

An Introduction to  
*The Biography of Shidō Munan Zenji*

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SHIDŌ Munan Zenji was born in 1603 and died in 1676 at his hermitage, Shidō-an, in Edo. Among his noted contemporaries were the Zen priests Takuan Sōhō (1573–1645), Gudō Tōshoku (1577–1661), Shōsan Suzuki (1579–1655), and Bankei Yōtaku (1622–1693).

As the teacher of Hakuin's teacher Shōju Etan, Munan is an important figure in the world of Japanese Zen, with nearly all modern Zen masters, except those of the Sōtō school, belonging to his line. It is due chiefly to the efforts of Hakuin (1685–1768) that Japanese Zen was revived. The reasons for this revival are manifold. Since the Kamakura Period (1185–1333) Zen had run a steady downhill course, as its connections with the military and ruling classes became more and more pervasive. It was their donations that built the temples, and their sponsorship that enabled them to subsist. Government sanction was required for priests to obtain positions. Temple life during this period was inseparable from the life of the upper echelons of Japanese society. The spirit of the Buddha, which had been inherited by successive generations of Zen masters in China as well as in Japan, was, in Munan's time, greatly lacking. A need to return to the true spirit of Zen was long overdue. The koan system, which was introduced to Japan from Sung China in the Kamakura Period, had by Tokugawa times become highly formalized, its freshness and vitality all but dead. There appeared a tendency for priests to indulge in literary pastimes; in fact, to become a Zen priest meant one had to possess literary talent. This manifestation is most clearly visible in the so-called *Gozan Bungaku* (五山文学), the litera-

ture of the 'five mountains', or five prominent Zen monasteries of Kyoto. This movement was devoted to Sung philosophy and literature, and was concerned with imitating the Zen of the Sung dynasty, which attempted to infuse the Zen spirit into literature, and placed great emphasis upon beautiful literary expression. This became in Japan a contest of literary talents, and the experience of genuine enlightenment was the loser.

Formalization, aristocratization, and attachment to literary pursuits for their own sakes—these were put aside by priests such as Munan and Hakuin, and a radical reorganization of Zen was undertaken.

Munan was originally a layman, not being ordained until he was 52 years old. He lived a life of material poverty, unconcerned with fame or fortune or social advancement. His sole aim was simply to share with all other beings the awakening of the Buddha nature. We may recall that in the T'ang dynasty it was Enō (Hui-nêng) the sixth patriarch, a layman and said to have been an illiterate as well, and not Jinshū (Shên-hsiu), who was skilled in both poetry and philosophy, that succeeded to the patriarchate of Bodhidharma. Kōnin (Hung-jên), the fifth patriarch, gave the seal of transmission to this lay disciple because he recognized the extraordinary quality of Enō's insight and great compassionate heart. This is reminiscent of the way in which Gudō Kokushi evaluated Munan's ability.

The general current of the times was for Zen priests to express themselves in Chinese, attaching Chinese verse commentaries to the koan collections and sayings of the masters. Munan completely broke with this tradition, expressing his insight exclusively in Japanese colloquial language, using the *kana* syllabary. He wrote nothing at all in Chinese. Examples of his verse can be found in the *Sokusbinki* and the *Jisbōki*, both of which were written around his seventieth year. As we read through these two works, as well as his *waka* collection, we feel as if we are reading the *Rinzai-roku* (The Sayings of Rinzai) or the *Platform Sutra*, the words flow forth so freely and naturally from his deep experience, unalloyed by any literary embellishings. Despite this seeming

lack of skill, his poems in the *waka* style are excellent; plain but strong. His Zen spirit is as trenchant as Rinzai's, and as poetical as Secchō's.

At the age of seventy-five, Hakuin happened to be in Edo, and learned from one of his disciples (who was an old monk himself) that Shidō-an was in disrepair and up for sale. Hakuin bought it and asked his disciple Tōrei to restore it. In one of his letters Hakuin mentions that he himself had practised under Shōju Etan at Shidō-an. It was here as well that his teacher was ordained and became Munan's disciple. And Munan himself had lived in it until his death. Thus Hakuin wished to have it preserved. Tōrei did as his master asked and used it himself afterwards, when he was in Edo. He also gathered together Munan's writings.

