

Bodhidharma (around 440? - 528?)

A collection of stories from Chinese literature

Preface:

Bodhidharma was an Indian Buddhist monk who came to China (East land) from India (West land) in the first quarter of the sixth century. He brought Mahayana Buddhism to China. It is said that he was born as the third prince of a kingdom of south India. Coming to China, he stayed nine years at the Shao-lin temple (少林寺), located east of Luo-yang of He-nan Province (洛陽, 河南省). Bodhidharma is well known in connection to a story expressed by the phrase “Wall Contemplation Nine Years (面壁九年)”. From the philosophy and practice represented by this phrase, the Chinese Zen Buddhism originated and developed in ensuing generations. Bodhidharma is respected as the First Zu (初祖 First patriarch). This new movement (of Zen Buddhism) brought about revolutionary change and enlightenment in the culture and lives of not only practitioners but also ordinary people in East Asia, including China, Japan, Korea and other countries.

In our contemporary world, the influence of Zen Buddhism is not waning, but rather it is vigorously expanding worldwide, and importance is increasing even more. With this increasing importance, clarity is needed in regard to the philosophy and practice of Mahayan Buddhism and its significance in the modern world. A study of the historical records of China would serve to document and elucidate the times and events crucial to the understanding this Buddhism.

According to Chinese records, Bodhidharma was born in a kingdom of South India. Documents published just after Tang dynasty (ending in 907) describe that the name of the Kingdom is expressed with two Chinese characters ‘香至’. There are four states which are called as South India. No historical record is found in which state the 香至 is located. At this time when interest in Zen Buddhism is increasing throughout the world, the birthplace of this pivotal master would be a great concern. Not only scholars but also those interested in Buddhism would welcome this missing piece of information where in India is the Kingdom 香至.

The Chinese name 香至 means “fragrance extreme”. At the time of Tang dynasty, it is likely that 香至 is pronounced as *Kang-zhi*. In 2007 by examining various documents, the author happened to come across the identification of 香至 to be Kanchipuram, an old capital town in the state Tamil-Nadu. Further investigation revealed that *Kanchi* means ‘a radiant jewel’ or ‘a luxury belt with jewels’, and *puram* means a town or a state in the sense of earlier times. Thus, it is understood that the ‘香至-Kingdom’ corresponds to the old capital ‘Kanchipuram’, located at a distance about eighty kilometers from the city Chennai in South India. It was a capital of Pallava Dynasty at the time when Bodhidharma was living. Currently, it is a sacred town of Hinduism. Historical remains related to Buddhism found in that region are very limited in number. In the Chennai Museum, however, one can see an image of standing Buddha (more than 2m height) excavated in a Hindu temple of Kanchipuram in the early times of 20th century. This image of dignity is reminiscent of the glorious times when

Buddhism had flourished in this region where it was discovered.

The Institute of Asian Studies in Chennai possesses a land of about two acres in Kanchipuram and designates its use to commemorate Bodhidharma. The future plan is to construct there a monument and sites for other institutions including Vihara. This article is in part a support and an explanation for the underlying meaning of this endeavor. This article is written by collecting stories of Bodhidharma and Chinese Zen masters from Chinese historical documents, which are listed at the end of this article. Most of them were published more than a thousand years ago. Note that the time of Bodhidharma was about a thousand and five hundred years ago.

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Part I.

Story of Bodhidharma

1. Times before leaving India

Bodhidharma was born as the third son of a South Indian King according to Chinese historical documents. It is speculated that the kingdom was Pallava, its capital city being Kanchipuram near Chennai. He was named Bodhitara and his surname was Kshatriya (the class of kings and warriors). [1]

His dharma teacher was *Prajnatarā* who was a Brahman of east India (the priestly class) and is presumed to be a Patriarch of a lineage descended from Maha-Kassapa. (who had received the Dharma from Shakyamuni Buddha). *Prajnatarā* ventured to the South India as an itinerant and arrived at Kanchipuram. The king there invited him to a banquet where he was offered a jewel (stone).

The King had three sons. The reverend Monk asked a question to the three sons: "This jewel is shining brightly. I wonder whether there is anything which is comparable to this." Answers of *two elder sons* were as follows: "This jewel is the most precious one among the seven treasures, and there is no jewel superior to it. There is no person who deserves to receive this besides the priest of high virtue like you."

Bodhitara, the third son, replied as follows: "This is a treasure of a secular society, lacking the merit to be regarded as the best. Among treasures, the dharma treasure is the best. Shining of the jewel lacks the merit to be regarded as the best. Among all kinds of shining, wisdom is the brightest of all. Among all kinds of shining, the mind shining is the best. The shine of the jewel is not of itself. The jewel is unable to shine by itself. The brightness of wisdom shines by itself and throws light on what is the secular shining. Owing to this observation, the secular treasure is not a treasure by itself."

