

# TRANSLATION

Talks by Hakuin  
Introductory to Lectures  
On the Records of Old Sokkō (3)  
(*Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*)  
Translated by Norman Waddell

*ZEN MASTER Jōsō Shōgaku of Tōrin,<sup>1</sup> a Dharma heir of master Ōryō,<sup>2</sup> used to tell his students:*

*“Senior priests Maidō and Shinjō, fellow students of mine under master Ōryō, were only able to penetrate our late teacher’s Zen. They were unable to attain his Way.”*

Master Daie said:<sup>3</sup> Shōgaku said that because for him, attaining the “Way” meant remaining as he was and doing nothing all the time—keeping thoughts, views, and the like from arising in his mind, instead of seeking beyond that for wondrous enlightenment. He constructed a teaching out of

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<sup>1</sup> Tōrin Jōsō Shōgaku 東林常總昭覺 (Chinese, T’ung-lin Ch’ang-tsung Chao-chueh, 1025–1091). Tōrin was a teacher of the poet Su T’ung-po (Japanese, Sotōba, 1036–1101).

<sup>2</sup> Ōryō E’nan 黃蘗慧南 (Chinese, Huang-lung Hui-nan, 1002–1069). Founder of the Ōryō branch of Chinese Zen which flourished during the Sung dynasty but died out a century later. Maidō Soshin 晦堂祖心 (Chinese, Hui-t’ang Tsu-hsin, 1025–1100). Shinjō Kokumon 其淨克文 (Chinese, Hsin-ching K’e-wen, 1025–1102).

<sup>3</sup> Daie Sōkō 大慧宗杲 (Chinese, Ta-hui Tsung-kao, 1089–1163). One of the great masters of the Yōgi (Chinese, Yang-ch’i) branch of Chinese Zen which later flourished in Japan, Daie was an outspoken opponent of the “do-nothing” (*buji* 無事) Zen that Hakuin attacks. His lengthy comment on the opening statement by Jōsō Shōgaku begins here. Hakuin quotes it from the *Daie buko*, “Daie’s Arsenal” (Chinese, *Ta-hui wu-k’u* 大慧武庫), T. 47. p. 948a, a collection of Zen teachings and anecdotes with comments by Daie.

the Dharma gate of kenshō [seeing into the self-nature], the true sudden enlightenment of Buddha-patriarchs such as Tokusan, Rinzai, Tōsan, Sōzan, and Ummon.<sup>4</sup> He took what the *Ryōgon Sutra*<sup>5</sup> says about mountains and rivers and the great earth all being manifestations that appear within the inconceivable clarity of the true mind, and rendered it into words devoid of substance—constructions erected in the head.<sup>6</sup> In fabricating his Zen from profound utterances and wondrous teachings of Zen masters of the past he blackened the good name of these Dharma ancestors—and he robbed later generations of students of their eyes and ears. Beneath his skin not a drop of blood flowed. In his eyes there was not a shred of strength. He and men like him infallibly get things turned upside down. Then they forge on, blissfully unaware, into ever-increasing ignorance. How pitiful they are!

In the *Sutra on Perfect Enlightenment*<sup>7</sup> we read that “*In the latter day of the Dharma, sentient beings who aspire to attain the Buddha Way should not be made to seek enlightenment, for if they do they will just end up amassing large stores of knowledge and deepening their self-made delusions.*”

In the same sutra: “*In the latter day, even sentient beings who seek out a good teacher encounter those who hold false views and they are thus never able to attain right enlightenment. This is a known pedigree for heresy. It is the fault of the false teachers. It is not the fault of the sentient beings who come to them for help.*”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Five great Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty: Te-shan Hsuan-chien, 780-865; Lin-chi I-hsuan, d. 866; Tung-shan Liang-chieh, 807-869; Ts'ao-shan Pen-chi, 840-901; Yun-men Wen-yen, 862-949.

