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TRANSLATION

A Chronological Biography of Zen Priest Hakuin

(Hakuin Oshō Nempu)

TRANSLATED BY NORMAN WADDELL

Introduction

The *Hakuin Oshō Nempu*, or *Chronological Biography of Zen Priest Hakuin*,¹ is the basic source for the life of Hakuin Ekaku, the father and greatest figure of modern Rinzai Zen. It was compiled by Tōrei Enji (1712–1792), the best known and perhaps greatest of Hakuin's disciples.

The *Hakuin Nempu* is hardly a biography in the modern sense. It contains none of the critical analysis, conjecture or other embellishment normally found in works of that sort. It rather brings together the facts, events, and experiences of Hakuin's career and presents them year by year in strictly chronological sequence. The work is divided into two parts. Part one, translated here, covers the period of his boyhood and religious training and concludes in his forty-second year with the decisive enlightenment experience that brought his religious quest to an end. Part two, spanning the second forty-two years of his life,

¹ The full title is *Ryūtaku-ji Kaiso Shinki Dokumyō Zenji Nempu*, "The Chronological Biography of Zen Master Shinki Dokumyō, Founder of Ryūtaku-ji Temple." Shinki Dokumyō is the honorific Zen master title conferred posthumously on Hakuin by the Emperor Gosakuramachi in 1769; Ryūtaku-ji is the temple Hakuin founded in his later years.

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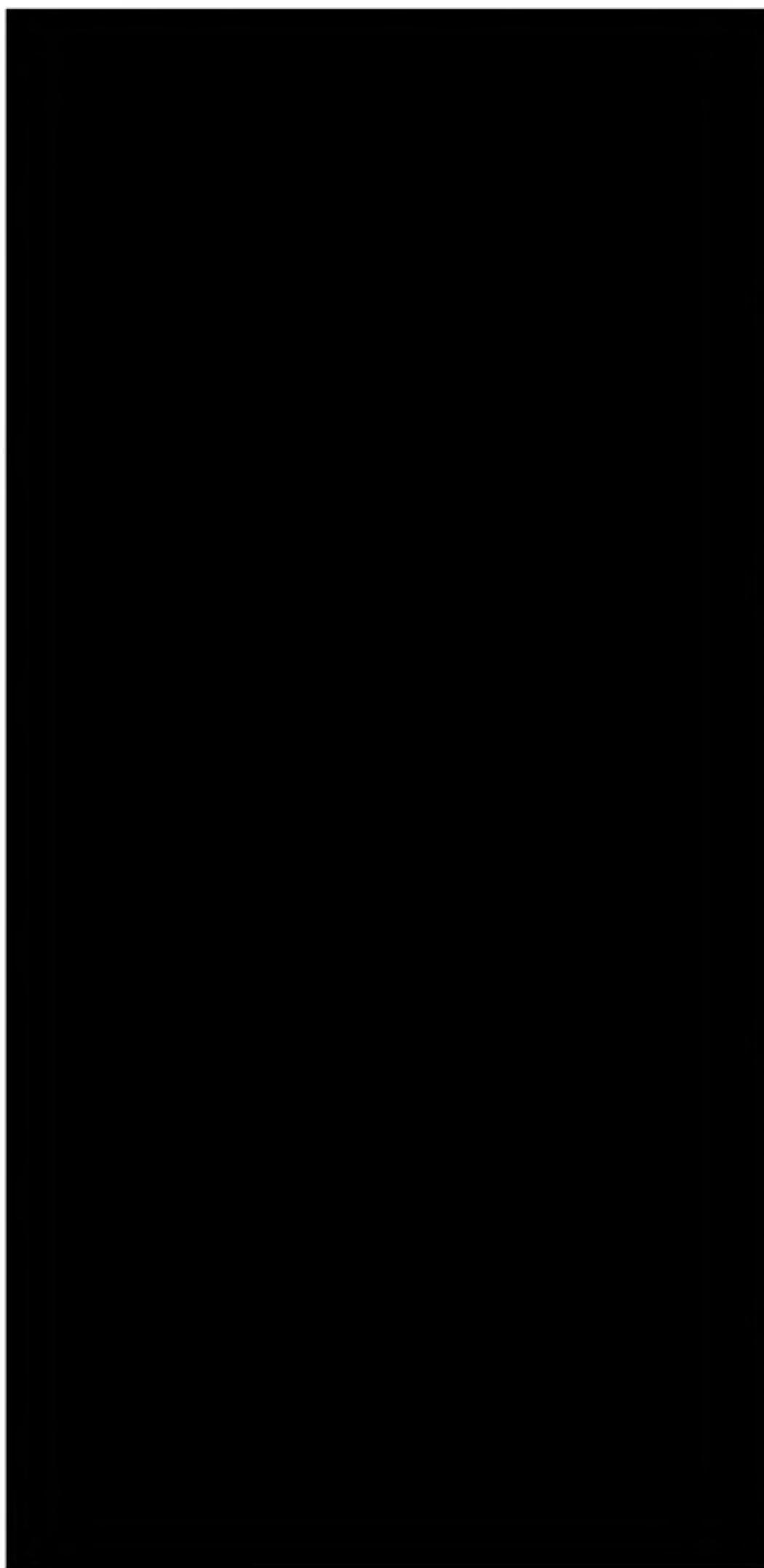
documents the extraordinary and multifaceted teaching activity that occupied him constantly until his death in 1768.

Although completed during Tōrei's lifetime the *Hakuin Nempu* did not find its way into print until much later. Tōrei entrusted his manuscript copy of the text to his disciple Taikan Bunshu (1766–1842), and instructed him to arrange for its publication. For some reason, however, Taikan did not get around to carrying out these instructions until 1817, the fiftieth anniversary of Hakuin's death, when at the urging of his fellow priests he finally set about editing the manuscript. The revised text he produced was published in 1820 by Ryūtaku-ji, the temple on the lower slopes of Mount Fuji where Tōrei had served as abbot.

I would like to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to two Japanese works: *Hakuin Oshō Shōden* ("A Detailed Biography of Hakuin Oshō"; Sankibō, 1963) by Rikugawa Taiun, and *Hakuin Oshō Nempu* ("The Chronological Biography of Zen priest Hakuin"; Shibunkaku, 1985) by Katō Shōshun. The former has been an invaluable source of information on various aspects of Hakuin's life and teaching; the latter has provided an annotated and indexed text of the *Hakuin Nempu* on which I have been abjectly dependent.

There are a number rather extensive notes inserted parenthetically in the original text. In an effort to make their presence less obtrusive I have moved some of the longer ones to the end of the sections in which they appear. They are indicated by asterisks.

Ages and dates are given as they appear in the text, that is, unconverted to the Western calendar. According to the traditional Japanese calendar, a person was already one year old the year of his birth, not on his first birthday; and the calendar year began roughly a month later than ours, sometime in our February. In the case of Hakuin this means that, by our calendar, his birth would fall not in 1685 but one year later, in 1686.



Portrait of Hakuin, by Tōrei Ryōtaku-ji

Hakuin Oshō Nempu

I. The First Period: Practice Leading to Enlightenment

SECOND YEAR OF JŌKYŌ (1685)
REIGN OF EMPEROR REIGEN

In this year, on the night of the 25th day of the 12th month, the master was born at Ukishima-ga-Hara, Suntō-gun, in the province of Suruga. His father's surname was originally Sugiyama. The Sugiyamas were descendants of the Suzuki clan, samurai who had earned an outstanding reputation for bravery and valor.* The master's mother was a daughter of the Nagasawa family who served as heads of the Hara post-station on the Great Eastern Road (Tōkaidō). The Nagasawas had for generations devoted themselves to cultivating the seeds of Buddhahood through various religious activities. The master's mother was a simple, good-natured woman who took pleasure in spontaneous acts of kindness and compassion.

One night his mother dreamed she saw a figure fly toward the house from the direction of southern Ise. It alighted on the roof and was bearing a divine amulet from the great shrine at Ise held out on a silken cloth. She trembled at the awesome solemnity of its appearance. When she woke, she had conceived a child. Because of this the Ise Shrine always held a special place in her heart. On the night of the master's birth the dream recurred. When it was over she was filled with an overwhelming joy and was thereupon delivered of a male child. The birth took place in the Hour of the Ox.^{1*}

* (Suzuki Saburō Shigeie was a vassal of Minamoto Yoshitsune. When Shigeie learned Yoshitsune had escaped the forces of his brother Yoritomo and made his way into the domain of Fujiwara Hidehira in Ōshū far in the north,² he

¹ Approximately 2 a.m.

² After Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159–1193) fled Kyoto to escape assassination he made his way into the northern provinces and sought refuge in Mutsu (Ōshū), the domain of Fujiwara Hidehira.

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knew it would no longer be possible for him to join up with his master. He thus led seven warriors who were kinsmen of his to the village of Enashi in Izu province. There they settled and lived quietly, concealed from the world. The Sugiyamas descended from this branch of the Suzuki clan. Tracing the family roots further back, we find that even at the time the great deities of Kumano returned from India by way of China, the men of the Suzuki clan were already known far and wide as the warriors of Kumano.)³

*(The Nagasawa family had five children, three boys and two girls.⁴ The master was the youngest son.)

JŌKYŌ 3-4

(1686-7)

EMPEROR HIGASHIYAMA
ASCENDS THE THRONE
AGES 2-3

The master was ashamed because he was unable to stand by himself. He tried again and again until one day he finally succeeded. Seeing his beaming face, someone exclaimed, "He's done it! Master Iwa can stand!" (Iwajirō was his childhood name).

The master remembered this incident; he later related it to his fellow priests.

JŌKYŌ 5/GENROKU 1
(1688)

AGE 4

The master had an excellent memory. He memorized a popular song of more than three hundred words which was sung in the village of Nakayama in the Sayo district. He sang it

wherever he went, never forgetting or mistaking a single word. People remarked on his cleverness and the quickness of his mind.

GENROKU 2
(1689)

AGE 5

One day, a young family servant took the master along with her when she went down to the beach to play with the other servant girls. He wandered off by himself and found a quiet spot. He sat there gazing southward out to

³ The samurai of Kumano, known for their exploits at sea, fought with distinction on the winning Minamoto side at the battle of Dannoura (1185).

⁴ Hakuin's father took the Nagasawa surname when adopted into his wife's family.

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sea. As he did, his attention fixed on the clouds constantly changing as they moved across the sky. "How strange and deceptive," he thought to himself. Having encountered for the first time the sad condition of life's impermanence, he suddenly began to cry. For a long time he wept inconsolably. No one could understand the reason for his tears.

GENROKU 4 The master enjoyed visiting temples. One day, he memo-
(1690-1) rized a talk he heard a temple priest give on the Devadat-
AGE 7 ta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*,⁵ and when he returned
home repeated what he had heard for the elderly mem-
bers of the household. By the time he had finished, one of the old men
had tears in his eyes.

Living in the village was a Pure Land Buddhist by the name of Kyūshinbō who devoted himself exclusively to the practice of the Nembutsu.* No one seemed to know anything about Kyūshinbō's origins, but he had a noble and upright character, and was credited with having performed superhuman feats on various occasions. The master's father often invited Kyūshinbō to the family home and entertained him with food and drink. Whenever Kyūshinbō visited, he would seat the master beside him in the place of honor. He would never allow ordinary laymen to occupy a better seat than the young boy.

Kyūshinbō would give the master a pat on the back and say, "You have unusual bone structure. When you grow up you are sure to become a man of great virtue who will benefit the world." He would tell him, "Shakyamuni spent six years in the Himalayas. Bodhidharma spent nine years at Shao-lin Temple.⁶ You must maintain that tradition." On another occasion, he told him, "One time alone. One place alone" (*jigiri, bagiri*: have the mind fixed in one place at all times.)

He imparted three secrets to the master:

1. "Consume all particles of food that remain in your bowl after you have eaten by adding hot water and drinking it.
2. "Always urinate in a crouching position, never while standing.

⁵ The Devadatta chapter teaches that all beings, even evil persons such as Devadatta, can attain Buddhahood through the power of the *Lotus Sutra*.

⁶ Shakyamuni is said to have engaged in ascetic practices for six years in the Himalayas; Bodhidharma is said to have sat facing a cliff for nine years at the Shao-lin (Shōrin) monastery.

3. "Respect the northern quarter. Never face north when you relieve yourself, and never sleep with your feet pointing north.

"Follow these three instructions religiously. It will prolong your life and enable you to reach a ripe old age."

The master observed the directives faithfully as long as he lived, even when he was sick.

* (According to one story, Kyūshinbō initially resided at Enjō-ji in Kamiya for a hundred years, then went to Mount Chōkō to study with the Ōbaku priest Tetsugyū; he made his departure from Tetsugyū by walking on air.⁷ Another account has him residing first in the village of Yamanaka for twenty or thirty years, constantly playing on his shakuhachi, and appearing to all as a crazy monk, and making visits to Hara for rest and relaxation. He was said to be Hitachibō Kaison, a retainer of Minamoto Yoshitsune. Following the latter's defeat at Takadachi, Hitachibō acquired secret arts from a sage he encountered and lived quietly, in seclusion from the world).

GENROKU 5-7 (No entries)
(1692-94)
Ages 8-10

GENROKU 8 The master was unusually large for his age, strong and
(1695) absolutely fearless. He never backed away from any-
Age 11 thing once he had started it. One day he went with his
mother to the Shōgenkyō-ji, a village temple, where
Nichigon Shōnin, a Nichiren priest from Kubogane, delivered a talk on
the *Great Concentration and Insight*.⁸ Nichigon warned his listeners in
no uncertain terms about the portents of divine punishment and

⁷ Tetsugyū Dōki, 1628-1700. One of the most prominent of the early Japanese Ōbaku priests.

⁸ The *Mo-ho chih-kuan (Maha Shikan)*, by the sixth century T'ien-t'ai teacher Chih-i, was an important text for the Lotus-based Nichiren Sect. In Hakuin's autobiography *Wild Ivy (Itsumadegusa)* the priest is said to have lectured on Nichiren Shōnin's *Letters*. *Eastern Buddhist* XV, no. 2 (Autumn, 1982), p. 11.

described the terrible forms of retribution that awaited them in hell.

It made the master's flesh crawl. His hair stood on end. He trembled from head to foot. "I've always delighted in killing living things," he reflected. "I'm wild and unruly. I'm forever making mischief. There is little chance for someone like me to escape falling into hell and undergoing endless torment." Do what he would, he was unable to banish these fears from his mind.

One day, his mother took him into the bath and directed one of the servant girls to stoke the fire under the tub to heat the bath water. Soon angry sounds were snarling up from the furnace fires. Fierce flames licked up and around the sides of the tub. The steam pricking against his skin with growing force felt to him like a rain of arrows. Suddenly he remembered the priest's descriptions of the torments inflicted on sinners in hell. He burst into loud bawling tears. No one could get him to stop. Finally, his mother's features hardened. "What a little sissy you are," she said sternly. "You're acting like a baby girl."

Choking back tears, the master blubbered, "But mother, I'm afraid of those torments that await me in hell. I'm terrified even to go into the bath with you. What would become of me if I fell into that dark, burning hell-pit all alone, without you? Who would come and help me out?"

"So that's your problem, is it? I'm sure we can find a solution and dispel those fears of yours," she said consolingly.

"We can?" he said.

"Yes," she said.

"Then we must find it," he declared.

