

Some of Hisamatsu Sensei's Favorite Verses

On February 28, 1980, before his coffin was carried out of the house in the suburbs of Gifu, I saw a folding screen set close to Hisamatsu Sensei's pillow. On the screen was one of Wang-wei's verses, written by Hisamatsu Sensei himself in an undulating grass style of calligraphy:

Going upstream, I reach
the water's source;
Sitting, I watch
when clouds arise.

行到水窮處

坐看雲起時

The character for "water" 水 was written horizontally as if flowing, and "cloud" 雲 seemed to have just risen from a mountain peak.

This verse was written on the blackboard at Kyoto University on May 30, 1946, the first day of Hisamatsu Sensei's new course, "The System of Buddhism." I still have the notebook in which I pencilled down the reading of the verse: *yuite wa itaru mizu no kiwamaru tokoro, zashite wa miru kumo no okoru toki*. He explained the verse as follows:

What these phrases indicate is how one truly gets engrossed in religion. Ordinarily, we see only the branches of the river. Even if we reach the source of one branch, we may later find yet another source. Our attempt to seek the source of an effluent ends when we arrive at the very origin of water itself. Unless we see beyond floating clouds, unless we see the very mountain peak from which they arise, we cannot attain their source. Conversely, it is when we come to the root-source that we clearly see the course of a system. In our life, if we want to gain true stability, we must proceed to its fundamental problem. Only through the solution of that problem of life can we realize the truly stable way of being described in Wang-wei's verse.

The next day, May 31, 1946, I attended the first lecture of another course of his, "The Religion of Production." In that lecture, he said:

It is in the unity of religion and production that we see the true core of Buddhism. Many religions leave the two unrelated. None of the established schools of Buddhism recognize this unity in the absolute sense of the term. In this course, "The Religion of Production," the true purpose of my lectures

lies in criticizing the established Buddhism, grasping the true Buddhism, and practicing it.

Having others realize the absolute urgency of coming to grips with and solving the fundamental problem of life, and elucidating the principle that makes possible the unity of religion and production (or history) seems to have constituted Hisamatsu Sensei's main concerns throughout the ninety years of his life.

On February 11, 1956, one year before he left Japan to lecture at Harvard University and travel throughout the world, Hisamatsu Sensei gave a lecture on Huang-po's (Ōbaku) *Ch'uan-hsin fa-yao* (*Denshin hōyō*; The Essence of Transmitting the Truth of Self) at the regular meeting of Gakudō-dōjō (the predecessor of the FAS Society). Following that talk, he introduced the following *waka* to those present:

THE ABSOLUTELY NEGATIVE SOLITUDE

Everything reliable having been exhausted,
There is no place between heaven
and earth
To place this mortal body.

Zettai hiteiteki kodoku
Tanomu beki mono,
mina tsukite ametsuchi no
kono utsushimi no
okidokoro nashi

THE ABSOLUTELY AFFIRMATIVE SOLITUDE

Reliable is the self that awakes as
"Won't rely"
For, free from all,
It has no hindrances.

Zettai kōteiteki kodoku
Tanomaji to satoru kokoro
zo tanomi naru yorozu o
hanare sawari
nakereba

THE SELF-EFFECTING NATURE OF DHARMA

Since this is the I without hindrances
My self feels at ease just as it is
With sin and death
just as they are.

Jinen hōni
Sawari naki ware ni shi
areba tsumi mo shi mo
tada sono mama ni
kokoro yasukeshi

The English translation of his *Zen and the Fine Arts* (1975) includes several verses not contained in the original Japanese. These were appended to passages where the author refers to Zen literature. The fourth added verse is Hsueh-t'ou's (Setchō) comment in the *Blue Cliff Record* on the following *mondō*:

A monk asked Fa-yen (Hōgen), "Hui-chao (Echō) asks the master,
'What is the Buddha?'"
"You are Hui-chao," said Fa-yen.

Hisamatsu-sensei reads Hsueh-tou's comment in a unique way:

REMINISCENCES

In the river land, the spring wind blows;	<i>gōkoku no shunpū</i>
Not rising aloft,	<i>fukedomo tatazu</i>
The partridge abides,	<i>shako naite ari</i>
Crying in deep flowers.	<i>shinka no uchi</i>

He was actually clarifying what Hsueh-t'ou should have originally meant.

The short passage entitled "My Encounter" (originally published in the *Asahi Shinbun* in July 1966) may best conclude this account of his verse:

I have lived FAS up through my 77th year, and will, irrespective of my worldly age, forever continue to live it. Here are some impressions in verse:

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ULTIMATE NO-RANK	<i>Ken chū tō</i>
Having spent zero years	<i>Zero doshi o</i>
Seventy-seven times,	<i>shichijū shichi tabi</i>
I wonder for what merit	<i>kasane tsutsu</i>
People call this the year of joy.	<i>nan no kudoku ya</i> <i>kiju to yūran</i>

ATTAINMENT, NIRVANA, AND NEW BIRTH	<i>Jōdō, nehan, tanjō</i>
Having awakened to the Formless Self	<i>Katachinaki jiko ni</i>
Dying without death, born without birth	<i>mezamete fushi de</i>
I disport myself through	<i>shi shi fushō de</i>
the triple world.	<i>umare sangai ni yuge</i>

TOKIWA GISHIN