

TRANSLATION

Talks by Hakuin Introductory to Lectures On the Records of Old Sokkō (4) (*Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*)

TRANSLATED BY NORMAN WADDELL

LONG AGO, a son of the Shakya clan (he was known later as the “golden sage”) went into the fastness of the Snowy Mountains to make his first retreat.¹ He carried cradled secretly in his arms an ancient, stringless lute. He strummed it with blind devotion for over six years, until one morning he saw a beam of light shining down from a bad star which startled him out of his senses.² The lute, strings and all, shattered into a million pieces. Presently, strange sounds began to issue from the surrounding heavens. Marvelous tones rose from the bowels of the earth. From that moment, he found that whenever he so much as moved a finger, sounds came forth which wrought successions of wondrous events, enlightening living beings of every kind.³

It began at the Deer Park, where he strummed the old four-strutted instrument, producing twelve elegant tones.⁴ In mid-career, at Vulture

¹ Here begins a lengthy section in which Hakuin praises a series of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese patriarchs of Zen, comparing their Zen styles to various sounds. He begins with Shakyamuni, the origin of the Zen transmission, and ends with 15th century Japanese priests of the Myōshin-ji line.

² Shakyamuni's enlightenment is said to have occurred when he looked up and saw the morning star. Hakuin calls it a “bad star” (*akusei* 悪星), using it, as he does “poison drum” or “poison words,” to emphasize its power to destroy Shakyamuni's illusion and bring about his enlightenment.

³ I.e., those womb-born, egg-born, water-born, and born by metamorphosis.

⁴ The “four struts” (四柱; the characters can also mean “four pillars”) are the Four

Peak, he articulated the perfectly rounded notes of the one vehicle.⁵ At the end, he entered the Grove of Cranes, and there the sad strains of his final song were heard.⁶ In all, his repertoire totalled five thousand and forty scrolls of marvelously wrought music.

Then a person appeared who understood—who could grasp these notes at the touch of a single string. He was known as Great Turtle.⁷ When his carapace fractured—a sudden blossom-burst of cracks and fissures—the melody was taken up on twenty-eight large instruments.⁸ When they had finished playing, a divine blue-eyed virtuoso with a purple beard arrived.⁹

How wonderful he was! With one sweep of the lion strings he swallowed up the voices of six schools. Eight times the phoenix strings changed hands as the divine lute passed in secret transmission.¹⁰ The source of it all was this man from the land of Kōshi, in India, who was born the son of a king.¹¹

Reaching the forested peaks of the Bear's Ears, he amused himself

Noble Truths: pain or suffering, its cause, its ending, the way thereto." *Dict. of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, p. 182. The "twelve songs" refer to the 12-linked chain of dependent origination: ignorance, actions produced by ignorance, emergence of consciousness, mental activity, the five senses and mind, sensory contact, perception, craving, attachment, existence, birth, old age and death.

⁵ Reference to the *Lotus Sutra*, where Shakyamuni preached the truth of the One Vehicle (Mahayana) by means of which all sentient beings can attain Buddhahood.

⁶ Japanese, *Kakurin* 鶴林, where Shakyamuni gave his final teaching and entered Nirvana. The "Sutra of Bequeathed Teaching" (*Yuikyō-gyō* 遺教經) is said to contain this teaching.

⁷ According to Zen tradition, Shakyamuni held up a flower during a sermon, but none among those assembled could grasp his meaning save his disciple Mahakashyapa ("Great Turtle" 大龜, J. Daiki), who broke into a smile. This is regarded as the start of the Zen transmission, handed down "outside the teachings" from master to disciple.

⁸ The succession of 28 Indian patriarchs from Shakyamuni to Bodhidharma who transmitted the Zen Dharma in India.

⁹ Bodhidharma.

¹⁰ Lute strings made from lion gut and phoenix blood were reputed to produce sounds of exquisite beauty. The six schools are those which Bodhidharma refuted in India before he went to China. *Keitoku Dentō-roku*, 3 (*Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*), section on Bodhidharma. "Eight times" apparently refers to the eight transmissions from Bodhidharma to Baso Dōitsu.

¹¹ According to accounts in the Chinese Zen histories, Bodhidharma was the son of a king of a country called Hsiang-chih 香至 (J. Kōshi) in southern India.

playing a holeless iron flute. But finding its sounds unable to rend men's bowels, he parcelled out his own skin flesh bone and marrow instead.¹²

Seven steps after him the transmission stumbled and a blind lifeless old nag was loosed upon the world. Kicking up his heels, he pranced forward at a high-stepping gait. Lathering up all three hundred and sixty joints, sending deadly milk flying wildly on every side, showers of blood and sweat steaming violently up from all eighty-four thousand pores, he stomped the trichilocosmic universe into dust, smashed the vaults of heaven into atoms with his deafening neighs, ran roughshod over Mount Sumerus by the millions, and ravaged lands in the six directions, leaving them in tiny pieces.¹³

The transmission continued. It was passed on at the foot of Mount Nansen, where a heavenly drum began to beat of its own accord.¹⁴ Chōsha and Jōshū harmonized with the mysterious direct pointing and broke into powerful personal renditions of the secret melody.¹⁵ It reached an old ferryman at the Daigi ford who liked to pass the time tapping away on the side of his boat, rapping out rough barbaric tunes that drowned out the notes of more graceful song.¹⁶

¹² Bear's Ears Mountain (Hsiung-erb shan, 熊耳山; J. Yūji-san); site of Bodhidharma's grave. According to a Zen tradition, he did zazen there for 9 years (cf. *Zengaku yōkan*, Segawa Shobō, 1907, p. 248b); after which he called his four disciples and had each of them express their attainments. To one disciple Bodhidharma said, "You have attained my skin." To another, "You have attained my flesh." To a third, "You have attained my bone." And to Eka (Hui-k'o), his successor, he said, "You have attained my marrow."

