"EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE RESOURCE SPECIALISTS – EAJRS"

Venice, 27-30 September 2006

"The rediscovery of a text: the case of *Shôbôgenzô*"

Aldo Tollini (University of Venice, Italy)

How important is it for scholars who use a source, to know how the text was born and its history?
I think that the events related to its development can help its understanding and also a correct use of it.

In this case I want to introduce the 'strange story' of a very important text in the field of Japanese Buddhsm, and more in general of Japanese history of thought: *Shōbōgenzō* by the zen monk Dōgen.

The reason for which I say 'strange story' is that, - as will be clear later - its highly valuable contents was not recognized and divulgated until a very late date.
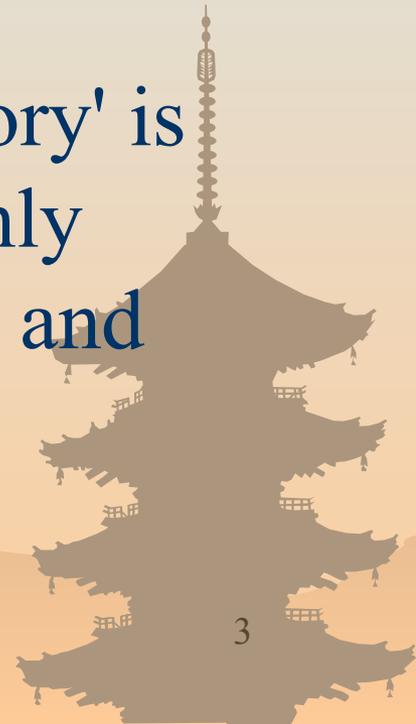
What is Shōbōgenzō?

Shōbōgenzō 正法眼蔵 (or *Eihei Shōbōgenzō*) means the *Treasure* (*zō* 蔵) *of the Eye* (*gen* 眼) *of the True* (*shō* 正) *Law* (*bō* 法). It was composed by the Buddhist master Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253). It is the canonical text of the Sōtō school of zen, presently one of the most important Buddhist schools in Japan. It is a text of very high doctrine, considered one of the most outstanding texts in the history of Japanese thought.

The oldest extant version of *Shōbōgenzō* (called *kankon'inbon*) is preserved in the Kankon'in temple in Aichi prefecture, in central Japan. This manuscript dates back to the mid-fifteenth century and collects in 15 volumes, the 75-chapter version. Other old copies are dated in the early sixteenth century.

From the 20th century there are various editions of *Shōbōgenzō* (as well as translations in modern Japanese, and in European languages), among which:

➢ Etō Sokuō (ed.), *Shôbôgenzô*, 3 vols., Iwanami shoten, Tokyo, 1961 (13°ed.).
➢ Tajima Ikudō, *Shōbōgenzō no kokugoteki kenkyū*, Kazama shoin, 1977-78, in 2 vols.
➢ Sakai Tokugen, Kagamishima Genrū & Sakurai Hideo (eds.), *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, 7 vols., Shunjūsha, Tokyo, 1991-3.

However, the most authoritative version is *Eihei Shōbōgenzō shūsho taisei*, Taishūkan shoten, from 1974, in 26 vols.
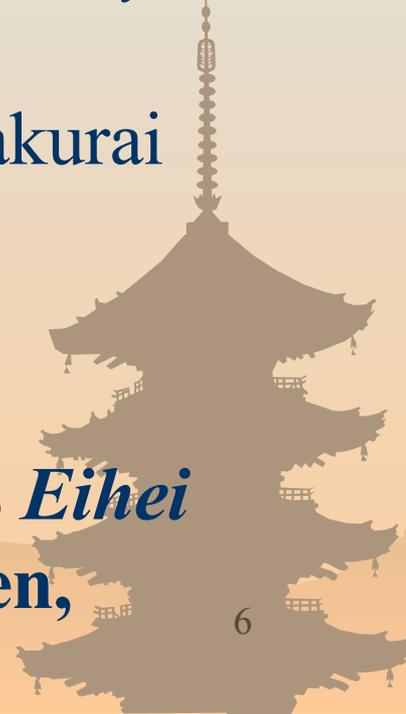
Dōgen and *Shōbōgenzō*

Dōgen composed this text in successive stages. The period from 1233 spent at Kannon Doriin (later called Kōshōji Hōrin), the first Sōtō zen temple, was the most productive. Here he wrote 44 chapters. In 1243 Dōgen moved to the remote province of Echizen where he founded Eiheiji. Here he wrote a further 29 chapters.

It was Dōgen's intention to complete *Shōbōgenzō* with 100 chapters, so he worked to this aim, however, before completing the task, he fell ill and died in 1253 at the age of 53. He could only produce 12 more chapters (called the 12 chapters version).

