about it and consider it as much as possible, cannot comprehend the wisdom of the Buddha.’ Now you would have ordinary people simply become enlightened to their own minds, yet you call that the perceptual understanding of the buddhas. I am not of superior abilities, but I cannot help but doubt if this is not to revile [the scriptures]. Also, the sutra talks about three carts, the sheep, deer, and bull carts, as well as the cart of the white bull. How are these different? I ask Your Reverence to explain these once again.”

The master said, “The meaning of the sutra is clear; it is you who is mistaken. The fault of the people of the three vehicles who are unable to comprehend the wisdom of the Buddha lies in their considering. Trying to figure it out as much as they possibly can, they [only] get further and further away [from the truth]. The Buddha originally preached this principle for ordinary people, not for buddhas. Those who were unable to believe left the assembly. They were

completely unaware that they were sitting on the white bull cart, but went outside to search for the three carts. How much more clearly could the sutra say to you, ‘There is only the one buddha vehicle and no other vehicle’? Whether there might be two or three or an infinite number of expedient means, with various stories, metaphors, and sayings, these teachings all constitute the one buddha vehicle.

“How can you not understand? The three carts are provisional and [were preached] because of the past. The One Vehicle is true and [was preached] because of the present. I teach only that you should repudiate the provisional and revert to the true. After reverting to the true, the true will also have no name.¹⁰⁸ You should understand that all the treasures you have are dependent on you and are used by you. Do not generate the thought of being father, do not generate the thought of being child, and be without any thought of their use: this is called maintaining the *Lotus Sutra*. From eon to eon one’s hand does not let go of the text, from morning to night there is no time one is not being mindful of it.”

Fada achieved a revelatory inspiration and leaped up in ecstasy. In verse he gave praise, saying:

The three thousand times I have recited the sutra
 Are forgotten with a word from [Huineng of] Caoqi.
 Not understanding the supramundane truth,
 How could one exhaust the deluded waste of so many lifetimes?
 The sheep, deer, and bull [carts] are provisionally established
 To be well lifted up [to the higher level of meaning] early, middle,
 and late.
 Who understands that he within the house of fire
 Is fundamentally the king within the *dharmas*?

The master said, “From now on you may be said to be a monk who is mindful of the sutra.” Fada comprehended the mysterious purport through this and never ceased reciting the sutra.

The monk Zhitong was from Anfeng (Shu Xian, Anhui) in Shouzhou. First he read the *Lankāvatāra Sutra*, [doing so] about a thousand-plus times. But he did not understand the three bodies and four wisdoms, so he did obeisance to the master and asked for an explanation of these doctrines.

356b The master said, “As to the three bodies, the pure *dharmakāya* is your nature, the perfect and complete *sambhogakāya* is your wisdom, and the thousand billion *nirmāṇakāyas* are your practices (i.e., *saṃskāra*, “mental activities”). To speak of the three bodies apart from the fundamental nature is called ‘having the bodies but being without wisdom.’ If you are enlightened to [the fact that] the three bodies have no self-natures, then you will understand¹⁰⁹ the *bodhi* of the four wisdoms.¹¹⁰ Hear my verse, which says:

The self-natures are endowed with the three bodies.
Generating illumination, the four wisdoms are created.
Without transcending the conditions of seeing and hearing,
One transcendently ascends to the stage of buddhahood.

I am now explaining [this teaching] for you.
Believe clearly, and be without delusion forever.
Do not study by racing after it,
And you will always preach *bodhi*.

Zhitong said further, “How might I hear the meaning of the four wisdoms?”

The master said, “If you understand the three bodies, then you will understand the four wisdoms. How could you ask any further? If I were to speak of the four wisdoms apart from the three bodies, this would be called ‘having the bodies but being without wisdom.’ This would be to have wisdom but make it into non-wisdom.” He preached another verse, saying:

The great round mirror wisdom is pure in nature.
The wisdom of the universally same nature¹¹¹ is without illness
in mind.
The seeing of the wondrous contemplation wisdom is not
[the result of] merit.
The wisdom that creates that which is accomplished is identical
to the round mirror [wisdom].
The five and the eighth, sixth, and seventh [consciousnesses]
transform [through] results and causes.¹¹²

These are just names that are used, with no true nature.
If one’s sentiments linger not in the places of their transformations,

In profusion does one generate in the locus of permanence—
the *samādhi* of the dragon.

(Thus are the consciousnesses transformed into the wisdoms. In the teachings it says, “Transform the first five consciousnesses into the wisdom that creates that which is accomplished. Transform the sixth consciousness into the wisdom of wondrous contemplation. Transform the seventh consciousness into the wisdom of the universally same nature. Transform the eighth consciousness into the great round mirror wisdom. Although the sixth and seventh are transformed within the cause, the [first] five and the eighth are transformed on the basis of the result. Only the names are transformed; the [consciousnesses] are not transformed in their essences.)

Zhitong [achieved] sudden enlightenment to the nature and the wisdoms. He then offered this verse:

The three bodies are originally the essence of oneself.
The four wisdoms are fundamentally the understanding of the mind.
The bodies and wisdoms interpenetrate without hindrance,
Responding to things in accordance with forms.

All [deliberate] activation of cultivation is false activity.
To guard one’s abiding is not true serenity.
The wondrous purport has been illuminated by the master.
I will forever forget [all] defiled names.

The monk Zhichang was from Guiqi (Guiqi Xian, Jiangxi) in Xinzhou(?).¹¹³ He left home [to become a monk] when he was seven or eight and intently sought to see the nature. When he paid his respects one day, the master asked, “Where did you come from, and what do you seek?”

[Zhichang] said, “Recently this student went to Mount Baifeng¹¹⁴ in Hongzhou, where I did obeisance to Reverend Shenxiu¹¹⁵ and heard his teaching on seeing the nature and achieving buddhahood. Since I was unable to resolve my lingering doubts, I have traveled this distance to do obeisance to you. I beseech Your Reverence, in your compassion, to teach me.”

The master said, “How did he (i.e., Shenxiu) phrase [his teaching]? Try to repeat it for me.”

356c [Zhichang] said, “After arriving there I received no teaching for three months. Because of the importance of the Dharma, one night I entered [Shenxiu’s] quarters alone to inquire of him, ‘What is my fundamental mind, my fundamental nature?’ Shenxiu then said, ‘Do you see space?’ I said, ‘I see.’ He said, ‘When you see space, does it have characteristics or not?’ I answered, ‘Space is without form. What characteristics could it have?’ He said, ‘Your fundamental nature is like space in that there is not a single thing at all that can be seen. This is called correct seeing. For there to be not a single thing that can be known is called true knowing. There are no blue and yellow, long and short. Just see that the fundamental source is pure, the essence of enlightenment is perfect and bright: this is called seeing the nature and achieving buddhahood. It is also called the perceptual understanding of the Tathāgata.’ Even though this student heard this explanation, I was still not certain, and I beg Your Reverence to teach me.”

The master said, “That teacher’s explanation still allows perceptual understanding to exist, which is why you were unable to comprehend. I will now reveal a verse for you:

Not seeing a single *dharmā* but maintaining the view of nonbeing
Is much like floating clouds blocking the face of the sun.
Not knowing a single *dharmā* but maintaining one’s knowledge of
emptiness
Is just like the great void generating lightning and thunder.

When such perceptual understanding arises for the slightest instant,
How can mistaken recognition ever understand expedient means?
You should understand the error of this yourself, in a single moment
of thought,
And the numinous brilliance of the self will be constantly manifest.

When Zhichang heard this verse, his mind became suddenly expansive [in enlightenment], and he related a verse:

There is no reason to activate perceptual understanding,
To be attached to characteristics and seek for *bodhi*.
When one’s intelligence¹¹⁶ harbors a single thought of enlightenment,
How can one transcend the delusions of the past?

The self-nature, enlightened to the essential source,
Illuminates the crazed currents [of awareness].
Without entering the room of the patriarch,
In a daze, going about with two heads.

One day Zhichang asked the master, “The Buddha preached the three vehicles, and he also spoke of the Supreme Vehicle. I don’t understand these doctrines and would like you to explain them for me.”

The master said, “When you contemplate your own fundamental mind, do not be attached to the external characteristics of *dharmas*. There are no four vehicles in the Dharma; it is only that peoples’ minds vary. To learn and recite is the small vehicle, to be enlightened to the Dharma and understand its meaning is the middle vehicle, and to cultivate according to the Dharma is the Great Vehicle. To penetrate all the myriad *dharmas* and to be equipped with all the myriad *dharmas*, without any defilement at all; to transcend the characteristics of the various *dharmas*, without anything that is attained: this is called the Supreme Vehicle. ‘Vehicle’ has the meaning of practice and cannot be argued about orally. You must cultivate yourself, not ask me about it. At all times the self-nature is itself suchlike.”

Zhichang thanked [Huineng] and served the master until the end of his years.

The monk Zhidao was from Nanhai in Guangzhou. He requested the benefit [of the master’s teaching], saying “Since this student left home [to become a monk], I have spent more than ten years perusing the *Nirvana Sutra*, but I haven’t understood its message. Would Your Reverence favor me with your explanation?”

The master said, “What is it you do not understand?”

[Zhidao] said, “I am in doubt about [the lines] ‘All processes are impermanent, these being the *dharmas* of generation and extinction. When generation and extinction are extinguished, quiescence is blissful.’”

The master said, “What doubts do you have?”

[Zhidao] said, “All sentient beings have two bodies, the physical body and the *dharmakāya*. The physical body is impermanent and is subject to generation and extinction, but the *dharmakāya* is permanent and is without knowing and without cognition. The sutra says, ‘When generation and extinction

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are extinguished, quiescence is blissful,' but I don't know which body is quiescent and which body experiences the bliss. If it's the physical body, when it is extinguished the four elements would disperse. This would [result in a state of] total suffering, and suffering cannot be called blissful. If it is the *dharmakāya* that becomes extinguished, then one would be identical to the plants and rocks, and who would experience the bliss? Further, the Dharma-nature is the essence and the five *skandhas* are the functions of generation and extinction. There is one essence and five functions. If generation and extinction are permanent,¹¹⁷ if there is generation then the functions should be activated on the basis of the essence, and if there is extinction then the functions should revert into the essence. To hear that there is generation once again implies that sentient beings are [subject to] neither annihilation nor extinction. But not to hear that there is generation once again implies a permanent reversion to quiescence, which would [make sentient beings] identical to inanimate objects. If this were the case then all the myriad *dharmas* would be contravened by nirvana and could not be generated. So how would there be bliss?"

The master said, "You are a disciple of the Buddha, so why are you cultivating the false views of annihilationism and eternalism of the heterodox paths? To explain the teaching of the Supreme Vehicle on the basis of what you have just said would be to imply that there is a *dharmakāya* separate from the physical body, and that one must transcend generation and extinction in order to seek quiescence. Furthermore, you have argued from the *Nirvana Sutra's* doctrine of] permanence and bliss that there is a body that experiences the functions, but this [doctrine was preached on behalf of sentient beings who] poignantly grasp onto samsara and are shamefully attached to worldly pleasures.

"You should now understand that the Buddha [preached] on behalf of all deluded people that the five *skandhas* conjoin to make their own essences and characteristics.¹¹⁸ [Sentient beings] discriminate all the *dharmas* as external sensory characteristics, taking generation as good and extinction as bad and being swept along moment after moment. They do not understand that the dreamlike phantasmagoria are false, and they pointlessly and crazily experience samsara. Thinking that permanent and blissful nirvana is transformed into the characteristics of suffering, they rush seeking after it all the time. Taking pity on such [people], the Buddha indicated the true blissfulness of nirvana: if

[even] for an instant there is no characteristic of generation and if [even] for an instant there is no characteristic of extinction, then there will be no generation and extinction that can be extinguished. This is to have quiescence right there. But if when it is right there, one does not have the thought of it being right there, this is called permanent and blissful. This bliss is not experienced and it is not not experienced. How can there be the categories of one essence and five functions? And how could one possibly speak of nirvana contravening the myriad *dharma*s and rendering them permanently ungenerated? This is to revile the Buddha and destroy the Dharma. Listen to my verse:

The unsurpassable great nirvana
Is perfect and bright, always serene and illuminating.
Foolish ordinary people call it death,
And the heretics grasp at it as annihilation.

Those who seek the two vehicles
Refer to it as unconditioned.
Of all that is considered by sentient beings—
Of [all] the sixty-two [heterodox] views—it is the fundamental
[source].

To falsely posit empty names—
How can these be true doctrines?
It is only those who go beyond thinking
Who penetrate and are without grasping and rejecting.

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Thereby does one understand the teaching of the five *skandhas*
And of the self within the *skandhas*.
Externally manifesting the images of form
And all the characteristics of sound.

[Considering all these to be] universally “same” like dreams or
phantasmagoria,
Not activating the view of [the distinction between] ordinary people
and sages,
Not forming an interpretation of nirvana,
The two extremes [of viewpoint] and the three limits [of time] are
eradicated.

Always responding to the functions of the senses,
But not activating the thought of “function.”
Discriminating all the *dharma*s,
But not activating the thought of “discrimination.”

Even though the eon-[ending] fire burns to the floor of the ocean
And the winds pound upon the mountains like drums,
The true bliss of permanent quiescence—
The characteristic of nirvana—is suchlike.

I have now resorted to words to explain it,
So that you would discard your false views.
If you do not follow this verbal interpretation,
You may be able to understand a little bit.

Upon hearing this verse, Zhidao experienced a great enlightenment. He leapt up [in ecstasy], did obeisance, and retired.

Chan Master Xingsi was born into the Liu family of Ancheng (Jian Xian, Jiangxi) in Jizhou. Hearing that the teaching [of sentient beings] was flourishing from the Dharma seat at Caoqi, he came to consult and do obeisance [to Huineng]. He asked, “What task should one undertake so as not to [back-slide and] fall down the stages?”

The master said, “What have you done in the past?”

[Xingsi] said, “I have not performed even the sagely truth.”

The master said, “What stages would you fall down?”

[Xingsi] said, “Without having performed the sagely truth, what stages can there be?”

The master was profoundly impressed by Xingsi, and made him the chief among his followers. One day the master said to [Xingsi], “You should go off and teach somewhere, so that [the Dharma] is not cut off.”

Xingsi thus attained the Dharma, then returned to Mount Qingyuan in Jizhou, where he disseminated the Dharma and taught [sentient beings]. (*His posthumous title is Hongji Chanshi* [“Meditation Master Extensive Salvation”].)

Chan Master Huairang was from the Du family of Jinzhou (Ankang Xian, Shaanxi). First he studied under National Master [Lao]an of Mount Song.

Laoan sent him to Caoqi to consult [Huineng]. When Huairang arrived and did his obeisance, the master asked “Where have you come from?”

[Huairang] said, “Mount Song.”

The master said, “[No matter] what kind of thing, how would it come?”

[Huairang] said, “If you say it’s like a single thing, then you’re off the mark.”

The master said, “Then can it be cultivated and realized?”

[Huairang] said, “Cultivation and realization are not nonexistent, but defilement does not occur.”¹¹⁹

The master said, “If it’s only that [you] here are not defiled, then this is the mindfulness maintained by the buddhas. You are such as this, and I am such as this. Prajñātara of Western India predicted, ‘Beneath your feet will come a pony, who will trample the people of this world to their deaths.’ [What you should do will be revealed] within your mind; do not preach too quickly.” (*One text lacks the twenty-seven characters beginning with “Western India.”*)

Huairang experienced a suddenly expansive conjunction [with the fundamental mind]. Thereupon, he served as [Huineng’s] attendant for fifteen years, becoming more immersed in the mysterious profundity day by day. Later he went to Nanyue, where he greatly disseminated the Chan school. (*By imperial proclamation, his posthumous title was Chan Master Dahui [“Meditation Master Great Wisdom”].*)

Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue was from the Zai family of Wenzhou (Yongjia Xian, Zhejiang). When he was young, he studied the sutras and *śāstras* and trained in the teaching of cessation and contemplation (i.e., concentration and insight meditation) of Tiantai. Through reading the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* he illuminated his mind-ground. Coincidentally, he visited and discussed [the Dharma] with the master’s student Xuance. Everything he said was in implicit accord with the [teachings of the] patriarchs.

