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Translations

Yasen Kanna 夜船閑話

A Chat on a Boat in the Evening

By Hakuin Zenji

Translated by

R. D. M. Shaw and Wilhelm Schiffer, S. J.

Introduction

Hakuin Zenji^a is one of the lesser known Buddhist saints of Japan. He lived at a time when Japan was at the nadir of her religious life. The country was in deepest seclusion from the rest of the world and only a very few Chinese monks were permitted to come during the whole of the century, one of them being the famous Ōbaku Ingen^b, founder of the Ōbaku sect^c of Zen in Japan. No Japanese was allowed to leave the country at all, and trade was limited to a mere dribble.

In Hakuin's days the Tokugawa regime was beginning to feel the results of its social policies. Edo and other cities were growing enormously in size, and moral depravity was becoming rampant—the Yoshiwara being merely one sign of the degradation of all classes. Even the ranks of the *samurai* and the *daimyō* in the provinces were being affected by this moral corruption. Outwardly a brilliant era, like that of the Genroku period^d (1688–1703), its glamour was no more than a cultural varnish concealing the underlying dissipation.

Though such shōguns as the fifth, Tsunayoshie (1646–1709), and the eighth, Yoshimune^f (1677–1751), saw the danger and attempted to introduce reforms, others like Ieshige^g (1744–1761) and Ieharu^h (1760–1786) outdid their own retainers in their profligacy and love

a 白隠禪師 b 黄檗隱元 c 黄檗派 d 元祿時代 e 綱吉 f 吉宗 g 家茂
h 家治

of display. There was only a small number of scholars and religious leaders who tried to maintain the nobler and better side of life. More or less contemporary with Hakuin were men like the famous Edo magistrate, Ōoka Echizen no Kami Tadasuke^a (1677–1751), who aided in the legal and moral reforms, and Arai Hakuseki^b (1656–1726) and other Confucian scholars both of the orthodox and unorthodox schools. There was Ishida Baigan^c (1685–1744) who had promulgated the simple ethical doctrines of the Mind or Heart^d, while a new life was being breathed into the old Shintō religion—ominous foreshadower of the Restoration and Reformation of the 19th century.

Very unsatisfactory, too, was the institutional side of the Buddhist world in this period. The Tokugawa government had seized absolute control of the temples. It interfered not only in their financial administration but even in such purely religious matters as the ritual and ceremonial activities. The government support brought material prosperity, and crowds of unworthy men flocked into the temples, but inwardly there was no spiritual life or force. Some famous priests, like Sūden^e (1567–1643) and Tenkai^f (1536–1643), were appointed to carry out the state's policy in its dealings with the Buddhist sects, and they did their job very efficiently. Some, however, like Takuan^g (1573–1645), fought for the independence of the religious world and suffered considerable persecution for their pains; and some priests, like Kogetsu Zenzai^h (1667–1751) and Hakuin, are outstanding examples of those who tried hard to bring a higher and more living religion back into the nation's life.

Hakuinⁱ was born to a man named Sugiyamaⁱ on 19 January, 1686. His mother was the eldest daughter of the postmaster of the town of Hara in Suruga^j province. At marriage his father was adopted into his wife's family and his name was changed to Nagasawa.^k The Nagasawa family was devoted to the Nichiren teaching, and this was of considerable importance in the spiritual development of the son, whose childhood name was Iwajirō^l.

From his earliest years he was noted for his remarkable memory, and it is said that at four he could repeat by heart over 300 village songs; and once after returning from a service where a sermon was preached on the *Devadatta Section* of the *Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra* (*Hokke-kyō*^m), he astonished everybody by giving them an accurate account of all that he had heard.

Unfortunately, a sermon on the Eight Hot Hells which he heard terrified him and it was a long time before he recovered from that spiritual shock. Eventually, however, as a result of his terror, he was

1 This biography of Hakuin is based mainly on *Ryūtakū-kaisō Shinkī-dokumyō Zenji Nempu-inkyō-kaku* 龍沢開祖神機独妙禪師年譜因行格 compiled by the monk Enji 慈円 and published in *Hakuin Oshō Zenshū* 白隠和尚全集, Tōkyō 1935, I, 1 ff.

a 大岡越前守忠相 b 新井白石 c 石田梅巖 d 心学 e 崇伝 f 天海 g 沢庵 h 古月禪材 i 杉山 j 駿河, 原 k 長沢 l 岩次郎 m 法華經

moved to seek for the truth. He had difficulty in persuading his parents to permit him to leave his home and begin his serious religious life by entering a temple and accepting the guidance of a priest. The temple was the Shōinji^a of the Rinzai branch of the Zen sect, and on 26 March, 1699, he received his primary ordination at the hand of Tan Reiden^b. His name was now changed to Ekaku^c.

He now began his long religious quest, moving from place to place, from temple to temple, and from famous priest to famous priest. This search was interrupted by the death of his mother in 1706, but he continued studying the scriptures, the *Kōkoshū*^d and the *Shijūnishō-kyō*^e, and at one period he was much influenced by the famous poet of the Zuiunji^f in Mino province^g, Ba-ō^h, partly through whom he obtained his polished and clear literary style.

About 1708, through the introduction of a friend, he went to Takada in the province of Echigoⁱ, where he studied under Shōtetsu^j at the Eiganji^k. From there he went to Iiyama in the province of Shinano^l, where he met Etan^m at the Shōjuanⁿ. This old priest treated Hakuin very roughly and offhandedly, and most young men would have taken offence and departed to more congenial surroundings. But Hakuin had been deeply impressed by the old man's character, so he patiently bore his treatment and after many months "under the shackles and hammer blows of Etan" he received the reward of his patience. This is what he tells us of his great experience at Iiyama:

"One day, in the morning, I wandered round the town of Iiyama on my customary alms-begging route. I was walking alone when a wonderful idea about the Way came into my mind, which I could not rid myself of. I became so obsessed with this idea that I did not notice where my feet carried me. Suddenly I found myself, without knowing how I had come there, at the door of someone's house where I was begging alms." For a long time he was standing there so absorbed in the new idea that the master of the house who had ordered him over and over again to go away, finally in exasperation, took up a writing brush and hurled it at Hakuin's head, cutting his face badly and knocking him over. Hakuin fell down in a faint. The neighbours rushed out to see what had happened, but even all the bustle and noise did not penetrate into Hakuin's brain. His mind was still filled with his great thought. Two or three passers-by lifted him up and asked him what was the matter, but he did not answer them. Then suddenly, he clapped his hands and burst out laughing. Everybody who saw this thought he was a crazy priest, and so they left him and went their way. Later on Hakuin came to himself and brushing off the mud and dust from his clothes he went back to his temple with a smiling face. As he reached the temple, Etan was standing on the temple verandah and saw him coming in. He called out: "Something nice seems to have happened to you, what is it?" So Hakuin told him the whole of his morning's experience, and what his great thought had been. And Etan said to him: "Now you must take the vows and not

a 松陰寺 b 単嶺伝 c 慧鶴 d 江湖集 e 四十二章経 f 瑞雲寺 g 美濃
h 馬翁 i 越後, 高田 j 性徹 k 英巖寺 l 信濃, 飯山 m 慧端 n 正受庵

be satisfied with having attained to that. Your studies from now on will have to be deeper than ever. Your life will have to be more strenuous since this enlightenment has come to you."