He ran outside and resumed his childish pastimes as if nothing had happened. He was back absorbed in his play the next morning, when he suddenly remembered his resolution of the previous day. He decided to make some inquiries. He asked a visitor who happened to be in the house at the time what he should do. But the man was unable to offer any advice.

Thinking to enlist his mother's help, he went to her and asked her to comb out his hair. "What an odd request," she said with a laugh. "Next thing you know the sun be setting in the east." She took him into the house, put some oil on his hair and started combing it out. He grabbed her hand, stopping her.

"Not yet," he said. "Please, you first must tell me how I can avoid

falling into hell.”

“First your hair,” she said.

“No, not until you tell me, mother. I’ll never let you. I’ll die first.”

His mother was at a loss for an answer. This made him angry.

“Don’t try to fool me, mother, or I’ll throw another tantrum.”

In an attempt to pacify him, she said, “The divine spirit of Tenmangu Shrine is enshrined in the Sainen-ji.⁹ He is a deity of great virtue and power. He can save people from any suffering karmic retribution may bring. Go to Tenjin and make a sincere appeal to him.”

The master clapped his hands together with delight. From then on, he entrusted himself singlemindedly to the divine power of Tenjin. Every morning, he doused himself with three bucketfuls of cold water, offered fervent prayers to the deity, and waited for some sign of response.

GENROKU 9 One day, the master hung a portrait of Tenjin on the
(1696) wall. He lit a stick of incense, made two bows, touching
AGE 12 his head to the floor each time, and addressed the deity:
“If there is a chance that I can achieve my goal, please
make the smoke from this incense rise up in a straight line.” He sat for
a long time in silent prayer. Opening his eyes, he saw a thread of smoke
rising straight up to the ceiling. Then a breeze came in, scattering the
smoke in all directions. His fear that he would be unable to escape
Mara’s evil clutches remained undispelled.

Hearing that the Bodhisattva Kannon possessed great spiritual power and that the wondrous efficacy of the *Kannon Sutra* and the *Dharani of the Great Compassionate One* surpassed all other religious texts,¹⁰ he memorized them both and began to recite them diligently.

Among the amusements at the annual festival at the Tenjin Shrine

⁹ The Tenmangu is dedicated to Tenjin, the deified form of the statesman and poet Sugawara Michizane (845–903). While the main Tenjin shrine was the Kitano Tenmangu in Kyoto, countless smaller Tenjin shrines were constructed throughout the country. Tenjin came to be worshipped as the deity of literature, scholarship, and calligraphy. A Tenjin shrine was located in Sainen-ji, a Ji Sect temple adjacent to the Nagasawa family home.

¹⁰ *Daihijin Dharani*. A text regularly recited in Zen temples. “The Great Compassionate One” is Kannon.

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was a skit played out by village youths on the interrogation and torture of Nisshin Shōnin at the hands of government officials in Kamakura.¹¹ In questioning the Shōnin, the officials ask him, "Is it true what they say about practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra* being able to enter a fire without being harmed, or to be submerged under water without drowning?"¹² Nisshin avows that it is. The officials have a red-hot iron cauldron put over his head, but thanks to the divine power of the *Lotus* he remains perfectly cool and composed throughout the terrible ordeal.

Watching the play, the master felt more than a touch of envy. He went home and spent the next several days reciting the *Kannon Sutra* and *Dharani of the Compassionate One*. Then he tested himself by heating an iron tong and touching it against his thigh. But the result was the same as it would have been before all the sutra-recitations—a bad burn. Again his spirits plunged. His distress and fear grew even more acute.

"Unless I leave home and enter the undefiled and emancipated realm of the priesthood, how can I ever hope to attain a free and unobstructed mind like Nisshin had?" He implored his parents on hands and knees to allow him to become a priest. But, doting on him as they did, they refused even to consider it.

One day, a hostler leading an official on horseback to the tethering post at the front of the house happened to pass beneath the window of the second floor room where the master was absorbed in a recitation of the *Diamond Sutra*. The official had the hostler pause so he could listen to the sound of the words being intoned. He was profoundly moved and walked away marvelling at the remarkable serenity of the master's voice.

GENROKU 10 (1697)
AGE 13 The master concluded that the confusion and defilements of worldly life were not conducive to religious practice. He climbed up Mount Yanagizawa to seek a spot more favorable to self-discipline. He came upon a flat rock, a foot or so in width, situated in the middle of a mountain

¹¹ In his work *Goose Grass (Yaemugura)* Hakuin says that this was a performance of joruri and puppet theater given by a troupe of travelling players.

¹² A similar statement occurs in the *Kannon Sutra*, which makes up the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*.

stream. A tall cliff with an unusual rock formation rose sheer behind it; below it the stream tumbled down the steep slope. It was totally removed from the world and its dust. The master took a chisel and carved a likeness of Kannon Bodhisattva on the face of the rock cliff. He sat quietly in front of the image and began reciting the *Diamond* and *Kannon* sutras and the *Dharani of the Great Compassionate One*. After reciting them several times each and praying fervently to Kannon for assistance, he returned home. He repeated this practice every day without fail, visiting the spot in the morning and returning home at nightfall.

One day on his way home after visiting a relative several miles distant, he found the road had been flooded by heavy rains, blocking his path. "If I just stand here wasting time like this," he told himself, "it will weaken the religious resolve I've cultivated so assiduously. I must cross the water and hurry back." He shed his robe, bundled it up and wrapped it over his shoulder; then, brandishing his sword above his head in his right hand, he waded across the perilous current. Upon someone later asking him why he had held his sword aloft, he replied, "I've heard that flood waters are infested with monstrous fish and turtles who lurk there hoping to assault innocent people. If one of them had attacked me, I would have cut it in two."

GENROKU 11 Under the guidance of Kin Shuza (later Tōhō Sokin) of (1698) Tokugen-ji, the master learned how read Chinese texts.

AGE 14 He had the entire *Kuzō-shi*, a Zen phrase anthology, by heart in just three months. Once he had something memorized, he never forgot it. Afterwards, when he took part in Zen-type dialogues or engaged in koan study, when he composed linked verses or impromptu poems, he was able to do it without giving much thought to it. They came easily to him—like a man producing articles at will from his pocket.

He went to his parents and once again declared his desire to enter the priesthood. Again they refused. This time, however, they realized that he was not to be deterred. They began to accept the idea that they would eventually be forced to part with their beloved son.

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GENROKU 12 His parents finally relented. On the 25th of the 2nd
(1699) month, they took him to the priest Tanrei Soden.¹³ Tan-
AGE 15 rei was a broad-minded man and an especially capable
priest. He performed the tonsure ceremony making the
young boy a Buddhist monk, and gave him the name Ekaku, "Wise
Crane." After Tanrei finished shaving the master's head, he patted him
on the back and said, "Always uphold the dignity of the priesthood."
He then gave him a piece of paper on which he had inscribed the charac-
ters for his new name. Shōzan Sojiku of Tokugen-ji wrote a congratula-
tory verse for the occasion:

A priest of genuine worth is a wonderful thing,
He makes Buddhas rejoice and demons despair.
If you hope to master the Way of the Buddha
Don't forget your three pats of self-reflection.¹⁴

The master made a vow to his teacher. "Although I may never
achieve the strength that will keep my body from being burned by fire
or swallowed by waves, I will never abandon my quest, even though I
die in the attempt." He began practicing diligently, reciting sutras and
performing bows day and night. Not long after that Tanrei sent him
to Daishō-ji in Numazu, where he was made an attendant of the abbot,
Sokudō Fueki.¹⁵

GENROKU 13 One day the master heaved a deep sigh and said, "In
(1700) deciding to become a monk, I turned my back on my
AGE 16 obligation to my dear parents. Yet I still haven't seen
any glimpse of progress. People say that the *Lotus* is
the king of all the sutras the Buddha preached during his lifetime. Even
evil demons and malignant spirits are supposed to stand in awe of its
power. It can even save a person from the torments of samsaric exist-
ence when someone else recites it on his behalf. How much more effec-
tive it must be if you recite it yourself! Surely such a sutra, with its un-

¹³ Tanrei Soden, d. 1701. A Myōshin-ji priest of the Tokuhō Zenketsu line.

¹⁴ The "three pats" a priest gives his shaven head three times each day as he reflects:
1. Why have I shaved this head? 2. What must I do now? 3. What is my ultimate goal?

¹⁵ Sokudō Fueki, d. 1712. Hakuin also refers to him as Nyōka Rōshi. Numazu,
where Daishō-ji was located, was only a few miles from Hara.

surpassed profundity, should be able to help me fulfill the vow I have made.”

He borrowed a copy of the *Lotus Sutra* from a Nichiren priest named Kan'ebō and read it carefully through. But except for phrases like, “There is only One Vehicle. All dharmas exist in perfect tranquility,” he found the sutra was devoted merely to preaching about cause and effect in the form of parables. He closed the book with a sigh. “If there is any merit in this sutra, then there must also be merit in the Chinese histories, the ancient philosophers, the Noh chants, even geisha songs.”

The disappointment of this discovery threw him into an unhappy state of great mental unrest. He began to doubt the means employed in Zen's “special transmission outside the scriptures.”

Sokudō loved the soaring spirit of his young disciple. He could not have shown him more favour if he had been his own son.

GENROKU 14 The tenth of the first month. Tanrei Soden, the teacher (1701) who had ordained the master, passed away. Tanrei had imparted his Zen transmission to Tōrin Sōshō, the master's elder brother in the Dharma.
AGE 17

GENROKU 16 In the spring, the master left Daishō-ji and went to the (1703) village of Shimizu in the same province (Suruga), and hung up his travelling staff in the monk's hall of Zensō-ji. The monks at the temple spent all their time in the study of texts, so the master pursued his practice by himself, performing prostrations and reciting sutras.
AGE 19

The head priest at Zensō-ji, Sen'ei Soen, was lecturing to the brotherhood on the *Wind and Moon Collection of Zen Poetry*.¹⁶ One day, he was telling them about Yen-t'ou Ch'uan-huo, a Zen priest who had lived as a ferryman. The master read in a biographical note on Yen-

¹⁶ *Chiang-hu feng-yueh chi (Gōkofūgetsu-shū)*. A 14th century compilation of poetry by Zen priests of the southern Sung and Yuan dynasties. Yen-t'ou Ch'uan-huo (Gantō Zenkatsu, 828-887), who is referred to in several of the poems in the collection, taught people while working as a ferryman after he had been forced to return to lay status during a government suppression of Buddhism. Sen'ei Soen, 1659-1616, was the restorer of Zensō-ji.

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t'ou that he had been set upon by bandits and slain; when they cut off his head, his death cry could be heard for miles around. This dealt the master's hopes a heavy blow, for if Yen-t'ou could not protect himself from bandits in this world, his own prospects of avoiding hell in the next world seemed slim indeed. He had heard Yen-t'ou praised as "a phoenix of the patriarchal groves." "A dragon of the Buddha seas." "If that is the best such a great Zen master can do," he thought, "what chance does someone like me have of escaping the tortures of hell? If I am to judge from this story, it is hard to see what I can expect to gain from studying Zen. Ahh! How can I trust a Buddhist teaching that is so false and unreliable."

He was again plunged into despair. Food lost all taste for him. "Now that I've left my home and family for the priesthood," he thought to himself, "I can't just turn around and become a layman again. I'd be too ashamed. I'm trapped. I can't go forward, I can't turn back. But if I do end up in hell, at least I'll be down there suffering together with Tanrei, Sokudō, and all the other Buddhist teachers who have lived before me. From now on I might as well try to enjoy life. I'll just indulge my desires and follow my inclinations."

The master now gave himself up to the pleasures of literature, and engrossed himself in the study of painting and calligraphy. Nonbuddhist notions dominated his thoughts. Whenever he saw a sutra or Buddhist image, his disgust for them only increased.

When the lecture meeting ended, he stayed on at Zensō-ji.

GENROKU 17/HŌEI 1 (1704)
Age 20 In spring the master travelled to Zuiun-ji in the village of Hinoki, Mino province, to study with the teacher Baō.¹⁷ A monk named On Jōza was already residing at Zuiun-ji. He was a son of the Confucian teacher Kumazawa Banzan, who had served the lord of Okayama in Bizen province. On Jōza and the master found that they shared the same outlook on things and soon formed a fast bond of friendship. They pursued the study of literature together.

But one day it occurred to the master that even if he succeeded in be-

¹⁷ Baō Sōchiku, 1629–1711, founder of Zuiun-ji. Aside from what Hakuin tells us about Baō in his writings, little is known about him. In *Wild Ivy*, Hakuin says he was widely known for his learning and literary skills.

coming a writer of surpassing skill, it still would not bring him peace of mind. It was a day when the books in the temple library were set out inside one of the halls for their annual airing. When the master entered the hall, he saw books of all kinds, Buddhist and nonBuddhist alike, stacked in piles on top of some desks. He approached, bowed down in reverence, and prayed: "Confucius. Buddha. Lao-tzu. Chuang-tzu. Which one should I take as my teacher? Heavenly Naga Kings guarding the Dharma, please, I beg you, indicate the right path to me."

Praying silently, he closed his eyes, reached out and picked a small volume from among the pile of books. It was *Spurring Students Through the Zen Barriers*.¹⁸ He held it up in an attitude of reverence, then he opened it randomly to a section entitled 'Tz'u-ming Sticks a Gimlet in His Thigh.'