¹³ I.e., Baso Dōitsu 馬祖道一 (Ma-tsu Tao-i, 709-788; Baso means literally "Horse Patriarch"), an heir of Nangaku Ejō (Nan-yueh·Hui-jang). Baso was the eighth Zen patriarch in the transmission from Bodhidharma. Nangaku Ejō was told by his teacher, the Sixth Patriarch, that the 27th Indian patriarch Prajnatara had predicted that he (Nangaku) would produce a spirited young horse who would trample the whole world into the dust; *Zennen mōgyū*, 禪苑蒙求, 2 (*Ch'an-yuan meng-ch'iu*); *Gotōgen*, 3 (*Wu-teng yao-yuan*).

¹⁴ Nansen Fugan 南泉普願 (Nan-ch'uan Pu-yuan, 748-835), a disciple of Baso Dōitsu.

¹⁵ Chōsha Keijin 長沙景岑 (Chang-sha Ching-ts'en, n.d.) and Jōshū Jūshin 趙州從諗 (Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen, 778-897), disciples of Nansen Fugan. "Direct pointing to man's mind" is a maxim of the Zen school.

¹⁶ Gantō Zenkatsu 巖頭全齋 (Yen-t'ou Ch'uan-huo, 828-887), a disciple of Tokusan Senkan (Te-shan Hsuan-chien). Forced to return to lay status during a suppression of

Old Elephant Bones sustained the resonance with his uncouth ways and wild dances.¹⁷ At Mount Ra and Mount Sō the old tunes, infused with the divine, flowed out in elegant numbers perfectly regulated to the Dharma truth.¹⁸ Shuzan and Sekisō pitched their tunes to the tones of “yellow bell” and “great harmony,” producing music which was faint and subtle yet stern and relentless.¹⁹ Country demons scuttled off in horror at the sound, idle spirits scurried into deep hiding.

The sharpest, most trenchant strains of all came from a poison drum slung upside down in the Kōtai-in in Kōnan province. Draining men's souls, bursting men's livers, they littered the landscape with the bodies of over eighty men and struck who knows how many others deaf and mute.²⁰

Gyōsō took charge of the lute and carried it up into Mount Tō. Juken clasped it to his bosom and entered Mount Setchō. From their peaks emanated sounds which shook the whole world.²¹

Roarings from an iron lion were heard over the lands west of the

Buddhism, Gantō continued his teaching efforts as a ferryman. Daigi 大義 (Ta-yi).

¹⁷ Seppō Gizon 雪峯義存 (Hsueh-feng I-ts'un, 822-908; an heir of Tokusan Senkan). Elephant Bones (Zōkotsu, 象骨, Hsiang-ku) is another name for Seppō-san (Hsueh-feng shan; in present Fukien province), where Seppō resided.

¹⁸ Rasan Dōkan 羅山道閑 (Lo-shan Tao-hsien, n.d.), an heir of Gantō Zenkatsu. Sozan Kōnin 疎山光仁 (Su-shan Kuang-jen, 837-909), an heir of Tōzan Ryōkai, a co-founder of the Sōtō (Ts'ao-tung) line.

¹⁹ Shuzan Shōnen 首山雀念 (Shou-shan Sheng-nien, 926-993), four generations after Rinzaï Gigen (Lin-chi I-hsuan); noted for his “Three Phrases,” used in koan study. Sekisō Keishō 石霜慶諸 (Shih-shuang Ch'ing-chu, 807-888), heir of Dōgo Enchi (Tao-wu Yuan-chih), known for his sleepless devotion to zazen. “Yellow bell” 黃鐘 and “great harmony” 大呂 are names given to two primary tones on the 12 tone Chinese musical scale; used figuratively to connote things of elemental significance (Morohashi 12, 965).

²⁰ Ummon Bunen 雲門文偃 (Yun-men Wen-yen, 862-949), founder of the Ummon line of Zen. The Kōtai-in 光泰院 (Kuang-t'ai yuan) was the name of his temple on Mount Ummon in Kōnan (Kuang-nan), in modern Kwangtung. The “eighty bodies” presumably refer to his Dharma heirs; the “countless others” to those who studied with him (he is said to have had over 1000 students) without receiving his transmission.

²¹ Tōzan Gyōsō 洞山曉聰 (Tung-shan Hsiao-ts'ung), early Sung period, and Setchō Juken 雪竇重顯 (Hsueh-t'ou Ch'ung-hsien, 980-1052), co-author of the *Hekigan-roku* (*Pi-yen-lu*), both of the Ummon line.

river—they would have killed the spirit in a wooden man.²² Bayings of a straw dog filled the skies over Lake Shi—they would have started hard sweat on the flanks of a clay ox.²³

Another true man emerged. He was a son of the Tō family of Hasei in Menshū. Known as Tōzan Rōjin, the Old Man of the Eastern Mountain, he devoted himself as a young monk to austere religious discipline at Brokenhead Peak. Later, he concealed his presence inside a clump of white cloud. One morning, he entered the rice-hulling shed, tucked up his hemp robe and made a single circumambulation of the millstone.²⁴ The thunder from this voiceless cloth drum rolled angrily out, snarling and snapping, and filled the world with its far-reaching reverberations—you would have thought the thunder god himself had been hired to pound a poison drum. It struck three Buddhas utterly senseless, and drained a quiet man of all his courage.²⁵