Etan's long continued discipline had at last produced its effect and Hakuin had grasped the inexpressible reality of the nature of Mind. He had reached Enlightenment.

Soon after this experience Hakuin was called back to nurse his first teacher at the Daishōji^a in Numazu^b, near to his home in Hara. It was here that he studied the *Pi-yen-lun*^c, the *Diamond Sūtra*^d and many other great scriptures at temples in that neighbourhood.

Now, however, his own health began to deteriorate. His own account of this illness, which he calls "meditation sickness", and his remarkable recovery, is given in his *Yasen Kanna*.

After his recovery he continued his studies and went on travelling widely, seeking further wisdom from many well-known teachers in all parts of the country. Sometimes he was tempted to stay with some enlightened priest, no matter how cold and uncomfortable the place.

After still further pilgrimages, he decided to retire to a distant hermitage in the province of Mino. He was dissuaded from this by an urgent message from his father who was then dying. So he returned to his own home and finally, after his father's death, took up residence at the desolate Shōinji, where he had begun his religious life many years before. Here he lived in great poverty till the end of his life, only going away to lecture at the request of many temples mostly in the neighbourhood.

But his piety and learning soon became known throughout the land, and many great persons and hundreds of young students came to him for guidance and instruction. How spiritually contented he was now, in spite of his many material discomforts, is shown by his little poem, composed at this time:

Feelings of pity and harshness,
All are reduced by distance
Happy indeed, I will not seek
The hills of any distant country.

Here in his first and last temple he died at the ripe old age of 84, on 18 January, 1769. He was given the posthumous title of Shinkidokumyō^e, in 1769, by Imperial edict, and the further title of Shōshūkokushif, in 1884.

Hakuin's teaching, as contained in the eight volumes of his collected works, may be summed up as follows:

First, he insists that the fundamental Zen practice of meditation and direct heart-to-heart knowledge of the Buddha is not an affair of the cloister or meditation hall alone; it is the spirit which should pervade the whole daily life of men. Further, he stresses the obligation to strictly observe the moral law, for meditation or other religious practices

a 大聖寺 b 沼津 c 碧嶽録 d 金剛經 e 神機独妙 f 正宗国師

alone are not sufficient to reach enlightenment. And lastly, he thinks that it is of importance that those who aim at attaining spiritual maturity should take care to preserve the health of the body.

In his instructions to the feudal classes, Hakuin placed these principles before them in this order. When teaching the less educated peasants, he stressed first the moral law and made that the base on which their religious life should be built. The third point, about health, was addressed more especially to the many earnest men who were giving up their lives to the strict observance of their ascetic and religious duties. Hakuin himself was an outstanding example of how health, seriously affected by too strenuous ascetic practices, might be restored.

Hakuin's teaching in its more philosophical aspect is to be found in his great work *Keisō-dokuzui*^a (Poisonous Stamens and Pistils of the Glade of Thorns). In that book may be found in fuller detail his doctrines about the nature of man, both in its physical and spiritual aspects, and his doctrine of the nature of mind as well as his teaching about the nature of the Buddha Heart or Mind.

Opposed to the idea, taught by many scholars of the Tokugawa period, concerning the fundamental unity of Buddhism and Shintō, Hakuin was a staunch supporter of the theory that Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were only different aspects of one truth, as may be seen in his work *Sankyō-itchi no ben*^b.

On the more practical side, one cannot but notice Hakuin's moral courage. It needed a great deal of that to say what Hakuin said to the nobles and *samurai* of those times about their need of moral reform. This he expressed very carefully in his courteous way.

His sympathy with the peasants in their suffering and poverty, which were increasing so terribly at that time, was true and deep. He literally suffered with them, as can be seen by the picture given of his life in that old and dilapidated temple of his, and in the way in which he used to go and sit on the little ridges between the rice fields and talk to them as a father talks to his family. No wonder they called him, "Our dear priest."

Hakuin's tolerant spirit is evident from his letters to members of other sects. He never thinks of belittling their beliefs or shows any sign of being superior in any way, but rather makes it clear that his own knowledge and experience in Zen has taught him that Zen can be found in, and is indeed the basis of, all true creeds and all efforts made in sincerity to discover the truth.

Of extremely practical value to the aspirant to Zen illumination are his *Yasen Kanna* and *Orate Gama*^c. The novice, eager to reach the goal in a short time, often overestimates his strength. The result is not the desired illumination but a nervous breakdown, *zen-byō*^d (meditation sickness) in Zen terminology. In these two works Hakuin, from his own experience, gives very detailed descriptions of the symptoms of this disease and explains his method of curing it.

a 荊叢毒藥 b 三教一致之辨 c 遠羅天釜 d 禪病

Hakuin calls this method *Naikan*^a (Introspection). As will be seen from the *Yasen Kanna* given here in translation, this Introspection is a kind of autosuggestion based on the idea that man's body and spirit form a close unity. This method of Introspection through which man, in a certain sense, finds his true self, liberates spiritual forces which greatly influence also man's bodily well-being. Hakuin's medical conceptions are, of course, those of the traditional Chinese medical school, but many of his ideas are truths recognized also by modern Western medicine.

Finally, it must be mentioned that Hakuin also excelled as a calligrapher, painter, and sculptor. His artistic works, preserved at the Shōinji, will be the subject of a special study to be published soon.

Text²

YASEN KANNA JO 夜船閑話序

Preface to a Chat on a Boat in the Evening

In the spring of the 7th year of Hōreki^b (1757) a man, the proprietor of the book store, Shōgetsudō^c, in the capital, sent a letter written in a current hand, to the near disciples of our Kokurin³ in which he said: "I have heard, with humble respect, that there is a manuscript, entitled *Yasen Kanna*, among the papers of your revered master. In this work, I am told, he has put together carefully the secrets of long life, secrets which train the spirit, nourish the soul and supply power for doing work. Indeed, it is the essence of what men call the Divine Elixir of Life. Therefore, those gentlemen, who know something of the good things in this world, think of this book as of clouds and a rainbow after a long drought. Some wandering priests may have transcribed it, yet it is kept as if it were a great secret and is never shown to

2 For this translation, the text in *Hakuin Oshō Zenshū* V, 341 ff. was used. Besides the Preface, a Part I and a Part II of the *Yasen Kanna* are given there. However, it seems that Part II does not belong to the original work, and therefore it was not translated here. Of great help in elucidating doubtful passages was Nomura Zuijō 野村瑞城, *Hakuin to Yasen Kanna* 白隠と夜船閑話, Kyōto 1946, a commentary from the medical point of view.

3 Kokurin 鵲林, "Goose Grove", originally name of the grove in which the Shōinji was located. Also used for the temple and its priest.

a 内観 b 宝曆 c 松月堂

anyone. It is as if the forces of heaven were kept uselessly stored up in a box. But I would like to print this book and so preserve it for posterity. Then the [spiritual] thirst of men may be quenched. I know that your revered master, even in his old age, always enjoys being helpful to others. So, if there is anything which may be of benefit to mankind [in this writing], would the master grudge it to us?"

