LIFE AND

ZEN POETRY

in 18TH CENTURY

KYOTO

BAISAŌ

TRANSLATED BY

NORMAN WADDELL

THE OLD TEA SELLER

The Old Tea Seller

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Baisaō

By Norman Waddell

COUNTERPOINT · BERKELEY

For My Wife Yoshie

Portrait of Baisaō. Ike Taiga. Inscription by Baisaō. Reproduced from Eastern Buddhist, *No. XVII, 2*.

The man known as Baisaō, old tea seller, dwells by the side of the Narabigaoka Hills. He is over eighty years of age, with a white head of hair and a beard so long it seems to reach to his knees. He puts his brazier, his stove, and other tea implements in large bamboo wicker baskets and ports them around on a shoulder pole. He makes his way among the woods and hills, choosing spots rich in natural beauty. There, where the pebbled streams run pure and clear, he simmers his tea and offers it to the people who come to enjoy these scenic places. Social rank, whether high or low, means nothing to him. He doesn't care if people pay for his tea or not. His name now is known throughout the land. No one has ever seen an expression of displeasure cross his face, for whatever reason. He is regarded by one and all as a truly great and wonderful man.

—Fallen Chestnut Tales

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Introductory Note

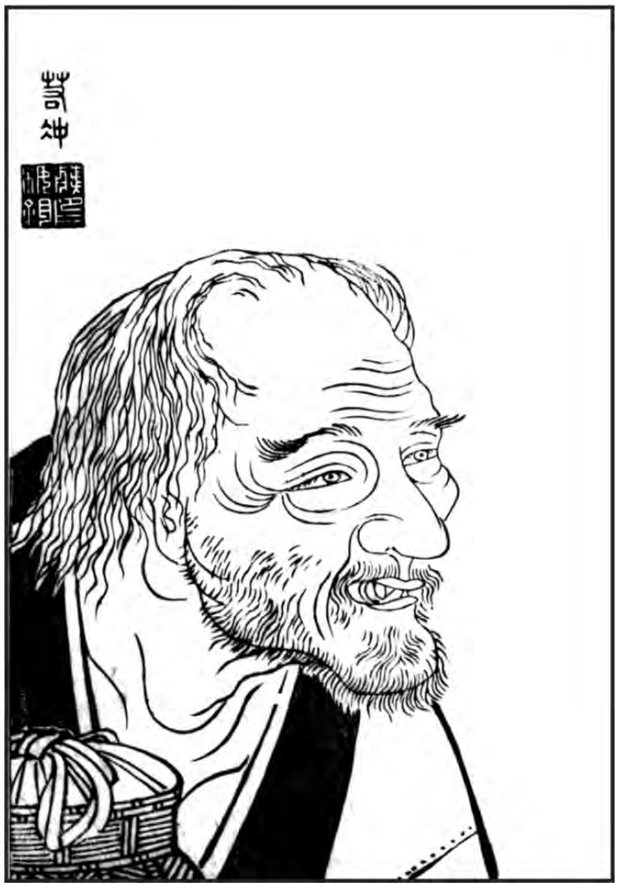
THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH of Baisaō in the first section of this book has been pieced together from a wide variety of fragmented source material, some of it still unpublished. It should be the fullest account of his life and times yet to appear. As the book is intended mainly for the general reader, I have consigned a great deal of detailed factual information to the notes, which can be read with the text, afterwards, or disregarded entirely.

The translations in the second part of the book represent all of Baisaō's published verse and prose as well as some additional verse taken directly from holograph manuscripts. With the exception of the holograph texts, all translations are based on the standard two-volume edition of Baisaō's works compiled by Fukuyama Chōgan.

Dates are given as they appear in the original texts, according to the lunar calendar. This means they fall roughly five or six weeks earlier than their Western equivalents; for example, reference in a text to the "first of the second month" would in the Western calendar fall sometime during the first half of March. However, I have converted Japanese ages, which were traditionally derived from a system that counted newborns as one year old, to conform to Western convention by subtracting a year.

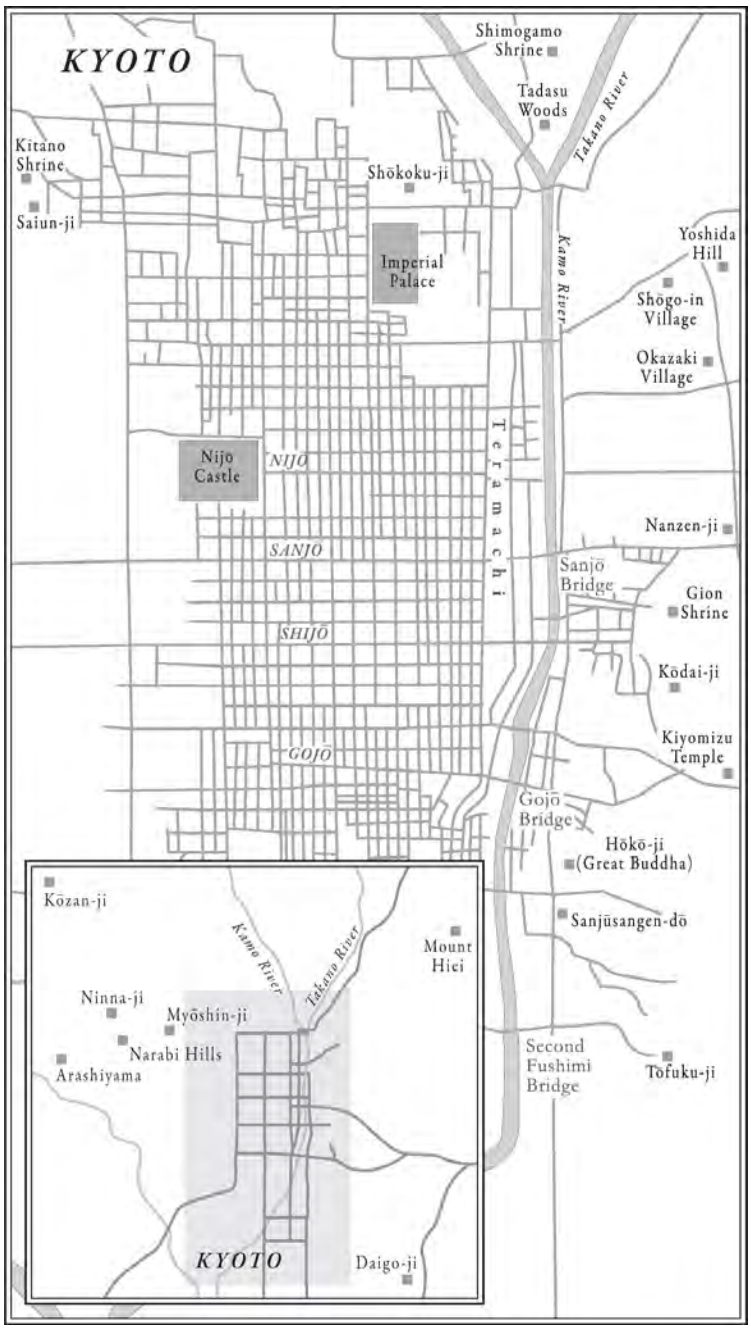
I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the many collectors and art dealers, past and present, who have allowed me to examine and photograph Baisaō letters and calligraphy in their collections, and to acknowledge a debt of thanks to the late Tanimura Tameumi for introducing me to little-known sites connected with Baisaō's life in and around Kyoto. More recent obligations are to Yoshizawa Katsuhiro of the International Institute

of Zen Studies in Kyoto and to the Ōbaku scholar Ōtsuki Mikio, who generously gave their valuable time to share their expertise with me.



PART 1

The Life of Baisaō, the Old Tea Seller



18th Century Kyoto

Life of Baisaō

INTRODUCTION

IN THE FOURTH month of 1724 the priest Gekkai Genshō, then in his late forties, left the Zen temple in the castle town of Hasuike on the southernmost Japanese island of Kyushu, where he had served for thirty-eight years, and set out for the capital at Kyoto, some five hundred miles distant. After a decade or so which he apparently spent wandering around the Kyoto/Osaka region, he took up residence in a small dwelling on the banks of the Kamo River in Kyoto, earning a living at the age of sixty by selling a new type of tea known as *sencha*, made by infusing leaves in a teapot.

He soon became a familiar figure around the capital, known simply by the sobriquet he had adopted, Baisaō, “the Old Tea Seller.” His shop was frequented by ordinary citizens as well as by many of those at the center of the city’s artistic, literary, and intellectual life. Baisaō forged lasting friendships with his remarkable clientele of leading poets, writers, painters, calligraphers, and scholars of the Edo period, a set of congenial spirits who made early eighteenth-century Kyoto one of the finest and most interesting cities anywhere in the world.

In addition to selling tea at his place of residence, Baisaō was soon taking his shop outdoors. Shouldering his tea equipment, balanced in large portable bamboo-wicker baskets on the ends of a carrying pole, he could set up for business wherever he wished, choosing sites among the many celebrated scenic locales in Kyoto and the surrounding hills.

Baisaō did not charge a fixed price for his tea, relying instead on donations left by customers. Although these alms usually were enough to buy the small amount of rice he needed to sustain himself and were occasionally supplemented by gifts of staples such as miso and shoyu, his poems describe times of great extremity when, foodless and penniless, he was reduced to begging.

For the first ten years of his residence in Kyoto, Baisaō remained a priest, going against Buddhist regulations pointedly forbidding clerics to earn their own living. When at the age of sixty-seven circumstances arose that obliged him to leave the priesthood, forfeit his Buddhist names, and revert to lay status, he adopted the secular name Kō Yūgai, which he and his friends often shortened to Layman Yūgai.

In his eighties, Baisaō was crippled by severe back pains that made it impossible to continue carrying his tea equipment around the city. He burned his favorite carrying basket and other tea utensils—to keep them, he said, from "falling into vulgar hands"—and began to eke out a living from writing calligraphy and from selling tea at his shop, which now, after many moves, was located in the village of Shōgo-in in Kyoto's eastern suburbs.

In the seventh month of 1763, Baisaō passed away peacefully at the age of eighty-eight. Shortly before, his friends had put in his hands a copy of the *Baisaō Gego* ("Verses and Prose by the Old Tea Seller"), a collection of Chinese writings he had composed in the course of his tea-selling life, which they had prepared and printed.

The earliest account of Baisaō's life is the one compiled by his young friend Daiten Kenjō, a Shōkoku-ji priest, as an introduction for the *Baisaō Gego*. This became the basic source for most of the brief sketches of Baisaō that appeared prior to the twentieth century. In piecing together the present work I have followed quite closely the chronology established by the modern Baisaō scholar Tanimura Tameumi. Thanks to new material in letters and inscriptions found in private collections and sales catalogs that I have been able to discover in the decades since Tanimura's work was published, I believe that I have been able to emend or clarify his research in some places.[1]

The present volume consists of two parts, the first a life of Baisaō, and the second, translations of Baisaō's poetry and prose, which include all of the works in the *Baisaō Gego* collection of poetry and prose published before his death, as well as most of the eleven additional verses that appear in *Baisaō*, the standard edition of his writings edited by Fukuyama Chōgan and published in 1934. Of Baisaō's prose writings, the most important are the *Baizan shucha furyaku* ("A Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain"), a very concise history of Japanese tea; and the *Taikyaku Genshi* ("A Statement of My Views in Reply to a Customer's Questions"), in which Baisaō explains at some length his reasons for taking up his tea-selling life.

Baisaō's religious career can be divided into three periods: the period of religious training, which continued until roughly his thirty-second year; the second period, ending in his fifty-seventh year, during which he served as temple supervisor, and later as de facto abbot at Ryūshin-ji in Hasuike; and the third period, which covers the years he spent in Kyoto as the Old Tea Seller. The following biographical sketch focuses on the third period: in addition to being the most interesting part of his life, it is the only one for which any source materials exist.

Family Life and Formative Years

Baisaō was born on the sixteenth day of the fifth month, 1675, into the Shibayama family of Hasuike, a castle town in Hizen, the smallest of Kyushu's provinces, located in the northwestern corner of the island. He was the third son of five children. Hasuike is situated at the southern edge of the extensive Saga plain, facing the Ariake Sea to the south, with a mountain chain dominated by high peaks to the north. The town is now incorporated into the city of Saga, the capital of Saga prefecture.

Baisaō's father, Tsunena, was a Confucian physician in the service of Nabeshima Naozumi, Daimyo of the Hasuike branch of the Nabeshima clan that ruled Hizen province. Tsunena belonged to the intellectual elite of the time. He was an accomplished poet (some

of his *waka* collections are extant) and was proficient in the arts of *Chanoyu* (the Way of Tea), incense, and calligraphy, in which he used the artistic names Gokei and Yasei.[2] We may assume that he gave his sons training in these pastimes as well.

Beyond upbringing, geographical factors played an important part in determining the future course of Baisaō's life. The area of Kyushu where he was born and raised was not far from Nagasaki, then the only port where foreigners—the Chinese and Dutch—were allowed to live and trade. The impact of foreign, especially Chinese, culture on the citizens of Hizen province was considerably stronger here than in other areas of the country.[3] This influence increased dramatically in the mid-seventeenth century, several decades before Baisaō's birth, with the arrival in Nagasaki of the Chinese priest Yin-yüan Lung-ch'i (1592–1673) and a contingent of emigré monks and laymen. Nabeshima Katsushige (1586–1657), the head of the Nabeshima clan at the time, was the first Daimyo to offer support to the newly arrived priests. Within a few years, thanks to the patronage of highly placed Japanese government officials, the Chinese priests succeeded in establishing a new school of Zen in Japan. This school, which would later come to be known as Ōbaku Zen, based its training curriculum on the customs and standards of Chinese Zen temples, which were quite different from those in the established Japanese Zen sects.

Baisaō entered the priesthood at a temple affiliated to this new school of Zen, which, some thirty years after its arrival in Japan, was approaching the pinnacle of its success. The school was securely headquartered in a large new Chinese-style monastery, Mampuku-ji, which had officially opened its gates in 1663 in Uji, south of Kyoto. A large number of Japanese priests from other Buddhist sects had converted to the new school, and many religiously minded young men were inspired to enter as novices to study what they regarded as innovative teachings. In response, the school appropriated hundreds of temples from existing sects to accommodate its growing numbers.[4]

Just after the New Year in 1683, when Baisaō was eight years old, his father, fifty-two, died at the Edo bureau of the Hasuike clan, where he had been sent to serve the permanent delegation

maintained by the clan. No further information is available about Baisaō's childhood during these formative years, but we may assume he was subjected to the same education as other Tokugawa schoolboys of his class. Central to the curriculum was the study of Chinese literature, in which Confucian classics and ethics were drummed into the student until they came automatically to his lips. The study of calligraphy was also of great importance, as was a grounding in the rules of etiquette and the use of weapons. *Hagakure*, the bible of Tokugawa Bushido, was written by a samurai of the Nabeshima clan.

Priesthood and Training

Baisaō became a monk in 1686 when he was eleven years old, the customary age at this period for young boys to enter the priesthood. He received the tonsure from Kerin Dōryū, the abbot of Ryūshin-ji, a small Ōbaku temple adjacent to Hasuike castle, and the religious names Gekkai and Genshō.[5] Although Kerin had begun religious life as a Sōtō monk, he had also studied under the Ōbaku teachers Yin-yüan and Mu-an, finally changing his allegiance to the new school in his mid-forties while a pupil of the Chinese priest Tu-chan. Although not much is known about Kerin's teaching methods at Ryūshin-ji, they were probably similar to those in other Ōbaku temples of the time: the study of the sutras and precepts, and the practice of zazen (seated meditation) combined with the recitation of the Nembutsu, repeating the formula "Namu Amida Butsu," a practice associated with the Pure Land sects in Japanese Buddhism.

In the autumn of 1687, when Kerin set out on a trip from Hasuike to Mampuku-ji to attend ceremonies in observance of his teacher Tu-chan Hsing-jung's sixtieth birthday, he took his twelve-year-old attendant along with him. Although still too young to enter the training hall at Mampuku-ji and practice with the other monks, Gekkai was granted permission to take part in the morning and evening sutra recitations. One day, temple abbot Tu-chan summoned Gekkai to his chambers and presented him with a verse

praising him as a young monk of great ability and exceptional promise (p. 77).[6]

Kerin and Gekkai returned to Hasuike the following spring after having spent several months at Mampuku-ji. From passages in Baisaō's later writings, we know that during that time they toured some of the famous sites and temples in and around Kyoto, an experience that no doubt impressed young Gekkai and gave him his first taste of life in the great capital. One of the places they are known to have visited was Kōzan-ji, a celebrated mountain temple situated in an exceptionally beautiful setting in the hills west of the city. Kōzan-ji had played an important role in the introduction of tea to Japan: it was there, in the Kamakura period, that temple founder Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) had planted some of the first tea gardens.

Gekkai visited Kōzan-ji again at the age of twenty-one when passing through Kyoto on his pilgrimage to northern Japan, and a third time seven years later while accompanying Kerin on another trip to Mampuku-ji. Although he no doubt also visited other Kyoto temples, it is Kōzan-ji alone that Gekkai mentions in his later reminiscences. This underscores the special affinity he felt for the old mountain temple and its tea fields, and confirms his statement at the opening of the *Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain* that his love of tea began at an early age.

In 1696 he set out from Ryūshin-ji on a Zen "pilgrimage" to continue his training with teachers in other parts of the country, although from the start his ultimate destination seems to have been Sendai in northern Honshu. The choice may have been made for him by his teacher, since on his arrival in Sendai Gekkai went directly into the training hall of the Anyō-ji, whose incumbent Gekkō Dōnen was a longtime friend and colleague of Kerin.[7] Gekkai may also have been influenced by strong family connections in the area; a number of his father's relatives and friends still lived nearby.

We know of several stops Gekkai made en route, one of them being Kyoto, where he visited temples and probably also called at Mampuku-ji to pay his respects to Kerin's teacher Tu-chan. During the New Year period of the following year, in the coldest part of the winter season, he prepared to set out from Edo northward for

Sendai. The difficulties Gekkai experienced on this trip are the subject of a Chinese verse he wrote in his later years (p. 89).

Gekkai remained at Anyō-ji for four years studying the Vinaya, or rules of monastic discipline, a branch of Buddhist learning then undergoing a revival,[8] and he may have gotten a taste of Japanese Rinzai training practices as well, since Gekkō had at one time been a student of the eminent Rinzai teacher Ungo Kiyō.

According to Daiten's *Life*, Gekkai left Anyō-ji the year following Gekkō's death in 1702. Having now been away from Ryūshin-ji almost six years, he began slowly working his way homeward to Kyushu, seeking instruction along the way from teachers of the Rinzai and Sōtō schools, and stopping in Ōmi province (present Shiga prefecture) to continue his study of the Precepts under the Shingon Vinaya teacher Tandō Eshuku (d. 1720), a recognized authority on the subject who had at one time been a pupil of the prominent Ōbaku teacher Tetsugen.

Even after he arrived back in Hizen province Gekkai continued to pursue his practice, seeking out isolated spots where he could sequester himself for solitary retreats aimed at achieving a decisive breakthrough in his training. Daiten mentions one arduous ninety-day summer training session on Mount Raizan north of Hasuike that enabled Gekkai to deepen his attainment, although still "not to his satisfaction."[9]

The only other mention of his association with tea during this period is found in a note in the *Brief History*, composed in his early seventies.

> As a young monk I visited Nagasaki and was received with great hospitality by a certain Chinese priest. He gave me a drink of Wu-i tea, and told me of the beautiful landscape in the mountains of Wu-i where the tea is grown, describing in great detail the vivid green hills and fields thickly covered with tea plants. It occurs to me now as I think back on his words that while the hills of Togano-o west of Kyoto, where Chinese tea seeds were first planted in Japan, may not be as high as those of Wu-i, they surely must rival them in scenic beauty.[10]

Gekkai undertook the third of his known trips to Kyoto in 1703, once again as Kerin's attendant.[11] According to the biographical record Daichō Genkō compiled of his teacher, Kerin spent part of his time in the Kansai (the Kyoto/Osaka area) visiting old acquaintances and going to some of the famous sites in and around the capital. Gekkai was thus given yet another opportunity to experience the charms of Kyoto, and perhaps also to meet members of its artistic community—painters, calligraphers, writers, and scholars—many of whom were closely associated with members of the Ōbaku priesthood, and some of whom were priests themselves.

Gekkai is thought to have remained at Mampuku-ji when Kerin returned to Kyushu in the summer of 1703, continuing his study for another four years. In his thirty-second year, according to one record, he was entrusted with the running of the temple kitchens at Mampuku-ji—a position of considerable importance and responsibility in a Zen monastery.[12] Daichō Genkō, his brother monk and close friend from Ryūshin-ji, was also in residence at Mampuku-ji for at least part of this four-year period, putting his knowledge of spoken Chinese to good use by acting as an interpreter between the Chinese and Japanese priests.[13]

Residence at Ryūshin-ji in Kyushu

In 1707 Gekkai was back at Ryūshin-ji. During his absence, Kerin had entrusted the running of the temple to his student Kyōshū Genko, a close friend and elder Dharma brother of Gekkai, and had gone into semiretirement at Kanro-in, a small dwelling he had built in a corner of the temple precincts. Gekkai resumed his attendance on Kerin in his retirement temple while serving as temple supervisor, a post in which he would have been responsible for running temple affairs. In his role as chief temple administrator he may have been obliged to make additional visits to the Mampuku-ji headquarters temple at Uji, and there is an old legend that he engaged in another brief session of solitary training in the nearby mountains,[14] but essentially his life for the next fourteen years, until Kerin's death, was centered in the everyday temple routine at Ryūshin-ji.

In autumn of 1720, Kerin became indisposed and was confined to his bed. Gekkai is said to have shown great devotion in nursing the old priest, “never leaving his side,” but on the ninth day of the eleventh month Kerin summoned his disciples, imparted his final instructions to them, and then quietly passed away. According to the custom, his students remained beside the casket for three days, then the corpse was cremated, and the ashes collected and interred in a funeral stupa erected in the temple grounds.

Well before his death, Kerin had apparently designated Daichō, who was three years younger than Gekkai, as his successor at Ryūshin-ji. Daichō was staying in the city of Sakai, south of Osaka, when he learned of his teacher’s death. He composed three *kanshi* verses expressing his deep sadness, and remorse at not having been present to help carry his teacher’s casket to the funeral pyre. However, Daichō did not return to Hasuike, and as the months passed it became increasingly clear that he was not at all keen on returning to take up life in a provincial Kyushu temple.[15]

Why didn’t the post go to Gekkai, the oldest disciple? The only clue toward answering that question is found in a passage from a contemporary work titled *Fallen Chestnut Tales*. Although secondhand, the account sounds plausible, and the words attributed to Gekkai explaining his reticence to take on a teaching responsibility agree with other statements he made in his early writings:[16]

> There was a samurai in the service of the Daimyo of Hasuike in Hizen who was quite knowledgeable about Baisaō. I learned from him many details about Baisaō’s life. According to what he said . . . Baisaō’s [Gekkai’s] teacher Kerin had no doubt that he had mastered the principles of Zen, and he had expressed a desire to leave the temple to him. However, Baisaō refused, and after Kerin’s death the post of abbot was transferred to Baisaō’s younger Dharma brother Daichō. [He then left the temple and] for a time his whereabouts were unknown. He is now living a retired life in Kyoto.
>
> When asked why he refused to accept the abbotship, he answered, “I live the way I do because I have no wisdom or virtue. I would be ashamed to put on a Dharma robe and live

on alms I received from others, as though I was special or somehow superior to them."

This same self-effacing attitude is seen with an added touch of humor in the following Japanese verse. It uses the image of the *shishi-mai*, the Chinese "lion dance," in which a pair of performers in a lion costume, forming the back and fore legs of the beast, dance through the streets accompanied by drums, whistles, and firecrackers:

Don't beat the drum
Don't blow the flute
Don't be the front
Be the lion's rear.

At the end of the New Year period of 1723, Gekkai's mother Miya died at the age of seventy-six. Her ashes were interred at Ryūshin-ji.

In the course of this year Gekkai and acting Ryūshin-ji abbot Kyōshū twice sent letters to Daichō in Kyoto reminding him of Kerin's wishes and urging him to return and assume the abbotship. Gekkai posted the second letter together with Kerin's surplice (*kesa*), a symbol of the Dharma transmission. Daichō finally returned to Hasuike the following year in time to take part in the annual memorial rites in observance of Kerin's death. At Gekkai's request, he composed the *Kerin Oshō Angō-ki*, a brief biography of Kerin in elegantly fashioned Chinese prose. Daichō was officially installed as abbot of Ryūshin-ji the following spring, although before he had served even a full year he was back to his peripatetic lifestyle.[17]

Once Daichō was installed as abbot, Gekkai was free to begin his new life, and set out that very year from Kyushu, at the age of forty-nine, headed in the general direction of the capital.

LIFE IN THE KANSAI (KYOTO/OSAKA AREA)

Japan at the time was well into its second century under the strict controls put in place by the Tokugawa Bakufu to maintain discipline and discourage expressions of individual freedom. Edo, present-day Tokyo, was the new and thriving administrative center of the country. However, in the old capital, Kyoto, a more lenient atmosphere continued to prevail, one that allowed a bit more leeway for individualism and creativeness to develop, as indeed they did. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Kyoto remained the destination of many young writers, artists, and scholars. These men succeeded in creating a new aesthetic and a variety of distinctive art forms, the true significance of which has only recently begun to be fully appreciated by the Japanese themselves. Sharing a common intellectual background and similar interests, perhaps the most conspicuous being an infatuation with Chinese culture, these artists seemed determined to escape from the suffocating weight of venerable tradition.

Some Japanese scholars have recently pointed to Baisaō as the central figure in the cultural flowering that unfolded so brilliantly in Kyoto over the second half of the eighteenth century, seeing his unconventional lifestyle as a strong denunciation of the religious and social establishment of the time. Whatever the case, there seems little doubt that Baisaō deeply influenced the young men who were instrumental in this revival, including many of the leading figures of Kyoto's artistic community.

A number of factors can be cited to explain their attraction: Baisaō's profound knowledge of Chinese literature, his impressive skills as a poet and calligrapher, and of course, on a personal level, his warmth and generosity, which seemed unfailingly to impress those he came in contact with. Perhaps most important of all was their profound respect for his strength of character and religious integrity. At a time when Buddhism and the average person's opinion of Buddhist priests were at a very low level, Baisaō was viewed as a rare individual who lived his entire life in conformity with the austere ideals of Zen that he espoused.

Baisaō's way of life was thus seen as rejection of a religious establishment that was widely believed to have lost sight of its primary mission. In a society characterized by lockstep conformity,

many citizens respected and deeply sympathized with the genuine nonconformity of a man like Baisaō, who had chosen to take a different path to fulfilling his Buddhist vows. His depth of attainment was clearly reflected in his face and demeanor, and in his cheerful and seemingly carefree way of life, penetrating all his activities, including his tea selling. Given the esteem in which he was held by the young scholars and artists at the core of Kyoto's intellectual community, it is not surprising, as we shall see, that so many attempted in various ways to emulate his example.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Kyoto, with an estimated five hundred thousand inhabitants, was one of the largest cities in the world. Set amid natural surroundings of exceptional beauty that today can only be dimly imagined, it was also one of the most picturesque and satisfying. Greater Kyoto was surrounded on three sides by hills covered with splendid forests of pines, cypresses, and maples. The Kamo River, running north to south through the city, then turning east, was the eastern border of the city. The historic Higashiyama district, where Baisaō spent his first years in Kyoto, extended over a wide area to a range of hills running north and south that formed a barrier at the capital's eastern limits, with Mount Hiei, the site of Enryaku-ji, the headquarters of the Tendai sect, rising at the northeast end of the range. Higashiyama was dotted with villages, temples, shrines, villas, and scenic spots celebrated by generations of painters and poets, and afforded charming walks enriched by delightful views enjoyed through the years by Kyoto's citizens.