Today, Zen needs a person like Munan, who came from lay status, lived a poor and simple life unattached from all traditional and worldly elements, in order to revitalize the Zen spirit, and return Zen to its original freshness and vitality.

The text used in the following translation is found in *Shidō Munan Zenji Shū* (The Collected Writings of Shidō Munan Zenji), edited by Kōda Rentarō. (Shunjūsha, Tokyo, 1956.)

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF SHIDŌ MUNAN ZENJI<sup>1</sup>

COMPILED BY FUFU-ANJU ENJI<sup>2</sup>

The master, whose priestly names were Munan and Shidō, was heir in the Dharma to Gudō Kokushi.<sup>3</sup> He was born into the Miwa<sup>4</sup> family

<sup>1</sup> The full title is "*Kaisan Shidō Munan Anju Zenji Anroku*" (開山至道無難庵主禪師行錄)

<sup>2</sup> 不不庵主圖菴—the literary name of Tōrei Enji (東嶽圖菴 1721-1792), the chief disciple of Hakuin Ekaku. Besides the present work, he is known for his biographies of Hakuin and Hakuin's teacher, Shōju Rōjin (正受老人 1642-1721).

<sup>3</sup> 愚堂圖師—"Gudō the National Teacher", Kokushi is the post. title of Gudō Tōshoku (愚堂東菴 1579-1661); head priest of Myōshin-ji 妙心寺 three different times.

<sup>4</sup> 三輪

of Sekigahara in Mino (in present day Gifu Prefecture). As a child he was so skilled in “grass-style” calligraphy that he was known in his village as *kanagakidōji* (lit. “the boy who writes *kana*”).<sup>5</sup> He was humble in nature and possessed a fine intellect. When he was about 15 years old he chanced to travel to Kyoto and Osaka with his father, and he there observed the transience of the world and early was made aware of the truth of the Buddhist teachings of impermanence, suffering, emptiness and non-ego. He thus came to long for the “special transmission outside the scriptures”,<sup>6</sup> but since there was no one else to carry on the family business, he was not able to actualize his desire of leaving home and becoming a monk. In time, he inherited the family business, an inn situated at a Tōkaidō post station. Gudō Kokushi, then of Daisen-ji,<sup>7</sup> used to pass the post station on his way to Kyoto. Thinking it a rare chance to meet such a person, Munan invited him to stay at his inn, where he took the opportunity to inquire intimately about the essence of Zen. Gudō, observing Munan’s pure and honest nature, gave him the koan of “original nothingness”.<sup>8</sup> Munan felt great doubt in his mind. He secretly meditated on the koan and went to Gudō’s room to show him the result of his meditation. He nearly forgot about sleeping and eating. Whenever Gudō went to Kyoto, he always stopped at Munan’s inn and gave him encouragement. One day, Munan was making some twine for coin strings; he was so engrossed in the koan he found himself unable to roll the twine properly. Seeing this, Gudō remarked to his attendants, “When Zen meditation attains such depths there is no need to worry about the possibility of *kenshō*.”<sup>9</sup> Just as Gudō had said, Munan before long penetrated to the Mind-Origin.<sup>10</sup> Gudō

<sup>5</sup> *kana*—the Japanese syllabary.

<sup>6</sup> 教外別伝—one of the principle statements of the Zen sect, traditionally ascribed to Bodhidharma.

<sup>7</sup> 大仙寺, in present day Gifu Prefecture.

<sup>8</sup> 本来無一物

<sup>9</sup> 見性—“seeing into one’s own nature.” Satori.