²² Reference to Sekisō Soen 石霜楚圓 (Shih-shuang Ch'u-yuan, 986-1039), better known by the posthumous title Jimyō 慧明 (Tz'u-ming). A disciple of Fun'yō Zenshō (Feng-yang Shan-chao) in the Rinzaï line, Jimyō's fierce devotion to his practice (he stuck himself in the thigh with a gimlet to keep from dozing off) earned him a reputation as the "lion west of the river." His example inspired the young Hakuin to continue his own training. The important Yōgi and Ōryō branches originate with Jimyō's disciples Yōgi Hōe (Yang-ch'i Fang-hui) and Ōryō E'nan (Huang-lung Hui-nan).

²³ Shiko Rishō 子湖利巖 (Tzu-hu Li-tsung, 800-880), an heir of Nansen Fugan. "There's a dog at Lake Shi," said Shiko. "Superior people get his head. Mediocre people get his heart. Inferior people get his legs. If you hesitate at all, your life is lost." A monk asked, "What about the dog?" "Woof! Woof!" barked the master. *Dentō-roku*, 10.

²⁴ Goso Hōen 五祖法演 (Wu-tsu Fa-yen, 1024-1104), an heir of Hakuun Shutan (Po-yun Shou-tuan) in the third generation of the Yōgi line; son of the Tō 鄧 (Teng) family of Hasei 巴西 (Pa-hsi) in Menshū 綿州 (Mien-chou), modern Szechwan. After studying doctrines of other Buddhist schools, Goso practiced Zen under Enkan Hōen (Yuan-chien Fa-yuan), who later sent him to Hakuun Shutan (Po-yen Shou-tuan; Hakuun means "white cloud"). He eventually succeeded Hakuun and spent his later years at Tōzan 東山 (Tung-shan), in modern Hupeh. Brokenhead Peak, Mount Hazu 破頭山 (P'o-t'ou shan), is one of the peaks at Ōbai-zan (Huang-mei shan), where it seems he went after leaving Hakuun. The episode Hakuin quotes here appears in the *Zenrinsōbō-den* 禪林僧寶傳 (*Ch'an-lin seng-pao chuan*), appendix 1: "A monk pointed to Goso rapidly turning the rice mill and said, 'Is that the working of supernatural power (*jinzu*)? Or is it the state of things-as-they-are?' Goso tucked up his robes and made a circumambulation of the mill."

²⁵ The "three Buddhas" are Goso Hōen's disciples Butsugen Seion 佛眼清遠 (Fo-yen Ch'ing-yuan, 1067-1120), Bukkan Egon 佛鑑慧融 (Fo-kuan Hui-ch'in, 1059-1119),

Myōki chanted, his voice reaching up and down the coasts of Kōyō. Bukkan roared, the reports piercing the bottom of the Dragon's Pool. Long howls emanating from Kokyū, Tiger Hill, shook whole forests to their roots. Bitter, soul-rending cries of a Yellow Dragon checked sailing clouds right in their tracks.²⁶

Beating time to the age-old rhythm, Donge, Kanketsu, Sōgaku, and Fugan all penetrated the farthest reaches of its infinite subtleties.²⁷

An old farmer in Shimei province who called himself Sokkō, Retired Field-tiller, kept up a constant stream of song as he swung his iron mattock. One day, he saw an ancient column of light from a large peak illuminate a memorial tower, and the marvelous principle entered him, filling him to his fingertips and producing sounds that moved two forests and swept through ten temples. The echoes it created winged their way eastward and fell in Japan.²⁸

and Bukka Zenji 佛果禪師 (Fo-kuo Ch'an-shih = Engo Kokugon 圓悟克勤; Yuan-wu Ko-ch'in, 1063-1135), all of whose names begin with the character "Buddha". The "quiet man" is another of Goso's disciples, Daizui Nandō 大隨南堂 (Ta-sui Nan-t'ang, d. 1135), whose honorary title Genjō 元靜 (Yuan-ching) contains the character "quiet".

²⁶ Daie Sōkō 大慧宗杲 (Ta-hui Tsung-kao, 1089-1163), master in the 5th generation of the Yōgi line. Kōyō 衡陽 (Heng-yang), in modern Hunan, is where Daie lived in retirement after he became involved in difficulties with the government. Myōki 妙喜 (Miao-hsi) is one of his pseudonyms. Bukkan 佛鑑 (Fo-chien) is the honorary title of Bushun Shihan 無準師範 (Wu-chun Shih-fan, 1177-1249), third generation from Mittan Kanketsu in the Yōgi line. Enni Ben'en, 1201-1280, an heir of Bukkan who founded the Tōfuku-ji in Kyoto, was one of several Japanese monks who studied with the master. Dragon's Pool (Ryūen, 龍淵, Lung-yuan) was a name inscribed on a plaque in Bukkan's chambers at the famous Kinzan (Ching-shan) monastery (*Dasoku*, 18v), where both Daie and Bukkan served as abbot.

Kukyū Jōryū 虎丘紹隆 (Hu-ch'iu Shao-lung, 1077-1136), a disciple of Engo Kokugon. Ōryō E'nan 黃龍慧南 (Huang-lung Hui-nan, 1002-1069), an heir of Sekisō Soen and founder of the Ōryō line.

