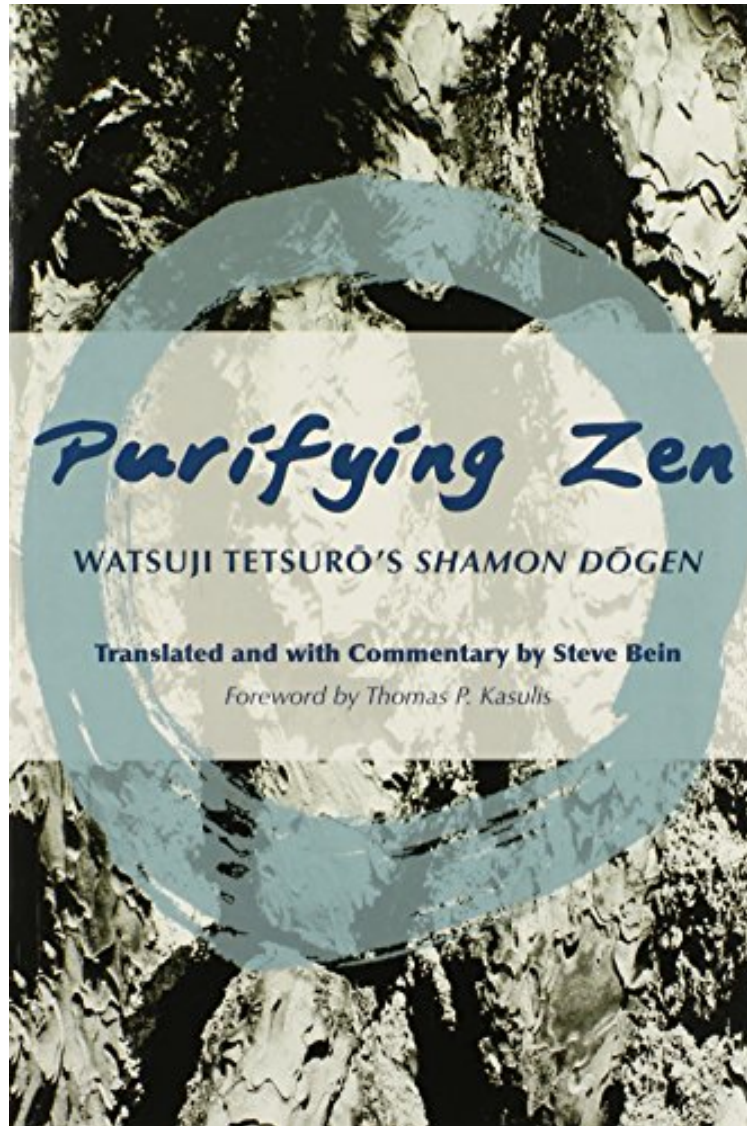


[Ebook pdf] Purifying Zen: Watsuji Tetsuro's Shamon Dogen

## Purifying Zen: Watsuji Tetsuro's Shamon Dogen

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**From University of Hawaii Press : Purifying Zen: Watsuji Tetsuro's Shamon Dogen** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Purifying Zen: Watsuji Tetsuro's Shamon Dogen:

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Historically Interesting, Philosophically BlandBy John C. Marshall Jr.This is a translation of Watsuji Tetsuro's "Shamon Dogen" (Dogen, the Monk). I tried several times to locate its original publication date in the Forward, Introduction, and Steve Bein's commentary, but came up empty handed. Other research puts the article's initial printing between 1925 and 1935, its appearance occurring as part of the growing intellectual movement known as the Kyoto School. Watsuji is usually linked with this movement.Japanese