Venerable *Prajnatarā* was impressed by the response of the young prince, and recognized immediately that *Bodhitara* was a person of great dharma talent. After the death of the King (his father), *Bodhitara* renounced the secular life. He received the dharma of *Prajnatarā*, and was given the dharma name, *Bodhidharma*. He

traveled throughout the many regions of India and turned the wheel of dharma for it's people. [10]

An episode of Prajnatarā:

Once, at a banquet invited by the king, most guests except Venerable Prajnatarā were turning sutras and reading the scriptural sutras. Then, *King* asked him: “Why you do not turn the sutra?” *Ven.Prajnatarā:* “At breathing out, this Poor Monk does not follow any connection, nor stays in the mundane world at breathing in. I am always turning the sutra of *thusness*, millions of times, not only once or twice.” [8],[9]

At earlier times, there were many Indian monks who visited China. In particular, two monks (*Buddhabhadra* first and *Gunabhadra* later) are to be mentioned. The two monks visited China at different times (during 400 – 460) independently without overlapping with different courses of journey. The former took a northern mountain-route and the latter a southern sea-route. They brought sutras such as Dharmatarā dyana sutra (describing the orthodox dyana (Zen)) and a sutra of Mahayana (Lankavatara sutra) respectively. Both of them assisted in translations of many scriptures into Chinese including the two mentioned previously. In regard to the case of Buddhabhadra, a record says that many learned Chinese monks living in Chang-an (west capital of Wei, northern China) did not understand the dharma he tried to expound. The philosophy was characterized as “all-at-once” dharma (opposed to that of step-by-step). During his stay there, he tried to keep the authentic buddhist style of India. His style was not trusted and he was hated. For that, he was obliged to escape together with some of Chinese monks to a temple in the south: Dong-lin at Lu-shan along the river Yang-zi-jiang.

A dharma teacher Venerable Hui-yuan at the temple asked him the following question. “Reverend monk, what did you expound there and why you were hated ?” The Indian monk did not say any word. But instead, he stretched his arm. He then made a fist by closing five fingers of his hand quickly and subsequently opened them exposing his palm without delay, and said: “*Is this quick ?*” Hui-yuan: “*Very quick.*” Indian monk: “This is not so quick. But, consider two of *Klesah* (defilement) and *Buddhahood* (enlightenment). The inter-relation of the two are exceedingly quick.”

It can be said that a shadow arises from the form of a body. Venerable Hui-yuan now realized that searching for Buddhahood by eliminating defilements is like searching for a shadow by getting rid of a body. He understood that Buddhahood is neither different from Klesah nor identical to it. Thus, he achieved a deep insight into the dharma. [7]

The Indian monk tried to explain the difference between the concepts of *all-at-once* and *step-by-step*. These are expressed by Chinese words *Dun* (immediate) and *Jian* (gradual) respectively. In the Lankavatara-sutra (Chap.2), we find an interpretation of their difference. The *immediate generation* is like the relation between an object and its image in a mirror,

while the gradual generation is like the sea waves generated by strong winds over the sea surface.

Hui-yuan appreciated this deeply, and later on he wrote an introduction to the translated sutra of Dharmatara-dyana by explaining what the Indian dyana is. Other sutras (both Theravada and Mahayana) were translated by the collaboration of Indian monks and Chinese monks. The Indian monk died after the translations, and his stupa was built there at Lu-shan.

Bodhidharma was aware that there were (almost) none in China who had faith in the Indian monks expounding the Mahayana philosophy.

After receiving the transmission of Dharma from Prajnatarā, Bodhidharma traveled throughout India as an itinerant monk and turned Dharma-Wheel for the people everywhere that he visited. Thus he spent about sixty years (after the parinivāna of his teacher in 457). Now, he realized that the time matured for China (the East-land) to receive Mahayana Buddhism.

First, he bade farewell at the stupa of Ven. Prajnatarā. Then he met the King and told him of his wish to go to China. The King tried to persuade him to stay in his home land, but Bodhidharma was determined to go. There was no longer anything for the King to do but to prepare a large boat with necessary items for a safe voyage. His hope was for the future return of Bodhidharma (preferably with the same boat). On the day of departure, the King accompanied Bodhidharma up to the harbor, together with the families of his relatives and vassals. [8]

At this moment, there were none who were not in tears. [11]

2. Arrival at China

After three years of voyage, Bodhidharma arrived at last at Guang-zhou of south China. There, the local governor Xiao-ang came to greet him. It was September of Pu-ton year 1st (520). This was informed to Emperor Wu (Wu-Di) of Liang dynasty. He invited Bodhidharma to the capital Jian-kang (now Nan-jing). It might take about a month for Bodhidharma to come to the capital. He arrived at Jian-kang in October. The Emperor came to greet him, with sitting on a decorated vehicle driven by men. At that time, Wu-Di (Emperor) invited him to the Court and later hosted a ceremonial dinner.

[The text [8] describes that Bodhidharma arrived at Guang-zhou in 527. However, the local governor Xiao-ang stayed there only till 521. The text [11] corrected it to 520.]

Wu-Di asked Bodhidharma: “Venerable, what sutras have you brought from the West-land (India).”

Bodhidharma replied: “I have brought not a word of teaching.”

Wu-Di told next: “I have constructed temples, transcribed a number of sutras, and ordained Buddhist monks. What karmic merit is promised?”

Bodhidharma: “No merit (Wu gong du)”

Wu-Di: “Why do you say no merit.”

Bodhidharma: “These are the virtues fabricated in the mundane world. (All that are fabricated in this world will be in ruins in due time.) Just as a shadow follows an object, there is nothing of reality, although it is said to exist.

