

Song of the Thatched Hermitage

(Sōanka by Sekitō Kisen, 700-790)

I've built a thatched hut with no treasures in it. After eating, I relax and enjoy a nap. When it was first built, the thatch was so fresh. Now it's falling apart, and needs to be covered with more thatch. The person abiding in the hut is always present, not stuck to inside, outside, or in between. Where worldly people abide, I don't abide. What worldly people love, I don't love. Though the hut is small, it includes the whole realm of reality. In this ten-foot square, an old person illuminates appearances and their nature. A bodhisattva of the unsurpassed vehicle trusts without doubt. Those of middle or low capacities can't help wondering if this hut will be destroyed or not. Whether it's destroyed or not, the host originally abides, not dwelling south or north, east or west. With a supreme foundation, it's strong and secure. A bright window beneath the green pines; jade palaces and vermilion towers can't compare with it. Covered with a patched robe, having put the myriad matters to rest, at such a time this mountain monk doesn't understand a thing. Abiding in this hut, one no longer strives to get free. Who would proudly arrange seats, trying to entice guests? Turn the light around and shine it back; thus immediately return. The vast spiritual source can't be turned towards or away from. Meet the ancestral teachers, become intimate with their instructions, bind thatch to build a hut, and don't give up. Let go of a hundred years and abide freely everywhere. With the wave of a hand, immediately go, without fault. Thousands of words, myriad explanations, are only to free you from obscurations. If you want to know the deathless person in the hut, how could it be separate from this skin bag here and now?