<sup>5</sup> Chinese, *Leng-yen ching* 楞嚴經. *Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu dasoku* 蛇足, p. 13 verso, cites a sentence somewhat similar to this from the *Ryōgon Sutra*, ch. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Japanese, *kakujō* 膈上; this is literally “words (from) above the diaphragm,” i.e., produced from emotion and intellect, in contrast to *kakuge* 膈下, below the diaphragm, i.e., (true words) arising from the gut center or tanden located below the navel.

<sup>7</sup> Japanese, *Engaku-kyō* 圓覺經; Chinese, *Yuan-chueh ching*. This sutra, which explains the meaning of perfect enlightenment, was an important scripture in Chinese Zen. This passage is found in chapter 9, T. 17 p. 916c.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 5, T. 17 p. 920a.

Could these statements from a sutra be merely empty words?

It was this same problem that prompted priest Shinjō<sup>9</sup> to declare in an informal talk to his monks:

*"These days priests everywhere latch on to phrases such as 'everyday mind is the Way,' and set them up as some sort of ultimate principle. You hear that 'Heaven is heaven.' 'Earth is earth.' 'Mountains are mountains.' 'Streams are streams.' 'Monks are monks.' 'Laymen are laymen.' They tell you that long months last thirty days and short ones last twenty-nine. The fact of the matter is, the whole bunch of them are unable to stand on their own legs. They flit about like disembodied spirits. Clinging onto trees. Leaning onto plants and grasses. Blinded by ignorance, unawakened, they plod their blinkered one-track ways.*

*"Confront one of them and suddenly ask, 'Why does this hand of mine resemble a Buddha's hand?' and he says, 'But that's your hand.'*

*"Ask him, 'How does my foot resemble a donkey's?' 'That's your foot,' he retorts.*

*"'Everyone has causes which determine his birth. What are yours, senior priest?' 'I am so and so,' he responds. 'I'm from such and such province.'"<sup>10</sup>*

*"Now what kind of answers are those? They proceed from a mistaken understanding that should never be allowed. These priests distribute the same teaching to everyone. All you have to do is make yourself one-track like them and remain that way through thick and thin. This, they assure you, is attainment of the final state of complete tranquillity. Everything is settled. Everything is understood. Nothing doubting. Nothing seeking. There is no questioning at all. They will not venture a single step beyond this, terrified they might fall and tumble down into a hole. They tread the long*

<sup>9</sup> Another of Ōryō's disciples and heirs; see fn. 2. "Informal talk" = *shōsan* 小参.

<sup>10</sup> These three questions, known as Ōryō's Three Barriers, are said to have been put by Ōryō (above, fn. 2) to all the students who came to him. As true heirs of Ōryō's Zen, these priests should of course be able to deal with his questions.

*pilgrimage of human life as if they were blind from birth, grasping their staff with a clutch of death, refusing to venture forward an inch unless they have it along to prop them up."*

Priest Maidō told his students:<sup>11</sup> "Go to Mount Lu [where Shōgaku's temple was located] and plant yourselves firmly within the realm of non-doing."<sup>12</sup>

But Tōrin's descendents have now all disappeared. His line is deader than last night's ashes. For that we must feel intense regret.<sup>13</sup>

Zen master Nandō Genjō says that "you must see your own nature (*kenshō*) as clearly as you see the palm of your hand. After *kenshō*, each one of you must diligently continue to cultivate your own native ground."<sup>14</sup>

I want to fully impress all you patricians who probe the secret depths—great men all—with the need to put your innate powers to work for you as vigorously and relentlessly as you can. The moment your *kenshō* is unmistakably clear, throw it aside. Dedicate yourself to boring through the difficult-to-pass koans.<sup>15</sup> Once you are beyond those barriers, you are certain to understand exactly what the Buddha meant when he said in the *Nirvana Sutra* that a Buddha can see the Buddha-nature with his own eyes as distinctly as he sees a fruit lying in the palm of his hand. Upon penetrating to see the ultimate meaning of the patriarchal teachers, you will be armed for the first time with the fangs and claws of the Dharma Cave. You will sport the divine, life-usurping talisman. You will pass into the realm of the Buddhas, stroll leisurely through the realms where evil demons dwell, pulling out nails and

<sup>11</sup> Another of the disciples of Ōryō mentioned above; see fn. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Bujikōri* 無事甲裏. This term appears in the records of Daie (see fn. 3); e.g., in his letters to his Zen students (*Daie-sho* 大慧書; Chinese, *Ta-hui shu*): "You must not remain within *buji* (non-doing) itself." In its original meaning *bujikōri* is said to refer to the top shelf (*kō*) of a set of Chinese shelves, which was normally left empty (*buji*).