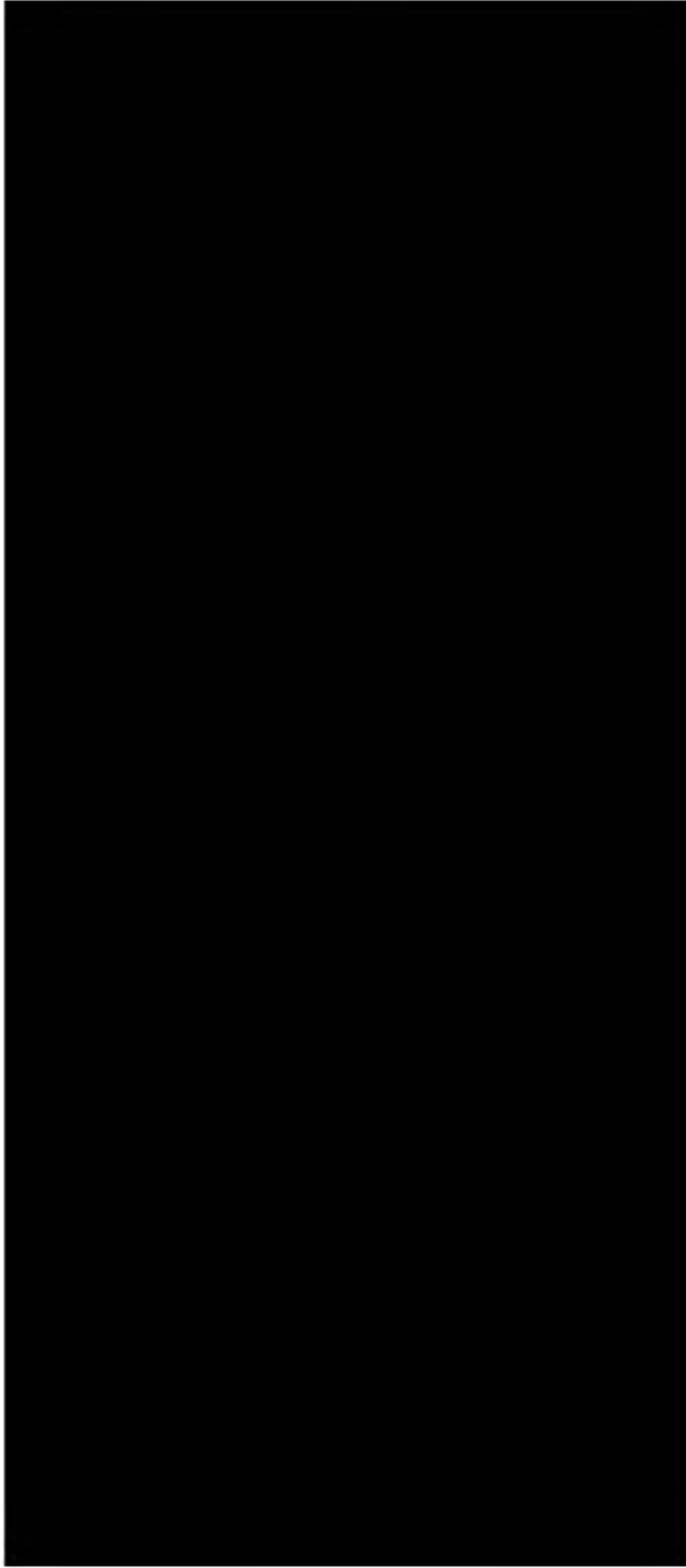
In the head notes over the text, he read, "Long ago when Tz'u-ming was practicing with master Fen-yang he devoted himself to the study of the Way with Ta-yu, Lang-yeh and four or five other monks. The bitter cold east of the river kept other students away. Tz'u-ming sat alone without sleeping through the long cold nights. To spur himself to greater effort, he told himself:

" 'The ancients applied themselves with arduous devotion and attained a purity and radiance that could not help but grow and prosper. Look at me. Who am I? I'm useless to my contemporaries while I live. I will be forgotten after I die. As far as the Buddhist Dharma is concerned, of what use am I?' " So saying, he took a gimlet and jabbed it into his thigh.' "

When the master read the passage, the store of wisdom accumulated from past lives stirred within him once again. Once more a deep and determined faith in the Buddha's Dharma formed in his heart. Casting aside his former views, he now took these words of Tz'u-ming as his guiding principle.

On the twenty-seventh of the fifth month word reached him of his mother's death. His grief was inconsolable. He composed a verse for

¹⁸ *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin (Zenkan-sakushin)*. A compilation of 110 passages from Zen and Buddhist literature relating to Zen practice by the Ming priest Yun-ch'i Chuhung (Unsei Shuko, 1535-1615); first published in 1600. Tz'u-ming (Jimyō) is the honorific title of Shih-shuang Ch'u-yuan (Sekisō Soen, 987-1040). An important figure in the Chinese Rinzai school, he is credited with revitalizing the teaching line of Lin-chi (Rinzai) Zen when it was in danger of dying out.



Tz'u-ming with a Gimlet, by Hakuin's disciple Suiō Genro

the repose of her soul.

Baō had a mean streak in his nature and most people stayed clear of him. But the master thought, "He may be ill-natured and hard on students, yet where else could I find another person with his wide learning?"

On the 15th of the 7th month, the day the summer retreat ended, the other students left the temple. The master alone remained. One day he was washing some daikon by the well. Baō saw him and, with an affectionate look in his eye, said, "Kaku [Crane]. It takes a lot of courage for a young bird to take flight."

HŌEI 2 In spring he left the Zuiun-ji and went to Hofuku-ji in Hora-
(1705) do to take part in a summer retreat conducted by head priest
AGE 21 Nanzen Keryū. Also attending were Masaki Ryōkō and
Tarumaru Sokai, two priests who were vigorously expound-
ing the merits of "ordinary, everyday Zen."¹⁹ Priests and laymen
throughout Mino province had become converted to this teaching.
Someone urged the master to join them. He rebuked him: "Should a
man devoted to pursuing the Way set store on what he hears people
say, and not on what he sees with his own eyes?"

In autumn he left Hofuku-ji and paid a visit to Bankyū Echō at
Reishō-in. Then he went on to attend the winter *rōhatsu* training ses-
sion with Daigyō Eryū at Tōkō-ji in Ijira.

HŌEI 3 Spring. Leaving Tōkō-ji, he went to Jōkō-ji, a temple in
(1706) Wakasa province, to attend Banri Shutetsu's lectures on the
AGE 22 *Record of Hsu-t'ang*.²⁰ While there, he chanced to read a line
of verse the Chinese priest Yun-chu Hsiao-shun had written
upon returning to resume the abbotship of Ch'i-hsien temple: "How

¹⁹ A reference to Bankei Yōtaku's (1622-1693) teaching of the "Unborn," which had won many adherents among contemporary Rinzai priests. Masaki Ryōkō, or Daien Ryōkō, 1625-1706, was a disciple of Bankei's heir Setsugai Sotei, and Tarumaru Sokai (Emon Sokai, n.d.) studied for a time with Bankei. See my *Unborn, the Life and Teachings of Zen Master Bankei* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984).

²⁰ The Zen records of the southern Sung priest Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu (Kidō Chigu, 1185-1269).

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often I rejoice; how often I grow angry."²¹ The moment he read it his eyes filled with tears. He had experienced something he had never known before.

In summer the master heard that a Dharma brother of his named Shō Zōsu had come to Mino province on pilgrimage.²² He sought Shō out and talked him into making a trip together to Shōjū-ji in Iyo province where Itsuzen Gijun was lecturing on the *Three Sutras of the Buddha-patriarchs*.²³ As he was reading in the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*, he came upon a passage: "A person who follows the Way is like a log in the water, floating along in the current. If it touches neither bank, is not taken up by men, is not obstructed by gods or demons, is not held back in the swirls and eddies, and is not corrupted by rot and decay along the way, it will surely flow into the great sea."

The master was ecstatic. He had pursued his practice with a firm, unwavering faith, but in his heart he had always been somewhat uncertain whether someone of his small understanding and merit could attain the wonderful, unsurpassed Way of the Buddhas. Reading these golden words had swept those lingering doubts completely away. Although he had not yet achieved his goal of enlightenment, his mind at that moment was perfectly clear. He was like a man who had finally crossed the border into his native land after having travelled a distance of a thousand miles. From that time forth, he always kept the *Three Sutras of*

²¹ The Northern Sung priest Yun-chu Hsiao-shun (Ungo Gyōken) was forced from the abbotship of Ch'i-hsien (Seiken-ji) temple on Mount Lu and returned to lay status when he incurred the displeasure of the local governor. When later pardoned and allowed to return to his temple, he read a verse to the brotherhood that ended with the lines, "For over half a year I lived without my monk's robe;/ Today, back in my temple again, how often I rejoice, how often I am angry."

²² Shō Zōsu (Zōsu: senior monk) was later known as Ishō (also Eshō) Kairyū, d. 1748. Ishō, senior to Hakuin, was also a disciple of Sokudō Fueki and accompanied Hakuin on many of his early travels. Recognizing Hakuin's ability, Ishō became his student and eventually received sanction as his first Dharma heir. He served as abbot at Genryū-ji and later at Muryō-ji, both located in villages near Hara.

²³ *Fo-tsu san-ching* (*Busso sankyō*), dating from the late T'ang or early Sung dynasty, is made up of three separate works: *Kuei-shan's Cautionary Teaching* (*Kuei-shan ching-ts'e; Isan Keisaku*), the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections* (*Ssu-shih-erh chang ching; Shijūnishō-kyō*), and the *Sutra of the Bequeathed Teaching* (*I-chueh ching; Yuikyō-kyō*). The passage quoted here is found in the twenty-sixth section of the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections*.

the Buddha-patriarchs and *Spurring Students Through the Zen Barriers* near at hand as his constant companions.

Winter. While he was visiting Shōjū-ji, he made a manuscript copy of an annotated edition of the *Three Sutras of the Buddha-patriarchs*. He was invited to a Buddhist memorial feast given at the residence of a high-ranking official of the local clan. The man brought out a number of scrolls of calligraphy to show the guests. There was one scroll, carefully wrapped in silk, that he particularly treasured. When it was unrolled, the master saw that it was a piece of writing by the Zen priest Daigu Sōchiku.²⁴ The brushwork was unstudied, almost offhand. There was no evidence of any great or unusual skill. The master was elated as he realized that the merit of the calligraphy, the quality which commanded such respect, had nothing whatever to do with the skillfulness with which it was written. After that he gave literature, painting, and calligraphy a wide berth and focussed his energies solely on the practice of the Way.

HŌEI 4 Spring. The master left Shōjū-ji and crossed the Inland Sea (1707) to Fukuyama in Bingo province where he attended lectures at AGE 23 the Shōjū-ji on the *Praise of the True School*.²⁵ When the meeting ended, he formed a group with some other monks and headed eastward toward his home in Suruga province. As he walked along, he worked with each step he took on the koan “Does a dog have the Buddha-nature?”²⁶ Their route took them past Okayama Castle in Bizen province. The master’s companions vied with each other in describing the beauties of the castle buildings and surrounding scenery. But the master would have no part of it. “I haven’t attained the Way yet,” he thought. “How can I spend my time sightseeing.” He kept his eyes tightly shut until the castle was out of sight.

Upon entering Harima province, they put up at a mountain temple.

²⁴ Daigu Sōchiku, 1584–1669. A prominent Rinzai priest active during the previous century.

²⁵ A 13th century work that sets forth the merits of the principle figures of the “Five Houses” of Zen. Full title: *In Praise of the Five Houses of the True School* (*Wu-chia cheng-tsung-tsan; Goke shōjū-san*).

²⁶ This is the “Mu” koan mentioned below. *The Gateless Barrier* (*Wu-men-kuan; Mumonkan*), Case One.

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The sight of a rushing mountain stream moved the master to compose a verse:

At the foot of the mountain
The stream flows without end.
If the mind of Zen is thus
How can *kenshō* be far off?

Soon after they resumed their journey, one of the monks in the party fell sick. The master lightened the man's burden by carrying his traveling pack for him. One of the others in the group, seeing this, said, "I'm having trouble too. I don't know if I'm going to be able to make it. You have a sturdy body and plenty of strength left, would you mind helping me?"

The master, without a sign of reluctance, bundled both the monks' travel packs together with his own and threw them onto his shoulders, thinking as he did, "Maybe this good turn, trifling as it is, will convey me more quickly to my long-cherished goal of *kenshō*." With each step he took, he struck the ground with his staff, working his way deeper into the Mu koan.

When they reached the city of Hyōgo, they bought passage on a boat. The moon hung overhead as the master's companions, laughing and chatting with the other passengers, settled down to enjoy the trip. The master, taking off his heavy load, lay back to rest. After what seemed a short, pleasant nap, he opened his eyes. The boat was at the harbor entrance.

"Haven't we cast off yet?" he called out to the boatman. "How long are we going to stay here?"

"What are you babbling about, you lead-head," jeered the boatman. "Ten boats went out last night. Most of them were capsized in the storm. We were the only ones lucky enough to come through it alive. The whole boat was praying to the gods and Buddhas for help. I cut off my topknot and pledged a solemn vow to the gods of the sea. And you slept there snoring through it all. Snorting like a horse. I've spent a good many years at sea but in all my days I've never seen a damnable shavepate with half your piss and vinegar."

The master jumped up with a start and looked round him. His shipmates were sprawled all over the boat, towels wrapped around their heads, their faces the color of dull clay. Some were gasping for breath.

Others were breathing feebly. The whole boat was so covered with vomit there was no place you could set a hand or foot. He immediately pressed his palms together in repentance for his negligence and said: "Thanks to the benevolent protection of the guardian sages, it was our good fortune to escape the storm last night."

They disembarked and found a room in an inn. There the master administered medicine to his incapacitated companions to help ease their discomfort. Later he admonished them: "It is said that hidden virtue is requited openly, for all to see. What happened last night has shown me the truth of those words." When they reached Ise province, word reached the master that Baō was seriously ill and had no one to care for him. He told his companions, "Go on home without me. I must travel to Mino and take care of old Baō." When they voiced reservations, the master just turned and left. He proceeded to Baō's temple and went directly to the old priest's bedside. For the next three months he nursed Baō's illness and attended to his needs. He tried to devote the daytime hours to pursuing his practice amid the activity of everyday life. He passed the nights in the stillness of samadhi, doing zazen.

One night as he was sitting in zazen a roundish shape the size of a cat's head appeared above his hands. It recurred several nights running. Although initially it made him feel uneasy, when he paid no heed to it, it disappeared. The experience made him realize that the obstacles Mara creates for a practitioner do not come from without but are the products of his own mind. On another occasion he sat the whole night in a near-lifeless state. Suddenly, he felt himself rising into the air and soaring off in a southerly direction. After covering several tens of leagues, flying over Toba Castle in southern Ise and seeing the shoreline of the Kii peninsula below him, he suddenly thought, "I'm a Buddhist priest, I can't allow this to continue." He shouted out a loud *KHAT!* and found himself sitting back on his zazen cushion as before. From his nearby sickroom Baō called out in a startled voice, "Kaku! What are you shouting about!" By the tenth month, Baō had recovered from his sickness and the master left for home.

That winter flames were seen burning brightly inside the crater of

²⁷ This, the last eruption of Mount Fuji, began in the eleventh month, on the night of the 22nd, with a series of earthquakes. The next morning the volcano erupted in violent explosions that continued for four days, until the evening of the 26th.

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Mount Fuji.²⁷ For several days fires belched out along the central slopes. Rumbblings were heard from deep in the earth, accompanied by sharp tremors. Thick clouds of smoke and dust blotted out the light of the sun and moon and cast a dark and ominous pall over the surrounding countryside. Then with a sudden great explosion the mountain erupted violently, sending an avalanche of molten lava pouring in fiery streams down the eastern side of the mountain. At the same instant, the ground suddenly collapsed. A bottomless crater was formed, filled with an incandescent mass of fire. Great squalls of smoke and ash mushroomed out with incredible speed, enveloping the countryside with tremendous blasts of searing heat and sending flashes of lightning forking and darting from above. Hails of red-hot sand and ash flew through the air and rained in a deluge to earth. A series of violent quakes rolled over the earth like the giant waves in a raging sea. All the villages and hamlets within range of the newly-formed crater—how many countless were there?—were inundated and buried under the tremendous onslaught of mud and rocky debris.

The sharp earthquakes rocked the Shōin-ji. Temple buildings convulsed and groaned. The master's Dharma brother Tōrin, the young kitchen attendants and the servant fled to safety far away and crouched in fear. The master remained alone inside the hall of the temple, sitting straight and erect in zazen. He made a pledge to himself, "If I open the eye of *kenshō*, the Buddhas will surely protect me and keep me from harm. If I don't, I will be crushed beneath the wreckage and destruction."

His elder brother Kokan came and pleaded with him to leave. "How can you stay so calm?" he asked. "This building could be destroyed any second now!" "My life is in heaven's hands," the master replied, without a trace of fear. Kokan tried several more times to make him change his mind but the master refused to budge. Instead, he used the threat of imminent peril to achieve even greater concentration in his meditation. When the rumbling and quaking eventually subsided, the master was sitting straight and upright as before, without having suffered so much a scratch.

Chō Shuso, a disciple of the Ōbaku teacher Egoku Dōmyō, came and stayed for a while at Tokugen-ji. He was accompanied by three monks, Kin Shuso, Genryū, and Chiei. The master paid Chō a visit but did not come away with a favorable impression.

HŌEI 5 Spring. The master accompanied Chō Shuso and his two com-
 (1708) rades to Eigan-ji in Takada to attend lectures by Shōtetsu
 AGE 24 Oshō on the *Eye of Men and Devas*.²⁸ Behind the temple was
 an ancestral shrine dedicated to former daimyos of the local
 clan. When lectures were not being given the master retired to the
 shrine room and did zazen. He sat day and night, almost forgetting
 food and sleep.

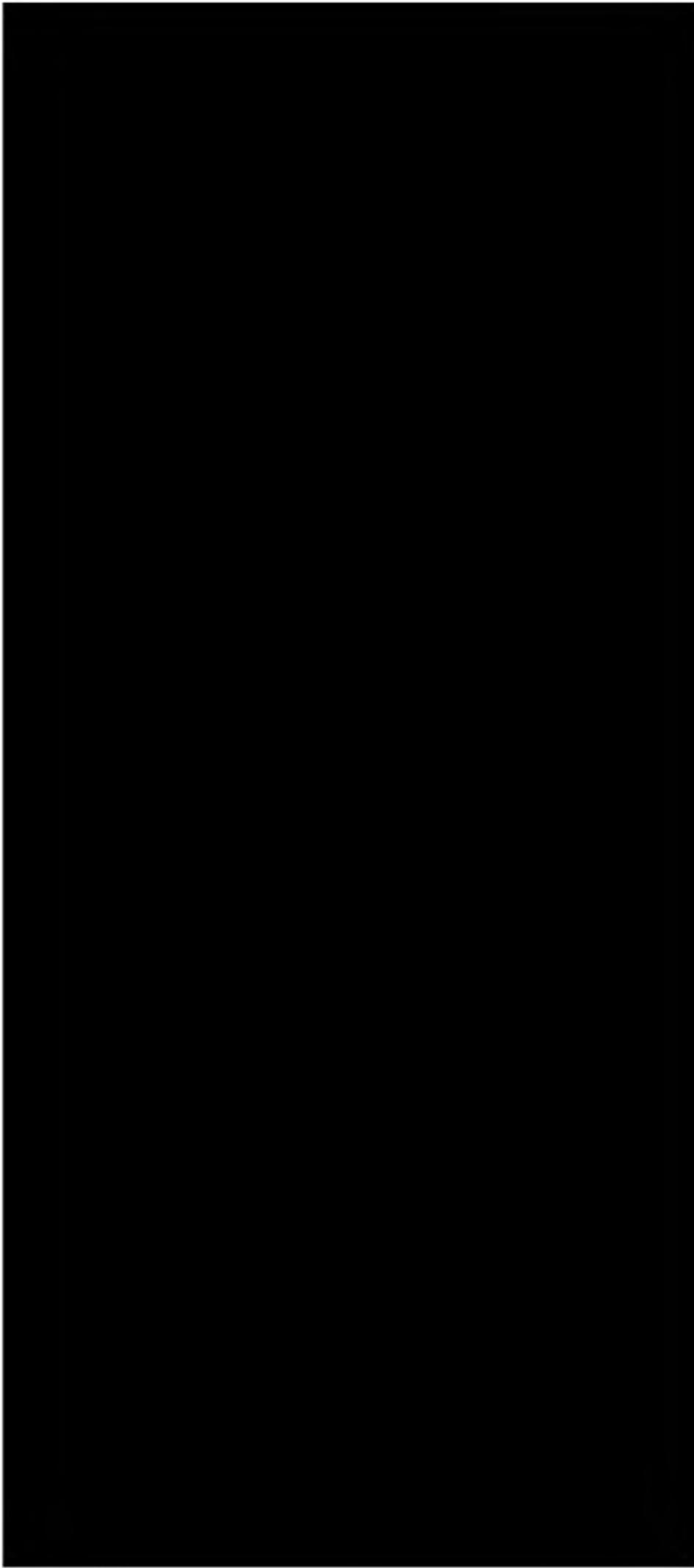
When he took his seat in the hall to listen to the lecture, his ears did not hear the sound of the priest's voice. When he went to the refectory for meals, his eyes did not take in the things around him. Everyone he saw was floating in a shimmering haze. His body was enveloped in white cloud. The external world seemed to be composed of purest crystal. All its various forms and shapes were perfectly transparent and free of the slightest flaw or blemish. But he did not attach to any of those appearances. He continued to spur himself forward. He felt as though he was moving slowly and surely up a precipitous mountainside with a heavy burden on his shoulders.

Through all the hours of day and night, whether he was sitting, lying, moving, or standing still, he focussed on his koan with singleminded purpose. This continued for ten days and nights (from the seventh of the second month to the night of the sixteenth). When dawn broke on the seventeenth he was still seated, totally absorbed in his koan. Suddenly he heard the echo of a bell ringing in a distant temple. The sound was faint, but the instant it reached his ears he was beyond the threshold and all dualities, perceiver and perceptions alike, were stripped completely away—it was as though an enormous bell had boomed out right beside his ear. In that instant he achieved great enlightenment.

He bellowed out at the top of his lungs, "Ahhh! Yen-t'ou! Yen-t'ou! You are all right after all! You are all right after all!"²⁹ and tore down the path to the temple to request an interview with Shōtetsu. He set forth the realization he had attained, but Shōtetsu offered only a

²⁸ *Jen-t'ien yen-mu (Ninden-ganmoku)*. A 12th century collection consisting of teachings, sayings, and verse of priests of the Five Houses of Zen. Shōtetsu Oshō (Oshō: Zen priest), or Shōtetsu Sokon, d. 1728; a prominent Rinzai priest of the time who served a term as abbot at the Myōshin-ji.

²⁹ Yen-t'ou is the priest whose death cries caused doubts in the mind of young Hakuin. see above, fn. 16.



Yen-t'ou the Ferryman, by Hakuin

lame response. The master cuffed him with his hand and stalked off. He sought out a priest named Buttō and spoke with Chō Shuso as well. But finding their ideas did not conform with the insight he had reached, he left them in a huff, shaking his sleeves.

After that, the master carried his enlightenment around on his shoulders, swallowing whole everyone he encountered, and telling himself, "No one in the past three hundred years has penetrated to such a glorious realization. No one in the whole world could parry my lightning Zen thrusts."

Just at that time a monk appeared at the temple requesting accommodations and permission to attend the lectures. He had a cold, severe look about him, and a disconcerting way of scrutinizing people by glaring at them over his shoulder. To the senior priests in charge of the meeting he appeared to be one of those fearless types of monk who might prove difficult to handle. The guestmaster took the new arrival to the annex for visiting monks, where the master had been placed in charge.

"Whenever you have one of these no-account ruffians on your hands you palm him off on us," said the master. "This isn't a dumping ground for misfits. Why must we take on all these worthless rascals?"

"We don't think he'll respect anything but physical strength," the guestmaster explained deferentially.

"If that's the case," said the master with a laugh, "I'll take him."

The guestmaster introduced the monk, whose name was Sōkaku,³⁰ and the master ushered him into the monks' quarters. The two men sat down facing one another.

"I'm Ekaku from southern Suruga. I have a mean temper and I like nothing better than giving monks a hard time. If you step out of line, you'll be out of here before you know what happened."

Sōkaku replied with a deep bow, his forehead touching the floor. The master assigned him a place at the back of the hall and put him to work sweeping and cleaning.

Every day the master and three or four of the other senior monks would gather in the hall and exchange comments on koans and other matters that came up in the course of the lectures. On one of these occa-

³⁰ Dōjū Sōkaku, 1679–1730. Sōkaku eventually became head priest at the Shōju-an in Iiyama, succeeding his teacher Shōju Etan.

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sions, after the others had left, Sōkaku approached the master. The master saw him and thought to himself, "He's going to start something after all."

"Aren't those the senior monks at this meeting?" asked Sōkaku.

"What if they were?" retorted the master.

"They were commenting on some old koans," said Sōkaku.

"What about it?" answered the master.

Sōkaku's features grew solemn. "The lecturer was mistaken about that first koan," he said. "You people grasped the meaning. On the other koan, you were mistaken, but the lecturer's understanding of it was quite good. None of you got the essential point on the last one."

"What about your own understanding?" asked the master, somewhat taken aback by Sōkaku's remarks.

Sōkaku thereupon set forth his own views of two or three of the koans. The master listened attentively, and as he did he could see that Sōkaku's grasp of them was indeed much deeper than his own. Mystified, he asked Sōkaku about himself.

"I'm originally from southern Shinano province," he said. "There's a priest there named Shōju Etan Shuza. He lives in a tiny hermitage in a remote village named Iiyama. He was a personal student and heir of Shidō Mun'an in Edō, and a grandson in the Dharma of Gudō Tōshoku.³¹ Shōju is a dedicated teacher, he uses the vital means of the Zen school to instruct students and guide them to higher attainment. I've been subjected to his poisonous fists for many years."

By the time Sōkaku had finished speaking, the master was eager to visit Shōju. He wanted to set out for Iiyama immediately. "I agree," said Sōkaku, "I think you have the capacity and insight to enter his forge and receive the refining blows of his hammer. His approach to teaching is clear, however. He wants only authentic seekers—young seeds and saplings who promise to grow up strong and straight. He has a great aversion to large numbers of students and the noise and commotion they bring. When we go, we must go alone. You can't take those companions of yours along."

The master waited until the meeting was over, then he slipped away from the temple and set out at Sōkaku's side for Iiyama. Until this

³¹ Gudō Tōshoku, 1579–1661; Shidō Mun'an, 1603–1676; Shōju Etan Shuza (Shuza: senior monk).

point in his career, the master confidently believed the negotiation of the Way to be an extremely easy matter. For this Sōkaku admonished him. He urged him to read about the lives of the Zen teachers in the *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*.³² The master followed this advice. In the section dealing with Bodhidharma's life he read how Bodhidharma had left home to become a monk at the age of six and served as an attendant to his teacher Prajnatara for twenty years before he was able to fully master the secrets of Prajnatara's Zen. This discovery succeeded to some extent in diminishing the rampant pride welling in the master's heart, and with it came a deepening of wisdom.

The two men arrived at the Shōju-an hermitage, located in the village of Kamikura below Iiyama castle, in the fourth month. There they met Tekiō Etan, master of the hermitage.³³

(One of the general talks, or *fusetsu*, in Hakuin's recorded sayings describes Shōju-an as being located deep in the forests surrounding Narasawa, only a hedgerow removed from the village of Narasawa itself. The master of Shōju-an was known by the priestly names Etan and Dōkyō. Tekiō was his posthumous name. Years later, in the second month of the second year of the Bunsei era [1819], he was accorded the rank of Daiichiza, or First Monk, at the Myōshin-ji in Kyoto and became known as Dōkyō Etan Zenji).

Shōju was gathering firewood when they arrived. When Sōkaku extended a greeting, Shōju glanced around. "This is Kaku Jōza from southern Suruga," said Sōkaku. "He would like to have an interview with you."

Shōju glanced again and grunted a response.

Sōkaku took the master on ahead to the hermitage. "He's an arrogant old gaffer," the master said to Sōkaku. "Doesn't seem to think

³² The principal "history" of the Chinese Zen school, consisting of biographies of Zen patriarchs and monks. The full title is *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp of the Ching-te Era* (*Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu; Keitoku dentō-roku*).

³³ Shōju Etan, 1642–1721, better known as Shōju Rōjin, the "Old Man of Shōju-an hermitage," whom Hakuin came to regard as his master. Shōju is a rather shadowy figure, known almost solely through the accounts found in Hakuin's writings. According to one writer, Shōju was not a priest at all, but a lay teacher. Awakawa Kōichi, *Hakuin: Shōgai to Geijutsu* (Maria Gabō, 1956), p. 1.

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much of me. Tomorrow I want to see him face to face.”

Sōkaku went to Shōju. “Kaku is a friend of mine,” he said. “Please grant him an interview.” Shōju agreed to receive the master in his chambers.

The next day when the master went to Shōju’s quarters he took along a verse he had composed to express his understanding and presented it to Shōju. Shōju grabbed it in his left hand and said, “This is what you were able to learn.” Then he held up his right hand. “Now give me your insight.”

“If I had any insight at all to show you, I’d vomit it up for you right now,” the master replied. He made gagging sounds.

Shōju pressed the attack. “What about Chao-chou’s Mu?” he said. “What is your understanding of that?”

“Chao-chou’s Mu?” said the master. “No place at all to get a hand or leg on it!”

Shōju reached out and grabbed the master by the nose. “Well,” he said, “I just got a real good hand on it.”

The master’s body broke out in cold sweat, his rampant self-esteem twisted completely away in Shōju’s fingers.

“You cave-dwelling Zen corpse!” said Shōju, howling with laughter.

The master was unable to make any response at all.

“Are you really satisfied being like this?” Shōju asked.

“Why shouldn’t I be?” countered the master.

Shōju then brought up another koan, Nan-ch’uan’s Death,³⁴ but the master put his hands over his ears and rose abruptly to leave the room.

“Honorable monk,” called out Shōju.

The master looked back.

“You cave-dwelling Zen corpse!” jeered Shōju.

After that every time Shōju caught sight of the master, he just laughed at him and taunted him with the same words: “Cave-dwelling Zen corpse!”

Each time the master entered the room for an interview, Shōju would look at him and say, “Ahh! You’re down inside a hole. A deep, deep hole. It’s like peering down at a man at the bottom of a well from the railing of a pavilion.”

³⁴ Found in *Shūmon kattō-shū*, vol. 2. Kajitani Sonin, Hōzō-kan, 1984.

During an interview in his chambers, he said,

“Secretary Ch’en was standing on the top storey of a pavilion with a group of government officials. They saw several monks approaching in the distance. ‘Zen monks on pilgrimage,’ remarked one of the officials.

“‘No, they aren’t Zen monks,’ Secretary Ch’en replied. ‘Wait till they come closer, I’ll test them.’

“The Secretary waited until the monks were directly below them. ‘Monk!’ he shouted down. The monks looked up. The Secretary turned to the officials and said, ‘Now do you believe me?’”³⁵

Then Shōju pressed his attack. “Say something in place of the official!” he demanded. “Make the Secretary happy! Say something that will show you’re an understanding friend!”

The master wrestled with this. Every time he came to Shōju’s chambers for an interview, Shōju would lash out at him with great vehemence the moment he entered the room. Whenever he attempted to speak, Shōju would silence him with deafening shouts.

Next Shōju brought up a verse by Zen master Hsueh-tou from the *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 51.³⁶ He said, “One line reads, ‘Living the same life makes us understanding friends.’ I don’t want to know about that, though. Tell me what’s being revealed in ‘Dying the same death separates us completely!’”

Shōju quoted from another poem: “South, north, east, west—setting out for home; /In dead of night the same snowcapped peaks row upon row.”

“Those lines contain an essential life-giving Zen function,” he said. “Show me how you understand them! Tell me! *SAY SOMETHING!*”

The master thought to himself: “The old man treats me in this shabby way because he doesn’t realize what a splendid enlightenment I had. I’m going to have to muster all my strength and confront him in a struggle to the death.”