Therefore, there is no merit.” ([6], [7], [8])

Wu-Di asked another question: “What is the first principle of noble truth?”

Bodhidharma : “Noble-less like an empty space (Kuo ran wu sheng).”

Wu-Di asked: “Who is standing before me?”

Bodhidharma : “Do not know (u-shi).”

The emperor Wu-Di was not aware of what Bodhidharma meant. The Da-shi (Great teacher) realized that there is no merit of opportunity to stay at the emperor’s palace. He then left the kingdom of Liang, and crossed the Yang-zi-jiang river to travel north. A learned monk informed Wu-Di that the master who recently departed was actually a bodhisattva, transmitting the seal of Buddha Mind (also called Mind seal, or Dharma seal).

3. Times at Shao-Lin

In a month or so, Bodhidharma arrived at Luo-yang, the east capital of Wei (northern China). According to the text [2], he visited the *Yong-ning* monastery (a center of translation of sutras). Seeing the glorious monastery and the golden disks of the pagoda reflecting in the sun, he was amazed and very impressed, and said: “I have passed through numerous countries. There is virtually no country I have not visited. There is nothing comparable to the beauty of this monastery in our world. Even the Buddha realm (India) lacks this.” He stayed there for a number of days, while chanting “*Nham*” and placing his palms together (Gassho, *he-zhan*).[17]

Later, he moved to the *Shao-lin* monastery at *Song-shan* located at south-east of Luo-yang, and stayed there for a long time. People called him a *Bi-Guan* [18] Brahman, because he spent all day long sitting in meditation, facing a wall. Of scholars who were compliant and understood the dhyana-sitting practice, there were none who did not come to have faith in him, but those who preserved their own views came to rebuke him for the meditation-only practice (Bi-Guan sitting) of Bodhidharma. ([10] ; [1])

In *Luo-yang*, there was a scholar named *Shen-guang* (about the age of 40) who was learned in all the teachings of *Con-zi*, *Lao-zi* and *Zhang-zi*. Hearing that a monk of high virtue (*Da-shi*) from India was staying at *Shao-lin* temple, *Shen-guang* came to pay homage to the monk in order to master the depth of the teachings of *Shakyamuni*. He requested reverently to hear the Dharma from *Da-shi*. However, whenever he tried to ask a question morning and evening, he received only silence.

One day as snow was falling in December, Shen-guang stood up overnight in the garden in front of the room of Da-shi. The snow lay knee-deep. At daybreak, *Da-shi* opened his mouth at last: “Why you have been standing in the snow?” *Shen-guang* replied near tears: “Da-shi, please open the Dharma gate with great mercy and compassion, and provide relief for all sentient beings widely.”

Da-shi thought that it was not possible to attain the Buddhas’ supreme enlightenment with a petty frame of mind, and that one must have indomitable wish for the Dharma by practicing unthinkable difficulties with being patient of the

most intense suffering. Admitting the firm sincerity of Shen-guang, Da-shi accepted him as a disciple and gave him the dharma name *Hui-ke* (Wisdom will do). Two disciples (*Hui-ke* and *Dao-yu*) and others demonstrated superior aspiration of high-mindedness and considered this encounter as a great fortune. They served Da-shi for several years, requesting reverently to hear the Dharma. Da-shi was moved by the purity of their zeal and opened the Dharma gate (the true path) for them to enter. ([1], [8])

Hui-ke asked: “Da-shi. Would you please tell me what is the mind seal of Buddhas.”

Da-shi: “The mind seal of Buddhas is not such one as obtained from someone else.”

Hui-ke asked further: “My mind is not yet peaceful. Da-shi. Have mercy to make my mind quiet (to make me *An-Xin*).

Da-shi ordered: “Present me your mind (*Xin*). I will make it quiet (*An-Xin*).

Hui-ke: “I’ve searched for my mind, but unable to capture it.”

Da-shi delivered judgment: “Quieting of mind is over for you.” [1]

Episode of cutting-arm and staying-in-the-snow:

According to the text [3], Shen-guang did not have an arm because it had been cut off by a bandit. But later texts describe the story of cutting off an arm by himself. Asked whether the body and life can be sacrificed for the sake of dharma, *Hui-ke* cut off his left arm and quested for the dharma [5]. The text [6] cites the following phrase of *Hui-ke* (recorded by his disciple):

”When I began practicing to attain the bodhi here, I cut off one of my arms and stood in the snow from first-night (about eight pm) to third-night (mid night), and did not recognize that snow became over my knee. Thus, I quested for the supreme path.”

In the text [5], it is written that Shen-guang cut off his *left* arm in order to show his sincerity for seeking the supreme dharma, on responding to the question of the great master, “Can you give your life for the dharma?” He might be standing up in the snow with a single arm. At the time when the text [3] was published (a hundred years after the parinirvana of Bodhidharma), it is presumed that the above story of the cutting-arm for the dharma was not well-known. The episodes of cutting-arm and staying-in-the-snow became to be written from the texts [5] and [6].

