

written in the dirt—the message of awakened ancestors

I sit near the door of my house. The steam of my pu'er tea drifts in the direction of the mourning doves' cooing. I see the faces of my mother and father in the mountains. They've died but have never left. I write in the dirt with a fallen twig: *at death we leave behind the radiance of our lives.*

These words remind me of the poet, Jokin Keizan Zenji. I imagine him making slow ink brush strokes, writing down the wisdom of the awakened ancestors that radiates in all of us: *unsurpassable bright lives are born of other unsurpassable bright lives*

The ink fades at the tail of his last stroke. He dips his brush tip into the stone that holds the ink. At the beginning, the black liquid dribbles on homemade rice paper. Finally, his hand dances with the brush. He writes on the paper that was once rice, that was once a seed, that was once dirt: *we receive the face of those with transmitted light with nothing lacking*

The ancient radiance of the first awakening is in our eyes, our faces. All the joy and faith in the world were given and received at birth. The power to enact the original awakening on this earth is present if we are aware of such power.

The mourning dove still coos. I pour tea over the words I wrote in the dirt. There's only a spot of mud there now. I look into the mud and realize the fruit of the earth was created in infinite time, before Buddha, before Christ. This ancient and infinite life is reflected in each of us. In our faces we can see the great ones from ancient times. If we want to see them, we can look eye-to-eye, face-to-face, stand body-to-body, even though the original awakened ones do not stand before us. This is what I remember of Jokin's poetry.

I am still sitting in the sun beneath a tree full of mulberries. I greet the ancestors who lit my face before my existence. I try not to run in fear of the radiance I resemble, which is to say, to not run in fear of myself. If I have not seen myself then how can I know myself as the heir of wisdom transmitted aeons ago?

I sip my tea and look at my feet. It must have been a shock when upon my birth the earth took shape. Trees came into view. I smelled gardenias, heard the wings of hummingbirds, tasted mother's milk, and my eyes were cleansed with tears.

Thousands of years have passed since the death of those I came from and yet it's still possible to offer incense, flowers, food, to bow to them, ring bells or blow a whistle made from the bone of a bald eagle. This is so I can clear my ears and write on the earth what is being said.

Jokin listened. He brushed the wisdom of awakened ancestors in ink made of charcoal, made of burnt branches, with a brush made from the hair of a goat: *like a dream your mind cannot think this but you do not have to dream of this either*

Aware of the beginning of time, we know that what we seek is already done. Peace is in that knowing. Peace is knowing that we've not just come to earth but have been here through a lineage of awakenings. When we listen and look deeply into each other we can hear the wisdom in the cooing of mourning doves. Awakened ancestors spoke through the silence and Jokin's hand brushed it in ink. I stand and begin to walk in meditation with the essence of Jokin's poetry.

I take a step and breathe.

*here is this life
you can see with this life all nature
in your eye, your face, and your body*

I breathe and take two slow deliberate steps.

through an inherited source of light, you can see

I breathe and take two more steps.

*A life that can be achieved, possessed, named,
and controlled is not the ancient life we were given. We walk with an ancient life*

Breathe and take three steps.

*the mountains are mirrors of our faces
the rivers mirrors of our bodies*

Breathing and standing in place for a moment.

*we are the ancient life before we knew life
there is no end to this life being given and received*

Now, keep breathing, keep walking.

In infinite time, my bones are a thousand years old. The tea I sip has touched my lips over millennia. The mulberry tree was over my head before I was born. The tree and the tea are grandparents from long ago and this is why I recognize them. And still, I can't grasp with the mind my resemblance of the radiance from the tree or the tea. I can only walk the earth a million times.

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