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OLD SOKKŌ

By HAKUIN EKAKU, 1686-1769

Sokkō (Chinese, Hsi-keng) is a literary name used by Kidō Chigu (Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu, 1185-1269), a Chinese priest of the Southern Sung dynasty in the tenth generation of the Yōgi (Yang-ch'i) line of the Rinzai (Lin-chi) school of Zen. The teachings of this line, brought to Japan by Kidō's Japanese disciple Nampo Jōmyō, flourished and in time became the principal branch of Japanese Rinzai Zen. Kidō was held in special veneration by Rinzai priests such as Hakuin, who regarded themselves as his spiritual heirs, and his writings and recorded sayings were included among the "seven books of Zen," works felt to be especially important receptacles of Zen teaching.

Hakuin's inscription reads:

The great Zen master, Priest Kidō Chigu of the Kinzan (Chinese, Ching-shan) monastery. Reverently inscribed five long centuries after Kidō by the eighty-three year old monk under the Sala Tree (Hakuin). The seventh day of the tenth month, the fifth year of Meiwa (1768).

The painting is part of a well-known collection of Zen art assembled by the Yamamoto family of Ashiya, and now kept in the Osaka Municipal Museum. We wish to thank museum officials for allowing us to reproduce it here.