Contemporary records describe the city's temples and shrines as thronged with pilgrims and travelers from around the country. There were six canals traversing the city, bordered with willow trees along which people would stroll at leisure. In springtime they carried boxes of food on outings to view the cherry blossoms; in summer they would sit by the water under the willow trees or on platforms built out over the bed of the Kamo River, or seek cool shade under the towering giants of the Tadasu Woods; in autumn there was moon viewing and visits to one of the many maple forests around the city. Some were inspired by the beauties of these spots to write poems, Japanese *waka* or Chinese *kanshi*, on strips of decorated paper.

Beautiful groves and gardens, abundant in the surrounding hills and in the countless temples and shrines throughout the city, were open to people of all levels of society, from lowly commoners to court nobles.

The historian George Sansom described Japanese society as it entered the eighteenth century as based largely on law and privilege and governed by harsh principle, yet liberal enough to allow a measure of freedom in spheres remote from politics. He concluded that it had achieved in practice a great urbanity and style, and a civilized and polished way of life that few if any contemporary European communities could approach.

The Jesuit João Rodrigues (d. 1634), who spent the final thirty-six years of his life in Japan, wrote in his reminiscences of the capital:

> The people of Kyoto took much pleasure in lonely and nostalgic spots, woods with shady groves, cliffs and rocky places, solitary birds, torrents of fresh water flowing down from rocks, and in every kind of solitary thing which is imbued with nature and free from all artificiality. . . . On going out of the city one sees everywhere the loveliest and most delightful countryside of all Japan. . . . Many people go to recreate in the woods and groves of the outskirts . . . every day crowds of people from the city enjoy themselves there.

The enduring charm of these pleasures, which remained more or less unchanged until the latter half of the eighteenth century, provided the setting for the life Baisaō led in the capital.

The best way to follow Baisaō's movements during the second half of his life is through his letters. I have been able to examine over fifty, all of which date from his years in Kyoto.[18] From his letters we know that his original intention when he set out from Ryūshin-ji in 1724 or 1725 was to lead a "wandering life"—evidently he planned to live as a mendicant priest, subsisting on donations—but that after ten years the rigors of such a life made him decide to settle in Kyoto and sell tea for a living.

Almost no information has been uncovered that would shed light on Baisaō's movements during this initial ten-year period, although indications are that he probably spent them in the Kyoto/Osaka area. He may have stopped periodically at Mampuku-ji in Uji, though considering the discontent with the Ōbaku establishment one senses from his writings, Baisaō may have elected to steer clear of the temple. Tanimura Tameumi places him for a time with friends from Hasuike who were residing in Osaka, one of whom, the Zen nun Kanshō, who was (or later became) his disciple, was living in a small hermitage near Tennōji, then a rural village.

The letter mentioned above (examined later in detail) also informs us that by the autumn of 1730, at the age of fifty-five, seven years after leaving Kyushu, Baisaō was living in the Higashiyama area of eastern Kyoto. Another letter that he sent to Nabeshima Yukiatsu, a nephew of Nabeshima Naoyuki (1643–1725), the Daimyo of Hasuike, reveals that several years later, in 1734, Baisaō had moved to a dwelling located just east of the Shōkoku-ji Zen monastery. The site, north of the Imperial Palace, would have been at the northern fringes of the city, and it is possible that he moved to this relatively isolated site because of friendships he had formed with members of the Shōkoku-ji priesthood. His Dharma brother Daichō, who was well connected at the monastery, may have supplied him with introductions. Baisaō seems to have had a special fondness for the rural Shōkoku-ji area, and would later spend his seventies in one of the monastery's subtemples.

The letter to Nabeshima Yukiatsu can be dated precisely to the eleventh day of the fifth month of 1734, Baisaō's fifty-ninth year. It is one of only two surviving letters that he signed with the religious name Gekkai; all others bear the signature Baisaō (Old Tea Seller) or later, Kō Yūgai, the lay name he adopted in his late sixties. He was writing in response to a letter asking for his help in finding lodgings for Yukiatsu's younger sister, the nun Taishin, who was about to arrive in Kyoto to study the Buddhist Precepts.

> I have to agree with what you said in your letter. I have been extremely negligent in not contacting you for so long. But I am profoundly pleased to learn that Taishin will be able to

realize her long cherished aspiration and come here to Kyoto to continue her study. I will do what I can to help her find lodgings here as you have requested.

Actually, I had already heard of her plans from the nun Getsu-ni, and I have met [the Jōdo Vinaya master] Reitan and discussed the matter directly with him. Some of the nuns studying under him also took part in the meeting. We think it would be best after Taishin arrives in Kyoto for her to settle down first at Shiun-an and remain there during the summer retreat. We can address the matter of finding a permanent place more suitable to her desires later. Unlike Edo, there are always houses available for rent, so I am sure she will be able to find the kind of dwelling she desires. So as far as that is concerned, there is nothing at all to worry about. Shiun-an is located directly adjacent to Shōkoku-ji, one of the five Gozan Zen temples of Kyoto. As I will be writing to Taishin to give her a more complete description of the temple, you can learn the details directly from her.

She told me about the illness you have been struggling with since last year. I sympathize deeply with the difficulties you must be experiencing. I hope that you are now recovering your strength and are at last able to enjoy your retirement from official life and devote yourself to the pleasures that are found apart from worldly affairs.

I am fifty-nine years old this year, but I am still hale and hearty. The last year was a difficult one due to the bad harvest, but I didn't starve,[19] so it seems Heaven has some years allotted to me yet.

As for your inquiry about inviting the Chinese priest to accept the abbotship at Mampuku-ji, it seems little progress has yet been made. It appears the government is considering the matter in a forthright manner. Kuroda Buzen no kami, who is now *Rōjū* (Senior Councillor), obtained agreement from Inoue Kawachi no kami and ordered the commissioners at Nagasaki to find some way to resolve the problem. They have their work cut out for them, as it involves the appointment of a Chinese priest from the mainland.

It is hard to predict what will happen. They can't just keep on waiting for the Chinese priest to answer. It has been a year since the former abbot at Mampuku-ji passed away, and because the established precedent is one of inviting new abbots from China, it is difficult for the government to appoint someone else. Meantime the temple is without a head priest. What can be done? At this point, if they are unable to find a priest in China who is willing to come by the end of the year, it looks as though they might appoint a less qualified Chinese priest from among those who are already in Japan.

But now the most important thing for you is to focus on regaining your health. As far as Taishin's stay in Kyoto is concerned, please discuss the matter with her and let me know if there is any other way I can be of service to her.[20]

Gekkai

The letter reveals how close Baisaō's relationship was with high-ranking members of the Nabeshima clan—not surprising, considering his long tenure at the clan's family temple. It also shows how knowledgeable he was of the inner workings of Mampuku-ji, a circumstance no doubt attributable to his connections in the Ōbaku community; he may also have obtained news from his close friend Daichō, who was visiting Mampuku-ji frequently during these years. Yukiatsu's concern over the difficulty of finding a new abbot is an indication of a deep personal interest he and other high-ranking members of the Nabeshima clan had in Ōbaku Zen. Yukiatsu succumbed to his illness in the winter of the following year.

Tea Selling and Poetry in Higashiyama

At the age of sixty, Baisaō was earning his livelihood selling tea at a tiny rented house in Kyoto. He called his shop Tsūsen-tei, "the shop that conveys you to Sagehood," a name that by extension became one of his own sobriquets as well. The shop, which may have been merely a stall (he speaks of it as a "snail dwelling"), was situated at the heavily trafficked Second Fushimi Bridge on the eastern bank of

the Kamo River. The bridge was one of three similar structures spanning three streams that flowed through the extensive grounds of the Tōfuku-ji and Sennyū-ji temples in the Eastern Hills and emptied into the Kamo River. Travelers on the Fushimi Road (*Fushimi kaidō*) crossed it when going to and from the Fushimi area south of Kyoto and the central part of the city. It was also a well-used pilgrim route that, except for the winter months, thronged with people making their way between the Kannon-ji, a subtemple of Sennyū-ji, and Tō-ji, a Shingon temple farther west. Baisaō was thus guaranteed a fairly steady flow of potential customers.

It was about this time that he assumed the name by which he is best known, Baisaō, Old Tea Seller. Long before Gekkai appeared on the scene and adopted his new name, the term *baisaō* had been used in a generic sense to describe the itinerant tea peddlers who roamed the streets of the capital selling an inferior grade of powdered tea. These peddlers, invariably elderly men from the lowest rungs of society, appear in genre paintings of the Muromachi and Momoyama periods and in the art and illustrated books of the Edo period. For a highly cultured Buddhist priest, a member of the intellectual elite, to undertake such an itinerant life was unheard of.

By selling tea while still a member of the clergy, Baisaō was violating an important Buddhist precept prohibiting priests from earning a living. According to the injunction, it is only possible for monks to maintain purity of mind when they beg for their food, obtaining it by what is called “right livelihood.” If one has to give consideration to earning funds to maintain oneself, the mind cannot avoid being tainted with thoughts of gain.

Compliance with the Precepts was given special emphasis in Ōbaku temples, and Baisaō probably felt considerable reticence about embarking on a way of life that ran counter to one of the basic articles in its code of discipline. We are fortunate to have a document, “A Statement of Views in Response to a Customer’s Questions,”which sets forth his thinking on the subject as he defends his decision to earn a livelihood in the manner of a layman. The *Statement of Views* is cast in the form of responses to a (most probably) fictitious questioner.[21] Since Baisaō states in the text that he had “lived at the Second Bridge for several years now,” we can

confidently date the document to this early period of his tea-selling life. Although rather lengthy, it is of such central importance to an overall understanding of Baisaō's life and thought that it deserves to be quoted in its entirety.

A Statement of Views in Response to a Customer's Questions

A customer of mine posed the following question:

Buddhist monks reside in temples and monasteries or else they go off and live by themselves, but they subsist on charity they receive from the lay community. If no donations are forthcoming, they go out and beg. Such a life, I believe, is in accord with the instructions left by the great sage Shakyamuni.

Here you are, living in the city, gaining a livelihood by selling tea. Isn't that in violation of the Buddhist precept that forbids monks to earn a living in the manner of laymen? I would like to hear your reasons for adopting such a life.

I replied:

I am well aware of the objection you raise. Most people would share your view of the matter. I should nevertheless like to acquaint you briefly with my own ideas on the subject.

Remember what Confucius replied upon once being asked to explain a desire he had expressed to go and live among the uncivilized tribes of the east? "If men of superior attainment went and dwelt among such people," he said, "they would not remain uncivilized."

There is an old verse:

Though a contented mind brings physical contentment with it,
Physical contentment also may occur when the mind is ill at ease.
When the mind is truly at peace, wherever you are is pleasant,
Whether you live in a marketplace or in a mountain hermitage.

Those lines are even truer when they are applied to our Buddhist teaching, which is immeasurably vast and contains an infinite number of ways of teaching people according to their capacities. Essentially, it all depends on the mind. A sutra says, “When the mind is pure, the Buddha-lands are pure as well.” When the mind is empty of impurity, wherever you stand—even in a wine shop, fish market, brothel, or theater—is a Buddha-land, a wonderful place of purity and bliss. And why? Because even then your mind is dwelling within the temple of great Enlightenment itself.

Look at the priests of today. Their bodies reside inside the walls of a temple or in a solitary dwelling somewhere, but for eight or nine of every ten, their minds still chase through the world’s red dust. Citing words from the Buddhist scriptures that assert their rightful claim as priests to receive people’s charity, they proceed to seek greedily in every way and at every opportunity to obtain donations from lay followers. When they are successful, they toady to their new benefactors, wagging their tails and showing them more respect and devotion than they do their teachers or their own parents.

Donors, for their part, pride themselves on their virtue, and on the strength of a small donation fancy the recipient now owes them a deep debt of gratitude. They end up regarding the priest with contempt. Both donor and priest are totally ignorant of the Buddha’s words clearly affirming the essential emptiness of giver and receiver and donation alike.

Outwardly, the priests may comport themselves with an air of great dignity, but inwardly their hearts are filled with ill-favored desires. Making the most of their superior positions, they deceive people into giving them donations, knowing full well that once offered with a mind of total purity, such gifts can never be nullified. Because their minds are clouded by greed, they continue to transgress knowingly against the Buddha’s Dharma. Their delusion is even greater than that of the donors, who are at least unaware of the transgression they are committing.

When the priests go out begging, they leave behind the heart of compassion that reaches out equally to all beings and head straight for the neighborhood where they were born or grew up or some place where they have had previous dealings. They take up a position beside the likely layman's door, and with a complacent look on their faces proceed to receive their donations with glib and artful words. Any layman who is not forthcoming is regarded as their mortal enemy. Is it any wonder people have come to regard mendicant monks with the revulsion they normally reserve for filthy roadside beggars?

All such priests are "living by unlawful means"—in direct violation of the Buddhist Precepts. There is no way they can avoid committing transgressions such as clinging to appearances, self-indulgence, and using flattery to obtain charity. They cause far greater damage than any thief alive. They are perfect examples of the saying, "The people are better off with an outright thief for a minister than with one who squeezes them dry with tax collections."

Buddhist temples today are in a truly deplorable state.[22] An ancient worthy once wrote in a verse:

A single grain of rice accepted from a donor
Has as much weight as Mount Sumeru;
If receiving it you fail to achieve the Way,
You are sure to be reborn with fur and horns.

Po Yi and his brother Shu Ch'i perished of starvation in the mountains of Shou-yang rather than compromise their ideals.[23] Confucius's disciple Yen Hui was content to live on a dipper of water and handful of rice. Can we afford to ignore the sterling examples of these ancient worthies? A Chinese Buddhist abbot some years past drew on provisions from the temple storehouse to feed his monks. On being asked, "In the Buddha's lifetime assemblies of monks numbering in the thousands all begged the food they ate. Why don't you have

your monks support themselves in the same way?" he replied, "What was suitable in the Buddha's day is not necessarily suitable today."

During the T'ang dynasty most Zen monasteries in China were self-sufficient. They had fields and paddies that the monks and senior priests worked together. There were legitimate reasons for doing this. So while it may appear that they were "living by unlawful means," theirs was in fact a perfectly pure way of life, and one that was in keeping with the Buddhist teachings.

For the first several years after I arrived in Kyoto and began residing here in the Eastern Hills, I accepted invitations to attend meals given at Buddhist memorial services, and I accepted gifts of money as well. Although in both cases the charity was associated with general offerings being made either to ancestral spirits or to the gods, not one grain of rice, not the smallest coin, was given in a spirit of total purity; there was always some kind of intent behind the gift. Not only that, on each occasion I invariably came away feeling a sense of obligation or indebtedness to the donor. As a result, one way or another, the charity was all tainted. It was no different from the food that people leave as offerings at gravesites.

I have always been very much opposed to receiving alms that are tainted because of some design in the mind of the giver or the receiver. It was only because of a strong desire to live in Kyoto that, during the first years, I accepted those donations. At my age, I knew I didn't have many more years to live. Realizing that if I went on accepting charity that at heart I was reluctant to receive, my spiritual commitment would be no stronger than a childish whim in a young girl's heart, I made up my mind to accept no more donations.

Life became very difficult after that. It was a constant struggle just to keep from starving. I was like the proverbial minnow gasping in a drying puddle. I then recalled the eminent Zen figures of the past who, even after they had

transcended the world, had lived by weaving sandals, working as ferrymen, or selling firewood or swords.

I was no longer young, and I wasn't up to imitating those great masters, so I rented a tiny dwelling on the banks of the Kamo River where there was a steady traffic of people, and began selling tea. Now, with the money customers leave me, I am able to purchase small amounts of rice that keep me alive and enable me to pursue a way of life that satisfied my deepest longings. People regard tea selling as one of the meanest occupations on earth. What they despise, I value immensely. It is a life that gives me great joy.

The customer said:

The life you have described would certainly appear to be pure and unsullied, utterly untouched by the troubles of worldly existence. Still I feel obliged to say that your attitude seems to me to be quite narrow and constricted. Even if someone gives you a donation with impure motives, if your own mind is empty and thought-free, surely the gift you receive should be pure and untainted. There shouldn't be any room for discriminations such as accepting the pure and rejecting the impure to enter.

I replied:

If I could overcome thoughts of accepting and rejecting, good and bad, then the purity or impurity of the alms I received—even were they to come from a slaughterhouse or a brothel—would all be one to me. But seen in the light of the Buddha's teaching I mentioned before about giver, receiver, and donation all being essentially empty, it is also true that distinctions such as those between pure and impure do exist.

Ultimately, all the thoughts I have set forth here are no more than scales covering the eyes. If I could rid myself of them, I could "churn the long river into purest cream," "turn the great earth to yellow gold." Having not yet reached that stage, I strive continually to overcome my shortcomings, but I am afraid I still see illusory appearances such as purity and impurity.

> When my questioner had heard me out, he encouraged me to persevere in the life I had chosen. He then asked me to put the ideas I had expressed into written form. Being neither a learned man nor a skillful writer, I was unable to compose the tract he requested. The best I could do was to jot down a few words in ordinary Japanese to give him some brief idea of my views.

Being so unlike the ordinary street-side tea sellers the townspeople of Kyoto had come to expect, Baisaō must have quickly aroused intense curiosity in those who stopped to drink his tea, and it is not difficult to imagine that some of these customers were eager to ask questions like those recorded in the *Statement of Views*. Although he states at the conclusion of the work that he had merely "jotted down a few thoughts on the subject," it is obvious that he had given a good deal of consideration and care to its composition, an indication of the importance these questions had for him at the time.

Before long, news spread of the unusual old Zen priest down by the Fushimi Bridge who was offering customers a new kind of tea. He brewed it with great skill in a clay pot of Chinese design and produced an unusually delicious beverage. Splendid lines of Chinese and Japanese verse written in elegant calligraphy could be seen hanging at his shop, and he was said to occasionally pass along a word or two of spiritual advice as well. He did not charge a fee for drinking the tea, although a bamboo tube was set out to receive donations. Perhaps most striking to the ordinary citizen was his appearance. He was usually fitted out in a long flowing white garment bordered in black, the "Crane Robe" (*kakushō-e*) favored by Taoist recluses and literati in China.

The tea furnishings Baisaō used at his shop, including elegant teacups, teapots, braziers, and other utensils, many of them of Chinese manufacture, were new to most Japanese and must have been viewed with great curiosity. Among them were articles of great rarity, presumably obtained from Chinese priests or laymen residing in Japan. We can gain a sense of the impression Baisaō must have made on the citizens of Kyoto from the many portraits that leading contemporary artists painted of him, which commonly show him in

his Crane Robe, often sitting by his brazier brewing tea, surrounded by his tea utensils.

At a time when the word “tea” for most Japanese still meant powdered *matcha*, Baisaō was serving a new variety that came to be known in Japan as *sencha*, a word that translates literally as “simmered tea.” The term was used to refer to loose-leaf teas in general, and could indicate the tea itself, the method of preparing it —simmering or steeping—and, later, the elegant pastime of drinking it (the “Way of Sencha”). In the form in which it was introduced by Chinese Ōbaku priests in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the tea was a loose-leaf variety, brown in color when infused, brewed in specially designed teapots and accompanied by an elegant tea aesthetic that had evolved in Ming dynasty literati circles based on ideals espoused by the T’ang dynasty tea “immortals” Lu Yü and Lu T’ung.[24] In the context of Baisaō’s life and times, *sencha* refers most often to the loose-leaf tea that Japanese in the mid-eighteenth century were adapting to their own tastes and sensibilities, and to the “philosophy,” grounded in Zen experience, underlying the drinking of *sencha*, which is seen in Baisaō’s writings.

There is nothing in the records to tell us precisely what kind of tea Baisaō served at his shop. References in his verse and letters reveal only that he used more than one type. He writes of brewing “Chinese” loose-leaf tea “sent from home”—his native province of Hizen—which could mean either an imported or a homegrown Chinese-style variety. In more than one verse, he writes of using a loose-leaf tea from Ōmi province (present-day Shiga prefecture). There are even allusions to a superior Chinese “brick” tea, and to a scented Chinese flower tea as well.

For the most part, however, Baisaō’s teas seem to have been loose-leaf varieties, and although he may have used imported Chinese leaves on occasion, he probably relied most heavily on the early versions of *sencha* that Japanese growers were producing around the time he starting selling tea in Kyoto, but about which very little is known. When the process for making this Japanese *sencha* was perfected a few years later, the results were leaves that could be easily infused in a teapot, and produced a tea with a beautiful jade-green color (Chinese leaf tea was brownish) and a wonderfully

sweet-tasting flavor. It is this so-called Japanese green tea that Baisaō is credited with having introduced to citizens of the capital.[25]

Teapot and Tea Cups. Baisaō chaki-zu

This next poem, his longest, which can be dated to this early period,[26] describes a tea from the Ekkei tea fields at Eigen-ji, a Zen temple located in a mountainous area on the eastern side of Lake Biwa. The Zen monks who worked the temple tea gardens had a reputation for producing fine teas.[27]

Tasting Some New Tea from Ekkei

A gift of “immortal buds” sent from an old friend
“first spring picking from the Ekkei fields,” he said.
Opening the packet, color and fragrance filled the room,
Proud banners and lances of outstanding quality.

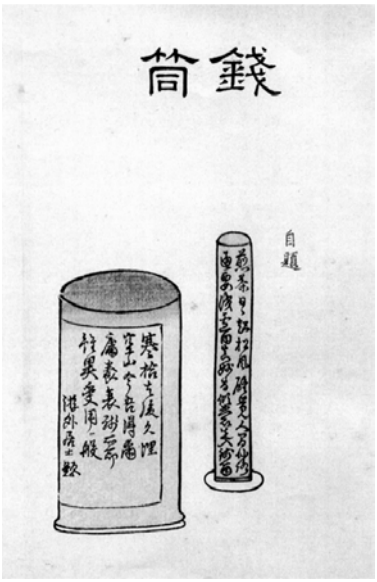
Clear water dipped at the banks of the Kamo
Well boiled on the stove, just right for new tea.
The first sip revealed an incomparable taste,
Purifying sweetness refreshing to the soul.
No need wasting time on butterfly dreams
Rising up, utterly cleansed, beyond the world,
I smile, there's not one word in my dried-up gut,
Just the wondrous meaning beyond all doctrine.
I've been poor so long, pinched with hunger,
Now a kind gift to soothe my parched throat,
Dewdrops so sweet they put manna to shame—
A fresh breeze rises round me, lifting me upward.
It doesn't take seven cups like Master Lu says
My guests get old Chao-chou's one cup tea;
And whoever can grasp the taste in that cup
Whether stranger or friend, knows my true mind.
Sake fuels the vital spirits, works like courage,
Tea works benevolently, purifying the soul.
Courageous feats that put the world in your debt
Couldn't match the benefit benevolence brings.
A tea unsurpassed for color, flavor, and scent,
Attributes that Buddhists refer to as "dusts,"
But only through them is the true taste known,
They are the Dharma body, primal suchness.[28]

The verse praises the tea for its wonderful color, fragrance, and taste, qualities that in the terms of Buddhist philosophy would represent the six "dusts," objects or fields of sensation and perception: color and form, sound, odor, taste, tactile sensation, and ideas or thoughts. They are called "dusts" because when perceived by the six corresponding sense organs they generate passions that defile the mind, causing illusion and suffering. However, as Baisaō says at the conclusion of the verse, according to the Mahayana principle of nonduality these very "dusts," which make up the illusory world in which we live, are no different from the highest

enlightenment. Once one grasps this truth, he will no longer seek the Buddhist Way (or a “Way of Tea”) in some pure realm apart from the defilements of everyday life. By the same token there is no need to deny the qualities of color and taste that the senses perceive in the tea as illusory, since they too represent the working of the formless *Dharmakāya*, or Cosmic Buddha-body.

Among the gifted writers, artists, and scholars who frequented Baisaō’s shop during these earliest years and established lasting bonds of friendship with the old priest were the calligrapher, painter, and delightfully eccentric Kameda Kyūraku, the Confucian calligrapher and Zen layman Kuwabara Kūdō, the calligrapher-physician Yamashina Rikei, the priest and Nanga painter Goshin Genmyō, and the Confucian teacher Uno Meika. Before long, ordinary citizens apparently came to regard Baisaō with genuine affection as well, and seem to have respected him for the difficult life he had undertaken in the pursuit of his spiritual goals. One of the more surprising developments was the large number of emulators that appeared. The physician Ōda Kenryō, a close friend, adopted the name Baiyaku-ō, Old Medicine Seller, and made his way through the streets dispensing medicine free of charge to the poor. Others took names such as Baika-ō, Old Flower Seller; Baishu-ō, Old Sake Selle; Baisai-ō, Old Vegetable Seller; and Baitan-ō, Old Charcoal Seller; patterning their names, and in some cases their lives as well, on Baisaō’s example. As we will see, Sakaki Hyakusen, Ike Taiga, and Itō Jakuchū, three of the great figures of Edo period painting, were inspired by their association with Baisaō to adopt artistic names that affirm their deep respect for his way of life.

The special significance of the offertory bamboo tubes (*zeni-zutsusen*) that Baisaō set out to receive customers’ donations is clear both from the words he inscribed on them and the verses he addressed to them. Baisaō equates the role of the bamboo tube with that of the begging bowl that Zen monks use to support their lives. The following inscriptions were written on three different receptacles.[29]



Offertory Bamboo Tubes. Baisaō chaki-zu

> The price for this tea is anything from a hundred in gold to a half *sen*. If you want to drink free, that's all right too. I'm only sorry I can't let you have it for less.
>
> Please customers, don't begrudge me a single *sen*. Dropped into this bamboo tube, it will keep me from starving.

One was addressed to the bamboo tube itself:

> After Han-shan and Shih-te vanished for the last time, you continued to dwell in the empty hills. Now I have made you mine. You sustain me in my declining years. Although your mandate may be different now, your vital work remains unchanged.

This same essential task is expressed in the verses he wrote on the bamboo tubes.

> *Inscription for the Bamboo Offertory Tube*
>
> I'm old, I'm bone poor

you are my begging bowl
my living and my dying
depends on you alone.

Epigram for the Bamboo Offertory Tube

Fanning up the pine wind
brewing tea day after day
quickening men's minds
to the path of the Sages.
If you want to understand
what old Lu really meant
just empty your coin purse
into this bamboo tube.

The Bamboo Offertory Tube

A scraggy old derelict
appeared from the west
with a poor sort of Zen
not a *sen* to his name,
selling tea he manages
a small handful of rice
his very life hanging
on a tube of bamboo.

Like the bulk of Baisaō's poetry, these are composed in a form of verse known as *kanshi* (literally "poetry in Chinese") that enjoyed great popularity in Edo Japan. The writing of *kanshi*, using the medium of (Japanese-style) classical Chinese, was an essential accomplishment for educated men of the period and an important part of their social life. Friends exchanged these poems on outings and at various social gatherings, often writing them to set themes, and sometimes employing the same rhymes as the poem to which they were responding.

Baisaō's *kanshi* poetry has been valued—and this sets it somewhat apart from most of the verse written by his contemporaries—for the way in which it conveys the unique *kyōgai* or "spiritual landscape" that surrounded him and his life in Kyoto. The majority of his poems were inspired by visits to scenic spots in and around the capital, and together they give a rather good idea of the nature of these outings and the meaning they held for him. The word *ge* ("religious verses") in the title *Baisaō Gego*, the collection of Baisaō's works published the year of his death, was undoubtedly deliberately chosen to emphasize the essentially religious nature of his poetry and thus distinguish it from ordinary *kanshi* written for literary purposes. Baisaō's poems are all intrinsically personal, integral with the author and his life, and firmly grounded in what may perhaps be called, for want of better words, the "spirit of poverty." Not poverty of the material sort, but in the sense of "traveling light;" a way of life whose aim is to eliminate excess baggage of all kinds, including intellectual dichotomies of self and other, good and evil, gain and loss, considered the source of ignorance and suffering.