²⁷ Ō'an Donge 圓庵曇華 (Ying-an T'an-hua, 1103-1163), an heir of Kukyū Jōryū, second generation in the Engo (Kokugon) line; Mittan Kanketsu, 密庵咸傑 (Mi-an Hsien-chieh, 1118-1186), an heir of Ō'an Donge; Shōgen Sōgaku 松源崇岳 (Sung-yuan Ch'ung-yueh, 1139-1209), an heir of Mittan Kanketsu; and Un'an Fugan 運庵普岩 (Yun-an P'u-yen, 1156-1226), an heir of Shōgen Sōgaku.

²⁸ Kidō Chigu 虛堂智愚 (Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu, 1185-1226), whose *records* are the subject of the present work, *Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*. Hakuin frequently refers to him by his pseudonym Sokkō 息耕 (Hsi-keng). A native of Shimei 四明 (Ssu-ming), in present-day Chekiang province, he received the Zen transmission from Un'an Fugan. His

There, they startled the golden cock, who clapped his wings and announced the coming dawn. A jade tortoise began sobbing out the sorrows of his heart.²⁹ It brought mild spring warmth to Recumbent Mountain.³⁰ It danced white flakes of snow over fields of purple.³¹ A herd of deer, streaking auspiciously by, made lightning seem slow.³² A bright pearl turned—its brightness throwing the surrounding seas into darkness.³³

The transmission reached the flower fields of Hanazono. Eight sounds rang out,³⁴ striking everyone dumb—they boomed like the great poison-lacquered crocodile drum that destroys everything within earshot.

enlightenment came while he was working on the koan "Sōzan's (Su-shan's) Memorial Tower," in which Sōzan says, "On Daiyu Peak is an old Buddha who emits dazzling shafts of light" (the entire koan is given in *Zen Dust*, p. 60). He served as abbot at ten temples, including two large monasteries. Noted as a Zen poet, Kidō is important in Japan as the master of Nampo Jōmyō (see footnote 30).

²⁹ The golden cock, that roosts in heaven, is used figuratively to refer to the sun. Here he heralds the coming dawn of the Japanese Zen school. Is the jade tortoise a reference perhaps to the moon: the darkness prior to awakening?

³⁰ "Recumbent Mountain": 横岳山崇福寺, Ōgaku-zan Sōfuku-ji, one of the first Zen temples established in Japan (1241). Nampo Jōmyō (南浦紹明, 1235-1309; Daitō Kokushi) studied with Kidō Chigu in China, received his transmission, and brought the teachings of his line back to Japan. Nampo served as abbot at a number of Japanese temples, including the Sōfuku-ji. His line became the main branch of Japanese Rinzai Zen.

³¹ The Murasakino district of Kyoto, where Nampo Jōmyō's heir Shūhō Myōchō (宗峯妙超, 1282-1338; Daitō Kokushi) founded the Daitoku-ji.

³² Allusion to the teaching style of the Chinese priest Mugaku Sogen 無學 元 (Wu-hsueh Tsu-yuan, 1226-1286; hon title, Bukkō Kokushi), a priest of the Yōgi line who was invited to Japan by the Shogun Hōjō Tokimune, who built a temple, the Engaku-ji, for him in Kamakura. At the opening ceremony a herd of deer ran through the precincts. It was taken as an auspicious sign, and the temple was given the name Zuiroku-zan 瑞鹿山 (Auspicious Deer Mountain) Engaku-ji. *Empō Dentōroku*, 2, section on Mugaku.

³³ A play on the name of a sub-temple of the Daitoku-ji founded by Ikkyū Sōjun (一休宗純, 1394-1481), the Shinju-an 真珠庵 (Dharma-pearl Hermitage).

³⁴ "Flower Fields" (Kaho, 華園 = Hanazono, 花園) refers to the Myōshin-ji in Kyoto, established for another of Nampo Jōmyō's disciples, Kanzan Egen (關山愷玄, 1277-1360), by the Emperor Hanazono ("Flower Fields"). The eight sounds apparently refer to the teachings of the other (eight) schools of Japanese Buddhism.

Branching rapidly out, it formed into four main pillars,³⁵ large instruments of surpassing wisdom and smaller instruments of earnest application, whose voices rolled throughout the universe, penetrated far beyond the seas.

How sad it is, then, to see the great elegance of this music withered away, its place taken by obscene noises pouring forth unchecked. The time-old tunes have been completely drowned out by the discordance of these vulgar, degenerate songs.

Observe the extraordinary caliber of the patriarchal teachers we have surveyed. Who among them bears any resemblance to the people of today? Most of you have not passed through the Barriers [koans] raised by these men, their essential core of truth is unpenetrated, so the fire still burns restlessly in your minds. You won't have a moment's peace as long as you live. You are like someone who suffers at daily intervals from a chronic fever. You try to meditate for five days or so. You give it up and begin prostrating yourself in front of Buddhist images. After five days, you discard that practice and start chanting sutras. Five days later, you quit again, switch to a dietary regimen, one meal a day. You are like someone confined to bed with a serious illness who can't sleep and tries to sit up, only to find he is unable to do that either. You stumble along like a blind mule, not knowing where your feet are taking you. And all because you were careless at the start—your entrance into the Way was not a breakthrough of unbearable joy and profound fulfillment.