Xuance said, “From whom did you attain the Dharma?”

[Xuanjue] said, “I heard that there is a succession of teachers for the Mahayana sutras and *śāstras*. Later I became enlightened to the central doctrine of the mind of the Buddha [by reading] the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*. As yet, no one has verified [my realization].”

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Xuance said, “‘Attained prior to King Sounds of Dignity; becoming enlightened oneself without a teacher after King Sounds of Dignity.’ In both cases, this was the heretical path of naturalism.”

[Xuanjue] said, “May I request that you verify [my realization]?”

Xuance said, “My words carry no weight, but in Caoqi there is the Sixth Patriarch, Great Master [Huineng]. [Students] assemble there from the four directions like clouds. You would certainly receive his Dharma, and if you would go there I will accompany you.”

Xuanjue then came with Xuance to consult [the master. Upon his arrival, he] walked around the master three times, shook his staff, and stood still.

The master said, “Monks are provided with three thousand forms of deportment and eighty thousand specific practices. Where have you come from, O One of Great Virtue, to generate such great self-conceit?”

Xuanjue said, “The matter of birth and death is great, and impermanence is rapid and swift.”

The master said, “Why don’t you understand the birthless and comprehend that there is no swiftness?”

[Xuanjue] said, “The essence is birthless, and comprehension is fundamentally without swiftness.”

The master said, “So it is, so it is.”

Only then did Xuanjue do obeisance [to Huineng] with full ceremony. He then immediately said he was going to leave. The master said, “Now isn’t this really swift?”

[Xuanjue] said, “The fundamental is itself motionless,¹²⁰ so how can there be swiftness?”

The master said, “Who knows its motionlessness?”

[Xuanjue] said, “You have just given birth to discrimination.”

The master said, “You have profoundly attained the meaning of the birthless.”

[Xuanjue] said, “How can the birthless have a meaning?”

The master said, “If there is no meaning, who is it that discriminates?”

[Xuanjue] said, “Nor is discrimination a meaning.”

The master said, “How excellent! But at least stay one night!” From this time they called him “one-night [Xuan]jue.” Later he wrote the *Song of Enlightenment*, which was disseminated throughout the world. (*His posthumous title*

was *Wuxiang Dashi* [“Great Master Without Characteristics”]. *At the time he was called Zhenjue.*)

The Chan monk Zhihuang first consulted the Fifth Patriarch and claimed that he had attained *samādhi*. Living in a hut, he [devoted himself to] lengthy sitting for twenty years. When the master’s disciple Xuance was wandering through Heshuo (the area north of the Yellow River), he heard of Zhihuang’s fame and went to [visit him in] his hut.

[Xuance] asked, “What do you do here?”

Zhihuang said, “I enter into *samādhi*.”

Xuance said, “When you say ‘enter into *samādhi*,’ does the mind of being enter or does the mind of nonbeing enter? If it is the mind of nonbeing that enters, then all the insentient plants and rocks would be able to attain *samādhi*. If it is the mind of being that enters, then all the sentient beings who have consciousness would also be able to attain *samādhi*.”

Zhihuang said, “When I have entered into *samādhi*, I am unaware of the existence of the minds of being and nonbeing.”

Xuance said, “If you are unaware of the minds of being and nonbeing, then this is permanent *samādhi*. How can you enter it or come out of it? If there is entering and coming out, then this is not the great *samādhi*.”

Zhihuang did not respond. After a while he asked, “From whom have you succeeded [in this teaching]?”

Xuance said, “My master is the Sixth Patriarch of Caoqi.”

Zhihuang said, “What does the Sixth Patriarch take as meditation?”

Xuance said, “What our master preaches is the wondrously peaceful and perfectly quiescent: the essence and functions are suchlike, suchlike. The five *skandhas* are fundamentally empty, the six [types of] sensory data are nonexistent. One does not enter and come out of [*samādhi*], one is neither concentrated nor disturbed. Meditation is in its nature nonabiding, and the serenity of meditation transcends abiding. Meditation in its nature is birthless, and the thoughts of meditation transcend birth. The mind is like space, but it is without any thinking of space.”

358a

When Zhihuang heard this teaching, he came to visit the master. The master asked, “Why have you come?”

Zhihuang related the previous events. The master said, “Truly, it is as you have been told. You should only have your mind be like space—but

don't become attached to the view [that there is] space. Your functions should be unhindered, being without mind in both motion and stillness. The distinction¹²¹ between ordinary person and sage is forgotten; subject and object¹²² are both destroyed. Nature and characteristics are suchlike, suchlike, and there is no time when one is not in *samādhi*. (One text is without the thirty-five characters beginning with "You should only," having merely "The master took pity on him for the distance he had come and so cleared up his doubts for him.")

At this Zhihuang experienced a great enlightenment. All that he had learned in the preceding twenty years had had no impact whatsoever. That night people north of the [Yellow] River heard a voice from the sky saying, "Chan Master Zhihuang has attained enlightenment today."

Zhihuang later took his leave and returned to north of the [Yellow] River to teach the fourfold congregation.

A monk asked the master, "What type of person attains the doctrine of Huangmei?"

The master said, "Someone who understands the Buddha-Dharma."

The monk said, "Has Your Reverence attained it?"

The master said, "I don't understand the Buddha-Dharma."

One day the master wanted to wash the robe that had been bequeathed to him. Since there was no beautiful spring [nearby], he went about five *li* behind the monastery, where he saw that the forest was lush and circulating with propitious energy. The master shook his staff and stood it upright on the ground, and a spring flowed forth where he pointed. [The water] collected into a pond, and [Huineng] knelt to wash the robe.

Suddenly, there was a monk on the rock who came forward and bowed, saying "[I am] Fangbian, from Western Shu (Sichuan). Formerly, I was in southern India, where Great Master [Bodhi]dharma enjoined me, 'Go quickly to China. I have transmitted the treasury of the eye of the correct Dharma and the robe (*samghāti*) of Mahākāśyapa. It has been transmitted through six generations and is at Caoqi in Shaozhou. You should go and do obeisance [to Huineng].' I have come from afar, and I would like to see the robe and bowl transmitted from our master."

The master showed them to him. [Huineng] asked further, "At what endeavor do you excel?"

[The monk] said, “I am good at clay sculpture.”

The master composed himself and said, “You should try sculpting me.”

Fangbian was unable to refuse, and after several days the sculpture was finished. The likeness was seven inches tall and thoroughly wonderful. The master laughed and said, “You only understand the nature of sculpture, but you don’t understand the buddha-nature.” The master reached out his hand and rubbed the top of Fangbian’s head, saying “Long will you be a field of blessings for humans and gods.”

(The master recompensed [Fangbian by giving him] the robe. Fangbian divided the robe into three [parts], one part to cover the statue, one to keep himself, and one to bury in the ground. He vowed, “In the future, he who will obtain this robe will be me appearing in the world. I will reside here and build new [monastery] halls.” In the eighth year of the Jiayou [period during the] Song [dynasty, or 1063], a monk named Weixian built a hall on this site and dug into the ground, obtaining the robe, which was still in new [condition]. The image is at Gaoquansi [“Lofty Spring Monastery”]; those who pray to it always receive a response.)

A monk cited Chan Master Wolun’s verse, which goes:

Wolun has a technique
By which one can eradicate the hundred thoughts:
The mind nonactivates with regard to the sensory realms,
And *bodhi* increases day by day.

Hearing this, the master said “[The author of] this verse did not understand the mind-ground. If you practice according to this, you will increase your fetters.” He thereupon recited a verse, which stated: 358b

Huineng is without techniques
And does not eradicate the hundred thoughts.
The mind is activated frequently with regard to the sensory realms.
How could *bodhi* increase?

Number Eight: Sudden and Gradual

When the patriarch [Huineng] resided at Baolin[si] in Caoqi, Great Master Shenxiu was at Yuquansi (“Jade Spring Monastery”) in Jingnan. At this time

the two schools flourished, and everyone said, “[Hui]neng in the South and [Shen]xiu in the North.” Hence there was a division into the two schools of South and North, sudden and gradual, but students did not understand the purport [of this distinction].

The master told the assembly, “In the Dharma there is fundamentally one doctrine; it is in people that there is South and North. The Dharma is thus a single seed, but in seeing it there is fast and slow. What is it that is named sudden and gradual? The Dharma is without sudden and gradual; it is people that are clever or dull, therefore the names sudden and gradual. But Shenxiu’s followers frequently criticize the Southern school, [saying] the patriarch [Huineng] is completely illiterate, so how could it be better? Shenxiu said, ‘He has attained the wisdom that is without teacher and is profoundly enlightened to the superior vehicle. I have not. In fact, my teacher, the Fifth Patriarch, personally transmitted the robe and Dharma [to him]—how could this possibly have been in error? I regret I am unable to travel the great distance to be close to him, but falsely receive the nation’s munificence. You people—do not linger here, but go to Caoqi to consult [with Huineng and have your doubts] resolved!’”

One day [Shenxiu] commanded his student Zhicheng, “You are intelligent and wise in many things. Go on my behalf to Caoqi and listen to [Huineng’s] Dharma. Whatever you hear, memorize it and come back and tell it to me.” Following this command, Zhicheng went to Caoqi, where he joined the assembly and inquired [of Huineng] without saying where he was from. At that time the patriarch informed the assembly, “There is now a person hiding in this assembly in order to steal the Dharma.” Thereupon Zhicheng came forward, did obeisance, and told everything. The master said, “You have come from Yuquan[si]; this must have been a plot.”

[Zhicheng] answered, “No, it isn’t.”

The master said, “Why isn’t it?”

[Zhicheng] answered, “Before I spoke up it was, but now that I’ve spoken up it isn’t.”

The master said, “How does your master teach his followers?”

[Zhicheng] answered, “He always teaches his congregation to ‘fix the mind to contemplate purity and sit constantly without lying down.’”

The master said, “To ‘fix the mind to contemplate purity’ is a sickness,

not meditation. How could it benefit the principle to ‘sit constantly’ with a rigid body? Listen to my verse:

You can sit [in meditation] without lying down from the day you’re
born,
But when you die you will lie down and not sit up.
One always has this putrid skeleton,
Why should one set such a task?¹²³

Zhicheng did obeisance again and said, “When I was at Great Master Shenxiu’s, I studied the Way for nine years without achieving enlightenment. Now I have heard one explanation by Your Reverence and I have conformed to (i.e., become enlightened to) the fundamental mind. I believe that the matter of birth and death is important. Would Your Reverence in your compassion teach me further?”

The master said, “I have heard that your master teaches students about morality, meditation, and wisdom, but I don’t know how he explains them. What are the characteristics of his practice? Tell them to me.”

358c

Zhicheng said, “Great Master Shenxiu teaches that ‘not to do evil is called morality, to practice good is wisdom, and to purify one’s own intentions is called meditation.’ Thus does he teach. I wonder, with what Dharma does Your Reverence teach people?”

The master said, “To say that I have a Dharma for people would be to deceive you. I simply release people’s fetters according to the situation. The *samādhi* of provisional names,¹²⁴ such as your master’s explanation of morality, meditation, and wisdom, is truly inconceivable. [But] my view of morality, meditation, and wisdom is different.”

Zhicheng said, “There can be only one type of morality, meditation, and wisdom. How can there be any other?”

The master said, “The morality, meditation, and wisdom of your teacher is directed at people of the Great Vehicle. My morality, meditation, and wisdom are directed at people of the Supreme Vehicle.

The enlightenment and understanding [of people] differs, and there is slow and fast in seeing. Listen to my explanation and [see if] it’s the same as his. The Dharma that I preach does not depart from the self-natures. To preach the Dharma apart from the essence is called superficial preaching and

is permanently deluded regarding the self-natures. You should understand that all the functions of the myriad *dharmas* are all activated from the self-nature. This is the true Dharma of morality, meditation, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:

For the mind-ground to be without error is the morality of the
self-nature.
For the mind-ground to be without stupidity is the wisdom of the
self-nature.
For the mind-ground to be without disruption is the meditation of
the self-nature.
Neither increasing nor decreasing, oneself adamantine,
The body going and coming fundamentally is *samādhi*.

When Zhicheng heard this verse, in gratitude he offered a verse that said:

The five *skandhas*, the body of phantasmagoria.
How could the phantasmagoria be [penetrated to the] ultimate?
Proceeding back toward suchness,
The *dharmas* are still impure.

The master approved this, then said to Zhicheng, “The morality, meditation, and wisdom of your master is for exhorting those of small capacities to wisdom, but my morality, meditation, and wisdom is for exhorting those of great capacities to wisdom. If you are enlightened to the self-nature, you need not posit *bodhi* and nirvana, nor do you have to posit emancipated perceptual understanding. Only when there is not a single *dharma* that can be apprehended can one posit the myriad *dharmas*. To understand this doctrine is called ‘the body of the Buddha.’ It is also called *bodhi* and nirvana, and emancipated perceptual understanding. The person who has seen the nature apprehends [the *dharmas*] whether he posits them or not. He is autonomous in his going and coming, without stagnation or hindrance. He acts in response to the functions [of students], and he answers in response to their words. Always manifesting¹²⁵ his *nirmāṇakāya*, he never departs from the self-nature. He attains the *samādhi* of autonomous disportment in the supernormal powers. This is called seeing the nature.”

Zhicheng further inquired of the master, “What is the meaning of ‘not positing’?”

The master said, “The self-nature is without error, without stupidity, and without disruption. In moment after moment of thought, *prajñā* illuminates,¹²⁶ constantly transcending the characteristics of *dharmas*. Independent and autonomous, he apprehends everything—how could there be any positing? The self-nature becomes enlightened itself,¹²⁷ sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation. There is no gradual progression. Therefore, one does not posit all the *dharmas*. The *dharmas* are quiescent—how could there be a progression?”

Zhicheng bowed [and said], “I wish to attend upon you [and will do so] 359a morning and night, without remiss.” (*Zhicheng was from Taihe in Jizhou.*)

The monk Zhiche was from Jiangxi and originally of the surname Zhang and name Xingchang. While young he was chivalrous. Ever since the division into North and South, although the leaders of the two schools had eliminated [the distinctions of] self and other, their disciples competed in their favoritism. At one time the followers of the Northern school established Shenxiu as the sixth patriarch and resented the public’s knowledge of the patriarch’s transmission of the robe. Thus they enjoined Xingchang to come assassinate the master.

Through precognition, the master knew what was happening and placed ten *liang* of gold on the dais. That night Xingchang entered the patriarch’s room and was about to attack him, when the master stretched out his neck [to make it easier] for Xingchang. Xingchang swung at him three times with his blade, but [Huineng] was not injured at all.

The master said, “The correct sword is not false, and the false sword is not correct. Just take your money; do not take the life you [came for].”

Xingchang fell prostrate with shock. After quite a while he came to his senses and sought [Huineng’s] compassion, repenting his error and wishing to leave home [to become a monk]. The master then gave him the money, saying “You should go. I fear my followers would harm you. If you can change your appearance and return some day, I will accept you.”

Xingchang followed these instructions and escaped in the night. Later he left home to become a monk, took the full precepts, and vigorously [trained in Buddhism]. One day, remembering what the master had said, [Xingchang] came from afar to pay his respects.

The master said, “I have been thinking of you for a long time. What night did you come?”

[Xingchang] said, “Previously Your Reverence disposed of my transgression. Now, although I have left home and [am engaged in] ascetic practices, ultimately it will be impossible to reward you for your virtuous [action]. Is transmitting the Dharma and saving sentient beings all that I can do? Your disciple has been reading the *Nirvana Sutra* constantly, but I do not understand its doctrines of permanence and impermanence. I beg Your Reverence, in your compassion, to explain these for me briefly.”

The master said, “That which is impermanent is the buddha-nature. That which has permanence is all the good and evil *dharmas* and the mind of discrimination.”

[Xingchang] said, “What Your Reverence has said is quite different from the text of the sutra.”