Among the earliest of Baisaō's *kanshi* is a set titled *Three Poems on Choosing a Dwelling*. The themes Zen and Tea, the constants of his poetry, intermingle as he describes tea selling from a standpoint that speaks with the singular authority of Zen experience.

i
I moved this morning
to the center of town
waist deep in worldly dust
but free of worldly ties.
I wash my robe and bowl
in the Kamo's pure stream
the moon a perfect disc
rippling its watery mind.

ii
Making the busy streets my home
right down in the heart of things

only one friend shares my poverty
this single scrawny wooden staff.
Having learned the ways of silence
within the noise of urban life
I take life as it comes to me
and everywhere I am is true.

iii
This rootless shifting east and west
I can't suppress a smile myself
but how else can I make
the whole world my home.
If any of my old friends
come around asking
say I'm down at the river
by the Second Fushimi Bridge.

Dating from this same period is a series of *Twelve Impromptu Verses*. Here are three from the series.

i
Set out to transmit
the teaching of Zen
revive the spirit
of the old masters
settled instead for
a tea-selling life.
honor, disgrace
don't concern me
the coins that gather
in the bamboo tube
will stop Poverty
from finishing me off.

ii
Set up shop this time
on the banks of the Kamo
customers, sitting idly
forget host and guest
they drink a cup of tea
their long sleep ends
awakened, they realize
they’re the same as before.

iii
I emulate old Chao-chou
“Have a cup of tea!”
the shelf’s been stocked for ages
yet no one comes to buy.
If you were to stop here
and take one good sip,
the old mental craving
would instantly cease.

Carrying Pole. Baisaō chaki-zu

In the second verse the phrase “forget host and guest” indicates transcendence of the self-other, subject-object dualities that inhibit ordinary existence; the final line suggests the realm of nonduality (illusion is enlightenment, enlightenment is illusion) attained in the realization of Zen awakening. “Have a cup of tea!” is the famous teaching phrase first used by the T’ang Zen master Chao-chou.[30]

Before long, Baisaō began taking his tea equipment out of doors, setting up shop at nearby temples and scenic spots in the Higashiyama area. As mentioned before, he transported his tea furnishings—including teapots and teacups, and a heavy brazier—in two large bamboo baskets at the ends of a carrying pole he balanced on his shoulder (such poles were the indispensable tool of itinerant vendors who transported wares of all kinds—vegetables, tofu, miso, fish, charcoal—to customers around the city). Once at his destination, Baisaō would spread out a thick paper mat toughened by persimmon-juice tanning, put up a banner on which were written the words “Pure Breeze,” and sit down and kindle a charcoal fire in his brazier. He would then make tea for those who, like him, had come to enjoy the special charms of the spots he chose. Baisaō would often compose and exchange Chinese verses with friends and customers to commemorate the occasion. He would continue selling tea only until twenty *sen* had collected in the bamboo offertory tube.[31]

Many of Baisaō’s earliest excursions were to Tōfuku-ji, Sanjūsangen-dō, and the Hall of the Great Buddha, important temples all situated in beautifully wooded areas within short walking distance. Tōfuku-ji seems to have been his favorite spot. Twelve of the roughly one hundred poems in the *Baisaō Gego* were composed at Tōfuku-ji, most of them at the Tsūten Bridge. Tōfuku-ji, established in 1236, was the first Zen monastery constructed in Kyoto. The Tsūten Bridge (“Bridge to Heaven”), built a hundred and fifty years later, is a famous and handsomely constructed covered bridge spanning a ravine through which a stream, Sengyoku-kan (“Jadewash Brook”), flows down from the Eastern Hills. The bridge and surrounding precincts have long been a favorite spot for autumn outings, drawing people from all over Japan intent on viewing the brilliant red, orange, and yellow maple leaves. Later in the Edo

period small platforms were set up, and tea and cakes were served to the sound of the purling water. Each year on the sixteenth day of the tenth month—temple founder Shōichi Kokushi's annual death anniversary—Baisaō took his tea utensils to the Founder's Hall at Tōfuku-ji and made a cup of tea as an offering to him.

Brewing Tea on a Visit to Tōfuku-ji

Pine trees rise through cloud
soar up into the blue skies,
bush clover spangled with dewdrops
sways in the autumn breeze;
As I dip cold pure water
at the edge of the stream,
a solitary white crane
comes lolloping my way.

After four years in his rented "snail dwelling" on the banks of the Kamo River, Baisaō moved his shop to one of the most beautiful spots in the Higashiyama area. He describes it as located in a large stand of pine trees between the Hall of the Great Buddha at Hōkō-ji and Rengeō-in, an area that is today the garden of the Kyoto National Museum. Rengeō-in is better known as the Sanjūsangen-dō, after the large rectangular hall (almost 120 meters long) that dominates the temple grounds. Inside the hall is enshrined a large seated statue of Senju (Thousand-armed) Kannon, flanked by two groups of five hundred smaller Kannon images arranged on tiers, ten rows deep, all covered in shining gold leaf. Here is one of four poems included in the *Baisaō Gego* that were written at Rengeō-in, all of them probably dating from this period. This one was apparently the first, composed to commemorate the opening of the new shop.

Opening up Shop at Rengeō-in

Life stripped clean to the bone
I'm often out of food and drink
yet I offer an elixir

will change your very marrow.
I sell it under the pine trees,
before a Hall of a Thousand Buddhas
How many who stop to drink it
will discover the Wu-ling spring?

“Hall of a Thousand Buddhas” translates the Japanese *Senbutsu-dō*, a popular name for the Sanjūsangen-dō, although in fact there are a thousand and one images enshrined in the hall, and they are not Buddhas, but representations of the Bodhisattva Kannon. Wu-ling, a utopian realm of eternal spring untouched by worldly defilements, appears in a famous story by the poet T’ao Yüan-ming.

Setting Up Shop on a Summer Night Beside the Iris Pond at the Hall of a Thousand Buddhas

An iris pond in flower
before the ancient hall,
I sell tea this evening
by the water’s edge;
it is steeped in the cup
with the moon and stars
one sip, you wake forever
from your worldly sleep.

The iris pond at Rengeō-in was located on the hall’s eastern side, and during the Edo period tea stalls were set up around the pond at the beginning of summer, when the iris were in bloom, for the crowds who came to view the flowers.[32] Stands of large pine trees that surrounded Rengeō-in continued into the extensive grounds of the adjacent Hōkō-ji, whose Hall of the Great Buddha was, along with the Sanjūsangen-dō, among the most heavily visited of the capital’s many attractions.

Although Rengeō-in and Hōkō-ji were only steps away from Baisaō’s new shop, the next two verses were evidently written while he was selling out of doors.

Setting Up Shop Under the Pine Trees
Before the Great Buddha at Hōkō-ji

Brewing tea in a cluster of pines
customers one after another
imbibing for a single *sen*
one cupful of the spring;
Friends, please don't smile
at my humble existence,
being poor doesn't hurt you,
you do that on your own.

Another nearby temple Baisaō was fond of visiting was Kōdai-ji, a Zen temple a short hike up into the hills northeast of his shop. Kōdai-ji had been built on a grand scale at the beginning of the previous century by the widow of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and although by Baisaō's day most of its large buildings had been destroyed by fire, in autumn people still came to view the bush clover, to gather *mattake* mushrooms in the mountains behind the temple, and to sit and drink sake. This verse was written during an outing Baisaō made to brew tea using water from the Kikutani, "Chrysanthemum Spring," a rivulet that flows down from the mountainside north of the temple.[33]

Brewing Tea at Kōdai-ji

Trudging slowly up
the long stone steps
to old Kōdai-ji
through a world of
rust red maples
unfolding like a scroll;
come to brew tea
with water dipped
from the fabled
Chrysanthemum Spring

just one cup
I now know
clears things up
for all time.

Winter was always a difficult time for Baisaō. The scenic spots were emptied of sightseers, dramatically curtailing his ability to collect enough coins for his daily rice. The hardships he faced at these times are a recurring theme in the verse of his sixties and early seventies. This one was written during his first winter in the Rengeō-in area. Records show that Kyoto experienced a spell of especially severe weather that year.[34]

The End of the Final Month of the Fourth Year of Gembun (1739), There Had Been No Customers and the Offertory Tube Was Empty. I Went to the First House I Saw and Asked the Man Who Came to the Door for Money. I Promptly Wrote This Verse to Thank Him

Year almost done
money tube empty
aching with hunger
I went to your door
begging for help;
this hundred *mon*,
a dipper of water
to a gasping wretch,
to keep me alive
into the new year.

Layman Yūgai

In the winter of 1741, at the age of sixty-six, Baisaō was obliged to return to Kyushu. An ordinance in his native Hizen province required all residents who traveled beyond the provincial borders to obtain a special permit, which was good for a period of six years for ordinary citizens and ten years for Buddhist priests. Those seeking permit

extensions were required to apply in person at clan headquarters. Baisaō mentions this, and his upcoming trip, in a long letter he wrote in the spring of 1741 to his cousin Kusakawa Tsunatada in northern Honshu.[35]

> I have been very remiss in allowing us to be out of contact for so many years. I have heard that you are unchanged and still in good health. I myself, while I continue to grow older and more decrepit, am still among the living and residing in a temporary dwelling here in Kyoto.
>
> On a recent visit to a Zen nun who lives nearby, I was shown a poem written by a vassal of the Miharu clan of Ōshū [northeastern Honshu]. It seems that a lady from Ōshū who had taken Buddhist orders (she now lives in Kameyama in the Tamba area) had been given the poem by another nun named Jitsusan. She brought it with her when she visited the Zen nun. The moment I saw it, I immediately recognized both the literary name and handwriting as yours. When I announced that I was acquainted with the person who had written the verse, they both were astonished at the strange coincidence. As they wanted to know all the particulars, I explained our relationship to them.
>
> When Jitsusan came to Kyoto and heard the story she was also struck by the curious series of events and expressed an interest in making my acquaintance. She visited my house on two occasions but unfortunately both times I was out. It wasn't until she came to Kyoto again during the New Year that we were able to meet and have a leisurely chat. We continued our discussion at length after that when I visited her at her lodgings. It was from her that I learned you were in good health.
>
> We have been floating through the transient world like clouds for twenty years now, totally without contact. I told Jitsusan I sent you a letter some eight or nine years ago but was unsure whether it had reached you. She said that last year she had learned from your elder brother that it had, and that you were trying to obtain my address.

As for me, [when I left the temple] my original intention was to spend the rest of my days moving from place to place without any fixed abode, but after experiencing ten years of such a rootless life, and with the growing burdens of age, I grew weary of it. For the last ten years I have been living in temporary lodgings in Kyoto, and for the past five or six have been leading an eccentric life, flouting convention, as a street-side tea seller. For the first two or three years I lived in a tea shop I called Tsūsen-tei that I opened on the banks of the Kamo River. At present my shop is located in front of the Hall of the Great Buddha and Sanjūsangen-dō in an open, park-like space within their grounds. I live a leisurely life as one of the capital's recluses, setting up for business whenever I please under the pine trees or in the shade of bamboo groves. I am already sixty-six, but strong and healthy for my years—still able to haul my braziers and other tea equipment in carrying baskets throughout the city. I am sure you will laugh when you see how many of my verses on tea have accumulated in the course of this life. In keeping with my native clumsiness, my thoughts are simply set down in an artless fashion, so you should disregard the style as you peruse them. Although the manuscripts of the verses are in pretty poor shape, given my intrinsically awkward handwriting, not to mention my severe nearsightedness, it would have required a great effort to write out a fair copy. Hence I have merely sent you the transcripts I had on hand. You will find about two or three hundred pieces in all. They include Chinese *kanshi* imitating the rhymes of verses people presented to me, as well as some *waka* and haiku . . .

Although you yourself have now entered the ranks of the elders, inasmuch as you are retired and doing as you please, I trust that your new life is an enjoyable one. I heard that you named Gozaemon as your heir, so you are now an idle fellow and can spend your time freely, untouched by the affairs of the world. As I expect most of your old friends are already down in the Yellow Springs [abode of the dead], it is high time that you stepped back from active life.

Provincial law requires me to return to Hizen this year. I plan to make the trip either in autumn or winter. I will thus have an opportunity to pay my respects to people in Hizen, probably the last chance I will have in this lifetime. I intend to spend the winter in Hizen and return to Kyoto in spring of next year.

From now on until I die I will write you from time to time. If you have business of some kind that brings you to Kyoto and find it convenient, please get in touch. Since as I said I do not have a permanent address—I go from one rented house to another, moving whenever I am so inclined—if you write me, your letter should be addressed to Shikoku Chūzaemon at the residence of Hino Dainagon. Lord Hino's wife is the elder sister of Lord Nabeshima Settsū no kami. Chūzaemon is in the service of her husband. A letter sent to the Nabeshima residence in Edo will be immediately forwarded to Chūzaemon here in Kyoto.[36]

With deepest respect,

Gekkai
9th of the 2nd month

Baisaō left Kyoto for Hizen toward the end of the tenth month, mid-December by the Western calendar.[37] It seems a strange season for a man of his age to be setting out on such a long journey, but perhaps Baisaō planned it that way to avoid being in the capital during its notoriously frigid winter. He apparently took the same route as most travelers to Kyushu, going by small boat from Fushimi, south of Kyoto, down the Yodo River to Osaka, then transferring to a larger barge-like craft for the long journey (three hundred and fifty miles) along the Inland Sea to the port of Moji, at the northern tip of Kyushu. From there it was a walk of eighty miles across the northern part of the island to Hasuike.

Meantime, his friend Daichō in Hizen province, looking forward to reuniting with his friend and colleague, composed this verse of welcome.

'Old Tea Seller' Is the Sobriquet of the Priest Gekkai, My Elder Brother in the Dharma. He Carries the Tools of His Trade Around the Capital Selling Tea. The People of Kyoto All Delight in His Presence. Now Word Has Reached Me That Having Pursued This Life for Ten Years, He Is About to Return to His Native Province. Overjoyed at the News, I Composed the Following Verse, Earnestly Anticipating the Time We Will Be Able to Link Elbows Once Again

When, I wonder, will you be setting out from the capital,
Sailing under cold autumn stars, through long frosty nights;
Ten thousand leagues distant is a clear sea, a mirror-like calm,
Its light, when we meet again, will reveal our white hairs.

The two friends met at the beginning of the eleventh month at Ryūshin-ji in Hasuike, where they no doubt passed many hours talking over old times and discussing the plans they had for the future. Baisaō brought along a collection of his Chinese *kanshi* poems, thinking they would give his friend a better idea of his life in Kyoto. After reading them, Daichō composed a colophon for the collection, which was later included in the printed edition of the *Baisaō Gego*:

The preceding collection of verses by the Old Tea Seller portrays in accurate detail the circumstances of his daily life in Kyoto. This is just the way he lives. Some say mistakenly that Baisaō leads a happy, carefree existence the like of which was never seen before and will never be seen again. If such were true, it would suggest that old Baisa is merely a recluse who has elected to seek a refuge in tea. No, the issue of his reclusiveness is an after matter, and has nothing to do with his essential meaning. Readers, please refrain from prattling with parrot-brained wisdom about Baisaō and tea.

Humbly written by Daichō Rōryō, a Dharma brother of the Old Tea Seller in winter of the first year of the Kampō era (1741).

While cautioning readers against misconstruing Baisaō's unconventional way of life for that of a tea-aesthete who turns away

from the world in order to immerse himself in the refined pleasures of tea, Daichō stresses the indomitable spiritual strength that informed his friend's entire life, focused as Baisaō was on achieving spiritual emancipation through the way of Zen. Baisaō himself emphasized the essential importance of this commitment in an inscription that, judging from the number of examples that have survived, he was extremely fond of writing and giving to people. The first sentence is from the *Analects:*

> Confucius said, "if a man hears of the Way in the morning, he can die in the evening without regret." [To which I would add that] any person who lacks an aspiration for the Way is no better than an animal, even if he lives for a thousand years.

While he was back in Hizen, Baisaō made two major changes in his life. He petitioned clan authorities to register him as an official retainer at their Osaka bureau, which would exempt him from the ten-year limit on his residency in Kyoto, and thus avoid having to return once again to renew his travel permit. Daiten's *Life* tells us that "because Baisaō was well known and highly respected in Hasuike, the petition was immediately granted."[38] The other step he took was to resign his position in the priesthood and return to lay status. His reasons are unstated. It may be simply that priests were not allowed to serve as official retainers; or he may have finally decided he would be more comfortable earning his own livelihood as a layman.

He adopted the secular name Kō Yūgai,[39] which he would use from now on, consisting of the family name *Kō*, a word meaning literally "high," that in this context can be interpreted as referring to a person of lofty pursuits. In Buddhism, the combination *kō-shi*, "high-minded man," was sometimes used in place of the term Bodhisattva. *Yūgai*, "roaming beyond [the world]," a sobriquet having strong Taoist overtones, is perhaps best described in a Mahayana context as the free and untrammeled lifestyle of a Bodhisattva engaged in his primary task of helping others reach enlightenment.

Both of these changes in Baisaō's life were almost surely nominal ones that apparently did little to alter its essential direction. His austere, uncompromising existence remained unchanged, and his friends still seem to have regarded him as a priest and Zen teacher, often refering to him as "Gekkai" or "Zen master Gekkai."

The next year when summer approached and Layman Yūgai prepared to leave on the return trip to Kyoto, Daichō and his friends and students sent him gifts of Chinese poems. From these verses and from those Baisaō's friends in Kyoto wrote welcoming him back, we are able to trace his movements from the time he left Ryūshin-ji until he arrived home. Heavy seasonal rains postponed his planned departure at the beginning of the sixth month by over a week, obliging him to stay over at Daichō's hermitage, where Daichō "consoled" him with additional Chinese verses. He finally departed on the fourteenth, taking the same route by which he had come, boarding ship at Moji in northern Kyushu for an approximately two-week trip through the Inland Sea to Sakai, and arriving in Kyoto at the beginning of the fourth month.

That same month he was back selling tea in Higashiyama. Baisaō describes his new shop as being quite near the previous location, and "close to the Hall of the Great Buddha." This was was an enormous structure measuring sixty meters in height, which enshrined a seated figure of Rushana Buddha nineteen meters high made of wood covered with gold lacquer. Popular with sightseers and temple-goers, it was easily the most conspicuous structure in the capital. The German physician Engelbert Kaempfer devotes several pages of his travel diary to the hall and to a description of the "Idol . . . gilt all over, and incredibly large."[40]

Soon after arriving back in Kyoto, Baisaō paid a visit to the Confucian teacher Uno Meika and presented him with a ceramic *suiteki*, a small receptacle for water used by calligraphers and ink-painters, which he had brought from the celebrated Imari kilns in Hizen.

In early summer Baisaō also made a trip to visit the tea-grower Nagatani Sōen at Yuyadani, a small hamlet about six miles southeast of Uji. Just four years earlier, in 1737, Nagatani had perfected a revolutionary new method of processing *sencha.* By

using only the tenderest young buds of the tea leaves and a method that preserved their fresh green color, he was able to produce a tea with a fine and delicate taste and a beautiful jade-green hue.[41] Baisaō ended up spending the night, and the next day, to requite his host's hospitality, he wrote this short piece to present to him.

For Old Nagatani Sōen

I have had a love of tea ever since I was a young boy. It has taken me far and wide, to places throughout the land. It has now brought me to the secluded hamlet of Tōkei, deep in the hills in back of Uji, where I find myself surrounded by a landscape of extraordinary beauty. To the south the summit of Eagle Peak soars into the clouds. From high ridges a pair of waterfalls—the Falls of Great Majesty and the Falls of Universal Wisdom—tumble down as though bolts of white cloth hanging suspended from the cliffs. From the foot of the hill three freshets of pure mountain water spill forth, and the sound of the rushing water mingling with the breeze threshing through the pine-clad hills is deeply cleansing to the soul. Dropping from perches among the airy steeps of Beadrock Peak, strange birds wheel slowly down into the skies below Teamill Rock.

When evening comes, fragrant tea fields steep in the light of the setting sun; at dawn, they glitter as it rises into the sky. Villagers are busily at work in front of every cottage door parching newly plucked tea leaves. The whole valley is alive with the feeling of spring. No great distance separates this tiny hamlet from the great capital, yet it remains far removed from the world's roiling dust. Profound tranquillity reigns on every side, amid a setting that resembles more than anything else a dwelling place of immortal beings.

My mind was still engrossed in the marvels of this sacred spot—surely unsurpassed for growing tea—as my host Mr. Nagatani ushered me into his house and led me to the room that had been prepared for me. He made some tea, using leaf buds freshly picked from his own gardens. How

wonderful it was! An incomparable beverage with an exquisite color and an aroma of indescribable freshness. Never in my life had I tasted such tea as this!

Before I had even finished the first cup there was not the slightest doubt in my mind that the tea fields of Daifuku produced leaves of a quality that could not be matched anywhere. I could do nothing but repeat over and over that I had never tasted such tea.

As we discussed tea and other matters of common interest, sipping cup after cup, emptying one teapot after another, we forgot ourselves completely. Before we knew it, the sun had disappeared behind the western peaks and the moon hung over the Eastern Hills. We had reached the fabled realm of Hōrai, the abode of the sages. Surely the pleasures we shared that day elevated us to the ranks of the Tea Immortals.

On this small sheet of paper I have written briefly of joys that I can never fully repay. I offer it merely as a divertissement for the amusement of my host.

Although Baisaō is thought to have begun using this new tea at his shop, the question remains whether he had known of it prior to this time. It is difficult to imagine that he wouldn't have at least heard of it, since Nagatani's tea fields were in the Kyoto area, and four years had passed since he had perfected his product, which was already being sold with great success in Edo.

The Narabi Hills

The following spring, after less than a year at his new location in Higashiyama, Baisaō pulled up stakes and moved once again, this time to a small house on the eastern side of the Narabi Hills (*Narabigaoka*), a series of three low, domed hills that are a conspicuous landmark in the western outskirts of the city.[42] He remained only a year, but while he was there he wrote some of his

most well-known poems. *Three Verses on a Tea-Selling Life* date from the month of his arrival.

i
I'm not Buddhist or Taoist
not a Confucianist either
I'm a brownfaced whitehaired
hard-up old man.
people think I just prowl
the streets peddling tea,
I've got the whole universe
in this tea caddy of mine.

ii
Left home at ten
turned from the world
here I am in my dotage
a layman once again;
A black bat of a man
(it makes me smile myself)
but still the old tea seller
I always was.

iii
Seventy years of Zen
got me nowhere at all
shed my black robe
became a shaggy crank.
now I have no business
with sacred or profane
just simmer tea for folks
and hold starvation back.

This next one, from the same year, is titled "Impromptu":

Took a shack by the Narabi Hills
western fringe of the city
I come and go when I please
taking whatever life brings
boiling clear water in the pot
kindling the pine cone fire
summoning customers to the shop
for a cup of my humble tea;
it's a plain and simple life
like those clouds in the sky
hidden deep in the shadow
of a thousand green bamboos
the food I need is provided
by means of a bamboo tube
the earnings of a lifetime
measured in cups of tea;
since Yü-ch'uan's "fish eyes"
roused me from my slumber
I've had no need to ramble off
to Huang-t'i's land of dreams,
People have little idea
how poor I really am
think I'm a strange old coot
enjoying a hermit's peace.

Yü-ch'uan is a name used by the "tea immortal" Lu T'ung. "Fish eyes" is a term used in tea literature to describe the way the water should look boiling in the teapot. Huang-t'i, a legendary Chinese ruler, dreamed he visited a utopian land whose inhabitants enjoyed lives of perfect bliss.

The rainy season, which usually arrives in June, continued longer than usual that year, and Baisaō soon found himself without food. The next verse was written to his friend Kameda Kyūraku, thanking him for coming all the way from Okazaki village on the opposite side of the city to offer his help.

A Poem for the Recluse Kameda Kyūraku, Written in the Summer of the Third Year of Kampō (1743), at the Age of Sixty-eight. I Had Moved My Tea Shop to the Eastern Edge of the Narabi Hills. The Seasonal Rains Started and Did Not Let Up for over a Month. There Were No Customers, the Bamboo Coin Tube Was Empty, and I Had Nothing to Eat. Kameda Sensei, Hearing of My Difficulties, Made a Special Trip to Bring Me Some Food. I Wrote Him a Verse to Express My Gratitude.

Out of tea
out of food
coin-tube empty
a minnow gasping
in a drying puddle;
thank you for
what you did
the special trip
the food
bowl and dipper
filled again
will stop the End
from closing in.

Kyūraku (1690–1758) was one of the pantheon of eccentrics who make eighteenth-century Kyoto such an interesting period to study. Born in Kyoto to a family of swordsmiths, he soon tired of the profession and left to lead a more easygoing and reclusive life. He was known for his idiosyncratic calligraphy and paintings, and as a more than convivial drinker.[43] All this earned him a place along with Baisaō among the rugged individualists included in *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times*, which has this to say about Kyūraku and his friendship with Baisaō:

> Kameda Kyūraku, "Enjoyer of Poverty," was a great eccentric, not caring a pin for the trifling matters most people worry over. For a time he lived on the same small lane as Baisaō, and despite the fact that one of them was a tea-drinker and the other a sake-drinker, the two men formed a close friendship.

Baisaō, who was a teetotaler, was once seen for several days in succession carrying a flask to the sake shop to get a refill for his friend, who had become too drunk to go himself.

Kyūraku with Sake Flask (Self-portrait). Kameda Kyūraku. From Eccentric Figures of Recent Times

This next poem, written in late autumn in the Narabi Hills, portrays in a particularly stark manner Baisaō's state of mind at this time, and supplies a Zen perspective on the circumstances he described in the previous verse.

Composed in a Dream
the 30th Day of the 10th Month
the 3rd Year of Kampō (1743)

Pain and poverty
poverty and pain
life stripped to bone
absolute nothingness
only one thing left
a bright cold moon
in the midnight window
illumining a Zen mind

on its homeward way.

The round autumn moon, bright as a polished mirror, is a conventional Buddhist metaphor for the perfectly enlightened mind.[44] It has been suggested that the poem expresses an enlightenment experience. Supporting this hypothesis is the undeniable authenticity the poem conveys, so absolute that it seems to transcend the poetic form, suggesting that it may indeed have been prompted by a religious breakthrough of some kind. A more tangible piece of evidence indicates the special significance the poem had for Baisaō: in a holograph manuscript of the poem he has specified not only the year but also the month and day it was composed. This seems to be the only instance prior to his eightieth year (when he began dating all his calligraphy) that Baisaō was so precise in dating an inscription.

Although the months at Narabigaoka seem to have been difficult ones, even for someone of Baisaō's rugged constitution and inner reserves of strength, the indications are that he accepted his privations with the same spirit of resolve as had other Zen figures before him, regarding them as an opportunity that would spur him to deeper attainment.

Emergence as a Zen Teacher

The Years at Shōkoku-ji

The following summer, after a year at the Narabi Hills, Baisaō moved to the Shōkoku-ji monastery, taking up lodgings in Rinkō-in, one of the monastery's many subtemples.[45] Shōkoku-ji was located in a sparsely settled area north of the Imperial Palace and large residences of the nobility, and surrounded on the other sides by extensive bamboo forests. Baisaō evidently was fond of this relatively remote section of the capital. He had lived adjacent to Shōkoku-ji for a short time not long after arriving in Kyoto, and he seems to have returned frequently to visit acquaintances in the Shōkoku-ji priesthood, Confucian scholars in the vicinity, and also,

as we see in the next verse, to make tea for customers during the autumn maple-viewing season.

Visiting Shōkoku-ji to Brew
Tea Under the Maple Trees

An ancient Zen monastery at the city's northern edge,
suffused in redolence four hundred autumns old;
its large mountain gate faces splendid palace walls
its ancient pond embraces towering temple roofs;
The sigh of the pine breeze rising from the brazier
veils the teapot in wreaths of thick white steam,
under brilliant red maples I bid my friends sit,
one sip of my tea, their mind-cravings cease.