The Bodhidharma Anthology [1]:

The text [1] is held to contain materials about Bodhidharma that are authentic. This was discovered in the early part of the twentieth century in Dun-huang cave complex in Northwest of China. It contains not only old and reliable records, but also the philosophy of early times of the school saved from deformation by history. Here some descriptions of interest are extracted:

- (i) Mind (心, *Xin* in Chinese) is formless, and so it is not existent. Mind is not existent of itself. But, mind functions ceaselessly, and so it is not nonexistent. Also, because *Xin* functions but there is no place of its existence, it is not existent. It is empty and it is yet functioning constantly, and so it is not nonexistent. Because it lacks a self, it is not existent. It arises due to conditions,

and so it is not nonexistent. This reality of Mind (Xin, Dharma) is termed as *Suchness* (Thusness, *Ru-Shi* in Chinese). Suchness (of Mind) is indeed what Buddha expounded from time to time.

- (ii) If Mind does not belong to anything, then it is liberation. When one does not understand what Mind (Xin) is, the person pursues Dharma. When one does understand it, Dharma pursues the person. What Bodhidharma tried to say is the quieting of mind (An-Xin) by Bi-Guan, namely *Za-Zen* sitting by a wall.
- (iii) When one is sitting, Dharma is sitting. Not that the self is sitting, and not that the self is not sitting. Do not seek Nirvana. Why? It is because Dharma is Nirvana. How could you use Nirvana to attain Nirvana. Do not seek Dharma when sitting. How could you seek Dharma (Xin) by Dharma (Xin)! This is characterized as *Dun-Wu* (immediate awakening, or all-at-once awakening) compared with *Jian-Wu* (gradual awakening, or step-by-step awakening).
- (iv) Xin is like a tree or a stone, since it is tacitly silent, unaware, undiscerning, nonchalant about everything. Be as if like a fool (a stupid). Why? It is because Dharma lacks awareness and knowledge. Dharma of sitting gives us fearlessness externally. It gives us supreme peace internally. There is no difference between common man and sage in this respect.

4. Transmission of Dharma and Robe

Hui-ke, Dao-yu and other disciples served Bodhidharma for several years. Bodhidharma now realized that it is a time of his announcement:

Bodhidharma: “Originally, I came to this land to transmit Dharma. Now, I have gotten such disciples who apprehended it. One has gotten my marrow of bone, another has gotten my bone, and the third has gotten my flesh. The one who gained the marrow is Hui-ke, the one gained the bone is Dao-yu, and the one gained the flesh is Ni-zong-chi (Nun-Dharani) [19].”

Then, Bodhidharma transmitted to Hui-ke his robe and said him to keep it as a seal of faith to the Dharma. Later, the robe was handed down from patriarch to patriarch. Furthermore, Bodhidharma handed to Hui-ke the sutra “Lankavatara” (four-roll version) and said “This sutra is most appropriate, as I observe the land of Han.”[5]

Bodhidharma passed away in 528, and was buried at Xiong'er shan (Bear-ear Mountain) west of Luo-yang in He-nan Province. At a time more than 200 years later (in Tang Dynasty), Emperor Dai-Zong (763 – 779) recognized the greatness of the contribution of Bodhidharma and gave him the name of Great Teacher, *Da Shi* of Perfect Enlightenment, and the title, *Bodhisattva of Emptiness*. [8]

Later, the dharma of Bodhidharma is expressed in the following compact form of four phrases:

No dependence upon words and letters,
Special transmission outside the scriptures,
Directly pointing to the mind dharma,
Having insight into suchness, and attaining Buddhahood.

It is now a thousand and five hundreds years since the time of Bodhidharma. Ask, which name is shining more brilliantly, Bodhidharma or Wu-Di? It is needless to say the answer. However, having heard the news of Bodhidharma's parinirvana, Wu-Di (who missed the chance when he met Bodhidharma first) composed an inscription expressing his deep sorrow and praising wholeheartedly the dharma wheel Bodhidharma turned. In fact, Wu-Di was one of the most respectful emperors among Chinese emperors. He kept the emperor position for nearly fifty years with his Buddhist policies at the early times of Chinese Buddhism in the south China. He was lucky and unlucky, because he met a real bodhisattva without realizing that the one was a man of *Suchness*. This encounter formed the first chapter of *Blue Cliff Record* (11th century) [12] of a collection of a hundred *Koans* [13] of the Zen (Dhyana) Buddhism. Thus, Wu-Di's name is eternal as well as the name of Bodhidharma.

Part II.

Zen Buddhism (Dharma Light of Bodhidharma)

--- Initial succession and development ---

5. Introduction to Part II

“Mahayana and Bi-Guan (Wall-Contemplating) of Bodhidharma is the highest achievement.” This is the statement written by Dao-xuan, the editor of *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* [3]. This was published in 645 more than a hundred years after the death of Bodhidharma (528). Succession of the dharma light of Bodhidharma was hardly recognized at that time by society. However, its succession was being carried out by his disciples steadily, quietly, seriously and intimately without words.

A text “*Record of Lanka Masters and Disciples* [6]” was discovered at Dun-huang in the beginning of 20th century, which had been published about 70 years (about 716) after the above text [3]. The aim of its editor Jing-jue (淨覺) was a private note “to leave the records of what Bodhidharma said” to posterity. The verse of faith in the opening paragraph describes the circumstances of why the dharma light was transmitted steadily and secretly among the disciples, regardless of scant recognition of the contemporaries. That is as follows [6]:

Buddha nature is empty and no form.	True thusness is quiet and no word
Instructions by words of either voice or letters,	those are all delusion-dhyanas.
Nirvana is a dharma of biting a flying arrow.	It is a secret and is not taught to anyone.
Mind penetrates, always silently functions.	Dharma is open only to those of good fortune
Persons of two vehicles do not know it.	Non-Buddhists have never heard of it.
Most of narrow views slander it.	Wish to pray. Do not circulate it.

