



**Commentary on the Song of Awakening: A  
Twentieth Century Japanese Zen Master's  
Commentary on the Seventh Century Poem by the  
Chinese Ch'an Master Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh**

*Kodo Sawaki*

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## Commentary on the Song of Awakening: A Twentieth Century Japanese Zen Master's Commentary on the Seventh Century Poem by the Chinese Ch'an Master Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh Kodo Sawaki

The Song of Awakening (chin. Cheng-tao ke, jap. Shōdōka), is a seminal text within early Chinese Chan (jap. Zen). Written in the seventh century by the Chinese master Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh (Jap. Yōka Genkaku, known familiarly as Yōka Daishi), this superb poem resonates with Yōka Daishi's great awakening to the truth of reality. As such, it has had a deep influence on the understanding and practice of a long line of Chinese and Japanese Zen masters and practitioners.

Kōdō Sawaki uses the poetic expression of Shōdōka as a springboard for a wide-ranging commentary that not only elucidates the poem, but adds a rich background of Buddhist teachings and emphasizes Sawaki Roshi's focus on upright sitting in the zazen posture as the seat of realization. Filled with humor, Japanese folk history, and sometimes a no-holds barred critique of academic and priestly posturing, Sawaki's commentary is a pleasure to encounter.

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