Soon after settling at Rinkō-in, Baisaō received a verse from Daichō in Hizen congratulating him on his seventieth birthday (his sixty-ninth by Western count) and speaking with nostalgia of his own years in the capital.

Congratulating Baisaō on His 70th Birthday

Reach seventy and they start revering you
especially a man with your dash and vigor
who's assumed the burden of a tea-selling life
taken a place among his fellow citizens;
How wonderful to reside in the capital,
changing dwellings whenever you please,
no need to seek the Peach Blossom Spring
with a face as youthful as it was years ago.
If I could dam up the flow of Duck River
channel its waters into my inkstone pool
I'd use it up expressing my congratulations
and I could celebrate your birthday forever.

In autumn, Baisaō carried his tea equipment on a visit to the Confucian teacher Uno Meika, who was suffering from what proved to be a fatal illness; he died the following year.[46] Accompanying Baisaō on this visit was a young twenty-five-year-old Zen priest named Daiten Kenjō from the Shōkoku-ji subtemple Jiun-an. Daiten was already winning distinction in ecclesiastical circles for his wide learning and brilliant scholarship.[47] Baisaō presented Meika with a gift of *tachibana*, a type of Chinese citrus whose astringent juice, taken medicinally, was said to be good for lung conditions. The fruit was rarely seen in Kyoto and had most likely reached Baisaō by way of Chinese traders in Nagasaki. Baisaō and Daiten composed *kanshi* verses to mark the occasion, and Meika responded in kind, thanking them for their visit. Daiten's verse has survived:

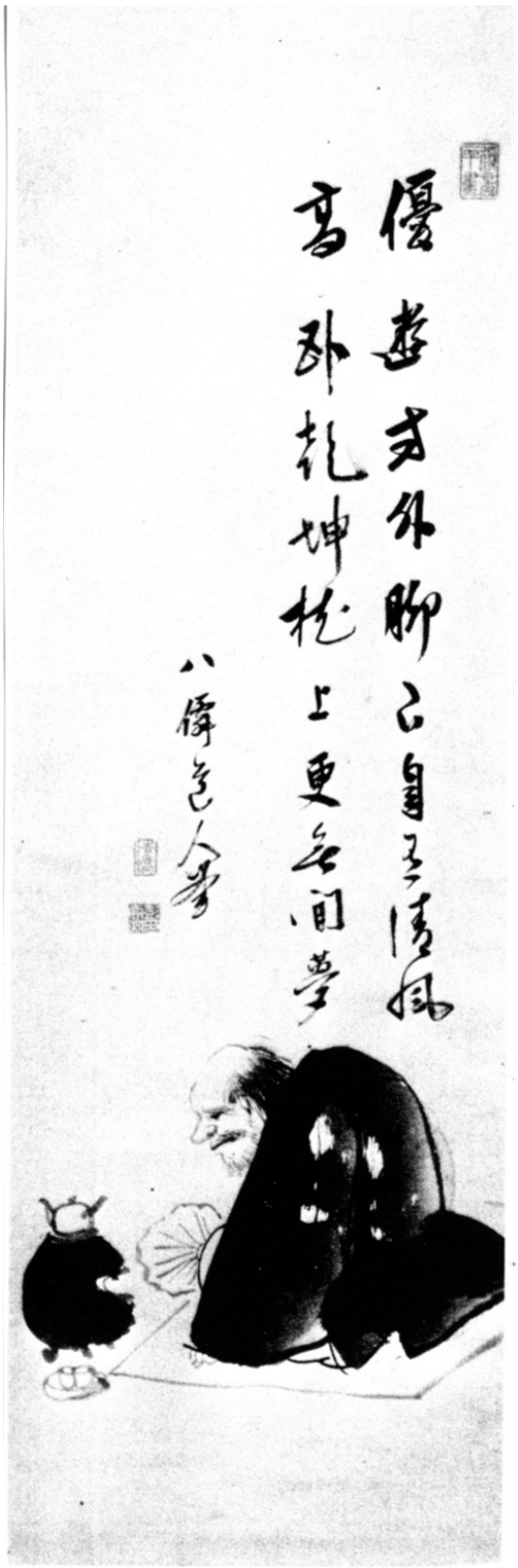
> The melancholy sound of a tea kettle
> fluting quietly from a thicket of bamboo
> steam rising from a hut morning and evening
> billowing in the wind, dispersing into the sky;
> The Old Tea Seller, knowing how few people
> in this world can appreciate such pleasures,
> has come shouldering the tools of his trade
> to give Meika Sensei a drink of his tea.

We know that Baisaō became acquainted with Meika soon after he arrived in Kyoto. They were most probably introduced by Daichō, who in addition to being Meika's teacher was his close friend and colleague. Baisaō and Meika shared a deep interest in *kanshi* poetry, Chinese learning, and tea, and seem to have become quite close friends. Ten years earlier, Baisaō had brought Meika a *suiteki* from the Imari kilns in Hizen on his return from Kyushu. The same year as the visit described above, he also presented Meika with a set of six blue-and-white porcelain *Sencha* teacups from the Ching-te-chen kilns in China, each bearing a floral design and the character for long life. It was also this year, and may even have been at the same meeting, that Meika personally inscribed Chinese verses on two of Baisaō's tea articles: one was addressed to the *chūshi*, a wooden

basin used for holding fresh water for making tea, and the other to a blowpipe, a slender section of bamboo that was used to fire up the brazier. The poem Meika wrote on the *chūshi* is typical of the dedications Baisaō and his friends inscribed to his utensils.[48]

Wooden Water-bucket

Wood once produced from water
now stows up water within itself
feeling no pride in its plenitude
overflowing, yet empty withal



Portrait of Baisaō. Sakaki Hyakusen. Reproduced from Baisaō shūsei

enjoying emptiness without shame
suffering nothing that is unclean
rejecting the old, receiving the new
keeping it always clean and pure.

In the autumn of 1745, Sakaki Hyakusen (1697–1753), a widely known painter, one of the pioneers of the literati style in Japan, paid Baisaō a visit. Few details are known about their association, other than the fact they had many friends in common, and Hyakusen painted at least two portraits of Baisaō that Baisaō inscribed with colophons. An artistic name Hyakusen adopted, Baiga Jikyū, "a man who supports himself by selling paintings," strongly suggests that he was another of the younger generation of Kyoto artists who admired, and were inspired by, Baisaō and his lifestyle.[49]

A series of *Three Verses of Self-Praise* belongs to these years as well. The "self-praise" in the title, and the bantering, self-deprecatory, not to say self-reviling, tone in which they are written belong to a type seen in colophons that Zen priests commonly inscribe over formal *chinsō* portraits. It seems likely, then, that these verses were composed for inscription on one of the many portraits Baisaō's friends and admirers were commissioning from contemporary artists.[50]

Here are the first two from the set:

i
Ahh! this stone-blind jackass
with his strange kink in the brain
he turned monk early in life
served his master, practiced,
wandered to a hundred places
seeking the Essential Crossing.
Deafened by shouts
beaten with sticks
he had a hard time of it
weathering all that snow and frost

still couldn't even save himself;
big-headed, brazen-faced
made a great fool of himself.
Growing old he found his place
became an old tea seller
begged pennies for his rice.
That's where the pleasure lies
selling tea by Tsūten Bridge
under blossoms at Moon Crossing,
when you prattle about flavor
you go completely wrong
remember Minister Wang long ago?
knowing friends are always rare.

ii
Beard on his face white as snow
scrabbly head hairs every which way
thin staff propping a decrepit frame
wrapped in a Crane Robe sages wear.
He shoulders his bamboo baskets
roams alone through the Eastern Hills
peddling tea for a livelihood
coaxing his feeble life along.
He's not Buddhist, not Taoist
not a Confucianist either
just an isolated old crank,
dull grizzled-headed ignoramus.

One of his favorite pastimes during the years at Shōkoku-ji was making excursions to the Tadasu Woods (*Tadasu no mori*), the sacred grove attached to the large and important Shimogamo Shrine. In Baisaō's day it was a forest of patriarchal maples, cryptomerias, and evergreen oaks that covered almost the entire peninsula, extending south from the shrine down to the confluence of

the Kamo and Takano rivers. The grove was only a half mile or so east of Rinkō-in, within easy walking distance, and Baisaō often carried his tea equipment there to brew tea for friends, especially during the hot muggy summer months.[51]

Among the poems inspired by these trips to the Tadasu Woods is one that Baisaō composed on an outing with Daiten and other unnamed friends in the summer of 1747. He was writing in response to a verse by Daiten, using his rhymes.

Taking Some Friends to Visit the Tadasu Woods

Together with a pair of friends
Tsūsen [Baisaō] enjoys the autumn
brewing tea with water dipped
from Kyoto's finest spring.
Its sweetness never varies,
a taste from another world;
pure talk, the simmering tea
ushers us into hidden depths.[52]

Baisaō also refers to an excursion to Tadasu in a brief letter to the Zen monk Daiyū.

I will be eating with Enshō today, so there is no need to cook my rice. If you are home for the afternoon meal please see that Musan gets something too. After we eat we are going to visit the Tadasu Woods to brew some tea. You may want to join us. If you do, bring Mujū along.

Yūgai.

The letter also provides the first inkling of a profound change that had taken place in Baisaō's life. At some point during the decade at Rinkō-in he had taken on some Zen students. Daiyū, the recipient of the letter, and two younger monks, Mujū and Musan, were now apparently living with him and serving as his attendants (*jisha*).

Musan seems to have stayed rather briefly; he would return to Ryūshin-ji in Hasuike, his home temple, before the decade was out. Daiyū and Mujū remained with Baisaō, and later accompanied him when he moved to the Okazaki area.[53]

Although Baisaō may have had some experience instructing young monks while serving at Ryūshin-ji, when he left the temple he disavowed all such responsibilities by saying that he was not cut out to be a Zen teacher. During the first two decades in Kyoto, any religious instruction on his part was most probably incidental, the natural result of his poetry, his daily contact with people, and of course, the example of the austere life he led (those who knew him best had characterized it as a form of religious training).

However, at some point in his seventies, Baisaō obviously had a change of heart; or, from a Buddhist standpoint, it would be better to say that as someone for whom the spiritual welfare of his fellow man was part and parcel of his own religious quest, he found himself unable to refuse serious-minded young monks who came seeking his spiritual help. Moreover, the maturity that all his years of continual practice had undoubtedly brought must have given Baisaō the confidence that his experience could benefit them. In any case, his life had changed. From this time on, his role as a Zen teacher surfaces much more frequently in the records, as do the names of Mujū, Daiyū, and the handful of other students who had come under his wing.

In the summer of 1748, an unidentified temple abbot (he is thought to have been the Shingon priest Mitsuben) presented Baisaō with a packet of new tea from the Togano-o fields at Kōzan-ji, in the hills west of Kyoto. Baisaō praises the color, fragrance, and flavor of the leaves as “extraordinary, and altogether worthy of Togano-o’s reputation for producing tea of the finest quality,” adding that it was the first time he had sipped tea made from the temple’s finest leaves (a surprising statement considering the numerous times he had visited the temple throughout his life).

Several months later, Baisaō received a request from Mitsuben to write an essay explaining Kōzan-ji’s role in the history of Japanese tea. The result was the *Baizan shucha furyaku*, “A Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain,”[54] a brief outline of the

history of Japanese tea. Seven years later it was published—a mere seven pages—in a small edition under the Kōzan-ji imprint, with a preface by Mitsuben. Despite its brevity Baisaō was able to insert a few pointed barbs at contemporary priests who he thought had neglected their religious concerns to become “dabblers in tea.”

> Eisai and Myōe were great Zen teachers, preeminent in the field of Zen, whose virtuous activity and right understanding, working in harmony like the two wheels of a cart, moved forward the great Dharma wheel. The waters of wisdom that welled up within them overflowed, extending their virtuous benefits to others. Their achievement is something today’s clerics who have immersed themselves in the elegant pursuit of tea drinking cannot begin to approach. The difference between these great priests and the prodigal, morally corrupt monks of today who traipse along in the worldly dust aping these great predecessors and amusing themselves with their tea pastimes is as great as that between sky and mud.[55]

It is obvious from the long list of temples and scenic spots mentioned in his verses that there were few places in the capital Baisaō did not visit on his tea-selling expeditions, which at times became trips of surprising length, considering his age and the heavy loads he had to carry. Twice during the decade at Shōkoku-ji Baisaō packed his tea equipment into his wicker carryalls and hiked the six or so miles to the Arashiyama area at the foot of the farthest western hills. On one of these trips he took part in a special ceremony being held at Rinsen-ji to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of temple founder Musō Soseki’s death. The main gate at Rinsen-ji fronted the broadly flowing Ōi River (the word *Rinsen* means “overlooking the river”) in the very heart of one of the most picturesque areas of the capital, which had long been celebrated for its cherry blossoms in the springtime and its maple leaves in autumn. Baisaō had come at the height of the fall maple-viewing season to make tea in front of the Founder’s Hall. He wrote the following verse for the occasion as well.

At Memorial Services Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Musō Kokushi's Death, I Gathered the Twelve Teachers and Carried Them to Rinsen-ji. On the Rocks at the River Bank in Front of the Hall Enshrining the Effigy Sculpture of Zen Master Musō, I Brewed an Ordinary Cup of Tea as an Offering. I Also Composed a Verse in the Master's Memory, Hoping to Express in a Small Way Something of His Dharma Truth. Please Accept It as Well

I'm not the one to offer
Three Turning Phrases
I'll just brew you some tea
on this flat ledge of rock
offer thoughts from the heart.
You taught seven emperors,
using an ageless tune
here the very river water
flowing before your hall
is an understanding friend.[56]

This next verse, which probably dates from the decade at Shōkoku-ji as well, was composed on an excursion to Shin Hasedera, a Shingon temple situated on the western slopes of Yoshida Hill in northeastern Kyoto. A popular pilgrim stop, the temple enshrined a large Eleven-headed Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. From its location on the hillside Shin Hasedera afforded splendid views of northern Kyoto, and was a favorite site for maple viewing. It survived until the second half of the nineteenth century, when it fell victim to the wave of destruction that "disestablished" Buddhism in the Meiji period. Today all that remains of Shin Hasedera is a portion of its stone ramparts, which can be seen at the western foot of Yoshida Hill.[57]

Going to Make Tea at Shin Hasedera, a Temple in Eastern Kyoto Sacred to the Bodhisattva Kannon

Footing it eastward
over Duck River
urged along by

the autumn wind
I sit alone with
my bamboo baskets
feeding the fire
with autumn leaves.
Pine trees thresh
up at the summit
shrilling quietly
inside the brazier
gentle voice of
the Great Being
resonating deep
within my heart.

In bringing this section on Baisaō's residence at Shōkoku-ji to a close, I would like to quote from a letter he sent to a friend in Okazaki village, the area in eastern Kyoto where he himself would soon be moving.

Seated Portrait of Baisaō. Itō Jakuchū. Reproduced from Baisaō shūsei

The maple leaves I have enclosed are from a tree at the Shōkoku-ji pagoda. Years ago priests of the Tatsuta Shrine in Ikoma [famous for its maple forests] presented the tree to Emperor Gomizunoo (1596–1680). The emperor was very pleased with the tree and, because it was so rare, directed that it be moved to Shōkoku-ji so that others would be able to view it as well. It is a large tree, covering a five-meter (five *ken*) wide area, and its shade extends to an area twice that large. It has green, yellow, and red leaves, the lowest layer of leaves red, the middle layer yellow, and top layer green, although there is of course some intermingling of colors. It is extremely beautiful, with large leaves. An old priest told me that until thirty or forty years ago each leaf measured about

> five inches (four *sun*) across. . . . It turns color much later than other maples, and this year, until two or three days ago, it had still not lost any of its leaves. I sent you the leaves to show you what they look like. If you put them in some water, you will find that their color will return. I know it is a rather unelegant thing to be sending someone. I just thought you might be interested in showing it to your friends.[58]

On New Year's Day, 1754, Baisaō's friends presented him with a large collection of verses congratulating him on his eightieth birthday —counting by the Japanese custom of calculating age not from the day of birth but from the beginning of the calendar year; by Western count he would have been seventy-nine. Baisaō marked the occasion with an impromptu verse.

Hummed to Myself on My Birthday

The years haven't
passed me in vain
I'm wrinkled and gnarled
beyond repair,
but all this bother
about a birthday
makes me feel ashamed;
What have I done?
consume good rice
pass idly through
"last night's dream,"
now, within that dream
I see I've reached
my eightieth spring.

In the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (*Engaku-kyō*), "last night's dream" is used as a metaphor for human life.

Later that spring, also in honor of his eightieth year, someone presented him with a set of personal seals.[59] In his verse thanking the person, Baisaō writes that although he had never felt the need to follow the usual custom of impressing seals on the calligraphy he wrote, he promised from now on to use the set he had received as a way of repaying the kindness the seal-carver had shown him.

On Receiving a Gift of Seals

What need is there at my age
for words incised in stone?
I have the wordless Mind-seal
an imprint unmistakably clear.
Now this unexpected kindness
a set of stones carved out for me
as I push on into my eighties
I'll be leaving tracks behind.[60]

"Mind-seal" is a common Zen term used in describing the way the eternally unchanging truth of enlightenment is transmitted from master to disciple—from one enlightened mind to another. Strictly speaking, an enlightened person, like the Dharma he embodies, has transcended the stage where his movements can be known to ordinary human perception. Here Baisaō says that although he is in receipt of this Dharma transmission, he will henceforth be "leaving tracks behind."

The set consisted of three seals, one engraved with the sobriquet *Tsūsen* ("the way to sagehood"), another *Baisa hachijū-ō* ("the old tea seller, eighty years old"), and a third, *Yūgai Koji* ("Layman Yūgai"). Almost all examples of Baisaō's calligraphy beginning from the spring of this year bear impressions of these three seals.[61]

One of the first pieces of calligraphy on which he impressed the seals was a verse titled "Admonitions for Myself," written during the New Year period. The list of cautionary pointers Baisaō sets for himself provides additional reminders of how committed he still was to the final completion of his religious quest. The verse was clearly

popular among his friends in the Buddhist community, given that Baisaō made at least three other copies of the verse at the request of students.

> Your life is a shadow
> lived inside a dream,
> Once that is realized
> self and other vanish.
> Pursue fame, the glory
> of a prince won't suffice;
> Take a step or two back
> a gourd dipper's all you need.
> No matters in the mind
> passions quiet of themselves
> mind freed from matter
> means suchness everywhere.
> The moment these truths
> are grasped as your own
> the mind opens and clears
> like the empty void above.[62]

Shōgo-in Village—the Final Decade

In the autumn of 1754 Baisaō left Shōkoku-ji for a small residence he had taken in Shōgo-in village, located in the Okazaki district across the Kamo River in northeastern Kyoto. A combination of factors probably entered into his decision to leave a place that was obviously so congenial to him. Old age—he was now seventy-nine—and periodic back pains may have obliged him to curtail his outdoor tea selling, and he was probably unable to engage in such activity at his residence in Rinkō-in. Temple residences, relatively large and spacious but open to the elements and difficult to heat, were also notoriously hard on the elderly. In contrast, the air and climate of the Okazaki area were reputed to be among the best in the capital. But

whatever the reasons, at the onset of winter at Shōgo-in village Baisaō began selling tea at his shop once again.

Daiten described Baisaō's existence in his final decade at Shōgo-in as spent "caring for his frail and elderly body," adding that when he turned eighty he burned his tea utensils, closed his gate, and refused all visitors from then on. Ban Kōkei seems to lend support to this account (unless, of course, he is merely repeating it) when he quotes someone as saying that Baisaō was extremely firm about refusing visitors at this time. While it is hard to gainsay contemporary accounts, especially that of someone as close to Baisaō as Daiten was, details that emerge from Baisaō's verse and letters suggest that Daiten may have somewhat overstated Baisaō's frailty and reclusiveness during this period. While tea selling, it is true, largely disappears as a subject from the inscriptions, in its place we find references to the numerous excursions Baisaō continued to make, both alone and with friends, to brew tea at his favorite spots. Utterances of an explicitly religious nature, addressed to Zen students studying with him, begin to appear in the verses and letters with greater frequency as well.

The relative abundance of letters, verses, and short prose pieces that survive from these final ten years can probably be accounted for in part by the fact that Baisaō was something of a celebrity, and specimens of his calligraphy were thus much more likely to be collected and preserved. In any case, this period of his life is by far the most richly documented, which also makes it the most interesting for modern readers. Baisaō describes the recent move to Okazaki in the following verse.

Choosing a Dwelling in the Grove of the Shōgo-in

Sedge hat planted on my head
walking stick stabbing the ground
I foot it eastward over Duck River
headed to a pure and healthful spot
just right for the tired old bones.
A row of towering pine trees
murmuring like strumming lutes

a grove of tall green bamboo
sways and clicks like tinkling jade.
Outside my window is a road
runs straight to the capital
inside, a newcomer to Shōgo-in
an old man from another world
sits by himself in a tiny room
beyond the busy paths of men
in a spiritual landscape
transcending all limits.

The Okazaki district northeast of the Kamo River where Baisaō now lived was mostly field and forest, dotted with temples, a few small villages, and some villas of Kyoto's wealthy upper class. The largest of these villages were Shōgo-in and neighboring Okazaki. Their location, isolated from the city yet near enough to enjoy its benefits, and their salubrious climate made them a natural destination throughout the Edo period for writers, scholars, and priests seeking a quiet place of retreat. Baisaō was acquainted with the area, and had undoubtedly visited it many times. Good friends such as Kameda Kyūraku, Shūnan Kaiseki, Genmyō Goshin, Ōda Kenryō, and the Precepts teacher Reitan all lived there, as did the painters Ike Taiga and Itō Jakuchū for shorter periods. After Baisaō's death, another of those who revered the memory of the Old Tea Seller, the Zen nun, poet, potter, and *sencha* devotee Rengetsu made the area her home as well.

The small house Baisaō occupied, which survived into the 1970s, was adjacent to Shōgo-in ("Temple of Guardian Sages"), a large Tendai monastery that served as an important training center for the Shugenja "mountain ascetics." His house was also only a few minutes' walk from the extensive Kurodani temple complex that occupied the southern spur of Yoshida Hill.[63] Surrounding Shōgo-in was a sacred grove (*Shōgo-in no mori*) famed for its massive trees, bamboo forests, and cultivated fields interspersed with groves of plum trees. To the north, on the southern side of Yoshida Hill, were ponds and marshlands.[64]

Baisaō described his new surroundings in a prose fragment that he apparently had drafted for use in a letter.

> Shōgo-in is situated on the east side of the Kamo River. There is a row of twenty or more large pine trees lining an earthwork border that extends for about two hundred meters in front of the gates of an imperial residence. My dwelling is situated beneath these trees. In the garden of the house on my western side is a bamboo grove that blocks out the strong western sun that beats in on summer days from about two o'clock on. My house fronts onto the road that leads up to the Kurodani temples. It is the same road that connects northern Kyoto with Ōtsu on Lake Biwa, and bullock-carts and a great deal of other traffic pass by every day. I occupy the western third of a three-dwelling row house (*nagaya*). The street in front is twelve feet wide. My landlord occupies the center dwelling, which he also uses as a resting place for people who come from the city to visit the cemeteries at Kurodani. A caretaker lives in the dwelling on the east side. It is a very agreeable place to live, with good, pure water. I have put up a plaque in my shop inscribed with the words "Walking Alone." I have the pine breeze as my friend, the bamboo shadows as my guests. I set up my business here, brewing tea and selling it to passersby. By buying rice with the coins they give me I am able to nurse my life along.[65]

The words "walking alone" (*doppo*) also appear in an inscription that probably dates from about this same time. It is in the *ren* form, in which two matching phrases are written on separate sheets of paper, or carved on wooden panels, designed to be hung up in the house or to flank a door or entranceway. Its plainspoken matter-of-factness may have given William Blake some uneasy moments.

Sayings for My Room

I walk the human world alone, coarse tea and watery gruel hard to come by.

I stroll idly through the realms of hell, red hot cakes, liquid lead in ample portion.

In a poem he wrote the following year, the privations Baisaō experienced at Shōgo-in emerge once again, accepted and validated here by a deep spiritual contentment he seems to have achieved.

Impromptu

Rambling free beyond the world
enjoying the natural shapes of things
a shaggy eighty-year-old duffer
scraping out a living selling tea.
He escapes starvation, barely,
thanks to a section of bamboo,
a tiny house with a window hole
provides all the shelter he needs.
Outside, carts and horses pass
annulling both noise and quiet
inside, easy talk at the stove
banishes notions of host and guest.
He lives under a row of tall pines
beside a temple of guardian sages
where the pine breeze sweeps clear
the dust of fame and profit.[66]

In early spring of his eightieth year (1755), Baisaō composed a verse marking the fiftieth year since the death of Tu-chan, the Chinese Ōbaku priest from whom Kerin Dōryū had received the Zen transmission, and who was thus Baisaō's "Dharma grandfather." Looking back on the time sixty-nine years earlier, when as an eleven-year-old acolyte he had accompanied his teacher to attend ceremonies at Mampuku-ji celebrating Tu-chan's sixtieth birthday, Baisaō recalls how Tu-chan had paid him the singular honor of summoning him to his chambers and presenting him with a verse

praising him as a young man who promised to have a great future in the world of Zen.[67] Notable beneath the light-spirited, self-deprecating tone is the firm assurance of someone who has struggled and come through. Significantly, Baisaō no longer feels the need to invoke the name of the great T'ang monk Chao-chou, or anyone else, in offering his "one cup" tea.

On the Fiftieth Year Since Zen Master Tu-chan's Death

Years ago old Tu-chan predicted
I'd be a "great Dharma vessel"
sixty-nine years come and gone
time it takes to crook a finger
wouldn't he laugh to see me now
a rancid old crock peddling roadside tea.
To make up for the way things turned out
I offer him a taste of my one cup tea
a Dharma transmission
worked out on my own.

Some of the most interesting bits of information about events and circumstances of Baisaō's life at this time are found in four lengthy letters, all datable to his eighties, that he wrote to his younger sister O-Yoshi in Hasuike. A fifth and much shorter letter has recently come to light that, though it lacks the name of the recipient, was almost surely addressed to O-Yoshi as well. It is difficult to know where to insert it in the chronology, although it appears to belong to this general period.[68]

I was glad to receive your message from Mr. Kiyota, who had been having trouble walking. It is good that he is now able to get around a bit better. . . . Speaking of walking, I am doing very well myself. Two months ago, in the 8th month, I walked about thirty miles from Upper Daigo-ji to Iwama, climbing some steep slopes, to reach Ishiyama-dera, where I spent

the night. Then I stayed up until late moon-viewing. I am able to say that I was not in the least bit tired.

Yūgai 25th of the 10th month

The trip Baisaō describes here is to the famous Ishiyama Temple. The three temples he mentions—*Kami* or Upper Daigo-ji, Iwama-dera,[69] and Ishiyama-dera—are old and famous Shingon establishments located south of Lake Biwa. All enshrine images of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and were stops on the most popular pilgrim circuit in western Japan. Baisaō's ultimate destination, Ishiyama Temple, overlooking the Seta River near the point where it flows out of Lake Biwa, was especially famous as a moon-viewing site. The view of the autumn moon shining over the Seta River and the lake was reputed to be one of the most beautiful in all Japan. As Baisaō's visit took place in the middle of the eighth month when the moon was at its fullest, we can safely assume that he undertook the unusually long trip in order to engage in moon-viewing at this celebrated spot.

The first of the four letters to O-Yoshi was written in the spring of Baisaō's eightieth year, just after his move to Okazaki village.

Your letter of the 7th of the 12th month last year reached me on the 6th of the following month. It seems you are still doing well and are in good health. I too have nothing unfavorable to report.

Your decision to postpone Juhaku Sama's [posthumous name of Baisaō's mother] anniversary service until the 12th month was I think a sensible one. The money (*chadai*) you sent was greatly appreciated. And I was glad to hear that the contribution I sent was offered at the anniversary service for Layman Jōkū.