The master said, “I transmit the mind-seal of the Buddha; how could [what I say] differ from the Buddha’s sutra?”

[Xingchang] said, “The sutra teaches that the buddha-nature is permanent, but Your Reverence says it is impermanent. [The sutra says that] the good and evil *dharmas* and the mind of *bodhi*¹²⁸ are all impermanent, but Your Reverence says they are permanent. This difference has made this student even more confused!”

The master said, “Formerly I heard the nun Wujin Zang read through the *Nirvana Sutra* once, and I explained it for her without so much as a single character or single doctrine being different from the text of the sutra. And I ultimately have no separate teaching for you.”

[Xingchang] said, “This student’s understanding¹²⁹ is shallow, and I ask Your Reverence to reveal [the teaching] for me in detail.”

The master said, “Do you understand? If the buddha-nature were permanent, then no matter what good and evil *dharmas* one explained, not a single person throughout the entire eon would generate *bodhicitta*. Therefore, I preach that it is impermanent. This is precisely the Way of true permanence preached by the Buddha. Furthermore, if all the *dharmas* were impermanent, then everything would have its own self-nature that would experience birth and death, and those true and permanent natures would not be omnipresent. Therefore, I preach that they are permanent, which is precisely the true doctrine of impermanence preached by the Buddha.

359b

“Because ordinary people and heretics are attached to false permanence and those of the two vehicles consider permanence to be impermanence, together forming the eight confusions, the Buddha in the authoritative teaching of the *Nirvana [Sutra]* destroyed their prejudices and revealed his explanation of true permanence, the true bliss, the true self, and true purity. You are now relying on the words but going against the meaning. With an annihilationist impermanence and a deterministic permanence,¹³⁰ you have misunderstood the Buddha’s last words, which are perfect, wondrous, and subtle. What benefit can there be in reading [the sutra] a thousand times?”

Xingchang suddenly experienced a great enlightenment, [after which] he spoke a verse, which went:

Because we maintain our minds of impermanence,
The Buddha preached of permanence.
Not understanding his expedient means,
I was as if collecting pebbles by a pond in springtime.
Now, without expending any of my own effort,
The buddha-nature is right before me.
It was not bequeathed to me by the master,
And I am also without anything that is attained.

The master said, “You have now penetrated [the true teaching], so you should be called Zhiche.” Zhiche bowed in gratitude and retired.

There was a boy named Shenhui, who was from the Gao family in Xiangyang. At age thirteen he came from Yuquan[si] to consult [Huineng]. The master said, “You¹³¹ have gone to great trouble in coming such a distance, but have you brought the fundamental? If you have the fundamental, then you must recognize the master (*zhu*, i.e., the host or subject). See if you can explain it to me!”

Shenhui said, “Nonabiding is the fundamental, and seeing is the master.”

The master said, “What will this novice say next!”

Shenhui then asked, “When Your Reverence sits in meditation, does he see or not?”

The master struck Shenhui with his staff three times and said, “When I hit you, does it hurt or not?”

[Shenhui] answered, “It both hurts and does not hurt.”

The master said, “I also see and do not see.”

Shenhui asked, “What is this seeing and also not seeing?”

The master said, “My seeing is to see constantly my own mind’s errors. I do not see other people’s right and wrong or good and evil. This is to see and also not to see. You said it hurts and does not hurt. How about this? If you do not hurt, then you’re the same as a tree or rock. If you hurt, then you’re the same as an ordinary [unenlightened] person, who would become resentful. When you just said ‘seeing and also not seeing’ [you thought] they were two extremes, and your ‘hurts and does not hurt’ were [your misconception of] birth and death. But you don’t see your self-nature, so you’re just playing around.” Shenhui bowed in gratitude.

The master went on to say, “If your mind is deluded and you do not see, then ask a spiritual compatriot to show you the path. If you are enlightened in your mind, then you will see the nature yourself. Cultivate in accordance with the Dharma. You are deluded yourself and do not see your own mind, but you come ask about my seeing and not seeing. I see and I understand, but how could this take the place of your delusion? If you see for yourself, then you will also be unable to take the place of my delusion. How can you ask about my seeing and not seeing when you do not understand and have not seen for yourself?”

Shenhui did obeisance once again, making over a hundred prostrations. Seeking to put an end to his errors, he served [Huineng] as attendant and never left his side.

359c One day the master announced to the assembly, “I have a thing without head or tail, without name or title, without front or back. Do you know what it is?”

Shenhui came forth and said, “It is the fundamental source of the buddhas. It is my buddha-nature.” The master said, “I told you it was without name or title, but you have called it the fundamental source, the buddha-nature. You’ve just covered your head with thatch.¹³² You’ve become a follower with only discriminative understanding.”

After the patriarch’s extinction, Shenhui entered Changan and Luoyang and widely disseminated the sudden teaching of Caoqi. He wrote the *Explanation of the Central Doctrine*, which circulated widely. (*This is the Chan Master of Heze*[si (“Lotus Marsh Monastery”)].)

The master, seeing that many of those who would ask about the schools with evil intentions had gathered beneath his dais, took pity on them and said, “Students of the Way, you should eliminate all good and evil thoughts! That there are no names that can be named is to name the self-natures. The nondual nature is called the true nature. It is upon the true nature that all the teachings are established. At these words, you should see for yourselves!” When they heard this explanation, they all did obeisance and requested that he be their teacher.

Number Nine: Proclamations

On the fifteenth day of the first month of the first year of the Shenlong [“Divine Dragon” period, 705, Empress Wu] Zetian and [Emperor] Zhongzong issued a proclamation that said, “We have invited the two masters Shenxiu and Laoan to the palace to receive our offerings, [with the suggestion that] the occasion of ten thousand possibilities always reaches its ultimate in the single vehicle. The two masters demurred, saying, ‘In the south there is Chan Master Huineng, who has intimately received the robe and Dharma from Great Master Hongren. He transmits the mind-seal of the Buddha, and you should invite and inquire [of the Dharma] of him.’ We are now sending Palace Attendant Xie Jian to hurry [to Caoqi] with Our invitation. We wish the master, in his compassionate consideration, to ascend quickly to the capital.”

The master memorialized to the throne, excusing himself on account of illness [and saying,] “I wish to live out my life in the forests.”

Xie Jian said, “The virtuous Chan monks of the capital all say, ‘If you wish to understand the Way, you must sit in meditation and cultivate *samādhi*. It has never happened that anyone attained emancipation without relying on meditation.’ I wonder, what is the Dharma that you teach?”

The master said, “One is enlightened to the Way through the mind. How could it depend on sitting? A sutra says, ‘To say that the Tathāgata sits or lies down is to practice a false path. Why? Because he is without coming and without going.’ To be without birth and without extinction is the pure meditation of the Tathāgata. For the *dharma*s to be quiescent is the Tathāgata’s pure sitting. Ultimately there is no realization, so how could it possibly [depend on] sitting?”

Xie Jian said, “When your disciple returns to the capital, my imperial masters will certainly ask me [about you]. Please, in your compassion, indicate

for me the essentials of the mind, so I may transmit them to the two palaces and the students of the Way in the capital. It would be like a single lamp lighting a hundred or a thousand lamps—the darkness would become entirely bright, brilliant without limit.”

The master said, “The Way is without bright and dark. Bright and dark are complementary ideas, so even the ‘brilliant without limit’ has a limit. This is because it depends on the positing of names (i.e., categories). The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* says, ‘The Dharma is without comparison, because it is without mutuality.’”

Xie Jian said, “‘Bright’ is a metaphor for wisdom, and ‘dark’ is a metaphor for the afflictions. If perchance students of the Way do not use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, how will they be able to escape beginningless *samsara*?”

360a The master said, “The afflictions are *bodhi*. They are nondual and not separate. If one [tries to] use the illumination of wisdom to destroy the afflictions, this is the interpretation of the two [Hinayana] vehicles [held by] those fit for the sheep and deer [carts]. Those of superior wisdom and Mahayana capabilities are completely different.”

Xie Jian said, “What is the Mahayana interpretation?”

The master said, “Ordinary people see brightness and ignorance as different, but the wise comprehend that they are nondual in their nature. The nondual nature is the true nature, and the true nature is present in the ordinary and stupid [common people] without decrease, and in the sages and wise ones without increase. One abides in the afflictions without disruption; one resides in meditation without serenity. Not annihilationist and not permanent, neither coming nor going; neither located in an intermediate location nor in the internal and external; neither generated nor extinguished, permanently abiding without movement—this is called the Way.”

Xie Jian said, “How does your teaching of neither generation nor extinction differ from the heretical paths?”

The master said, “When those of the heretical paths preach neither generation nor extinction, they have extinction put a halt to generation and generation reveal extinction. Their extinction seems like nonextinction, and their generation is explained by nongeneration. Our explanation of neither generation nor extinction is that fundamentally there is no generation and now

there is no extinction. Therefore, it is different from the heretical paths. If you want to understand the essentials of the mind, you should simply not think about all the [different types of] good and evil. You will then naturally attain entry into the pure essence of the mind, which is peaceful and always serene, with wondrous functions [as numerous as the] sands of the Ganges River.”

When Xie Jian heard this teaching, he experienced a sudden expansive great enlightenment. After doing his obeisance, he returned to the palace and submitted a memorial relating the master’s words.

On the third day of the ninth month of that year, a proclamation was issued extolling the master: “On account of age and illness, the master [Huineng] has declined [Our invitation], which was made so that We might cultivate the Way. The master [may be considered] a field of blessings for the nation, just like Vimalakīrti, who used his illness to teach the Mahayana in Vaiśālī. He transmits the mind of the buddhas and discusses the nondual Dharma. Xie Jian has transmitted the master’s instructions, which are the perceptual understanding of a Tathāgata. We have accumulated an overabundance of auspicious good¹³³ and have planted good roots in the past-[thus have] We encountered the master’s appearance in the world and the [teaching of] the superior vehicle of sudden enlightenment. Our gratitude to the master’s good favor toward Us is neverending.” Along with this were donations of a vestment (*kaṣāya*) of valuable Korean material¹³⁴ and a bowl made of crystal. An edict declared that the governor of Shaozhou should renovate the monastery, and the master’s former residence was allowed to become Guoensi (“Monastery of the Nation’s Gratitude”).

Number Ten: Transmission

One day, the master summoned his disciples Fahai, Zhicheng, Fada, Shenhui, Zhichang, Zhitong, Zhiche, Zhidao, Fazhen, and Faru, and said, “You are different from other people. After my extinction you should each become a master in a different region. I will now teach you how to preach the Dharma without losing the fundamental doctrine.

“First you should discuss the three categories of the teaching and the thirty-six responses of active functioning. Coming out and going in transcend the two extremes. In preaching all the Dharmas, do not depart from the self-nature.

360b “If suddenly someone asks you about the Dharma, say something that will exhaust dichotomies. [You should] always use the teachings of the responses, such as the mutual causation of coming and going. The dualistic *dharmas* will be thoroughly eliminated, and [the questioner] will have no recourse (literally, “no place to go”).

“The three categories of the teaching are the *skandhas*, realms, and entrances. ‘*Skandhas*’ refers to the five *skandhas* of form, feelings, thoughts, impulses, and consciousness. ‘Entrances’ refers to the twelve entrances (*āyatanas*): the six types of external sense data of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and *dharmas*; and the six internal sense organs of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. ‘Realms’ refers to the eighteen realms: the six types of sensory data, the six senses, and the six consciousnesses. The self-nature is able to incorporate the myriad *dharmas* and is named the ‘storehouse consciousness.’ If one activates thinking, it is the ‘transformation consciousnesses,’¹³⁵ the generation of the six consciousnesses to exit the six senses and see the six types of sensory data.

“Thus are the eighteen realms. All of them are functions that are activated from the self-nature. If the self-nature is false, it activates the eighteen falsely. If the self-nature is correct, it activates the eighteen correctly. If the functions are bad, then they are the functions of sentient beings; if they are good, then they are the functions of a buddha. On what do the functions depend? They exist on the basis of the self-nature.

“The responses include the five insentient responses of the external realms: the response of heaven and earth, the response of sun and moon, the response of bright and dark, the response of *yin* and *yang*, and the response of water and fire. These are the five responses.

“There are twelve responses of the words of the characteristics of *dharmas*: the response of words and *dharmas*, the response of being and non-being, the response of form and formless, the response of with characteristics and without characteristics, the response of defiled and undefiled, the response of form and emptiness, the response of motion and stillness, the response of pure and impure, the response of ordinary and sage, the response of monk and layperson, the response of old and young, the response of large and small. These are the twelve responses.

“There are nineteen responses of functions activated from the self-nature: the response of long and short, the response of false and correct, the response of stupid and wise, the response of foolish and sagacious, the response of disruption and concentration, the response of compassion and ill-will (literally, “poison”), the response of morality and transgression, the response of straight and crooked, the response of real and empty, the response of steep and level, the response of the afflictions and *bodhi*, the response of permanent and impermanent, the response of commiseration and injury, the response of joy and anger, the response of generosity and stinginess, the response of advancement and regression, the response of generation and extinction, the response of the *dharmakāya* and the physical body, and the response of the *nirmāṇakāya* and the *saṃbhogakāya*. These are the nineteen responses.”

The master said, “If you understand how to use these thirty-six responses, you will be able to explain the teachings in all the sutras. Exiting and entering transcend the two extremes; the self-nature mobilizes the functions.¹³⁶ When speaking with people, externally you can transcend characteristics within characteristics and internally you can transcend emptiness within emptiness. Those who are entirely attached to characteristics will increase their false views. Those who are entirely attached to emptiness will increase their ignorance. Those who are attached to emptiness will slander the sutras. Just speak and do not use written words. Suppose you do not use written words.¹³⁷ If there are also people [to whom] you should not speak, just say as follows: ‘This is the characteristic of written words.’¹³⁸ You may also say,¹³⁹ ‘I simply speak, but do not posit written words.’ This is not to posit written words.¹⁴⁰ They are also written words. Hearing someone preach, you may revile them, saying they are attached to written words. You should understand that you may be deluded yourselves and also revile the Buddha’s sutras. You must not revile the sutras, which is a transgression immeasurable. You may be attached to characteristics externally and teach¹⁴¹ that one should seek the true. Or you may extensively establish training centers and preach about the errors of being and nonbeing. Such people will not be able to see the nature for eon after eon!

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“Simply listen, and cultivate according to the Dharma. Also, do not think about the hundred things and be impeded with regard to the enlightenment-nature. If you listen to this explanation and do not cultivate, you will on the

contrary generate false thoughts. Just cultivate according to the Dharma, bequeathing the Dharma without abiding in characteristics. If all of you would be enlightened, rely on this for your preaching, rely on this for your functioning, rely on this for your practice, rely on this for [all] your actions; you would not lose the fundamental doctrine.

“When people inquire about the doctrines, when they ask of being, respond with nonbeing; when they ask of nonbeing, respond with being. When they ask of the ordinary, respond with the sagely, and when they ask of the sagely, respond with the ordinary. Through the two modes of speaking you will generate the doctrine of the middle. Respond to them one by one, and if there are any other questions, make up [your response] according to this and you will not go wrong. If someone asks you, ‘What is darkness?’, you should answer, ‘Brightness is the cause and darkness is the condition. When brightness disappears there is darkness. Brightness reveals darkness, and darkness reveals brightness.’ Through the modes of coming and going, you will create the doctrine of the middle. All other questions should be handled like this. Later, when you transmit the Dharma you may rely on this to develop material for teaching. Don’t lose the central doctrine!”

In the seventh month of the first year of the Taiji (“Great Ultimate”) [period], the forty-ninth hexagenary year, the Yanhe (“Extended Peace”) [year, or 712] (*This year was changed during the fifth month to Yanhe. In the eighth month Xuanzong took the throne and [the year period] was changed to Xiantian* [“Preceding Heaven”]. *The following year [the year period] was changed to Kaiyuan* [“Opening the Origin”]. *The other text[s] have this as [occurring during] Xiantian, but this is incorrect.*), the master ordered his followers to go to Guoensi in Xinzhou to construct a stupa. He had them hurry the work, and the unveiling was at the end of the summer the following year. On the first day of the seventh month [of 713] he assembled his followers and said, “I will depart from this world in the eighth month. If any of you have doubts, you should ask me about them soon, and I will resolve (literally, “destroy”) your doubts for you and make your delusions disappear. After I am gone, there will be no one to teach you.”