This letter, which was sent in duplicate, was presented to the master. He smiled. Whereupon we, his disciples, opened the box containing the old manuscripts. More than half the papers had already been consumed in the bellies of the moths. The disciples, however, immediately emended and copied the writings and fifty pages were soon ready. They were enclosed in covers to be sent to the capital.

Since I am a day older than the other disciples, I was asked to write this preface, and I did not refuse that request. It is now forty years since our master, taking up his alms bowl, came to the Kokurin [-Temple]. During that time till today, many hempen-robed priests in search of truth have crossed the threshold of this temple. Here they have submitted to his poisonous spittle and endured his painful rod, but they have forgotten to go away. Some have been here for ten, some for twenty years. Some do not seem to dislike the possibility that they may become dust under the trees of the Goose Grove. They are all prominent men, the best in our land. They live scattered about, some to the East and some to the West, within distances of five or six *ri*. They live under conditions of great suffering, in old, decaying houses, temples and broken down tombs, which they hire as hermitages. Distressed in the mornings, pained with bitter evenings, starved in the daytime, frozen at night, nothing passes through their mouths but vegetable leaves and barley flour. Their ears hear nothing but scoffs and reviling or scolding words. What touches their bodies is only angry fists and painful rods. What they see causes them to furrow their brows. What they hear brings sweat to their bodies. The very gods must surely shed tears for them. And even the demons will surely put the palms of their hands together in prayer for them.

When these men first came here, they had the attractive looks of Sung Yü and Ho Yen.⁴ Their skin was glistening like fine oil.

4 Sung Yü 宋玉, Chinese poet of ca. B.C. 300, and Ho Yen 何晏, 3rd cent., were famous for their good looks.

But before long they were like Tu Fu and Chia Tao, their figures emaciated, their faces haggard, as one meets them bent down by the banks of the lagoon.⁵ If they were not in very truth superior men, bold and strong of spirit, regarding not the life of their bodies, what pleasure could there possibly be for them in crowding together here for such a length of time? Because these men have too often suffered excessively and been too strict in their disciplinary exercises, their lungs have shrunk and their bodies have become wrinkled. They suffer pains in their loins and they have indigestion and other diseases which are too hard to cure. For very pity and grief the master, although also not too well, at once put aside all restraint and daily exercised his grey head and tried to feed them from his aged breasts by imparting to them the secret of Introspection.

He says: "If a student, who wants to study and practise the meditation of the Zen Way, has fits of dizziness⁶ and feels weary in his body, as if his five internal organs were out of harmony with each other, then, even if he tries to cure his ailments by the use of the three medical arts: acupuncture, moxacautery and drugs; even if he were Hua-t'o or Pien-ts'ang⁷, it would be difficult for him to be healed. But I have the secret of the hermits' Elixir of Life.⁸ If you make trial of it, you will see wonderful results. It will be to you like sunshine breaking through clouds and mists. If you wish to practise this secret art, desist for a little while from all exercises, give up meditation on the Model Subjects,⁹ and first of all learn how to sleep well and to wake up at once. Before you sleep and close your eyes, stretch your legs, press them hard together, and let the energy of your body fill the navel, the space

5 Tu Fu 杜甫 and Chia Tao 賈島, both of the T'ang period, were poor during the whole of their lives.

6 Lit.: "...if his heart is moving upward." As will be explained later, the heart is under the element Fire. In order to be healthy, man has to suppress the upward movement of Fire. If he neglects this, dizziness and weariness will be the result.

7 Hua-t'o 華陀 was a famous physician of the 3rd cent., Pien-ts'ang 扁倉 (or Pien-ch'iao 扁鵲) was one of the physicians of Huang-ti (B.C. 27th cent.).

8 The drug, sought after by Taoist alchemists, which was to make men immortal.

9 The text has *watō* 話頭, the Zen story (*Kōan* 公案) used as subject for meditation.

below it,¹⁰ your loins and legs down to the soles of your feet and repeatedly make the following consideration:

This space below my navel, my loins and legs down to the soles of my feet are in truth my original face.¹¹ There is no need of any nostrils. This space below my navel is in truth my original home. There is no need of any visits from my home. This space below my navel is in truth the Pure Land of my heart. There is no need of any other splendor. This space below my navel is in truth the Amida who am I. There is no need of preaching the Law to me.

Bring such ideas as these into your mind over and over again, and when the effects of such musings have taken a hold upon you, the energy of your body will fill your loins and legs down to the soles of your feet, the space below your navel will be well-rounded like a new ball. Meditating simply in this way, if after 5, 7 or up to 37 days all accumulated diseases, all weariness and tiredness will not be cured completely, you may cut off this old priest's head and carry it away."

When the disciples heard this, they were filled with joy and thanked the master. Each one in private carried out this secret discipline, and all saw marvellous results. How soon the effects were felt depended on the exactness of their performance of the discipline; however, more than half of them were entirely cured. No one tired of praising the wonderful effects of Introspection.

The master said: "Do not let this cure of the sickness of your hearts be sufficient. The better the cure, so much the more is the need to carry on the discipline. The better you understand, the more you will progress. When I first began the study of the discipline, I developed a severe illness which it was difficult to cure. My pain and distress was ten times worse than what you have suffered. It became impossible for me to move, and I used to think in my heart, as people in the world probably think, that I would like to get rid of this old skin bag of bones as quickly as possible, rather than become drowned in my sufferings. But

10 The text has *sairin* 臍輪 the navel, *kikai* 氣海 centre of breathing 1 inch below the navel, *tanden* 丹田 centre of strength 0.5 inch below the *kikai*.

11 *Waga honrai no memmoku* 我が本来の面目. A Zen expression meaning: My Original Nature.

oh, how great was my happiness when I was taught the secret of Introspection and found that I was entirely cured. My joy was like that which you all feel."

The great man once said: "This is the divine art of long life and immortality. With this, a life which lasted for three hundred years would be called a life of below medium length, and no one can guess how much longer it might last. With unrestrained joy I faithfully performed the proper discipline for about three years, and I noticed that my soul and body were getting gradually healthier and my vitality stronger. Now, however, in my heart, I often began secretly to think that even though I might be disposed to carry on this discipline and support life say for eight hundred years, as did P'eng-tsu¹², I should be nothing better than a dull and ignorant ghost protecting a corpse. It would be like an old badger sleeping in an old badger hole; at last everything would return to dust. Why have I not seen companions like Ko Hung, T'ieh Kuai, Chang Hua and Fei Chang¹³, until now? Would it not be better, I thought, to perform the Four Great Vows¹⁴; to learn the rules of the Bodhisattvas, always to fulfill the works of the Law; to destroy the irreversible, firm *dharmakaya*¹⁵ which does not die before the Void¹⁶ and is not born after the Void; and to achieve the strong and indestructible body of the immortals?