<sup>10</sup> 心原

thereupon gave him the priestly name Kōgai.<sup>11</sup> and added the following comments and verse:

“Lay disciple Miwa Michitoki is native to Sekigahara in southern Mino. He visited many Zen masters and asked about the Great Matter of Buddhism. For a long time he had no insight. Meditating and reflecting by himself, one evening all of a sudden he awoke from his dream, his Great Doubt broken. And so now he wants me to give him a special name. I bestow upon him the name Kōgai, and composing a verse for the occasion, I congratulate him for his future accomplishments:

Creating involves no skill or art.  
 On a rootless tree flowers burst into blossom—  
 Not red, not white, yet a blessed sign;  
 Such a spring is truly rare in the world of men.”

Thereafter, Gudō was extremely severe with him, and uplifted him with his forging hammer. Munan firmly resolved to rid himself of family cares, and to use up his karmic defilements. This he continually tried to accomplish within the vicissitudes of his daily life. One day, Gudō was on his way to Edo at the request of the provincial lord, and stopped at Munan's inn. Munan was not home at the time, and Gudō learned from a member of the household that Munan had recently become addicted to *sake*, and that as a result he and the rest of the household were on bad terms, with the latter on the verge of leaving the inn. They begged Gudō in his great compassion to do something. Gudō agreed without hesitation. He readied a cask of *sake* in one of the rooms and waited for Munan to return.

Around midnight, someone knocked at the gate. A servant said, “He's come back. Look quietly and see what he does.” After he had

<sup>11</sup> 超外—“He who is beyond time.”

clambered over the gate, Munan began scolding the servants in drunken anger. The members of the household looked on with aversion. Then Gudō stepped forward and said, "Inn master, are you well? I've been waiting a long time for you." Munan, who was greatly surprised to see his teacher, said, "What are you doing here?" He led Gudō inside to the seat of honor and bowed before him. Gudō said, "I am now obliged to travel far away. Here, I've brought a cask of *sake*. How about using it to exhaust the emotion of our farewell?" Smiling, Munan answered, "I am overwhelmed with gratitude for your compassion." With that Gudō ordered the servants to prepare the celebration. He offered a large cup brimful with *sake*, which Munan received reverently. With a solemn countenance Gudō said, "I hear you have gotten so attached to *sake* you threaten the good-will of the entire household. Tonight this old monk will allow you to drink to your heart's content. You possess the courageous mind of a gentleman,<sup>12</sup> please use up this drunkenness to the last now, and never repeat it again." Munan bowed and said, "That is exactly what I want to do. Please, don't you forget it either!" Gudō laughed. All through the night they exchanged conversation until, before they realized it, dawn began to break. When Gudō left the inn in his palanquin, Munan, to everyone's surprise, attended along beside. Seeing Munan was following him farther and farther away from the inn, Gudō said, "You must go back now, your family will be worried." Munan replied, "I have a successor. My home and business will be well taken care of." Full of love for his master, Munan, who had neither money nor clothing for such a trip, followed the palanquin from post station to post station, disregarding Gudō's entreaties for him to return. They finally reached Shōtōshin-ji<sup>13</sup> in Edo. On the day of their arrival Munan shaved his head, and seating himself before his master, he bowed, saying, "I have looked for the right op-

<sup>12</sup> The allusion here is perhaps to a line from the Confucian classics, about the will of a superior man being able to attain all heaven and earth.

<sup>13</sup> 正燈新寺.

portunity to rid myself of my family cares. The opportunity has come. Now is the time for me to enter the priesthood. Will you kindly give your permission?" Gudō smiled his agreement and ordained him, giving him the name Munan. Thereafter, Munan attended closely upon Gudō, and did *sanzen*<sup>14</sup> with him every morning and evening.

The day then came when Munan, passing through the koan of *shidō bunan*,<sup>15</sup> penetrated the behavior of the two great old Zen masters, Jōshū and Secchō. Whereupon Gudō gave him the title of Shidō Anju,<sup>16</sup> and presented him with the *bossu*<sup>17</sup> he himself always had carried with him, thus indicating the new life<sup>16</sup> upon which Munan was about to embark. He added the following verses:

"Since the Third Patriarch Sōsan wrote the *Sbinjinmei*<sup>18</sup>  
Its flower-like phrases and leaf-like words have thrived in the  
halls of Zen.