Shōbōgenzō's story

The history of the text after the death of Dōgen is very complicated because his successors copied *Shōbōgenzō* , adding or cutting off chapters, producing various editions in the course of time.

The most important editions are the following:

1. Ejō Koun (1198-1280), in 1255 copied the manuscript and produced an **edition of 75 chapters**.

2. In 1329, Eihei Giun (1253-1333), took 50 chapters from the edition of 75 chapters, added a further10 chapters and produced an **edition of 60 chapters**.

3. In 1419, Taiyō Bonsei added Giun's 9 chapters to the 75 chapters edition and produced an **edition of 84 chapters**. This was considered the standard edition untill the Tokugawa period.

4. In 1690, Kōzen added a further 11 chapters to the edition of 84 chapters and produced the first wood-engraved **edition in 95 chapters**.

Secret *Shōbōgenzō*.

In the beginning of the 18th century at Eiheiji was discovered a fascicle containing 28 chapters. This version was called *Himitsu Shōbōgenzō* or *Secret Shōbōgenzō*. It seems that they were a copy by Ejō.

A page of Himitsu *Shōbōgenzō*.
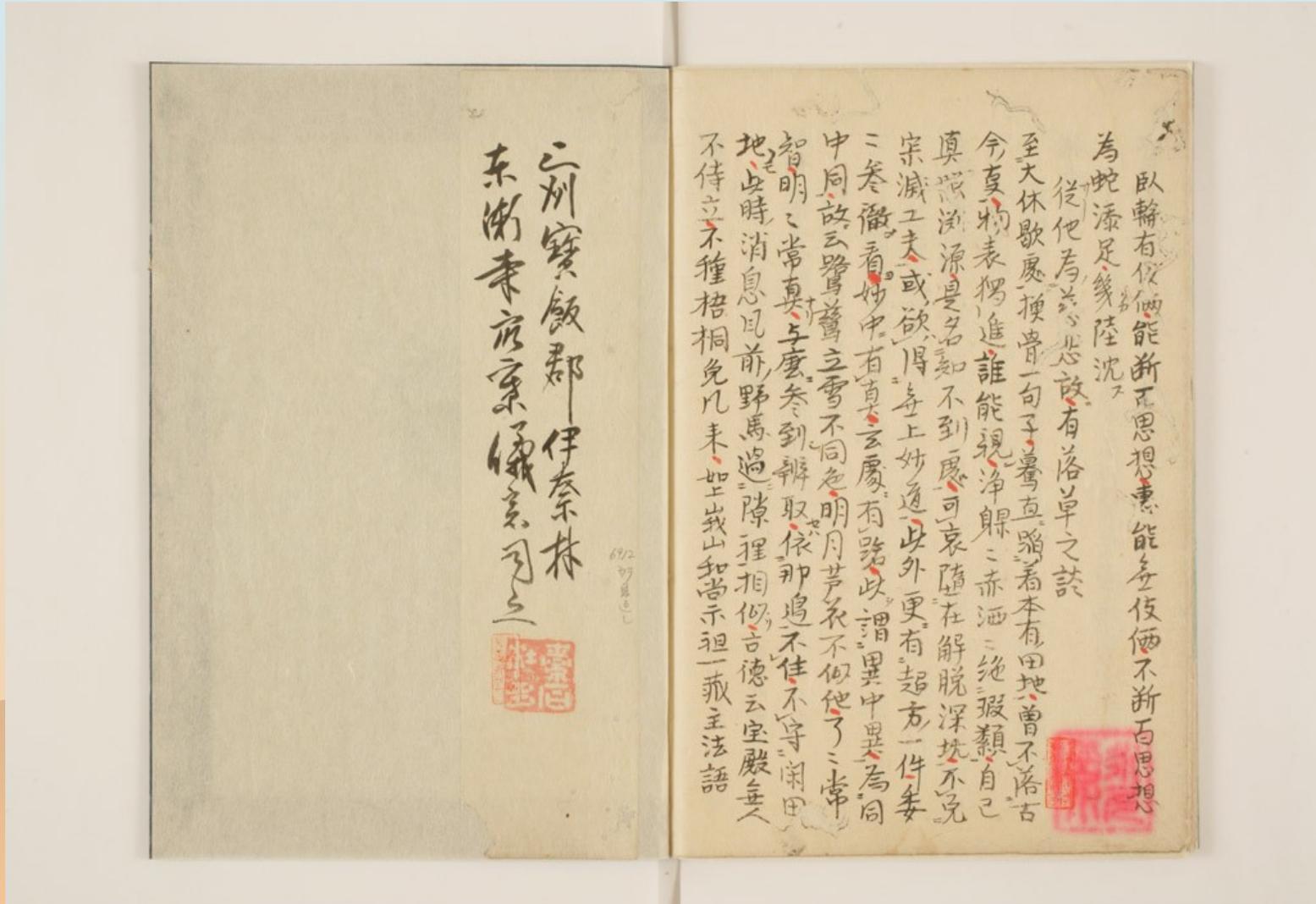
From an early date a few commentaries to the text developed. Senne a disciple of Dōgen wrote about in 1263 *Gokikigaki* in 10 chapters based on the direct teaching of the Master. In the early 14th century, Kyōgō wrote another commentary called *Shōbōgenzōshō.* These two commentaries are usually put together and called *Goshō*, had a great influence on *Shōbōgenzō* studies until the Tokugawa period, when new commentaries were produced. Among which are worth mentioning:

➢Tenkei Denson's, *Shōbōgenzō benchū* (1726-29):
➢Menzan Zuihō's *Shōbōgenzō shōtenroku* (1759):
➢Banjin Dōtan's *Shōbōgenzō shōten hoketsuroku* (1771):
➢Kōsen's *Shōbōgenzō shōten zokuchō* (1836).

When the intention to publish *Shōbōgenzō* became clear in the first half of the 18th century, the Sōtō school strove to prevent its publication issuing a decree in 1722 called *Shōbōgenzō kaiban kinshirei* (Prohibition of the publication of *Shōbōgenzō*) with which publication for the successive 50 years could be stopped.

14

At last, in 1815 *Shōbōgenzō* was able to be published.

This first modern edition for the general public was called Honzanban (Edition of the See).
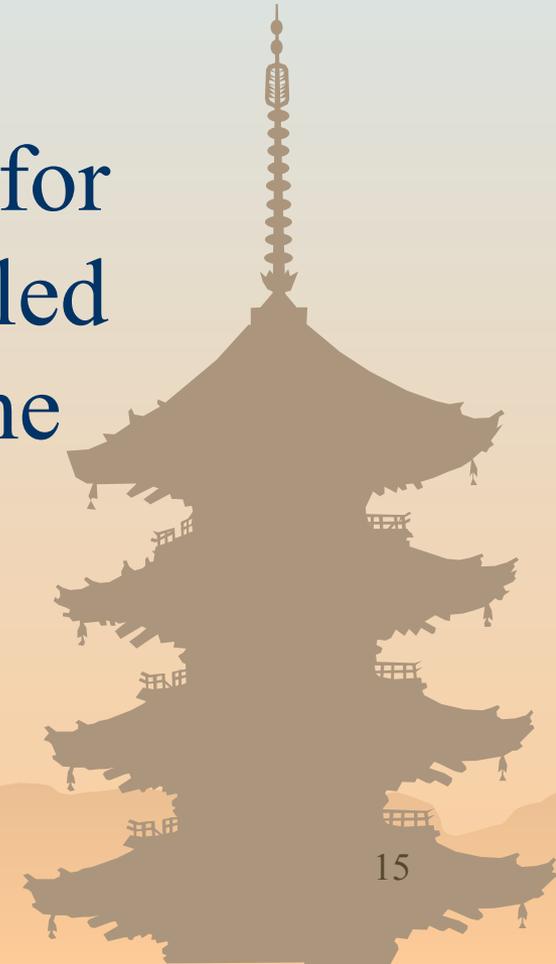
Table 2
Chronology of Eiheiji's *Honzan* Edition of the *Shōbōgenzō*

Year	Number of *Shōbōgenzō* Chapters Published
1796	2
1797	14
1798	11
1799	9
1800	22
1801	14
1802	5
1803	8
1804	1
1805	3
1811	1
1815	boxed set of entire edition
Total 20 years	90 chapters

Today *Shōbōgenzō* is known in three main editions: the one of 12 chapters (called *shinsō* 新草 , written by Dōgen before dying), the one of 75 (*kyūsō* 旧草) and the one of 95 chapters (Honzanban).

The first two editions were never printed but reproduced manually over the course of time. The edtition of 95 chapters is the most complete and includes all of the chapters from the other two editions. Scholars do not agree on which of the three is the most reliable.

Besides *Shōbōgenzō* written in the Japanese language (called *kana Shōbōgenzō*), another *Shōbōgenzō* exists. It is *mana Shōbōgenzō* (or *maji Shōbōgenzō*), written in Chinese and containing 300 kōans. In fact, the real title is *sanbyakusoku Shōbōgenzō* (*Shōbōgenzō* of 300 kōans). It was compiled in 1235 by Dōgen and used for the drafting of the Japanese language *Shōbōgenzō*.