<sup>13</sup> The quotation from the *Daie buko* ends here.

<sup>14</sup> Nandō Genjō 南堂元靜 (Chinese, Nan-t'ung Yuan-ching, 1065-1135). An heir of Goso Hōen (Chinese, Wu-tsung Fa-yen) in the Yōgi line. The quotation appears in the *Gotōgen* 五燈會元 (Chinese, *Wu-teng yuan-yao*), ch. 20. *Zokuzōkyō* 2.11. p. 393c.

<sup>15</sup> *Nantō* koans. A class of complicated koans used in Hakuin Zen; given after a student has advanced beyond *kenshō*.

wrenching free chocks and dispersing great clouds of compassion as you go, practicing the great Dharma giving, and immensely benefitting the monks who come to you from the four quarters. But you will be the same worthless old duffer of a monk you were before, doing nothing at all with your time. Your eyes will stare out from your face from the same position as before. Your nose will be where it always was. At this point you will be the genuine article, an authentic descendant of the Buddhas and patriarchs, to whom you will have repaid in full that incalculable debt of gratitude you owe them.

You will be at liberty to spend your days free from the clutch of circumstances. Drinking tea when given it, eating rice when it comes. Doing and non-doing will be firmly in your grasp. Not even the Buddha-patriarchs will be able to touch you. You will now be ready to use millions in gold.<sup>16</sup>

If, on the other hand, you follow the trend of the times, when you gain entry into the eighth consciousness's dark cave of unknowing<sup>17</sup> you will begin crowing about what you have achieved. You will go around telling one and all how enlightened you are. You will proceed to accept, under false pretenses, the veneration and charity of others, and become one of those arrogant creatures who declares he has attained realization when he has not.

If that is the course you follow, a horrifying future lies before you. Every grain of rice that you have received as a donation will turn into a red-hot particle of iron or a burning grain of sand. Every drop of water you have received will become a speck of molten bronze or boiling excrement. Each thread of the cloth you have accepted will become part of a flaming wire net or white-hot chain.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Presumably this alludes to the immense worth of a truly enlightened priest, who is deserving of alms in any amount; an unawakened priest, on the other hand, has not properly earned the right to receive alms at all. A similar phrase appears in the *Records of Rinzai*.

<sup>17</sup> When the practitioner penetrates the eighth or Alaya consciousness, regarded as the source of all human consciousness, the root of all existence, he is considered to have finally succeeded in overcoming evil passions. But if he clings to it, it then becomes a cause trapping him within birth and death. Hakuin often exhorts practitioners to smash open the dark cave of the eighth consciousness so that the precious light of the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom will shine forth.

<sup>18</sup> These are various tortures undergone in the realms of hell.

Ahh! Hoping to free yourselves from the press of birth and death you men have your heads shaved. You put on a black robe. But then you make the mistake of falling under the spell of a false teacher. You live out the rest of your life like this as an irresponsible, no-account man of the Way. If you die and enter the Yellow Springs<sup>19</sup> with your eyes in this unopened state, you are destined for harrowing retribution. You will head straight back to your old home in the three evil paths—as<sup>20</sup> though you had not suffered enough in your previous existences! You, who have worn the surplice of a Buddhist priest, will sink to the bottom of a loathsome hellish mire and experience unending agonies. No more horrible fate is conceivable than to fall victim to the delusions these false teachers serve up to you.