Why is it they trifle with their writing brushes; the realm of  
satori,

<sup>14</sup> 參禪—an interview between a Zen student and teacher during which the student conveys his understanding of the koan achieved through meditation.

<sup>15</sup> The four characters of this koan—至道無難—taken from the *Sbinjinmei*, are read, in Japanese, *shidō bunan*. They are also found in the *Hekigan-roku*, Case Two, where the T'ang Zen master Jōshū (778–897) is the subject. Secchō (Hsüeh-tou, 980–1052) is one of the authors of the *Hekigan Collection*, having composed the commentary verses upon the sayings and dialogues of the old masters. D. T. Suzuki translated this four characters, "The Perfect Way knows no difficulties." (See *The Eastern Buddhist* Vol. I, No. 1 and 2 for Dr. Suzuki's translation of this case, as well as for his introductory remarks on the *Hekigan-roku* in general.)

<sup>16</sup> 至道庵主—when Munan received this name, which means literally "the master of Shidō hermitage", it signified he was now Gudō's Dharma-successor. "New life" means that now he is qualified to teach others.

<sup>17</sup> A whisk carried by Zen priests, largely for ornamental purposes, but also, as in this case, it is used as visible evidence of the Dharma succession.

<sup>18</sup> *Sbinjinmei* (*Hsinshinmei*, 信心銘), "Inscription of the Mind to Believe". One of the first known treatises on Zen; written by Sōsan, (Seng-ts'an 僧璨), the third Chinese Zen patriarch from Bodhidharma. He lived during the sixth century, dying in 606 A.D. The entire work is translated by Suzuki in *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, 1935, pp. 106–121.

With its quiet and vastness, encompasses both past and present.”

“The Third Patriarch wrote a poem—the *Sbinjinmei*:  
The Perfect Way that knows no discrimination encompasses  
past and present;  
Yet his Way and my Way are not the same.  
Mountains are naturally high; seas of themselves are deep.”

In the second year of Keian (1649), when Munan was forty seven years old, he began to travel, knocking at the gates of various masters of Zen and testing their Zen flavour. Sometimes he would withdraw deep into the mountains, where he would conceal his virtue and cultivate the Way. During this period the rigor of his training far surpassed that of his contemporary monks.

In former times, Tōyō Oshō<sup>19</sup> practiced Zen under the master Sekkō<sup>20</sup> for a long while, studying with him the hundred “cases” of the *Hekigan-roku*, a manuscript of which was handed down to Gudō Kokushi. Gudō kept it with him at all times, carrying it in his monk’s pouch which hung at his side, and constantly savoring its contents. Seeing Munan’s extraordinary ability, he secretly presented him with it. Munan received the manuscript, gave a parting bow, and took leave of his master. He went to stay at Tōhoku-an,<sup>21</sup> in the Azabu district of Edo, reaffirming his name as Shidō Anju. Numbered among his disciples were the provincial lords Uesugi of Yonezawa, Dewa Province; Ando of Kanō; and Tsubouchi of Shin-kanō, both of Mino Province. At Tōhoku-an he dwelled without ritual or unnecessary possessions. Due to his extremely severe attitude most students found him unapproachable.

<sup>19</sup> Tōyō Oshō (Tōyō Eichō Zenji 東陽英朝 1429–1504). There is a direct Dharma lineage from Tōyō Eichō through Gudō Kokushi to Munan.

<sup>20</sup> Sekkō Shūshin Zenji (雪江宗深 1408–1486).