Fahai and the others listened, and everyone wept. Only Shenhui was emotionally unmoved and did not cry. The master said, “Young master Shenhui, you have become able to be unmoved before good and bad, before praise

and blame, without generating sorrow and joy! You others have not attained this—what Way can you have been cultivating all these years on this mountain? Who is it you're crying for so sadly now? If you're sorry for me, you don't know where I'm going. I know myself where I'm going. If I didn't know where I was going, I wouldn't be announcing it to you in advance! You're all crying because you don't know where I'm going. If you knew where I was going, then you wouldn't be crying. The Dharma-nature is fundamentally without generation and extinction, going and coming. You should all sit down, and I will recite a verse for you. It is called the 'Verse of True and Provisional and Motion and Stillness.' You should recite this verse, with the same meaning as mine. You should cultivate according to this, without losing the central doctrine."

The assembly of monks bowed and requested that the master recite the verse. The verse went:

All [things] are without any truth.
Do not see them as true.
If you see the true,
This is for what you see to be completely untrue.

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If you are able to possess the true yourself,
Transcend the provisional and your mind will be true.
If you do not transcend the provisional in your own mind,
You will be without the true, for where could the true be located?

If you are sentient, then you are able to move;
That which is insentient is immobile.
If you cultivate the practice of motionlessness,
You become identical to the immobility of insentiency.

If you are seeking the true motionlessness,
[Then realize that] there is a motionlessness of motion.
Motionlessness is motionlessness;¹⁴²
Insentient [objects] lack the seeds of buddhahood.

If you are able to discriminate well characteristics,
The cardinal meaning [of Buddhism] is motionlessness.

Just to have such a view
Is to have functioning that is suchlike.

I am telling you students,
Make an effort! And be careful!
Do not in this gateway of the Mahayana
Grasp onto the wisdom of birth and death!

If you can correspond [to the truth] upon hearing these words,
Then we may discuss the doctrines of the Buddha together.
If you in fact do not achieve correspondence,
Then hold your palms together [in the *anjālimudrā*] and be joyful
[that you've encountered the teaching at all]!

This teaching is fundamentally without disputation,
For disputation leads only to errors.¹⁴³
To grasp and oppose and dispute the teaching
Is for one's nature to enter into birth and death.

After the assembly heard [Huineng] speak this verse, they all did obeisance. Everyone there understood the master's point, and they all composed their minds [and became determined] to cultivate in reliance on the Dharma without any further disputation.

Realizing that Great Master [Huineng] would not remain in the world for long, Elder Fahai bowed once more and asked, "After Your Reverence has entered nirvana, to whom will the robe and Dharma be bequeathed?"

The master said, "There is a summary in circulation of my sermon at Dafansi [and my teachings] up to now, entitled *Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure*. You should all protect [this text] and transmit it. In your saving of the myriad living beings, you should rely on only these sermons. This is called the correct Dharma. I have preached the Dharma for you now, [but] I will not bequeath the robe. This is because your roots of faith are mature, you are definitely without doubt, and you are able to undertake the great affair. In accordance with the intention of the former patriarch, Great Master [Bodhi]dharma, in the bequest of his [final] verse, the robe should not be transmitted. His verse went:

I originally came to this land
To transmit the Dharma and save deluded sentient beings.
A single flower opens into five leaves,
And the fruit will appear of itself.

The master said further, “Good friends, you have each purified your minds and listened to me preach the Dharma. If you wish to achieve the planting [of the roots] of wisdom,¹⁴⁴ you must master the *samādhi* of the single characteristic and the *samādhi* of the single practice. If in all locations you do not reside in characteristics, if within those characteristics you do not generate revulsion or attraction and are also without grasping or rejecting, if you do not think about matters such as the creation and destruction of [personal] benefit, and if you are relaxed and quiet and emptily melded with the pallid and simple, this is called the *samādhi* of the single characteristic.

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“If in all your walking, standing still, sitting, and lying down you have a pure and unified straightforward mind, not moving [from the] place of enlightenment, truly creating a pure land, this is called the *samādhi* of the single practice.

“Those who accomplish both *samādhis* are like the earth bearing seeds, which it stores and nourishes during their maturation into fruit. So is it with the [*samādhis* of] the single characteristic and single practice. My preaching the Dharma to you now is like the timely rains that moisten the great earth, and your buddha-natures are likened to the seeds: encountering this watering, [your buddha-natures] will all begin to grow. Those who partake of my meaning will definitely attain *bodhi*! Those who rely upon my practice will certainly realize the wondrous fruit! Listen to my verse, which says:

The mind-ground stores the various seeds,
Which all sprout through the universal rain.
With the flower of sudden enlightenment, intelligence is ended,
And the fruit of *bodhi* forms of itself.

After the master spoke this verse he said, “The Dharma is nondual, and the mind is likewise. The Way (*dao*, enlightenment) is pure and without the various characteristics. You should all be careful not to contemplate purity or make the mind empty. The mind is pure and cannot be grasped or rejected.

You should all make an effort! Go well, according to your needs.” The members of the congregation then bowed and dispersed.

On the eighth day of the seventh month, Great Master [Huineng] suddenly addressed his followers, saying, “I am going to return to Xinzhou. Get a boat ready quickly!” The large congregation then cried out, trying their best to get him to stay.

The master said, “The appearance of the buddhas is like their manifestation of nirvana. Where there is coming, there must be going; this is an everlasting rule. There must be some location to which this skeletal form will revert.”

The congregation said, “When you leave here, how soon will you return?”

The master said, “Leaves fall and revert to roots. I cannot say when I will return.”

They asked further, “To whom has the storehouse of the eye of the correct Dharma been transmitted?”

The master said, “Those who are enlightened have attained it; those who are without mind have penetrated it.”

They asked again, “Won’t there be some difficulties in the future?”

The master said, “Five or six years after my nirvana, a person will come to take my head. Listen to my prediction, ‘On the head cultivating intimacy, in the mouth a need for repast. Encountering the difficulty of sufficiency, with willows the officials.’”

[Huineng] also said, “Seventy years after I go, two bodhisattvas will come from the East, one a monk and one a layman. They will simultaneously establish my teaching and make it flourish, decorating the monasteries and making many transmissions.”

[The members of the congregation] asked, “We do not know through what generations the transmission has proceeded from the appearance of the buddhas and patriarchs of the past. Please reveal this to us.”

The master said, “The ancient buddhas have responded to the world in numbers unmeasurable and beyond calculation. For the moment, [however,] we take seven buddhas as the beginning: Vipaśyin Buddha, Śikhin Buddha, and Viśvabhū Buddha of the ornamentation eon of the past; and Krakucchanda Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha, Kāśyapa Buddha, and Śākyamuni Buddha of the present auspicious eon: these are the seven buddhas.

“Taking Śākyamuni Buddha as the first of these seven buddhas, the transmission [is as follows]: number one, the Honored One Mahākāśyapa; number two, the Honored One Ānanda; number three, the Honored One Śaṅavāsa; number four, the Honored One Upagupta; number five, the Honored One Dhītika; number six, the Honored One Miśraka; number seven, the Honored One Vasumitra; number eight, the Honored One Buddhanandi; number nine, the Honored One Buddhāmītra; number ten, the Honored One Pārśva; number eleven, the Honored One Puṅgyayaśas; number twelve, the Honored One Aśvaghōṣa; number thirteen, the Honored One Kapimāla; number fourteen, the Honored One Nāgārjuna; number fifteen, the Honored One Kāṇadeva; number sixteen, the Honored One Rāhulata; number seventeen, the Honored One Saṃghanandi; number eighteen, the Honored One Gayaśata; number nineteen, the Honored One Kumāralāta; number twenty, the Honored One Jayata; number twenty-one, the Honored One Vasubandhu; number twenty-two, the Honored One Manorahita; number twenty-three, the Honored One Halenayaśas; number twenty-four, the Honored One Siṃha Bhikṣu; number twenty-five, the Honored One Vasiṣṭa; number twenty-six, the Honored One Puṅyamitra; number twenty-seven, the Honored One Prajñātāra; number twenty-eight, the Honored One Venerable Bodhidharma (*the initial patriarch in this land*); number twenty-nine, Great Master Huike; number thirty, Great Master Sengcan; number thirty-one, Great Master Daoxin; and number thirty-two, Great Master Hongren.

“[I,] Huineng, am the thirty-third patriarch. From the beginning, the patriarchs have each had successors. In the future, when it comes to letting the transmission be carried onward, you must not make mistakes!”

Great Master [Huineng], after a vegetarian feast at Guoensi [in Xinzhou] on the initial third day of the eighth month of the fiftieth hexagenary year, the second year of the Xiantian [period, or 713] (*In the twelfth month of this year; [the year period] was changed to Kaiyuan.*), addressed his followers, “All of you, sit according to your stations. I am going to part from you.”

Fahai addressed him, “Your Reverence, what teaching is it you leave so that the deluded people of later times will be able to see the buddha-nature?”

The master said, “All of you, listen well. If the deluded people of some later time recognize sentient beings, [they will recognize them] as the buddha-

362a nature. If they do not recognize sentient beings, they could seek the Buddha for ten thousand eons without ever meeting him. I teach you now: to recognize the sentient being in one's own mind is to see the buddha-nature in one's own mind. If you wish to see the Buddha, just recognize the sentient being [in your mind]. It is only sentient beings who are deluded as to the Buddha; the buddhas are not deluded about sentient beings. If you are enlightened to your self-nature, then the sentient being is the Buddha; if you are deluded as to the self-nature, then [what might be] a 'buddha' is [only] a sentient being.¹⁴⁵ If the self-nature is universally 'same' (i.e., level), the sentient being is a buddha; if the self-nature is false and steep, the buddha is a sentient being. If your minds are steep and crooked, then the buddha is [hidden] within the sentient being. If a single moment of thought is level and direct, then the sentient being becomes a buddha. One's own mind possesses the Buddha, and this own-buddha is the true Buddha. If one is without the buddha-mind oneself, where could one seek the true Buddha? Your own minds are the Buddha, do not doubt this! Outside of this there is not a single thing that can be posited! All of us generate the ten thousand types of *dharmas* from our fundamental minds. Therefore, the sutra says 'When the mind is generated, the various types of *dharmas* are generated; when the mind is extinguished, the various types of *dharmas* are extinguished.'

"I will now leave a verse for you in parting, called the 'Verse of the True Buddha of the Self-nature.' If people of later times understand the point of this verse, they will see their own fundamental minds and achieve the enlightenment of buddhahood. The verse goes:

The suchlike self-nature is the true Buddha;
False views and the three poisons are King Māra.
During false delusion Māra is in one's home;
During correct views the Buddha is in one's hall.

When false views and the three poisons are generated in the nature,
This is for King Māra to come reside in one's home.
When with correct views one eradicates the three poisonous
[states of] mind,
Māra is transformed into the Buddha, true and not provisional.

The *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*—

The three bodies are fundamentally a single body.

If one can see it oneself within the nature,

This is the cause of *bodhi* and the achievement of buddhahood.

From the *nirmāṇakāya* is fundamentally generated the pure nature;

The pure nature is always within the *nirmāṇakāya*.

The nature makes the *nirmāṇakāya* practice the correct [eightfold] path,

And in the future will be perfect and complete, true without limit.

The licentious nature is fundamentally a cause [within] the pure nature;¹⁴⁶

To eliminate the licentious [results in] the body of the pure nature.

Within the nature you should all transcend the five desires;

In the instant that you see the nature, they are true.

If you have encountered the sudden teaching in this lifetime,

Become enlightened immediately to the self-nature and see the

World-honored One.

If you cultivate by trying to become a buddha,

You'll never know where to seek for the true.

If you are able to see the true in your own mind,

Having the true will be the cause of your achieving buddhahood.

If you do not see the self-nature but seek the Buddha externally,

Every activation of your mind will be that of a big fool.

This sudden teaching is being left [for you] now,

But you must cultivate it yourself in order to save others.

I tell you, future students of the Way,

If your view is not like this, [you will come to] great sorrow!

After the master spoke this verse he announced, “You may all stay here, but after my nirvana do not become upset and cry tears like rain. Those who accept condolences from others or wear mourning clothes are not my disciples and are not [following] the correct Dharma. Just recognize

your own fundamental minds and see your own fundamental natures, [which are] neither moving nor still, neither generated nor extinguished, neither going nor coming, neither correct nor false, neither abiding nor going.

362b “I am afraid your minds are deluded and you don’t understand my meaning. I will tell you again, in order to make you see your natures. After my nirvana, practice in accordance with this just as if I were alive. If you go against my teaching, it would be no use even if I were alive. I will say another verse:

Stupefied,¹⁴⁷ not cultivating good.
Leaping, not creating evil.
Serene, eradicating knowledge.
Vast, the mind unattached.

When the master finished saying this verse, he sat upright until the third watch [of the night]. Suddenly he announced to his followers, “I am going,” and, peacefully, he went. At the time a strange fragrance filled the room, a white rainbow touched the earth, trees in the forest changed to white, and the birds and animals cried out.

In the eleventh month the officials of the three prefectures Guang[zhou], Shao[zhou], and Xin[zhou], the monks, and the laypeople argued over who was to receive [the master’s] body. Since they could not decide, they burned incense to gain a portent, saying, “The smoke from the incense will indicate the direction in which the master’s body should return.” The smoke from the incense connected directly to Caoqi.

On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month, [the master’s] casket and the robe and bowl he had transmitted were returned [to Caoqi]. In the seventh month of the next year, the casket was opened, and the disciple Fangbian spread incense paste on [the master’s remains]. Remembering the prediction about the taking of the head, they lacquered the master’s neck with metal sheets and placed it in his stupa. Suddenly, a white light appeared from inside the stupa that went straight up to heaven. Three days later it began to dissipate. [The prefect of] Shaozhou memorialized [about these happenings], and an edict was promulgated for the establishment of a stele recording the master’s spiritual activities.

The master was seventy-six. He [received the] transmission of the robe at age twenty-four and offered up his hair [to become a monk] at age thirty-

nine. He preached the Dharma to benefit sentient beings for thirty-seven years, and transmitted the Dharma to forty-three people. The number who became enlightened and transcended [the state of unenlightened] ordinary person cannot be known.

The robe that was transmitted by Bodhi[dharma as an emblem of the] faith (*which was of quxuan cotton*¹⁴⁸ *from the Western Region*), a precious bowl of polished *māṇava* given by [Emperor] Zhongzong, the image of the master sculpted by Fangbian, and his religious implements are stored forever at the training center at Baolin[si]. This *Platform Sutra* has been transmitted in order to make manifest the central doctrine, to disseminate the triple treasure, and to benefit all living beings.

*End of The Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure
of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch.*

Appendix

An Additional Record of the Story of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch

Collected by the disciple Fahai and others

The Great Master was named Huineng. His father was of the Lu family and had the posthumous name Xingtao. In the ninth month of the third year of the Wude (“Martial Virtue”) [period, 620, Lu Xingtao] was banished to Xinzhou.

His mother, of the Li family, had a dream prior [to bearing Huineng, and] white flowers appeared in profusion in the front garden, a pair of white cranes flew by, and a strange fragrance filled the room. Realizing that she was pregnant, she maintained the chaste precepts in pure sincerity. She was pregnant for six years before the master was born, which was at the first [or “child” hour] (i.e., midnight) of the eighth day of the second month of the thirty-fifth year in the hexagenary calendar, the twelfth year of the Zhenguan (“Proper Exemplification”) [period, 638] of the Tang [dynasty]. At the time a white light leaped to the sky from between [the baby’s] eyebrows, and a fragrant pneuma wafted through the air. 362c

At dawn two monks came to see him. They said to the father, “We have divined the name for the baby who was born last night.¹⁴⁹ It should be ‘Hui’ above and ‘neng’ below.”

