

# Wherever You Stand 6: Who: Dayi Daoxin

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Previously on “Wherever You Stand”...

We’ve looked at Bodhidharma,  
who came from the West to China and sat,  
gave transmission to  
Huike,  
who practised and studied and sat,  
who gave transmission to  
Jianzhi Sengcan,  
who sat,  
who apparently died sitting.

Now, I know a lot of us may have thought from time to time  
that we were going to die if that gong didn’t sound,  
but that’s not what I’m talking about,  
I’m talking about actually sitting down  
and dying in that posture,  
under a tree, it is said,  
during a Dharma Assembly.

Before that happened, he gave transmission to Dayi Daoxin,  
the Fourth Chan Ancestor in our Lineage.

The earliest mention of Daoxin was in “Further Biographies of Eminent Monks”,  
the accuracy of historical records is somewhat questionable,  
but we do know that he was a Dharma heir of Jianzhi Sengcan.

His family name was Zima or Ssu-ma. Anzan Hoshin’s translation of the Denkoroku Case 32 calls it Zima.

He was born in or close to Huai-ning, north of the Yellow River and at seven, he started studying Buddhism. It is said that his teacher at the time, no name was given, was a man of immoral or impure conduct, whatever that might mean, but Daoxin maintained his understanding of Buddhist morality on his own, without the knowledge of his teacher for five or six years. So obviously he managed to settle for himself, even at that tender age, questions that come up as to how people are and what he should do.

Daoxin met Sengcan when he was fourteen.

One story:

Daoxin said: “I asked the Master’s compassion, instruct me on how to achieve release.”

Sengcan said: “There is someone who constrains or binds you?”

Daoxin: “No.”

Sengcan: "Why seek release when there is no one constraining you?"

In the Denkoroku translation by Anzan Hoshin roshi, the koan is written thus:

*The Thirty-First Ancestor was Zen Master Dayi. He bows and says to Great Master Sengcan, "Please, Master, out of your great compassion, teach me how to become liberated."*

*Sengcan asks, "Who put you into bondage?"*

*Daoxin answers, "No one has bound me."*

*The Ancestor says, "Then what liberation are you looking for?"*

*Hearing these words, Daoxin greatly awakened.*

So at a very simple level, we can look and see how there is not one word that is going to describe one thing for everybody at all times, but the stories do have a similarity.

Now, it's said that Dayi studied and attended to Sengcan for nine years. Then, when Sengcan went to Mount Luofu, he told Daoxin not to follow him, saying: "The Dharma has been transmitted from Bodhidharma to Huike, to me. I am going south. You stay here and protect the Dharma."

For ten years he studied with Zhikai at Great Woods Temple on Mount Lu, and he studied the Three Treatises School.

"All phenomena, including ideas and thoughts are fundamentally empty of a permanent, static existence."

This is also described as sunyata.

Now the Three Treatises School is coming from the Madhyamaka Doctrine, first transmitted to China in the 5th century by a monk named Kumarajiva who was born in India 334 C.E., died in 413 C.E. Now Kumarajiva had quite an impact on the development of the understanding of practice, and the understanding of the literature of practice because he was a translator and in his translation, he made his style very clear and overcame the concept of "matching style" which had been what was accepted. This means comparing what was said by the Buddhist Teachers to similar things in Confucian or Daoist terms to try and convey the meaning.

You can see how this could be very confusing to people wanting to study the Buddhist Teachings, so to have clarity of expression freed from previous concepts was quite useful.

Kumarajiva, amongst other important texts,  
translated  
the Diamond sutra,  
the Lotus sutra,  
the Vimalakirtinirdesha sutra,  
the Mulamadyamikakarika and  
the Mahaprajnaparamita sutra.

There was a saying of Kumarajiva's which has come down to us:

"Where there is form, already there is emptiness.  
Where there is emptiness, already there is form."

Daoxin was studying these texts, studying this approach with Zhikai at Great Woods Temple so he was quite well educated. It is said he received ordination as a monk in 607 C.E.

In 617, Daoxin and some of his disciples traveled to a place that is called Ji'an City today and entered the town which was besieged by bandits. He is said to have taught the residents the Mahaprajnaparamity sutra, or "Discourse on the Heart of Vast and Perfect Knowing", and the bandits when hearing this abandoned their siege.

Why?

Well we don't really know why they did that.

Was the chanting that bad? [laughter]

I know some mornings...

no we won't go there. [more laughter]

And in the Denkoroku as translated by the Roshi, there is:

*A large gang of bandits had been holding the city under siege for seventy days and terrorized the people. Daoxin felt pity for them and so he taught them to chant the "Great Transcendent Wisdom". When the bandits were scouting over the wall of the city, the people appeared to them to be like war-gods. They said to each other that there was something very strange about the people of this city and that perhaps they would be better off to just leave them alone. They gradually withdrew.*

Now what this brings to mind is, oh, bagpipes and how these were used to scare the enemy and so on, loud noises... But that's neither here nor there because we don't know what was actually said.