The dharma of Bodhidharma is expressed compactly by “Wall contemplation and

quieting mind” (壁觀安心 Bi-Guan An-Xin), or “Special transmission outside the scriptures, Directly pointing to the mind dharma”. This dharma was succeeded by Hui-ke (慧可 487-593), and then by Seng-can (僧璨, ? – 606). A stone monument [4] erected in 689 describes as follows: “Dharma teacher Bodhidharma brought from India the dharma of Shakyamuni to the east land, and came to the country Wei 魏 and transmitted it to Hui-ke. Next, Hui-ke transmitted to Seng-can, Seng-can transmitted to Dao-xin (道信), and Dao-xin transmitted to Hong-ren (弘忍).”

Accordingly, Bodhidharma is called as the first Zu (Ancestor), Hui-ke the second Zu, Seng-can is the third Zu, Dao-xin (580-651) is the fourth Zu, Hong-ren (638-713) is the fifth Zu. Thus, the dharma light of Zen Buddhism was succeeded. Next it arrived at the Sixth Zu, Hui-neng (638-713), fifth Chinese Zen Master after Bodhidharma. This is the original source of modern Zen Buddhism. The dharma light of Bodhidharma is expressed compactly by the following well-known verse [8]:

I have come to this land with an ambition, that is
Transmitting Dharma and relieving unsettled minds.
A single flower opens five petals.
Fruiting should be naturally achieved.

First two lines describe the aim of Bodhidharma who came to China. The last two lines are a figurative expression. A person has a flower in his/her own heart, which opens its petals and comes to fruition.

For people of succeeding generations, this verse overlaps the history described above. In fact, the story of transmission and development after the fifth Zu was dramatic. There were about ten eminent Zen masters who succeeded the dharma of the fifth Zu Hong-ren. At the time of Tang dynasty, there was a lineage of Zen school which regarded Shen-xiu (606-706) as the sixth Zu, and another lineage which regarded Fa-ru (638-689) as the sixth. Disciples of each lineage claimed that their school was orthodox.

There was a difficult time initially when the dharma lamp-light might have died out. This was followed by a time of exploding development. After which, there was a time when each lineage competed to claim its school as the orthodox. It is likely that the above verse was formed at this time. The sections given below describe this most interesting initial history of succession and development of the schools of the Bodhidharma’s dharma light.

6. Second Zu: **Hui-ke** (慧可, 487-593) and Third Zu: **Seng-can** (僧璨 519? – 606)

There were unfortunate movements of anti-Buddhism (expulsion of Buddhism) by an Emperor two times in the years of 570 under which both of Hui-ke and Seng-can had to bear up. Presumably, it was 559 when Seng-can met Hui-ke first. Hui-ke was already over seventy. From the references [9, 11], it was as follows:

Some day, a layman came to see Hui-ke Da-shi. (In documents, it is not described where the layman was from, and his age was written to be forty [9, 11], or fourteen [10], maybe miss-ordered.). He bowed according to Buddhist formality, and said, “This disciple suffers paralysis. Da-shi, please have mercy on the poor disciple to exorcise his sin.”

Hui-ke: “Bring me your sin. I will exorcise it.”

Layman: "I tried to get the sin, but cannot get it."

Hui-ke delivered judgment: "Exorcising of sin is over for you. Please trust and take refuge in the three treasures: Buddha, Dharma and Bhikkhus (Sangha)"

Layman: "Now, I see Da-shi, and understand what is a bhikkhu. Please have mercy to tell me, what is buddha and what is dharma."

Hui-ke: "The mind is Buddha. The mind is Dharma. Buddha and Dharma are not two separates. Bhikkhus treasure is the same."

Layman: "Now I realize for the first time that sin exists neither inside, outside, nor intermediate. Just as the mind is so, Buddha and Dharma are not two."

Now, Da-shi was aware that the layman is a man of dharma talent. Then, he was shaved and ordained a monk. Da-shi sensed that the layman is his treasure, and named him "Can". [9, 11] (Can means *brightness* of a jewel stone and Seng means *monk*.)

At the time of expulsion of Buddhism in 574, both of them escaped to the south and took refuge in Wan-gong-shan (皖公山) in An-hui province, and stayed at Shan-gu-si (山谷寺) for several years. Here, Seng-can recovered from his disease of paralysis, and was called as bare-head Can [9].

Hui-ke told Seng-can, "Bodhidharma had come from India and transmitted True Dharma to me, I now transmit the Dharma to you and give you this robe, furthermore, make it as a seal of faith to the Dharma." "You must keep it and guard it carefully. Never let the Dharma light be extinct." He then gave Seng-can the Lanka Sutra to rely on in his practice.