As you heard, I have moved to a new place. I've been in Shōgo-in village since the 10th month of last year. A fine spot, about fifty meters east of the house where Taishin resided on her first trip to Kyoto, and not far—only about

three hundred meters—from upper Okazaki, where she stayed on her second visit.

We too had a warm winter this year. Only one severe stretch when it was extremely cold at the beginning of the 12th month. But we are still getting frost even in the third month.

The comments your daughters added to your letter are more than I deserve.

The reply you wrote me on the 14th of the 8th month last year arrived five weeks later on the 21st. . . . You mentioned that you were going to celebrate my 80th birthday at the New Year. I have done nothing to deserve such consideration. . . .

Regarding what you said about [the late] Hōchi-in appearing to you in a dream. Deeply rooted karma cannot be cancelled merely by sitting next to a priest while he recites a sutra for you. During the Buddha's lifetime even as fine a priest as the venerable Maudgalyayana [one of the Buddha's ten great disciples] found it impossible to lighten his mother's deep karma, so it stands to reason that none among today's priests will be able to do it. In view of the fact that you have many children, the best thing you can do is to recite the Buddha's name with a calm and tranquil mind.

I can claim no special virtue to speak of, but I have written Hōchi-in's name down in my registry of deaths and each month what little merit I derive from reciting sutras I will transfer to her. Reciting sutras is especially efficacious in such cases. I want you to be sure to consult Daichō regarding the dream you saw about your daughter carrying your grandchild in her womb.

I postponed replying to your letter until now because of the great difficulty I have getting letters to the posting place. That is also the reason it took so long for me to receive the letter you sent. Although it arrived at my friend's house on around the 26th of the 12th month, delivery was delayed because we were already into the New Year season, and I didn't actually get it until the 6th of the 1st month. Where I live now, I must walk about two and a half miles, crossing the Kamo River, to

fetch your letters, and when the water is running high, I must take a roundabout way down over the Sanjō Bridge, which adds over another mile to the trip.

I am afraid this is not very legible. I wrote it at night.

P.S. You say that Mr. Kiyota is in very fragile health. As I remember, he is about ten years older than me. Please give him my best regards.[70]

Yūgai 4th of the 3rd month

This letter was followed two months later by another, in which Baisaō once again refers to the concerns O-Yoshi had expressed about the ominous dream she had during her daughter Miya's pregnancy.

I was glad to learn that you are still doing well. There is no change to report here either. On the 27th I used the money (*chadai*) the two of you sent me—the proverbial "kindness from afar"—to procure some *mochi* and other items and invited a couple of abbots and others over to share them with me. The priest of Tokurin-ji is a very scrupulous man—he brought your letter over himself.

I can imagine how happy you must be at the birth of your grandson. I share those feelings completely.

I now have a better understanding of the dream you saw during Miya's pregnancy. Within the transmigratory cycle of birth and death, there is nothing in the least unusual about parents begetting children and children becoming parents in their turn. When you go to see Daichō, be sure to tell him that I want him to explain what the *Kusha-ron* teaches about people dying and being reborn again. It is something that would be difficult for me to do in a letter. The birth of Miya's son is perfectly in keeping with what the *Kusha-ron* teaches us.[71]

A few days after receiving your letter, I had a visit from Nakanoin Chūnagon.[72] I clarified for him the meaning of transmigration, the cycle of births and deaths, in the same

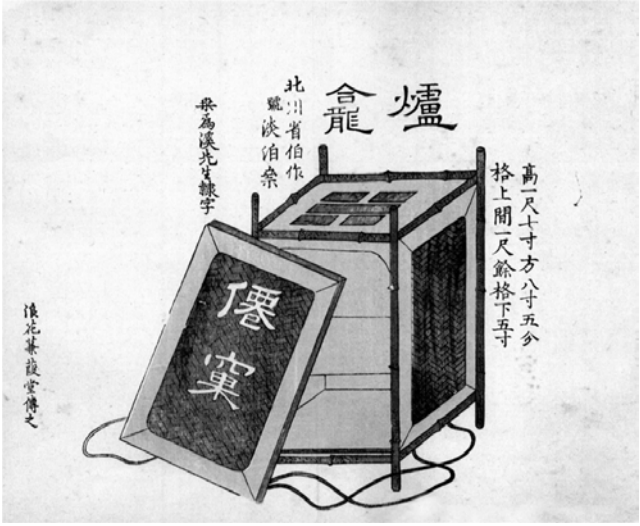
way that I have explained it to other Buddhist laymen, and he seemed to be deeply moved by it.

An opportunity has arisen for me to post this letter, so I will. I'll also send along a layered basket I had ready to send you.[73] The basket was a gift someone brought me from the Arima Hot Springs where he had spent time recuperating. It's not particularly refined, but because of the blue paper with which it is lined, I have found it to be quite useful.

I'm also sending you some tea leaves. Use them to make an offering of tea at the annual service for the Ryūshin-ji founder [Kerin]. As the tea will be traveling during the rainy season, it may become damp and lose its freshness, so you should take the amount you want to use and parch it first on some paper until it is dry. It is from Ōmi province, so it shouldn't be simmered.

Yūgai 9th of the 5th month

When autumn came, the combination of advanced age, declining physical strength, and the recurring back pains that had been plaguing him (and would soon lay him up altogether) evidently brought Baisaō to the realization that he would no longer be able to continuing selling his tea outdoors. He took his favorite carrying basket, *Senka* ("Lair of Sages"), two of his bamboo offertory tubes, and a small flat piece of bamboo root he had carved into a tray for his teapot, made a large fire in front of his dwelling, and consigned them to the flames. He composed the following eulogy.



Senka. Baisaō chaki-zu

Words Written on Committing *Senka* to the Flames

Senka is the name of the bamboo basket in which I put my tea equipment when I carry it around from place to place.

I've been solitary and poor ever since I can remember. Never had a place of my own, not even space enough to stick an awl into. *Senka*, you have been helping me out for a long time now. We've been together to the spring hills, beside the autumn streams, selling tea under the pine trees and in the deep shade of bamboo groves. Thanks to you, I have been able to eke out the few grains of rice to keep me going like this past the age of eighty. But I've grown so old and feeble I no longer have the strength to make use of you. I shall go off, 'hide myself inside the Big Dipper,' and await the end. After I die, I don't think you'd want to suffer the indignation of falling into worldly hands, so I am eulogizing you and then will commit you to the Fire Samadhi. Enter forthwith amidst the flames and undergo the Great Change. Afterwards, what words will you use to express that change? After a brief moment of silence, I say:

After the world-ending kalpa fires consume all things

Won't the emerald hills still soar into the white clouds?
With these words I commit you to the flames.

The 4th day of the 9th month, the 5th year of Hōreki (1755). Eighty-year-old Kō Yūgai[74]

Two days after burning *Senka*, Baisaō composed a verse for Buddhist services that were being held at Hōzō-ji in western Kyoto to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the death of the celebrated Ōbaku priest and poet Hyakusetsu Genyō (1668–1749). As Hyakusetsu had been a longtime friend, one supposes that Baisaō also attended the rites, a considerable walk from Okazaki of almost ten miles round-trip.[75]

At Services Commemorating the Seventh Anniversary of Hyakusetsu's Death I Joined Others in Offering a Verse

The ninth month
a bright red leaf
fluttering through
the autumn void.
Seven times now
yellow flowers
have offered
their incense.
I perform my bows
to far-off places:
'north of T'an'
'south of Hsiang.'
Your virtue flows on
in the water welling
from the spring
at old Hōzō-ji.[76]

With the earnings from his tea selling now limited to the donations he received at his shop, Baisaō's writing brush became an increasingly important tool in his struggle to eke out a living. He would inscribe calligraphy at the request of friends and admirers in return for small sums of money. His calligraphy, which had no doubt always been admired on its own merits, was now sought after because of his celebrity as well, having the added cachet of coming from the brush of the "Old Tea Seller."[77] We know from the relatively large number of thank-you letters which have survived that people were also giving him gifts of food, tea, and other necessities, as well as money. Baisaō's needs were minimal in the extreme, and he could subsist quite happily on surprisingly meager rations.

Still, as we see in this next letter to a friend and follower named Yasuda Zesui, these gifts were not enough to sustain him year-round. There were times of great difficulty when, to keep from starving, he was reduced to soliciting help from friends. The letter to Zesui, a request for assistance in drumming up customers for his calligraphy, became rather widely known after being reproduced in a book published in the early nineteenth century as a model of supplicatory letters of this kind.[78]

> As a recluse in pursuit of the Way, I have never coveted the things of the world. I have satisfied my meager needs by selling a bit of tea and converting what I received into food. But now that I have grown elderly and feeble and it is difficult for me to do even that, I make ends meet with my brush, writing inscriptions for those who request them. People present me with gifts of sweets, tea, and so forth. But no matter how nice the tea and cakes may taste, they do not satisfy an empty stomach. Rice alone, without even miso soup, is not enough for an old man. When the cold weather sets in, I need charcoal. Money to pay the landlord is also a great problem. I am a poor, wretched old recluse. I am deeply ashamed to be asking this of you, but I would be grateful if you would please introduce me to any of your friends you think might be interested in my calligraphy. I'm afraid that is not the end of it either. I have used up my supply of paper

and would be very much obliged if you could have some sent to me.

Sincerely yours, Yūgai

When Kyoto's notoriously cold winter weather set in that year, the back pains that had bothered Baisaō from time to time suddenly became more intense, making it difficult for him to walk or move about. They continued for the next twelve months, suddenly and mercifully disappearing at the beginning of the next winter. He thus seems to have been more or less incapacitated for almost the whole of his eighty-first year.

It was during this difficult year that he inscribed a colophon over a painting by the artist Ike Taiga of a small crab climbing up a stalk of bamboo grass (p. 88). Taiga, almost fifty years younger than Baisaō, had already gained wide recognition as one of the leading painters and calligraphers of the time, and Baisaō seems to have felt a special affection for the brilliant young artist, regarding him as someone who shared his spiritual values to a unique degree.[79] The two of them were later included among the group of exceptional men and women of Edo Japan in the widely read *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times*, in which the author Ban Kōkei singled them out as supreme examples in the present age of the eccentric as defined by Chuang Tzu: "one who is different from other people, but is in conformity with the ways of Heaven."[80]

Just before he died, Baisaō presented Taiga with one of his most prized possessions, a stoneware teapot used for boiling water for tea. It was of a type extremely rare in Japan at the time, and given the meaning the teapot obviously had for Baisaō, who had previously burned his tea utensils rather than see them "fall into the hands of the vulgar," the gift was a clear measure of how highly he valued his young friend.

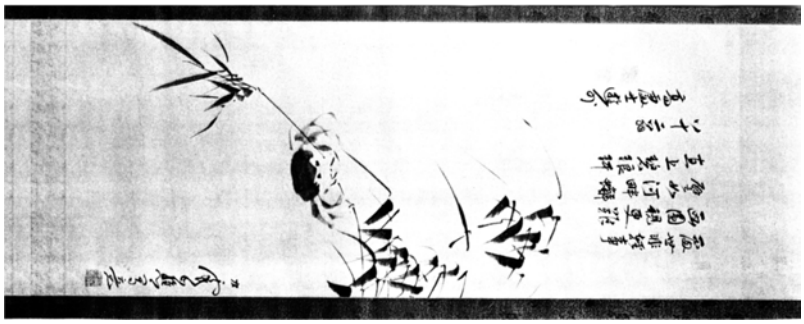
A virtually identical crab painting by Taiga, dated four years later, bears the same verse inscription by Baisaō. In both paintings Taiga depicts a tiny swamp crab climbing up a thin stalk of bamboo grass suspended precariously out over a rushing brook. The text Baisaō

used for the colophon is the last four lines of an eight-line verse written by his friend Daichō:

> A tiny crab, scrabbling his lonely way
> up a desolate stalk of bamboo grass,
> brave little chap, grasping the bamboo
> unruffled by the brisk summer breeze;
> Negotiating life is surely no easy task,
> this painting makes it seem even harder,
> a swamp crab, hanging over a swift stream,
> creeping along a slender green branch.

Because of the crab's habit of casting off its shell, it is frequently used as a symbol of rebirth and longevity. In Taiga's depiction the tiny crustacean edging resolutely forward under difficult conditions no doubt also indicates the resolve required by students negotiating the path of Zen, and, more directly, describes his friend and mentor Baisaō.[81]

Another important work dating from this eventful year is the portrait Taiga painted of Baisaō, which is one of the finest among many done by contemporary artists (p. vi). While other painters generally drew Baisaō as the skinny, toothless old man he probably was, Taiga went beneath the physical appearance to portray the inner spirit of the old man he obviously loved and admired, showing him smiling and sage-like, with the cheerful corpulence and spiritual well-being of Hotei, the "smiling Buddha."



Crab on a Bamboo Leaf. Ike Taiga. Inscription by Baisaō. Reproduced from Baisaō shūsei

In a verse dated New Year's Day of the following year, 1757, Baisaō looked back to an experience that had occurred to him years before when he was a young monk on pilgrimage to the deep north.

I Wrote This on the 1st Day of the New Year, the 7th Year of Hōreki [1757], a Fire-Ox Year, as I Suddenly Recalled Another Day Sixty Years Before.[82] *I Was Twenty-three and Had Set Out from Edo on the 15th of the 1st Month Headed North for Sendai. I Was Stopped by a Heavy Snowfall*

Trudging eastward long ago
callow youth of twenty-two
I see I've come full circle now
a sheep-ox year once more.
Eighty-three springs upon me
moving in a timeless realm
sauntering the Way at leisure
a goosefoot staff in hand.

Also thought to date from this year is the famous portrait by Itō Jakuchū (see cover) that depicts Baisaō as a toothless, scraggly-haired old man poised dramatically on a footbridge over a rushing stream. He is shouldering *Senka* and his other tea utensils balanced at the ends of a carrying pole, his Crane Robe blowing in the wind.[83]

This next letter to his sister, written during the summer of the following year (1758), provides further insight into Baisaō's life at the time and reveals how solicitous people were about his health.

Your letter of the 27th of the 1st month reached me on the 29th of the 2nd month. I was pleased to learn you are still healthy. Kaemon's wife sent me some *kuzu* (arrowroot) and I sent her a letter thanking her in the 8th month of last year. I received another letter from her on the 15th of the 1st month, but I have been in such a state of exhaustion since last

summer that it has been difficult for me to reply. The pain in my back that dogged me for an entire year is gone. It has not bothered me since winter of the year before last. I suppose at eighty-three, this fatigue is not too surprising. The weather was not too severe last winter even here in Kyoto, although we did have a few long cold spells in the spring.

Last winter a very considerate person gave me a new night robe. She thought that someone of my age would have difficulty coping with the winter cold and that the heavy kimono I wore at night might be too cumbersome for me. Someone else came from Osaka to see how I was doing during the winter months and brought me a portable hand and foot warmer [*anka*, a heating device using charcoal]. It is an unusually elaborate piece of workmanship, and even people here in the capital drop by to take a look at it.

In the 9th month last year I was obliged to go over and attend to some business at Shōkoku-ji. Daishōji-no-miya learned of my visit and came to see me while I was there. People had told her I was extremely frail and warned her this winter might be my last. She presented me with a padded vest-like garment. I'll be wearing it, and using the other gifts I told you about, so you don't have to worry about me suffering from the cold this winter. Daishōji-no-miya is an aunt of the present emperor.

It is becoming extremely difficult for me to write letters, and there is no need for you to send me any either. In the event of my death, I have asked that word be sent to the Osaka bureau of the Hasuike clan, whence it will be passed on to you. As long as you hear nothing, you can be assured that I am among the living. Even if you send a letter to Kyoto, there is no one around here I can send to pick it up. That means I must go out and find someone I know to fetch it for me. All this is very bothersome. I have not gone to pick letters up for two or three years now. If some misfortune were to occur in Hizen, it would probably be a long time before the news happened to reach my ears.[84]

Yūgai 17th of 5th month

The garment translated here as “night kimono” (*yogi* in Japanese) may be the *kamiko* he mentions in a letter to the Zen nun Shōen from this same general period. *Kamiko* of superior quality, woven from paper strands softened and treated with persimmon juice, were prized for their lightness, and because of their superior ability to preserve body heat were often worn at night for warmth. The letter to Shōen was written in the twelfth lunar month, the coldest time of the year, and, if the paper robe is indeed the “night kimono” of the previous letter, it would date from his eighty-third year.

> The letter you told me about on the 15th of last month arrived on the night of the 17th. I am glad that even during these cold months you are in good health. In spite of weakness brought by old age I too am succeeding in nurturing my health along. I am extremely grateful for your very considerate gifts: the paper robe and the bean cakes (*manjū*). Despite the distance that separates us, I keenly felt the kindness of your heart and am deeply thankful for your thoughtfulness—that paper robe is the perfect thing for an old man’s needs.
>
> I have one of Han-shan’s poems that I recently wrote out hanging up before my desk now. I find the direct and forthright manner he uses in expressing himself very stimulating. As I sat there warmly wrapped up in your gift, it suddenly occurred to me I should write something and send it to you. I immediately set about composing *waka*. It was intensely cold at the time and I’m afraid they are a bit rough, but I will send them along anyway. They may amuse you during these cold winter days.

The last of Baisaō’s letters to O-Yoshi was apparently written in the spring of his eighty-fourth or possibly even his eighty-fifth year.

> I received your letter of the 5th of the 2nd month on the 23rd of the following month. I was glad to hear you are still in good health. I seem to be pretty fit myself these days. As you surmised, I lived on rice cakes (*mochi*) during the winter

months and early spring. Since I am now living far from my previous dwelling at Shōkoku-ji, I no longer get the rice cakes the neighbors used to bring me. However, I receive some from a person who lives near me here, so the situation is much the same as before. People in the Kyoto/Osaka area (*Kamigata*) call them *kan-mochi*, “cold season rice cakes.” The gentleman began bringing them to me last winter, so you needn’t worry about me having enough to eat. This past winter I ate nothing else for one hundred days in all, from the 2nd day of the 11th month until the 10th of the 3rd month.

Now as I have written you many many times before, it has become a great burden for me to send you these dull letters when I really have nothing to say. It is even more difficult for me to find someone to post them for me. I have to go all the way to Sōbei’s, almost two and a half miles beyond the messenger’s house. And if I ask either of them to do these chores for me, I am obliged to give them some money or a gift of some kind from time to time. Sōbei himself has trouble finding someone to fetch and carry our correspondence. From now on there is no need for you to send letters so frequently. Once each year should be enough, if you find it necessary, and if you do send one, you should understand that I might not be able to reply. But as I have said to you before, as long as you receive no news from here, you can regard me as being among the living. When I die, I have arranged for officials at the Osaka bureau of the Nabeshima clan to be informed. They will contact Hizen, and the news will reach you that way.

I received the news about Yajirō’s death. If I remember correctly, he was about sixty. Not a short life, though some might think so if they compare it to mine. . . . I wanted to send a letter of condolence to Yajirō’s family, but I have forgotten his son’s name and I didn’t have the name of the village head either. I would be obliged if you would extend condolences on my behalf to his son and wife.

Yūgai 25th of 3rd month

Mochi are cakes made of steamed and pounded glutinous rice. *Kagami mochi*, an unusually large size in the shape of circular discs, is made at the New Year. *Kan-mochi*, “cold season rice cakes,” were dry, rock-hard pieces of rice cake made by breaking up the *kagami mochi* after they had served their purpose as offerings on the New Year’s altar. Immersed in jars of water, they would keep for long periods. Normally, before being eaten, they were softened by being cooked over a fire or added to soups. In the Kyoto area, *kan-mochi* were traditionally eaten from the sixth to the twenty-first of the first month. Although it sounds as though Baisaō was quite satisfied with this meager fare, one cannot help wondering how reassured O-Yoshi was to learn her brother had been living exclusively on a diet of these rice cakes for over three months.

Retirement and Lay Teaching

Although the repeated reference to physical weakness in the correspondence from his early and mid-eighties gives the impression of quite advanced senescence, Baisaō’s verses also mention excursions he continued to make with friends. Outings referred to include, among others: seeking out the view, reputed to be the best in the capital, at Eastern Iwakura, high on the slopes behind the Nanzen-ji monastery; enjoying the maple trees at Shinnyo-dō, a large Tendai temple a short climb into the hills behind his house; viewing the flowers at Saiun-ji, a Tendai temple south of the Kitano Shrine; brewing tea in distant Arashiyama; and moon-viewing at the Hirosawa Pond in Saga, where he stayed up until midnight with the priest and poet Gessen Jōtan, waiting (in vain, as it turned out) for the autumn moon to appear.

It is also clear from Baisaō’s verses and letters that he was still deeply involved in the spiritual welfare of his Zen pupils. In particular, the correspondence he addressed to close students such as Mujū and Daiyū is composed in the assertive manner of a Zen master imparting instructions and encouragement to those in his charge.[85]

Given the importance of the teaching activity Baisaō assumed later in life, I have devoted a section to these documents to give a

better idea of their nature. The following examples are taken from the verses and letters Baisaō composed for the four students to whom he devoted the most attention during this period: Daiyū, Mujū, the nun Kanshō, and the layman Yasuda Zesui. I have also included a few of the verses and letters he sent his close friend Kodō Jōkan, the abbot at Ryūshin-ji.

In his eightieth year Baisaō wrote a verse congratulating his closest student, "Brother Kyō," on the adoption of a new religious name, Mujū Dōryū. As is typical in such verses, he plays on the meaning of the new names: Mujū, "not abiding," and Dōryū, "establishing oneself in the Way."

The Zen Monk Kyō Has Changed His Name to Mujū Dōryū. I Wrote This Verse to Celebrate the Great Prospects That Lie Before Him

Unwillingness to remain in the ruts of former Buddha-patriarchs
Unsurpassed aspiration and fierce passion to achieve the Way
These are precisely the qualities found in a true Zen monk
Attained the very moment you "have been there and back."

The appearance in the final lines of a reference to a famous verse by the Sung poet Su Tung-p'o, which was said to express an enlightenment experience and had enormous influence on later Japanese Zen literature, strongly suggests that Brother Kyō received a new name because of a significant spiritual breakthrough he had achieved.

The misty rain at Mount Lu, the surging tide at Che-chiang,
Before you have been there, how great the desire to see them;
But once you have been there, how matter of fact they become —
The misty rain at Mount Lu, the surging tide at Che-chiang.

In late spring of the following year—the same year Baisaō was plagued by back pains—when Daiyū and Mujū set out on a Zen-type

“pilgrimage” to continue their training under teachers in other parts of the country, he sent them off with a verse of encouragement.

Sending the Zen Monk Mujū off on Pilgrimage (Accompanied by Elder Brother Daiyū)

As you seek the Way, visiting teachers throughout the land
You walk the road knowing your true home has been reached.
The events that unfolded at Mount Ao are new and fresh today—
A plum tree offers up a branch of pure fragrance in the snow.

The verse invokes a famous story from Chinese Zen history. The priest Hsüeh-feng, nearing fifty, had struggled hard for many years to achieve realization and his elder Dharma brother Yen-t’ou, who had already completed his training, thought he could help Hsüeh-feng realize his goal by taking him on pilgrimage. During the trip, thanks to some timely words spoken by Yen-t’ou, Hsüeh-feng finally attained enlightenment. Baisaō’s verse likens the pilgrimage of his students Daiyū and Mujū to the one in the story, implying that with Daiyū’s help Mujū’s long struggle may at last bear fruit. Daiyū’s age at the time is not known, but Mujū was, like Hsüeh-feng, in his late fifties, and seems to have already devoted many years to his practice.

The verse concludes with an allusion to plum flowers, whose purity of spirit allows them to thrive amid the biting cold of early spring (after heavy snows, plum flowers are said to produce even greater fragrance).

Two extant letters contain spiritual advice from Baisaō to Daiyū. The first was a response to spiritual concerns Daiyū had inquired about, and provides further confirmation of Baisaō’s preoccupation with Precepts study. The reference to “advanced age” suggests that Baisaō probably wrote the letter in his eighties, so perhaps when Daiyū was on this pilgrimage.

I have read your recent letter carefully, and I am extremely pleased to learn that your practice is proceeding satisfactorily. You write that you are still unable to notice any results from the efforts you are making. Sometimes the very

attempts a student makes to discern attainment too sharply or distinctly are what keep him from reaching it. What is important now is that you devote yourself all the more diligently to your practice. Continue your study of the Precept sutras for up to a year, pushing forward with steadfast courage as you do so that no failing of spirit or feeling of weakness can enter your mind.

You must excuse me. My advanced age prevents me from writing any more.

Kō Yūgai 11th of the 6th month

It is more difficult to venture a date for the second letter, although from the content, we can infer that Daiyū was on a pilgrimage to Kyushu at the time.

Your letter of the 20th of the 6th month arrived on the 23rd. I was gratified to hear that even in the summer heat you are still in good health. You mentioned the begging rounds (*takuhatsu*) you made on the 26th and 27th of the first month. Cold and heat can both make begging expeditions extremely difficult. I want you to regard the rounds as something without any flavor or taste whatever.

I am grateful to you for delivering the letters I wrote to Kodō and Tsuboi-ya, and also for relaying the message to Musan. Recently I received a gift for the *chūgen* [summer gift season] in both of their names. I opened it as soon as the temple priest brought it to me. Although I thought about whether I should accept it or not, the tatami here are worn and ragged, so I decided to use the money to have them recovered.

Zesui sends me bitter melons when they are in season. Whenever we eat them I tell him about you and your doings. When it gets a little cooler, if you come to inquire after my health, we could eat some delicious melon together.[86]

Sincerely yours, Kō Yūgai
28th of the 7th month

An early example of a verse in which Baisaō addresses the recipient in the manner of a Zen teacher is one he wrote, probably in his seventies, for the nun Kanshō. Kanshō was a native of Hizen province who had entered religious life after the death of her husband, a samurai in the Nabeshima clan. She had moved to a small hermitage in Osaka, Shōgi-an, at Chausuyama near Tennō-ji, where Baisaō is thought to have stayed during his first years in the Kyoto/Osaka area. Kanshō may have studied with him earlier, during his tenure at Ryūshin-ji, but in any event, she regarded herself as his disciple at this time, a relationship corroborated by the present Baisaō made to her in his final years: the Buddhist surplice (*rakusu*) he had worn as a priest. The third line of the verse contains a play on her name Kanshō, "Seeing into the (true) nature."[87]

Instructions for the Zen Nun Kanshō

The clear waters of the Sea of Truth, originally tranquil,
roiled into waves by the passions can blot out the sky;
Turn within, see your nature in its original suchness,
Where your intrinsic radiance is immediately manifested.

A letter he wrote Kanshō is also of interest, not for any religious advice it contains (there is none), but in revealing a close personal relationship. Calculating from the information Baisaō gives us in the letter, we can date it to his early eighties, and possibly later.

> You are to be congratulated on remaining healthy through this intense lingering summer heat despite the long and difficult time you have had nursing your patient. The light hemp summer robe you sent is much too fine for the likes of me. You shouldn't have gone to such trouble on my behalf. What will I do with such a splendid garment? I wore the same old white summer robe for over fifty years, until it became quite threadbare. Then about twenty years ago someone presented me with another one. He had it redyed before giving it to me, and that is how I have worn it.

Your kind and gracious letter arrived this morning, and before I had even finished reading it, the robe also arrived. I had it on and was already breaking it in when I finished your letter. A robe of the most inferior cloth would be the most fitting garment for an old recluse like me, so I am extremely grateful for your gift.

This heat saps all my strength. There are no specific complaints to speak of, and I try to eat sparingly, but for more than a month this fatigue has kept me from engaging in daily activities.

Sincerely yours, Kō Yūgai
28th day of the 7th month

The number (and content) of inscriptions Baisaō wrote to or for Yasuda Zesui, the lay follower mentioned earlier as the recipient of a supplicatory letter from Baisaō, attest to a particularly close relationship between the two men, and show that Zesui, an accredited tea master in the Chanoyu tradition, regarded himself as a pupil of Baisaō in both Zen and Sencha. The next verse seems to indicate how decisively he had been affected by Baisaō's way of life.