intellectuals in the early half of the twentieth century worked to introduce the western philosophical tradition to Japanese intellectual life. They largely believed that Japan simply had nothing comparable to western rational inquiry, and if Japan was to participate (or compete) in a larger global community, western rationalism needed to find a place in its academic institutions and social life. Many Japanese intellectuals studied in Europe and America and returned home with the writings of Kant, Hegel, James, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger stuffed in their luggage. Watsuji initially fell under the spell of this intellectual climate, with a strong interest in the literary, including Romanticism. But the introduction of foreign ideas at a time of growing nationalism produced a milieu of both admiration and discontent given to the reworking of western ideas to reflect a more Japanese sensibility. Many Japanese found western individualism and a metaphysics of Being dispiriting and aesthetically jarring and questioned the wisdom of any syncretic project with western philosophy. The year 1918 became a turning point in Watsuji's life, when his father, not especially happy with his son's western interests, basically put to him the question "What has Freiburg got to do with Kyoto," to ape a line from classical Christianity. Watsuji, moved by the criticism, started to study intellectuals closer to home. One of his explorations produced this article on Dogen. Though unimaginable for moderns, Dogen in Watsuji's time was almost completely unknown except to Soto zen monks. Watsuji's article sought to reestablish Dogen as a major light in the Japanese intellectual heritage. "Shamon Dogen" single-handedly rescued Dogen from obscurity, and it is this fact that makes this article historically interesting. It is the first effort to introduce Dogen's philosophy to the world. But as Bein makes clear in his commentary, it is geared toward a Japanese audience and is largely designed to inspire a Japanese audience. Western philosophical concerns lie in the background to themes more in tune with Japanese interests. Watsuji's presentation of Dogen's "Kingdom of Truth" emphasized zazen, poverty, and a strict adherence to a lineage of masters from whom enlightenment could be transferred. Time-space, epistemology, and the dialectics of western philosophy do not in any way dominate Watsuji's presentation. In this sense, Watsuji's article is not a philosophical endeavor. "Shamon Dogen" is an inspirational work designed to promote a native intellectual equal to the influx of western thinkers. To the western reader, it comes off a bit bland and intellectually light. If you are expecting something a western philosopher could appreciate, this book will be disappointing. However, from a standpoint of zen practice and intellectual history, this book should be on every zen practitioner's reading list, as it provides the starting point for all the Dogen studies that followed. It is also a good introduction to Dogen's teachings. The Japanese coloring in "Shamon Dogen" is interesting. If you like reading it, a comparable film presentation, *Zen*, struck me as a mirror of Watsuji's article possessing similar themes and concerns, an interesting more contemporary insight into what the Japanese would want to see reflecting a native son's life. If you want a more philosophical book on Dogen, Hee Jin Kim's *Eihei Dogen: Mystical Realist* is largely considered a classic. Watsuji broached Dogen's thoughts on art and poetry, but a recent publication by Pamela D. Winfield, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kukai and Dogen on the Art of Enlightenment*, offers a more nuanced and complete perspective of Dogen's aesthetics.

*Purifying Zen: Watsuji Tetsuro's Shamon Dogen* makes available in a clear and fluid translation an early classic in modern Japanese philosophy. Steve Bein's annotations, footnotes, introduction, and commentary bridge the gap separating not only the languages but also the cultures of its original readers and its new Western audience. from the Foreword by Thomas P. Kasulis In 1223 the monk Dogen Kigen (1200-1253) came to the audacious conclusion that Japanese Buddhism had become hopelessly corrupt. He undertook a dangerous pilgrimage to China to bring back a purer form of Buddhism and went on to become one of the founders of Soto Zen, still the largest Zen sect in Japan. Seven hundred years later, the philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro (1889-1960) also saw corruption in the Buddhism of his day. Watsuji's efforts to purify the religion sent him not across the seas but searching Japan's intellectual past, where he discovered writings by Dogen that had been hidden away by the monks' own sect. Watsuji later penned *Shamon Dogen* (Dogen the monk), which single-handedly rescued Dogen from the brink of obscurity, reintroducing Japan to its first great philosophical mind. *Purifying Zen* is the first English translation of Watsuji's landmark book. A text intended to acquaint Japan with one of its finest philosophers, the work delves into the complexities of individuals in social relationships, lamenting the stark egoism and loneliness of life in an increasingly Westernized Japan. In addition to an introduction that provides biographical details on Watsuji and Dogen, the translation is supplemented with a brief guide to the themes and ideas of *Shamon Dogen*, beginning with a consideration of the nature of faith and the role of responsibility in Watsuji's vision of Dogen's Zen. It goes on to examine the technical terms of Dogen's philosophy and the role of written language in Dogen's thought.

About the Author Steve Bein teaches philosophy at the University of Dayton. He holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and did graduate work at Nanzan University in Nagoya and Obirin University in Tokyo. His books include *Compassion and Moral Guidance* and *Purifying Zen*.