*Once, at the time of Shakamuni, a group of seven women was walking through a graveyard. Coming upon a fresh corpse, one of them pointed to it and said: "Here is a man's body. Where has he gone?"*

*Another answered: "What . . ."*<sup>21</sup>

*Hearing this, the women all realized the truth that she spoke and were instantly enlightened.*

*Taishaku, Lord of the Devas,<sup>22</sup> was moved by this to shower a rain of flowers down upon them.*

*"Tell me," he said to them, "if there is anything that any of you holy ladies desires. I will see that you have it as long as you live."*<sup>23</sup>

Take a good hard look at this story. If people today are right in paying no attention to it, the realization these ladies attained long ago must have been mistaken. But why would the Lord of the Devas have spoken to them as he did if they had not attained realization?

*In response to Taishaku's offer, one of the women said: "All of us have the four basic necessities of life. We have the seven rare treasures*

<sup>19</sup> The realm of the dead.

<sup>20</sup> Realms of hell, craving ghosts, and animals.

<sup>21</sup> 作麼作麼; *somo somo* in Japanese.

<sup>22</sup> Taishaku is guardian of those who place their trust in the Buddha Dharma.

<sup>23</sup> *Gotōgen*, ch. 1. *Zokuzōkyō* 2.11. p. 3 c-d. Hakuin elsewhere attributes part of this dialogue to a work he calls *Shichi gennyō kyō* ("Sutra of Seven Wise Women" 七賢女經). *Kaienfusetsu dasoku* also gives this sutra as a source for this passage.

as well.<sup>24</sup> There are, however, three things we would like. A tree without roots. A piece of land where there is neither light nor shade. Some corner of a mountain valley where a shout does not echo."

"Anything else, ladies," replied Taishaku, "and I will gladly provide it to you. But the things you ask for...to tell the truth, I just don't have them to give you."

"If you don't have them," said the women, "how can you possibly expect to help others liberate themselves?"

Taishaku found himself at a loss for words. He decided to confer with the Buddha.<sup>25</sup>

Do you see what that wise young girl says! "If you can't give us such things, how do you expect to save others?" Compare that with the fellows today who quake with fear when they encounter a few touches of poison. How infinitely superior she is—the difference between a crown and an old shoe is not nearly so great.

You men set out on your religious quest with fire in your blood. You go through great difficulties, suffer untold hardship, as you bore into the secret depths. Isn't it all because you intend at some later date to do great work by bringing the benefits of salvation to your fellow beings? What about you? Don't you think you'd be lacking if you couldn't come up with these three things?

When the Buddha learned why Taishaku had come, he said, "As far as that's concerned, Taishaku, none of the Arhats in my assembly has the slightest clue either. It takes a great Bodhisattva to grasp it."<sup>26</sup>

Why did the Buddha utter these words, instead of quaking and quivering with fear? Or do you think he was unaware of the deadly poison contained in the girl's utterance?

Try to fathom the Buddha's intent here. Don't you suppose he was hoping to make Taishaku realize the true meaning of the young girl's words? To enable him to leap directly beyond the gradual steps of the

<sup>24</sup> The four necessities: food, clothing, medicine, and shelter. One enumeration of the seven rare treasures: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, moonstone, agate, ruby, carnelian.

<sup>25</sup> *Gotōden*, ch. 1. *Zokuzōkyō* 2.11. p. 3 c-d.; *Zen'en mōgyū*, (Chinese, *Ch'an-yuan meng-ch'iu*, 禪苑蒙求), *Zokuzōkyō* 2.21. p. 116b-117a.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

four attainments and three ranks<sup>27</sup> and arrive at the stage of the great Bodhisattvas?

*The Buddha said: "I have the eye-treasure of the true Dharma, the exquisite mind of Nirvana, the Dharma gate of the true formless form. This I entrust to you, Mahakashyapa."*<sup>28</sup>

This is another statement most people get totally wrong. I myself worked on it years ago when I was with old Shōju.<sup>29</sup> He pushed me and hounded me ruthlessly. I came up with a response, but he rewarded it with a rain of blows from his staff. I hadn't really grasped it yet. I was like a man out at sea gazing at a tree on a distant cliff.