Zesui Is an Outstanding Fellow. Having Left His Home and Turned His Family Business Over to His Son and Heir, He Now Lives Quietly in Retirement in a Small Hut He Built for Himself. I Sent Him This Verse

Having braved the perilous seas of worldly existence
"Who is this" has now set his sights on a reclusive life;
His task is to discover where the ultimate self is found,
Basing his career on an open brazier's glowing flames.[88]

Another of Baisaō's close friends was the Ōbaku priest Kodō Jōkan. Kodō was a disciple of Daichō Genkō who had taken the tonsure late in life. After a period of study at Mampuku-ji, he returned to Hizen and was installed as the fifth head priest at Ryūshin-ji. Several of the students that Kodō sent to Mampuku-ji to complete their training found their way to Baisaō in Kyoto, and when Kodō made trips to the

headquarters temple in Uji on official business he would visit Baisaō. In this way, the two men seem to have become quite close.[89]

This letter contains advice for Kodō's student Musan, the monk who had stayed with Baisaō for a time at Rinkō-in. He was now back at Ryūshin-ji and had evidently sent Baisaō a letter voicing discontent with the lack of food and other difficulties they were facing due to recent crop failures.

> The great Daitō Kokushi [founder of Daitoku-ji] once directed a student to "Go out onto the Tamba Road and steal 'it' from someone." Daitō's words came to the notice of the monk Kanzan Egen [later founder of Myōshin-ji] who was studying in Kamakura at the time. He immediately set out for Kyoto and on arriving went directly to Daitoku-ji and requested to be accepted as Daitō's student. Kanzan eventually succeeded in "stealing" a rare and priceless treasure from Daitō. If Musan can go out onto the Nankai Road [one of the main Kyushu high roads] and steal something from one of the passersby, his poverty will immediately transform into wealth he cannot even imagine.

This next verse accompanied a gift that Baisaō sent Kodō: a monk's robe woven of strong Japanese paper that was worn for warmth during the winter months. In presenting the garment Baisaō pretends it is the Dharma robe of transmission, which a Zen teacher transmits to a disciple he deems is qualified to be his successor. Although it may be merely a lighthearted gesture on Baisaō's part, it is also possible that a more serious intent was involved.

> *Given This Paper Monk's Robe Long Ago, I Have Used It Until I Am Old and Feeble: Now, with This Verse, I Bestow It on the Old Zen Man Kodō*
>
> A garment of thinnest paper
> heavy as a hundred-weight!
> handed scrupulously down
> from the very first patriarchs

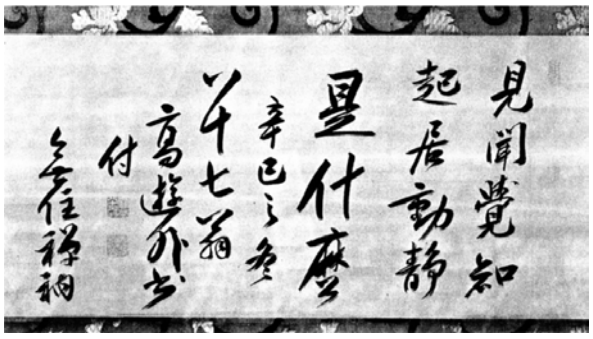
has now grown too heavy
for these old shoulders to bear—
no more words, I take it off
and I pass it along to you.

On another occasion Baisaō gave Kodō his *hafuton* (the word means literally “worn-out cushion”), the zazen cushion he had used during meditation. As the word *hafuton* is also used as a metaphor for diligent religious practice—meditating so assiduously that you wear out the cushion—no doubt Baisaō intended that implication as well.

Giving My Zazen Cushion to Old Zen Man Kodō

This tattered old
cushion of mine
over fifty years
I’ve used it
it doesn’t belong
to master Lin-chi
has nothing to do
with Chang-ch’ing either
now it’s yours
blind old monk
now you use it
fifty years.

The ninth-century Chinese Zen master Lin-chi had responded to a monk’s question about the meaning of Buddhism with the words, “Bring me my zazen cushion.” When it was brought, “Lin-chi sat on it.” The Zen master Chang-ch’ing is said to have worn out seven cushions in the course of his zazen practice.



Calligraphy. Religious Instructions for Mujū. Baisaō shūsei

Final Years

Calligraphy on purely Zen themes predominates in the final years of Baisaō's life, a period to which it is difficult to confidently place any of the letters. Among them are a handful of vertical one-line inscriptions—Zen aphorisms written in large Chinese characters—a genre favored by Japanese Zen calligraphers but rarely seen in Baisaō's earlier works.[90] One of the salient characteristics of Baisaō's calligraphy as a whole is the care and scrupulous manner in which they are inscribed—a quality, one imagines, shared by the man himself. What is somewhat surprising in these later examples is their exuberance and vitality, a marvelous untrammeled strength in the brushstrokes that seem to flow unhindered from a state of utter freedom, as if the writer had attained a spiritual plane that transcended incursions of time and senescence. One of the prime examples of this marvelous calligraphy are the words of religious instruction Baisaō addressed to his student Mujū in the winter of 1761, just over a year before his death. It is a powerful piece of calligraphy with an exuberance that belies Baisaō's age and enfeebled physical state. Using the typical master-to-disciple manner of address, he assigns a Zen conundrum for Mujū to struggle with.

> Your seeing, your hearing, and all your experience whether you are sitting or standing, active or at rest—What is it!
>
> [A koan] Given to Zen monk Mujū.
>
> Kō Yūgai, eighty-six years old

Only one piece of calligraphy from Baisaō's final year is known to exist.[91] In a colophon Baisaō says that he wrote it at the request of a Zen layman named Nishida. For the text Baisaō used a verse he had written not long after moving to Kyoto many years before. It was one for which he apparently felt a special fondness, having also singled it out for inclusion in his *Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain*.

> Going far away to China
> to seek the sacred shoots
> Old Eisai brought them back
> sowed them in our land.
> Uji tea has a taste infused
> with Nature's own essence
> a pity folks only prattle
> about its color and scent.

Baisaō wrote this inscription in the final months of his life, and there is definitely something uncharacteristic about the brushwork, especially when compared to the powerful calligraphy of the previous year—a hint of fading strength, as if written by someone approaching the end. It is tempting to regard it as a death verse, the kind that Zen teachers have traditionally left behind for their followers, although that seems a bit out of character for a man who forbade his friends to erect any marker in his memory. Whether Baisaō intended it as such or not, there is no denying that the poem sums up the themes of his life rather well.

The only account we have of Baisaō's final months is that found in Daiten's *Life*. He says that Baisaō became indisposed in the fifth month of 1763 and his condition gradually deteriorated. On the sixteenth day of the seventh month, he passed quietly away at the age of eighty-eight. Baisaō's friends apparently succeeded in getting a printed collection of his writings into his hands as he lay dying, and he was presumably able to appreciate this expression of his friends' respect and admiration.

This collection, *Baisaō Gego* (“Verses and Prose by the Old Tea Seller”), was put together by the combined effort of these men, many of them now leading figures in the cultural flowering that unfolded in Kyoto over the second half of the eighteenth century. The work was thus not only a tribute to Baisaō and his ideals, but a concrete symbol of the transmission of those ideals, through him, to the next generation.

Baisaō Gego opens with a title page in seal-script calligraphy by Kinryū Dōnin, a well-known Tendai scholar and *kanshi* poet who befriended Baisaō after moving to the Shōgo-in area in 1758. Opposite the title page is a woodblock bust portrait of Baisaō, patterned on a portrait by Itō Jakuchū that shows him as a grizzled, hollow-cheeked old man with sparse, scraggly hair, dressed in a Crane Robe. His face is seamed with age; there are signs of one or two teeth, and eyes that lend some credence to a contemporary description of them “emitting a light that entered men’s souls.” The page following the portrait contains a verse by Baisaō printed in a facsimile of Ike Taiga’s calligraphy.

Impromptu for a Portrait

He lives in the world
doesn’t know its ways
he worked hard at Zen
gained no understanding;
He totes his shop around
on a shoulder pole
brews tea all over town
but no one comes to buy,
so he packs it all up
moseys aimlessly on
finds a quiet seat
beside a tumbling stream.
Bah!
Why bother drawing a face like that?
People who see it will only laugh.

At the end of the verse is an inscription that reads: “Kō Yūgai, legitimate heir in the orthodox lineage of [Chinese Tea Sage] Lu T’ung and transmitter of the Zen Dharma in the forty-fifth generation from Bodhidharma.” This formulation, though it is not found on any of his other inscriptions, is presumably Baisaō’s own. It underscores his role as a Zen teacher who, even after he left the priesthood and lived as Layman Kō Yūgai, remained dedicated to the school’s essential principles that stem directly from sect founder Bodhidharma, prior to any sectarian ramifications, and stresses at the same time his deep affinity with the spiritual ideals of Lu T’ung, the man he respected above all others for his mastery of the Way of Tea.

After Baisaō’s verse, and prior to the approximately one hundred pieces of his verse and prose that make up the main portion of the work, is a four-page preface by Kinryū Dōnin, followed by Daiten’s *Life of Baisaō*. There is also an appendix, consisting of nineteen poems and poetical inscriptions that Baisaō and his friends had written for the tea implements. An epilogue by Daichō’s student Baizan rounds out the book.[92]

When Daiten reprinted the *Life of Baisaō* in a book of his collected writings ten years later, he included a coda in which he brought up to date the account he had written for the *Baisaō Gego*.

> I composed the *Life of Baisaō* for the collection of Baisaō’s Chinese verses that appeared in summer of the thirteenth year of Hōreki. At the time I wrote it, his strength was beginning to fail. He became weaker by the day and was moved from Okazaki to a small hermitage located south of the Hall of the Great Buddha, where, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month, he departed this world.

The biographical notice on Baisaō that Ban Kōkei included in *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times* (1788), based largely on Daiten’s account, states that Baisaō died at the Gengen-an, a small Buddhist hall located near Rengeō-in where he had lived during the early years in Higashiyama. This account agrees with Daiten’s description, although the hall was probably not Gengen-an, since records show

that several years prior to Baisaō's death the building had been dismantled and rebuilt at the Anrakuritsu-ji, a Tendai temple situated in the eastern foothills of Mount Hiei. It can be seen there today, the only of Baisaō's dwellings to have survived into the twenty-first century.

Ban Kōkei is also the source for the story about the manner of Baisaō's cremation. He wrote in *Kanden jihitsu* (1806) that Baisaō had given his friends instructions that he wanted no grave marker to be erected and that after his cremation his bones were to be pulverized and the powder scattered into the Kamo River. In the same work Ban writes that the painter Mikuma Shikō (1730–1794), who had encouraged him to write *Eccentric Figures* and had done the illustrations for the book, often told people that when he died "he wanted his bones pulverized and scattered into the Kamo River, just like Baisaō." Two facts tend to enhance the credibility of these accounts: both Ban Kōkei and Mikuma Shikō knew Baisaō personally and were closely acquainted with members of his circle, and no grave marker for Baisaō has ever been discovered.

PART 2
Translations

The Life of Baisaō

By Daiten Kenjō

Baisaō, “the Old Tea Seller,” was born into the Shibayama family of Hasuike in the province of Hizen. He left home to enter the priesthood at the age of eleven, receiving the religious names Genshō and Gekkai. His teacher was the Zen priest Kerin Dōryū of the Ryūshin-ji temple in Chikugo, who was an heir of the Chinese Ōbaku master Tu-chan Hsing-jung. The exceptional gifts that distinguished Baisaō from ordinary men showed themselves at an early age. Once he accompanied his teacher Kerin on a visit to the Mampuku-ji, head temple of the Ōbaku school at Uji south of Kyoto. While there, chief abbot Tu-chan summoned the young boy to his quarters and presented him with a verse—a sign his unusual excellence was already recognized.

After that he continued his practice with even greater assiduity, his aspiration never flagging. At the age of twenty-one he contracted a debilitating bowel ailment that caused him great difficulty. Finding he was unable to cure it on his own, he girded up his spirit and resolved to leave on a pilgrimage to visit other teachers around the country. Even before he had recovered from his illness, he cinched up his robe, put on a sedge hat, and set out on a journey that in time led him thousands of leagues northward to the Manju-ji in the city of Sendai, where he begged an audience with the abbot Gekkō. Gekkō granted him permission to reside in the training hall of his temple. He remained there for several years, practicing diligently through the days and nights.

Before it was over, Baisaō's travels took him the length and breadth of the land. He visited many eminent priests of both the Rinzai and Sōtō schools. He studied the Precepts from the Vinaya teacher Tandō. At one time he sequestered himself in a remote hermitage. He also spent time traveling, moving from place to place, alone and penniless, devoting himself singlemindedly to his Zen practice. Once he holed up on the summit of Thunder Mountain which soars twenty leagues into the skies of Chikuzen, sustaining himself on water and uncooked wheat dumplings and descending into the valleys to bathe in the tumbling streams. A summer of rigorous austerities deepened his attainment, but he was still not satisfied.

He was frequently heard to declare:

> In the past, when Zen master Fo-yen asked his chief monk Shih-ch'i to succeed him as head priest, Shih-ch'i refused: It is like a physician piercing a patient's eye with a golden needle. If his hand errs by even a hair's breadth, he will blind the patient. Better I remain a student and continue my training.
>
> I keep that story in mind to admonish myself. If I were really capable of responding freely to students with the spontaneous means of a true Zen teacher, then I should go out into the world and help others. But to strut arrogantly about, armed with a smattering of learning, calling myself a teacher of Zen—that I will never do.

When his pilgrimage was over, Baisaō returned to Ryūshin-ji where he served in the post of temple steward for the next fourteen years, until the death of the head priest Kerin. He recommended that his brother monk Daichō be appointed Kerin's successor. He was now free at last to do what really suited his nature, and set out for Kyoto.

Baisaō believed that the propriety of a Buddhist priest leaving his temple and entering the secular world depended on the mind of the

priest involved, and not on any external circumstances. He did not believe anyone who desired to lead a genuine Buddhist life of self-improvement should exaggerate the virtues of the priesthood in order to obtain the devotion and charity of the lay community.

It was for these reasons that he began to earn his living as a tea seller. He called his establishment Tsūsen-tei, “the Shop That Leads Straight to Sagehood.” From his dwelling place that he chose in the outskirts of Kyoto he went forth to sell tea at spots celebrated for their scenic beauty in and around the capital. Among his favorite haunts were the Hall of the Great Buddha, the iris pond at the Sanjūsangen-dō, the maple-forested stream at the Tōfuku-ji, the western hills of Saga, and the Tadasu Woods surrounding the Shimogamo Shrine.

He carried the utensils he used to make tea from spot to spot in a portable cabinet made of woven bamboo. Setting up an earthenware brazier, he took his gourd dipper and ladled into his teapot water from a pure, cool stream. Before long the steam from the simmering tea would begin to rise, curling and billowing, into the skies. As he fanned the brazier fire, a wonderful aroma filled the air. Those who came to partake of his tea marveled at its exquisite sweetness. The money they put into a bamboo tube set out to receive donations gave Baisaō the bare means of gratifying his hunger. Before long, the name of Baisaō, the Old Tea Seller, was known throughout the land.

An ordinance in effect in Baisaō’s native province of Hizen required residents who left the provincial borders to obtain an official permit. All inhabitants, even members of the Buddhist clergy who wished to travel the country on religious pilgrimage, were obliged to return to Hizen after a period of ten years in order to have their permits renewed.

When at the age of seventy Baisaō returned to Hizen from Kyoto, he requested permission to leave the priesthood. At the same time, desiring to avoid the ten-year limitation on his stay in the capital, he petitioned provincial authorities to have his name registered as a member of the delegation at the Kyoto bureau of the Hizen clan. As the clan officials knew him and were well aware of his character, they granted his request. He renounced his religious names and adopted

in their place the lay name Kō and the style Yūgai. At the time he explained with a smile on his lips, “I’m poor so I can’t provide for my own needs. I’m old so I can’t provide for a wife.” Then he set off for Kyoto in buoyant spirits. After that everyone referred to him as Kō Yūgai, or as Layman Yūgai.

Baisaō wrote poems for friends in both Chinese and Japanese. Several hundred in number, they date from both before and after his reversion to lay status. All of them are informed with the refined simplicity of his life—an existence such as has rarely been seen before. Yet old Baisa’s purpose did not lie in tea. The scrupulous routine of his everyday life, a religious practice in itself, was something most people failed to notice.

His final years were spent in the Okazaki district of Kyoto caring for his frail and elderly body. When he turned eighty, he took his tea utensils and burned them (an inscription he composed for the occasion is found among his poems). He then closed his gate and refused all visitors, in that manner living out the rest of his days.

Baisaō is now eighty-eight years old, and reports say he is still hale and hearty.

The thirteenth year of Hōreki (1763). Tankai Jikujō (Daiten) [For the revisions Daiten made to this final paragraph, see p. 106.]

Impromptu for a Portrait

He lives in the world
doesn’t know its ways
he worked hard at Zen
gained no understanding;
He totes his shop around
on a shoulder pole
brews tea all over town
but no one comes to buy,
so he packs it all up
moseys aimlessly on
finds a quiet seat
beside a tumbling stream.

Bah!
Why bother drawing a face like that?
People who see it will only laugh.

Kō Yūgai, legitimate heir in the orthodox lineage of [Chinese Tea Sage] Lu T'ung and transmitter of the Zen Dharma in the forty-fifth generation from Bodhidharma.

Twelve Impromptu Poems

i
Set out to transmit
the teaching of Zen
revive the spirit
of the old masters
settled instead for
a tea-selling life.
honor, disgrace
don't concern me
the coins that gather
in the bamboo tube
will stop Poverty
from finishing me off.

ii
Set up shop this time
on the banks of the Kamo[1]
customers, sitting idly
forget host and guest
they drink a cup of tea
their long sleep ends
awakened, they realize
they're the same as before.

iii
I emulate old Chao-chou
“Have a cup of tea!”
the shelf’s been stocked for ages
yet no one comes to buy.
If you were to stop here
and take one good sip,
the old mental craving
would instantly cease.

iv
The older I get the keener
I sense my native clumsiness,
old friends jockeying
to be first in the world
all pity me: “alone and poor,[2]
his shadow his only friend,
has to keep himself alive
by selling streetside tea.”

“Have a cup of tea!” is a teaching phrase associated with the T’ang Zen master Chao-chou Ts’ung-shen. Chao-chou asked a newly arrived monk, “Have you been here before?” The monk replied in the affirmative. Chao-chou said, “Have a cup of tea.” Later when he asked another monk the same question, the monk replied in the negative. Chao-chou said, “Have a cup of tea.” When a third monk asked Chao-chou why he had responded the same way to two totally different answers, Chao-chou called out the monk’s name. When he responded “Yes, master,” Chao-chou said, “Have a cup of tea.”

v
How many spring and autumns,
that first crochet still unchanged,
my nature’s strange and crazy bent

as strange and crazy as before
seated squarely in the city streets
red dust far as the eye can see,
an empty boat drifting freely[3]
among the troubled urban waves.

vi
A peerless tea from Chien-hsi[4]
emblazoned with phoenix and dragon,
one sip, worth its weight in gold,
dethrones your tongue forever;[5]
You're welcome to taste it yourself
right in the streets of the capital,
yet today it's the same old story:
I won't even cover my costs.

vii
I know my carefree life
seems crazy to the world
buried deep in city dust
indulging my silly crank;
but don't say "his shadow
is the poor man's only friend"—
I have Twelve Teachers with me
they share my idle life.

viii
Always took things as they came
tried active and reclusive life
holed up on a mountain peak alone
waxed eccentric—"crazy monk!"
Now I live in the city streets
ministering to the passing trade;

what a laugh—an old duffer
begging coins by flogging tea.

ix
Going far away to China
to seek the sacred shoots
Old Eisai brought them back
sowed them in our land.
Uji tea has a taste infused
with Nature's own essence
a pity folks only prattle
about its color and scent.

x
Waves roil in the earthen pot
the wind's thin wail starts up
simmering tea and serving it,
offering it to all mankind;
a shame no one who comes
understands its real taste;
sitting alone I brew for myself
a tea beyond compare.

xi
The crystal cup Manjushri[6]
raised up on Mount Wu-t'ai
a taste so marvelous
there's nothing you can say;
don't tell me it's not found
in these southern lands,
I've got it here at Tsūsen-tei[7]
the taste is just the same

xii
At a roadside by the archery grounds,[8]
suffused in Kyoto's redolent past,
purest fragrance of perennial spring
wafting out for a thousand leagues;
I've come here and set up shop,[9]
as is befitting my humble talents,
it's an old story, the life I lead,
awaiting someone who understands.[10]

Three Poems on Choosing a Dwelling

i
I moved this morning
to the center of town
waist deep in worldly dust
but free of worldly ties.
I wash my robe and bowl
in the Kamo's pure stream
the moon a perfect disc
rippling its watery mind.

ii
Making the busy streets my home
right down in the heart of things
only one friend shares my poverty
a single scrawny wooden staff;
Having learned the ways of silence
amid the noise of urban life
taking things as they come to me
now everywhere I am is true.[11]

iii
This rootless shifting east and west

I can't suppress a smile myself
but how else can I make
the whole world my home.
If any of my old friends
come around asking
say I'm down at the river
by the Second Fushimi Bridge.[12]

Tasting Some New Tea from Ekkei

A gift of "immortal buds" sent from an old friend
"first spring picking from the Ekkei fields," he said[13]
Opening the packet, color and fragrance filled the room,
Proud 'banners and lances' of outstanding quality.[14]
Clear water dipped at the banks of the Kamo
Well boiled on the stove, just right for new tea.[15]
The first sip revealed an incomparable taste,
Purifying sweetness refreshing to the soul.
No need wasting time on 'butterfly dreams,'[16]
Rising up, utterly cleansed, beyond the world,
I smile, not a single word in my dried-up gut,
Just the 'wondrous meaning' beyond all doctrine.[17]
I've been poor so long, pinched with hunger,
Now a kind gift to soothe my parched throat,
Dewdrops so sweet they put manna to shame:
The fresh breeze rises round me, lifting me upward.
It doesn't take seven cups like Master Lu says,[18]
My guests get old Chao-chou's 'one cup tea';[19]
And whoever can grasp the taste in that cup
Whether stranger or friend, knows my true mind.
Sake fuels the vital spirits, works like courage,
Tea works benevolently, purifying the soul.
Courageous feats that put the world in your debt
Couldn't match the benefit benevolence brings.

A tea unsurpassed for color, flavor, and scent,
Attributes the Buddhists like to call “dusts,”[20]
But only through them is the true taste known,
They are the Dharma body. Primal suchness.

A Verse Hung up at the Shop (Tsūsen-tei)

The tea simmering in this pot is offered to all who pass,
The cost to you, my friends, is only one half *sen*;
A single cup can purge all the cares from your heart,
Enjoyments here at Tsūsen-tei are slow and unhurried.

A Pair of One Line Inscriptions Put up at the Entrance to Tsūsen-tei

Opening shop, I attract gentlemen throughout the city,
I brew tea to banish the sleep demon from their minds.

The Bamboo Offertory Tube

A scraggy old derelict
appeared from the west[21]
with a poor sort of Zen
not a *sen* to his name,
selling tea he manages
a small handful of rice
his very life hanging
on a tube of bamboo.

Selling Tea by Tsūten Bridge

The old tea selling man, the one by Sanjō Bridge
is here again to brew the pure waters of Tsūten;
Young men, don’t tell me my price is too steep,
everything only half a *sen*, you get yellow leaves as well.

Opening up Shop at Rengeō-in

Life stripped clean to the bone
I'm often out of food and drink[22]
yet I offer an elixir
will change your very marrow.[23]
I sell it under the pine trees,
before a Hall of a Thousand Buddhas[24]
How many who stop to drink it
will discover the Wu-ling spring?[25]

Brewing Tea at Saiun-ji in Kitano[26]

Brewing tea by the roadside
fragrance rising from the pot
a marvelous refined pleasure
a flavor found nowhere else.
The soft shrilling of the pine wind
moving through the northern fields
billowing steam from the brazier
dispersing into the western clouds.

Inscription for the Offertory Bamboo Tube

I'm old, I'm bone poor
you are my begging bowl
my living and my dying
depends on you alone.

Setting Up Shop at Tsūten Bridge

Sitting under the covered bridge
my twelve old teachers with me
I simmer a pot of the Uji spring[27]
on the bedrock beside the stream;
The sound you hear is not a lute[28]
the strain is from another realm,

when you leave it will have washed
away the dust of the mundane world.

Lines Hung on a Branch at Tsūten Bridge

Red maples stippled with autumn frost
clothe Tsūten Bridge in sumptuous brocade;
yellow leaf buds and pure snow water[29]
brewing the spring by Jadewash Brook.[30]

Opening up Shop in a Grove Before Hōjū-ji[31]

In a grove of tall bamboo, by an ancient temple
steam rolls from the brazier in fragrant white clouds;
I show you a path leads you straight to Sagehood
can any of you understand the lasting taste of spring?

Setting Up Shop Under the Pine Trees
Before the Great Buddha at Hōkō-ji[32]

Brewing tea in a cluster of pines
customers one after another
imbibing for a single *sen*
one cupful of the spring;
Friends, please don't smile
at my humble existence
being poor doesn't hurt you,
you do that on your own.

Epigram for the Bamboo Offertory Tube

Fanning up the pine wind
brewing tea day after day
quickening men's minds
to the path of the Sages.
If you want to understand

what old Lu really meant
just empty your coin purse
into this bamboo tube.

A Gentleman in Kii Province Sent Me a Gift of Yellow Fangs. I Dropped Them into the Offertory Tube and Wrote This Poem to Thank Him for His Kindness[33]

Far far over cloudy trails
a kindness transmitted mind to mind,
an offering from a distant friend
come to ease my poverty;
Converted into a handful of rice
it will keep the life-thread whole—
the contents of a bamboo tube
deciding whether I starve or not.

Opening up Shop at Tsūten Bridge

Setting up for business here
under a canopy of white cloud
in a landscape so rich and rare
Yü-ch'uan would gape in wonder;[34]
I have a way that can usher you
straight through to the heavens
and it won't take you six cups
to reach the Immortals' abode.

Setting Up Shop on a Summer Night Beside the Iris Pond at the Hall of a Thousand Buddhas

An iris pond in flower
before the ancient hall,
I sell tea this evening
by the water's edge;
it is steeped in the cup
with the moon and stars

one sip, you wake forever
from your worldly sleep.

The Priest Seki Shōnin, Hearing I Had Changed My Place of Residence, Presented Me with a Verse: I Wrote One Using the Same Rhymes[35]

I brought my brazier here
today beside a temple pond,
pine winds scented with liquid
jade drift across the water;
the townsfolk, as usual
fail to grasp its true worth
at my waist, in vain
hangs an empty purse.

The 'Master of Kyūshi Studio' Was a Name Used by Mr. Iwata of Osaka. His Sobriquet Was Genzan. Although I Was Not Well Acquainted with Him, I Do Know He Was a Person of Fine and Upright Character. When He Was Sick and Confined to His Bed, He Composed a Waka Verse to Send Me. After Finishing a Draft of the Verse, the Master of Kyūshisai Passed Away. His Elder Brother Sōhō Had the Poem Mounted as a Scroll and Sent It to Me, Explaining the Conditions Under Which It Had Been Written. In Gratitude, I Wrote a Verse and Gave It to Sōhō to Offer to the Spirit of the Deceased. He Told Me He Had Displayed It in the Family Shrine[36]

You sent me a verse—a work of rare excellence[37]
I hummed it once or twice, gazing up at the heavens
Then I offered you a cup of my own special tea
Don't say it has no flavor, like Chao-chou's Zen![38]

Simmering Tea Under Pine Trees on a Summer Day

I love the idle solitude
of slow September days
fragrance from a stoneware brazier
rising in shade of a thousand pines.
No sweltering worldly heat
could ever reach me here

no marvel in the Sages' realm
can tempt me from it either.
My water is dipped from
the pure Otowa springs[39]
my tea is grown in China
(I have it sent from home)
life's ultimate pleasure
is to be free from care
yet people point and snigger:
"crazy old tea-grubber."

