

[Member Book, Heine, Wisdom Within Words](#)

Discussion published by Steven Heine on Friday, August 26, 2022

Dear All,

I am pleased to announce the publication of my new book: Steven Heine *Wisdom within Words: An Annotated Translation of Dōgen's Chinese-Style Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

Wisdom within Words is the first complete bilingual edition and annotated translation of the poetry collection entitled *Kuchugen*, which features 150 Chinese-style verses (*kanshi*) written by Dōgen Zenji (1200-1253), founder of the Soto Zen sect in early medieval Japan, and compiled in the eighteenth century by Menzan Zuiho. These poems are essential in highlighting several key aspects of Dōgen's manner of thinking and process of writing creatively while transmitting the Chan/Zen tradition from China to Japan in the first half of the thirteenth century. Dōgen learned the Chinese style of writing poetry—featuring four rhyming lines with seven characters each—when he travelled to the mainland in the 1220s. It was there that he first composed 50 verses, the only texts available from this career stage. He continued to write Sinitic poetry throughout his career at both Koshōji temple in Kyoto and Eihei-ji temple in the remote mountains.

Dōgen's poems had various aims, including reflecting on meditation during periods of reclusion, commenting on cryptic koan cases, eulogizing deceased patriarchs, celebrating festivals and seasonal occasions, welcoming new administrative appointees at the temple, remarking on the life of the Buddha and other aspects of attaining enlightenment, and highlighting various teachings or instructions. Although Dōgen's poetry has often been overlooked by the sectarian tradition, these writings have played valuable roles in the development of East Asian Buddhist contemplative life.

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"Dōgen's Zen prose works have been studied extensively, but prior to this volume, scant attention has been paid to his Zen poetry. Now, the senior Dōgen scholar in the West, Steven Heine, has crafted a much-needed portal for broader appreciations of the thirteenth-century Zen master's Chinese-style poems. Heine's translations from Dōgen's *Wisdom Within Words* are a must-read for those interested in Dōgen or Zen verse."

- **John Tucker, Professor of Japanese and East Asian History, East Carolina University**

"Steven Heine's *Wisdom within Words* is a skillfully translated as well as informatively introduced and insightfully commented upon collection of Chinese-style poetry by the matchless Zen and literary master Dōgen. This book will not only be celebrated as a major contribution to Zen studies, it will be welcomed by a wide range of readers who will treasure the access it provides to much of the greatest poetry by one of the greatest spiritual teachers of all time."

- **Bret W. Davis, author of *Zen Pathways: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Practice of Zen Buddhism***

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