It frequently happens that someone will take up Zen and spend three, five, perhaps even seven years doing zazen, but because he does not apply himself with total and thorough devotion, he fails to achieve true singlemindedness, and his practice does not bear fruit. As months and years pass, he goes on without ever experiencing the joy of Nirvana, and samsaric retribution is always there waiting if he stops or regresses.

³⁵ Four disciples of Sekkō Sōshin (雪江宗深, 1408–1486; a priest known as the restorer of the Myōshin-ji), from whom begin the four main branches of the Myōshin-ji line: Keisen Sōryū 景川宗隆, 1425–1500, Ryōsen branch; Gokei Sōton 悟溪宗頓, 1416–1500, Tōkai branch; Tokuhō Zenketsu 特芳禪傑, 1419–1506, Reiun branch; and Tōyō Eichō 東陽英朝, 1428–1504, whose Shōtaku line, to which Hakuin belonged, was particularly influential in the Tokugawa period.

At that point, he turns to the calling of the Name and goes all he knows for the Nembutsu, eagerly desirous of being reborn in the Pure Land. His previous resolve to bore his way through to the truth is cast to the winds, his resolution to negotiate the Path forgotten. People like this have enjoyed great success ever since the Sung. They have most of them been people of mediocre caliber, weak limp-spirited followers of Zen.

Wanting to cover up their lack of success and compensate for their own shortcomings, they are quick to cite the rebirth and reincarnation of men like Kai of Mount Goso, Shinnyo Kitsu, and Gi of Dangai,³⁶ and to draw from their examples the conclusion that practicing zazen is useless. They are singularly unaware that those men were primarily practitioners of the Nembutsu. Alas! in their zeal to support their own preconceived and commonplace notions, they rustle up a brokendown reincarnated old warhorse or two whose religious aspirations were weak to begin with, who had no real gift for instant discernment, in order to throw into disrepute the wise saints who have forged the actual links in the Dharma transmission, thus perverting the secret, untransmittable essence that these men have transmitted Dharma-father to Dharma-son. The five cardinal sins themselves cannot compare with what they have done. The sins they have piled up reach beyond the heavens. There is no possible way they can repent.

Essentially, there is no Pure Land separate from Zen; there is no mind or Buddha separate from Zen. The Sixth Patriarch was a teacher of men who manifested himself for eighty successive lives.³⁷ Nangaku

³⁶ An apparent allusion to stories related in Zen literature involving rebirths or reincarnations of these three figures: Kai of Mount Goso 五祖戒 (Goso Shikai, 五祖師戒; Wu-tsu Shih-chiai, n.d.), a Sung priest of the Ummon line, said to be the previous incarnation of the poet Su Tung-po (*Nindenhōkan* 人天寶鑑; *Jen-t'ien Pao-chien*, 1); Gi of Dangai 斷崖義 (Tenmoku Ryōgi 天目了義; T'ien-mu Liao-i, n.d.), reborn as a human being because of good works performed as an eminent priest (*Sannan zatsuroku* 山庵雜錄; *Shan-an Tsa-lu*, 1); Shinnyo Tetsu 真如詰 (Taiji Bōtetsu 大鴻慕詰; Ta-kuei Mu-tse, d. 1095); Shinnyo was his posthumous title. I have been unable to find much to suggest that they were engaged primarily in Pure Land practice.

³⁷ *Kaienfusetsu dasoku* (21v) quotes Engo Kokugon here: "The Sixth Patriarch, an authentic old Buddha, manifested himself in the world of men in the form of a 'good teacher' (*zenchishiki*) for 80 successive lifetimes in order to help others. . . . It was all owing to his profound compassion and indomitable religious will." Hakuin seems to mean that the inherent ability and religious aspiration of outstanding priests like the

was a venerable master who had stored up knowledge from three previous existences.³⁸ It is all a great ocean of infinite calm and tranquillity, a great empty sky where no traces remain. There are rebirths, there is reincarnation in human form, men are born in the Pure Land—and there are men of the *unborn*. Heaven and hell, the impure world and the Pure Land—these are like a Mani gem of pure suchness moving freely and easily on a tray. If even the slightest trace of thought intrudes, it is like a fool scooping foul water from a midnight pool.

If the ultimate principle of the Buddha Dharma was a matter of desiring rebirth in the Pure Land, the First Patriarch Bodhidharma could simply have sent a letter to China, one or two lines telling everyone: "All you have to do is devote yourselves singlemindedly to repeating the Nembutsu and you will attain rebirth in the Pure Land." What need would there have been to cross ten thousand miles of perilous sea and endure all the hardships he did in order to transmit the Dharma of seeing into the self-nature (*kenshō*)?

As you know, the *Meditation Sutra*³⁹ declares the Buddha's body to be as tall as "ten quadrillion miles multiplied by the number of sand particles in sixty Ganges rivers." You must see that Buddha-body. You must give it your closest scrutiny. Because that and that alone is the way which will point you directly to the mind, make you see your own self-nature, and bring you to attainment of supreme enlightenment.

Sixth Patriarch and Nangaku Eshi were so great they were able to get themselves reborn as religious teachers over and over again in order to help others.