Setting Up Shop by Tsūten Bridge

I've packed my tools of trade
among the fallen yellow leaves
stoking the brazier with pine cones
summoning a soft pine wind;
I'm not concealing secret arts
to speed you on to Sagehood
once you transcend the flavor
you'll savor its true rich taste.

The Bamboo Offertory Tube

Setting up shop all over town
a one *sen* coin, one cup of tea
my entire life is dependent
on the contents of this tube,
either I eat or go hungry,
it's not for me to decide.

The End of the Final Month of the Fourth Year of Gembun (1739), There Had Been No Customers, the Offertory Tube Was Empty, I Went to the First House I Saw and Asked the Man Who Came to the Door for Money, I Then Promptly Wrote This Verse to Thank Him

Year almost done

money tube empty
aching with hunger
I went to your door
begging for help;
this hundred *mon*,
a dipper of water
to a gasping wretch,
will keep me alive
into the new year.

Two Impromptus

i
Pure water from a clear spring
simmering over the clay stove
battered robe and tattered cap
brown with fume and tea smudge.
Don't think I'm some old gaffer
with a wild-eyed love for tea
my purpose is to waken you
out of your worldly sleep.

ii
Hunched in silence on his mat
bottle gourd dipper in his hand
he passes months he passes years
ladling pure water from a spring.
Sages never come to drink
knowing friends are rare,
who will pass the secrets on
that straighten people's minds?

Opening up Shop in a Bamboo Grove

Taking refuge inside a grove of towering green bamboo,

I brew tea on a bamboo brazier, sell it to folks who pass;[40]
serving customers leisurely by a fence of woven bamboo,
acquiring thanks to my bamboo tube a never-ending spring

Selling Tea Under the Pine Trees

Under a thousand towering pines
cloistered in deep green shade
steam from a pine-cone fire billows—
I'm buried inside a white cloud.
Often I sit here under these trees
then leave without any earnings,
again today I face the pine breeze
sitting alone with my unsold tea.

An Outing to Brew Tea at Duck River

Leaving my snail-shell dwelling
shouldering my tools of trade
I dip water from a flowing spring
and strike out up Duck River.
You won't find any worldly taste
simmering inside my teapot
nor have I any need to run off
seeking storied pools of jade.[41]

Brewing Tea on a Visit to Tōfuku-ji

Pine trees rise through cloud
soar into the blue skies
bush clover, spangled with dewdrops
sways in the autumn breeze;
As I dip cold pure water
at the edge of the stream,
a solitary white crane[42]
comes lolloping my way.

Brewing Tea at Kōdai-ji[43]

Trudging slowly up
the long stone steps
to old Kōdai-ji
through a world of
rust red maples
unfolding like a scroll;
I've come to brew tea
with water dipped
from the fabled
Chrysanthemum Spring
just one cup
I now know
clears things up
for all time.

Going to Make Tea at Shin Hasedera, a Temple in Eastern Kyoto Sacred to the Bodhisattva Kannon[44]

Footing it eastward
over Duck River
urged along by
the autumn wind
I sit alone with
my bamboo baskets
feeding the fire
with autumn leaves.
Pine trees thresh
at the summit
shrilling quietly
inside the brazier
gentle voice of
the Great Being
resonating deep
within my heart.

Taking Some Friends to Visit the Tadasu Woods[45]

Together with a pair of friends
Tsūsen enjoys the autumn[46]
brewing leaves with water dipped
from Kyoto's finest springs.
Its sweetness never varies,
a taste from another world,
pure talk, simmering tea
ushers us into hidden depths.

Selling Tea at Tōfuku-ji

Peddling tea at my age
seems sillier by the day,
poverty is another smile
not even a scrap to eat.
Below the maple forest
that reddens Good Sun Peak[47]
I'm out begging coins again
nursing the life that's left.

Visiting Shōkoku-ji to Brew Tea Under the Maple Trees

An ancient Zen monastery, at the city's northern edge;
suffused in redolence four hundred autumns old.
its large mountain gate faces splendid palace walls
its ancient pond embraces towering temple roofs;
The sigh of the pine breeze rising from the brazier
veils the teapot in wreaths of thick white steam,
under brilliant red maples I bid my friends sit,
one sip of my tea, their mind-cravings cease.

Three Verses on a Tea-Selling Life

i

I'm not Buddhist or Taoist
not a Confucianist either
I'm a brownfaced whitehaired
hard up old man.
people think I just prowl
the streets peddling tea,
I've got the whole universe
in this tea caddy of mine.

ii
Left home at ten
turned from the world
here I am in my dotage
a layman once again;
A black bat of a man[48]
(it makes me smile myself)
but still the old tea seller
I always was.

iii
Seventy years of Zen
got me nowhere at all
shed my black robe
became a shaggy crank,
now I have no business
with sacred or profane
just simmer tea for folks
and hold starvation back.

Verses Hung up at My Stall at Ninna-ji in Omuro, Which Boasts the Most Celebrated Cherry Trees in the Capital

Brought my clay stove
my first trip to Ninna-ji[49]
the cherries in full flower

brewing cups of the Uji spring;
Flowing far from its source
in the uplands of Hupeh,
Master Lu's tea sweeps[50]
cravings and cares away.

Tea drinking, handed on
through centuries past
over five hundred years
since it reached our shores;
recluses, revering the past,
took to it, raised it to an art
now I sit here with my teapot
savoring it under the flowers.

Impromptu

Took a shack by the Narabi Hills[51]
western fringe of the city
I come and go when I please
taking whatever life brings
boiling clear water in the pot
kindling the pine cone fire
summoning customers to the shop
for a cup of my humble tea;
it's a plain and simple life
like those clouds in the sky
hidden deep in the shadow
of a thousand green bamboos
the food I need is provided
by means of a bamboo tube
the earnings of a lifetime
measured in cups of tea;
since Yü-ch'uan's fish eyes[52]

roused me from my slumber
I've had no need to ramble off
to Huang-t'i's land of dreams;[53]
People have little idea
how poor I really am
think I'm some strange old coot
enjoying a hermit's peace.

A Poem for the Recluse Kameda Kyūraku, Written in the Summer of the Third Year of Kampō (1743), at the Age of Sixty-eight. I Had Moved My Tea Shop to the Eastern Edge of the Narabi Hills. The Seasonal Rains Started and Did Not Let Up for over a Month. There Were No Customers, the Bamboo Coin Tube Was Empty, and I Had Nothing to Eat. Kameda Sensei, Hearing of My Difficulties, Made a Special Trip to Bring Me Some Food. I Wrote Him a Verse to Express My Gratitude

Out of tea
out of food
coin-tube empty
a minnow gasping[54]
in a drying puddle;
thank you for
what you did
the special trip
the food
bowl and dipper
filled again
will stop the End
from closing in.

Impromptu

He works long and hard at selling tea,
an ageless tradition—new every day,
customers arrive from the sages' cave[55]
finest Ōmi leaves simmer on his stove.

Pure spring water, with pebbles added,[56]
a tea that washes all worldly dust away;
If any friends want to know who he is—
he's someone who has transcended taste.

Receiving a Verse from the Priest Hō Ryūkei. I Wrote This One Using the Same Rhymes[57]

Pure chance made us neighbors
when I moved my shop here
you dropped by, sat by the stove,
brought me a splendid verse;
I sell flowers, I sell the moon
but no one comes to buy them
the pure breeze at the sixth cup
isn't reckoned in worldly coin.

Stopping by Saiun-ji to Brew Tea I Left a Verse for a Revered Abbot[58]

I've carried the bamboo baskets
to Saiun-ji in northern Kyoto
to brew some fresh spring water
near Michizane's shrine;[59]
the pine breeze rises,
the cups are filled,
the first one for the priest—
he smiles to see the life I lead
buried in smoke and steam.

A Gift Arrived from the Abbot of a Certain Temple. Some of the Year's First Pick from the Ekkei Fields in Ōmi Province. There Was a Verse Enclosed. Using the Same Rhymes, I Composed One Myself

Devoting my life to peddling tea
crusted thick with worldly dust
has spread a groundless rumor:

I'm one of Kyoto's idle poor.
At dawn, a rap at the gate,
a gift of tea from eastern Ōmi—
it takes my thoughts back to
Yü-ch'uan's springtime long ago.[60]

Impromptu Warning Young Monks About Aping My Tea

The tea pot turned over in master Wang's face
has been a vital koan for a thousand years;
unless you have it in you to lift that straight up,
don't spoil the reality prattling about 'tea.'

Brewing Tea by Tsūten Bridge

In a forest of scarlet red maples
amid rocks and tumbling waters
brazier smoke mutes the autumn colors
rises to envelop the Tsūten Bridge;
The whispering thresh of trees
mingling with the brook's soft trilling—
How could such an unearthly realm
exist in the human world?

Impromptu

White clouds billow and thicken
rising up from the brewing tea
what use do I have if I have this
seeking out caverns where sages dwell.
I set out to be a seller of tea
ended up the buyer as well,
holding it up, enjoying it alone—[61]
understanding friends are rare.

Simmering Tea at Shōkoku-ji

(Before the Great Temple Gate is a Pond of Eight Virtues, Where Today In the Upper Story A Memorial Service Is Being Conducted)[62]

Under a row of shade trees by a many-virtued pond
I sit by my bamboo brazier awaiting the passing trade
perfume from lotus blossoms floats over the pond
pure sounds of sutra-chanting descend from the upper story.
in the earthen pot waves rise from the flavorless tea
the pine wind quavers like music from a stringless lute—
and all this happens, all is enjoyed
within the small small space of my mind.

Impromptu

Out of step with the world
confirmed in my uncouth ways
peddling tea for a living
follows the natural grain;
A plain life and a quiet mind
excel the finest luxuries
an easy heart and tattered robe
better far than finest silk.
At dawn I dip from the well
and set out toting the moon
at dusk I shoulder an earthen stove
come home trailing the clouds.
It's a life I'm able to manage
despite this worn body of mine
roaming outside the mundane world
beyond the clash of pro and con.

Setting Up Shop in the Tadasu Woods

Roaming freely beyond the dust
has a flavor all its own,
tea simmering in the kettle

the taste of another world.
The “Pure Breeze” banner is flying[63]
Senka sits by my side at the stove[64]
I simmer some clear spring water
dipped at dawn in the eastern hills.
The tea in the cups has a fragrance
from beyond the western seas[65]
I carried it here on my shoulder
it is yours at a special price.

Brewing Tea in a Forest of Red Maples

White clouds, crimson trees,
here I am selling the spring;
if you enter an autumn forest
and enjoy the flowers of spring
sleep demons lower their banners
beat an abject retreat
pure breeze covers the earth
keeping defilements at bay.

Impromptu in Late Summer

Deep in a bamboo grove,
savoring the life that’s left
I sit leisurely by myself
untouched by worldly cares;
planted flowers out back—
the forms of formlessness
listen to a soundless rhythm
of the rocks beneath the window.
stop and rest by the river’s edge
to the sounds of sutra chanting
stroll idly beside a pond
in sweet aroma of lotus bloom;

anyone comes here looking
for the ‘special transmission’ of Zen[66]
I’ll point them under their noses
to matters of their everyday life.

For Senior Priest Koshin

You look askance at fame and fortune
verbal transmissions of Buddha-truth
revere the style of old Yung-ming[67]
a horned tiger of the groves of Zen;
the pine tree before the temple gates
clearly differentiates host from guest
the thicket of bamboo out back
clarifies the essential mystery
lotus flowers blossom beyond the wall
glowing with light from a land of bliss[68]
wild geese crossing the autumn sky
descend to a river flowing below.
Combining Nembutsu with Zen—
“plum trees north, plum trees south”[69]
pure fragrance from a single branch
fills the world till the end of time.

Two Impromptus at Year End

i
Four seasons, whirling past
spinning like a wheel of fire
within them is a springtime
change can never touch;
Hiei, beautifully carved gem[70]
ten thousand snow-capped feet
Buddha’s body, pure and chaste
Vairochana, for all to see.[71]

ii
The years of a man's life
spin like the spokes of a wheel;
beyond the cave of immortals,
a world of perennial spring;
chin deep in urban dust
I leave no tracks behind,
a totally traceless existence
a self completely unbared.

My Monk's Robe[72]

I patched you from a hundred scraps
a garment of the mountains and streams,
you became the soul of my being
and I came back clothed in the clouds.[73]
When I turn and take a hard look
gazing right down under my feet
I see the jewel fitted in the lining[74]
gleaming there bright as before.

At Memorial Services Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Musō Kokushi's Death, I Gathered the Twelve Teachers and Carried Them to Rinsen-ji. On the Rocks at the River Bank in Front of Your Hall Enshrining the Effigy Sculpture of Zen Master Musō, I Brewed an Ordinary Cup of Tea as an Offering. I Also Composed a Verse in the Master's Memory, Hoping to Express in a Small Way Something of His Dharma Truth. Please Accept It as Well.

I'm not the one to offer
Three Turning Phrases
I'll just brew you some tea
on this flat ledge of rock,
offer thoughts from the heart.
You taught seven emperors
using an ageless tune

here the very river water
flowing before the hall
is an understanding friend.

Sayings for My Room

I walk the human world alone, coarse tea, thin gruel hard to come by.
I stroll idly through the realms of Hell, red hot cakes, liquid lead in ample portion.

An Outing to Eastern Iwakura[75]

Clambering into emerald hills
above the city's boiling dust
green pines and scarlet maples
nature's own intrinsic shapes;
A fabric of splendid silk brocade
blanketing the mountainsides
revealing the infinite virtues
of the cosmic Buddha body.

Hummed to Myself on My Birthday

The years haven't
passed me in vain
I'm wrinkled and gnarled
beyond repair,
but all this bother
about a birthday
makes me feel ashamed;
what have I done?
consume good rice
pass idly through
"last night's dream,"[76]
now, within that dream

I see I've reached
my eightieth spring.

A Verse Congratulating Ichiu ("One Rain"), Goshin Oshō, on His Appointment to the Abbotship of Hōsen-ji [77]

Ensconced in your teaching chamber
Mo-yeh Sword ready at your side[78]
sitting upright on your zazen seat
no one will be able to touch you;
A dash of rain, so bracing
to gentlemen of the capital,
now a flowing Dharma spring
to invigorate the wise ones of Ise.

On Receiving a Gift of Seals[79]

What need is there at my age
for words incised in stone?
I have the wordless Mind-seal
an imprint unmistakably clear.
Now this unexpected kindness
a set of stones carved out for me
as I push on into my eighties
I'll be leaving tracks behind

Choosing a Dwelling in the Grove of the Shōgo-in

Sedge hat planted on my head
walking stick stabbing the ground
I foot it eastward over Duck River
headed to a pure and healthful spot
just right for the tired old bones.
A row of towering pine trees
murmuring like strumming lutes
a grove of tall green bamboo

sways and clicks like tinkling jade.
Outside my window is a road
runs straight to the capital
inside, a newcomer to Shōgo-in
an old man from another world
sits by himself in a tiny room
beyond the busy paths of men
in a spiritual landscape
transcending all limits.

Impromptu for the New Year[80]

Nine times nine always comes up eighty-one,
Eyes are horizontal, your nose up and down;
Once the madness ceased, Yajnadatta was fine,[81]
When the change comes, it's springtime everywhere.[82]

The Zen Monk Kyō Has Changed His Name to Mujū Dōryū. I Wrote This Verse to Celebrate the Great Prospects That Lie Before Him

Unwillingness to remain in the ruts of former Buddha-patriarchs
Unsurpassed aspiration and fierce passion to achieve the Way
These are precisely the qualities found in a true Zen monk
Attained the very moment you "have been there and back."

Impromptu

Rambling free beyond the world
enjoying the natural shapes of things
a shaggy eighty-year-old duffer
scraping out a living selling tea.
He escapes starvation, barely,
thanks to a section of bamboo,
a tiny house with a window hole
provides all the shelter he needs.
Outside, carts and horses pass

annulling both noise and quiet
inside, easy talk at the stove
banishes notions of host and guest.
He lives under a row of tall pines
beside a temple of guardian sages
where the pine breeze sweeps clear
the dust of fame and profit

Zen Master Fukei Genryū Was Appointed an Attendant at Mampuku-ji, the Ōbaku Headquarters Temple, Where He Will Now Assist in the Teaching of Others: I Wrote This Verse for Him[83]

A golden carp from the western ocean
has come to sport in the eastern seas;
he'll mingle in among his fellows
mindful to conceal his inner worth;
Springtime, he'll head for the open road
emulating old Attendant Ch'eng-yüan,[84]
sweeping away the false and wrong
raising up ancient ancestral winds.

For the Old Zen Man Kodō on Being Installed as Librarian at Mampuku-ji, the Ōbaku Headquarters Temple[85]

You always were partial
to old Mu-chou's Zen,[86]
now you're at the summit
wield your own staff;
Over five thousand volumes
idle words and idle phrase
but a flower placed on silk brocade[87]
can enhance its splendor.

I Wrote This on the 1st Day of the New Year, the 7th Year of Hōreki [1757], a Fire-Ox Year, As I Suddenly Recalled Another Day Sixty Years Before. I Was

Twenty-three and Had Set Out from Edo on the 15th of the 1st Month Headed North for Sendai. I Was Stopped by a Heavy Snowfall

Trudging eastward long ago
callow youth of twenty-two
I see I've come full circle now
a sheep-ox year once more.
Eighty-three springs upon me
moving in a timeless realm
sauntering the Way at leisure
a goosefoot staff in hand.

At Services Commemorating the Seventh Anniversary of Hyakusetsu's Death I Joined Others in Offering a Verse[88]

The ninth month
a bright red leaf
fluttering through
the autumn void.
Seven times now
yellow flowers[89]
have offered up
their incense.
I perform my bows
to faroff places:
"north of T'an"
"south of Hsiang."
Your virtue flows on
in the water welling
from the spring;
at old Hōzō-ji.

For Daichō Rōryō on His Eightieth Birthday

Valley streams mountain
flowers

Dharma body
diamond hard[90]
spiritual landscape
boundless radiance
primal Buddha's
eternal spring
one moon twinkling
on a coral tip,[91]
its light upon us
forever new.

Impromptu for the New Year

The ninth spring of Hōreki[92]
has rolled around
the wretched old tea-man
has turned eighty-four;
still worthless as ever
shamefaced old chuffer—

a single plum flower[93]
blossoming beyond time.

Admonitions for Myself[94]

Your life is a shadow
lived inside a dream,
Once that is realized
'self' and 'other' vanish.
Pursue fame, the glory
of a prince won't suffice;
Take a step or two back
a gourd dipper's all you need.
No matters in the mind
passions quiet of themselves

mind freed from matter
means suchness everywhere.
The moment these truths
are grasped as your own
the mind opens and clears
like the empty void above.

Written for the Wall of Master Shinsan's Study[95]

There are times sitting
idly at the open window
I reach the hidden depths
of the immortal sages,
times, rambling free
beyond the floating world
I ascend to the heights
of the wise men of old.

Composed in a Dream the 30th Day of the 10th Month the 3rd Year of Kampō (1743)

Pain and poverty
poverty and pain
life stripped to bone
absolute nothingness
only one thing left
a bright cold moon
in the midnight window
illumining a Zen mind
on its homeward way.

On the 50th Anniversary of His Parents' Death, the Zen Priest Enshō[96] *Brought Some Priests Together for a Memorial Feast. I Was Among Those Invited. We Chanted the Brahma Net Sutra*[97] *and Diamond Sutra. Then I Wrote a Verse to Assist Them in Their Journey in the Next World*

The precepts' unvarying fragrance

permeates throughout the universe
the divine light of Buddha wisdom
bestows the world a radiant glow;
transcending birth and death alike
treading both of them underfoot,
hearing the sound of fresh laughter ring
from the inner halls of Nirvana.

For Layman Daien Genkyō,[98] *a Devoted Student of the Way of the Sword Who Calls His Style of Swordsmanship "The Way of the Great Round Mirror Wisdom"*

Wielding your Feather Cutter[99]
talking of taking and giving life
you must find the way
that strikes straight to the center;
fling body and soul together
into the great round mirror
the mind will empty instantly
then pass right on through.

A Verse Teaching for Senior Monk Daiyū

When you first aspired to enlightenment,
sudden attainment of Buddhahood
all forty-two of the Bodhisattva stages
were contained in that single thought;
If the keeping or breaking of precepts
lacks the strength of a firefly's gleam
the virtue of the precepts' true meaning
is lost, although you bask in its light.

Giving My Zazen Cushion to Old Zen Man Kodō

This tattered old
cushion of mine

over fifty years
I've used it
it doesn't belong
to master Lin-chi
has nothing to do
with Chang-ch'ing either
now it's yours
blind old monk
now you use it
fifty years.

Three Verses of Self-Praise

i
Ahh! this stone-blind jackass
with his strange kink in the brain
he turned monk early in life
served his master, practiced,
wandered to a hundred places
seeking the Essential Crossing.
Deafened by shouts
beaten with sticks
he had a hard time of it
weathering all that snow and frost
still couldn't even save himself;
big-headed, brazen-faced
made a great fool of himself.
Growing old he found his place
became an old tea seller
begged pennies for his rice.
That's where the pleasure lies
selling tea by Tsūten Bridge
under blossoms at Moon Crossing,[100]
when you prattle on about flavor
you go completely wrong

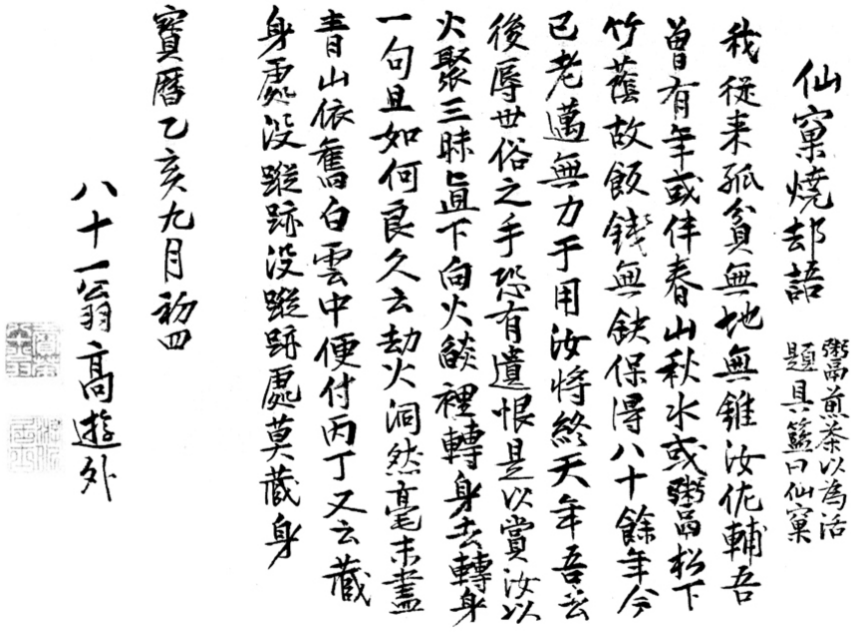
remember Minister Wang long ago?[101]
knowing friends are always rare.

ii
Beard on his face white as snow
scrabbly head-hairs every which way
thin staff propping a decrepit frame
wrapped in a crane robe sages wear.
He shoulders his bamboo baskets
roams alone through the eastern hills
peddling tea for a livelihood
coaxing his feeble life along.
He's not Buddhist, not Taoist
not a Confucianist either
just an isolated old crank,
dull grizzle-headed ignoramus.

iii
What's the tea seller
got in his basket?
bottomless tea cups?
a two-spouted pot?
He pokes around town
for a small bit of rice
working very hard
for next to nothing—
blinkered old drudge
just plodding ahead . . .
Bah!

Words Written upon Committing Senka *to the Flames*

Senka is the name of the bamboo basket in which I put my tea equipment when I carry it around from place to place.



Calligraphy. Eulogy for *Senka*. Baisaō shūsei

I've been solitary and poor ever since I can remember. Never had a place of my own, not even space enough to stick an awl into. *Senka*, you have been helping me out for a long time now. We've been together to the spring hills, beside the autumn streams, selling tea under the pine trees and in the deep shade of bamboo groves. Thanks to you, I have been able to eke out the few grains of rice to keep me going like this past the age of eighty. But I've grown so old and feeble I no longer have the strength to make use of you. I shall go off, 'hide myself inside the Big Dipper,' and await the end. After I die, I don't think you'd want to suffer the indignation of falling into worldly hands, so I am eulogizing you and then will commit you to the Fire Samadhi. Enter forthwith amidst the flames and undergo the Great Change. Afterwards, what words will you use to express that change? After a brief moment of silence, I say:

After the world-ending kalpa fires consume all things
Won't the emerald hills still soar into the white clouds?
With these words I commit you to the flames.

The fourth day of the ninth month, the fifth year of Hōreki (1755). Eighty-year-old Kō Yūgai

Epilogue by Daichō Rōryō

The preceding collection of verses by the Old Tea Seller portrays in accurate detail the circumstances of his daily life in Kyoto. This is just the way that he lives. Some say mistakenly that Baisaō leads a happy, carefree life the like of which was never seen before and will never be seen again. If such were true, it would suggest old Baisa is merely a recluse who has elected to seek a refuge in tea. No, the question of his reclusiveness is only an after-trace; it has nothing to do with his essential meaning. Readers, please refrain from prattling with parrot-brained wisdom about Baisaō and tea.

Daichō Rōryō, the Old Tea Seller's younger brother in the Dharma, humbly wrote this epilogue in winter of the first year of Kampō (1741).

Additional Verse and Prose

The following verses are not included in the *Baisaō Gego* that was published in the final year of Baisaō's life. Some are taken from the additional verses included in the standard modern edition of Baisaō's works edited by Fukuyama Chōgan; others are from unpublished manuscript copies.

Given This Paper Monk's Robe Long Ago, I Have Used It Until I Am Old and Feeble: Now, with This Verse, I Bestow It on the Old Zen Man Kodō

A garment of thinnest paper
heavy as a hundred-weight!
handed scrupulously down
from the very first patriarchs
has now grown too heavy
for these old shoulders to bear—
no more words, I take it off

and I pass it along to you.

On the Fiftieth Year Since Zen Master Tu-chan's Death

Years ago old Tu-chan predicted
I'd be a great Dharma vessel
sixty-nine years come and gone
time it takes to crook a finger
wouldn't he laugh to see me now
a rancid old crock peddling roadside tea.
To make up for the way things turned out
I offer him a taste of my one cup tea
a Dharma transmission
worked out on my own.

Rules for Life

Be free of greed—better than charity.
Be free of ignorance—better than zazen.
Be free of anger—better than following precepts.
Be free of thoughts—much better than chasing them.
Once the ways of ignorance are subdued, you sleep soundly
when night comes, you sit by the fire when the cold sets in.
The fires of the passions are generally devoid of smoke.
Don't avoid the Dark Lady.[102]
Don't seek the Goddess of Virtue.
When good and skillful means emerge at will
everything transforms to Buddha wisdom.
Once Buddha wisdom like that is yours,
the rewards and virtues are limitless.

Going with Zen Master Baisaō [Daiten] to the Tadasu Woods

An eminent priest has joined me
on an excursion to Duck River
watery passions meeting and merging

meeting and merging without end;
This basket I carry around with me
is filled with a truly endless flavor
now I'm going to share it with you
let you savor the pleasure it gives.

Instructions for the Zen Nun Kanshō

The clear waters of the Sea of Truth, originally tranquil,
roiled into waves by the passions can blot out the sky;
Turn within, see your nature in its original suchness,
Where your intrinsic radiance is immediately manifested.