So I secured two or three like-minded colleagues, superior men who came to study the mysteries with me. Together with them I practised Introspection as well as Meditation. Together with them I cultivated the virtues of the ascetic life and together with them I struggled, for more than thirty years. Each year another member was added, our membership increased by two shoulders, till now we are nearly two hundred. In this fellowship there are priests who have come from all parts of the country—

12 P'eng-tsu 彭祖, the Chinese Methuselah.

13 Ko Hung 葛洪, Taoist, 4th cent., better known by the name Pao P'u-tzu 抱朴子. T'ieh Kuai 鐵拐, Chang Hua 張華 and Fei Chang 費張: immortals of Taoist lore.

14 *Shigusei* 四弘誓, the four vows taken by the Bodhisattva. Different according to Sūtras. See Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亭, *Bukkyō Daijiten*, 仏教大辭典, Tōkyō 1932, II, 1755 f.

15 In the Zen teaching, even the *dharmakaya* must be transcended, because it is less than the Absolute, the Primal Unity where all distinctions are lost.

16 I. e. the Absolute.

men who have undergone labour, sorrow, weariness; pitiful men with dizzy minds and almost demented, but secretly they were given the essentials of Introspection and were made well immediately. The more one understands, the more one helps to progress.

Though my own age is said to have passed that of a withered old tree, I have not even a bit of painful illness, my teeth have not fallen out, my eyes and ears are clearer than ever, so that I am apt to forget the darkness and cloudiness [of the end of life]. Never have I had to omit the fortnightly duties of the Law. In response to requests from the provinces I have attended meetings of three or five hundred men together, and, as requested by these wandering monks, I have lectured on the Scriptures and Records, sometimes for fifty or seventy days. Though we had fifty or sixty of these meetings, not once have I been obliged to close any before finishing it in proper course. My body is healthy and my energy is greater now than it was when I was a young fellow of twenty or thirty. I realize that all this is entirely due to the wonderful effects of Introspection.”

The disciples in the temple, with tears of gratitude, said: “Master, out of your deep compassion and in mercy to us please write down the main points of this Introspection. Write it so as to preserve it, and succour us and those colleagues of ours, who like us, may in the future suffer from the disease which comes from meditation and from weariness.” The master agreed to do so and immediately this manuscript was written.

And what is the sum of the teaching of this document? Roughly, it is that to nourish life and to come to an old age is better than the moulding of outer forms alone. The essential of the moulding of the outer forms consists mainly in allowing the inward spirit and vital force to penetrate into the space below the navel. When the inward spirit is intent in that way, the vital spirit is concentrated, and when the vital spirit is concentrated, that is when the elixir of life is made. When this elixir is thus made, then the outer form becomes firm, and when the outer form becomes firm, the inward spirit becomes perfected. When the inward spirit is thus perfected, long life ensues. This is the secret of the Nine Revolutions of the Elixir of the Hermits.¹⁷

It must be thoroughly understood that this elixir is not an

17 The most powerful elixir of immortality was thought to result from nine repetitions of the process of sublimation.

external thing. It is entirely a descent of the heart into the space below the navel. If all the disciples resident in the temple are assiduous in performing this discipline and try to progress without neglect, not only will the meditation sickness be cured and the weariness of the body be overcome, but the Zen teaching itself will also make great advances, and in future years those persons who are now in doubt will be found clapping their hands and laughing for joy.

Lo! The moon is high, the shadow of the castle has gone.

On the 25th day of the 1st month of spring, 7th year of Hōreki (14 March, 1757). The Master of the Hut of Poverty, the Hungry and Frozen One¹⁸, burning incense and reverently bowing his head wrote this.

YASEN KANNA 夜船閑話

A Chat on a Boat in the Evening

On the very first day that I went into the mountains to study, I resolved to arouse in me strong faith, to proceed unremittingly on the Way, and to work hard at carrying out the refining discipline. After only two or three frosts had passed, suddenly one night I had an illumination. The many doubts which I had up to this time were brought into harmony with the root principles of the doctrine and melted away like ice. The *Karma*-roots of the eternal life-death cycle sank down to the bottom and dissolved like foam on the sea. Later I said to myself: The Way is truly quick in leaving man: the 20 or 30 years spoken of by the men of old, what phantoms are they? It is only a few months before joy and dancing are forgotten.¹⁹

But later, when reflecting on my daily life, activity and non-activity had become entirely out of harmony. I could not decide whether to do a thing or to omit it. So I said to myself: I will try once more, courageously and with thoroughness, even if it cost my life.

18 One of Hakuin's disciples. His real name is unknown.

19 Meaning that illumination, once obtained, is no guarantee of not losing it again.

Scrolls by Hakuin

Self-portrait



The Buddha doing penance

(Courtesy of the Shōinji, Hara)

Scrolls by Hakuin

Meditating monk



Tsune ni Kanzeon Bosatsu wo nen-zu

(Courtesy of the Shōinji, Hara)

In this state, I set my teeth, fixed my eyes clearly, and determined even to forego sleep and food. And then, before I had spent many months in that strenuous way, my heart began to make me dizzy, my lungs became dry, both my legs felt as cold as if they were immersed in ice and snow. My ears were filled with a ringing as of the rushing waters of a swift river in a deep canyon. My liver felt weak, and in my behavior I experienced many fears. My spirit was distressed and weary, and whether sleeping or waking I always became lost in wild fancies. Both armpits were perpetually bathed in sweat, and my eyes were continually filled with tears. I resorted to famous teachers in every part of the country and searched widely for great physicians, but none of the hundred medicines was of any avail.

It was at this time that someone said to me: "There is a man living on the cliffs in the mountains of Shirakawa in Yamashiro^a. People call him Master Hakuyū.²⁰ His age, they say, has passed in review three or four cycles.²¹ His abode is about 3 or 4 *ri* from the nearest habitation of men. He does not like seeing people, and if anyone goes up to his dwelling he always runs away. People do not know whether he is a wise man or a fool; the villagers talk of him as an immortal. It is rumored that he was a teacher of Jōzan.²² He is an expert astronomer and is also

20 Until recently the historical existence of this Hakuyū 白鷗 was the subject of many discussions. Even at the Shōinji we were told that "Hakuyū" probably was a pen-name used by Hakuin, and in proof of this we were shown a scroll written by Hakuin but signed Hakuyū. But now all doubt has been removed by Itō Kazuo 伊藤和男, who in an article "Hakuyūshi no hito to sho" 白鷗子の人と書 (*Zen Bunka* 禅文化 6, Kyōto 1956, p. 40 ff.) discusses the problem at length and comes to the conclusion that Hakuyū was a historical person. His real name was Ishikawa Jishun 石川慈俊. Born in 1646, he was a disciple of Ishikawa Jōzan (see n. 22). He lived as a hermit on the Uriyama 瓜生山 in Kitashirakawa 北白川, Kyōtō, and died in 1709. When Hakuin in the *Yasen Kanna* at the age of 73 years says that he visited Hakuyū in 1710, this must be ascribed to the long interval between that visit and its actual recording, which made Hakuin see many things concerning Hakuyū in a somewhat phantastic light.

21 180–240 years.