I left home to become a Buddhist monk when I was fourteen. A year later, I was lamenting sadly that I still hadn't seen even a hint of the Dharma's wonderful power, despite the fact that my hair had been shaved off and I was wearing a black monk's robe. I happened to hear that the *Lotus Sutra* was the king of all the scriptures the Buddha had preached. It was supposed to contain the essential meaning of all the Buddhas. I got hold of a copy and read it through. But when I had finished, I closed it with a heavy sigh. "This," I told myself, "is nothing but a collection of simple tales about cause and effect. Even though words about the 'one absolute vehicle,'<sup>30</sup> and 'the changeless unconditioned tranquillity of all dharmas' do appear, on the whole it is still what Rinzai dismissed as 'prescriptions for relieving the world's ills,' and 'teachings that reveal only the outer surface.'<sup>31</sup> It certainly isn't worth devoting any time to this."

<sup>27</sup> Four attainments (*shika* 四果) and three ranks (*sangen* 三賢) enumerate gradual stages in Buddhist training leading to Bodhisattvahood or Arhatship.

<sup>28</sup> According to Zen tradition, Shakamuni spoke these words when he transmitted his Dharma to Mahakashyapa. As a koan it is found in *Mumonkan* 無門關 (*Chinese, Wu-men kuan*), case 6. This is the first in a series of quotations that follows the Zen transmission from Shakamuni until Baso Dōitsu.

<sup>29</sup> Hakuin's account of his encounter with Shōju Rōjin is found in his religious autobiography *Itsumadegusa* ("Wild Ivy"). See my translation in the *Eastern Buddhist*, xv 2; xvi 1, 1982-3.

<sup>30</sup> Also called the Buddha-vehicle; the Mahayana teaching of supreme, absolute truth which encompasses all other teachings and carries all beings to Buddhahood.

<sup>31</sup> "In the past I concentrated on the study of the Vinaya. I went through all the sutras and shastras. Later, when I came to realize they were merely expedient therapies

This discouraged me deeply. I didn't get over it for a long time. Meanwhile, I lived as the priest of a small temple. I reached forty, the age when I was not supposed to be bothered any longer by doubts or perplexities.<sup>32</sup> One night, I decided to take another look at the *Lotus*. I raised up the wick of my solitary lamp, took out the sutra, and began to read it once again. I got as far as the third chapter, the one on parables, when suddenly, unexpectedly, all the doubts and uncertainties that until then had lingered in my mind ceased to exist. They dissolved utterly and all at once. The reason for the *Lotus's* reputation as the "king of sutras" was revealed to me with blinding clarity. A rain of tears rolled down my face—the drops flew out like strings of beads. It was just like beans pouring from a bursted sack. Involuntarily, I found myself wailing out loud uncontrollable sobs. I knew for the first time that what I had realized in all those satoris I had experienced, what I had grasped in my understanding of those koans I had passed—had all been totally wrong.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, I was able to understand fully the source of that free, enlightened activity that permeated old Shōju's daily life. I also knew beyond doubt that the root of the World-honored One's tongue did not have two stalks.<sup>34</sup> I felt like taking my staff, teaming up with old Rinzai, and giving them both a good thirty blows!

*Long ago, Ananda asked Kashyapa: "Apart from the transmission robe of gold brocade, what Dharma did the World-honored One entrust to you?"*

*"Ananda," replied Kashyapa, "go and take down the banner at the gate."<sup>35</sup>*

To penetrate these words uttered by Kashyapa and understand them

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for relieving the world's ills and revealed only the outer surface of things, I cast them aside at once and turned my search to the Way and the practice of Zen meditation." Yanagida Seizan, *Rinzai-roku* (Butten kōza 30, Daizō shuppan, 1972), p. 139.

<sup>32</sup> Confucian Analects.

<sup>33</sup> "Wild Ivy," *Eastern Buddhist*, xvi 1, 1983, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> 舌根欠兩莖筋. Hakuin now realized that he had been wrong in supposing the Buddha spoke less than absolute truth when he preached the *Lotus Sutra*.

<sup>35</sup> This episode appears in the *Mumonkan*, case 22. Although Ananda heard all the sutras the Buddha preached during his lifetime, he still could not grasp their true meaning, hence his question.

is difficult in the extreme. They are like angry bolts of thunder striking against a granite cliff, tearing it apart. They send sages of the three ranks scattering in spiritless panic. They strike terror into adepts of the four attainments.<sup>36</sup> Yet the sightless shavepated bonzes inhabiting today's temples expatiate knowingly on them:

“The banner stands for something that is intermediate. When this is swept away, it means the Great Matter is achieved.”

