

Wherever You Stand 10: Who: Dajian Huineng Part 3

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“Wherever You Stand” is a phrase from Yoka daishi’s “Shodoka”,
and what we’re doing is looking into the history,
looking into what was taught
by the five preceding Chan Ancestors,
the five preceding
Huineng.

Now as a student said, there were Chinese Ancestors, there were Chinese Masters after Huineng, but the six that are referred to as the Founding Chan Ancestors were deemed so because there may be or there is a direct connection to Bodhidharma’s pointing, the direct pointing to mind.

We have Huineng, again traditionally referred to as the last of the Six Chan Ancestors, the sixth and last of the Chan ancestral founders.

Now, all surviving schools, of which there were five main ones, regarded Huineng as their Founder.

Previously on “Wherever You Stand”...

we left Huineng having received Transmission in the third watch of the night,
Transmission of the Teachings
and of the robe and bowl of Bodhidharma
from Hongren.

Now one story says that Hongren, who had told Huineng that he should leave because there were going to be monks that would be upset that he had received Transmission, rather than one more accomplished in the Classics and in studying, a more accomplished monk, Shenxiu.

So what we have here, in a way, is sort of a node in the Transmission where things may get, did get, and are a little shady. Some say that Huineng was the Sixth Chan Ancestor because one of his students, after his death, lobbied to have him declared so, but there may have been, and there were factions that regarded other people, including Shenxiu, as the Sixth Ancestor, that he should have been the Sixth Ancestor...

But it’s pretty well accepted that Huineng is the Sixth in the group.

So in the night, Hongren had come to visit Huineng and gave him the robe and bowl. The story is Hongren accompanied Huineng to a river and there’s a quote attributed to Huineng:

When one is infatuated, one’s Master ferries one across, but when one is enlightened, one should appropriately ferry myself across.

This is from Huineng, saying that yes, he can make it on his own from now on.

Hongren went back to the monastery, but he didn’t come to the Monk’s Hall for several days and monks

came to check, asking him if he were indisposed.

He said:

"I'm not indisposed, but the robe and bowl have gone to the south."

ZOOOOOOT!!!! What's this? [laughter]

So, several hundred monks, it is said in some stories, led by one Huiming, set out to snatch away the robe and bowl from Huineng. They were basically confusing, it would seem, these material objects as being the Transmission.

And remember, Hongren had warned Huineng that this would happen, there would be confusion around the robe and bowl.

So chased by several hundred monks led by Huiming, who had been according to some sources a military commander, in a chase that went on apparently for some two months. At one point Huineng threw the robe and bowl on a rock saying:

"This robe is a token of faith, can it be taken by force?"

And this is Huineng that's speaking in the "Platform sutra", apparently,

"Then I hid in the bushes. Huiming tried to pick up the robe and bowl but couldn't move them."

Huiming said:

"I came for the Dharma and not the robe."

Again there's confusion around this historically because there were two Huimings. Some say that Huiming and Huineng studied together under Hongren. Other sources say that this would be impossible because Huiming only received the precepts in 719. Huineng died in 713, so I think what we can take from this is, as with a lot of it, is the general intent, the general message which is that Bodhidharma's direct pointing to the human mind was being passed on, but there was confusion, people started to factionalize, to form alliances and belief systems around different people.

So back to the story, Huiming after his two months of chasing Huineng, had caught up with him. Huineng sat cross-legged on a rock, and said to Huiming who had asked for the Dharma:

"Since you come for the Dharma, you should first banish all feelings and should not give rise to a single thought."

And I refer you to the verse which was read in the last Dharma Talk, from the "Shodoka":

*The radical Direct Teaching is beyond sentiment;
there is no room for doubt or hesitation.*

And an aside to modern day students:
in daisan and practice interviews,

sit quietly in the posture of practice.

Drop your prepared responses
and listen to the instruction that is given.

This doesn't mean that you cannot say anything,
this does mean that when you present your little prepared speech
about how wonderful all of this is,
how much you enjoy it,
how indispensable it is to your current appreciation of your life
when it's pointed out to you that that's thought,
those are thoughts,
they're prepared
that you can look and recognize the truth of that.

Use that moment of recognition to
feel the breath
to sit up straight,
to practise that moment of clear seeing
because remember:
this is too intimate to be personal.

The Teacher or the practice advisor is not criticizing you,
they are pointing out to you that self-image,
that contraction into a sense of self
that has beliefs about how it is
and how the world is
has been operating for a little while,
preparing that speech,
because we all know, we've all experienced it,
we don't want to be seen for who we really are,
which a lot of the time is just an idiot...[O-sensei and students laugh]
when we're acting out our thoughts and feelings,
it can be a little embarrassing
but that too is just a pattern,
it's something bodymind has learned to do.

So when you notice it,
feel the breath,
sit up straight,
practise the whole bodymind
wrapped around the breath
in this whole moment.

So back to Huineng and Huiming on the rock...

So the two of them sat for a while, after Huiming had asked Huineng for the Dharma.

Then Huineng said:

“Do not think of either good or evil. At the very moment there is no thought in your mind. What is the Venerable Huiming’s fundamental face?”

Here it comes:

Huiming was enlightened. Then Huiming wanted to talk about it and said—

(now I don’t know who is sitting there, taking all of this down, I think it was storytelling again, people saying “well I heard that...”)

but the essence is quite true and
it is the essence that is important.