Shōbōgenzō rediscovered

After Dōgen's death, *Shōbōgenzō* remained within the temple precincts and though studied by monks, was not considered as the main doctrinal text for the Sōtō school.

Only from the 18th century (that is 5 centuries after Dōgen's death), *Shōbōgenzō* began to play an important role within the Sōtō school.

It coincided with the birth of the movement for the restoration of the purity of Dōgen's teaching, a return to the roots of the school and the rejection of spurious teachings (*shūtō fukko*).

In particular, its main leader Gesshū Sōko (1618–96) and his disciple Manzan Dōhaku (1636-1715) after him, promoted the study of *Shōbōgenzō* amongst the monks and insisted on its value as canonical text for the Sōtō school.

However, outside the Sōtō environment, *Shōbōgenzō* was not known and was not recognized for its importance in the history of Japanese thought. The first to appreciate and to make it known to the general public was Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960), a scholar of Japanese thought.

In the second decade of the 20th century Watsuji wrote a series of essays on Dōgen, the most important of which is 沙門道元 *Shamon Dōgen* ("Monk Dōgen") (1926) in which he recognized not only the religious value of *Shōbōgenzō*, but also its important position in the history of Japanese thought.

After that, the text was studied and left a great influence on the Kyōto school of philosophy, for example with Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) and Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962).

From that time on, *Shōbōgenzō* began to be largely studied by scholars occupying a preminent role in the field of academic studies. After the Second World War, it began to spread also among the general public.

Shōbōgenzō and the transmission of a canonical text

As we have seen up to now, *Shōbōgenzō* was kept for centuries within temple precincts, and also there it did not play an important role in the teaching of the Sōtō school. It was not even studied by monks, and was not even accessible, if not by senior monks.

The particular destiny of the text is due to several factors, among which the history of the Sōtō school is particularly relevant.

In fact, under the leader of the school, Keizan Jōkin (1268-1325), a disciple of Gikai, Sōtō took an unexpected turn and was transformed into a mass movement: local costumes and popular beliefs and traditions were incorporated.

25

The profound and original insights of Dōgen, his philosophical thought and his tendency to be isolated from the secular world, were abandoned and the opposite of what Dōgen taught prevailed. In this situation *Shōbōgenzō* could not possibly play an active role in the Sōtō school.

Its role became formal. The possesion of an edition of the text, or part of it was considered proof of the direct lineage with Dōgen, who was considered as the founder of the school. As such it was not a reference point for doctrine, but a symbol that guaranteed lineage from Dōgen, and from him down to Chinese Buddhism. In this sense it also played an important part in the struggles amongst temples for gaining authority over others.

So, for centuries the Sōtō school preferred to found its authority on lineage rather than on the transmission of doctrine.

Another reason can be found in the lack of a definitive text. The presence of many different editions prevented recognizing one of them as the most authoritative and a certain reference for all.

Another reason can be found in the intrinsic difficulty of the text. Its doctrinal and philosophical content, together with linguistic abstruseness, rendered the text too difficult for the general public and also for scarsely learned monks.

The story of *Shōbōgenzō* is at least peculiar: it lay dormant for centuries. Respected and also venerated, it was scarcely known for its highly valuable doctrinal content. Considered by the Sōtō school as its canonical text, it was however, relegated to a pure formal role and its rediscovery was mostly due to secular scholars.

Often, and mostly in the case of texts whose content is not easily accessible, the great spiritual guides such as *Shōbōgenzō* tend to be viewed more as symbols of the spiritual unity of a group, as their roots, than for their doctrinal content.

What practical consideration for the users of the source can be pointed out?

1. from a general philological point of view:

   The very fact that *Shōbōgenzō* was jealously kept within temple precincts and copied only by reverent monks, helped to prevent deviations from the original. From the Muromachi period we can find almost no variants. We can suppose that the sacralized aura that permeated *Shōbōgenzō* could help a faithful transmission. Who dares to correct a sacred text?

However, the importance of the possession of *Shōbōgenzō*, or part of it, as a token of authority, can have stimulated the production, or inclusion of spurious parts. Different traditions within the Sōtō school, or important temples had a tendency to rely on their own version of *Shōbōgenzō* (for ex. The 75 chapters version belong to Ejō's lineage and the one in 60 chapters to that of Jakuen 75) and the Honzanban which represent the Sōtō school contains all the 95 chapters.

2. from the point of view of the use of the source:

Much attention must be paid to the chapters involved: if they are surely recognized as a production of Dōgen or not, and if they are an early production, or a late one, because there are substantial differences between the two, and they cannot be treated in the same way.

THANK YOU

ご清聴ありがとうございました