The father said, “Why should he be named Huineng?”

The monks said, “‘Hui’ (“to enrich”) is because he will enrich sentient beings with the Dharma. ‘Neng’ (“capable”) is because he is capable of performing the task of the buddhas.” Saying this, they left. It is not known where they went.

The master did not drink mother’s milk but was anointed with sweet dew by the gods at night. When he was three, his father died and was buried next to the house. [Huineng’s] mother maintained her will (i.e., did not remarry) and brought up [their son,] who cut firewood to support his mother as he grew older.

At age twenty-four, [Huineng] heard the [*Diamond*] *Sutra* and had a [moment of] understanding. He went to Huangmei to consult with and do obeisance to the Fifth Patriarch, who appreciated his abilities, transmitted the robe and Dharma to him, and had him receive the position of patriarch. The time was the fifty-eighth hexagenary year, the first year of the Longshuo (“Dragon Fiat”) [period, 661].

Returning south, [Huineng] hid himself until the eighth day of the first month of the thirteenth hexagenary year, the first year of the Yifeng (“Phoenix of Righteousness”) [period, 676],¹⁵⁰ when he met Dharma Master Yinzong. After discoursing upon the profound mystery, Yinzong became enlightened to the master’s doctrine.¹⁵¹ On the fifteenth day of the month, there was a great meeting of the fourfold congregation, and [Yinzong] gave the master tonsure. On the eighth day of the second month, various famous worthies were assembled for the bequest of the full precepts. Vinaya Master Zhiguang of the western capital [Changan] was the preceptor, Vinaya Master Huijing of Suzhou was the officiant, Vinaya Master Tongying of Jingzhou was the instructor, Vinaya Master Jitāra of Central India was the explicant, and Tripiṭaka Master Mida (?) of the Western Country was the validator.

The ordination platform had a stele erected by Tripiṭaka Master Guṇabhadra of the Song, which said “In the future a bodhisattva in human form will receive the precepts here.” Also, in the first year of the Tianjian (“Heavenly Oversight”) [period, 502], Tripiṭaka Master Prajñācandra¹⁵² came from Western India by boat and planted a cutting of the *bodhi* tree from India next to the platform. He also predicted, “One hundred seventy years from now, a bodhisattva in human form will open forth the superior vehicle under this tree and save innumerable beings. He will be the Dharma-chief of the seal of the truly transmitted mind of the Buddha.” When the master came here and offered up his hair [in tonsure], received the precepts, and opened forth the doctrine of the direct transmission to the fourfold congregation, it was all as had been prophesied before. (*It is one hundred seventy-five years from the nineteenth hexagenary year, the first year of the Tianjian* [period, or 502] *of the Liang until the thirteenth* [hexagenary year], *the first year of the Yifeng* [period, or 676] *of the Tang.*)

In the spring of the following year, the master left the assembly [at Faxingsi in Guangzhou] and returned to Baolin[si]. Yinzong and over a thousand

people, both monks and laypeople, saw him off. He went directly to Caoqi. At the time, Vinaya Master Tongying of Jingzhou and several hundred students remained [in Guangzhou, practicing] according to the master's [teachings].

When the master arrived at Baolin[si] in Caoqi, he saw that the buildings were small and unable to accommodate his congregation. Wanting to enlarge [the monastery], he visited the local figure Chen Yaxian and said, "This old monk would like to receive from you enough room for my sitting mat. May I?"

Yaxian said, "How big is Your Reverence's sitting mat?"

Huineng showed him the sitting mat, and Yaxian agreed. Huineng then spread out his mat so that it completely covered all of Caoqi. The four heavenly kings appeared and sat down [so as] to protect the four directions. The present monastery grounds include the Ridges of the Heavenly Kings, which are named on account of this.

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Yaxian said, "I know that the power of Your Reverence's Dharma is great, but the grave of my ancestor is also here. Some day when you build your stupa, I beseech you to leave [the grave] there. I also wish to donate all of this, to make it a precious domain [of the Dharma] forever. However, this earth is a [mountain] range to which come living dragons and white elephants. You may level heaven, but just do not level the earth." Later, when they built the monastery, they followed what he had said completely.

The master roamed over the superior locations of mountains and water within the monastery grounds and then rested. Monastery [buildings] were constructed in thirteen locations, which are now called the Huaguo yuan ("Flower-fruit Chapels"). These are registered as belonging to the monastery.

As to the Baolin training center, when Tripiṭaka Master Prajñācandra of the Western Country came from the Southern Ocean and was passing by the mouth of Cao Creek (Caoqi), he scooped up some water and drank it, realized how unusual was its beautiful fragrance, and said to his followers, "This water is no different from the water of Western India. At the source of this stream there must certainly be a superior location suitable for a monastery!" They followed the current up to its source, which was surrounded by mountains and water on all four sides, with peaks and crags strange and excellent. [Prajñācandra] sighed, "This is like Mount Baolin (Ratnavana?) in Western India."¹⁵³ He said to the people living in Caohou village, "You should build

a monastery on this mountain. One hundred seventy years from now, the unsurpassable Dharma-treasure will be disseminated here.¹⁵⁴ Those who attain enlightenment will be like a forest, so it would be appropriate to call it Baolin (“Treasure Grove”) [Monastery].”

At the time the governor of Shaozhou, Hou Jingzhong, [reported what Prajñācandra] had said in a memorial, and the throne granted his request and bestowed a name plaque for Baolin[si, written in the imperial hand and making the monastery] a pure palace [of the Dharma]. It was unveiled in the third year of the Tianjian [period, or 504].

In front of the monastery’s [Buddha] hall was a deep pool, where a dragon constantly went in and out, deforming the trees. One day he manifested a form that was extremely large, roiling up waves and obscuring [the sky with] clouds and mists. [Huineng’s] followers were all afraid, but the master scolded [the dragon], “You’re only able to manifest a large body—you can’t manifest a small body. If you were a divine dragon, your abilities at transformation would include the manifestation of the large with the small and the manifestation of the small with the large!”

The dragon suddenly disappeared and then instantly reappeared in a small body, jumping around the surface of the pool. The master held out his bowl, testing [the dragon] by saying, “But I’ll bet you don’t dare enter this old monk’s bowl!” The dragon then swam up in front of him, and the master scooped him up in the bowl. The dragon could not move. The master carried the bowl to the [monks’] hall and preached the Dharma for the dragon, who then shed his skeleton and went away. His skeleton is about seven inches long and was complete with head and tail, horns and feet. It is kept at the monastery. The master later had the pool filled up with earth and rocks. The iron stupa that now exists in front of the hall on the left side guards the location.

The rock that the master dropped from his hips [when he went to Hongren’s chambers to receive the transmission] is inscribed with eight characters [that read] “recorded [for] Layman Lu on the first year of the Longshuo [period, or 661].” This stone now exists at Dongchan[si] in Huangmei.

In addition, Assistant Director of the Right Wang Wei composed a *Record of the Patriarch* on behalf of Great Master Shenhui, which says, “The master hid among workers for sixteen years. When he encountered Yinzong’s lecturing on the [Nirvana] Sutra, [Yinzong] therefore performed the tonsure for him.”

Also, Governor Liu Zongyuan composed an *Epitaph on the Patriarch's Posthumous Title*, which says, “The master received the implement of authentication and hid himself in Nanhai for sixteen years. When [the time was right for him to] undertake the salvation [of sentient beings], he took up residence in Caoqi and became the teacher of humans.”

Furthermore, Grand Councilor Zhang Shangying composed a *Record of the Fifth Patriarch*, which says, “The Fifth Patriarch taught at Dongchan yuan in Huangmei Xian, which was convenient in his support of his mother. In the first year of Longshuo, after bestowing the robe and Dharma on the Sixth Patriarch, he dispersed his following and entered a hut on East Mountain. There was a layman [named] Pingmao, who gave the mountain to the master (i.e., Hongren) for a training center.”

In consideration of this [evidence, we must conclude] then that the master's journey to Huangmei and reception of the Fifth Patriarch's robe and Dharma was in fact in the fifty-eighth hexagenary year, the first year of the Longshuo [period, or 661. From this year] to the twelfth hexagenary year of Yihuang [676], when the master first went to Faxing[si] and shaved his hair, is sixteen years. Other texts may say that the master went to Huangmei in the Xianheng (“Universal Penetration”) [period, 670–674], but I fear this is incorrect.

Details of Accolades through the Dynasties

Emperor Xianzong (r. 805–820) of the Tang bestowed on the Great Master the posthumous title,¹⁵⁵ “Chan Master Great Mirror.”

Emperor Taizong (r. 976–997) of the Song supplemented this posthumous title to “Chan Master Great Mirror of True Emptiness” and by edict reconstructed the master's stupa and named it “Stupa of Great Peace and Benefit of the Country.”

Emperor Renzong (r. 1022–1063) of the Song, in the tenth year of the Tiansheng (“Heavenly Sage”) [period, 1032], welcomed the master's body, robe, and bowl into the palace for offerings. He supplemented the posthumous title to “Chan Master Great Mirror of True Emptiness and Universal Enlightenment.”

Emperor Shenzong (r. 1067–1085) of the Song supplemented the posthumous title to “Chan Master Great Mirror of True Emptiness and Universal Enlightenment and Perfect Wisdom.”

All of these details are found in the epitaph and record of Yan [Shu] Yuanxian.¹⁵⁶

Epitaph on the Bequest of the Posthumous Title “Chan Master Great Mirror”

by Liu Zongyuan

[The Military Commissioner Ma Zong,] Lord of Fufeng, inquired in detail about [the events of] the three years in Lingnan, where a Buddhist became the Sixth Patriarch. Since no title had been granted, he enumerated [these details] to the emperor, who in an edict granted the posthumous title “Chan Master Great Mirror” (Dajian chanshi). [The Sixth Patriarch’s] stupa was called “Stupa of Numinous Illumination” (Lingzhao zhi ta). On the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the tenth year of the Yuanhe (“Original Harmony”) [period, 815], the tally promulgated from the Bureau of Sacrifices of the Department of State Affairs was received by the Military Commissioner,¹⁵⁷ who then commanded that subofficial functionaries from the bureau receive a report [on the welcoming of the tally] from the city’s clerks to be forwarded to the [Bureau of] Sacrifices.

[The report read, in part:] “So many banners and canopies, bells, and drums were placed on the mountain that its size increased, and the valleys were filled. Ten thousand people gathered together, as if to hear the gods and demons. At that time there were more than a thousand scholars [present], all of whom danced for joy in vigorous excitation, as if the master [Huineng] were alive again. Then, again, they felt pain and cried in fond remembrance, as if the master had just died.”

Therefore I, [Liu Zongyuan,] say, living beings are naturally inclined to fighting, robbing, and killing. Disaster is our fundamental lot, obstruction and resistance the licentious flow [of samsara]. Thus there is nothing better than to return to the beginning. Confucius was without great position, but in death his words have been maintained in the world.¹⁵⁸ Then again, Yang [Zhu], Mo [Di], the Yellow [Emperor], and Lao[zi] have become increasingly heterogeneous, their areas of expertise rent asunder. Last to appear was our Buddha [Śākyamuni], who, reasoning, transcended and returned to the source, and who must be called the one who lived in serenity.¹⁵⁹

[Emperor Wu] of the Liang enjoyed performing conditioned [works of merit.] Master [Bodhi]dharma scolded him, and the technique of emptiness became increasingly apparent. The sixfold transmission arrived at Great Mirror (i.e., Huineng). Initially, Great Mirror labored hard at his task [of hulling rice], but when he once heard the words [of Shenxiu's verse], his [own] words were rare and trenchant. Master [Hongren's enlightened] functioning responded, and at last [Huineng] received the implements of authentication.¹⁶⁰ He hid himself in Nanhai, and no one heard of him. Then, after sixteen years, [the time was right for him to] undertake the salvation [of sentient beings], so he took up residence in Caoqi and became the teacher of humans. Those who assembled to study under him numbered a thousand.

[Huineng's] Way took the unconditioned as being, the empty void as the real, and the vast and unbounded as the refuge. He taught people first with essentialistic goodness,¹⁶¹ ultimately [to point out that] essentialistic goodness did not depend on weeding and hoeing. Fundamentally, it is serene.

[Emperor] Zhongzong heard of his fame and dispatched an emissary who invited him twice [to court], but he was unable to go. [The emperor] took his words as the technique of the mind. His teaching is extant in its entirety and is now disseminated [everywhere] under heaven. All that which is called "Chan" has its origins at Caoqi.

[Great Master] Great Mirror departed the world one hundred and six years ago, having extensively instilled [his teaching] in an extensive following. His well-known [successors] number a few over ten, but I cannot list their names here. Now, for the first time, the emperor has been informed [of his achievements] and he has attained a "great" posthumous title.¹⁶² Bounteously has he aided our Way—could he not but receive such an accolade?

When Lord [Ma Zong of Fufeng] first stood before the court, he was strong in Confucian learning. He has been Governor of Qianzhou (Gong Xian, Jiangxi) and Protector of Annan, and the great Man and Yi, barbarians from India in the West, have come over the ocean on their ships to hear his commands. They all accept the public virtue, receiving banners¹⁶³ [of enfeoffment], and regulating their halberds. After [Ma Zong of Fufeng] arrived to overlook the southern oceans, those who have joined our country are [as numerous as the trees of] a forest. They do not murder, nor are they angry; the people are filled with awe and do not speak bluntly. In truth, well does

the refulgence [of his administrative success illuminate] the virtuous [Ma Zong of Fufeng].

The brilliant procession for Great Mirror was not like that for a lord, but it is fitting that he be the elder of the people, and it is simple to [make him] a rock beneath the foundation [of the national welfare].¹⁶⁴

Your emissary proceeded there to pay respect with this accolade, which reads:

Bodhidharma, advancing ceaselessly, transmitted the mind of the
Buddha's sayings, and
The sixfold succession was bestowed on Great Mirror for oversight.
Laboring diligently in singleminded silence, he ultimately grasped
the profound, and
Wrapped himself in the implements of authentication (i.e., the robe
and bowl),¹⁶⁵ going to his southward haven.

His Way, at Caoqi here bequeathed,
Whether combined with great or humble, its stature is not razed.
The transmission, recounted in its entirety, is for the Way but praise.

Born with essentialistic goodness, in beings innate;
Crazily rushing, racing in the extreme, a myriad modes of existence;
Not thinking and increasingly chaotic, not realizing and increasingly
mistaken—
Through the master's internal mirroring, all is attained in the
fundamental.

If one does not plant roots, one will not cultivate seedlings;
If the one within is melded without, one will possess pure brilliance
in the extreme.¹⁶⁶

Emperor Zhongzong enjoined that word be sent to the court,
In the shadows assisting the salvation of kings, the humble person
free and easy.

One hundred and six years have passed with title unrecorded,
But through Lord Fufeng the Son of Heaven was now informed.

From the Secretariat was returned the practice of the “great” [title],
 which eulogized
 His brilliance across the southern lands, rejuvenating his Dharma.
 His followers were ten thousand, a hundred million, despondent
 together, elated together.
 One thinks the extent of the master’s teaching derives from Lord
 Fufeng,
 Who has offered all of his experience to the Son of Heaven.¹⁶⁷
 The Son of Heaven, in repose, has ordered,
 And the excellent lord has virtue beauteous.
 Overflowing the oceans are the barbarians, overlooked by the Buddha.
 The master [Huineng] has transmitted [his teaching] with benevolence,
 And with benevolence has Lord [Fufeng] administered.
 With greetings resolute, let this continue forever without cease.

364a

Epitaph for Chan Master Great Mirror

**(Along with the Inscription on the Buddha’s Robe,
 both of which were compiled by Liu Yuxi)**

On a certain month and day in the tenth year of the Yuanhe [period, or 815], an edict delivered praise on Huineng of Caoqi, the Sixth Patriarch, bestowing the posthumous title “Great Mirror.” In truth, Ma Zong, Governor of Guangzhou, had enumerated [the details of Huineng’s career] in a memorial, which was followed [by the emperor]. Revering the Way and honoring names revert identically to the same good and do not differ in the disparate teaching (i.e., Buddhism). With a single word of praise both Chinese and barbarians are extremely moved, attaining that for which they had appealed.¹⁶⁸ Lord Ma [Zong of Fufeng] venerated [Huineng’s] accomplishments, and, with respect, was the first to record them for posterity, and then consulted with literati.