Huiming wanted to talk about what he’d understood:

“Is there any other hidden meaning besides the esoteric expressing and Teaching handed down by the Ancestors?”

Huineng said:

“What I’ve said is not esoteric if you look inward.
What you call ‘esoteric’ or ‘mysterious’ is within you,
is your own experience.”

Huiming said:

“I hadn’t realized my own nature until you taught me.
Now you’ve taught me
I’m like a drinker of water
who alone knows
whether
it is hot or cold.”

Huiming went back down the mountain and told the others who had been pursuing Huineng: “Hey, guys, we’re on the wrong track” and they took off leaving Huineng alone.

In the “Denkoroku” Keizan zenji’s discourses, Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi have written that:

Huiming approached and tried to grab up the robe and bowl but, although he strained with all his might, he was unable to lift them. Huiming began to tremble and said, “I have come for the Dharma, not a robe.”

Huineng came out and sat down on the stone.

Huiming bowed and said, “Please, reveal the essential Dharma.”

Huineng said, “Without thinking of good or bad, what is your Original Face?”

*Hearing this, Huiming had great awakening. He asked, “Is there any further mystery you have to tell me?”
Huineng said, “What I have to tell you is no mystery. Turning the movement of thought, the mystery is within this.”*

Huiming said, "Although I studied with Hongren at Huangmei, I never truly knew my own Face. Now, receiving your Teaching I feel like someone who drinks water and knows first hand whether it is cool or warm. You are my Teacher."

Huineng said, "So it is, but Hongren is the Teacher of us both."

Huiming bowed and thanked him and set off. In later years he became an abbot and changed his name to Daoming, not using "Hui" out of respect for Huineng.

And there's another story about Huineng which you've heard, it is that Huineng went down to Faxing monastery where there was a master expounding the "Mahaparinirvana sutra" and when Huineng arrived there were two monks arguing over a banner streaming in the wind. There was a dispute. One monk said and insisted that the wind was moving, the other insisted that the banner was moving.

Huineng said: "Neither the wind nor the banner moves. The minds of the Venerables move."

And this impressed the Master, Dharma Master Yinzong who said:
"I've heard of you, do you not have the Dharma and the robe of Hongren?"

Huineng said: "I dare not (claim to be)" and in Chinese this was a very polite way of saying "Yes, I am".

Now the very matter of the robe and bowl, again is up for some dispute. Hongren had said to Huineng that the robe of Transmission "has become something to dispute over. Just let it stop with you and don't pass it on."

Dharma Master Yinzong was impressed and asked Huineng to expound on how Hongren taught, and Huineng said: "Well really there was no teaching, the Ancestor, the Master taught looking into self-nature. He didn't postulate meditation."

Now I take that to mean the focussing on and creating of states,
and so Huineng is saying that Hongren did not teach focussing and the creation of states,
and he did not teach deliverance,
which, again I take to mean some sort of merit that would be gained,
assuring that if you accumulated enough merit—

(when I hear 'merit' it makes me think of hell money of which there was a tradition of offering it to dead people, putting it in their coffin by family and friends so that they could buy their way out of hell when they got there—)

so apparently Huineng is saying that he didn't get taught focussing,
he didn't get taught the creation of states
and he did not get taught about that desolate marketplace
of gaining merit through doing things that other people should be doing for themselves,
such as sitting zazen.

Yinzong said, "well why not? Why were meditation and deliverance not taught?"

"Well," Huineng said, "that's a dual Dharma, that's two things that seem to be in opposition. Buddhadharma

is not dual, it's all at once in this moment."

Sound familiar? This moment is the only thing that is going on, wherever you stand...

Now we'll just fast forward a few years and we have the "Shodoka" which was written around 713, shortly after Huineng had died and Yoka daishi, who was one of the disciples of Huineng, wrote.

*In my youth I collected knowledge,
reading the Discourses and commentaries.*

*I fell into name and form, which makes as much sense
as trying to count the sands on the ocean floor.*

*The Buddha was speaking about me when he said,
"What gain is there in counting another's treasure?"*

*I realized how for many years I had gone astray
and wandered lost.*

*Due to crooked inclinations and wrong views
the Thus Come's Direct Perfection is misunderstood.*

*Men of the Narrow Path practise without compassion,
worldly scholars have knowledge but no wisdom.
Foolish, with wrong interpretations,
they miss the pointing finger of the empty hand.*

Now next time we'll look into Huineng as Abbot of Baolin monastery, with according to some 26 disciples including Yoka daishi, and we'll meet very briefly someone called Faru who some say was up for being the Seventh Ancestor. He had been a student of Shenxiu and Faru is, in some texts, given credit for developing and studying and presenting the concept of Lineage.

Huineng, some say, rose to prominence after his death through an extensive campaign by one of his students.

And then there's that mummy....

So in this moment
wherever you
sit
stand
walk
lie down
buy gas
shovel snow

wherever your little feet take you
you have an opportunity

to practise this moment
the only thing going on
by feeling the whole bodymind
wrapped around the breath.

Any dharma that's noticed is a moment to practise,
to wake up to the reality
of this moment.

How cool is that?

Thank you for listening.