Now, Dayi Daoxin eventually settled at East Mountain Temple and he taught Chan, or Zen for 30 years, apparently attracting lots of practitioners. Some records say there were over 500 lay persons and monks.

In 643, the Emperor Tai Zong visited Daoxin,

invited Daoxin to the capital but

Daoxin refused.

He was asked to come to the capital three times

but refused.

The last time, the emperor instructed his emissary to bring back Daoxin or his head and

the emissary told this to Daoxin,

who stuck his head forward,

bared his neck and

indicated something like:

"Bring it!"

The emissary was so shocked he reported this to the emperor who was impressed and honoured Daoxin as an exemplary Buddhist monk, thus the phrase: "Dare to be a monk like me". [O-sensei laughs quietly]

In August 651, Daoxin ordered his students to build a stupa because he was going to die, and he was asked: "Who is your heir?"

In some records it's said that he replied by saying: "I've given many transmissions during my life," and he died.

Posthumously the emperor honoured him with the name Dayi "Great Healer", or as the Roshi says in the Denkoroku, "Great Healing Zen Master Dayi Daoxin".

Daoxin's Teachings and those of his successor Hongren are known as the East Mountain Teachings, the precursor to the flowering of Chan on a national scale some 75 years later at the beginning of the 8th century.

Daoxin was the first Chan Master to settle permanently for an extended period of time in one place.

As you will remember;

Bodhidharma, Huike, Sengcan wandered from place to place, but

Daoxin settled and established a monastic community,

which seems to have worked so well that it led

to many monastic Chan communities across China.

Now at this stage, with people established in community, alms begging wasn't viable as a way to keep people nourished whilst on the zafu, so all the monks had to work, do administration and practise and study. So 1400 years ago, Daoxin started what we're doing right now.

Practice can't, shouldn't be, won't be confined to practice halls.

It cannot be because the bodymind that's sitting on that zafu is the same bodymind

that walks out of the Hatto or

out of the Zendo,

that shovels snow,

that cooks,

that eats,

that goes to the toilet,

that feeds the cat.

It's the same bodymind

so practice is available as long as that bodymind is breathing in and out.

It's not something that you put on like a costume when you enter into the Dharma Halls.

So listen up and learn.

You can practise anywhere

and you can recognize

through your own experience of what happens

when you notice anything

any moment of experiencing

and you feel the breath and

feel the whole bodymind

how everything loosens up,  
how there is more ease for you  
no matter what's going on.

You can recognize the real  
necessity of practice  
in all aspects of one's life,  
and that of course is the central theme of  
Chan Zen Teachings.

The record of Daoxin's Teaching "Five Gates of Daoxin's Teachings", didn't appear until the second decade of the 8th century, after his student's record, after Hongren's record appeared, so the historical accuracy of Daoxin's Teachings, like many of the events and texts that we've been talking about, may not be, well let's say the historical accuracy may be in doubt.

But scholars agree that he taught what was called and is still called in some places, "meditation", what we call "practice", what we call "sitting". He died sitting at ease.

It is also said that Daoxin never lay down to sleep for 60 years.

One Zen scholar says the expression "samadhi of one's practice" was the heart of Dayi Daoxin's practice.

The Five Gates quotes him as saying: "Buddha is the mind, outside of the mind there is no Buddha."

So if we say "Buddha is the bodymind, outside of the bodymind there is no Buddha" we have another means of expressing that.

Daoxin is quoted in a later chronicle, some 150 years after he died, as saying to students: "Sit earnestly in meditation, sitting basic to all else. Don't read the sutras. Discuss with no one."

On his death bed, he is said to have said: "All of the myriad dharmas of the world are to be dropped away. Each of you, protect this understanding and carry it into the future."

And then he died.

From the "Shodoka: Song of Freedom":

*Completely realizing  
the Realm of Reality to be objectless,*

*one finds oneself the source of all things  
and one's own nature to be Awake Awareness.*

*The five aggregates arise and decay like  
aimless clouds,  
the three distorted orientations come and go  
like bubbles on water.*

*Realizing Suchness, neither self nor things exist;*

*in one moment cause and effect are liberated.*

This was written some hundred plus years later by Yoka daishi.

So I think you can see the thread of understanding of what Buddhism was actually teaching, outside of the sutras, the importance of sitting, sitting, sitting, whether walking, standing, or lying down, sitting, practising the whole bodymind in this whole moment.

Thank you for listening.