22 Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山 (1583–1672). Born of a *samurai* family, he first learned the martial arts, later devoting himself exclusively to literary studies. The last 40 years of his life he spent at the *Shisendō* 詩仙堂 at Kyōto writing books and composing poetry.

a 白川, 山城

skilled in medical lore. If one visits him with all respect, he may utter some of his rare sayings. When returning one ponders over them, one finds that they are of real benefit to mankind."

Thereupon, in the 2nd decade of the 1st month of the 7th year of Hōei^a (1710), I secretly clad myself in my travelling garments and left Mino, crossed over dark valleys and soon came to the village of Shirakawa. There I deposited my bundle at a tea-house and made enquiries about the location of Hakuyū's abode on the cliffs. A villager pointed out to me a mountain river. Following the sound of the water of the river, I went up the valley. After climbing for one *ri*, I was obliged to ford the stream. There was not even a path for the wood-cutters. Soon I came upon an old man. He pointed to a spot far away up in the clouds. There I could see a gold and silver looking dot not much more than an inch square. This little object was sometimes visible and sometimes lost to view according to the changing mists of the mountains. I was told that that was the rush curtain which Hakuyū had hung at the entrance to his cave. I girded up my clothes and began to climb. After passing along some precipitous places, I pushed through some more underbrush. Ice and snow bit through my straw sandals. The damp mists weighed down my clothes. The sweat poured out of me and my fat flowed away, till at last I reached that rush curtain. The surroundings were of an infinite purity and everything seemed to be sublime. My spirit trembled and my skin felt a shudder. For a short time I leaned against a rock and inhaled the air several hundred times. Then I shook out my garments and straightened out my collar and hesitatingly and timidly bent down and peered behind the rush curtain. There I could only dimly see Hakuyū sitting upright, with his eyes fixed in front of him. His luxuriant hair reached down to his knees, his face was ruddy and beautiful as the fruit of the jujube tree. He was wearing a large cloth as an apron, and was seated on a soft straw mat. The cave itself was barely five or six feet square. There was absolutely nothing to eat. On a desk were placed the *Chung-yung*, the *Lao-tzu* and the *Kongō-Hannya*.²³

I made a courteous bow of respect and then told carefully the symptoms of my illness and asked for help. After a while

23 中庸, 老子, 金剛般若. This whole description adds a touch of mystery to the person of Hakuyū.

a 宝永

Hakuyū opened his eyes and fixed them on me and then spoke very slowly. He said: "I am only a half dead and useless man here in the midst of the mountains. I gather chestnuts for my food. I sleep in the company of the deer. How can I have knowledge of anything else? I am really quite ashamed that I should have been the cause of troubling a saintly priest to come and visit me."

Thereupon I became all the more insistent and did not give up. Then Hakuyū quietly took my hand, and began to enquire about my give internal organs²⁴, and went on to investigate the nine marks.²⁵ Since my finger-nails had only half their length, he furrowed his brows, as if he were actually in pain. Then he said: "Alas! Because your meditation was beyond measure and your asceticism without moderation, you have finally become so seriously ill. Truly, your meditation sickness will be difficult to cure. Even if you were to call for all three of the curative measures: acupuncture, moxacautery and drugs, with the hope of being cured; and even if Pien-tsang were to use all his skill and Hua-t'o were to furrow his brows, you would not see any wonderful effects. You are already defeated because of your meditation. Unless you now heap up the good effects of Introspection you will find that at last you will not be able to stand. For it depends wholly on you whether you will be cured or not."

So then I said: "Please, I would like to hear the essential secrets of Introspection. While studying it I will practise it." Hakuyū remained silent as he changed his posture without hurry. Then slowly he said: "Ah! You are the sort of man who likes to ask many questions. Shall I tell you a little of what I learnt long ago? It is the mystery of preserving life. It is something which but few men know. Provided one is not remiss in carrying it out, wonderful results will certainly be obtained, and a long life may even be expected. The Great Way divides into the Two Principles. When these, the *Yin* and *Yang*, mingle harmoniously men and things are produced. There is an innate vitality silently moving within the body, the five organs are [well] arranged and the pulse beats rhythmically. The breathing, which protects the body, and the blood, which gives it activity, mutually rise and fall in regular motion about fifty times each day

24 Heart, liver, stomach, lungs, kidneys.

25 The Oriental method of diagnosis which proceeds from an investigation of the colour of the patient's face, his finger-nails etc.

and night. The lungs are female organs and rise above the diaphragm. The liver is a male organ and sinks below the diaphragm. The heart belongs to the Greater *Yang* and has its seat above. The kidneys belong to the Greater *Yin* and rule below. The five organs are related to seven spirits, of which the spleen and kidneys shelter two each. [When breathing] the exhalation comes from the heart and the lungs, the inhalation enters the kidneys and liver. To each exhalation there is a movement of the bloodstream of about three inches, and to each inhalation there is a movement of the bloodstream of about three inches. There are about thirteen thousand five hundred full breaths during a full day and night. The bloodstream moves through the body fifty times. Fire is light and therefore always burns upwards, water is heavy and therefore always tends to flow downwards. If a man does not pay attention and loses moderation in contemplation, or transgresses the right measure in thinking, his heart becomes hot and his lungs burn out. When the lungs hurt, the kidneys get weak. One affects the other, and so each of the five senses becomes tired; the six kinds of diseases break out. The four elements lose their balance and each produces 101 maladies. Then none of the hundred medicines will provide any remedy. All the physicians in the world joining hand in consultation will not be able to say anything useful.

The maintenance of life may be compared to the defending of a country. An enlightened prince and good lord always gives his devoted attention to the masses of the people. Unenlightened rulers and unwise princes arbitrarily pay attention only to the upper classes. Now, when attention is arbitrarily paid to the upper classes, the Nine Ministers²⁶ assert their own authority, the Hundred Officers call for special consideration for themselves, so that at last there is nobody to take care of the poverty and distress of the common people. At such times people will look emaciated, and in the nation there will be starvation and death. Then the virtuous will hide away, and the people will be angry and discontented. Local nobles will isolate themselves or rebel. The barbarians, who surround the land, will rival one another in making raids and uprisings, till at last the common people will be reduced to the direst distress, and the rhythmic order of the national life will cease.

²⁶ Nine Ministers, Hundred Officers: the whole officialdom of a country.

But when attention is devoted to the masses of the people, then the Nine Ministers have to restrain their ambitions, the Hundred Officers have to be sincere in observing agreements and they do not forget the hard labours of the common people. In the fields there will be abundant millet, for the women there will be abundant material for clothing. Then the wise men of the province will affiliate themselves with the nation, the local nobles will obey with fear. The common people will be well nourished and so the whole nation will be strong. There will be none among the people who disobey orders; there will be no enemies who violate the frontiers; the land will not hear the sound of the war drums; and the people will not even know the name of the halberd.

And it is just like this with the human body too. The perfect man always supplies energy to the lower [bodily organs]. When these lower organs are thus provided with energy, the seven misfortunes do not operate in the body, nor can the four evils invade it from the outside. The bodily defences are sufficiently strong so that heart and mind are healthy. The mouth does not know the taste of drugs, nor does any part of the body have to experience the pains of acupuncture or moxocautery.

But the ordinary people selfishly turn their energy to the things above. When they do so, the fire on the left²⁷ overcomes the metal on the right.²⁸ The five senses shrink from fatigue and the six intestines²⁹ suffer and become inharmonious. Therefore [the official at] Ch'i-yüan³⁰ says: 'The true man breathes with his heels, the ordinary man breathes with his throat.' Hsü Tsun³¹ says: 'When the energy is in the lower *shō*, breath becomes rare; when the energy is in the upper *shō*, breath becomes excited.' Shang-yang-tzu³² says: 'In man there is the energy of the True

27 The heart.

28 The lungs.

29 Acc. to the Chinese theory: large intestine, small intestine, liver, stomach, bladder and one called *san-shō* 三焦 (Ch. *san-chiao*), an organ consisting of three parts, the upper *shō* below the heart, the central *shō* in the stomach, the lower *shō* above the bladder, and regulating digestion and elimination of waste products. Its counterpart in Western anatomy is not clear.

30 I. e. Chuang-tzu 莊子, who held a small post at Ch'i-yüan 漆園. The quotation is from Bk. VI of the *Chuang-tzu*.

31 許俊 Taoist of the Ming period.

32 上陽子. Pen-name of Ch'en Chih-hsü 陳致虛, Taoist and *I-ching* scholar of the Yüan period.

One.³³ When it goes down into the space below the navel, one *Yang* line returns. If one wants to know the moment of the first return of the first *Yang* line, one can find out by observing the temperature.'

Generally speaking³⁴, the way of nourishing one's life requires that the upper part be always kept cool and the lower part warm. Then the twelve bloodvessels are in accord with the twelve [cyclical] stems, the twelve months and the twelve hours of the day. The six lines of the hexagrams [of the *I-ching*] always change in turn and thus the year is completed. When there are five *Yin* lines on top and one *Yang* line at the bottom, we have the hexagram of 'Return', which corresponds to the winter solstice. That the true man breathes with his heels is represented by the hexagram of 'Peace', three *Yang* lines below and three *Yin* lines on top. It corresponds to the first month of spring when all things contain the energy of growth and the hundred plants receive the blessing of spring development. It is the symbol expressing that the perfect man fills his lower parts with the original energy. He who receives it, is full of resistance and strong in power. When there are five *Yin* lines below and one *Yang* line on top, it is the hexagram 'Decay'. It corresponds to the 9th month. With regard to heaven, it means that woods and gardens lose their colors and the hundred plants wither. It is the symbol of the ordinary man's breathing with the throat. He who receives it, will have emaciated looks and his teeth will fall out. Therefore, it is said in the *Yen-shou-shu*³⁵: 'When the six

33 真一の氣. A Taoist expression. The hermit sits upright with the mind as if he were to write the character—(one) on the palm of his hand. This attitude is supposed to give interior peace and strength.

34 This paragraph explains the medical aspect of Introspection in terms of the *I-ching*. The ideal is represented by the hexagram of 'Peace' (䷍) where the *Yang* lines are at the bottom (=all vitality in the lower part of man). In the hexagram of 'Return' (䷗) the one *Yang* line at the bottom means that man has begun to recover, while in the opposite hexagram of 'Decay' (䷘) the one *Yang* line on the top of five *Yin* lines shows a man in whom that *Yang* line will soon be overcome by the *Yin* lines, i.e., he has almost no vitality left. Another point insinuated by these hexagrams and also mentioned in the preceding quotation from Shang-yang-tzu: it is very important to know the temperature of the parts of man's body. The lower part warm and a cool upper part is a sign of good health. The opposite would mean that something is wrong.

35 延壽書. Possibly the *San-yüan-yen-shou-shu* 三元延壽書 by Li Fu-fei 李鵬飛 of the Yüan period.

Yang lines are all exhausted, man easily dies because all have become *Yin*.' One must know that the main thing in nourishing one's life is to fill the lower part with the original energy.

In olden times, Wu Ch'i-ch'u once visited Master Shih-t'ai.³⁶ After performing the correct purifications, he asked about the art of mixing the elixir of life. The master said: 'I have a very secret elixir which may not be handed on, except to persons of the highest grade. In olden times Huang Ch'eng-tzu³⁷ transmitted it to the Yellow Emperor. The Emperor performed thirty-seven purifications and received it. For outside of the Great Way there is no true elixir, and outside of the true elixir there is no Great Way. In final analysis, it is the method of eliminating the cravings coming from the five senses.³⁸ When one rids oneself of the six lusts, and each of the five senses forgets its function, then the harmonious fundamental energy will float before one's eyes. This is what that famous Taoist, Tai-po³⁹, referred to when he spoke about being united with the heaven which one serves. It is the same thing which Mencius calls the vast-flowing energy.⁴⁰ When one stores it up in that space below the navel; when one guards it for months and years and thus preserves oneself; when one fosters it and thus makes it invincible; then suddenly, one morning, when one fires the oven of the elixir, the inner and the outer and the intermediate, the whole universe [will effect] the great reduction of the elixir. Then for the first time, one will realize that one's own self is not something which was born before Heaven and Earth, nor will it pass away after the Void, but it is nothing but a divine immortal possessing true long life and true immortality. Then the true elixir-oven will have produced its true effects. Should he be satisfied with such trifling miracles as riding on the winds, straddling over the mists, compressing the land and walking on the waters? He may be able to turn the ocean into cream and to change the soil into gold, but as a wise man of old has said: The elixir is in the space below the navel,

36 It was impossible to identify Wu Ch'i-ch'u 吳契初 and Shih-t'ai 石台. This paragraph, a strange mixture of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, explains the meaning of the elixir of life in a new way.

37 黃成子. Ancient hermit.

38 The text has 五無漏の法. Buddhist term signifying elimination of "cravings coming from the five senses" (有漏).

39 大白道人. Could not be identified.

40 Meng-tzu II A 2, 11 ff.

the fluid is the fluid in the lungs. Because one makes the fluid in the lungs return to the space below the navel, on speaks of gold (=lung) fluid being sublimated into the elixir.’”