Although there is no evidence, it might be this time when presumably Seng-can composed the outstanding verse "Xìn Xīn Míng (信心銘)", one of the most well-read verses in the Zen history. It would not be surprising if he presented it to his master Hui-ke. This might have been a verse of the seal for receiving the dharma light. It consists of 146 phrases of four characters. The word Xìn (信) denotes *faith* nominally, but it essentially denotes Bi-Guan (*i.e.* Za-Zen sitting with a robe, which is a faith), while the word Xīn (心) denotes the Mind (*i.e.* Dharma). In the last part, it states that Xìn (信) and Xīn (心) are not separate two, and that non-separate two Xìn (信) and Xīn (心) do (function). Later, a disciple of Hui-neng, Shen-hui (神会), wrote [7] as "Internally, Mind-awakening is the transmission of Dharma. Externally, Robe is transmitted, which is the sign of Dharma."

Composition of the verse Xìn Xīn Míng might have been an expression of the wish that the Dharma "Mind" which Bodhidharma transmitted should not be extinct. This might be seen as a desperate effort as if their lives were hung by a thread (which was a word given by Hong-ren to Hui-neng. [11]). Presumably, Hui-ke was over 87 years old at this time, and was still suffering the crisis of Buddhism.

At the time of Sui (隋, 589-618), Hui-ke Da-shi appeared again at the capital Ye (鄴), surviving the crisis of Buddhism and expulsion. Dressed shabbily and having little to eat, his mind was certain and resolute. He strolled along streets and markets with this unusual appearance. He turned Dharma at wherever he chose and offered people relief from their troubles. [7, 15] One day when he was set to labor by others, he was told by a bystander, "Do not be put to labor by others, because you are a man of Dao." He replied "I am controlling my mind." [11] He was

led by certain compelling internal motives for his actions. He was a man of Suchness.

One day, it happened that Hui-ke Da-shi turned the dharma in front of a temple where a lecture was being given on the “Nirvana Sutra (涅槃經)”. He attracted a number of people around him. A false charge was made against Hui-ke, because of violation of the public order for Buddhism. He was then arrested and overtaken by ill fortune (punishment of heheading). Da-shi received it quietly [11]. At this time (593), he was a hundred and seven years old. The ill-fortune of Hui-ke was reported to the Sui Emperor immediately. The Emperor mourned from his heart for Hui-ke, and his court as a whole expressed sympathy. This event might have worked to be a step to open a door for later revival of Buddhism [7]. In the year 642 after about fifty years from the death of Hui-ke, a temple Yuen-fu (元符寺) was constructed at the place of his last resting place. (He-bei Province 河北省磁州).

In 592 (or 593) when Seng-can was living with his colleague monk in Wan-gong-shan (皖公山) in An-hui province, a novice named Dao-xin (about 14 years old) came to see Seng-can and bowed according to Buddhist formality, and asked for mercy and for the teachings on the *Dharma gate to Liberation*.

Seng-can Da-shi asked, “Who binds you ?”

Dao-xin: “Nobody binds me.”

Da-shi: “If nobody binds you, what sense does it make for you to seek liberation further.”

After exchanging this kind of dialogue, Dao-xin followed the teacher Seng-can and practiced according to his teaching for nine years. Seng-can Da-shi now realized that the opportunity for transmission had matured, and he gave the Dharma and Robe to Dao-xin, and said: “In the past, Hui-ke Da-shi transmitted to me the Dharma and Robe. I transmit those to you. I will now go south (Luo-fu-shan, 羅浮山). Now that, there is no reason for me to stay here.” [11] Later, he returned to Shan-gu-si (山谷寺) and passed away there. [9]

7. Fourth Zu: **Dao-xin** (道信 580-651) and Fifth Zu: **Hong-ren** (弘忍 601-675)

In 605, an Imperial ordinance was issued by the Sui Dynasty, which permitted renouncement for Buddhists. Dao-xin was appointed to a temple managed by the ruler in Ji-zhou (吉州). It was the first time that Zu-shi (Master teacher) of the lineage of Bodhidharma was recognized publicly.

The policy of pro-Buddhism reached across the sea as far as to Japan. At that time, Shotoku-Taishi (Prince Shotoku, 聖德太子) was the Prince Regent for the court of Emperor Suiko (a woman Emperor) in Japan [5]. The policy of Sui Dynasty in favor of Buddhism encouraged him to construct the temple Horyu-Ji (法隆寺) in Japan. Since then, Buddhism in Japan flourished and expanded throughout the country.

One day in these times, when Dao-xin visited Huang-mei district (湖北省黃梅縣), he met an odd boy (of about seven years old) and asked him a question,

“What is your surname?”

Boy: “My surname is not usual.”

Da-shi: “What is it?”

Boy: “Budhha nature”

Da-shi: “Don’t you have a surname?”

Boy: “Because my surname is empty.”

Now, Da-shi realized that the boy is unusual, and sent his attendant to the house of his parents. By the permission of his parents, Da-shi ordained the boy and gave him the name Hong-ren (弘忍) [10, 11]

In 624, Dao-xin (at the age of 45) moved to a temple Zheng-jue Si (正覺寺, or 四祖寺) located at the west peak of Double-peak mountain (双峰山) in Hu-bei Province (湖北省黄梅县, 蕪州). He stayed there for more than twenty years and attracted many students. Dao-xin told his disciples:

“Devote yourselves to sitting. Sitting is the fundamental. Do practice for three years, or five. Having minimal food to prevent starvation, just close gates and strive to “just sit”. Do not read sutras. Do not have conversations. Before long, you will be a useful man. Just as a monkey eats fruit of a chestnut by winking out, you could get it by sitting. Such a person is rare.”

Furthermore, asked from disciples, who is the person who receives the Dharma? Dao-xin replied with sighs, “Hong-ren would do”. [5] Dao-xin Da-shi passed away at the age of seventy two (651).

Hong-ren was a man of few words by his nature and often regarded as unimportant by his colleagues. Usually, he wished to render labor service, and followed others while keeping low profile. Xin Da-shi recognized him as a man of dharma talent. In the daytime, he spent his time on errands. At night, he does Zazen sitting till next morning. Thus, he spent his years without living in idleness. He did not read sutras nor texts, but understood everything he heard. He received kind and appropriate guidance from Dao-xin. [5]

After receiving transmission of the Dharma and Robe from Dao-xin Da-shi, Hong-ren stayed at Zhen-hui Si (真慧寺, or 五祖寺) at the east peak. He attracted many men of ability. In ten years or so, his sangha developed to a most active Zen group, since the Dharma was brought to China. Lay people in the capital Luo-yang said, “There are many awakened persons in the East Mountain (東山) in Huang-mei district (湖北省黄梅县).” [6]

One asked Ren Da-shi: “To learn Dharma, why do you keep staying within a mountain, rather than going to city or village.”

Ren Da-shi replied: “Good woods for structures are obtained from deep mountains, not from places of human habitation. Out of the way, trees would not be cut away by ax or hatchet, and each tree grows into a big wood. Then afterward, those are used as useful ridges or beams. Thus we know that if our minds live in deep valleys by keeping ourselves from worldly affairs and if we maintain ourselves within mountains, our mind is stabilized naturally and becomes quiet.” In this way, Ren Da-shi kept doing quiet and clean sitting, and in most cases taught his disciples without any word. [6]

8. Sixth Zu: Hui-neng (慧能 638-713)

Hui-neng was born in Xin zhou of (southern) Guang-zhou Province. The place was a newly developed area, which is known from Xin (new). It is said that his father had been exiled from (northern) He-bei Province to the south. He lost his father when he was young. After grew up, he traveled around seeking a teacher as a

layman. Eventually, due to a suggestion from a zen master, he came to see Hong-ren Da-shi at the East Mountain of Huang-mei, and bowed according to Buddhist formality. (It is said that he was 32 years old [11], or 22 years old [7] at this time.)

Ren Da-shi asked, "Where are you from?"

Neng answered, "I came from Xin zhou of Ling-nan (嶺南 southern than the Nan-ling-shan). I wish to be a buddha."

Da-shi: "Ling-nan is a place of barbarians."

Neng answered, "Although the body is barbarian, the buddha nature is not different from that of Da-shi."

Ren Da-shi realized deeply that Hui-neng is a man of great dharma talent. After some time, Hong-ren transmitted the Dharma and Robe to Hui-neng (secretly) who was still a layman. Soon after, Hui-neng went to Ling-nan, and concealed himself among lay persons in the Ling-nan area for several years.

In 676 when Hui-neng was 39 years old, he appeared dramatically at the Fa-xing Si (法性寺, also called as 制止寺 or 光孝寺) in Guang-zhou, where a lecture on the Nirvana Sutra (涅槃經) was being given by the dharma teacher Yin-zong (印宗法師). It was a windy day and a temple flag was flapping in the wind. Two monks looking at it started an argument. One said the flag moved, the other said the wind moved; they argued back and forth but could not reach a conclusion. Hui-neng could not withhold his compassion and opened his mouth: "It is not the wind that moves, it is not the flag that moves; it is your mind that moves." [7, 10, 14]

This episode gave a great impression to listeners (and to all who heard of it), giving deep insight into what is the mind in everyday life. After more than five hundred years, Zen Master Wu-men Hui-kai (1183-1260) cited this story and adopted it as a koan (No.29) in his Koan text "Wu-men-guan (無門關)" (1228). He commented, "It is not the wind that moves; it is not the flag that moves; it is not the mind that moves. Where do you see the patriarch?" and added "You see that the two monks got gold when trying to buy iron." [14]

It is to be remarked that the Fa-xing Si (法性寺) was a special temple in China's Buddhism history. First, it was the temple opened by Gunabhadra (cited in the beginning of this article) who came from south India and arrived at Guang-zhou in 435. Next, it is said that Bodhidharma also stayed at this temple when he arrived at Guang-zhou in 520. Thirdly, Hui-neng was ordained to be a bhikkhu at this Fa-xing Si (around 676). It is very interesting to note that there was a link at this temple to three major figures in the early development of Mahayana in China.

Thereafter, Hui-neng Da-shi turned Dharma at the Bao-lin Si (宝林寺, later renamed as Nan-hua Si 南華寺) in Guang-dong Province (廣東省韶州).