<sup>21</sup> Tōhoku-an (東北庵) at Sakurada, Hyakushō-machi in Edo; the name, which means ‘the northeastern hermitage’, was later changed to Tōboku-ji, Tōhoku Temple. (Kōda’s footnote)

He often told his students, "There is no special doctrine for the study of Zen. All that is needed is to see it directly, hear it directly. In direct seeing there is no seeing. In direct hearing there is no hearing. This is possible when you naturally become one piece, with no in and no out." He also used to say, "All of you are right now Buddhas, only you do not know it. If you do know it, you break with the Buddhas and Patriarchs. If you do not know it, you become entangled in birth and death. Unless you are possessed of the One Eye of Enlightenment, how will you resolve this dilemma?" He cited the following verse:

"When you penetrate the Fundamental Origin<sup>22</sup>  
 You go beyond all phenomena.  
 You know there is a realm beyond all words,  
 Which the Buddhas and Patriarchs could not transmit."

A monk asked, "What is the Great Vehicle [the Mahayana]?" Munan answered, "Be upright. There are no other rules. That is the Great Vehicle." Another monk asked, "What is the Ultimate Vehicle?" Munan answered, "Free yourself from all restrictions. That is the Ultimate Vehicle. Its meaning is so profound that men find it very difficult to attain, and fall short of it. I am afraid it is all too easy to misunderstand it."

Munan said to a gathering, "Even though our school takes satori as its root, one should not think that he may rest after satori is gained. The Way must be exhausted through practice (*sbugyō*; 修行) in *nyobō* (如法). *Nyobō* means to know the Original Mind<sup>23</sup> as it is. Practice means to annihilate karma with wisdom gained by satori. To have satori is rather easy, but to apply it in daily life is most difficult. Therefore the Bodhidharma said, 'Those who know the Way are many, those who practise it few.' What is necessary is to wield the precious Sword of the Vajra King<sup>24</sup> day and night, and to kill yourself with zeal. When

<sup>22</sup> 根元      <sup>23</sup> 本心

<sup>24</sup> 金剛王寶劍—this sword, according to the *Sbōdōka* (*Cheng-tao ke* 証道歌) "cuts all"

your body is dead, you will attain, naturally and without fail, the Great Emancipation, the Great Freedom.”

Munan addressed a group of people, “When you see your Original Mind, you must nurse it as continually and undividedly as you would an infant. You must reflect the wisdom of satori on all your daily acts, or they will stain you with the seven *vijñāna*.<sup>25</sup> Keep your Original Mind well and your insight will be always bright, you will be like the infant who grows and develops to a full fatherhood, where *dhyaṇa* and *prajñā* are completely merged and live in the Buddhas and Patriarchs. Why do men overlook such a Great Matter?<sup>26</sup> In Buddhism, it is said that to chance to receive a human body is the most fortunate of occurrences, for the simple reason that one is thereby able to gain emancipation in this life. Ordinary people usually are concerned primarily with their material welfare, and continually driven by their illusory thoughts; then, when death comes they end up ‘biting their navels.’<sup>27</sup> What good is that? Buddha appeared in this world to point out the untrue paths and to reveal the Original Mind to man, to make it possible for him to separate himself from birth and death and all phenomena. Where we really *are* we know we really are not; where we really see, hear and perceive, we know we do not really see, hear and perceive. Herein is the real merit of the true practice of Zen. Do you suppose it is a simple matter?”

Munan said to a gathering of people, “If you think there is some truth to be imparted, then you are thousand-errored, million-errored; and even more so is he who would learn such a truth. Few people realize that the Buddha Dharma is degenerated. Two thousand years

\*the entanglements of knowledge and ignorance; / . . . smashes in pieces the intellect of the philosophers. / But disheartens the spirit of evils ones.” Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>25</sup> the seven aspects of consciousness.

<sup>26</sup> Great Matter (大事) an expression often used in Buddhism, referring to the ultimate truth.

<sup>27</sup> “bite their navels”—extreme regret.

after his death the Buddha's Great Dharma reached the Eastern Sea [Japan]. Now, the passage of a thousand more years finds it completely degenerated. After much reflection, I have come to believe the reason for this is to be found in man's selfish intellectuality. It is generally true that the more one is inclined to intellection, the less faith he has. The origin of the Buddhist Way is faith. The degeneration of faith is due to the intellect. It is for this reason that gradually deceit has grown from the artful intellect, and all the Dharma and teachings have come to a state of complete disintegration. These are the signs of *mappō*.<sup>28</sup> You must realize that when you reach the stage where you become effortless while making effort, there the great Way becomes strong. Students today generally think their teacher's teaching is something to be grasped intellectually. Very, very few of them exert themselves through faith to reach the Way."