Here I said: “I have listened with respectful attention to what you have said. For a while I will discontinue my Zen meditation and will take the opportunity of endeavouring to cure myself. I only fear that I incline to what Li Shih-ts’ai calls ‘Purifying Diarrhoea’. And if I confine my heart to one place only, will not the flow of my breath and blood perhaps be hindered?”⁴¹

Hakuyū smiled and said: “No. Did not the same Li also say: ‘It is the nature of fire to burn upwards. Therefore it must be brought downwards. It is the nature of water to flow downwards. Therefore it must be made to rise upwards. When water can be made to rise and fire to descend that is what I call Intercourse. When such Intercourse [of the elements] takes place everything becomes perfected,⁴² but without such Intercourse everything is still without perfection. Intercourse is the mark of life, lack of Intercourse is the mark of death.’ When Li spoke about the inclination to ‘Purifying Diarrhoea’, he was trying to succour the difficulties of people who study Tan-ch’i. The people of old used to say⁴³: The reason why the ‘Minister Fire’ easily ascends, is because suffering parts in the body supply water and control the fire.’ In the final analysis, there are in fire the two principles of ‘Lord’ and ‘Minister’. The ‘Lord Fire’ stays above and is quiet, the ‘Minister Fire’ is below and in motion. The ‘Lord Fire’ is the Lord of the heart, the ‘Minister Fire’ its Minister. In the ‘Minister Fire’ there are again the two modes which become the kidneys and liver. The liver corresponds to thunder, the kidneys to the dragon. Therefore it is said: If one makes the dragon return to the bottom of the sea, there will be certainly no vehement thunder. When one stores the thunder in the marsh, there will be certainly no dragon flying up. Whether sea or marsh,

41 Purges are widely used in Chinese medicine, but, as is said in the following paragraph, the medical author Li Shih-ts’ai 李士才 warns against their over-estimation observed among the followers of Tan-ch’i 丹溪 (pen-name of Chu Chen-heng 朱震亨, a famous doctor of the Yüan period).

42 This “becomes perfected” and the following, “still without perfection”, suggest *I-ching* hexagrams 63 and 64 respectively.

43 The following is a consideration of the element “Fire” under the two aspects of “Lord” (君) and “Minister” (相), to prove that perfect health is only obtained if the “Minister Fire” is kept in a low place.

both are impossible without water. Is this no [good] expression to regulate the easy ascending of the 'Minister Fire'. Again it is said: When the heart is troubled, one must become empty and the heart will become warm. When the heart is empty, in order to restore it, one must push down the heart and make it associate with the kidneys. This is called 'Restoration'; it is the way of 'Already Perfected'.

Because hitherto your heart has been going upwards, all these distressing symptoms have appeared; if you don't bring down your heart, you will not be able to stand, even if you practice all the secrets of the three worlds. Further, is my method, because of its similarity to that of the Taoists, so very different from that of the Buddha? This is Zen! When one day it suddenly starts you will experience great joy. Contemplation through non-contemplation becomes true-contemplation. Much-contemplation is bad-contemplation. Because of your former much-contemplation, these difficult symptoms have appeared. Should you not remedy these symptoms now by non-contemplation?⁴⁴ If you collect the flames of your heart and the fire of your thoughts and concentrate them on the space below the navel and the soles of your feet, your breast and diaphragm will of themselves become cool and clear. No abstruse calculations will disturb you, and not the slightest ripple of disorderly waves of desire will rise. This is true and pure meditation.

Do not say that you will reject for a while the Zen meditation. The Buddha himself has said: 'A hundred and one diseases are cured by fixing your attention on the soles of your feet.' In the *Agamas*, too, there is a method of using 'Butter'⁴⁵, a wonderful thing for rescuing a man from the weariness of his heart. Further the *Mo-ho-chih-kuan*⁴⁶ of the Tendai examines very carefully the causes of disease and gives detailed disquisitions on the rules for curing disease. There are the twelve kinds of breathings, which help in curing all diseases. Then there is the method of contemplating an [imagined] bean at the centre of the navel. The purpose of this procedure is to bring down the

44 As long meditation is still full of thoughts (much-meditation 多觀), it is not true-meditation (正觀). Only if one becomes empty of all thoughts (non-meditation 無觀) meditation may be called Zen.

45 On this method there will be more later.

46 The famous work by Chih-k'ai 智顗 (538–597), founder of the Tendai sect in China.

heart and concentrate it in the space below the navel and in the soles of the feet. This not only cures diseases, but at the same time it is a help to the Zen meditation. For, in last analysis, there are two kinds of Cessation and Contemplation⁴⁷—the relative one and the true one. The true one means perfect perception of reality. The relative one makes the concentration of the heart vitality in the space below the navel the most important thing. Ascetics who have tried this have received much benefit.

Long ago, the Patriarch of the Eihei-ji⁴⁸ went to Sung-China and paid a visit of respect to Jung-ching⁴⁹ at the T'ien-t'ung monastery. One day he entered the meditation hall and asked what might be of help to him. Jung-ching said: 'Dōgen, at the time of meditation put your heart on the palm of your left hand.' This is the gist of relative Cessation and Contemplation, as taught by Chih-k'ai. Chih-k'ai was the first to teach the secret of this relative Cessation and Contemplation in connection with Introspection. By this method he saved his disciple Che-shen from serious illness and snatched him from a thousand deaths, as is fully described in the *Hsiao-chih-kuan*.⁵⁰ Further, the monk Po-yün⁵¹ said: 'I always make my heart fill my abdomen. I never fail to do this, when, for instance, I am instructing my disciples, or presiding at meetings, or associating with guests, or at special meetings, or at preaching services, or at the seven meetings and the eight meetings. It has benefitted many aged guests of mine, as I well know. It is a practice much to be valued.'

This is what is said in the *Su-wen*⁵²: 'If one is disinterested and empty, the true energy follows; if one guards the spirit inside, from where might disease still come?' Isn't my teaching based on this word? In order to guard it inside, it is essential to fill the

47 止觀, Skr. *śamatha-vipaśyanā*, cessation of one's active thoughts and contemplation of the nature of things. See Mochizuki Shinkō, *Bukkyō Daijiten* II, 1759 f., and Fung-Bodde, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton 1953, II, 375 ff.

48 Dōgen 道元 (Shōyō Daishi 承陽大師), 1200–1253. Went to China in 1223, and in 1244 made the Eihei-ji 永平寺 the headquarters of the Sōtō branch of the Zen sect.

49 Jung-ching 如淨 (1163–1228), 50th patriarch of the Sōtō branch.

50 小止觀. Other name for the *Hsiu-hsi-chih-kuan-tso-ch'an-fa-yao* 修習止觀坐禪法要 by Chih-k'ai.

51 白雲和尚 (1043–1121).

52 素問, medical treatise, part of the *Nei-ching* 內經.

whole body with the original energy and to keep the three hundred sixty joints of the body and all the eighty-four thousand pores of the skin in perfect state, and to prevent even one hair from falling out. One must know that this is the main thing in nourishing life.

Peng-tsu says: 'The method for keeping the spirit peaceful and for directing the vital energy is this: First close well the doors of the meditation hall. Lie quietly on the floor and warm it. Have your pillow two and a half inches high. Stretch out your body and lie face up. Close your eyes, concentrate the energy of your mind on your chest and diaphragm. Place a goose feather on your nose and without moving take in three hundred breaths. Listen to nothing, look at nothing. When you have reached this state, then neither cold nor heat can violate you, no bee or scorpion can poison you. Your life will last for three hundred and sixty years. You will be near to being a true man.'