Now, Lord Liu [Zongyuan] of Hedong, Governor of Liuzhou,¹⁶⁹ has composed an earlier epitaph. Three years later the monk Daolin led his followers here from Caoqi, saying they wished to erect a second epitaph. This was the desire of [Huineng’s] students.

During the middle five hundred years after the Tathāgata's nirvana, [Kāśyapa] Matanga and Zhu Falan brought sutras to China, and people first heard his words. This was like seeing sunrise through layered darkness. During the next five hundred years [Bodhi]dharma brought the Dharma to China, and people first transmitted [the Buddha's] mind. This was like seeing the gleaming sun on a dark morning. From [Bodhi]dharma the sixfold transmission reached Great Mirror and, like wish-bestowing pearls strung together, there was neither identity nor difference from one to the other. What is referred to in this world as the true doctrine, also known as the sudden teaching, was initially brought by [Bodhi]dharma along with the Buddha's robe, which is transmitted by the enlightened as a seal of the truth. [The robe] has reached Great Mirror and will no longer be transmitted. How could it possibly be like the fish and rabbit traps or the straw dog [that are discarded after the game is caught or the ritual finished]? Is it not that people simply had no choice but to do something with it and decided to let it stay [at Caoqi]?¹⁷⁰

I am without [spiritual] attainment but have come to know [the following].¹⁷¹ On the basis [of Daolin's testimony, Chan Master] Great Mirror was born in Xinzhou, left home at thirty-four, and died at age seventy-four.¹⁷² After one hundred and six years he received a posthumous title. Initially, it was at East Mountain in Qi[zhou] that he received the prophecy of future enlightenment from the Fifth Patriarch, then returned [to the south]. [Emperor] Zhongzong sent a palace worthy¹⁷³ who repeatedly invited [Huineng to court, but he] did not accept the invitation. [The palace worthy] then submitted [Huineng's] words to the throne, which reverentially put them into practice.

The inscription reads:

The birth of the Perfected Man was unlike any other.

Identical to people was his form, transcending the human was his wisdom.

In this southern outskirts [of civilization where insects] wriggle did descend to be born one of exceptional greatness.

His father the sky and [his] mother the earth, alone did he take his form from the primal pneuma.

At a single word he was suddenly enlightened, without treading [even] the first stage [of the bodhisattva path],

With the transmission from the fifth master, who bestowed the precious implements (i.e., the robe and bowl).¹⁷⁴

Sitting in meditation at Caoqi, the world called it the Southern school.¹⁷⁵

Students come here like the [inexorable flowing of] water to the east. Drinking of the wondrous medicine, they heal their deafness and dumbness.

Summoned but unable to proceed [to court,] he was allowed to become a hero of the Dharma.

The time of the Buddha is remote, and his words have accumulated to a hundred million.

Attaching themselves to emptiness and grasping being, everyone races toward his realm (the Western Paradise).

“I (Huineng) have established a snare for truth, which has been triggered in this southern country.¹⁷⁶

Cultivating without cultivation, attaining without attainment, [This teaching] can cause students to return to their natural awareness.”

As when dark and obscure, one lifts one’s eyes to the polestar.

Attaining it naturally, ultimately it cannot be transmitted.

Transmitted by mouth and passed by hand, [to hand down the robe] would be to be obstructed by being.¹⁷⁷

The robe is stored in the hall of emptiness, to attain it is to have it bestowed by heaven.

364b

Inscription on the Robe of the Buddha

(with Introduction)

I have written the second epitaph for [Huineng of] Caoqi on behalf of the monk [Dao]lin. Thinking that I might explain the meaning of the Sixth Patriarch not transmitting his robe, I have composed this inscription on the robe of the Buddha:

When the Buddha’s words are not practiced, the Buddha’s robe is [the subject of] argumentation.

Suddenly close but honoring the remote, our feelings toward ancient and contemporary are eternally [the same].

The birth of Confucius was in a place not even a village,
But after the dream-offering [his teachings] have lasted for a thousand
years.

As I recall, in the past there was [Emperor Wu] of the Liang, who
was like a crazed elephant.
[Bodhi]dharma, in order to save [the people of this] world, came
and became the Medicine King.
Because his words did not heal, he moved [elsewhere] on behalf of
living things.
As if holding the matching tally and returning to the barrier!¹⁷⁸

When the people do not know the officials, they look on their carriages
and are afraid.

When laypeople do not know the Buddha, they consider his robe as
something to be honored.

A robe of disintegrating colors—the Way is not in this!
It is precious because it proves the enlightenment [of Huineng].

The Sixth Patriarch was not prominent, and his origins were obscure.
He returned to the wolf-infested wilds, traveling far to live among
the cretinous imbeciles [of the far south].

If he had not had the implements of authentication, how would
sentient beings have taken refuge in him?

This was to open the gate of expedient means, not to transmit the
robe as an end in itself.¹⁷⁹

What has a beginning must have an end; how could the transmission
[of the robe] not cease?

Things must revert to nothingness; how could one long rely on a robe?

If prior to the end one knows the end, its use is inexhaustible.

Our Way is imperishable; how could it include a robe?

When its use has been told, who would not consider it a straw dog
[to be cast aside when no longer needed]?

It was after the master's [body] was placed in the stupa, on the third day of
the fifty-ninth hexagenary year, the tenth year of the Kaiyuan [period, or

722]. Suddenly, in the middle of night, there was heard a sound like the dragging of an iron chain.¹⁸⁰ The monks arose in surprise and saw a person in mourning clothes¹⁸¹ running out of the stupa. Upon inspection, they saw a wound on the master's neck. They reported the entire affair at the county and prefectural headquarters to Magistrate Yang Kan and Governor Liu Wutian and obtained a warrant for the urgent apprehension [of the assailant]. After five days the bandit was captured in Shijue village and sent to Shaozhou. Under interrogation, he identified himself as Zhang Jingman from Liang Xian in Ruzhou (Linru Xian, Henan). While at the Kaiyuansi ("Opening Origin Monastery") in Hongzhou, he had received two thousand cash from the Silla monk Kim Daepi (Jin Daibei) for taking the head of the Sixth Patriarch, Great Master [Huineng], to be returned to Haedong (i.e., Korea) [to become the object of] offerings.

Governor Liu, hearing the report [of the interrogation], went himself to Caoqi prior to sentencing. He asked the master's chief disciple [Ling]tao, "How should we deal with this?" [Ling]tao said, "According to civil law, he should obviously be executed. But according to the Buddhist [principle of] compassion, both enemy and friend are treated equally. How much more the case since they wanted [Huineng's head] in order to make offerings to it. This transgression should be overlooked." Governor Liu sighed and said, "For the first time I understand the grandeur of Buddhism!" He then pardoned [the criminal].

In the first year of the Shangyuan ("Uplifting the Origin") [period, 760, Emperor] Suzong sent an emissary to request that the master's robe and bowl be returned to the palace for offerings. On the fifth day of the fifth month of the first year of the Yongtai ("Eternal Peace") [period, 765, Emperor] Daizong dreamed that the Sixth Patriarch, the Great Master, requested [the return of] the robe and bowl. On the seventh day, an edict [was sent] to Governor Yang Jian, which said, "We have dreamed that Chan Master [Hui]neng has requested that his robe of transmission, his *kaṣāya*,¹⁸² be returned to Caoqi. We now dispatch Great Defender-General of the State¹⁸³ Liu Chongjing to receive and return it reverentially. We state that it is a national treasure. Our servant should return it to its original monastery and enplace it according to the Dharma. We adamantly command the monks who have personally received the teachings [of Huineng] to guard it carefully and not allow [his body] to be defiled."

364c

Afterward, there were those who snuck in to steal [Huineng's remains], but they were always captured before they got far away. Such events happened three or four times.

[Emperor] Xianzong bestowed the posthumous title “Chan Master Great Mirror,” and the stupa [name] “Numinous Illumination of the Original Harmony.” The remaining details are recorded in the epitaphs by Minister Wang Wei, Governor Liu Zongyuan, and Governor Liu Yuxi, all of the Tang.

Recorded by the *śrāmaṇera* Lingtao, who guards the stupa.

Epilogue

The Dharma always preached in the past by the Sixth Patriarch, the Great Master, was entirely the perfect and sudden teaching of the Mahayana. Therefore, it is called a “sutra.” Its words [use] what is close to point to what is remote; its phrases are straightforward (literally, “level”) and its meanings clear. Whoever recites it will receive [benefit] thereby. Mingjiao Qisong has constantly praised it, saying “Those whose natural abilities are sharp will attain it profoundly; those whose natural abilities are dull will attain it shallowly.” How true these words!

When I first entered the Way [to become a monk] I was very moved by this [scripture]. Eventually I saw that the three texts [available] were not uniform. Each has strengths and weaknesses, and the [printing] blocks were becoming obliterated. Therefore, I have made a comparative edition of the text, correcting their errors and elucidating their abbreviations. I have also added the requests for instruction and encounters between [Huineng] and his students. I hope that students will be able to attain the teaching of Caoqi in its entirety [through this text].

For example, Governor Yungong Conglong¹⁸⁴ is profoundly versed in this Way. One day he passed by my room in the monastery, perused my edition, and said, “You have achieved a grand consummation of the *Platform Sutra!*” Lamenting [the text's unavailability], he commanded workers to carve the catalpa tree [printing blocks] solely in order that [the text would] circulate and keep the school of Caoqi from ever coming to an end.

Someone said, “Bodhidharma ‘did not posit words, pointed directly at the human mind, [and taught] seeing the nature and the achievement of

buddhahood.’ Why should the correct transmission to Patriarch Lu in the sixth generation (i.e., Huineng) utilize words?”

I said, “This sutra is not words but the pointing of the ‘direct pointing of the unilineal transmission from [Bodhi]dharma.’ Nanyue [Huairang], Qingyuan [Xingsi], and the various great elders illuminated their minds through this pointing. Furthermore, they used it to illuminate the mind of Mazu [Daoyi], Shitou [Xiqian], and the various masters. The Chan school, which now is disseminated throughout the world, has always depended on this pointing. From now on, how could it not rely on this pointing and still illuminate the mind for the seeing of the nature?”

The questioner acknowledged this, bowed again, and said in gratitude, “I have been feeble-minded [in asking this]. Please include [this exchange] at the end of the sutra in order to inform those to come.”

Epilogue by Shi Zongbao of Nanhai, summer of the twenty-eighth hexagenary [year, the twenty-eighth year] of the Zhiyuan (“Ultimate Origin”) [period of the Yuan dynasty, 1291].

Notes

- ¹ This location is not listed in Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* (Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1958–60).
- ² The Chinese has *fuchong jushi*, “layman who bore [the responsibility of] pounding [grain to hull it].” The English rendition obscures the actual construction of the Chinese but is used for convenience. The first character could be read as applying to the transmission, resulting in “[the transmission] was borne only by the layman of the pestle.”
- ³ Ogawa Tamaki, et al., eds., *Kadokawa shin jigen* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1968; second revised edition, 1998), p. 720, has *zhufa* as merely to cut the hair, with the first character glossed as *duan*.
- ⁴ Identified as a prefect in the scripture itself, here Wei Ju is referred to by the title *shijun*.
- ⁵ The term used here, *wu babi*, literally means “without handle,” as a cup or pitcher having no handle. See Morohashi, 4:389b. I cannot think of a more descriptive way of putting this in English.
- ⁶ The term *xuanfeng*, “mysterious wind,” is a euphemism for the Way. See Morohashi, 7:775a.
- ⁷ This translation was prepared with reference to Araki Kengo, *Bugyōhen*, *Zen no goroku*, no. 14 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1981).
- ⁸ This sentence could be read “it is without location and not attaining [*de*, i.e., “perceiving”] itself.” I have followed Araki’s interpretation.
- ⁹ I am following Araki’s citations (p. 233) of Qisong’s interlineal commentary in the interpolations in this sentence.
- ¹⁰ Araki, p. 234, points out that these four terms for the mind are based on Zongmi’s *Chan Chart*, Kamata Shigeo, *Zengen shosenshū tojo* (*Comprehensive Preface to the Interpretations of the Source of Chan*), *Zen no goroku*, no. 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1971), pp. 70 and 74n. The “mind of dependent cognition” (*yuanlü xin*) refers to the eight *vijnānas* (consciousnesses), while the “mind of correlation and activating” (*jiji xin*) refers to the eighth, or *ālayavijnāna* (storehouse consciousness).
- ¹¹ The Chinese is *jiaowai yi quanfa zhi yao*, following Araki’s punctuation, p. 228.

Notes

- Araki, p. 234n, points out that this incident is drawn from the Northern text of the *Nirvana Sutra*, fascicle two, the *Shouming pin* or “Chapter on Longevity.”
- ¹² Although the text has *shengru* here, the term *shengren* occurs twice below. Araki’s text has *ren*.
 - ¹³ I am following Araki’s punctuation, interpreting *wei* as a negative initiating the succeeding sentence.
 - ¹⁴ The phrase “sincerely embody” renders the Chinese *liang*, which is glossed as “*makoto*,” “*makoto ni*,” or “*shinjiru*” in Japanese.
 - ¹⁵ Literally, to his “realization-nature,” *zhengxing*. Qisong’s interlineal commentary glosses this as “to realize the principle-nature” (*zhengwu lixing*) (Araki, p. 235n).
 - ¹⁶ Both the Guanzhu xylograph and Araki’s text use the character that means “false” for *wang*.
 - ¹⁷ The term *chushi* can refer both to leaving the world, as a renunciant, and to appearing in the world, as a buddha. Because of the parallelism with the following sentence, I have chosen the former alternative.
 - ¹⁸ The supratextual gloss to the Guanzhu, p. 18a, cites the annotation to the *Daya yi pian* section of the *Shijing*, which defines *wulou* (literally, “room-leak”) as the northwest corner of a room. However, the Guanzhu interpretation itself is very clear in referring to a hole in the roof. The supratextual gloss indicates the *Zhuangzi* as the source of the simile of the broken auger.
 - ¹⁹ This paraphrase is based on the Guanzhu, p. 18b. To follow the phrase order more literally, “The Perfected Man penetrates and comprehends and is in accord with the scriptures, [about which] his determination [of the truth] may be seen.”
 - ²⁰ The character *kuang* becomes *bikuang*, “compare-metaphorize,” in the Guanzhu commentary.
 - ²¹ Araki, p. 239n, explains *dazi* as “fundamental point of reliance.”
 - ²² This reading of the text is based on the Guanzhu, p. 26a, where *wei* is expanded to *xingwei*, “generate-act,” and *zhen* to *zhenfa qi yiyu*, “agitate-generate its meaning-notations.” The term rendered here as “abstruse” is actually *yuan*, “distant.”
 - ²³ See the Guanzhu, p. 26a.
 - ²⁴ The Guanzhu at this point (p. 26b) uses a weaving metaphor that I will not introduce into the translation. “Great method” renders *dafang*, which in the Guanzhu becomes *dafa*, “great method” or “great Dharma.”
 - ²⁵ The Chinese is *yixiang zhiguan*, which the Guanzhu expands to *yixiang wuxiang zhiguan*.
 - ²⁶ Above and elsewhere, the word *cheng*, “to create,” is used in compounds such as

- chengdao* in the sense of “to attain enlightenment.” Here it is used in the sense of “to come into being” or, in the final phrase, even “to exist.”
- ²⁸ In this section the word for enlightenment is *zheng*, which elsewhere is generally rendered “realization.”
- ²⁰ This actually ends in a rhetorical question, which I have not been able to retain in the English.
- ²⁹ The term *wuji* means “neutral” in technical Buddhist jargon, but it is used in Chan texts to refer to a state of mental dullness or blankness. See the *Xiuxinyaolun*.
- ³⁰ The Guanzhu text does not have the negative *pu* before *chien*, “views,” found in the Taishō and Wenji texts, as its supratextual gloss notices. This is a curious case where the presence or absence of a negative does not change the meaning, since views are generally bad in Buddhism. However, the interpretation “nonviews” is untenable.
- ³¹ This interpolation is based on the Guanzhu text, p. 39a.
- ³² The reference is to a text known as the *Datonglun* (*Treatise on the Great Identity*) by Wang Wenkang (Mingshu, Zi Huishu; 963–1034), whose biography may be found in the *Songshi* 286, *Liezhuan* 4005. The text is not known to be extant, but Araki notes that Zhang Shangying also cites it approvingly. The citation is based on a line from the *Lunyu*, *Yaoye* section. The point of the quotation is that just as there was a natural transition from Zhou to Qi to Lu, there was a natural progression of profundity from Confucianism to Daoism to Buddhism.
- ³³ Here the word *zong* might be better translated as “school.”
- ³⁴ In the translation below, I have translated *zuoli* and similar terms either as to “do obeisance” or to “bow.”
- ³⁵ When used as a form of address by a monk or teacher to laypeople or students, *shan zhishi* (*kalyānamitra* in Sanskrit) conveys a sense of mutual respect and spiritual fellowship. In other cases it is used to mean a teacher.
- ³⁶ Throughout the text Huineng refers to himself by his own name and to others by titles. I have used the first person pronoun for Huineng’s self-references, and have translated the titles used in reference to the other figures.
- ³⁷ Nanhai (“Southern Ocean”) was used as a general term for the coastal regions of Guangdong, including Shaozhou. The term was used by the Qin dynasty as the name of a *jun* and by the Sui as the name of a county (*xian*), the latter being limited (in Ming and Qing times) to the administrative center of Guangzhou.
- ³⁸ Here and below the word used is *ke*, “customer,” but I think it is better to interpret this as a general term for “person” used by Huineng in his position as a vendor.
- ³⁹ The term *jianxing* could also refer to seeing the buddha-nature, but it is *zixing*, “self-nature(s),” that has already been used above and is used next below. The term *benxing*,

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“fundamental nature,” is used frequently in this portion of the text, but *foxing* or “buddha-nature” does not occur. Suzuki Tetsuo has shown that in this text *jianxing* appears most often as a bound form, as a goal to be attained, the object of a verb, whereas in Shenhui’s writings the characters occur as the actual verb and object of clauses or sentences.