This can only be called commonplace, an observation produced by deluded thinking. They're like blind men trying to distinguish colors.

The first Zen patriarch Bodhidharma's injunction, “cease all relations without; stop all thirstings within,” is likewise frequently explained and interpreted from an ordinary level of illusory reasoning.

*At the end of his life, the Zen patriarch six generations after Bodhidharma<sup>37</sup> was asked by one of his disciples: “You will leave us soon. How long will it be before you return?”*

*He replied: “Leaves fall and return to the roots. When that time comes, they are silent.”*

Terrifying! A bottomless pit spreading out for ten thousand leagues, filled with a sea of dark black flame. Even the gods and demons cannot hope to complete their lives here. The whole world is the lotus-blue eye of a Zen monk. Great care must be taken not to throw sand in it. Yet the silly know-it-alls who occupy positions of power today assert confidently:

“ ‘Roots’ refers to the Hsin-chou region [the Sixth Patriarch's native place]. The silence of the leaves connotes the original field of tranquillity, where there is no coming or going, no inside or outside.”

*Pffuph!* Blind comments. Lifeless, perverted understanding. I get sick to my stomach every time I see or hear such rubbish. It makes me want to vomit.

*They asked the Sixth Patriarch: “Who have you entrusted with your*

<sup>36</sup> See fn. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Reference is to the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen, Enō (Chinese, Hui-neng). The quotation is found in the *Keitoku dentō-roku* (Chinese, *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*), ch. 5 (T. 51. p. 236b) and in some editions of the *Platform Sutra*.

*Dharma?" He answered, "Take a net and snare it at the top of Daiyu Peak."*<sup>38</sup>

Chen-bird feathers! Wolf liver! Cat heads! Fox drool!" All brothed up in a big pot and thrown right under your nose. How'll you get your teeth into that? Never say the Sixth Patriarch doesn't have any poison.

Nangaku Daishi said, "Suppose an ox is pulling a cart. If the cart doesn't move, should you hit the cart, or should you hit the ox?"<sup>40</sup> His words, too, are filled with virulent poison, but these modern exegetes insist on applying their deluded reasoning to them:

"The cart stands for the body or substance," they say. "The ox stands for something intermediate, neither this nor that."

They certainly make it sound plausible. Hearing Master Baso's "Sun-faced Buddha, Moon-faced Buddha,"<sup>41</sup> they tell you that it is "the body of one's proper subtle radiance that is prior to the onset of all the illnesses of mind." And they expect you to swallow all this! You could take a conventional explanation of this ilk, mix it up with some rice and set it out under the trees for a thousand days without getting even a crow to fly by for a second look.

<sup>38</sup> This appears in the *Rinkan-roku* (Chinese, *Lin-kuan lu*, 林間錄), an anecdotal collection by the northern Sung priest Kakuban Ekō 覺範惠洪 (Chinese, Chueh-fan Hui-hung, 1071-1128). *Kokuyaku zengaku taisei*, vol. 10 (Tokyo, 1929), p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> Four extremely poisonous things.

<sup>40</sup> Nangaku Ejō 南岳懷讓 (Chinese, Nan-yue Huai-jang, 677-744). Nangaku, seeing Baso practicing zazen, took a tile and began polishing it. Baso asked what he was doing. He replied he was making a mirror. When Baso said he couldn't expect to make a mirror by polishing a tile, Nangaku first said, "And how do you expect to become a Buddha by doing zazen?" then spoke the words Hakuin quotes here. *Keitoku dentō-roku*, ch. 5. T. 51. p. 240c.

<sup>41</sup> Baso Dōitsu 馬祖道一 (Chinese, Ma-tsu Tao-i, 709-788). This was the answer Baso gave when a priest asked after his health. *Hekigan-roku* 碧巖錄 (Chinese, *Pi-yen lu*), case 3.