

Poetry Stones #7–9

#7

The seventh monument is located on the north side of the street, just before it curves to the south:

tazune iru

miyama no oku no

sato zo moto

wa ga sumi nareshi

miyako narikeri

Upon arriving

in this small mountain village

what did I find but

the same home that I had known

and lived in for many years

Explanation:

When Zen Master Dōgen (1200–1253) moved to Echizen Province (now Fukui Prefecture) with his community of monks in 1243, he left behind the bustling capital of Kyoto. While this might have been a difficult transition, this poem expresses how Dōgen found the area around Eihei-ji Temple to be oddly familiar, as if he had already been living there. It is also thought that this poem may have been composed in response to repeated offers to return to the capital.

#8

The eighth monument, placed at the entrance of Eihei-ji Temple, is inscribed with one of Dōgen's most well-known poems:

haru wa hana

natsu hototogisu

aki wa tsuki

fuyu yuki saete

suzushi kari keru

Spring—cherry blossoms

summer—the lesser cuckoo

in autumn—the moon

in winter, a chill descends;

the snow freezes crisp and clear

Explanation:

As we enjoy the charms of each season, the year passes before our very eyes. Accepting the changing nature of all things and learning to live within that cycle is a key step on the path to awakening.

#9

The ninth and final monument is located just outside the entrance to Haku-ji.

asahi matsu

kusaba no tsuyu no

hodo naki ni

isogi na tachi so

nobe no akikaze

Mournful autumn wind

please sit for just a moment

over the meadow

let stay the morning dew that

soon will vanish in the sun

Explanation:

Like the dew that evaporates in the morning, existence is impermanent. For Dōgen, this was not a bleak thought, but rather an opportunity to reflect on the beautiful ephemerality of life.