Munan said to a gathering, "Some who cultivate the Way apply themselves with great earnestness, and some are less intense. I, now an old monk, formerly applied myself with extreme vigor for many years. Then one day I happened to come upon the words of Confucius which say, 'One can find men wise enough to govern the empire, a principality, or the domain of a minister of state, disinterested enough to refuse emoluments, or courageous enough to walk upon bare swords; one cannot find one capable of holding to the mean.'<sup>29</sup> His words are really to the point. When students are practicing the Way, unless they penetrate to the marrow with their whole spirit, how will they be able to use up their karmic limitations. Once, while my teacher Gudō was bathing, he allowed the lady attendants to wash his entire body, yet remained as disinterested and unaffected as if he were engaged in any other act of daily life. Does not this show that his actions were free from karma?"

<sup>28</sup> *mappō*—末法 "the Latter Degenerate Days of the Law," a period foretold by Buddha in which his teaching would decline and perish.

<sup>29</sup> From the *Cbung Tung* 中庸, based upon the translation by Couvreur. *Li Ki*, Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1913 (2nd edition) Vol. II, p. 383.

Munan said to a gathering, "I first met my late master Gudō while I was still residing at my inn. He gave me the koan of 'original nothingness', which I eagerly accepted. I pursued it for thirty years. Walking, staying, sitting, lying—I made a very intense seeking<sup>30</sup> with my whole body, really becoming one with nothingness itself. After that I entered master Gudō's kiln many times, and completed penetration to the final truth of the Patriarchs. And now, for your benefit, I am 'drawing out the nails,' and 'pulling out the wedges.'<sup>31</sup> How could this be insignificant?"

Munan said to a gathering, "When you approach fire you become hot; when you draw near water you become cool. When you come near a man of the Way, he will naturally annihilate your mind, extinguish your consciousness, and thus make all your deluded thoughts vanish. This is called the merit of perfect virtue. When you enter the monastery for the first time, you boast that you are 'men of the Way.' That is cause for nothing but shame."

One day he admonished his disciples, "To be my followers you must be very careful in your daily lives, and not follow the trend of the times. To leave behind them words and writings was for the ancients an act performed for the sake of those who would come after. But when 'those without nostrils'<sup>32</sup> gather they invariably think only of benefits in this present world, never knowing that this body may perish, but this Mind will not, though the heads and faces be different. How pitiful they are! When men have positions of esteem they are saturated in luxury, and are supercilious; when they are lowly, they flatter and fawn on others for the sake of favors. It is because of this that the Buddhas and Patriarchs with great compassionate means revealed the Mind-Origin to man, left words for him, and transplanted into his being the supreme and wondrous Way. But man is not really aware of such a Great Matter,

<sup>30</sup> *Kufū*, 工夫

<sup>31</sup> "drawing out the nails, pulling out the wedges," 拔釘奪楔. To help others to free themselves from the bondage of ignorance and delusion.

<sup>32</sup> "Those without nostrils"—the breath of life comes in and goes out, but there is some block which arrests the free movement of life.

sometimes he clings to the words and reason he favors, and sometimes he cherishes the matters which please him. Hardly any take this (supreme and wondrous Way) as the basis of the Mind, or embody it in themselves. If you fully accept what I have told you, first penetrate to the origin of the truth, and from this very minute to the end of time carry the Great Dharma on your shoulders. Continue along this Way with diligence, just as heaven and earth do. You must not allow your vow to end even though the vastness of space is exhausted. You then may be called my true followers.”

(1)

“You should enter not a mountain,  
But your own mind—  
Making your hiding place  
In the unknown.”

(2)

“If you know, you are lost;  
If you do not know,  
You are also lost—  
The Dharma Way.  
Then what is the Buddha’s Truth?”