³⁸ A reference to Nangaku Eshi 南嶽慧思 (Nan-yueh Hui-ssu, 515-577), teacher of Chih-i, founder of Chinese T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. In works such as the *Zoku Kōsō-den* (*Hsu kao-seng chuan*), Nangaku is described as being able to see his existence in three previous rebirths. "At Mount Nangaku (Nan-yueh), he pointed to the foot of a cliff and said, 'In my previous existence, while I was doing zazen there, my head was cut off by bandits.' Search was made and a small collection of human bones was found. Later, when he was at another mountain, he pointed to a large rock. 'Two existences ago, I lived here,' he said, picking up an old skull. . . . Some years later, in yet another place, he said, 'There used to be a temple here. I resided in it three lives ago.' He had people dig at the spot and they uncovered articles used by monks as well as the foundations of a Buddhist hall." *Busso toki* 佛祖統紀 (*Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*), 10. A slightly different account appears in *Dentō-roku*, 27.

³⁹ "Sutra of Meditation on the Buddha of Boundless Life" (*Kanmuryōju-kyō*, 觀無量壽經), one of the principal sutra-texts of the Pure Land tradition.

Eshin-in Sōzu said that "Great faith enables you to see a great Buddha."⁴⁰ Zen practice has you break through so that you see that venerable old Buddha with perfect clarity. If you seek elsewhere or in any other way, you will find yourself among the tribe of evil demons who work to destroy the Buddha's Dharma. That is why the sutra says, "If you see the self as a form or appearance, if you seek the self in sounds or in voices, you are on the wrong path, and will never be able to gaze up at the Buddha."⁴¹

All Tathagatas, or Buddhas, are said to possess three bodies: a Dharma-body, Birushana, which is said to be "present in all places"; a Recompense-body, Rushana, which is called "pure and perfect"; and a Transformation-body, Shakyamuni, described as "tranquillity through great endurance." The three appear in the bodies of all sentient beings as tranquillity, wisdom, and [unimpeded] activity or function. Tranquillity corresponds to the Dharma-body, wisdom to the Recompense-body, activity to the Transformation Body.⁴²

The great teacher Bodhidharma said,⁴³

"If a sentient being constantly cultivates good karmic roots, the Transformation-body Buddha will manifest itself. If he cultivates wisdom, the Recompense-body Buddha will manifest itself. If he cultivates non-activity, the Dharma-body Buddha will manifest itself."

⁴⁰ Eshin-in Sōzu 慧心院僧都, also known as Genshin, 942-1017. Tendai priest regarded as one of the forerunners of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. The quotation, from Genshin's *Ōjō Yōshū* 往生要集 ("Essentials for Rebirth"), has the word *nen* 念 ("keep in mind") where Hakuin uses *shin* 信 ("faith").

⁴¹ *Diamond Sutra*.

⁴² The Dharma-body (Sanskrit, Dharma-kāya; Japanese, *hosshin* 法身) is the essential nature of the formless, eternal Buddha; it is invisible to the senses and present everywhere throughout the universe. The Recompense-body or Reward-body (Sanskrit, Sambhoga-kāya; Japanese, *hōshin* 報身) is Buddha enjoying itself in its manifestation as a Tathagata or Thus-come. The Transformation-body (Sanskrit, Nirmāna-kāya; Japanese, *keshin* 化身) is the Buddha manifesting itself in the form of man as the Tathagata Shakyamuni. The identification of Dharma-kāya with Birushana 毘盧遮那 (S. Vairocana, the central Buddha of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, originally meaning the Sun), Sambhoga-kāya with Rushana 盧舍那 (meaning Illuminating), and Nirmāna-kāya with Shakyamuni (the Illuminated or Enlightened One) is a Tendai (T'ien-t'ai) doctrine.

⁴³ From the *Goshō-ron* 悟性論 (*Wu-hsing lun*), included in the *Shōshitsu rokumon* 少室六門 (*Shao-shih liu-men*). Hakuin quotes approximately.

In the Transformation-body, a Buddha soars throughout the ten directions, accommodating himself freely to circumstances as he delivers sentient beings. In the Recompense-body, the Buddha Shakyamuni entered the Snowy Mountains, eliminated evil, cultivated good, and attained the Way. In the Dharma-body, Buddha remains tranquil and unchanging, without words or preaching.

“Speaking from the standpoint of the ultimate principle, not even one Buddha exists, much less three. The idea of three Buddha bodies only came into being in response to differences—high, middling, low—in human intelligence. People of inferior intelligence, who deludedly delight in the exercise of worldly fortune, deludedly see the Buddha of the Transformation-body. Those of middling intelligence, deludedly engaged in eliminating evil passions, deludedly see the Buddha of the Recompense-body. Those of higher intelligence, who are deludedly engaged in realizing enlightenment, deludedly see the Buddha of the Dharma-body.

“People of the highest intelligence, turning their light inwardly, illuminate themselves and attain a state of perfect tranquillity; then, their minds perfectly clear, they are Buddhas. Their Buddhahood is attained without recourse to the workings of mind. They then know that the three Buddha-bodies as well as all the myriad things can none of them either be grasped or expounded.

“Isn’t this what the sutra means when it states that ‘Buddhas do not preach the Dharma, do not save sentient beings, do not realize enlightenment?’ ”

The great teacher Ōbaku said,⁴⁴ *“The Dharma preaching of the Dharma-body can’t be found in the written word, in voices or other sounds, or in forms or appearances. It is not something that can be preached; it is not something that can be realized; it is self-nature and self-nature alone, which is absolutely empty and which runs through all things. Hence the sutra says, ‘No Dharma can be preached—the preaching of that unpreachable Dharma is what is called preaching the Dharma.’”*⁴⁵ *Although both the Recompense-body and Transformation-body manifest themselves to expound the Dharma in response to*

⁴⁴ Ōbaku Kiun 黃蘗希運 (Huang-po Hsi-yun, d. mid. 9th century). From the *Den-shin hōyō* 傳心法要 (Chuan-hsin fa-yao).