- ⁴⁰ The term used here is *lieliao*, a general term for those who hunt birds and animals; below the text uses *geliao*.
- ⁴¹ Here and below it is difficult to decide whether to render *zixing* and similar terms in singular or plural. The text does not really address the issue of whether one’s own fundamental mind is at some level identical to the fundamental minds of other sentient beings. In order to prevent the reader from inferring that “self-nature” refers to some kind of absolute, Brahma-like and transcendent, I have used the plural “selfnatures” whenever the context seemed to allow it.
- ⁴² Here the term used is *geliao*, the first character of which is orthographically very similar to the first character of *lieliao*. During the Tang dynasty the Glao (also Lau and Tlao) lived over a wide expanse of south and southwestern China. The term became a generic reference for non-Chinese people in general, with stereotypical implications of such people as being lazy, engaging in hunting (which was looked down upon by the agrarian Chinese), and exhibiting a barbarian lack of culture. For an informed explanation, see Richard von Glahn, *The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, and Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 20–24.
- ⁴³ The term *caochang* used here is defined by Morohashi as “*uma-goya*” or “stables,” using this as the *locus classicus*. However, since *cao* means barrel or tub and *chang* means a shed without walls, stables, or a workplace, judging from the subsequent context this refers to a shed in the monastery’s maintenance department, perhaps one in which grain was stored and/or threshed. Nowhere is Huineng associated with the care of horses.
- ⁴⁴ Huineng was engaged in separating rice grains (previously threshed from the stalks) from their hulls by means of a mortar and foot-driven pestle.
- ⁴⁵ Literally, to the “front of the hall” (*tangqian*). The *Platform Sutra* gives us a look at the very simplified layout of a Chinese monastery at the end of the eighth century, the only two locations given being the *houyuan*, “chapel in the rear” or, more likely, “behind the chapel,” used just above, and *tangqian*, “in front of the hall.”
- ⁴⁶ This scene occurs in all but the Dunhuang text, and it seems an editorial attempt to reduce the entire verse episode to a dramatization of Hongren’s preconceived selection of Huineng. We will see further evidence of this editorial position regarding Hongren below.

- ⁴⁷ The text seems to make Hongren's announcement a teaching device, an esoteric ruse, aimed at Huineng. (This is in accord with the addition of Hongren's visit to Huineng in the hulling room.) The latter must be inspired by this occasion to achieve seeing the buddha-nature, an experience he has not yet quite achieved. The material that follows this, given in parentheses and in italics, is a gloss in the text.
- ⁴⁸ Here the term of reference for Hongren changes from *zu*, "patriarch," to *heshang*, technically meaning "preceptor" or "reverend."
- ⁴⁹ The term here is *gongfeng*, which Philip Yampolsky, in his *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1967), translates as "painter." However, Charles O. Hucker, in *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 292a, defines the term (in the applicable period) as being used from the early 700s as an appendix to titles, meaning someone was qualified but waiting for a position, a fully-qualified supernumerary. Also see Morohashi, 1:757d, who defines *gongfeng xueshi* as a term used for scholars of the Hanlin Academy (with the connotation that one who could offer some literary or artistic expertise to the nation) up to 738. Perhaps the term remained as an honorific euphemism for "painter" even after 738, or the text is consciously reaching back to the period at the end of Hongren's life. Yampolsky, p. 129, note 27, indicates this individual's biography is unknown, so it would seem impossible to make a final judgment.
- ⁵⁰ Literally, *bianxiang*, "images of transformations." The possible association with the *bianwen* literature of Dunhuang is obvious.
- ⁵¹ The grammatical relationship of this last clause to the preceding is not clear, but given the context it must mean that the paintings were to be done in order to further disseminate the Dharma and to function as a focus of offerings from lay believers.
- ⁵² The compound *xiudao*, which is the basis of this statement, may be translated either as "cultivate enlightenment" or "cultivate the Way." (Here it does not refer to *bhāvanā-mārga*, the "path of purification.") Although this does not represent any particular problems in the present case, the ambiguity, or rather multivalence, of the word *dao* will cause some difficulties below.
- ⁵³ Below, this equation is used explicitly with reference to the mind and its myriad objects as the "one" and "all," and it seems best to interpret the line here in identical fashion. Incidentally, it is very difficult to know how strongly to interpret the syntax of statements such as this; another rendering might involve a sequence of conditional statements and conclusions in English, i.e., "if the myriad *dharmas* are without obstruction, then the one is true. . ." and so on.
- ⁵⁴ The term *biejia* was once a military term, but by the Tang referred to the chief officials of administrative aides of commanderies, etc.
- ⁵⁵ I am uncertain regarding the grammar underlying this translation—in particular the use here of the word *shi*, "to cause"—although the English cannot be far off. "Living bodhisattva" is actually *roushen pusa*, or "bodhisattva in a physical body."

Notes

- ⁵⁶ The Chinese text reads *ying wu so zhu er sheng qi xin*; the English given here is based on the understanding of this line in contemporary Chan literature and is substantially different from the intent of the original Sanskrit.
- ⁵⁷ The text has *hunian*, which could be translated “protect [your own] thought” or, even more simply, “be careful.”
- ⁵⁸ The Taishō text actually has *da sou ling*, but the second character is no doubt an error for *yu*.
- ⁵⁹ “Ampleness” renders *yuan*, which is the name of a *zhou* established during the Sui dynasty. The character refers to the ample length of garments. “Munificence” renders *meng*, which may also be a place name. This is the same sort of prophecy given by Hongren to Huineng above.
- ⁶⁰ The character *xian*, “county” occurs in the Daijōji, Kōshōji, and Deyi texts of the *Platform Sutra*. This section does not occur in the Dunhuang version.
- ⁶¹ Note that the term used for hunter here shares one character with the word usually rendered “barbarian,” above (see note 42).
- ⁶² This sentence could be rendered “the self-natures and emptiness are also like this” or “the self-natures are empty, just like this.” See the sentence two paragraphs below, however.
- ⁶³ I am repunctuating this.
- ⁶⁴ This is not a vague equation of the infinity of *dharmas* within the universe with every single *dharma* (a concept possible in the doctrines of the Huayan school thinkers), but shorthand for the equation of the one mind with all its concomitants.
- ⁶⁵ That is, “when the one mind is true, all its associated *dharmas* are true.”
- ⁶⁶ The term *qi* can often be rendered “generate,” but it also has a specific technical meaning in much early Chan literature. I am retaining the more specialized English equivalent because of its possible relevance.
- ⁶⁷ The term *chenlao*, literally “dusts-enerivating,” is a synonym of *fannao* (Sanskrit: *kleśa*), “afflictions,” which has the connotation of causing one to remain in the exhausting realm of *samsara*. The term “dust” is frequently used to mean sensory experience and/or the afflictions, as in the “mind-verses” attributed to Shenxiu and Huineng at the beginning of this text.
- ⁶⁸ The term *wo ci famen* refers to the teaching of Huineng and, presumably, the other patriarchs. When Huineng refers to himself it is usually by the pronoun *wu*.
- ⁶⁹ The Chinese is *xuedao zhe*, which could be rendered more simply as “trainees.” I have used the more literal translation because there are both lay and ordained practitioners in the audience.

- ⁷⁰ The meaning of *tongjian tongxing*, “uniform seeing and uniform practicing” (which occurs again just below in this paragraph) is not entirely clear. The term “see” (*jian*) is obviously of special importance in this text, given the emphasis on seeing the buddha-nature. However, this phrase also recalls the use of *jian* to render the Sanskrit *dṛṣṭi*, “views,” usually incorrect ones. The translation is tentative and has taken some liberties with the syntax in order to present the most reasonable interpretation.
- ⁷¹ The word used here is *dao*, “Way” or “enlightenment,” which should not be automatically identified with the Daoist concept. It is almost impossible to determine whether in the *Platform Sutra* and other Chan literature this term invoked for contemporary readers the technical Buddhist meaning of enlightenment or a Chan Buddhist sense of the Way.
- ⁷² The Chinese reads *bobo*, “wave-wave,” which I am interpreting as being in a wavelike fashion of agitation. The reference could be to being carried on through life passively, as if on the current of samsara.
- ⁷³ The character *zuo*, nominally meaning “left” (sinistral), can have the meanings of “assist” and of the Japanese “*motoru, yokoshima*.” I have taken the former.
- ⁷⁴ This is of course not the original meaning of the term *yixing sanmei*, which should be rendered “*samādhi* of the single characteristic.”
- ⁷⁵ The term is *xinxing*, which ultimately derives from the Sanskrit *cittasaṃskāra*, meaning roughly “mental functions.” But I wonder if the Chinese readers of this text would have recognized it as such.
- ⁷⁶ Translation tentative.
- ⁷⁷ Literally, teachings with characteristics, *xiangjiao*.
- ⁷⁸ The Chinese is *qi*, which means to match together like two halves of a tally.
- ⁷⁹ The text has “because true suchness possesses a nature,” *zhenru you xing*, but I think this is an orthographic error.
- ⁸⁰ At this point occurs a long interlineal gloss in one of the source texts that attributes Huineng’s vigorous statement of the ideas here to his fear that the prominence of the Northern school teachings would overwhelm and destroy Bodhidharma’s doctrine.
- ⁸¹ In the technical parlance of meditation, the usage here (*zhuoxin*, “to become attached to the mind”) means merely to concentrate on the mind. However, the text plays on the notion of false attachment.
- ⁸² The term is *renxing*, “person-nature,” which of course is very different from the English “human nature,” a tempting choice nevertheless for the translator.
- ⁸³ The text here and in the rest of the paragraph uses *que*, “on the contrary,” “contrary to expectations,” which I have rendered “only.”

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- ⁸⁴ I am repunctuating the text slightly from the Taishō.
- ⁸⁵ As above, this is *zhuo*, “attach,” in its usage as a technical term of meditation.
- ⁸⁶ This is the only occasion in the entire translation in which I have not taken this address as the beginning of a new paragraph.
- ⁸⁷ This is a paraphrase. Literally, the text reads, “All you good friends who have come, this affair must have arisen from out of your own affairs.” For the word “affair,” one source text has “nature.” The same and another source text have “nature(s)” for “affairs.” It is impossible to determine whether these alternate readings are correct, but the context indicates that the paraphrase is correct. (See a few sentences below in the text.)
- ⁸⁸ The text has *hugui*, “kneel barbarian-style,” which is to kneel with the body erect, rather than sitting on one’s heels.
- ⁸⁹ The Chinese is *jietuo zhijian*, or “perceptual understanding of emancipation.” *Zhijian* refers to all the mental activity involved in perceiving, knowing, and understanding.
- ⁹⁰ Literally, the “not-good” (*bushan*), or unwholesome mental states in general.
- ⁹¹ Literally, “do not have your minds function (*yongxin*) incorrectly.” This is an injunction as old as Buddhism—to examine things and arrive at one’s own understanding.
- ⁹² It is difficult to choose a single correct rendering of *zi gueiyi*. The text “floats” from context to context, and in some cases these characters could be interpreted as to “take refuge in one’s own [mind],” “take refuge in the self-[nature],” or “take refuge in the self-[buddha].” Since the three-character phrase seems to have an identity of its own, however, I have used the simple reflexive rendering, which is one of the phrase’s various connotations that would be overlooked through over-translating. Part of the problem, of course, is the ambiguity and multivalence of the word *zi*, “self” or “automatic,” etc.
- ⁹³ The term is *zhixin*, “to make the mind dedicated,” which here seems equivalent to the usage *jingxin*, “purify the mind.”
- ⁹⁴ Literally, “you can’t say ‘return.’” The point is that you cannot return to your own body, since you are already in it. Or, you cannot take refuge in your body because it is impermanent. The same usage appears again below.
- ⁹⁵ To be more precise, this should be “Tathāgata in three bodies” or “three-bodied Tathāgata,” but the ultimate meaning is unchanged.
- ⁹⁶ Here *xing* may be equivalent to the Sanskrit *saṃskāra*.
- ⁹⁷ That is, a single moment of unwholesome mentation.
- ⁹⁸ This phrase, *zixing zi jian*, could easily be rendered with the more mechanistic “for the self-nature to be seen of itself.”

- ⁹⁹ Taking the variant in the primary manuscript.
- ¹⁰⁰ That is, the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. Most of the versions used in the Taishō edition have “three evils” here, but it seems redundant to talk of the evils of body, speech, and mind all deriving from the mind.
- ¹⁰¹ See toward the end of Number One, just as Huineng is about to leave Hongren. It is unclear whether the character *huai*, meaning “destruction,” should be inferred here rather than the modern homophone meaning “sentiment.” The former might refer to the desolation of Baolinsi when Huineng arrived there, the latter to his support by local residents. The second character, *hui*, must however refer to the group chasing him.
- ¹⁰² Perhaps the “two hamlets” are Caohou and Caoqi?
- ¹⁰³ This could be read, “If you [realize] the function to be fundamentally birthless, then your dual cultivation is correct.”
- ¹⁰⁴ Here and in most cases the word “experienced” is not in the text but must be supplied for the translation.
- ¹⁰⁵ The Chinese is *yunxi*, “tendency of the *skandhas*.”
- ¹⁰⁶ Or the text could be referring to Huineng’s predecessors. The change of subject here seems abrupt and disjointed.
- ¹⁰⁷ The reference is to the *liniu* or long-haired yak of the mountains and high plateaus of Asia, whose tails were used to ornament banners. Morohashi says the character *li* is pronounced “*nyak*” in Tibetan.
- ¹⁰⁸ Or “will be without names,” i.e., without conceptual distinctions.
- ¹⁰⁹ One text has *ming*, “called,” rather than *ming*, “understand.”
- ¹¹⁰ The sentence would read better if the word *bodhi* were not there; it does not occur in this context elsewhere. These sections of the scripture, which are not in the pre-Song versions, do present some problems.
- ¹¹¹ This rendering is intentionally in the Chan style.
- ¹¹² The reason for this unusual order is implied in the gloss below.
- ¹¹³ This location must be just over the line from Shaozhou, rather than in Xinzhou.
- ¹¹⁴ Location unknown.
- ¹¹⁵ Given as Datong Heshang. Shenxiu is referred to as Datong below (the last line of Taishō 356b) as well, but I have used his name for simplicity.
- ¹¹⁶ The Chinese is *qing*, which means either emotions (in a Confucian sense), or the basic or commonsense intelligence of the mind (in a vernacular sense).