(3)

“How marvelous it is. . .  
Though in this floating world  
The Buddha lived,  
He was unhindered by it.”

(4)

“Even though you might fall  
Heel over into Hell,  
Never think  
To become a Buddha.”

(5)

“Kill. Kill. Kill your body.  
And when it has totally perished,  
You are nothing but nothingness itself—  
And then you may teach others.”

(6)

To a monk who asked about  
Munan's everyday life:

“While the moon and the flowers  
Are the same moon and flowers of old—  
They become the moon and flowers  
Of the one who sees them.”

(7)

Inscribed on a picture of Sakyamuni's descent  
from the mountains:

“‘Buddha’ is the name attached  
To what remains alive,  
After the body  
Has thoroughly died.”

(8)

Inscribed on a picture of the priest Rinzai:<sup>33</sup>

“You became a monk,  
A commandment-breaker monk—  
Because you killed the Buddhas  
And the Patriarchs.”

<sup>33</sup> Rinzai—Lin-chi I-hsüan 臨濟義玄 d. 866. T'ang Zen Master. Rinzai Zen, which came to emphasize the use of the koan in its teaching, is one of the two main streams of\*

There are a great many other *dōka*<sup>34</sup> similar to these written in Japanese, telling of the Way. They may be found in the two works *Sokusbinki*<sup>35</sup> and *Jisbōki*,<sup>36</sup> which are still extant.

Munan's nature was singly directed, thus he did not follow the currents of the time, did not rely upon words or letters or rules; he was sincere and humble throughout his lifetime; he did not seek name or glory and his words and deeds were marked by a simplicity and directness. He possessed naturally an aura of the sages of the past. Gudō Kokushi prized the excellence of Munan's wisdom and understanding of Zen. He gave him the name Munan, and it is by that name that he has been known and revered ever since.

Ōkubo Tadatomo, the governor of Kaga Province, found his house beset by spirits, which remained even though attempts were made by Buddhist and Shinto priests to exorcise them. Hearing of Munan's virtuousness, he appealed to him for help. Munan drew a picture of a black-colored rice-cake on a piece of white paper and gave it to the governor, whereupon the spirits disappeared. Because of this, a concubine of the Shōgun Tsunayoshi became a nun, requesting Munan to become her teacher. Many attendants of the Shōgun's wife asked in turn to receive his teaching. Kyōgoku-shuri, a high official of Ōmi Province (modern Shiga Prefecture), was told of Munan by the Shōgun's former concubine, now the nun Teishō-in.<sup>37</sup> He invited him to restore his provincial temple, Fumon-ji,<sup>38</sup> in order that he might learn of the Buddhist Way. Although Munan accepted this offer, he stayed only a short time, and then returned to Tōhoku-an. A daughter of the head

\*Chinese Zen that were transplanted to Japan, the other being the Sōtō school, which places more emphasis upon *zazen*. Munan is in the Rinzai line of Zen, leading from Eisai (1141–1215), through Munan, to Hakuin.

<sup>34</sup> 道歌—didactic *waka*, poems of 31 syllables written in the Japanese language in order to make their Buddhist message available to the widest possible audience.

<sup>35</sup> 即心記      <sup>36</sup> 自性記

<sup>37</sup> 貞松院—a native of Ōmi Province and a relative of Kyōgoku-shuri. She was constantly urging him and his household to become Munan's followers. (Kōda's footnote)

<sup>38</sup> 普門寺

of the Uesugi clan became his follower and was given the name Shōrei-inshi.<sup>39</sup> She later founded a temple for nuns called Kōzen-ji,<sup>40</sup> and asked Munan's help in instructing her students.

In the latter years of the Kambun Period (1661–1672) Munan's disciples selected some land near Shibuya (in Edo) and built a temple for him, intending for it to become a new Tōhoku-an. But Munan preferred the simple, antique air of the original hermitage and refused their request, recommending instead his head disciple Shōju Etan.<sup>41</sup> But Etan refused them as well and fled to Shinano Province (mod. Nagano Prefecture). At this time Esui Shuso,<sup>42</sup> who had once been under Gudō's tutelage during the master's late years, was in the Mita district of Edo, where he had shut himself up in order to cultivate the Way. Munan invited him to become the head priest of the new temple.