⁴⁵ *Diamond Sutra.*

people's capacities, that is not the true Dharma. Indeed, neither the Recompense nor Transformation body are the true Buddha, nor is what they preach the true Dharma."

You must realize that although Buddhas appear in response to sentient beings in a limitless variety of shapes and sizes, large and small, they never appear except as the three Buddha-bodies. In the *Sutra of the Supreme Kings of Golden Light*,⁴⁶ we find the words, "When the three bodies are thus completely achieved, supreme enlightenment is attained. . . . Among the three, the Recompense-body and Transformation-body are merely provisional appearances. The Dharma-body alone is true and real, constant and unchanging, as the fundamental source of the other two."

Still the words of the sutra⁴⁷ are clear: the height of a Buddha's body is "ten quadrillion miles multiplied by the number of sand particles in sixty Ganges rivers." Can you tell me: Is this colossal body a Recompense-body? Is it a Transformation-body? Or perhaps it is the Dharma-body? It has already been stated that the Recompense and Transformation bodies appear to benefit sentient beings in response to their different capacities, yet a world large enough to accommodate such a Buddha, and the gigantic size of the sentient beings to whom he would appear, are both nonsensical. And don't say that because sentient beings in a Pure Land of that size would be correspondingly large, a Buddha would have to manifest himself in a large form too. If that were true, Bodhisattvas, religious seekers, and everyone else who inhabited such a world would have to be just as tall—"ten quadrillion miles multiplied by the number of sand particles in sixty Ganges rivers."

The width of a river the size of the Ganges measures forty leagues across; its sands are as small as finest atoms. Not even a god or demon could count the sand in a single Ganges River, or in half a Ganges River, for that matter—or even the sand in an area ten foot square. And we are talking here about the sand in sixty Ganges! The all-seeing eyes of the Buddha himself could not count them. These, in essence,

⁴⁶ *Konkōmyō saishōō kyō* 金光明最勝王經, "Sutra of the Supreme Kings of Golden Light" (Sanskrit, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*). This quotation is from the 2nd chapter ("Distinguishing the Three Bodies").

⁴⁷ *Meditation Sutra*.

are numbers which cannot be reckoned, calculations which are beyond calculating. Yet they contain a profound truth which is among the most difficult to grasp of all the truths in the Buddhist sutras. It is the golden bone and golden marrow of the Venerable Buddha of Boundless Life [Amida]. If I had to say anything at all about it, it would be that the sand in those sixty Ganges rivers alludes to the colors, sounds, and other kinds of "dust" that appear as objects to the six organs of sense.⁴⁸

Not a single dharma among all those that exist transcends the six kinds of dust. When you are perfectly awakened to the fact that each and every one of those dharmas is, in itself, the golden body of the Buddha of Boundless Life in its entirety, you pass beyond the realm of samsaric suffering and become one with supreme perfect enlightenment right where you stand. At that time, everywhere, east and west alike, is the Land of the Lotus Paradise⁴⁹—it extends in all directions throughout the trichilocosmic universe, not a pinpoint of earth excepted. This is the meaning of "everywhere, universally," that great, all-pervading, primordial peace and tranquillity of Birushana Buddha's Dharmabody, which pervades freely all things, is perfectly unhindered in all beings, and remains without change for kalpas on end.

The scripture goes on to say that those who recite the Mahayana sutras belong to the highest class of the highest rank of those who are reborn in the Pure Land.⁵⁰ What are "Mahayana sutras"? Not those yellow scrolls of paper with the red handles. There's no question about it, they indicate the Buddha-mind that is originally furnished in your own home. So that foolish talk about Zen practice being ineffective is inexcusable. I'm not referring now to wise, compassionate saints who are motivated by the working of their Bodhisattva vow to try to extend the benefits of salvation to those of mediocre and inferior capability.⁵¹ They engage in Pure Land practices themselves so they can instill a firm

⁴⁸ Six "dusts" or objects of perception (corresponding to the six sense organs): color and form, odor, taste, sound, tactile objects, mental objects; called dusts because they give rise to desires and thus pollute the mind.

⁴⁹ Amida's Pure Land.

⁵⁰ *Meditation Sutra*.

⁵¹ E.g., Genshin (see fn. 40 above); and Hōnen, 1133–1212, founder of the Jōdo (Pure Land) school.

desire for Pure Land rebirth in their followers and enable them to acquire a mastery of the triple mind and fourfold practice.⁵²

But for a member of the Zen school who has neglected to apply himself totally to his own training to declare afterwards that Zen practice is useless, for him to say that sole devotion to Zen practice does not bring results—such a person cannot be allowed to escape without severest scrutiny. He is just like someone who has failed the civil service examination, been passed over for government appointment, and is reduced to an ignoble existence drifting around the country sponging off others—and who then points to a few government officials who have been dismissed and banished to the provinces, examples which prove, he says, the uncertainty and precariousness of government service. The man is himself a failure yet he insists upon belittling others of genuine worth who have passed the examinations with highest honors. Doesn't he remind you of someone who is unable to raise his food up to his mouth yet who keeps assuring you he isn't eating because he's not hungry?