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- ¹¹⁷ Repunctuating the Taishō text slightly.
- ¹¹⁸ Or “the characteristics of the self-essence,” i.e., the illusion of selfhood.
- ¹¹⁹ Literally, defilement is “not attained,” *wude*, i.e., imperceivable or not apprehensible.
- ¹²⁰ The text, both here and immediately below, actually has “not moving,” *fei dong*, but I think the distinction is trivial.
- ¹²¹ The word is *qing*, which refers to the basic mental faculty of intelligence or “figuring.”
- ¹²² More technically, *nengsuo* refers to capability and actor.
- ¹²³ The character *tou* could be a suffix; the term *gutou* could refer to the skull, but the previous lines seem to refer to the body in toto. The term *gongke*, “merit-task,” is unusual.
- ¹²⁴ It is difficult to understand how the four characters *jiaming sanmei* fit in the context here.
- ¹²⁵ Or “seeing,” using the more common intransitive definition of *jian*.
- ¹²⁶ Here, as elsewhere, *guanzhao* could be translated as either “contemplates” or “illuminates.”
- ¹²⁷ The text has the deceptively simple *zixing zi wu*, or literally, “self-nature self-enlighten.”
- ¹²⁸ Could this be the mind that perceives and understands *dharmas*, or is this simply here in error?
- ¹²⁹ The term used here is unusual and perhaps a colloquialism, *shiliang*, “recognize-calculate.”
- ¹³⁰ The term given is *queding si chang*, “permanence of definite morbidity.”
- ¹³¹ The term used is *zhishi*, “friend,” probably short for *shan zhishi*, “spiritual compatriot.”
- ¹³² The reference is to miscanthus, used to thatch roofs.
- ¹³³ This phrase seems to have an extra character in it.
- ¹³⁴ Nakamura Hajime, *Bukkyōgo daijiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Shoseki, 1975), p. 1280d, cites this as the *locus classicus* for this term, *mana jiesha*.
- ¹³⁵ This term refers to all the *vijnānas*, except the eighth, as the manifest or nonsubconscious consciousness, if you will.
- ¹³⁶ This abstract statement seems out of place here, and as a result the reading is not certain.
- ¹³⁷ This is clearly redundant, as if the text is corrupt.
- ¹³⁸ This reading is doubtful.

- ¹³⁹ This could be, “[The master] also said,” as in the beginning of a new quotation.
- ¹⁴⁰ Here the text has *liangzi*, “two words,” which is clearly a textual error.
- ¹⁴¹ The term is *zuofa*, which I have interpreted as to “create *dharmas*.” It could also refer to one’s practice.
- ¹⁴² This line would be better as something like “motion is motionless,” but that is not what the text has.
- ¹⁴³ That is, *shi daoyi*, to lose the meaning or intention of the Way.
- ¹⁴⁴ Uncertain. The text has merely *zhongzhi*, “plant wisdom” or “types [of] wisdom.” It could be “wish to achieve [the various] types of wisdom.”
- ¹⁴⁵ I am allowing the translation to change tenses and varying the usage of “buddha” and “Buddha” in order to capture some of the varieties of meaning.
- ¹⁴⁶ Or “is to purify the nature and body.”
- ¹⁴⁷ The expression *wuwu* is difficult to translate. In Chan texts it generally refers to an enlightened sort of stupidity or stolidity. It is derived from a term meaning fixed or unmoving. In this case there is a definite parallel with the term *dengdeng*, “leaping,” i.e., “excited,” in the next line.
- ¹⁴⁸ Morohashi cites the *Song Gaoseng zhuan* biography of Huineng (T. 50: 755b20) as the *locus classicus* of the term *quxua*, the word describing the material from which the bowl was made; it means “of man,” and is no doubt a mistaken transcription. Presumably, by Song times transliterations from Sanskrit done in error were not noticed.
- ¹⁴⁹ The Kokuyaku text, p. 125n, reads *zhuan* as representing the same character with the bamboo radical, a Chu dialect word for divination with bamboo. If this reading is not accepted, the sentence would read, “Only we should name the baby that was born last night.”
- ¹⁵⁰ The Yifeng period only began in the eleventh month of this year, so this represents a minor flaw in dating.
- ¹⁵¹ The Chinese is *wuqi*, to “be enlightened and conform to.”
- ¹⁵² The Chinese is Zhiyue; the reconstruction is tentative, although the problem is moot if the individual is accepted as fictitious. The Kokuyaku text, p. 126n, points out that the *Quandeng lu*, *Wudeng huiyuan*, *Fozu tongji*, and *Quanfa zhengzong ji* all have this figure as Tripiṭaka Master Zhendi (Paramārtha).
- ¹⁵³ Not listed in Sir Monier-Williams’ *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899; new edition 1951), which does however have Ratnavat as the name of a mountain, p. 865a.
- ¹⁵⁴ This is the same line attributed to above; hence the Kokuyaku text annotator’s inference that the two are being confused.

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- ¹⁵⁵ Here and elsewhere there is the definite implication that this was a certain category of posthumous title, exceptional for including the character *da* or “great” and for being granted only in very special cases.
- ¹⁵⁶ I am uncertain how to read this name.
- ¹⁵⁷ The *Liu Hedong ji* note identifies dufu with the *jiedu fu*, or the office of the Military Governor. This is confirmed as general Tang usage by the *Kadokawa shin jigen*, p. 1022a.
- ¹⁵⁸ Or is it that “his words have maintained the world”?
- ¹⁵⁹ I am repunctuating, taking *he* as “*masa ni*” at the beginning of the phrase, as in the *Liu Hedong ji*. Liu Yuxi notes that the *locus classicus* for this phrase is the *Liji*, which reads “for man to live in serenity is the nature of heaven” (*ren sheng er jing, tian zhi xing ye*).
- ¹⁶⁰ The term is *xinju*, “faith-implements,” which the *Liu Hedong ji* notes identifies as the robe and bowl. Below (in the texts of both Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi) occurs the synonymous term *xinqi*.
- ¹⁶¹ Literally, *xingshan* is “goodness of the nature.”
- ¹⁶² I think what is meant is that Huineng’s posthumous title is especially honorific because it contains the character *da*, “great.”
- ¹⁶³ *Qi* is a flag bestowed on feudal lords, having dragon motifs and a bell at the top of the pole, while *dao* also refers to a country banner on a pole.
- ¹⁶⁴ The reading of this entire paragraph is tentative. Literally, the text says “easy stone at under the eave.”
- ¹⁶⁵ The term used here is *xinqi*, which also occurs in Liu Yuxi’s “Inscription on the Buddha’s Robe.” It could of course refer solely to the robe.
- ¹⁶⁶ Morohashi, 3:809a, defines *kongzhao* as “extremely bright” (*hanahada akiraka*).
- ¹⁶⁷ This sentence plays on the compound *ludai*, which is “to walk the earth and carry heaven,” *ludi daitian*, i.e., to live.
- ¹⁶⁸ This is tentative.
- ¹⁶⁹ The identification of Liu Zongyuan by his post in Liuzhou suggests that this sentence was written during 815–19. However, would Liu Yuxi not have referred to him as the “late” governor if the first epitaph were written in 818 and this one three years later?
- ¹⁷⁰ This is a difficult sentence.
- ¹⁷¹ If it were not for the particle *er* within this short sentence, I would take it to be a remark intended to conclude the previous thought: “I have no way of knowing [why the robe is not being transmitted].”

- ¹⁷² The text has reversed the numbers to read “forty-seven,” a figure that does not correspond with Huineng’s biography. (If he had been a monk for forty-seven years, his death would have occurred sometime during 719–20 rather than in 713.)
- ¹⁷³ The term *zhonggui* (*ren*) refers to someone permitted within the confines of the imperial palace, usually a eunuch. It is not listed as an official title in Hucker.
- ¹⁷⁴ One would think *baoqi* might refer to the bowl rather than the robe, but in Liu Zongyuan’s epitaph the robe and perhaps the bowl are referred to as *xinqi*.
- ¹⁷⁵ Here *zong* refers to Huineng’s school, but this does not imply an institutional rather than doctrinal identity.
- ¹⁷⁶ Literally, *jieqi nanguo* is “arisen southern country.” Grammatically, there is no reason not to interpret this as “to lift up the southern country,” in the sense of a snare being triggered and lifting up its quarry. I have used “triggered” in the translation to represent this action, even though the Chinese is less specific. Also, I have interpreted the pronoun *wo* as Huineng referring to himself, with this passage being quoted (or paraphrased) by Liu Yuxi.
- ¹⁷⁷ I cannot conceive of how this sentence could read without making it refer to the robe, which is indeed mentioned in the next line.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Fuguan*, “return-barrier,” according to Morohashi. I do not understand this line.
- ¹⁷⁹ This is a paraphrase. The text has “not to stop with the transmission of the robe.”
- ¹⁸⁰ A *diesuo* is a bound form as an iron chain, while the character *ye* or *yi* (“*ei*” in Japanese) is “to pull or drag along.” However, the *Kadokawa shin jigen* defines *suosuo* with the onomatopoeic words “*kasakasa*” and “*sarasara*,” which might imply a reading of “a sound of something scraping on iron.” The problem with the conventional reading is that in Chapter Ten of the sutra itself (and this section should be considered part of the text, in spite of its placement in the Appendix), there was a prediction of someone trying to steal the Sixth Patriarch’s head and the monks forestalling this by shielding his neck with iron. Hence the reference to a chain is inexplicable. Note that the prediction in Chapter Ten agrees with this in saying “five or six years after my death.”
- ¹⁸¹ The text has *xiaozhi*, “child of filiality” or someone in mourning for his parents. Presumably this was a disguise.
- ¹⁸² I wonder if the Chinese author of this portion of the text thought that *kaṣāya* referred to the bowl rather than the robe? Perhaps the words “robe” and “*kaṣāya*” were inadvertently inverted.
- ¹⁸³ The title *Zhengguo jiangjun* is listed in Hucker, but only for the Ming and Qing dynasties. I have used it anyway, with the addition of “Great” for *da*.
- ¹⁸⁴ This figure is as yet unidentified, in part because the name is cited in incomplete fashion. Yungong Conglong may be the individual’s religious name, but he was clearly an important political figure.

Glossary

Amitābha (“Immeasurable Light”): A Buddha of the Pure Land in the West, or Sukhāvātī. Amitābha frequently appears in a triad with Avalokiteśvara on his left and Mahāsthāmaprāpta on his right. *See also* Avalokiteśvara; Mahāsthāmaprāpta; Pure Land.

Avalokiteśvara: The name of a great bodhisattva who represents Amitābha’s great compassion. *See also* Amitābha.

bodhi: Enlightenment; a state in which one is awakened to the true nature of things.

bodhisattva: A person who has experienced the profound aspiration (*bodhicitta*) to achieve perfect enlightenment on behalf of all sentient beings. Śākyamuni is referred to as the Bodhisattva prior to his attainment of buddhahood, and his life forms the model emulated in Mahayana Buddhism.

buddha-nature: The basic enlightened nature of sentient beings, which is chronically obscured by their ignorance. The complete unfolding of the buddha-nature is enlightenment itself.

Chan Buddhism: A major school of East Asian Buddhism which takes its name from the practice of *dhyāna* (*channa* in Chinese transliteration), or meditation. Chan Buddhism (called Zen in Japan) evolved new approaches to religious practice based on a lineal succession of buddhas and patriarchs.

five perverse transgressions: 1) patricide, 2) matricide, 3) killing an arhat, 4) maliciously causing a buddha to bleed, and 5) causing disharmony in the Buddhist order.

four heavenly kings: The guardian kings of the four heavenly realms around Mount Sumeru, which sits at the center of the cosmos. They are: 1) Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the East, 2) Virūdhaka in the South, 3) Virūpākṣa in the West, and 4) Vaiśravaṇa in the North.

four major prohibitions: The four most grave offenses for Buddhist monks and nuns, which result in their expulsion from the order—1) killing, 2) stealing, 3) sexual activity, and 4) lying.

four wisdoms: The wisdom of the path; various wisdoms of the path; omniscience, or wisdom concerning the emptiness of everything; and universal wisdom.

Mahākāśyapa: The disciple whom, according to the Chan tradition, the Buddha designated as his successor. Also called Kāśyapa.

Glossary

Mahāsthāmaprāpta (“Possessed of Great Power”): A great bodhisattva who represents the wisdom of Amitābha. *See also* Amitābha.

Maitreya: The future buddha, currently still a bodhisattva.

prajñā: Nondiscriminating or transcendental wisdom, the understanding of things in their actual realities. One of the six perfect virtues (*pāramitās*) of a bodhisattva.

precepts: Vows concerning moral conduct taken by lay Buddhists and monastics. The five basic precepts are: 1) not to kill, 2) not to steal, 3) not to commit adultery, 4) not to lie, and 5) not to take intoxicants. In addition, there are two hundred and fifty monastic rules for monks and three hundred and forty-eight for nuns.

Pure Land: A blissful realm that came into being as a result of the fulfillment of the vows of Amitābha, in which believers in his salvific power will be reborn. Also called the Western Paradise. *See also* Amitābha.

Śākyamuni: The historical Buddha who lived in India in the fifth century B.C.E., and whose life and teachings form the basis of Buddhism.

samādhi: A mental state of concentration and focusing of thought on one object. Also called meditation. *Samādhi* is usually practiced repeatedly for a long period of time until the practitioner attains enlightenment.

Samantabhadra (“Universally Gracious”): A great bodhisattva who represents the ultimate principle, meditation, and the practice of all buddhas. The embodiment of adherence to vows of great compassion.

samsara: The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Śāriputra: One of the original disciples of the Buddha, called “the foremost of the wise.”

six consciousnesses: 1) Eye consciousness, 2) ear consciousness, 3) nose consciousness, 4) tongue consciousness, 5) body consciousness, and 6) the mental sense or intellect.

ten evils: 1) Killing, 2) stealing, 3) sexual misconduct, 4) lying, 5) uttering harsh words, 6) uttering words that cause division, 7) idle talk, 8) greed, 9) anger, and 10) holding false views.

ten types of good: Refraining from all of the ten evils. *See also* ten evils.

three bodies: 1) The Dharma body (*dharmakāya*), which is ultimate truth; 2) the body of enjoyment (*sambhogakāya*), a symbolic personification of the Dharma body that a buddha assumes both as a reward for eons of ascetic practice and in order to expound the Dharma to bodhisattvas and others; and 3) the transformation body (*nirmāṇakāya*), an “incarnate” or “historically manifested” body of a buddha such as Śākyamuni that appears in the world to guide sentient beings in a manner adapted to their situations and abilities.

three periods of time: Past, present, and future.

three poisons: Greed, hatred, and delusion, all of which hinder the pursuit of enlightenment.

three refuges: The Buddha, the Dharma (the Buddhist teachings), and the Sangha (the community of followers of the Buddha). So called because one becomes a Buddhist upon “taking refuge” in them. Also called “triple refuge,” “three treasures,” “triple treasure.”

unfortunate modes of existence: The three realms into which sentient beings transmigrate as retribution for evil deeds: 1) hell, 2) the realm of hungry ghosts, and 3) the realm of animals.

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BDK English Tripiṭaka (First Series)

Abbreviations

<i>Ch.</i> :	Chinese
<i>Skt.</i> :	Sanskrit
<i>Jp.</i> :	Japanese
<i>Eng.</i> :	Published title

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Ch. Youposaijie jing (優婆塞戒經)	1488
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