Munan stayed in his hermitage, calling himself Shidō Anju, "the master of Shidō hermitage." In the spring of the second year of Empō (1674), he transferred the hermitage to Koishikawa, where he remained for three years. While he was there, he had a wood-carver carve his image. He requested his disciple Tanzui to keep in the hermitage those belongings he had always had with him; his staff, stick, robe, and iron begging bowl, as well as the *bossu* presented to him as the Dharma-seal by Gudō.

The fourth year of the same period (1676), on the 19th day of the eighth month, without illness, Munan passed away while sitting in *zazen*. He was seventy-four years old. His dharma age<sup>43</sup> is not clearly known. His disciples took his body and buried it at Tōhoku-ji.

Shōju Etan alone received Munan's *inki*,<sup>44</sup> and succeeded in his correct Dharma line. There were also four other priests who received the *mikki*<sup>45</sup> from Munan, each becoming teachers and instructing people

<sup>39</sup> 松嶺庵之    <sup>40</sup> 興禪寺    <sup>41</sup> 正受慧端    <sup>42</sup> 魁水首座

<sup>43</sup> dharma age—a priest's age counted from the time of ordination.

<sup>44</sup> 印記—a written *inka* or seal of approval.

<sup>45</sup> 密記—approval given to disciples who do not receive their master's *inka*, but who are nevertheless sanctioned to teach others.

in their own particular ways. They were Shōzan Tanzui Anju<sup>46</sup> (who succeeded Munan at Shidō-an), Kōō Ichigai Anju<sup>47</sup> (who lived at Genju-an in Yanaka), Ganjū Entetsu Anju<sup>48</sup> (who lived in Gokurakusui-an), and Meitsū Seikan Anju<sup>49</sup> (who built a small hermitage next to Shidō-an). There were also a number of nuns among his disciples; Inshi-ni Zenji,<sup>50</sup> Chōgen-ni Jōza,<sup>51</sup> Zesan-ni Jōza,<sup>52</sup> and others. They followed in accord with Munan's purity, adhering to the Buddhist regulations and practicing the Way. Besides these, countless numbers of priests, nuns, lay men and women, and lords and ladies received Munan's corrective teaching and encouragement, and entered the right path. During his lifetime there were numerous instances where his virtue brought relief to those suffering from the bane of evil spirits; these he exorcised, afterwards immersing the sufferers in the time-old grace of the Buddha.

With the help of donations from laymen he built or restored many temples: Fumon-ji (Kuchiki, Shiga Province), Seisui-ji<sup>53</sup> (Inage, Bushū Province), Kōzen-ji, Shōrei-ji<sup>54</sup> and Sokugen-ji<sup>55</sup> (all in Shirogane, Edo), Giun-ji<sup>56</sup> (Fukagawa, Edo), Goyō-an<sup>57</sup> (now belonging to Shōgen-ji), Tōhoku-ji and Shidō-an. These temples still remain, but since there is no one in them fully qualified to succeed to Munan's teachings, knowledge of the Master's illustrious words and deeds is now very difficult to collect. This is but a brief outline of his life. We must await the day some superior man appears, able to complete this biography.

*The 7th year of Meiwa (1770), autumn. Chūzan Osbō<sup>58</sup> of Tōhoku-ji, in memory of the one hundredth anniversary of Munan's death, requests for Munan from the government the posthumous title of Myōshin Daiichiza.<sup>59</sup>*

Translated by Kobori Sōhaku and N. A. Waddell

46 群山丹瑞庵主      47 光應一外庵主      48 岩融園微庵主      49 明通清鑑庵主  
50 隱之尼禪師      51 長元尼上座      52 是三尼上座      53 清水寺      54 松嶺寺  
55 即現寺      56 宜雲寺      57 五葉庵      58 忠山和尚      59 妙心第一座