Again the Han-lin scholar Su⁵³ says: 'If you are hungry take food, but leave off before repletion. Then ramble about for long distances and make your stomach empty. Then enter into a quiet room, sit down in correct posture and be silent. Count your inhalations and exhalations, beginning from one to ten, then on from ten to hundred and from hundred continue to thousand. You will then find that your body will be as still and your spirit as calm as the Void itself. When this state has been reached and has lasted for some time your breath will automatically stop. When there are no more inhalations and exhalations your breath will come forth like a steaming cloud of vapor from all the eighty-four thousand pores of your body. Then all illnesses, from unremembered times until now, will automatically be eliminated and you will understand clearly that all your troubles have been destroyed in a most natural way. It will be as if a blind man had suddenly received his sight: he will no longer have to ask someone to point out the way to him. All that is left for you to do then is to give up ordinary speech and to sustain your vital energy. For it is said: He who nurtures the eye-sense, always closes his eyes, he who nourishes the ear-sense always wards off noises, he who nourishes the heart is always silent.'

Here I said: "I would like to ask you to tell me how to use

53 I. e. the poet Su Chih 蘇軾 (1036-1101).

the 'Butter' method."⁵⁴ Hakuyū replied: "If the ascetic while meditating has the four elements out of harmony and feels his body and spirit to be wearied, he must rouse himself and let the following ideas come into his mind. If, for instance, he were to place some deliciously scented pure, clean, soft butter as large as a duck's egg on his head he will feel a delicate sensation. His head will become all moist. The moist feeling will seem to sink deeper and go lower and lower to both shoulders and both arms, to both breasts, the diaphragm, the lungs, the liver and the stomach, till at last it will reach the bottom of the spine and the buttocks. Then everything accumulated within the breast, the pains in the loins, the pains in the bowels will, as one desires it, flow downwards like water till there will be felt a clear sensation of energy circulating all round the whole body, warming both the legs, and reaching right down to the very soles of the feet. The ascetic should make this consideration a second time. The overflow of energy, which goes on sinking in and in, accumulates till it brims over warming and moistening the body—just as a good physician of the world collects all kinds of delicious herbs and scented drugs, brews them and pours them into a bath till they brim over, and then applies them and makes them soak into every part below the navel. When one makes this consideration, because of the immateriality of the phenomenon, the sense of smell becomes aware of rare odours, the sense of touch becomes marvellously keen. Body and spirit are so closely in harmony that there is more vitality than at the age of only twenty or thirty years. Now everything accumulated melts away, the bowels and stomach return to harmony, and without knowing it the skin takes on a shining glow. Provided that one strives and does not become remiss, there is not a single sickness that is not cured, not a single virtue that is not attained, not a single ascetic practice that is not carried out, not a single way that is not accomplished. The rate at which these wonders become efficacious depends solely upon the perfection of the discipline of the ascetic. When I was young, I had many illnesses, ten times more serious than those which you are suffering from. I reached such a state that no physician would consider my case, and in spite of making exhaustive use of the hundred remedies there was no medical art

⁵⁴ The expression "Butter method" (酥を用ふるの法) is, of course, only a metaphor. A short explanation is given in Itō, l.c., p. 42 ff.

which could save me. Thereupon I prayed to all the gods, above and below, and I asked for help of many heaven-bound ascetics, but had no success, until at last—oh, how fortunate I was!—I received from someone the knowledge of this wonderful ‘Butter’ method. My joy was without limit. Without intermission I practised this discipline, and in almost no time, half my illnesses had left me. From that time on, in my body and in my spirit, I have known nothing but calm and peace. Slowly, but with assiduous practice, hardly noticing the waxing and waning of the moon or marking the passing of the years, my worldly thoughts became gradually slighter, and now it is as if I had forgotten the old habits of my former human desires. I do not even know how many decades of my life have passed over me until now, but somewhere in the middle part of my life I had occasion to go away into the mountains of the Wakayama province, where I escaped the world for about thirty years. During that time I had no communication with mankind. When I look back on that time, it seems like a very short dream.

Now up here in this uninhabited mountain, I have cast away this withered old vessel of my body. I clothe it with only two or three thin cloths, even in those most severe winter nights when the cold breaks through the thickest woolen garments. Yet I have never suffered any harm from cold in these worn out old insides of mine. It is now many months since my supply of stored grain gave out, and I have received no other grain, yet I have never felt frozen or starved. I am sure that all this is due to the efficacy of that meditation. But what I have told you is a mysterious matter, which cannot be used up throughout a long life. Is there anything else for me to say?”

With these words he closed his eyes and remained sitting in silence. With tears in my eyes I then expressed my thanks to him and slowly went out of the cave. The rays of the setting sun were just tinting the tops of the trees below. After a short time I heard the sound of footsteps echoing across the valley, and I timidly turned to look back. With surprise and wonder, I saw that Hakuyū had left his cave and was coming to show me the way. He said: “This mountain trail shows but uncertain traces of the footsteps of man. It is difficult to distinguish East from West here. I was afraid lest you, who were a guest of mine, should be distressed on your way home.” The old fellow said he would show me the way for some distance. He was wearing straw sandals such as were generally shod on young horses, and he carried a

thin stick, but he stepped over the rough rocks and stones and climbed up the precipitous places like the wind waving over a level plain. Laughing and chatting, he went in front of me as my guide. When we had descended the path for one *ri*, we reached the river which I must ford. Here he said: "If you follow down this river you will certainly reach the village of Shirakawa." Here I reluctantly parted from him.

For some time I stood and followed Hakuyū with my eyes as he retraced his steps. The pace of his old feet was strong and swift, like that of a man who was flying to a mountain retreat in order to escape from the world. I envied him and respected him. I felt bitter with myself, because I could not follow a man like that to the very end of the world. Then slowly I came back.

After that I began to practise Introspection continuously, and before only three years had passed all those former illnesses of mine, even though I used no medicines nor received treatment by acupuncture or moxacautery, were thoroughly swept away as if by some predetermined fate. And not only were my illnesses healed, but also all those things which are difficult to believe, difficult to penetrate, difficult to understand, difficult to enter into, and which until then I had been unable to grasp with my hands or feet or to reach with my teeth—those things I now understood intuitively at once, penetrating them to their roots, piercing them to their depths. Thus I experienced the great joy six or seven times. And beside this, I forget how many times I have experienced the little enlightenments, the joys which make one dance. For the first time I realized the meaning of those words, saying that in Paradise one will experience great enlightenment eighteen times, but the little enlightenments are too numerous to mention. In real truth I have not been deceived.

Previously, even though I put on two or three pairs of socks, the soles of my feet were always cold as if frozen in snow or ice. Now though three extremely cold winters have passed over me, I have worn no socks at all, nor have I gone near a fire, and though my years have passed beyond the usual span of man's life, there is not even half a pint of sickness in me which I could point out. And I put all this down to the instruction given [by that old hermit] in this heavenly art.

And do not say to me: "Kokurin, who has one foot already in the grave, has written meaningless and absurd conversation and tries to deceive other gentlemen."

[No!] This tradition of which I have written is one which

has bones as well as spirit. However, it is not for those smart people who wish to reach the goal at once.

But fools like me, who suffer from fatigue and illness, they will certainly be to some extent relieved, if they study and meditate with minute care to the details. What I only fear is that others might clap their hands and laugh at me. Therefore: The horse chews the dried up winnow and disturbs the midday nap.

In the 7th year of Hōreki, on the 25th day of the 1st month (14 March, 1757).