

The Record of Ippen:
Sayings Handed Down by Disciples
(concluded)

TRANSLATED BY DENNIS HIROTA

80. Further he said, The Name is the Dharma that all the Buddhas have themselves realized.¹ Hence it is explained, "The Buddhas' bringing others to enlightenment is itself Amida."²

81. Further he said, The Lotus of the Dharma and the Name are one. The Lotus is the Dharma in color-form; the Name is the Dharma of mind.³ Since form and [perceiving] mind are non-dual, the Lotus is in itself the Name. Thus the *Meditation Sutra* teaches: "The person who utters the nembutsu is a pundarika among men."⁴ "Pundarika" means lotus flower. And the Lotus is called *Saddharma-pundarika sūtra* (Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Dharma).

82. Further he said: Someone asked, Is it possible to attain birth through doing other practices or not? And which is superior, the Lotus or the Name?

* This is the third and concluding portion of *The Record of Ippen: Sayings Handed Down by Disciples*. Part I appeared in *EB* xi, ii (October 1978), pp. 113-131; Part II appeared in *EB* xii, i (May 1979), pp. 130-147.

¹ All the Buddhas of the past, present and future have attained or will attain perfect enlightenment through the realization of Amida-samadhi. (*Genshaku*)

² Cf. Hōnen's words in *Ōhara dangi kikigaki shō*: "Among the Buddhas Amida is primary and central. . . . He is the essence of the compassion of all the Buddhas" (T83, 317c, 8-9; cited in *Genshaku*).

³ "Dharma in color-form" refers to the physical appearance of the eight scrolls of the *Lotus Sutra*; "Dharma of mind" refers to the fact that the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life* points to the original nature of mind. (*Genshaku*)

⁴ T12, 346b, 12-3.

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Ippen answered, If the various other practices also lead to birth, so be it; if not, then not. And if the Name is inferior to the Lotus, then let it be inferior; if it excels it, then may it excel. The person who is not wise in his own shrewdness, but ceases putting on airs [of wisdom] and wholeheartedly says the nembutsu, is praised by Shan-tao as "the most exalted among men."⁵ It is a passage from the sutras which states that [the teaching of] the Lotus is the fundamental intention in [the Buddhas'] appearing in this world.⁶ It is also a scriptural passage which states that Śākyamuni's appearing in this evil world of the five defilements and establishing the Way was for the purpose of teaching the Dharma [of the nembutsu] that is most difficult to believe.⁷ If there is benefit in accordance with the nature of the particular being, both are superior Dharmas, both are the fundamental intention. If there is no benefit, both are inferior Dharmas, and neither is the Buddha's fundamental intention. It is because there are other sutras and other schools that this question arises. When the Three Treasures perish utterly, with what other teaching will you compare and debate? You should become a being of the hundred-year period after the demise of the Dharma who knows nothing aside from the nembutsu and wholeheartedly say the Name.⁸ This is a question of one who has no aspiration for enlightenment.

83. Further, someone asked which of the various doctrines among the different streams of Pure Land Buddhism one should adhere to.

Ippen answered, The great diversity among the various doctrines is a concern that emerges from attachment to self. In the Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*, there is no doctrinal rationale. If birth were attained through rationale, this question would be appropriate. But birth does not depend in any way on rationale; it depends on the Name. Even if you feel in your heart that you will not attain birth because of having entrusted to the Name that I recommend, if only you say the nembutsu you will be born in the Pure Land. I have come to believe that whatever sham doctrine

⁵ *Sanzengi*, T37, 278a, 17-8.

⁶ *Lotus Sutra*, "Chapter on Skillful Means," T9, 7a, 21-2, "The Buddhas, world-honored ones, appear in the world for one great cause alone," as interpreted by Chih-i.

⁷ *Amida Sutra*, T12, 348a, 23-4.

⁸ *Larger Sutra*, T12, 279a, 11-2: "In the future my sutras and the ways I have taught will die away utterly, but out of compassion I will have this [*Larger*] *Sutra* remain, surviving for one hundred years."