Adding Pure Land to Zen, someone said, is like fixing a tiger with wings.⁵³ What empty-headed piffle! Ah, Zen! Zen! Anyone who would say something like that could never understand Zen, not even in his wildest dreams. Why if you show adepts of the three ranks or wise ones of the four ranks⁵⁴ the slightest glimpse of its working, they topple over into deep shock, their hearts and livers sapped of life. Those who have gone beyond them to even higher stages of attainment lose all their nerve. Even Buddha-patriarchs plead for their lives. Zen is not something that has to appropriate expediciencies like these from other schools to aid its future generations.

⁵² Requirements for the Nembutsu practitioner to attain Pure Land rebirth: the "triple mind" (*sanshin* 三心): mind of perfect sincerity, mind that deeply desires rebirth, mind that vows to turn its merits to benefit others; and fourfold practice (*shishu* 四修): practice Nembutsu alone, practice it constantly, practice it with reverence, practice it for an entire lifetime.

⁵³ From the *Sugyō-roku* 宗鏡錄 (*Tsung-ching lu*), a 100 fascicle work by Yōmei Enju 永明延壽 (Yung-ming Yen-shou, 904–975), of the Hōgen 法眼 (Fa-yen) school, who advocated the unity of Zen and Pure Land teachings. The wings would make a tiger even more formidable.

⁵⁴ These refer to high levels of attainment in the paths of Bodhisattvahood and Arhatship.

I have heard recently about an old clam who has burrowed himself into a Naniwa riverbank.⁵⁵ He has been slumbering his time away in a thousand-year sleep, missing any chance he may have to encounter a Tathagata when one appears in the world. But somehow, these words reached his sleeping ears. He raised himself out of his slumber in a huff, blew out a great spray, ten thousands bushels of venomous poison foam. Then he opened his jaws wide. "Adding Pure Land to Zen," he said, "is like a cat losing its eyes. Adding Zen to Pure Land is like raising a sail on the back of a cow."⁵⁶ Granted he was just prattling off at the mouth, even so, such marvelous prattle!

Twenty years ago, a man said that in two or three hundred years all Zennists will have joined the Pure Land schools.⁵⁷ My answer was, "If a follower of Zen does not apply himself to his practice with absolute devotion, he will indeed gravitate to the Pure Land teaching. If a follower of the Pure Land does the Nembutsu singlemindedly and is able to achieve samadhi, he will flow inevitably into Zen."

A great and worthy man told this story. "There were, thirty or forty years ago, two holy men, one named Enjo and the other Engū.⁵⁸ It is not known where Engū was from or what his family name was, but he devoted himself constantly and singlemindedly to the calling of the Name—he kept at it as relentlessly as he would have swept a fire from the top of his head. One day he suddenly entered samadhi and realized complete and perfect emancipation—his attainment radiated from his entire being. He set directly out to visit Dokutan Rōjin at Hatsuyama in Tōtomi province.⁵⁹ When he arrived, Dokutan asked him,

⁵⁵ Clam (Rakō, 螺蛤). A pseudonym used by Tenkei Denson 天桂傳尊, 1648–1735, a Sōtō priest who served as abbot at several temples in Naniwa (Osaka). Hakuin's remarks of praise seem to contain a playful criticism of the quietistic Sōtō tradition to which Tenkei belongs. Shellfish were said to sleep for a thousand years.

⁵⁶ This quotation appears in Tenkei's commentary on the *Platform Sutra*, *Rokusodangyō Kaisui-iteki* 六祖壇經海水一滴, 3.

⁵⁷ *Kaienfusetsu kōwa* (p. 243) attributes this statement to Tenkei Denson.

⁵⁸ Enjo, 圓恕; Engū, 圓愚. *Kaienfusetsu kōwa* (p. 243) attributes this to Unkai Shōnin 雲海上人 of the Ungan-ji 雲巖寺.

⁵⁹ Dokutan Rōjin. Dokutan Shōkei 獨湛性臺 (Tu-chan Hsing-ying, 1628–1706), Chinese priest of the Ōbaku Zen sect; known as "Nembutsu Dokutan." The Shozan 初山 (= Hatsuyama) Hōrin-ji 寶林寺 is a temple he founded in Enshū, 遠州 i.e., Tōtomi, in present Shizuoka prefecture.

Where are you from?

From Yamashiro, he replied.

What Buddhism do you practice? Dokutan inquired.

I'm a Pure Land Buddhist, he said.

How old is the Revered Buddha of Boundless Life?

He's about my age, said Engū.

Where is he right now? asked Dokutan.

Engū made a fist with his right hand and raised it slightly.

You are a true man of the Pure Land, said Dokutan."

This substantiates what I just said about Pure Land followers gravitating inevitably to Zen if they repeat the Name singlemindedly and enter into samadhi. Unfortunately, Pure Land followers who turn to Zen are harder to find than stars at midday, while Zennists who avail themselves of Pure Land practices are more numerous than the stars on a clear night.

Recently, I have heard tales about Nembutsu meetings in remote Zen temples in the country where people set up gongs and metal drums and beat them while wailing out loud Nembutsu choruses, startling the surrounding villages with the din.

Ahh! that prediction about Zen three hundred years from now is terrifying. Barring the appearance of some great Zen saint like Baso or Rinzai,⁶⁰ the situation seems beyond redemption. It gives my liver the willies every time I think about it.

So loyal and valiant patricians of the secret depths, gird up the loins of your spirits! Make piles of brushwood your beds! Make adversity your daily ration!

⁶⁰ Baso Dōitsu and Rinzai Gigen, great Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty.