ICHINICHI ICHIZEN: ON TRANSLATING AN NHK GUIDE TO EVERYDAY ZEN[1]

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The publication titled *Ichinichi Ichizen* (一日一禅, "One Zen Lesson a Day"), produced by the Japanese public broadcaster NHK, provides insight into the realm of Zen practice and its practicality for everyday activities. With its light tone and illustrative Japanese-style drawings, it colloquializes and illuminates essential concepts in the Zen tradition using "Zen phrases" (禅語 *Zengo*). The moniker 一日一禅 is itself a play on words, as is common in Zen dialogues, referring to the more common Japanese proverb 一日一善 (also pronounced *Ichinichi Ichizen*), meaning "one good deed a day." The play on words achieves a dual meaning by associating the ordinariness of "one good deed a day" with "one Zen lesson a day," while implying that committing to daily Zen acts, no matter how trivial, is equivalent to performing a good deed. This interplay involving words and their meanings and readings highlights the charm of *Ichinichi Ichizen.*

The articles are written entirely by the master Masano Shunmyo, who uses his expertise in the field of Zen as well as architecture to explain the importance of incorporating practices from the religious tradition into everyday life. The content of the articles concentrates primarily on providing brief straightforward explanations of Buddhist terms and framing them in a manner that shows readers the applicability of Zen to the challenges of modern existence. The main ideas can be divided into four important elements of Zen practice that have relevance for everyone's life: purpose, meditation, writing sutras, and cleaning. Underscoring the other points is the basic idea that monks do all their activities in a monastery as part of a daily routine that laypeople can also integrate them into their routines. Meditation is an essential method for controlling untamed thoughts and connecting with

[1] Author's Note: The present essay is an extension of the translation project completed for my Master of Arts in Asian Studies in the Spring 2020 at FIU. For the original magazine published in Japanese, see: 俊明枡野 Shunmyo Masan, 禅の言葉で暮らしをクレードアップ：一日一禅 *Zen no Kotoba de Kurashi wo Guredo Appu: Ichinichi Ichizen.* [Improve Your Daily Life with Zen Phrases: One Zen Lesson a Day] (Tokyo: NHK Publishing. July 2017), 7–59.

one's inner self. Sutra transcription and recitation allows for single-minded concentration and offers a reprieve from daily worries. And finally, cleaning becomes a way to tidy not only the space around oneself but also the spiritual space inside oneself. Zen words are used as tools for explaining the importance of these practices.

In this essay, I encapsulate the various messages of *Ichinichi Ichizen* as listed above through a partial translation of the essays written by Masano Shunmyo, while further commenting on some of the main themes he explicates. I also provide the kanji (characters) and their readings for specialized Zen or related Buddhist terms.

Zen Origins and Zen Today

To begin with, *Ichinichi Ichizen* addresses the questions of Zen: What is it? Why should it be practiced? Masano answers these questions with reference to Buddhist words that help explain the qualities of Zen. The first key term is "Buddha-nature," which emphasizes that the innate or "true self" is possessed by everyone. Buddha-nature is explained in the following passage:

> There is a phrase: "all sentient and non-sentient beings possess the Buddha nature" (一切衆生悉有仏性, *Issai shujou shitsu u busshō*). This means that every person has the Buddha-nature within their mind. The Buddha-nature is the absolute truth, and the "original self" (本来の自己, *Honrai no jiko*). Through practice, you will become aware of that mind inside yourself and come face to face with it.[2]

Metaphysically, Zen is presented as an all-encompassing, non-discriminating practice that anyone can utilize; hence, the saying, "all sentient and non-sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature." This points to the accessibility of the true self; therefore, everyone should commit to practicing seated meditation.

In a more down-to-earth tone, the practicality of applying daily Zen practice in a modern context is explained by using the traditional Buddhist terms for "dust" and "desire":

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[2] Ibid., 6.

> Because of the widespread use of internet technology, there is an overflow of information being disseminated so that, despite the advantages of convenience, it is thought that human relationships are unsatisfactory and stressful as contemporary life is becoming ever more complex. Information overload causes desires, and troublesome personal relationships exhaust the spirit. Desire and weariness are dust and debris that wrap around the mind. It can be said that the minds of people today are cluttered with greed and pettiness. I call this a "mental metabolic syndrome." Zen is an excellent "prescription" for doing away with mental metabolism.[3]

Here, Zen is framed as the solution to the modern problem of "information overload." Masano comments on the mental and social issues caused by the vicissitudes of modern life. Desire and weariness take on a symbolic Buddhist flavor in terms of "dust and debris," as information overload becomes a precursor to "desire." The cure for this so-called "mental metabolic syndrome" is readily available in daily Zen practice.

Understanding the "why" and "what" of Zen, including the relation between monastic and lay practice, is a focal point recurring throughout *Ichinichi Ichizen*. Therefore, Masano's abstract approach to grasping the necessity of Zen is juxtaposed with a description of daily practices carried out by monks. Although these practitioners live a much more regimented and disciplined life, all the religious activities in a temple setting can also be done in one's own home.

The monks awaken early in the morning (3:30 AM or 4:00 AM in the winter), and throughout the day they meditate, eat meals, read sutras, and clean. All these activities are prescribed to the reader and imbued with religious significance. To emphasize that the monks are constantly committed to practicing, even when involved in seemingly mundane activities, Masano says:

> There is a phrase, "Awaken on half a *tatami*, sleep on a single *tatam.*" (起きて半畳寝て一畳, *Okite hanjou nete ichijou*), meaning the same space where a novice monk

[3] Ibid., 9.

> sleeps and wakes, whether a full tatami, or half a tatami space, can be described as "simple…" Practice is "walking, standing, sitting, and lying down" (行住坐臥, *Gyōjū zaga*). That means that twenty-four hours a day, one's manners and bearing are all exemplary of practice.[4]

In other words, no matter which of these activities one commits to, they should all be considered a form of "Zen practice," which highlights the idea of applying Zen to one's daily life. While the monks are immersed in the challenge of "walking, standing, sitting, and lying down" as a form of practice, it is clear that not only monastic practitioners can live in such a manner anywhere and anytime. So can lay followers of Zen. Meditation is the first step in this process.

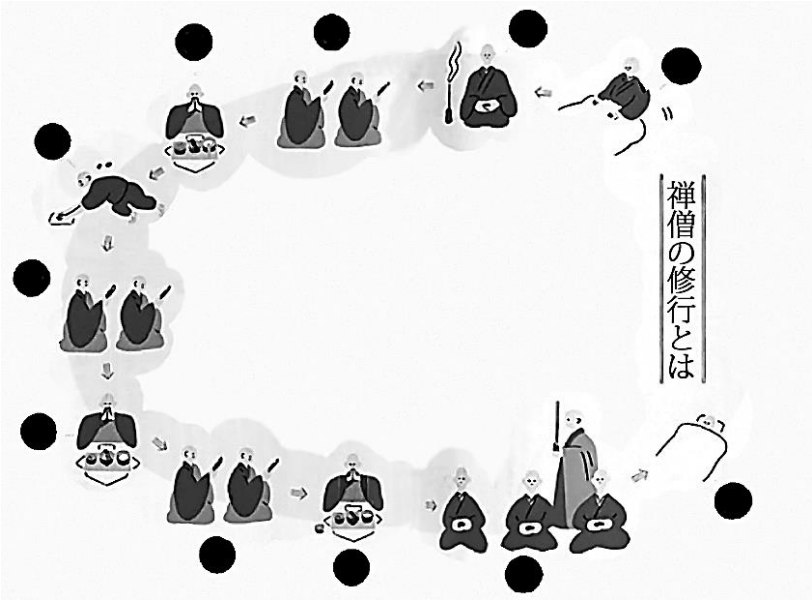

Figure 1. Daily practice at a Zen monastery[5]

[4] Ibid., 11.
[5] The images in this essay have been enhanced by María Sol Echarren.

Meditation

A prominent component of *Ichinichi Ichizen* revolves around clarifying the purpose behind meditation and providing succinct steps for performing it properly. Masano covers, first, the aim of seated meditation and what one hopes to accomplish with it, and then provides a detailed explanation of the necessary clothing, seating, length of time, and location; additionally, he explains the proper posture from clasping your hands together to form an "egg" shape to "rocking" the upper body back-and-forth to find a comfortable position.

The goal of seated meditation is considered through an examination of the Zen phrase 心身脱落 (*shinjin datsuraku*), or "casting off body and mind," whereby one achieves clarity of mind through reflecting on their original self. Masano describes the Zen phrase as follows:

> You will, without listening, effortlessly hear the sound of the faintest breeze, and not realize the passage of time or that you're even sitting…The condition of complete liberation and clarity, whereby you are free of ensnarement and have been cut off from all attachments, is "casting off body and mind." It can be said that this is the highest state of mind that Zen seeks to attain.[6]

In this section, Masano implies that liberation from attachments is not just achieved in the physical conditioning of meditation, but also in training the mind to be cast-off along with the corporeal self. Upon doing so, a higher state of being is achieved.

Taking the description of a condition of "complete liberation and clarity" a step further, Figure 2 illuminates this notion with an interesting analysis of the character for "sitting" (often used interchangeably with meditation). The image depicts the "duality" of the mind represented by the character for sitting "座" (the "*za"* in *Zazen* (座禅). In the inner portion of this kanji, the radical for "person" (人) lies on both sides of the radical for "earth" or "world" (土). This figure eloquently indicates that while there is a "twoness" in the self, there is also a sense of "oneness," as both sides cannot exist outside the very foundation of the self. The goal of casting off body and mind

[6] Ibid., 15.

as shown here is to achieve oneness. The following description summarizes this point:

> The character for "*za*" [sitting] illustrates how the disturbed, unsettled self, comes face to face in this world with its original Buddha-nature (its true form). To discover the Buddha-nature (the form of the original self) that resides in all of us, you should sit quietly every day for at least a brief period of time.[7]

In short, meditation is an introspective journey to find the Buddha-nature in oneself. As a result of this introspection, one meets their inner Buddha-nature and casts aside the attachments that weigh one down. A brief look at the Zen phrase in an accompanying image in the text – 独座大雄峰 (*dokuza daiyuhō*, "Sitting alone as a majestic mountain" – encapsulates the author's point about meditation being a self-explorative process.

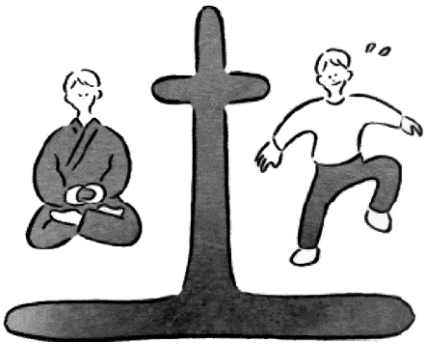

Figure 2. The character for "sitting" ***(left)***

Figure 3. Sitting alone as a majestic mountain ***(right)***

The reader can see in Figure 3 that the person meditating sits above the clouds and beyond the mire of the world below. Notice that he/she is sitting alone with no one else assisting or interloping. The person here

[7] Ibid., 12.

becomes the majestic mountain itself: unmoving, tall, upright, and above the pettiness of the muddy world.

To make another comment on meditation, Masano uses a series of Zen phrases that detail the stages of sitting. The three phrases are: "harmonious body, harmonious breathing, harmonious mind" (調身, 調息, 調心, *choshin, choshoku, choshin*). The sequence of these three words has a melodic tune to it, from the first phrase on "body" (身) to the last phrase on "mind" (心), thus implying the profound connections linking physical and spiritual realms. An interesting play on words happens here as the pronunciation of both characters is *shin*. This gives the reader the image, or better yet, the "sound" of the integration of the meditative process. Masano comments further on the relationship between the three components:

> These three elements are deeply interconnected, so if you harmonize your posture, then your breathing will harmonize. Once both posture and breathing are harmonized, the mind will harmonize…Even if it is difficult to harmonize the unseen mind, you can harmonize your posture when you engage in seated meditation.[8]

This reminds us of the process of "casing off body and mind." Once the steps of harmonization are completed, and mind and body are one, then they can simultaneously be "cast off."

Figure 4. Harmonize posture, harmonize breathing, harmonize mind

While seated meditation is a significant component of the philosophy expressed in *Ichinichi Ichizen*, the insight into Zen phrases and

[8] Ibid., 22.

practices does not end there. The next section refers to another form of practice: copying and reciting sutras. As with meditation, the purpose and step-by-step process of performing sutra-copying are explained in meticulous detail.

Transcribing Sutras

Sutra transcription (写経, *shakyō*) is just as vital to the practice of Zen as meditation; so much is this the case that transcribing sutras is another activity that Zen monks carry out nearly every day at a monastery. This fulfills a similar purpose to meditation by helping the practitioner performing the task reach a state of "no-mind" (無心, *Mushin*). Masano's guiding words on achieving this state accentuate it relatability to the average person by highlighting that one can achieve an extremely advanced level of focus even during daily work. He writes the following about no-mind:

> In Zen, it is taught that no matter what you come across, when engaging with it you must realize no-mind (無心). Considering this, you have unintentionally thought about last evening's drinking party while you were working, right? Or perhaps there are times when you are enjoying your hobby on your day off, yet you can't get your mind off work the next day. However, everyone has had the experience of being in no-mind (無心)…You've likely had a time when you concentrate and engage fully in your work, complete it, and then think to yourself, "What? This much time has gone by already?"[9]

No-mind is not a special state that can only be achieved by monks adhering to strict practice and sitting in temples. Instead, it is an inner power that can be tapped into by anyone. This notion follows the earlier theme of meditation and finding one's own Buddha nature within the discord of the world and the undiscipline aspects of the typical self. Sometimes one can even access the wellspring of Buddha-nature through single-minded concentration when completing a given task. Copying sutras is done to enter this state of mind by focusing intently on the writing of Chinese characters.

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[9] Ibid., 30.

Masano next explains the absolute focus that occurs when copying the sutras:

> Sutra transcription is just copying sutras the way they are. Originally, this practice began with monks transcribing sacred texts, but today many people are engaged with the process because its effectiveness in calming the mind. It is said that writing a single character is equal to carving the body of the Buddha…When you are moving the brush, you can drift away from the mundane for a little while and reexamine yourself; the time you are copying the sutras will itself be a moment of tranquility.[10]

The emphasis here is that copying the characters of a sutra is non-dualistic or unified in its sacredness and pragmatism. It is also noted that understanding the meaning of the characters is not as important as the act of copying. The very movement of the brush sliding across the paper engages your mind as it purposefully concentrates on the strokes, curves, and balance of writing the characters. This becomes another form of "walking, standing, sitting, and lying down."

No-mind is connected to the everyday application of sutra-copying that offers a respite from overstimulated thinking and stress. The strict guidelines on how to ritualize the process means it is far from merely setting down a piece of paper to write. Masano instructs for preparing to copy sutras:

> Wash your hands, rinse your mouth, and cleanse yourself. Bring your hands together and bow deeply, recite that day's entire sutra passage, or the single character you will copy…Harmonize your breathing while you neatly copy character by character. Once you finish writing, check for any incorrect or missing characters. If there are any incorrect or missing characters, write a (') to the right side and write the character in a blank space, or at the end of the character line. Recite the Parinama (transfer of merit). Place your hands together and bow deeply.[11]

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[10] Ibid., 32.
[11] Ibid., 33.

Transcribing sutras takes on a spiritual and ceremonial character if performed in the way prescribed here: purification before engaging with "carving the body of the Buddha," verbal recitation, concentration on breathing, and recitation of a Buddhist chant. Much like the other Zen activities prescribed in this publication, the ceremonious side of practice is supplemented by its utility in day-to-day life. Below is an image of the paper used for copying sutras with the characters from the *Heart Sutra*:

Figure 5. Sutra transcription paper with lines from the *Heart Sutra*

Cleaning

The final section of *Ichinichi Ichizen* focuses on Zen phrases and activities related to the broad topic of cleaning. As seen in the image of monastic practices in Figure 1, special time is devoted to cleaning and sweeping. While it can be easy to view cleaning as a "necessary chore" that must be tolerated, in Zen this humble activity becomes another way to practice "walking, standing, sitting, and lying down," not just for monks but for those at home as well. No action is beyond or beneath the realm of practice. Masano argues that cleaning can be considered just as or even more important than religious merits such as devotion. His explanation of the Zen term "Cleaning first, devotion second" (一掃除二信心, *Ichi souji ni shinjin*) highlights this idea:

> In Zen, "temple work" (作務, cleaning and other chores), is one of the most important things. "Cleaning first, devotion second" is a Zen phrase demonstrating that, as a person who aspires to the path of the Buddha, you place "temple work" above all important "devotional intentions" (信心). Cleaning is not just a matter of tidying up a place, it is also the act of wiping away the mind free of dust and debris or worldly desires.[12]

Temple work is another part of "practice" and is taken very seriously by the monastic community. Its purpose is to clean at once physical and spiritual space. More importantly, before practitioners consider the abstract notion of devotion, they must first commit to acting concretely in the everyday world.

In the Zen temple setting, the latrine (東司, *tōsu*), bathroom (浴司, *yōsu*), and the monk's hall (僧堂, *sōdō*), are all categorized as part of the "3 silent dojos" (三黙道場, *sanmoku dōjō*). Therefore, it can be surmised that the seemingly unimportant peripheral places for washing up or sleeping are just as significant as what is considered the central buildings in a complex, such as the buddha hall or dharma hall where lectures and rituals are held. To explain the importance of this in a normal home setting, Masano comments on how the opportunity to clean one's own washroom as indispensable:

> In today's average homes, I think that there are not many places that are cleaned with a wet dust cloth. The toilet is one of those "precious" places where you can do this. Polish the floor thoroughly and conscientiously and thus polish your mind completely. Every time you use the toilet, check for any stains on the seat and dust on the floor. If you keep the area clean, the person who uses it next will naturally pay attention to how they should maintain it.[13]

Despite being an unseemly location (the Japanese suggests the euphemisms, "eastern office" or *tōsu* and "wash office" or *yōsu*), the bathroom is presented as an exalted space where one can wholeheartedly practice Zen. Another important aspect to note is that Masano uses the term "dust" (埃) in his

[12] Ibid., 46.
[13] Ibid., 51.

explanation to signify the connection between the body and mind by evoking a wordplay. The literal dust that accumulates on the bathroom floor is swept away, while the spiritual "dust" is simultaneously polished and removed from the mind. Furthermore, the verb "to polish" (磨く) points to the Zen idea of eliminating the "dust" from the mind to reveal the "pearl" or the Buddha-nature of the true self. Cleaning, therefore, extends well beyond the tiles of the bathroom.

As with the other Zen activities, the philosophical explanation is accompanied by a practical everyday instruction. A guide on how to clean your living room, kitchen, Japanese entranceway (*Genkan*), furniture, and indeed every nook and cranny is also prescribed. However, the kitchen takes a special position and is highlighted as a "holy place:"

> The kitchen is a holy place that deals with life. The things that we eat all have a life. Certainly, meat and fish do, but vegetables and fruits do as well. In other words, we receive life from other things for us to live. The kitchen where we prepare food is a place that deals with this precious life…If you are not putting away cooking utensils and leaving plates dirty, you cannot preserve the area's holiness. It is also disrespectful to the life forms with which you are dealing.[14]

The comment on food points to the Buddhist respect for life from, even while accepting that meat and fish are often consumed. It also highlights to the usually obscure "holiness" of the everyday routine in the kitchen. In addition to this, the role of the cook in a monastic setting is highlighted to emphasize how crucial maintaining kitchen hygiene is:

> The person standing in the kitchen is a special Zen figure called a *Tenzo* (典座, a cook representing a distinguished monk who has practiced extensively). The *Tenzo* keeps the area clean with meticulous attention to every nook and cranny.[15]

[14] Ibid., 50.
[15] Ibid.

Again, stressing the notion of "walking, standing, sitting, and lying down," cooking clearly must be added to the list of sincere practices. We also see the applicability of the activities of monks to everyday life in the non-monastic realm. Notice that the characters for the cook (典座) transliterate into "ceremony officiant," thus indicating the highly valued role of the chef and his cooking in Zen monastic practice. Turning back to the theme of practicality, Masano encourages readers to, in effect, become the *Tenzo* in the holy place that is their own kitchen.

A final and crucial point is made in the chapters on cleaning by focusing on the importance of gardens. The garden in Zen is explained as a place where one comes in touch with nature and appreciates life. It is also a space where one can reflectively contemplate on the self. Returning to the idea of harmonization and musicality, Masano, who is a professional architect and garden designer, comments on how rock gardens are constructed for people who want to have a garden with "nothing" in it:

> In order to make a space with nothing, you have to put something in it. Scrape off all unnecessary things to the point of not being able to remove anything else. Then, finally, place no more than a few rocks. Look at the expressions of the rocks, then construct the garden while listening to the voice of the rocks. This is the mentality behind constructing "Zen Gardens."[16]

This passage carries the spirit of minimalism, indicating that only the bare minimum is necessary for the garden. It is also important to note that the rocks are anthropomorphized into having "expressions" and "voices," suggesting a connection between the "sentient" and "non-sentient" within the realms of existence. The rocks are no more than a reflection of the mind of the viewer, meaning that interpreting the "expressions" of rocks is simply reading the expression of the self and, in turn, reading into nature is, in a way, reading into the self of all beings. In other words, nature functions as a mirror for the condition of one's mind. Further comments on the "expressions" of the garden are included by Masano:

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[16] Ibid., 59.

> What you feel when you look at a "Zen Garden" differs from person to person. It also changes depending on your state of mind at that time. Because each time you examine it, the garden changes its expression. Your mind is constantly stirring, and when the mind complements and resonates with it, that is when the space truly turns into a "Zen Garden." This type of garden becomes "the true mind," a place where you can look at yourself objectively. Gazing at a garden is like seated meditation.[17]

Here, we see a turn to words such as listening (聞く) and resonate (響く), which are used to describe the musical quality of crafting a garden. The song of the garden then harmonizes its rhythm with the "gardener's" mind to make the garden a place of single-mindedness.

Moreover, the equivalency of gazing at a garden and meditation, as stated in the last sentence of the passage, is important. Returning to Masano's first aim, which stated that meditation is an introspective process, we see this reemerge in the act of just looking at nature. A good visualization of "listening to expressions" is provided in the image of a monk contemplating a rock garden:

Figure 6. A Zen monk "listening" to the rocks

[17] Ibid.

Once more, gardening and cleaning are tasks that anyone can do. The passage by Masano implies that the garden only becomes a "Zen Garden" when one's mind harmoniously resonates with it. Therefore, as part of home-based practice, we are encouraged to remove all unnecessary things from the space around us as well as within our minds, while focusing on "polishing" every corner in accordance with its particular form of "expression."

Conclusion

Ichinichi Ichizen is an accessible resource for gaining insight into the world of Zen and Japanese culture. It provides detailed explanations of important Buddhist terms, in addition to robust instructions on how to approach meditation, sutra transcription, and cleaning, while undergirding the spirit of Zen: that is, by imbuing every action from start to finish with a meditative focus.

To achieve this, Masano uses the iconic "one Zen deed a day" to familiarize readers with the methods of practicing Zen while simultaneously acquainting us with the religious pursuits of monks in a process that can be referred to as using "skillful means" (*hoben*) to attain enlightenment. *Ichinichi Ichizen* can undoubtedly be turned into a resource for studying the message and communicative power of the modern Zen Buddhist institution, as well as serving as an introduction to those unfamiliar with its tenets.

Appended Notes: Translation Challenges

Although *Ichinichi Ichizen* was written in a relatively simple and straightforward tone, there are many challenges for the translator. First and foremost, perhaps the most difficult component of translation from the Japanese language involves discerning the topic of a sentence and tracking its way throughout a paragraph or even an entire page. This was the case with this article and its occasional drawn-out sentences that are likely intended to "wrap" around the readers' minds as they read through the text. Moreover, the use (or lack thereof) of pronouns in Japanese presents an issue when deciding which English pronoun to use. Another consideration with "pronoun-less" sentences is whether this deliberately implies a Zen notion of "it" as a designator for Buddha-nature or no-mind, or simply indicates an ordinary grammatical function.

Additionally, the translation of specialized Buddhist terminology is also challenging. While most Buddhist terms have already been translated and the lexicon is readily available for researchers, there are numerous terms that do not necessarily have a clear meaning in a specific context. This also

works inversely, whereby multi-kanji words are broken down into individual lexical components rather than translated as a compound to provide a better rendition. Another issue involves the omission of some words. In addition to the absence of pronouns, Japanese sentences also tend to omit verbs or are ambiguous as to their referent.

Long Japanese sentences that have an intricate syntax are a challenge because they vary from the grammatical order of English, so that a translator may misplace the subject of the sentence or where the verbs are directed. An example is a sentence on page 9 of the original text (translated on the top of page 119 above): "技術革新が進み、世の中の流れが速くなっている現代は便利になった一方で心が満たされない、心が騒ぐ、渇いている、という思いを多くの人が抱いているのではないでしょうか？"[18] This sentence places the subject (現代) in the middle, a descriptive phrase (技術革新が進み、世の中の流れが速くなっている) at the beginning, and the verb (抱いている) at the end. To translate such a sentence in a concise and readable way, it is essential to locate the grammatical components first and then rearrange the syntax to fit the English structure. While taking into account that the Japanese sentence order is usually subject, which sometimes implied rather than clearly indicated, object, and verb, the artistic liberties that the author often takes also need to be considered. Therefore, a "Zen-like" focus is likely needed so as not to get lost while both rendering and reading this type of sentence.

The need to recognize the tone and style of the author leads to another frequent obstacle: recognizing what pronouns are necessary when translating to English. One challenge is determining whether to use the word "you" or the more impersonal "one." Initially, it seemed more appropriate to use the pronoun "one" for a more impersonal way to address the reader, as it suggests the "feel" of a Zen master giving a lecture. Yet, as the translation progressed, it became clear that *Ichinichi Ichinen* is tailored for the average reader and is less of a sermon and more of a conventional, interactive, and entertaining read targeting those who are not experts in Zen. Therefore, it seemed more appropriate to use the pronoun "you" in most cases, despite the the fact that word あなた is used only once on page 3 out of a total of over 80 pages. Moreover, tracking the "you" or the "it" as the subject of the sentence is also a challenge that remains an essential part of translating with accuracy and consistency. A sentence with hidden pronouns is perplexing at first, but it can be translated with adequate contextual interpretation provided by the

[18] Ibid., 9.

preceding and following sentences. An example on page 2 is the sentence: "悩みや迷いの中にいても、いたずらに心が騒ぐことなくどっしりと安心していられる。それらを乗り越え…"[19] Without the context of the previous sentence, the part meaning "overcoming those (それらを乗り越え) has no appropriate translation in English. However, by turning back to the previous sentence, it becomes clear that "those" refers to delusion and suffering as well as the uneasiness of the mind (悩みや迷い，いたずらに心が騒ぐこと). Special attention should be paid to the context of a Japanese sentence.

An additional challenge was balancing a holistic and atomistic approach to translation. In some instances, translating as a unit by highlighting the general meaning renders a proper translation. However, there are cases where this does not work, and a more detailed analysis of words and their meaning is necessary to properly convey the author's message. One representative case was the phrase, 調身、調息、調心 (*choshin, chosoku, choshin*); see page 123 above. The individual words in the phrase all have the character for 調える (*totonoeru*), which is usually used to mean to tidy up, to clean, or to put in order. Therefore, an initial translation was "correct body, breath, and mind." However, this was not the best approach to this phrase, even if the translation made sense. After further investigating the origin of the character 調, it is evident that there is a musical quality connected to its original use in Zen. Some of the definitions are "tone, meter, and harmonize," with the word harmonize being the most appropriate because it is applicable to the message that the three aspects are deeply interconnected.

The phrase "心のよりどころ" (*kokoro no yoridokoro*) presents a similar issue. If translated directly, it would be "the basis/foundation of the mind," which can be understood as an erudite comment on the essential quaality of the mind. However, understanding the meaning of the phrase as a whole provides a more syntactically appropriate definition, "something one can rely on," which better fits into a paragraph speaking about a set of rules that one needs to follow. Even so, it can be argued that the author was trying to make a play on words using both the regular and Buddhist meanings.

Another example where the opposite approach was effective was with the phrase 法界定印 (*hokkai jōin*). This word is defined holistically as a "impression of reality," but a clearer meaning can be drawn from the phrase when breaking down the compound and translating the characters

[19] Ibid., 2.

individually. A more appropriate translation is, “the seal (定印) of the dharma realm (法界).”

Other Buddhist terms are also challenging. For example, the word 捨てる usually means to “throw away,” but in a Buddhist context, it indicatesto “cast off” in a positive sense. Similarly, the word 塵 (*chiri/gomi*), which in regular modern Japanese means garbage or trash as well as dust, is strictly referred to by Masaon as “dust” or clutter on the mind. Another Japanese word for dust, 埃 (*hokori*), and the compound “塵埃” (*jinai*), which means “dust,” are common in Buddhist texts and are also used to indicate “petty worldly affairs.” The challenge lies determining whether the author deliberately chose these words in the literal or Buddhist sense, or both.

For example, another word that has both a Buddhist and secular meaning is 醍醐味 (*daigomi*), which means either “the appeal of something” or “the Buddha’s gracious teachings.” In order to determine whether the Buddhist meaning or the secular meaning is the one being used, a thorough understanding of the context in the sentence is necessary. Again, it can be argued that the author purposefully chose words for both their secular and Buddhist meanings, playing a word game similar to the title *Ichinichi Ichizen*, which can be read as 一日一善 or 一日一禅.

Lastly, a key issue is deciding whether to add individual words or omit them based on the target language (in this case, English) while preserving the essence of the original Japanese text. For example, the phrase “この呼吸を繰り返す,” which would translate as “repeat this breath,” needs the word “technique” or “exercise” to make sense in English. To provide another case where this was important, the phrase “[~ながら]をやめ” is clearly understood in Japanese as “stop while doing,” but the direct translation may not indicate the full meaning a short phrase. A more extended translation such as “stop doing this while doing that” is a more appropriate way of capturing the meaning byadding words that are not in the Japanese version.

While the translation difficulties were indeed demanding, a translation project such as this is an invaluable opportunity to educate oneself on central Buddhist themes and topics, whether you are a practitioner or an academic. The mental somersault from Japanese to English challenges one to interpret words and phrases differently, and this is a useful skill to develop when approaching other translations, research, or even reading sutras. Such a project also becomes a meditative practice in itself. To better understand practical meditation techniques and the reasoning behind them, it requires the translator to tap into his/her interpretive, creative, and linguistic mind to construct creatively a personal and veritable expression of the self on paper.