The next time the master entered Shōju’s chambers and began his interview, Shōju scolded him severely. But the master stuck defiantly to

³⁵ *Shūmon kattō-shū*, vol. 2.

³⁶ *Pi-yen lu (Hekigan-roku)*. The principal koan collection in Rinzai Zen, comprised of discourses by the Sung priest Yuan-wu K’o-ch’in (Enko Kokugon, 1063–1135) on the verse commentary Hsueh-tou Ch’ung-hsien (Setchō Juken, 980–1052) had previously composed on a hundred representative koans.

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his position. Shōju grabbed him by the collar and delivered a score of blows with his fist, knocking the master down. He rolled off the veranda onto the ground and lay there unconscious. When he came to, he saw Shōju glaring down at him, roaring with laughter. Suddenly, with his body pouring sweat, he realized how wrong he had been. He clambered quickly back onto the veranda and prostrated himself before Shōju.

“You cave-dwelling Zen corpse!” Shōju shouted at him.

The master threw himself into the koan of Nan-ch’uan’s Death with even greater determination. Once, he thought he had penetrated it, and went to Shōju’s chambers to present his understanding. But Shōju would not accept it and sent him away with more of the same abuse—“Cave-dwelling Zen corpse!”

For days, the master labored hard over the koan. He went into the village on a begging round, stopping beside the entrance to a house. An old woman came out of the house and told him to leave. The master just stood there with a stupid look on his face. The woman, losing her temper, grabbed a bamboo broom. “Didn’t you hear me?” she said, brandishing it over her head. “I told you to go somewhere else!” She gave him a hard swat with the broom. At that instant, the meaning of the Zen masters was his. The verse about the roundness of the lotus leaf. Su-shan’s Memorial Tower.³⁷ Nan-ch’uan’s Death. And all the other profound, hard-to-penetrate koans he had struggled over—which until now he had been unable make any dent in whatever—were all at once clear and distinct before his eyes.

He hurried back to the hermitage in an ecstasy of joy. Before he was even through the gate, Shōju knew from the look on his face what had happened, and gave him a joyous welcome. “You have broken through the Barrier!” he said, confirming the master’s realization. “You have come through!”

(That night the master’s mother Myōjun appeared to him in a dream and said, “Thanks to your religious attainment, I will be able to rise free of the realms of suffering and attain birth within the inner palace of Maitreya Bodhisattva.” “Where are you now?” he asked her. “With the King of the Northern

³⁷ This verse appears later; see fn. 49. A translation of Su-shan’s Memorial Tower is found in *Zen Dust*, p. 288–89.

Quarter," she replied. "Have you suffered?" he asked. "Not in the least," she replied. "I simply reside here in the King's palace." The master asked her to stretch out her feet so he could see them. When she did this, he saw that the soles of her feet were smooth and showed no trace of injury. "It's true," said the master joyfully, "there are no signs of suffering at all." She then bade him farewell and disappeared. A radiant white light appeared in the sky and the room filled with a wonderful fragrance.)³⁸

The fifth month. The master told Shōju of his desire to go to Ekōzen-ji in Matsumoto to receive the full precepts. Shōju told him about the formless Mind precepts,³⁹ and then imparted those precepts to him. The master received them with tears of gratitude.

One day the master asked Shōju to instruct him in the Sōtō school's Five Ranks of Apparent and Real.⁴⁰ In reply, Shōju told the master to set forth his own understanding of the Five Ranks. When the master had finished, Shōju said with a laugh, "Is that all? Nothing more?" The master was silent. "There is nothing better for clarifying post-enlightenment training than Tung-shan's Five Ranks," said Shōju reprovingly. "Its principle is exceedingly profound. If there were no more to it than what you have understood, it would just be a useless

³⁸ Myōjun is the posthumous religious title of Hakuin's mother. Departed souls are thought remain in the realm of the dead from the seventh day after death until the second death anniversary. During this period the Ten Kings of Hell, one of whom is the King of the Northern Quarter, hold judgment on sins the departed has committed. The palace of Maitreya, Buddha of the Future, is located in the Tushita heaven, which would be a favorable rebirth.

³⁹ When the enlightened mind is functioning in perfect freedom all precepts are observed naturally, without conscious effort. Hakuin comments on the (Buddha-)mind precepts in the supplement to his Zen records, *Poison Stamens in a Thicket of Thorns* (*Keisō-dokuzui*).

⁴⁰ The Five Ranks is a teaching device formulated by the T'ang priest Tung-shan Liang-chieh (Tōzan Ryōkai). During the first half of the Tokugawa period the Five Ranks was used in the Sōtō tradition but generally ignored in the Rinzai school. Hakuin accorded it an important role in post-enlightenment training. His approach to the Five Ranks is seen in his *Commentary on the Poems of Cold Mountain* (*Kanzan-shi sendai-kimon*), in *Gudō's Lingering Radiance* (*Hōkan ishō*) and in *Poison Stamens in a Thicket of Thorns*. The commentary in *Poison Stamens* is translated in Sasaki and Miura, *Zen Dust* (First Zen Institute, Kyoto, 1966), pp. 63-72.

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piece of temple furniture. Why do you suppose Tung-shan formulated the number of different ranks he did?"

Shōju later transmitted the secrets of the Five Ranks to the master. But when he reached the passage, "A double Li hexagram, The Apparent and Real totally integrated; Putting one on the other, there are three . . ." ⁴¹ he stopped abruptly. The master begged Shōju to continue and give him the secret of the passage that follows: "Completely transformed, there are five." "You can't expect to get it all in just one visit," Shōju replied. "Take a look at Tung-shan's verses on the Five Ranks. ⁴² Don't read anything else. Pay no attention to the comments or theories others have made about them. If you do, you'll find yourself down inside the same old hole as the other polecats."

One day Shōju took the master to a memorial service and meal at the house of a temple patron. Their path took them along the edge of a steep cliff. As they walked along in single file, Shōju suddenly turned and grabbed the master. He said, "'I have the treasure of the right Dharma eye, the wondrous mind of nirvana, the true Dharma gate of formlessness. This I entrust to you, Mahakashyapa.' ⁴³ What is that about!" he demanded.

The master looked Shōju straight in the eye and gave him a hard slap. Shōju abandoned the exchange.

The master served at Shōju's side for over eight months. During that time he received instruction constantly, both day and night, until at last he penetrated the heart of Shōju's Zen.

As a teacher, Shōju's sole concern was to produce a genuine heir, someone capable of stirring up the winds of the true Zen tradition once again. He often said, "This Zen school of ours began to decline in the Sung dynasty. By the Ming, there wasn't a breath of life left in it. Its remaining poison was transmitted to our country. But even here it's

⁴¹ These are lines from the *Jewelled Mirror Samadhi* (*Pao-tsung san-mei; Hōkyō sammai*), a Zen poem traditionally ascribed to Tung-shan Liang-chieh in which the teaching of the Five Ranks is illustrated by means of hexagrams in the *Book of Changes*. The "Double Li" hexagram (number 30 in the *Book of Changes*) consists of two identical Li trigrams, one on top the other.

⁴² Tung-shan's verses are translated in *Zen Dust*, p. 67-72.

⁴³ The koan The World-Honored One Holds Up a Flower is found in the *Gateless Barrier*, Case 6.

like looking for stars in broad daylight. A truly distressing situation.”

He also said, “If you were to scour the entire world right now, you would come up with nothing but dead men. Imposters with plausible theories. Priests unable to extricate themselves from even their own views. And when it comes to that final, essential and ineffable secret the Buddha-patriarchs have passed from one to another, that is something these modern priests haven’t glimpsed in their fondest dreams.”

In later years the master told people, “Whenever I heard Shōju deliver judgments on other Zen teachers, I used to think to myself, ‘Why does the old fellow do that? Why does he get so riled up about respected temple priests, men known throughout the country for their eminence?’ I even wondered if it might not be because they belonged to a different teaching lineage. After I left him, though, I travelled the length and breadth of the land, visiting many Zen teachers. Not once during that time did I meet up with authentic master—not one person who possessed the true and absolute Dharmaeye. It wasn’t until then that I was able to truly understand how far Shōju’s Zen surpassed all the others.”

Once, following a heart to heart talk with the master, Shōju opened his fan and began fanning the master’s back. “You should succeed me here and reside at the hermitage,” he said.

“You have Sōkaku,” replied the master.

“He won’t be able to accomplish any great undertaking,” said Shōju. “He doesn’t know how to conserve his vital spirit.”

Another time, Shōju looked at the master and said, “By the time you reach my age, I believe you will have achieved great things.”

In the eleventh month several of the monks who had accompanied the master to Echigo the previous spring showed up at the hermitage. They had traced him there all the way from Eigan-ji in Takada. Thus far the master had been providing for his own needs by begging so as not to draw on the meager store of provisions at the hermitage. The new arrivals, being less fully dedicated to Buddhist practice, were not so scrupulous about such matters, and the master feared their presence might hinder the practice of other students at the hermitage. To avoid the possibility of that happening, he decided it would be best for him to accompany his comrades back to his home province. He figured it would always be possible for him to return later by himself and finish his study under Shōju.

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When the morning of departure finally arrived Shōju, wearing wooden geta, accompanied them along the path for over two leagues. The master's companions began to complain about the slow pace. They said it was causing them to lose valuable time. The master asked a lay student of Shōju's named Fuhaku to take Shōju back to the hermitage.

"We should be turning back now, master," said Fuhaku. "Even if we went along like this another ten leagues, parting still wouldn't be any easier."

"Where is Kaku Zōsu?" said Shōju, looking around. The master stepped forward. Shōju took his hand, gripping it tightly. "I want you to devote all your effort to turning out one or two real monks. Don't try for a large number. If you do, it will be hard to produce a superior student. If you can manage to bring up one or two authentic seedlings, the ancient Zen winds will blow once again."

There was a long pause. Shōju at last released the master's hand and, turning to Ryū Zōsu (his name was later changed to Shōgan), said, "Stay with Kaku Zōsu. He will make sure that your Dharma eye opens."

The master listened intently to Shōju's instructions, tears forming in his eyes. He thanked him and then departed.

He spent the winter retreat at the Shōin-ji.

HŌEI 6 In spring, the master travelled to Nōman-ji in Koyama, Tōtō-
(1709) mi province, to attend lectures on the *Diamond Sutra* being
AGE 25 given there by Dankai Oshō. In summer, he attended a lec-
ture meeting on the *Praise of the Five Schools* conducted by
Chōmon Zen'a at Bodaiju-in in Sumpu. Sōkaku came from Shōju-an
in Iiyama to attend. When the meeting broke up and the master bid
farewell to Sōkaku, he asked a favor of him. "Shōju is advanced in
years," he said. "It may not be possible for me to see him again.
Brother Kaku, I'd like you to get him to teach you the secret of the
'completely transformed, they become five,' phrase of the Five Ranks⁴⁴
so that you can pass it on to me." Sōkaku agreed, and the two men set
out on their separate ways.

⁴⁴ The line from the *Jewelled Mirror Samadhi* quoted above. See note 41.

In examining his everyday behavior, the master could see an inconsistency between the active and meditative aspects of his life. When active, he was never able to experience a true sense of freedom. As far as the realization he had attained was concerned and his grasp of the words of the ancients, he was sure that both were exceedingly sharp and clear. To his regret, however, he realized that in the daily affairs of life he was not complete master of his mind and body. When working on a koan during zazen his mind would be calm and focussed; yet this same composure was lacking when he returned to enter the busy world of everyday life.

Although he would formulate ideas and principles with a highminded determination and resolve, when he set about to apply those ideas the influence of his former delusive mental habits would invariably come to the fore and prevail over the principles he had determined upon. He saw in observing the workings of his mind that when circumstances were favorable feelings of attachment would appear in great number, and when circumstances were unfavorable feelings of aversion would invariably arise. Under his very gaze, joy and anger, love and hate, worry and anxiety, compassion and fear kept appearing and reappearing. He was powerless to correct this tendency within himself through ordinary intellectual means, and equally powerless to change external conditions through the dynamic function of the ultimate Zen principle.

"Could it be," he reflected, "that the way of *kenshō* is just another of those words devoid of truth and substance? When the Zen patriarchs of old achieved their great transformations weren't they like the dragons that attain a lasting and unrestricted freedom the instant they reach a drop of water?"

"The difference between the teachings of 'greater' and 'lesser' vehicles stems from a difference in the depth of the teachings that students are given to dispel their illusion. Shravakas reach a state of non-defilement by meditating on the Fourfold Truth. Pratyekabuddhas attain nirvana by contemplating and realizing the twelfold chain of dependent co-origination. Bodhisattvas develop their extraordinary powers by realizing the true emptiness of all dharmas. A Zen monk, by going directly within himself, eliminates attachment to Buddha-wisdom above while dispelling the influence of delusory mental habits below.

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“I’m like a physician possessed of a wonderful knowledge of medicine who has no effective means of curing an actual illness. I already know the remedy for discrimination. I have grasped the secrets our school has for ‘going beyond’. Yet here I am still suffering from illness myself. How can I possibly hope to cure illness in other sentient beings?”

“There is no doubt where the cause of my problem lies. I have achieved *kenshō*, I have penetrated the nature of discrimination, but I still have trouble integrating the Dharma truth I have grasped into my daily life because I have not succeeded in severing completely my ties to life, and my samadhi-power is not fully developed either.”

In winter he went to help Keirin Oshō instruct students at Hōun-ji in Suruga.

Now the master took the whip in hand and, with jaw set firmly and eyes open wide, “spurred the dead ox forward once again.” When he practiced zazen, he immersed himself totally in samadhic tranquility; when he returned to his everyday tasks, he pursued his practice within activity.

HŌEI 7 When spring came the master left Hōun-ji and returned directly to Shōin-ji. He then joined a group that included Dai-
AGE 26 gi, Shōgan, and Rokuin and went to Hōdai-ji in Sumpu to attend Jōsui’s lectures on the *Blue Cliff Record*. On the way they decided that since they would not be allowed sake once they arrived at the temple, they would stop somewhere for a few drinks before they arrived. At Iwabuchi they made for a drinking establishment. They drank their fill and then chanted out a pledge in the form of a mantra: “*Sakasaraba, Sakasaraba,*” “Farewell to sake! Farewell to sake!”

Sōkaku arrived from Shōju-an during the lecture meeting, just as he had promised. The master asked him for the secret of the “completely transformed” passage of the Five Ranks.

“It’s not easy,” said Sōkaku.

“Sōkaku,” said the master. “Would it make it any easier if we enlisted the aid of some liquid Prajna (sake)?”

The master’s fellow monks went and tracked down a flask of sake. Sōkaku’s cup was filled but as he raised it to his lips the master caught

his hand.

"Have your drink after you give me the secret," he said.

"No," Sōkaku said, "let go of my hand."

"After you drink all that sake," explained the master, "you won't be in any shape to explain it to me."

Unable to come up with any reason to refuse, Sōkaku finally began to explain the passage. He had done no more than utter the words "Completely transformed, they become five . . ." when the master suddenly realized the meaning.

"Stop! I've got it now! I understand it!" he declared.

The others were indignant. "Don't stop him!" they said. "We don't understand it yet."

"You can learn it from me," replied the master.

Sōkaku had by then finished off several cups of sake and they all had a good laugh.

Next day when the master found time to be alone with Sōkaku he set forth to him the understanding he had grasped. Not a word he spoke was inconsistent with the teaching Shōju had entrusted to Sōkaku.

But still the master's lack of freedom in his everyday activity showed no improvement. The long years of arduous training had taken their toll on him and he was set upon by the demons of sickness.⁴⁵ The heat in his heart began to mount upwards into the area of his neck and head, parching and drying out his lungs. He consulted physicians, but they were unable to do anything to help him. Twelve morbid symptoms appeared:

1. fire-like burning in his head
2. loins and legs cold as ice
3. eyes constantly watering
4. ringing in his ears
5. instinctive shrinking from sunlight
6. irrepressible sadness in darkness or shade

⁴⁵ Hakuin's fullest account of his sickness and subsequent cure thanks to the meditation techniques he learned from the cave-dwelling hermit Hakuyū are the subject of *Idle Talk on a Night Boat* (*Yasen-kanna*), his most widely-read work. In the manuscript of Hakuin's *Chronological Biography* compiled by Tōrei this section dealing with "meditation sickness" (*Zen-byō*) is included in Hakuin's thirty-first year. *Taikan Bunshu* moved it to this year when he edited the work for publication.

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7. thinking an intolerable burden
8. recurrent bad dreams that sapped his strength
9. emission of semen during sleep
10. restlessness and nervousness during waking hours
11. difficulty digesting food
12. cold chills unrelieved by layers of clothing.

He became like a confirmed invalid, losing interest in worldly affairs and all concern for others. But he decided that instead of sitting back and allowing himself to rot away, he might as well attempt to track down a physician who might be able to cure him.

He set out from Shōin-ji travelling in a westerly direction. When he reached Reishō-in in Mino province, someone he met told him about a man named Hakuyū who lived in a cave in the hills of Shirakawa in the eastern part of Kyoto.*

The person said, "Hakuyū is well versed in the medical arts. He has grasped the secrets of the Way of the sages as well. But his behavior makes him appear to the world like an ignoramus, a man who cannot even speak without stuttering. He always keeps his virtue to himself, concealing his wisdom, so when people come to see him, his only response is to say, "I don't know." Or he answers in a thick country accent that makes people smile at him. Unless you are able to convince him of your sincerity, he'll probably just treat you as he does any other passer-by."

The master was greatly encouraged by this information. He left Reishō-in at once for Shirakawa. Upon entering Kyoto, he continued on, asking directions along the way. After trekking several leagues up into the mountains at the eastern edge of the city, he came upon a cave hidden among the cliffs. Lifting up a bamboo blind hanging down over the entrance, he performed a deep bow. "I am one who is engaged in the practice of the Way," he said, introducing himself. "But I have been plagued for a long time with an incurable illness. Master Hakuyū, people have told me that you are deeply versed in the Way of the ancient sages; they say you only pretend to be ignorant and feign a speaking impediment. I beg you to help me. Please, use the secret knowledge that you possess to cure me of my affliction."

Hakuyū made a perfunctory gesture with his hand as if to dismiss the master. "You heard wrong," he said. "I'm no physician. I'm no sage

either. Just someone who has separated himself from the world because of illness. It embarrasses me to have holy monks like you coming long distances to see me.”

But the master would not be put off and continued to beg Hakuyū earnestly for his help. Finally, with a casual movement of his hand, Hakuyū grasped the master's wrist. He felt his pulse at nine pulse points and checked the working of his internal organs. His brow furrowed into a dark frown. “It's not good,” he said. “You have become ill because you pushed yourself too hard in your pursuit of the Way. When the vital energy is lost from the internal organs like this, it is very difficult to replenish it. Curing the kind of condition you suffer from is a formidable task. Acupuncture, moxacautery, and medicine bring no relief in a case such as this. Your problems were caused by meditation and you will never get back on your feet unless you can accumulate some merit by practicing Introspective Meditation (*naikan*). As the saying goes, ‘when you fall to the earth, it is from the earth that you must raise yourself up.’ ”

“I would like to learn the essentials of Introspective Meditation,” said the master.

Hakuyū solemnly proceeded to teach him the secret method of Introspective Meditation. (The oral transmission that Hakuyū gave is found in the master's work *Idle Talk on a Night Boat*.)

When the master came to know the secrets of the Way of the immortal sages, he realized for the first time that the exhalation samadhi and inhalation samadhi, as well as Tathagata Zen and Patriarchal Zen, were father and mother to both the unimpeded activity the Buddha-patriarchs and to the Sages' ultimate attainment of nondefilement.

He parted from Hakuyū with reluctance and returned to Shōin-ji, where he devoted himself singlemindedly to cultivating the meditation techniques he had learned. But before long the heat in his heart was mounting feverishly upward into the region of his neck and head. It continued to grow in strength till it became almost unbearable. He found that by discontinuing the meditations and doing nothing at all, he could obtain some relief; but as soon as he resumed them and made any effort to control his mind, the heat would start to rise once again. He recalled hearing that when a morbid upward flow of primal energy such as this continued unchecked it inevitably ended in death. He decided to put it to the test.

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He went through his belongings assembling the notes and manuscripts he had made during his years of koan study and committed them to the fire. He made certain there was enough money to cover the cost of his funeral. He then sat down and began meditating, detached and aloof, determined to sit his way through to the end. Soon the vital energy rising against the natural flow began to fill the area of his upper chest. Gradually increasing in intensity, it pulsed up through his throat and into his jaw. It continued to rise, throbbing inside his nose, reaching his eyes. A pair of ball-shaped objects suddenly seemed to emerge from his eye-sockets. When he caught at them with his hands he felt an intense, stabbing pain in his brain. He held on desperately to the two round objects but they broke free, soaring quickly upward and disappearing into the sky like a pair of skylarks. Immediately his heart felt lighter. His sharpness and alertness returned. He had at last succeeded in severing himself from the long illness that had been oppressing him.

He devoted the summer months to zazen, practicing together with Sōkaku and several other monks of his acquaintance. When autumn arrived the senior priest Setsu Jōza of Ketsujō-ji came to Shōin-ji at the master's invitation and lectured on the *Record of Lin-chi*.⁴⁶

* (Hakuyū's family name is unknown. In his youth he served Ishikawa Jōzan but upon falling ill left him and began to seek a means of regaining his health. At the age of twenty he encountered a mysterious stranger from whom he learned a meditation technique called the "soft butter method," as well as the art of refining the cinnabar center. He then went into the mountains and lived a reclusive life without any fixed abode. At the age of seventy or thereabouts he lived for a time at Shisendō, the residence of Ishikawa Jōzan. Finally, he chose a small plot of land among the hills of Shirakawa as a place of retirement and lived there for over twenty years. It is not known where he died. Later, there was a rumour that someone had met him in the mountains of Wakasa. In Shirakawa I [Tōrei] learned from a stone-cutter that Hakuyū had once mentioned to his father that he was looking for a

⁴⁶ *Lin-chi lu (Rinzai-roku)*. The Zen records of the T'ang priest Lin-chi I-hsuan (Rinzai Gigen, d. 866).

cave to live in. The stone-cutter's father told Hakuyū, "Near my quarry is a cliff with a deep, cave-like opening. If you find it to your liking, you can live there." Hakuyū took up residence in the cave. People occasionally would invite him for meals, or bring him fruits of the season. He had a constant stream of visitors. He was around ninety years old when he died. Examples of his calligraphy are sometimes seen.

When my late master [Hakuin] wrote in his work *Idle Talk on a Night Boat* that Hakuyū had been a teacher of Ishikawa Jōzan and that he had lived to be three hundred years old, I believe his memory was playing tricks on him. Because of that some people have criticized him as a man who indulged in idle talk. In years past, when I was living in Kyoto, I scoured around for information about Hakuyū, and that is how I was able to uncover these facts about his life from the stone-cutter in Shirakawa.)

HŌEI 8/SHŌTOKU 1 In spring he went to Ryūkoku-ji in Tōtōmi (1711) province. While he was there he came upon a passage in *The Collection of Sand and Pebbles* which read,⁴⁷ "The deity of Kasuga Shrine, addressing Gedatsu Shōnin of Kasagi, said: 'Since the time of the Buddha Kuruson, all the wise men and eminent priests who have lacked the mind of enlightenment have fallen into the realm of demons.'" The words struck terror into the master's heart. His blood ran cold in his veins.

In the second month he set out travelling in a group that included Shōgan and Rokuin. They visited Yōgen-in in Sakura, Shimōsa province, and stayed on in the training hall run by Daiga Oshō.

The head monk at Yōgen-in was Tettsū Shuso. During a discussion one day Tettsū held up his pipe and, pointing to the pipe bowl, said, "This doesn't look like a goose. Why do people call it a goose neck?"

The master grabbed the pipe out of Tettsū's hand, held up the end with the mouthpiece, and said, "This isn't sour (*sui*). Why is it called a mouth-piece (*sui-kuchi*)?"

⁴⁷ *Shaseki-shū*. By the Rinzai priest Mujū Dōgyō, 1226–1313. The episode Hakuin describes here is not found in Mujū's work.

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A monk who had witnessed the exchange attempted to remonstrate with the master: "You shouldn't talk to the head monk like that." The master struck him.

From Yōgen-in, the master went to Sōen-ji in Shimōsa to receive instruction from the head priest Tetsuzui. While he was there he met a strange monk by the name of Chōshū Dōnin who was also staying at the temple.

Winter, the eleventh month. Word reached the master that his teacher Sokudō was ill. He left immediately for Daishō-ji to take care of him. All his spare time when he wasn't looking after Sokudō he spent doing zazen. He never sat for less than eight sticks of incense each night.

SHŌTOKU 2 During the days the master used his free hours to "illuminate his mind with the teachings of the ancients." At
(1712) night, when he was not busy preparing food or medicine
AGE 28 for his teacher, he devoted himself to zazen. One day during his reading he happened upon a verse by master Hsu-t'ang: "When I saw you off there was a tall bamboo at the gate;/ Its leaves moving in the pure breeze joined me in waving farewell." He felt like a man who had acquired a bright lamp on a dark night path. The old saying about the ancients achieving a "samadhi of words and letters" when they reached this point in their training was now perfectly understandable to him.

Summer. He returned to Shōin-ji and lectured on *Bodhidharma's Six Gates*.⁴⁸

Autumn. On the 24th day of the 8th month, he received word of Sokudō's death. He went and collected Sokudō's ashes and brought them back to Shōin-ji.

SHŌTOKU 3 The death anniversary of his teacher Tanrei fell during
(1713) the first month. Burning incense at the altar, he per-
AGE 29 formed his bows and offered a verse:

⁴⁸ *Shōshitsu rokumon*. A Japanese collection of six works attributed to Bodhidharma first published in 1647.

A wind moving eastward across India, China and Japan
 Fills the branches with a profusion of different flowers;
 In all the pleasant springtime shapes and colors
 I see the features of my late master's ugly face.

The master learned that Jakuji Oshō of Bungo had been appointed senior monk at Kenkoku-ji in southern Ise province (Jakuji later resided at Kōfuku-ji in Shimōsa and took the name Jōzan) and was acquiring a reputation at lecture meetings being held there. He put on his travelling gear and set out for Ise to pay him a visit. As he was passing the post station at Yui he was accosted by a young boy selling candy. "Buy some of these sweets," the boy declared. "You must take some, whether you want them or not!"

"How true those words are," thought the master with a sigh. "If a person is truly dedicated to the Way, he must continue his practice, whether he sees results or not, until he reaches his ultimate goal."

From Yui he proceeded directly to Kenkoku-ji, where he took part in a lecture meeting on the *Record of Hsu-t'ang* conducted by Gikai Oshō. He also attended supplementary lectures given by senior monk Jakuji. But nothing he heard from either man made any strong impression on him.

He heard Kogetsu Zenzai had attained a deep understanding after wrestling for many years with master Ta-hui's verse about the round lotus leaves.⁴⁹ People said Kogetsu was the most virtuous priest in all of Kyūshū. The master was eager to go and visit him, hoping that with Kogetsu's help he too might be able to penetrate to an understanding of Ta-hui's verse.

After leaving Kenkoku-ji he headed west for the pass over the Suzu-

⁴⁹ The verse is: "Lotus leaves, perfect discs, rounder than mirrors; Water chestnuts, needle-sharp, sharper than gimlets." A comment by Ta-hui Tsung-kao (Daie Sōkō) on the Mu koan; found in the *Ta-hui p'u-shuo* (*Daie fusetsu*). Kogetsu Zaikō (also Zenzai, 1667-1751) of the Daikō-ji in Hyūga province, present Miyazaki prefecture. The Zen world of the time was said to be divided between Hakuin in the east and Kogetsu in the west. Many of Hakuin's finest disciples began their practice with the older master. A note in Tōrei's draft biography reads: "During a summer practice session the monks in Kogetsu's temple were chanting sutras and dharanis. When they came to the *Dispelling Disasters Dharani*, Kogetsu made his prostrations before the image of Manjushri, and Manjushri responded with three nods of his head . . ." Rikugawa Taiun, *Hakuin oshō shōden* (Sankibō, Tokyo, 1963), p. 482.

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ka range. A rain-swollen mountain stream had overflowed its banks, inundating the road. The master hitched up his robe and began wading through the flood. After slogging along several hundred feet he came to a broad expanse of water. At that moment, Ta-hui's verse was revealed to him with sudden transparent clarity. Beside himself with joy, exulting in his realization, he lost his footing and toppled over into the water. Other travellers came and tried to pull him up, but he just lay there in the mud roaring with laughter. They thought he had taken leave of his senses.

When he arrived in southern Kyoto he took lodgings in a temple where he overheard a discussion some monks were having about Zen master Kogetsu.

"When Kogetsu prostrated himself before a statue of Manjushri Bodhisattva, he actually witnessed Manjushri returning his bow. He mentioned the incident during a talk he had with Gakuō [the priest who had founded his temple hundreds of years before]."

"One morning the god of the mountain appeared to Kogetsu in a dream to seek his help in liberating some lost spirits that had been appearing in the night."

"Kogetsu is truly an old Buddha—a teacher of his like rarely appears in the world."

The monks' interest in Kogetsu did not extend beyond a discussion of strange occurrences like these. Nothing the master heard from them would have enabled him to get a true picture of Kogetsu's Zen teaching, so he just knitted his brow into a furrow and thought to himself, "If that's the kind of priest Kogetsu is, there would be nothing to gain by visiting him." He changed his plans and struck out northward for Wakasa province.

While he was stopping to rest at a roadside tea shop in Shirakawa he saw a young boy of high rank pass by. He was carrying a bush warbler in a cage. The shopkeeper bowed to the boy and said, "Where are you going, young sir?" "Lord So-and-so has a warbler that is universally praised for the elegant beauty of its voice," the boy replied. "I am going to his residence. I want to place my bird near his so it will learn to sing with that same wonderful voice."

"Even that young boy can decide what he wants to do," thought the master mournfully. "Can I, a Buddhist priest, do less?"

He heard about a temple priest in Wakasa province named Tetsudō.

Tetsudō had studied under Sekiin Oshō for many years and was reputed to be an outstanding teacher. He went to Tetsudō's temple, Enshō-ji, and served as an attendant through the end of the summer practice session. Then, hoping to receive instruction from Egoku Dōmyō, he travelled to Hōun-ji, Egoku's temple in Kawachi province.⁵⁰

The master introduced himself to Egoku and said, "I'm confident that I have grasped the fundamental teaching of the Way of enlightenment but as yet I've had little success integrating the emancipated state of repose and tranquility into my everyday life. Please tell me what I should do."

Egoku said, "A person in your situation should live in the mountains. You should stay there and wither away together with the trees and plants."

Following Egoku's advice the master proceeded to nearby Mount Makinoo to find a hermitage where he could live by himself. He was forced to give up the idea and leave when the abbot of the temple that owned the mountain refused to give him permission to stay.

He had heard about a priest at the Inryō-ji, a nearby temple, named Tesshin.⁵¹ Tesshin had died some years before but the master was confident that if he visited Inryō-ji he would be able to learn something about Tesshin and his Zen from the people and traditions he found there. He went to Izumi and hung his travelling staff up in the Inryō-ji's training hall. Although the temple was governed by an extremely strict set of regulations, almost all trace of Tesshin's influence had vanished.

One day as the master was sweeping and cleaning in the garden behind the temple with the other monks he saw a tiny rundown hut. Inside on a desk lay a copy of the *Nirvana Sutra*. His interest stimulated, he asked who lived in the hermitage. One of the monks told him it was a man named Jukaku Dōnin. "He served as Tesshin's attendant for many years," said the monk. "He had a bright future but he was held back by a careless, reckless streak in his nature. Now he keeps pretty much to himself."

⁵⁰ Tetsudō Genchi, 1658–1730. Egoku Dōmyō, 1624–1713?, was a leading master of the Ōbaku Zen school that had been introduced into Japan by Ming priests during the previous century.

⁵¹ Tesshin Dōin, 1593–1680, was a prominent master of the Sōtō school. He studied in Nagasaki with emigre Chinese priests including Tao-che Chao-yuan (Dōsha Chōgen).

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The master, seeking Jukaku out, came upon an old man with an unsightly face and a robe hanging in tatters from his body. He looked to be half-demented. He ran off when he saw the master approach. The master went after him and was finally able to corner him. Catching hold of his robe to keep him from bolting again, he said, "Wait a minute, elder brother. I've travelled a long way because I wanted to learn something about master Tesshin's Zen. I'd be much obliged if you could tell me how he taught the monks here at Inryō-ji."

Jukaku stared at the master in amazement. "Everywhere you go," he said, "you see the true style and traditions of our school lying forgotten in the dust. Nobody has ever come here asking about my teacher. You're the first. Why are you interested in him?"

After that, when time permitted, Jukaku would talk to the master about Tesshin's religious activities and the ways and methods he employed in the instruction of his monks.

One night the master continued sitting on into the early hours of the morning. In the gathering light he heard the sound of snow falling from the trees outside the room. Suddenly, amid a great enlightenment, he penetrated the koan *The Young Woman Leaves Dhyana*.⁵² He composed a waka,

If only I could
Make you hear
The sound of snow
Falling late at night
At the old temple
In the forest of Shinoda!

SHŌTOKU 4 In spring the master left Inryō-ji. He went to Mino (1714) province where he once again visited Nanzen Oshō at AGE 30 Hofuku-ji. He remained through the summer. While he was there he read the *Record of Daitō*.⁵³ He learned from one of the monks that an old temple priest had once told his assembly: 'I used to regard the utterances in Daitō's records as steep and forbid-

⁵² *The Gateless Barrier, Case 42.*

⁵³ *Daitō-roku.* The Zen records of Shūhō Myōchō (Daitō Kokushi), founder of the Daitoku-ji in Kyoto.

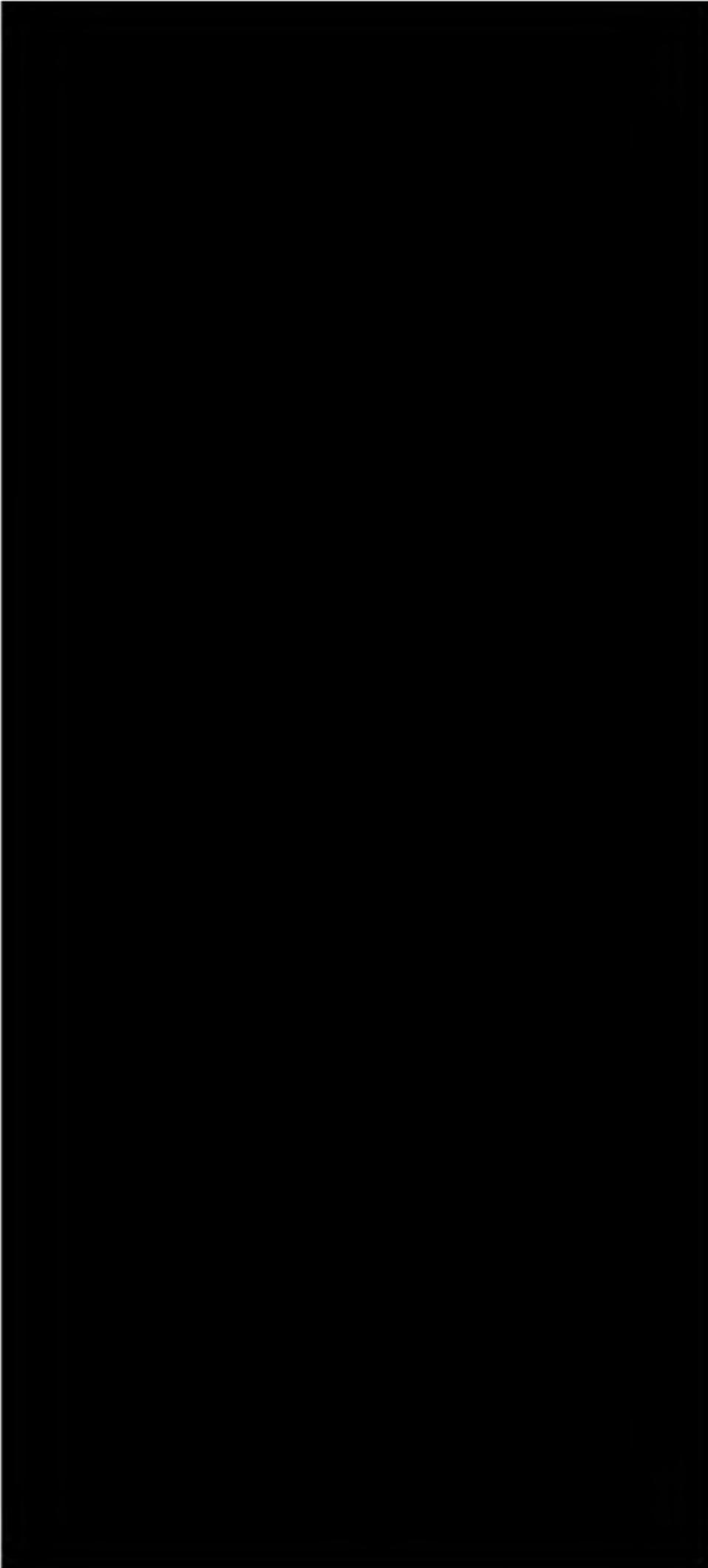
ding—like lightning bolts striking a granite cliff and breaking it apart. Why didn't I realize they were merely verbal Zen—idle talk and needless speech'?"

"Ah! I know just what he means," thought the master. "Among the many records left by Chinese masters from the Yuan and Ming dynasties on up to the present, there is not a single one I can even bear to look at. How could Daitō be an exception!" Hence he had put Daitō's records aside and given them no further thought. He lectured on them for the first time years later, and then only because requested to by his students. However he came to keenly regret the error he had made in accepting unthinkingly the false views passed around by wrongheaded monks. Because of that error he had for years remained ignorant of the timeless and unmatched wisdom contained in Daitō's utterances.

In autumn he left Hofuku-ji and returned to Bankyū Oshō at Reishō-in. He stayed until winter and took part in the *rōhatsu* training session. One day as he was doing *kinhin* in the training hall all the understanding he had previously attained suddenly fell away. He roamed free and unrestricted, totally beyond the phenomenal world.

SHŌTOKU 5 Spring. The third month. The master left Reishō-in to
(1715) seek a remote spot cut off from the world where he could
AGE 31 devote himself singlemindedly to the cultivation of the
Way. He resolved to continue his quest until his goal was
achieved, vowing not to stop even if it cost him his life. He headed east
in the direction of the monastery at Mount Kokei. On the way a man
told him of a mountain called Iwataki. It was, the man said, "cut off
on all sides from worldly intrusion. There's nothing there but a small
hut, but you couldn't find a better place to devote yourself quietly to
zazen."

The master turned and made for Iwataki. On his way up the mountain he saw an old shaven-headed priest harvesting wheat in the fields with some farmers. The priest had a strange glint in his eye and there was something about his appearance that struck the master as being out of the ordinary. He glanced up as the master passed and their eyes met. That night the priest visited the master's hut. The master took the opportunity to ask the priest—whose name was Sōjun Dōnin—about himself. Sōjun made frequent visits to the hut and passed many hours



Self-portrait by Hakuin

with the master.

One day the master was out walking on the mountain. He sat down to meditate at the edge of a precipitous cliff. It was a wonderful spot that afforded splendid views on all sides. Suddenly the master heard a man's voice yelling up to him from far below. "Honorable priest! You shouldn't be up there on that rock!" He immediately climbed down from his perch.

That evening the master continued sitting late into the night. Around midnight he heard the crunch of feet on the ground outside the hut. There was a creak as of a door opening. Someone entered the hut and stood inside. He was huge, eight or nine feet in height, with the rough appearance of a yamabushi or mountain ascetic. A loud voice boomed out, "Master Kaku!" The master did not look around or make any reply. After what seemed a long time, the figure disappeared. The master got up and surveyed the room. The door was secured just the way it had been. There was no sign of anyone having entered. The master realized that the visitor who had come to test his mettle had been no ordinary being.

The next day someone came to the hut and asked the master, "Anything unusual happen last night?" "What do you mean?" the master said. "That big flat rock up there is the abode of the god of this mountain," he explained. "Anyone who climbs up on it is sure to incur his wrath."

Every day the master chanted sutras and dharanis while beating a small *mokugyō* as he strove to deepen his concentration and strengthen the working of prajna wisdom. One night he heard strains of wonderful celestial music in the sky above him. As he listened the sounds grew ever more pleasing to his ears. But he simply paid them no heed and contemplated the principle that "all forms and appearances are false and empty." The sounds continued for six or seven nights in succession, until suddenly, in the midst of deep samadhi, he realized they were only figments of his own mind.

Living amid the deep mountain stillness, cut off from intrusions of external sound, with his mind perfectly tranquil and with his sense of hearing quiet and undisturbed, he found that even the smallest exertion of his vital energy would immediately produce faint sounds inside his ears. The slightest flicker of thought was enough to sustain the noise, which resonating deep inside his ears gave rise to sounds of various

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kinds.

Later the master told his monks, "Those who engage in zazen should just be aware that such things will occur. If you live deep in the mountains and practice by yourself you will experience Mara's seductions in many forms. They can easily distract you from your training. This is what the scriptures mean, 'When the demons are at work within the demons without can gain a foothold.' "

One night as he was doing zazen a sudden fear took hold in his heart. He could not bring himself to venture outside his hut. "What is this fear?" he asked himself. "I'm afraid that goblin will suddenly thrust his loathsome face up in front of me," he answered. "But what, after all, is that face? If a goblin does appear, become a goblin yourself. Confront the goblin with a goblin. What is there to fear? If you are a Buddha, it becomes a Buddha too. Buddha confronting Buddha. There is nothing to fear on that account either. When your own mind appears in its true suchness, all things in the Dharma universe are seen in their fundamental oneness. Goblins and Buddhas have the same nature. False and true are identical. Where in all this universe can you set up a 'self' or an 'other'?"

When he contemplated these thoughts, all obstructions and impediments, physical and mental, vanished, and he experienced a state of absolute fearlessness. He later told people, "From that time on it was the same to me whether things were going smoothly or not. Even in the presence of those of exalted rank I am as easy and relaxed as I am in my own sleeping quarters. Even when I am immersed in the noise and myriad appearances of the world it is as though I am alone meditating in the training hall."

One night that winter he was inspired by a snowfall to compose a waka:

Forget the thought
 'How cold it is'—
There was once a man
 Too busy to sweep
The snow from his floor.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The "man" referred to is the Sung master Yang-ch'i Fang-hui (Yōgi Hōe). *Ch'an-men pao-hsun (Zenmon hōkun)*, 1.

KYŌHŌ 1 The master practiced arduously in the hut on Mount
(1716) Iwataki. Layman Shikano Tokugen arranged for his son to
AGE 32 bring food to the master. But the master recalled that
“those in the past who pursued the Way either abstained
from food or else partook of very little. They never had better than
meager sustenance or clothing. One priest sat for a hundred days sub-
sisting on half of a dried persimmon twice a day.⁵⁵ Others baked moun-
tain yams and boiled bracken to sustain their bodies and nourish their
vital spirits. Who am I to idly consume these precious offerings?”
From that time forth he set himself a daily ration consisting of half a
handful of rice.

One day while he was out begging he heard a story about National
Master Kanzan,⁵⁶ who centuries ago had lived in the neighboring moun-
tains.

“When Kanzan received a summons from the emperor and was
about to leave the mountains of Ibuka for the capital, an elderly couple
approached him with tears in their eyes. ‘We are ignorant people,’ they
said. ‘We lead shameless, wicked lives. Like wolves we just follow our
animal cravings. As we approach the end of our days we know we can-
not hope to be absolved from the transgressions we have committed.
Nevertheless we would be deeply grateful to receive a word from you.
Something which would help us in the next life.’

“‘Come closer,’ said Kanzan.

“When they did he had them sit facing each other, one to his left and
one to his right. Holding the backs of their necks with his hands, he
had them lower their heads in front of him until they touched. After a
brief pause he suddenly bumped their heads together and released
them. Neither the man nor his wife comprehended the meaning of Kan-
zan’s action, but they felt deeply grateful to him and thanked him pro-
fusely. Kanzan then set out for the capital.”

As the master listened to the story he was impressed by the depth and
sincerity of Kanzan’s compassion for the old couple.

⁵⁵ The priest Musō Soseki, 1275–1351, founder of the Tenryū-ji in Kyoto. Hakuin re-
lates the story of Musō’s solitary practice in *Wild Ivy*. See *Eastern Buddhist*, vol. XVI,
no. 1, Spring, 1983, pp. 115–118.

⁵⁶ Kanzan Kokushi; the honorific title of Kanzan Egen, 1277–1360. Kanzan was
living in the mountains of Ibuka, in Mino province, when he was summoned by Em-
peror Hanazono to become founder of the Myōshin-ji in Kyoto.

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The master's father Sōi had fallen ill and was confined to a sickbed. He was deeply concerned about the family temple. "Our Shōin-ji was founded by my uncle Daizui," he said. "The two of us put a great deal of time and work into building it up. Now it is furnished with all the requisite halls and structures. It is even blessed with splendid tall trees. None of that would have been possible without Daizui's laborious efforts. Unless we take steps to protect the temple now it will before long become a field for the foxes and rabbits . . . My son Ekaku still hasn't returned . . . Oh, what are we to do."

An old family servant (Yobakari Shichibei was his name) said to Sōi, "If it's Ekaku you want, I'll track him down for you and get him to come back."

"He wouldn't be easy to find no matter how hard you searched," said Sōi.

"Well he can't have flown off to another world," Shichibei said. "I'll comb the entire country, search everywhere under heaven, until I find him."

