Sawaki Nyoho-e Treasurey

**Kodo Sawaki and Kesa**

Kodo Sawaki was ordained by Koho Sawada when he was 17 in 1897 at Soshinji in Amakusa, Kyushu. After two years he traveled as the tradition of ‘hensan’ ( visiting temples to practice with different teachers).

His first encounter with Nyoho-e was when he practiced with Rev. Ryoun Fueoka at Hosenji from 1899 to 1900.

Fueoka had practiced with Bokusan Nishiari, a great Zen master, for about 20 years. Sawaki felt an affinity with Fueoka, for the first time in his life he met the true teacher of the Dharma.

Sawaki had a competitive nature and wanted to gain ‘satori’ in his early years but he learned from Fueoka’s unassuming presence the essence of ‘no-gain’ (*mushotoku* ) Zen practice. Although Sawaki only could practice with Fueoka for less than 2 years Fueoka was a lasting influence for Sawaki for the rest of his life.

It was during this time with Fueoka Sawaki saw him wearing an unusual style of okesa. From the two sources of Sawaki’s biography in Japanese there were two okesa that was mentioned, and one was ‘a gray okesa with fine ramie ( ‘*Echigojofu*’ 越後上布)’ and the other was ‘a mokuran (ochre) linen okesa with fine visible stitches’.

Fueoka’s okesa was called ‘nyoho-e’ (the robe made in accordance with the Buddha's teaching) which the practice was lost but revived in 18th century Japan by a Shingon scholar monk Jiun Onko.

Though Sawaki didn’t know anything about ‘nyoho-e’ at that time Fueoka’s okesa gave Sawaki a deep lasting impression. Fueoka’s presence of wearing nyoho-e okesa gave Sawaki an aspiration that he thought ‘I wish I would be able to wear such okesa someday.’. His wish came true many years later when Sawaki was studying Yogachara teaching at Horyuji in Nara.

Fueoka gave Sawaki private lectures on some of Dogen’s important texts such as ‘Gakudo Yojinshu’ and ‘Eihei Shingi’, but when Sawaki begged Fueoka to teach Shobogenzo, he was advised that in order to truly understand Dogen’s teachings he needed to study Buddhism in general first.

Sawaki took Fueoka’s words to heart and studied at two Buddhist schools, a Shin Buddhist school in Takada and Horyuji Kangakuin in Nara from 1906 after he was discharged from his 6 years of military service.

It was during his time in Nara he met two Shingon nuns who wore the same style of kesa Fueoka roshi was wearing. The encounter with the nuns introduced him to the study and the practice of nyoho-e kesa. He explored it more in later years and advocated the importance of nyoho-e in Soto Zen.

Read more:

＊The story with the Shingon nuns and Sawaki’s nyohoe study

＊Jiun Onko ( Kokiji) and Sawaki’s nyohoe study

＊Sawaki roshi's first nyoho-e kesa (15jo Funzoe)

＊Nyohoe movement in 1930’s

＊Soto School regulation and nyohoe

＊How the sewing group ‘Fukudenkai’ started

＊The teaching of ’*E hou ichi nyo’* ( 衣法一如）The robe and the dharma are one

＊Shobogenzo Kesakudoku ( Virtue of Kesa) and Den-e (Transmission robe)

＊Kesa without self expression: Nyohoe and commercially made kesa

＊’Great Robe of Liberation - Study of Kesa’ by Echu Kyuma

＊Sanshin Style nyohoe sewing