9. Later explosive development

There were ten great disciples (Zen masters) from the "East Peak Dharma Gate" of Hong-ren Da-shi: Hui-neng (慧能 Zu of southern school), Fa-ru (法如), Shen-xiu (神秀 Zu of northern school) among them. During this period of extraordinary growth, hot disputes arose between disciples of Hui-neng and Shen-xiu about which is the orthodox school: southern school or northern school. This was an inevitable

happening when the Zen school expanded explosively, and there arose many schools not only south and north, but also west, east, central, and so on. However, among the disciples of Hui-neng, there were also thoughtful groups which were unconcerned with such disputes and interested only in the Dharma itself. They practiced quietly, seriously and intimately without words, and went their own ways.

Nan-yue (南嶽懷讓) and Qing-yuan (青原行思) were two Zen Masters who lead such serious sanghas. Both of them were the disciples of Hui-neng. As a matter of fact, Chinese Zen originated from the two groups and expanded largely thereafter.

Shi-tou (石頭希遷), a disciple of Qing-yuan, wrote his view on the affairs in the respected verse ‘Can-Tong-Qi (參同契)’ as

“Mind of a great saint of India, transmitted from west to east without word,

There are both clever and dull in human natures.

In Dharma, there is no teacher of south nor teacher of north.“

At the time of Tang Dynasty, more than a hundred years later, the Dharma light of Bodhidharma was respected and recognized especially by the followings.

First Zu Bodhidharma was given Honorific title of Yuan-Jue Da-shi (圓覺大師),

Second Zu Hui-ke, Honorific title, Tai-Zu Zen-Master (太祖禪師),

Third Zu Seng-Can, Honorific title, Jing-Hui Zen-Master (鏡智禪師),

Fourth Zu Dao-Xin, Honorific title, Da-Hui Zen-Master (大医禪師),

Fifth Zu Hong-Ren, Honorific title, Da-Man Zen-Master (大滿禪師),

Sixth Zu Hui-Neng, Honorific title, Da-Jian Zen-Master (大鑑禪師).

The dharma light of Bodhidharma was succeeded further by the two disciples of Sixth Zu, Nan-yue and Qing-yuan, from whom five schools of Zen sangha sprang and flourished in later generations.

10. Concluding remarks

Among the five schools, two schools (Lin-ji School 臨濟宗 and So-to School 曹洞宗) have been succeeded up to the modern era in China, Japan, Korea and east Asian countries. In the twentieth century, the two schools of Rinzai and Soto have expanded worldwide.

Even now in the twenty-first century, the Dharma Light of Bodhidharma is shines more brightly than ever, appealing to people and providing them islands for peaceful mind.

Lastly, the author wishes to emphasize the depth and breadth of the influence which Bodhidharma brought to the East land. This is exemplified by the following fact. Most frequently asked question among hundreds of Koans of the Zen school (in Chinese) is “*Ru-he shi zu-shi xi-lai yi?*”, **What is the intention of Bodhidharma coming from the West-land (India)?**

This *Koan* proposes encouragingly a fundamental quest for *Suchness* which Bodhidharma tried to transmit to the people of East-land. This brought about revolutionary change and enlightenment in the culture of the East-land including China, Japan, Korea and other countries. “*Why did Bodhidharma come to the East land?*” is also the *Koan* to us living in the present world of the 21th century.

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- [2] *Record of Buddhist Monasteries of Luo-yang* (洛陽伽藍記, 547).
- [3] *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* (続高僧伝), by Dao-xuan (道宣, 645).
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- [5] *Record of Transmission of Dharma Treasures* (伝法宝記, 713).
- [6] *Record of Lanka Masters and Disciples* (楞伽師資記, 716).
- [7] *Record of the Dharma Treasure through the generations* (歴代法宝記, 775).
- [8] *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (六祖壇經, 790?).
- [9] *Transmission of Treasure Forest* (宝林伝, 801).
- [10] *Record of Patriarchal Hall* (祖堂集, 952).
- [11] *Jing-De (era) Record of Transmission of Dharma Lamp* (景德伝燈録, 1004).
- [12] *Record of Orthodox of the Transmission of Dharma* (伝法正宗記, 1064).
- [13] *Blue Cliff Record* (碧巖録). Main core-texts of one hundred koans by Xue-Dou (980-1052), critical remarks and interpretations by Yuan-Wu (1063 – 1135).
- [14] *Koan* (公案) refers to a story selected from sutras or historical records, or to a perplexing element of a story, which stimulates awakening or spiritual insight. A collection of koans is used as a textbook for students in training, teachers or monks in the schools of Zen Buddhism.
- [15] Wu-men-guan (無門関, 1228) by Wu-men Hui-kai (無門慧開, 1183-1260).
- [16] Complete Collection of Suzuki Daisetsu (Iwanami, Tokyo, 1968), Vol.II (Study of history of Zen philosophy, Second(禅思想史研究第二): 第一篇第二 (七 曇林所伝) 「如是安心者壁観」; 第四篇第三 (一 敦煌出土修心要論) (弘忍) .
- [17] Probably there, he saw also numerous diligent monks working for translation work.
- [18] Chinese ‘*Bi*’ is a wall and ‘*Guan*’ is to look or to contemplate. Nominally Bi-Guan is wall-contemplation. Even now, there is a cave called “Dharma Cave” up on a hill near the Shao-lin Temple within which there is a statue of *Bodhidharma*.
- [19] Nun-Dharani is said to be a daughter of Emperor Wu. [7, 9]

8 June 2008

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