Shichibei took some travelling money and started out at once in the direction of the capital. He scoured each of the provinces he passed through—Tōtōmi, Mikawa, and Owari—one after another. Finally, at a small village in the mountains of southern Mino he heard about a solitary monk who was living on Mount Iwataki engaged in a severe regimen of religious practice. Shichibei went directly to Iwataki. He made his way up the mountain and sought the monk out.

The master could scarcely believe his eyes. "What are you doing here?" he asked in astonishment.

Shichibei addressed the master. "Reverend priest. While you hide here enjoying your spiritual exercises like this Shōin-ji is without a priest. Besides, your father is very ill—no one can say how much longer he has left. Don't you feel an obligation to return home and repay some of the debt that you owe him?"

Unable to defend himself against the sharp censure of the faithful old servant, the master gave in. He arrived home around the final week of the eleventh month. His father was overjoyed to see him and immediately had the priest's quarters at Shōin-ji cleaned so that the master could move in and rest up from his trip.

The master came every morning and evening to see how his father was doing. Yet he still had hopes, given the chance, of going back and

resuming his practice at Iwataki. His father issued instructions to his brothers, his children, and the senior lay members of Shōin-ji: they were to make a concerted effort to keep the master at the temple.

KYŌHŌ 2 Parishioners of Shōin-ji, working in collaboration with Yō-
(1717) shun Shūdaku (priest of the Seiken-ji⁵⁷) and other senior
AGE 33 Rinzai priests belonging to the same teaching line as the
 master, worked out a plan of action. On the tenth day of
 the first month, they assembled at the special feast held on the death
 anniversary of the master's teacher Tanrei Soden and preemptorily
 performed a ceremony installing the master as the Shōin-ji's resident
 priest.

Shōin-ji was at the time in an almost indescribable state of disrepair. At night stars shone through the roofs. The tokonoma was sodden with rain and dew. It was necessary for the master to wear a waterproof as he moved about the temple attending to his duties. He had to wear sandals inside the main hall when he conducted memorial ceremonies. The assets of the temple had passed into the hands of creditors. Ceremonial equipment and other temple furnishings had all been pawned. There was an old servant named Kakizaemon (his posthumous religious name is Jitsujō Dōkyū) who gathered wood for fuel, collected vegetables, and managed to produce two meals morning and night. A monk who showed up and was appointed an attendant to the master was able to help supply the kitchen by making daily begging rounds. One day the master took a look at the monk's haggard face and exclaimed dolefully, "Oh my, look what's happened to you from staying here and helping me! The halls haven't got any doors or panels in them. We can't even use the room lamps. About the only assets we have around here worth noting are the moonlight and the sound of the wind. I have no way whatever of making things easier even for a single monk like you!" To show his gratitude he gave the monk some personal instruction using *Ta-hui's Letters* as a text.⁵⁸

As he looked back over the time he had spent in the mountains of

⁵⁷ Shōin-ji was a branch temple of Seiken-ji, a large Rinzai temple located at the Okitsu post station in Suruga province.

⁵⁸ *Ta-hui shu (Daie-sho)*. Letters of religious instruction from Ta-hui Tsung-kao (Daie Sōkō, 1089–1163) to his lay followers.

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Iwataki, he was moved to compose a waka.

The good times and the hard times too
have faded far away;
I'm so happy now—
Never will I seek
another mountain again.

A citizen of Hara by the name of Shōji turned up at the temple one day with a sack of rice slung over his shoulder. He moved in and became a student of the master.

In autumn Ehatsu Zōsu came to stay. The master made him an attendant.

In winter the master lectured on *Precious Lessons of the Zen School*.⁵⁹ On the 21st day of the 12th month the master's father passed away.

KYŌHŌ 3 In spring the master set out with Shōgan Genryū to attend a
(1718) memorial feast at Chōkō-ji in Hara. On the way, as they
AGE 34 were walking along a narrow trail, the master suddenly
penetrated the heart of Nan-ch'uan's Death, achieving an
understanding that far transcended his previous one. He was ecstatic
and struck the ground again and again with his staff. Shōgan marvelled
uncomprehendingly at his behavior.

The priest Tetsuzui came all the way from Sōen-ji in Shimōsa to seek personal instruction from the master.⁶⁰ Tetsuzui was one hundred and three years old at the time. He took lodgings at the Funi-an in nearby Matsunaga and he and the master formed a fast friendship during the time he studied at Shōin-ji.

In summer the master lectured on Bodhidharma's *Breaking Through Form*.⁶¹

The master's lay student Shōji had a brother who went by the studio

⁵⁹ *Ch'an-men pao-hsun (Zenmon hōkun)*. A 12th century collection of anecdotes and episodes from the lives and sayings of Zen masters.

⁶⁰ Tetsuzui Genshō, 1640-1745. Said by Hakuin to have received Dharma sanction from Shidō Mun'an (*Wild Ivy*).

⁶¹ *P'o-hsiang lun (Hason-ron)*; included in *Bodhidharma's Six Gates (Shōshitsu rokumon)*.

name Yūtetsu. Yūtetsu was possessed of an unusually keen intellect. Once as he was about to leave to attend to some business in Edo the master told him, "Birth and death is the one great matter; change comes swiftly. When you arrive at the final hour, what kind of utterance will you make?" Yūtetsu did not know what to answer. The master gave him Daitō's waka about "seeing with the ears, hearing with the eyes" to work on. (It is found in Daitō's *Poems for Cultivating the Ox*: "When the ear sees/And the eye hears/One has no doubts;/How naturally the rain drips/From the eaves!")⁶²

Once when they were in the garden the master tested Yūtetsu by asking, "When Mount Sumeru is shattered into small bits of stone, empty space breaks into two, three, four."⁶³ What is the principle of that?" Yūtetsu reached down, picked up a lump of dirt at his feet, and threw it to the ground. The master abandoned the exchange.

In autumn the master lectured on the *Record of Lin-chi*. In the eleventh month he was appointed to the rank of First Monk (Daichiza) at Myōshin-ji,⁶⁴ the headquarters temple in Kyoto. He adopted the name Hakuin and was made an heir of Tōrin Soshō, his elder brother in the Dharma.

KYŌHŌ 4 In spring two monks came and asked Hakuin to lecture on (1719) the *Praise of the True School*. He agreed. (This marked the AGE 35 first time he lectured at the request of monks.)

In summer Sōnin from Mino and Genshin from Kai came and became his attendants.

The monk Unzan of Kongō-ji and the master had been friends from the time they were seven or eight years old.⁶⁵ Unzan came frequently to

⁶² *Yōgyū-keigin-ka* ("Ox-herding Poems for Leisurely Humming"). A collection of didactic verse (*dōka*) attributed to Shūhō Myōcho (Daitō Kokushi). In the first published edition of the work (17th century), this verse is not included. Hakuin quotes it elsewhere as his own verse (*Horse Thistles; Oniazami*).

⁶³ A similar phrase occurs in a headnote to one of the waka in *Ox-herding Poems for Leisurely Humming*.

⁶⁴ It was necessary, as a minimum requirement, for priests of the Myōshin-ji line to obtain this rank from the headquarters temple before they could be installed as abbot at a branch temple.

⁶⁵ Unzan Sotai, 1685-1747. Unzan achieved enlightenment under Kogetsu Zaikō. The Kongō-ji was located in nearby Numazu.

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study with the master. He later achieved a realization. Whenever Hakuin travelled somewhere Unzan always accompanied him.

KYŌHŌ 5 Spring (the third month). While Hakuin was in Izu enjoying the waters at Yoshina hot springs, he was visited by
(1720) a priest named Batei.*
AGE 36

Autumn. Hakuin stopped for a day at a meeting being held at Seiken-ji where Yōshun Shūdaku was lecturing on the *Blue Cliff Record*. The next day, after Hakuin had left, Yōshun told the assembly, "I had trouble giving the lecture yesterday because the priest from Shōin-ji was here." This confession greatly perplexed the monk Gedatsu from Muryō-an, who was attending the meeting. "How strange for a priest of Yōshun's stature to feel that way," he mused. "Now that I know the name of the Shōin-ji priest, I want to go and see him face to face." When the assembly ended Gedatsu went to Shōin-ji and began to study under the master. (He was the first monk formally accepted by Hakuin as a student.)

* (It is not known where Batei was from or what teaching line he belonged to. He had practiced with the Ming priest Hsin-yueh Hsing-t'ao in the city of Mito and served as head monk under him. Batei's stock answer, whenever people asked his age, was to say that he was seventy years old.

Hakuin chaffed him about it. "You were made the head monk when you were still a child. You became an attendant as an old man. Is that the order they customarily follow in Ming China?"

"What do you mean?" asked Batei.

"Well, I've heard you were head monk in Hsin-yueh's assembly at the same time Mokushitsu served as his personal attendant," replied Hakuin. "Judging from Mokushitsu's present age, you couldn't have been more than fifteen at the time."

"You impudent old man," Batei chided. "Going around fooling people like that."

"On the contrary," replied Hakuin. "You have been deceiving me." Batei burst out laughing.)

KYŌHŌ 6 Ekyū of Rinsen-ji came to study with the master and under-
 (1721) went the ceremony making him a disciple. During the win-
AGE 37 ter a group of twenty travelling monks arrived and asked
 the master for permission to stay and study at Shōin-ji. The
 master refused them in no uncertain terms, but that did not deter them.
 They sat down in a row at the edge of the garden and remained there
 for several days until the master finally relented. He held a lecture meet-
 ing for them on the *Letters of Ta-hui*. Tetsuzui came from Funi-an to
 help.

At the beginning of the tenth month, on the sixth day, word reached
 him that Shōju Rōjin had died.

KYŌHŌ 7 In summer the master lectured on the *Treatise on the Orig-*
 (1722) *inal Man*.⁶⁶
AGE 38

KYŌHŌ 8 Provisions in the temple larder were nearly exhausted. The
 (1723) monks made the rounds of nearby shops begging rancid
AGE 39 shoyu that was about to be thrown out. At one meal Teki
 Zōsu, temple cook at the time, served some cold soup the
 surface of which was alive with wriggling maggots.

“Pay more attention to your work!” scolded Hakuin.

“Maggots breed in rancid shoyu,” said Teki. “I couldn’t bring
 myself to squash them, so I just added it to the soup stock and served it
 unheated.”

“Is that all there is?” asked the master with a laugh.

“We never have extra supplies of food. We go out and beg what
 others are ready to throw out. Then we use it for the morning and even-
 ing meals. Why don’t we just set the soup aside. We can wait until the
 maggots have all hatched and then ladle them out.”

One day Tetsuzui came to Shōin-ji and stayed over. The master
 opened up his heart to the old priest as they exchanged views about mat-
 ters of the past and present. That night Jizō Bodhisattva appeared to
 the master in a dream. His body was of infinite magnitude, filling all
 space. The master, sitting in attendance at his side, asked the Bodhisatt-

⁶⁶ *Yuan-jen lun (Gennin-ron)*, by Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (Keihō Shumitsu, 780–841).

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va, "How can I incorporate the attainment I've achieved into my everyday life?" The Bodhisattva looked around at him and said, "As though sitting in a thicket of thorns and briars . . ." Cold shivers ran up and down the master's spine. When dawn came, he described his dream to Tetsuzui.

"Don't worry yourself over it," advised Tetsuzui. But the master told someone, "That was a place Tetsuzui hasn't reached yet."

KYŌHŌ 9 During the summer the master lectured on *Po-shan's Cautionary Words*.⁶⁷ The meeting was attended by about
(1724) twenty monks.
AGE 40

KYŌHŌ 10 Hakuin had resided at Shōin-ji for ten years now. During
(1725) that time he had applied himself singlemindedly to his
AGE 41 practice and endured great difficulty and privation without ever deviating from his spare, simple way of life. He never followed any fixed schedule for chanting sutras or other rituals. When darkness fell he would get inside a derelict old palanquin and seat himself on a thick cushion he had placed on the floorboard. One of the young boys studying at Shōin-ji would then come, wrap the master's body in a futon, and cinch him tightly into this position with a rope. There he would remain without moving, looking just like a painting of Bodhidharma, until the following day, when the boy would come to untie him so that he could relieve his bowels and take some food. The same routine was repeated nightly.

Neither did he neglect the words and sayings of the Buddhas and patriarchs; they never left his side. He used them to verify the meaning of the ancient worthies' injunction "to illuminate the old teachings by means of the mind, to illuminate the mind by means of the old teachings."

He had a room built a hundred paces or so behind the abbot's quarters where he could go and devote himself quietly to zazen free from all outside cares. When he entered the room no one except the monks permitted to receive his personal instruction dared to approach.

⁶⁷ *Po-shan ching-yu (Hakusan keigo)*. Instructions for students engaged in koan study by the Ming priest Wu-i Yuan-lai (Mui Genrai, 1573-1630).

These examples all testify to the scrupulousness and rigor of the life he observed at Shōin-ji.

One night he dreamed that his mother Myōjun came to him and presented him with a robe of purple silk. When he accepted the garment, he felt heavy weights in both of the sleeves. On examining the sleeves he found in each one an old mirror about five or six inches in diameter. The mirror in the right sleeve shone with a brilliance that pierced deep into his heart. His body and everything else—mountains, rivers, the great earth itself—were like a clear and bottomless pool. He noted that not even a flicker of light came from the mirror in the left sleeve. But the very instant that thought occurred to him he realized with blinding clarity that the mirror on the left was shining with a brilliance millions of times brighter than the mirror on the right. From that time forth, whatever he saw, it was as though he was looking at his own face, and for the first time he understood the true meaning of the words about a Tathagata seeing the Buddha-nature with his own eyes.

KYŌHŌ 11 Autumn. Hakuin hung out the schedule for sutra chanting (1726) on the announcement board. At the suggestion of Tōhō AGE 42 Sokin of Tokugen-ji, he read the *Lotus Sutra*. One night as he was reading in the chapter on parables a cricket made a sequence of churrs from the foundation stones of the temple. The instant the sound reached his ears he suddenly became one with the deep principle of the *Lotus*. The doubts and uncertainties that had arisen at the beginning of his religious quest and had remained with him ever since dissolved all at once and ceased to exist. He realized the understanding he had gained from all his satoris had been greatly mistaken. He could see with perfect clarity the reason for the *Lotus's* reputation as the king of sutras. He let out an involuntary shout and began weeping uncontrollably. He was able to see for the first time the enlightened activity that had pervaded Shōju's daily life, and understand that there were no bones at all in the tongue with which the World-honored One spoke.⁶⁴

Hakuin lived from then on in a state of great emancipation. The enlightening activity of the Buddha-patriarchs, the Dharma eye to grasp the sutras—they were now decisively his own, without any lack

⁶⁴ The expression means that he spoke with perfect freedom.

BIOGRAPHY OF HAKUIN

whatever.

(The master's religious attainment may be divided into three general periods. The first period [his 15th to his 23rd year] began when religious doubts first arose in his mind and continued until he penetrated the fundamental ground. The second period (his 23rd to his 27th year) began with his investigation of the profundities of the ultimate principle under Shōju Rōjin. In the 3rd period (his 27th to his 41st year) he continued to practice and refine his attainment as he experienced the contradictions between the aspects of activity and non-activity, phenomena and ultimate truth. I have thus called the first part of this biography the Practice Leading to Enlightenment.)