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you may utter with your lips or believe in your mind, the Name is a Dharma that does not depend on rationale, nor does it depend on the mind, so if you recite it, you will attain birth without fail. For example, when something is set aflame, one may wish mentally, "Do not burn," and say this aloud, but fire does not depend on such words or on the power of thought; it simply burns out of its own inherent power. It is the same with water wetting things. In like manner, the Name possesses, by its own nature, the virtuous power to bring about birth, so when a person says the Name, he will be born in the Pure Land, without any dependence on doctrine, without any dependence on the heart or mind, without any dependence on words. I believe this to be the practice embodying Other Power, which surpasses conceivability.

84. Further he said, The original source of the Deity of the Kumano Shrine is Amida. Softening his light and becoming one with the dust of this world,⁹ [Amida] manifested himself as a god in order to spread the nembutsu. Hence the Deity is called [the deity of] the Hall of Witness. This is because he gives witness to the nembutsu. The *Amida Sutra* states, "In the West is the Buddha of Immeasurable Life"; this is Amida who actively gives witness [to the nembutsu].¹⁰

85. Further he said, My teaching is the oral transmission given in dream by the Manifestation of the Kumano Shrine.¹¹ I had before that studied the Pure Land teaching for as long as twelve years, but it was all an exercise of self-will, of which I was unable to free myself. Nevertheless, while I was in retreat at Kumano, I received a revelation that declared: "Make no judgments about the goodness or evil of your heart and mind. Since this mind is illusory, both when it is good and when it is evil, it cannot be essential for attaining emancipation. Namu-amida-butsu itself is born." At that time I abandoned my own intentions and aspirations of self-power once and for all. When, thus awakened, I read Shan-tao's Commentary, I realized that there is not a single passage or phrase in it that is not the

⁹ Expression originally drawn from *Tao ts ching* 4 but often invoked with reference to the view that the native Shinto gods are manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas (*honji suijaku*).

¹⁰ See section 46, *EB* xii, 1 (May 1979), pp. 132-33.

¹¹ Summer of 1274; for the account of the *Hijiri-e*, see "Record of Ippen: Letters," *EB* xi, 1 (May 1978), pp. 54-5.

virtuous working of the Dharma. At the beginning of [the opening section,] "On the Profound Meaning," are the words "First I encourage the great assemblage of sentient beings so that they awaken the aspiration and take refuge in the Three Treasures": this is *Namu-amida-butsu*.¹² From this point through to the very end, every passage and every phrase is the Name.

86. Further he said, What is ultimately expressed in all the sacred teachings of Śākyamuni's lifetime is simply the Name. For in Tendai it is said, "The teachings largely give their praise to Amida";¹³ Shan-tao explains, "Hence, in the sutras the working of the nembutsu is widely praised";¹⁴ in the *Meditation Sutra*, [Śākyamuni] entrusts the sutra to Ānanda, saying "'Hold to these words' means 'Hold to the Name of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life'";¹⁵ the *Amida Sutra* he entrusts to Śāriputra, saying "[I teach] the Dharma [of the nembutsu] most difficult to believe"; and the *Larger Sutra* he entrusts to Maitreya, saying "In a single utterance one attains the supreme virtue." The three [Pure Land] sutras as well as [all the sutras of] the lifetime of teaching ultimately give expression simply to the nembutsu. The sacred teachings are all none other than [Śākyamuni's] teaching of this nembutsu. Once you have understood this, you should abandon all things and just say the nembutsu; if instead you devote your time to study or become attached to the sacred teachings and do not pronounce the Name, it is no different from vainly counting treasures that belong to another.¹⁶ It is like having a promissory note for a thousand *ryō* in gold and failing to collect it.¹⁷

These were his constant words.

¹² *Gengibun*, T97, 245c. "To awaken aspiration and take refuge" is the meaning of *namu*. The Three Treasures (Dharma, Buddha, monk) are the working of the Name, *amida-butsu*: *Amida* is Immeasurable Life (Dharma); *butsu* indicates the person of enlightenment, both the fully awakened (Buddha) and the partly awakened (monk). Thus, awakening aspiration and taking refuge in the Three Treasures is none other than *Namu-amida-butsu*. (Earlier commentary quoted in *Genshaku*)

¹³ *Shikan bugyō denguketsu* 止觀輔行傳弘決 by Chan-jan 湛然, the sixth patriarch of the Tendai school in China, T46, 182c.

¹⁴ *Jōzengi*, T37, 268a, 15.

¹⁵ T12, 346b, 15-6.

¹⁶ *Avatamsaka Sutra*, T9, 429a, 3-4: "Say there is a poor man who day and night counts the treasure that belongs to another, while himself having not half a cent. Much learning is like this."

87. Further he said, There was a nun in Iyo province named Butsu-amidabutsu who spontaneously gave expression to the teaching without ever having studied. She was always saying, "Knowing, know not; return and become foolish and ignorant." What this means accords perfectly with the Pure Land teaching.¹⁸

88. Further he said, It is stated, "That Buddha is actually in the world now, having attained Buddhahood. Know that the amassed Vows of his primal aspiration are not vain."¹⁹ "Amassed Vows" should be understood to mean "Vows piled up"; it does not have the sense of "momentous" here. "That Buddha is actually in the world now, having attained Buddhahood. Know his primal aspiration": this refers to the forty-eight Vows. "The amassed Vows are not vain" refers to the Vows of birth through the nembutsu heaped one upon another. The explanation, "Declaring and vowing one by one,"²⁰ also has this meaning.

89. Further he said, I had a dream of both dream and reality. (This was a dream on the night of the 21st of the first month, Kōan 11 [1288].) I thought I was travelling about in practice with a variety of transformations [of scene]: this was dream. When I woke up and looked around, [I realized that] I had never gone out from this practice hall and I thought that this inactivity was my own, true nature; this also was dream. Here, both dream and reality were dream. People of the present who make a great clamor about having enlightenment are of this level. If one has not genuinely awakened from the dream of birth-and-death, such an enlightenment can only be dream. In truth, waking from the dream of birth-and-death is solely Namu-amida-butsu.

90. Further he said, The *Treatise on the Mind of Enlightenment* states: "After one has encountered the raft [of the Dharma] and reached the

¹⁷ *Kangō hōkai hiketsushō* 金剛寶戒秘決章 attributed to Hōnen states: "It is like imagining oneself already in possession of a thousand pieces of gold when one has a promissory note for that amount but has not yet claimed it. . . . It is to take texts as the Dharma, a promissory note for the gold itself."

¹⁸ Cf. T'an-luan's *Ōjōronchū*: "The mind of a sage is without knowledge; therefore there is nothing it does not know." (Quoted in *Genshaku*)

¹⁹ *Ōjōraisan*, T47, 447c, 25-6.

²⁰ *Gengibun*, T37, 250b, 15-6.

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other shore, one should abandon even the Dharma."²¹ The Land of Bliss also, in so far as it is of the level of pointing the direction by establishing forms,²² comes under the dictum, "One should abandon even the Dharma."

91. Further he said, Concerning the statement, "Practices in the three modes of action are all the nembutsu":²³ this does not mean that if you take care to worship or to think on the Buddha in your mind, that in itself is the nembutsu. When one takes the rosary in hand, though one may not say the Name aloud, without fail *Namu-amida-butsu* surfaces in the heart. When one worships with the body, unfailingly the Name is called to mind. When one reads the sutras or concentrates on the features of the Buddha, the Name never fails to manifest itself. This is expressed as, "The three modes of action are themselves the nembutsu." You should be perfectly clear about this with regard to calling the chanting of scriptures and so on the five kinds of Right Practice also.

92. Further he said, The phrase, "It is taught that by practicing both virtues and wisdom, obstructions shall be eliminated,"²⁴ refers to Shingon. "It is taught that one should sit in meditation and contemplate" refers to the [Zen] school. Jōhen²⁵ applied these words thus in his *Zoku-senjaku*. However, "None surpasses attaining birth in the West through saying the nembutsu" means that of all the [Buddhist] teachings the nembutsu is the most excellent. This is because of Other Power, which is wondrous beyond conceivability.

²¹ *Kongōchō yugachū hotsu anokutara sammyakusambodai shinron* 金剛頂瑜伽中發阿耨羅三藐二菩提心論 T32, 573b; attributed to Nāgārjuna and highly regarded in the Shingon school.

²² See section 8, *EB* XI, II (October 1978), p. 119.

²³ From Shōkū's *Ta hitsu shō* 他筆抄.

²⁴ *Hōjisan*, T47, 435b, 7-10: "The Tathāgata appeared in this world of five defilements to convert beings through his skillful means. He preached the attainment of salvation through broad learning; . . . he taught that by practicing both virtues and wisdom, obstructions shall be eliminated; he taught that one should sit in meditation and contemplate. The many and various dharma-gates all lead to emancipation. But none surpasses attaining birth in the West through the nembutsu."

²⁵ 靜運 (1166-1224). A Shingon priest connected with Zenrin-ji in Kyoto. His *Zoku-senjaku* is a work in praise of Hōnen's *Senjaku-shū*.

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93. Further he said, The revelation of the Taima Mandala²⁶ declared: "Your long accumulated merits are not merits, virtues not virtues." All dharmas of good and evil should be understood in terms of this. Do not deliberate about some before or after beyond Namu-amida-butsu here and now.

94. Further he said, Concerning the statement, " 'The adornment of the saintly host' signifies the host of those who are presently there [in the Pure Land] and those throughout the ten quarters of the Dharma-realm who will be born in the same way":²⁷ when seen from the perspective of the virtue of the Name, which is the fulfilled cause [for birth], all beings, regardless of where they may be in the ten realms, including even those of this saḥā world, are among the true beings of the Land of Bliss. When seen from the perspective of illusory discrimination, pure is divided from defiled, and sentient beings and Buddha are sharply distinguished.

95. Further he said, If a little water is put in an earthenware vessel, it will evaporate presently. If it is added into the Ganges River, it becomes harmoniously united in one taste with the river and will not dry up. In this same way, once we have turned our lives, transient with the defilement of premature death, and placed them in refuge in Immeasurable Life, which is non-arising and non-perishing, there is no birth-and-death. In the commentary of a great teacher of men it is written: "If a flower is brought into the heaven of five purities, wind and sun will not wither it. If water is added to the miraculous river [wherein a dragon dwells], it will not be exhausted in any drought of this world."²⁸

96. Further he said, Apart from the Name, there is no merit whatever in ourselves. I believe everything [on our part] to be but deception and delusion. Consider all your words apart from the nembutsu to be gibberish.
This he said constantly.

²⁶ A renowned tapestry depicting the Pure Land based on the contemplative exercises of the *Meditation Sutra*. Ippen made a pilgrimage to Taima-dera in Nara in 1286.

²⁷ *Gengibun*, T37, 246c, 22-3.

²⁸ From the *Anrakushū* of Tao-ch'o, T47, 7b, 22-3. Tao-ch'o, however, uses the metaphors to depict the power of the aspiration for enlightenment, not of Immeasurable Life.

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97. Further he said, "Nembutsu, which is like the great earth," means that since the Name holds the virtue that is the fulfilled cause [for embracing all beings] of the Dharma-realm, there is no place one can go and be apart from the Dharma. This is also taught in the words, "Amida, whose body is the Dharma-realm," and is further explained, "The lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters are all the house of the Dharmaking [Amida]." ²⁹

98. Further, someone asked, What have you decided about your remains after your death?

Ippen answered, As for my remains, the absence of any monument shall be my monument. What does it mean to leave remains behind? I have no idea. The legacies of people in worldly life are treasures and possessions. They make objects of attachment their monuments, and so it becomes a fault. I have no treasures or possessions. I have taken leave of all thoughts of attachment. Now, my monument is nothing but the place where all sentient beings utter the nembutsu. *Namu-amida-butsu*.

99. Further Ippen, declaring Kūya Shōnin to be his teacher and predecessor, took his words to heart and had them always on his lips. Kūya said: "Since there is nothing attached upon by the mind, with the sun's setting I halt; since there is no settled dwelling for the body, with the coming of daybreak I depart. Thick is the robe of humility, so sticks and tiles and stones do no hurt; and far-reaching is the abode of compassion, so no abuse or slander catches the ear. Since the samādhi I practice is one of leaving all to my lips, even the marketplace is my practice hall. Since the vision of Buddha I seek comes in response to voicing, my breath itself is a rosary. Night after night I await the Buddha's coming, and dawn after dawn rejoice that the end has come nearer. To fate I entrust my acts and words and thoughts, and to bodhi yield up the four forms of deportment." ³⁰

Further Kūya said, "When one seeks fame and leads a following, the body tires and the mind also; when one acquires merits and practices good acts, ambitions increase. Nothing is comparable to being completely solitary, uninvolved with any outside world; nothing matches reciting the Name and casting off the myriad concerns. The hermit living in seclusion

²⁹ From a hymn included in *Ōjōraisan*, T47, 444c, 13.

³⁰ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 4; also found in *Kūya Shōnin ashiden* 空也上人繪圖傳.

rejoices in his poverty; the dweller in a still room for meditation and contemplation makes a companion of quiet. Hempen clothes and paper bedding are robes of purity and are easily found, and there need be no fear whatever of thieves."³¹ Ippen, following these words of Dharma, abandoned his life in the mountains and meadows and found his shelter where wind and cloud led him, and though he had followers as the occasions arose, in his heart he was far removed from all entanglements. He possessed not a particle of money; no silken cloth touched his skin. He never took gold or silver objects in his hand and strictly refrained from liquor, meat, and the five forbidden flavors, thus polishing the jewels of the ten major precepts.

100. Further, Ippen once entered [the grounds of] the mansion of a warrior in Chikuzen province.³² A banquet was in progress, with people drinking, but the owner was particularly careful to straighten his clothes, wash his hands, and rinse out his mouth. Stepping down [into the garden] he turned to Ippen and accepted a nembutsu card from him. He said nothing further, so Ippen started to leave. Then the householder told the others, "This monk is the greatest fraud in the country. What a pretentious attitude!" One of the guests asked, "Then why did you accept the nembutsu card from him?" He answered, "Because there is nothing fraudulent in the nembutsu."

Ippen later said, "I've encountered many people, but here I think is a man who truly believes in the nembutsu. Other people all rely on some person, and there is no entrusting to the Dharma, but this layman knows the principle of 'entrusting to the Dharma and not to other people'; he is in perfect accord with the Buddha's final admonitions. How rare and wonderful!" Thus he lavished praise upon the man.

101. Further, when Ippen reached Kamakura, because of special circumstances guards strictly prohibited entry.³³ In addition, they deliberately slandered him, so Ippen said, "For me, nothing whatever is indispensable.

³¹ Attributed to Kuya in the *Hijiri-e*, scroll 7, but to Genshin in another source.

³² From the *Hijiri-e*, scroll 4; the incident occurred in 1276.

³³ The road was closed because the regent Hōjō Tokimune was travelling. The refusal may have stemmed, however, from a prohibition on the nembutsu within Kamakura. The *Hijiri-e* (scroll 5, 1282) states that Ippen, leading a party of followers, tried to force entry when soldiers were clearing the city of beggars, and that he was accused of merely seeking fame.

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I merely encourage people to utter the nembutsu. But how long will you be alive to assault and slander the Buddha's teaching thus? Even though it is the nembutsu that can save you when, drawn by your evil karma, you are about to head down the path of darkness."

The warriors made not the slightest reply but struck him twice with rods; whereupon, without any expression of pain, Ippen said, "The propagation of the nembutsu is my life. Yet I am forbidden thus. Why, then, should I go elsewhere? I will face my death here."

102. Further a follower, feeling uncertain about purple clouds that had gathered and flowers that had fallen, asked about them.³⁴ Ippen replied, "About the flowers, ask the flowers; concerning purple clouds ask the purple clouds: Ippen doesn't know."

103. Further, while Ippen was holding a seven-day session of continuous nembutsu practice at Jimoku-ji in Owari province,³⁵ the strength of [the provisions to continue with] the offering [of the nembutsu] was exhausted and the temple monks were lamenting among themselves, so Ippen said, "If there is the aspiration, we should stay for however many days it lasts. When we sense that sentient beings are moved by faith to give donations, then we simply accept. Thus it is said, 'Savor the taste of the Buddha's teaching and partake of the meal of being absorbed in meditation.' If we are concerned about clothing and food for ourselves, then [our Buddha-way] fails completely to be the way of benefiting beings. Rather, our turning to householders [and accepting donations] for the present is what it means to guide in accordance with, and on a level with, the nature and circumstances of the particular people. Let there be no lamenting whatever. The seven-day session will reach completion by itself."

104. Further, when the priest Karahashi Hōin brought a record of a dream he had had in which Ippen appeared as an incarnation of Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta,³⁶ Ippen admonished him with the words, "It is the

³⁴ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 6; *Ippen Shōnin eshiden*, scroll 2. Incident of the third month, 1282. Concerning the signs, see letter 6, *EB* xi, 1 (May 1978), p. 62.

³⁵ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 6; *Eshiden*, scroll 3. Incident of 1283.

³⁶ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 7; *Eshiden*, scroll 3. Incident of 1284. Karahashi was priest of Konkōji, founded by Kōya in Kyoto. Converted by Ippen, he became a follower, and is regarded as the founder of the Ishiya branch of the Ji school, one of twelve streams.

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nembutsu that is revealed as ultimate. If I am not Mahāsthāmaprāpta, will you refuse to believe?"

105. Further, about the fifth month of the year of his birth in the Pure Land, Ippen said, "Opportunities and conditions have already grown weak. People do not put my teaching and admonitions into practice. My life has not long to go, and the time of death is approaching."³⁷

106. Further, on the morning of the tenth day of the month before his death, while chanting the *Amida Sutra*, Ippen burned the books and other writings in his possession with his own hands, declaring "All the sacred teachings of [Śākyamuni's] lifetime were exhausted when they became *Namu-amida-butsu*."³⁸

107. Further, some days before his death,³⁹ he had his final instruction concerning the Dharma taken down⁴⁰ and then added, "After my death, some of you may cast yourselves to the bottom of the sea.⁴¹ If the settled mind has been established, whatever you may do there is no mistake [about your birth]; however, if your self-attachment has not been exhausted, this must not be done. Hard to receive is human life in which to encounter the Buddha-way. How lamentable it would be to cast it away in vain!"

108. Further, some days before his death,⁴² when people asked to receive his final teaching, Ippen said, "In the nembutsu that transcends the three modes of human action, all are the same, but for the sake of those who have no understanding of this truth—to whom these are mere words—and who have not raised in their own hearts the one thought-instant [of rejoicing]: *Ta-amidabutsu*,⁴³ does *Namu-amida-butsu* make you glad?" Whereupon *Ta-amidabutsu* wept with joy.

³⁷ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 11; *Eshiden*, scroll 4.

³⁸ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 11; 1289.

³⁹ *Hijiri-e*, scroll 11; 2nd of the eighth month, 1289.

⁴⁰ See Letter 10, "Record of Ippen: Letters," *EB* xi, 1 (May 1978), p. 65.

⁴¹ A practice reflecting the belief that birth could be attained through renouncing worldly life by drowning oneself.

⁴² *Hijiri-e*, scroll 11; *Eshiden*, scroll 4. Incident of the 2nd day, eighth month, 1289.

⁴³ 他阿彌陀佛 (1237–1319), also known as Shinkyō 眞教. The second patriarch of the Ji school.

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109. Further, before his birth in the Pure Land, someone reported that purple clouds had gathered (on the 9th and 10th of the eighth month, Shōō 2 [1289]).⁴⁴ Ippen said, "Well, I need not expect my death today or tomorrow. At the very end there should be not the slightest trace of such signs."

Ippen often said, "Unthinking people, apprehensive about the mischief of demons [at the time of their death], shift their attention to omens and do not entrust themselves to the true Buddha Dharma. This is altogether worthless. There is only *Namu-amida-butsu* to depend on."

110. Further Ippen said, "My disciples are not to perform funeral rites. Bodies should be abandoned on the moors for wild beasts. However, there is no need to extend this [prohibition] to the efforts of laymen who seek [through such rites] to effect bonds with the Dharma."⁴⁵

111. Further, someone, in anticipation, asked Ippen what would take place at the moment of his death.⁴⁶ He replied, "Good warriors and people of the Way do not make known to those about them the circumstances of their dying. People will likely not know my end."

His death did not deviate in the least from these words.

⁴⁴ *Hijiri-s*, scroll 12.

⁴⁵ *Hijiri-s*, scroll 12; last part of the eighth month, 1289.

⁴⁶ *Hijiri-s*, scroll 12; 23rd of the eighth month, 1289.