Zesui Is an Outstanding Fellow. Having Left His Home and Turned His Family Business Over to His Son and Heir, He Now Lives Quietly in Retirement in a Small Hut He Built for Himself. I Sent Him This Verse

Having braved the perilous seas of worldly existence
"Who is this" has now set his sights on a reclusive life;
His task is to discover where the ultimate self is found,
Basing his career on an open brazier's glowing flames.

Sending the Zen Monk Mujū off on Pilgrimage (Accompanied by Elder Brother Daiyū)

As you seek the Way, visiting teachers throughout the land
You walk the road knowing your true home has been reached
The events that unfolded at Mount Ao are new and fresh today
A plum tree offers up a branch of pure fragrance in the snow.

Layman Munin Passed Away in the Prime of Life.[103] *I Received a Letter From His Elder Brother a Thousand Leagues Distant in Far-off Hizen, Asking That I Brew the Deceased an Offering of Tea. I Also Composed a Verse for the Occasion*

Some years back I acquired the tea of old Chao-chou,
It wakes you from your dreams, routs the sleep demon;
Now take a sip of that tea from my bottomless cup,

And please, no missteps as you make your way home.

Prose Texts

I. Prose Written for a Certain Person

When Zen master Myōan Eisai returned from his second trip to China in search of the Dharma, he brought back some seeds of the tea plant. He planted a few on Mount Seburi in Hizen province, and when he returned to Kyoto he gave some to Myōe Shōnin at Togano-o, northwest of the capital. Myōe prepared a special field at Togano-o and planted the seeds. A number of years later, the Shogun Yoshimitsu ordered a retainer named Ōuchi Yoshihiro to established tea fields at Uji, south of Kyoto, using seeds from the Togano-o plants. From that time, tea became known to the world at large and spread throughout the land. But all of the tea plants derived from those first seeds that Eisai brought from China. Both Eisai and Myōe extolled the virtues of tea, praising it for the way it refreshes the spirit and keeps the mind alert during Zen meditation.

Today, tea has become a mere plaything for Buddhist priests and laypeople alike. They know nothing of the fundamental meaning tea had for people such as Eisai and Myōe.

Master Eisai was the first Zen teacher in Japan. There had been priests before him who had brought the Zen teachings back after studying in China, but their transmissions all died out. The transmission of the Zen Dharma that Eisai introduced has continued unbroken to the present day. But today's priests are even in their dreams unable to grasp the meaning of the Zen school's "direct pointing." As one who is proud of the traditions of the Zen school, I deplore its current practice of soliciting money and such from the government, and I deplore no less the habits of modern priests who devote themselves to the superficialities of the tea they drink, its color, fragrance, or aroma, while remaining totally ignorant of its true meaning. I sigh with regret to witness the decline of Zen, which proceeds hand in hand with the decline of tea.

II. *A Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain*

The *Baizan shucha furyaku, A Brief History of the Tea Seeds Planted at Plum Mountain*, was written in 1748 at the request of Mitsuben, a priest of Kōzan-ji, a Shingon temple at Mount Togano-o in the western hills of Kyoto. Baizan is a Sinified version of the name Togano-o. The original edition of *A Brief History*, which was published in 1754 with a colophon by Mitsuben, is extremely rare. Although the work is basically a very concise outline of the history and spiritual background of Japanese tea, at the conclusion of the work Baisaō expresses a personal sense of his disappointment at the state of contemporary tea, together with the hope that it can be returned to its true spiritual foundations. The *Brief History* is a rather confusing mixture of text, interlinear notes, parenthetical notes, and headnotes. The interlinear and parenthetical notes are evidently by Baisaō; the headnotes were added by someone else, perhaps Mitsuben. In the following translation headnotes are omitted and the notes by Baisaō are set in italic type.

Text

Tea has an ancient history dating from the time of Shen-nung [mythical Good Ruler of ancient China]. Lu Yü's *Classic of Tea* (Japanese, *Cha-ching*) and Lu T'ung's "Tea Song" (*Cha-ka*) were written during the T'ang dynasty, and led to the spread of tea drinking throughout the country. Gentlemen of taste and culture who wrote odes or other rhymed verses or prose invariably praised the virtues of tea.

In our own country, from long in the past, such things have been rare. On the eighth of the fourth month in the first year of the Tempyō era [729], Emperor Shōmu invited a hundred Buddhist priests to his palace where for a period of four days lectures were delivered on the *Larger Prajñā-pāramita Sutra*; on the second day a tea ceremony was held for the priests. In the first year of the Kōnin era [810], the Emperor Saga held a ceremony that for the first time had as its purpose the tasting and enjoyment of tea.

From the 1st year of Tempyō to the 1st year of Kōnin is a span of eighty-two years. Lu Hung-chien [Lu Yü] lived during the Tien-pao era, the reign of Emperor Yüan Tsung. The 1st year of Tien-pao in China corresponds to the 14th year of Tempyō in Japan. Lu Yü-ch'uan [Lu T'ung] lived during the Yüan-huo era, the reign of Emperor Ching Tsung. The 1st year of Kōnin corresponds to the 5th year of Yüan-huo in China.

An old record preserved at Mount Baibi [Togano-o] states that "Emperor Saga proceeded to the Bonshaku-ji in the province of Ōmi, where he drank a cup of tea when he was suffering from the effects of sake drinking. This marks the beginning of tea drinking in Japan." Tea drinking goes back to ancient times in our country. It is said that *hikicha* (ground tea) was served at court banquets in the Imperial Palace. It appears that this was a powdered tea.

Powdered tea was also consumed in China in ancient times. Later, brick tea and simmered tea were also consumed. In recent times people drink mostly infused (ch'ung) *tea, what the* Classic of Tea *calls* yen *tea, or* p'ao *tea, in which tea leaves are put into a bowl and hot water is poured over them. The leaves used in* ch'ung *tea and* p'ao *tea are processed differently from today's* sencha.

Nonetheless, there were still few people in Japan with a real appreciation for tea. In the second year of Kenkyū [1191], when Zen master Eisai (also known as Myōan) of Kennin-ji returned to Japan from his second trip to China in search of the Dharma, he brought back some seeds of the tea plant.

The period from the 1st year of Kōnin to the 2nd year of Kenkyū is a span of three hundred and eighty-two years.

Eisai had obtained seeds of a superior quality, and he designated precisely where they should be planted. *It is said that the tea seeds were from Gu-chou. Whether true or not, I do not know*.

He first planted some of the seeds at Mount Seburi in Chikuzen Province on the island of Kyushu.

In the past, ships traveling west to China left from the port of Hakata in Chikuzen as they would today from Nagasaki. From Hakata to Mount Seburi is about ten ri *[approx. 25 miles], and it is a very difficult mountain road. I believe that when Zen master Eisai first arrived back in Japan, he probably had no fixed residence. An*

especially close friend, perhaps from the days when he was a Tendai priest, was serving as abbot at a temple on the mountain, and that is why he first planted tea seeds there. In the Genkō shakusho*, it says that Eisai planted tea seeds on Mount Seburi in Chikuzen province. The southern side of the mountain is in Hizen province, the northern side in Chikuzen. Today, only the southern side is referred to as Mount Seburi, and the name Mount Seburi is one that is used chiefly in Hizen. There are ten Tendai temples on the mountain, including the Gokai-in. The lord of Hizen province provides food for the monks there. Much tea is still being produced on the mountain, but because it is a rustic hinterland, the processing of the leaves is poor and the tea is not of a good quality*.

He then presented some to Myōe Shōnin of Mount Togano-o.

According to a temple legend at Mount Togano-o, Master Eisai presented the tea seeds in a small pot. The pot is still preserved in the temple. It is called "Little Persimmon of the Han [dynasty]."

Myōe planted the seeds at his temple, made tea from the leaves, and took great pleasure in drinking it.

There are eleven tea fields at Togano-o, including the Togano-o, Fukase, and Sanbonki fields.

According to a temple legend at Togano-o, Myōe Shōnin was the first to produce *sencha* or simmered tea, this marking the beginning of *sencha* drinking in our country. In the 6th year of Kenkyū (1195), Master Eisai planted tea shoots in the back gardens of the Shōfuku-ji Zen temple that he had established in Hakata.

It would appear, then, that the first tea plantings were at Mount Seburi, the second at Togano-o, and the third at Shōfuku-ji. In spite of this, Japanese have long hailed Togano-o, not Mount Seburi, as the site of the first tea planting in Japan. It is a case of a place gaining fame because a superior man had appeared, and of a man becoming widely known because of the fame a place had achieved.

From these beginnings, tea spread throughout Japan, and many people developed a strong love of tea and tea drinking. Hence, on exploring the early history of tea drinking, we find that Eisai and Myōe occupy the same position in our country as Lu Yü and Lu T'ung did in T'ung China.

Eisai and Myōe were great Zen teachers, preeminent in the field of Zen, whose virtuous activity and right understanding, working in harmony like the two wheels of a cart, moved forward the great Dharma wheel. The waters of wisdom that welled up within them overflowed, extending their virtuous benefits to others. Their achievement is something today's clerics who have immersed themselves in the elegant pursuit of tea drinking cannot begin to approach. The difference between these great priests and the prodigal, morally corrupt monks of today who traipse along in the worldly dust aping these great predecessors and amusing themselves with their tea pastimes is as great as that between sky and mud.

Among the Buddhist verses on tea selling I myself have written is this one:

> Going far away to China
> to seek the sacred shoots
> Old Eisai brought them back
> sowed them in our land.
> Uji tea has a taste infused
> with Nature's own essence
> a pity people only prattle
> about its color and scent.

Daichō Genkō wrote a verse using the same rhymes:

> When was it Myōe crossed over to China?
> Today old Chao-chou resides here in Japan;
> He has a tea shop that leads you straight to the Sages;
> When will people discover the fragrance found there?

An old document preserved at Mount Togano-o quotes the following passage from the *Seisai shiwa* (Seisai's Talks on Poetry): "On leaving Japan to return to China, the priest Shou Shang-jen was

given as a product of Japan some tea from Mount Togano-o. He expressed his gratitude in a verse, saying “I had the good fortune to learn of Plum Mountain, and for the first time was able to taste Japanese tea.”

Zen master Sesson Yūbai once secluded himself at Mount Togano-o. He had even before that been a great lover of tea, and I believe he decided to stay at Togano-o because of his deep admiration for Myōe’s spiritual legacy, and his fascination for the splendid beauties of its rivers and hills.

Akamatsu Enshin, another tea lover, visited Master Sesson while he was living there. Sesson wrote a verse in which he said: “How can one account for the attraction mountain tea has for people in the mundane world? The dust flies from their horses’ hooves, billowing up in great white clouds.”

Later Ashikaga Yoshimitsu directed his vassal Ōuchi Yoshihirō to take some tea seeds from Togano-o and plant them in Uji south of Kyoto.

From Master Eisai’s arrival back in Japan in the 2nd year of Kenkyū to the time Shogun Yoshimitsu ordered Ōuchi to plant seeds in Uji is one hundred and seventy-eight years.

Today, from those beginnings, there is nowhere, in the capital or in the remotest countryside, where tea plants are not grown, and there is not a single one of those plants that does not trace its origin to Mount Togano-o. A priest at one of the temples at Togano-o said: “Every year when the families in Uji produce tea from the young tea buds, they first of all place an offering of the leaves before a portrait of Myōe Shōnin.” This is proof that they have not forgotten their roots.

When I was a young boy, I climbed up Mount Togano-o. There was a single tea plant growing in the garden in front of the shrine to Myōe Shōnin (it was called the Shōrō-ka, “Bell-tower flower”). The next time I visited, the plant had died and nothing remained but a stump. The third time I went there was nothing, only an empty yard. Togano-o is situated in a splendid setting, surrounded by mountains and rivers, an ideal environment for tea gardens.

As a young monk I visited Nagasaki and was received with great hospitality by a certain Chinese priest. He gave me a drink of Wu-i

tea, and told me of the beautiful landscape in the mountains of Wu-i where the tea is grown, describing in great detail the vivid green hills and fields thickly covered with tea plants. It occurs to me now as I think back on his words that while the hills of Togano-o west of Kyoto, where Chinese tea seeds were first planted in Japan, may not be as high as those of Wu-i, they surely must rival them in scenic beauty.

In the fifth month of this year [1748], a temple priest presented me with a packet of this year's new tea. For the first time, I sipped the finest tea from the Togano-o fields. The color, fragrance, and flavor were outstanding, altogether worthy of Togano-o's reputation for producing tea from the finest tea bushes in Japan.

Not being skilled in the use of words and uncertain about matters of the past, I have been able to do nothing but gather together and write down the gist of what I have read or heard on the subject. It would be a fine thing for Mount Togano-o tea, and a great pleasure for me, if on perusing my account someone would correct my mistakes, enlarge on the facts I have presented, and incorporate it into a more comprehensive work. It would then be like the case of the man who followed a woodcutters' path and found his way to the house of Master Ko Hung [in the realm of the sages].

The Fifth year of Enkyō [1748]
Baisaō (Kō Yūgai)

Mitsuben's Colophon

Mount Togano-o, situated on the western fringes of the capital, is a beautiful place with a long and illustrious history. The pot of tea seeds that Zen master Eisai presented to Myōe Shōnin at Togano-o long ago marked the beginning of the dissemination of tea in Japan. As it continued to spread throughout the country over the centuries, many people forgot its origins. Tea, which had originally been used among practitioners of Zen to sweep away sloth and sleepiness, and praised by the high-minded, later became a plaything of wealthy and worldly-minded gentlemen, its roots forgotten.

Kō Yūgai, who is known throughout the capital as Baisaō, the Old Tea Seller, responded to my request and composed this brief history

of tea.

The third month, the fourth year of Hōreki [1754]
Baizan Mitsuben

1. The Kamo River runs north to south through Kyoto, forming the eastern boundary of the main part of the city. “Forget host and guest” denotes a state in which self-other, subject-object duality is transcended, a principle also alluded to in the final line.
2. “alone and poor, his shadow his only friend”: proverbial for loneliness.
3. “Empty boat” appears in the Chuang Tzu as a metaphor for what in Buddhist terms would be called enlightened activity in the state of “no-mind,” living in the world but untouched by its troubles.
4. The Chien-hsi district of Fu-chien province was an important tea-growing region. In the Sung dynasty, *Shih lung feng* (“decorated with dragon and phoenix”) was the name for a brick tea of the highest quality. It was stamped with a phoenix-and-dragon design and reserved for use by the imperial household.
5. The expression “dethrones (literally, ‘transforms’) your tongue” appears as a capping phrase in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Case 19): Zen master Chü-chih’s enlightened activity (holding up a finger in response to all questions) is praised for “dethroning the tongues of everyone on earth,” that is, for abrogating attempts to describe Zen in words.
6. Manjushri’s crystal cup: an allusion to a story in the *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 35. The Bodhisattva Manjushri, who represents the wisdom of the Buddhas, and was reputed to reside on Mount Wu-t’ai, conjured up a temple for a monk who was traveling on the mountain. A Zen-type dialogue followed, and when the two drank tea, Manjushri held up a crystal cup and asked, “Do they have this in the south?” The monk answers in the negative, whereupon Manjushri renders the monk speechless by saying, “Then what do they use to drink tea?”
7. Tsūsen-tei, the name of Baisaō’s shop, “the Shop that Leads Straight to Sagehood,” and by extension, Baisaō himself.
8. The archery ground before the Sanjūsangen-dō at Rengeō-in in Higashiyama, where tournaments are held at the New Year period.
9. “Teachers set up their shops according to their talents.” *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 88.
10. “awaiting someone who understands”: from the *Analects*, 9:12. A follower told Confucius he had a great treasure and asked whether he should sell it. Confucius urged him to sell, then added that he too had been waiting for a person to sell his treasure to. The painter Ike Taiga used the words for one of his artistic names. It has been suggested he may have been influenced by reading Baisaō’s poem.
11. “Everywhere I am is true”—from the *Record of Lin-chi*.
12. One of three smaller bridges south of the large Gojō Bridge in the Higashiyama district, spanning streams that flow into the Kamo River from the eastern hills.

13. The Ekkei tea fields are attached to the Eigen-ji Zen temple located in the mountains of Ōmi province (present Shiga prefecture) on the eastern side of Lake Biwa.
14. “Banners and lances” are descriptive of the tea leaves’ shapes as they unfurl in the infusion process. For the finest tea, the new leaves are picked when two buds have appeared from one leaf, hence the reference is sometimes to “one banner and two lances.”
15. “Well boiled on the stove” (literally, “old boiling water”) refers to water that has been brought to a boil and kept boiling until it ceases to emit steam.
16. “Butterfly dreams”: allusion to the well-known story of Chuang Tzu musing about whether he is a man dreaming he is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he is a man.
17. “beyond all doctrine”: The Zen school is said to transmit the “wondrous meaning that exists apart from the Buddhist scriptures.”
18. In his “Tea Song,” Lu T’ung states that after drinking six cups of tea one’s “dried-up bowels are thoroughly cleansed, leaving only five thousand volumes inside” (a scholar was said to have thousands of books in his stomach); after seven cups, the drinker flies up to join the immortal spirits. See translation, p. 188.
19. Old Chao is Zen master Chao-chou.
20. According to the Buddhist theory of cognition, the Six “Dusts” (color or form, smell, taste, sound, touch, and objects of consciousness), perceived by the Six Roots (the five senses and consciousness), are the cause of the afflicting passions (*klesha*) that create the state of illusion and suffering. According to the Mahayana principle of nonduality, when one grasps the fundamental truth of the Buddha Dharma, one realizes that the passions are in and of themselves enlightenment, or the Buddha-body (Dharmakāya) itself.
21. The First (Chinese) Zen Patriarch Bodhidharma is said to have “come from the West” to China in order to transmit the Zen teaching. Baisaō also came from the west, from his home in Kyushu.
22. “often out of food and drink”: cf. “Admirable is the virtue of Hui! With a handful of rice and a single gourd of water, living in a mean narrow lane, while others could not have endured the distress, it made no difference at all to his joy” (*Analects*).
23. “change your very marrow”: In a well-known poem on tea, tea drinking is said to “change the marrow of your bones and render the body light.”
24. “Hall of a Thousand Buddhas” (Senbutsu-dō) was the popular name for the Sanjūsangen-dō, although in fact one-thousand-and-one images are enshrined in the hall, and they are representations of the Bodhisattva Kannon.
25. “Wu-ling spring”: In T’ao Yüan-ming’s *Record of Peach Blossom Spring*, a fisherman of Wu-ling follows a river upstream through a grove of blossoming peach trees and suddenly emerges into the perennial springtime of the realm of the immortal sages.
26. Saiun-ji: a Tendai temple located near the Kitano (“Northern Field”) Tenmangu Shrine in western Kyoto. The final line alludes to the temple’s name, “Western Cloud Temple.”
27. “Uji spring”: spring-picked tea buds from the Uji fields.

28. The sound is the “pine wind,” water or tea simmering in the teapot.
29. “Yellow leaf buds”: young tea buds.
30. Jadewash Brook (*Sengyoku-kan*), spanned by the Tsūten covered bridge, flows down through the celebrated ravine at the Tōfuku-ji.
31. Hōjū-ji, located just southeast of the Rengeō-in, had wells noted for their fine water. In its heyday in the Heian period, Hōjū-ji had been a great palace/temple, from which the cloistered Emperor Goshirakawa ruled the country. In Baisaō’s day, there were few if any buildings left.
32. The Great Buddha—the text has *Shana-den*, Shana being an abbreviated form of Birushana (Sanskrit, Vairochana) Buddha. It was an enormous bronze figure constructed at Hōkō-ji in 1588 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in imitation of the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji in Nara.
33. Kii province: present-day Wakayama prefecture. “Yellow fangs” (*kōga*) are gold coins. The “cloudy trails” are the sky. The word *tobei*, “a measure of rice,” in line five was used as a studio name by the painter Itō Jakuchū, and may have been suggested to him by this verse.
34. Yü-ch’uan: a sobriquet used by Lu T’ung. The poem contains various allusions to his “Tea Song”: see the translation, p. 188.
35. Seki Shōnin is probably the Ōbaku priest Kaiseki Shūnan. The verse seems to have been written in 1739, when Baisaō moved his shop next to Sanjūsangen-dō. Shōnin is a title of respect used for Buddhist priests.
36. Nothing else is known of Kyūshisai Shūjin (Master of Kyūshi Studio). According to the Ōbaku scholar Fukuyama Chōgan, Sōhō was a sobriquet used by Ōeda Ryūhō (d. 1756), the author of a well-known work on Sencha titled *Seiwan Sawa*, “Seiwan’s Talks on Tea,” published in 1756. Ryūhō, the son of a wealthy Osaka merchant, distinguished himself by his proficiency in flower arrangement, incense, and Chinese-style literati tea. The writer and Sencha devotee Ueda Akinari praised Ryūhō as being second only to Baisaō in his knowledge of tea and skill in choosing water.
37. A postscript—“Your verse contained an allusion to Chao-chou’s ‘Have a cup of tea!’ The final two lines of my verse allude to it too”—was probably an addition supplied by one of the editors of the *Baisaō Gego*.
38. The final line apparently alludes to a comment in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Case 58) praising an utterance of Zen master Chao-chou: “The Elephant King trumpets, the lion roars. Chao-chou’s flavorless talk shuts people’s mouths.”
39. The Otowa springs are a small waterfall located high on the slope of Kiyomizu hill behind the famous Kiyomizu temple in the southeastern quarter of Kyoto.
40. “bamboo brazier”: a porcelain brazier set inside a woven bamboo casing.
41. “pools of jade” (Chinese, *Yao-ch’ih*): said to be found at the dwelling place of the immortal sages.
42. The solitary white crane is a common symbol of the free untrammeled spirit of the Taoist immortals.
43. Kōdai-ji, a Rinzai Zen temple located high in the hills of Higashiyama, was a favorite site for maple viewing. The Chrysanthemum Spring (*Kikutani*) is a small

stream that flows through the temple grounds and was noted for the purity of its waters.

44. Shin, or New, Hasedera, located at the western foot of Yoshida Hill in northeastern Kyoto, enshrined a famous image of Kannon Bodhisattva.

45. Tadasu Woods (*Tadasu no mori*), the sacred grove surrounding the Shimogamo Shrine, is located at the confluence of the Kamo and Takano rivers in the north of Kyoto. The brooks that ran through the woods were noted for the purity of their waters.

46. Tsūsen (Tsūsen-tei) refers to Baisaō himself.

47. "Good Sun Peak," *E'nichi-san*, is Tōfuku-ji's "mountain name."

48. "A black bat of a man": Like a bat, which was thought to be neither beast nor bird but something in between, it is hard to tell whether he is priest or layman. There is a relevant passage in a Zen work of the Yuan dynasty, *Hsi-men ching-hsün* ("Admonitions for Buddhists"): "He resembles a monk but is not a monk. He resembles a layman but is not a layman. The Buddha called such men 'bat-monks,' or 'shavepate laymen.'"

49. The Ninna-ji is a large and important Shingon temple in western Kyoto, north of the Narabi Hills where Baisaō lived in his early seventies. It has a famous grove of dwarf cherries trees.

50. Lu Yü, author of the *Classic of Tea*, lived at Ching-ling on the West River (Hsi-chiang).

51. The Narabi Hills: a series of three low, domed hills that form a conspicuous landmark in the western part of Kyoto.

52. "fish eyes": a term Lu Yü uses in the *Classic of Tea* for the water bubbling in the teapot: "When the water is boiling, it should look like fishes' eyes, with just a hint of a sound."

53. Huang-t'i, Yellow Emperor, one of China's legendary rulers, visited a utopian land in his dreams where the people enjoyed lives of perfect bliss.

54. "Minnow gasping in a drying puddle," from the Chuang Tzu, is proverbial for acute desperation.

55. "sages' cave" (*sentō*): abode of the immortal sages, untouched by defilements of the world.

56. "pebbles added": Adding oval-shaped pebbles to the simmering water was thought to purify it.

57. Hō Ryūkei has not been identified, though there was a Buddhist sculptor named Ryūkei, mentioned in *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times* (p. 344), living near Gōjō street in Kyoto during the Tenmei era, 1781–1789.

58. The Saiun-ji abbot has not been identified. According to Tanimura he was a teacher of the Tendai Vinaya school.

59. The great scholar and poet Sugawara Michizane (845–903) was posthumously deified and enshrined in the Kitano Tenmangu Shinto shrine in northern Kyoto.

60. Yü-ch'uan's (Lu T'ung) "Tea Song" begins with a messenger knocking at his gate with a gift of new tea.

61. The phrase “holding it [the true Zen Dharma] up, enjoying it alone” appears in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Case 42).
62. A memorial service (*Daihi-sen*) in which repentance is offered to the Great Compassionate One, Kannon Bodhisattva, was held at Shōkoku-ji on the seventeenth day of each month in the second story of the large Sanmon (Mountain Gate).
63. The banner Baisaō set up when he made tea outdoors was inscribed by two of his friends, the Zen priests Keijū Dōrin of Tenryū-ji and Daiten of Shōkoku-ji.
64. Senka was his favorite carrying case (see illustration, p. 83).
65. “Beyond the western seas” could mean the tea is from China, but perhaps the meaning is that the tea, and he himself, are from the island of Kyushu.
66. Zen is said to be a special “mind-to-mind” transmission apart from the teachings in the Buddhist scriptures.
67. Yung-ming Yen-shou (904–975) was one of the earliest and most important Zen teachers who advocated the dual practice of Zen and Nembutsu (chanting the name of Amida Buddha). Koshin, who was probably an Ōbaku priest, would have been sympathetic to this type of syncretic Zen. Many of the expressions in the poem allude to sayings in Yung-ming’s works: e.g., a person practicing both Zen and Nembutsu is like a “horned tiger,” that is, he becomes even more formidable.
68. The “land of bliss” is an allusion to the Pure Land or Paradise of Amida Buddha.
69. “‘plum trees north, plum trees south’”: The editors of the *Sōmon* text of Baisaō’s poems explain that although the branches on the southern and northern sides of the same plum tree both blossom, they do so at different times. Fukuyama suggests an allusion to the different Zen styles of the Fifth Patriarch’s two disciples: Hui-neng’s abrupt or sudden “southern” teaching and Shen-hsiu’s gradual “northern” teaching.
70. Hiei[zan]: the mountain center of Tendai Buddhism that rises prominently northeast of Kyoto.
71. Vairochana, or Mahavairochana, the cosmic or sun Buddha, regarded as the source of the universe, is sometimes described as being pure white, the blending of all colors.
72. The *nōe* or monk’s robe, also called a *kesa* or “shoulder robe,” was originally made from scraps of cloth discarded by or received from people in the secular world. Worn over the shoulder or around the neck, and over the *koromo* or priest’s main garment, it was said to symbolize the universe itself, and to remind the priest of his essential oneness with the universe.
73. Zen monks in training are called *unsui*, literally “clouds and water,” after the manner of religious pilgrims moving freely like clouds or water without any place of rest.
74. “jewel fitted in the lining”: allusion to a famous parable in the *Lotus Sutra*. A poor man visiting a wealthy friend to seek his assistance is treated to wine, becomes drunk, and falls asleep. The friend leaves the house but first sews a priceless gem into the lining of the poor man’s robe. The poor man wakes up and continues his life, undergoing great hardship, until he once again meets his friend

and is told about the gem. He is overjoyed to find the gem, of which he had been completely ignorant. The gem symbolizes the Buddha-nature inherent in all people. Based on the entry in *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Concepts*, Nichiren Shoshu International.

75. Eastern Iwakura was located high on the slope behind the Nanzen-ji monastery, overlooking Keage Pass.

76. 'last night's dream': a metaphor for human life found in the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (*Engaku-kyō*).

77. Goshin Genmyō, 1713–1785, an Ōbaku priest and noted painter in the Nanga or literati tradition, was from Ise province, although he lived in Kyoto for many years. He was known by his sobriquet Ichiu ("One Rain"), after Ichiu-an, his hermitage in Okazaki village. In 1754 he became abbot of the Hōsen-ji ("Dharma spring" temple) in Ise province. The verse can probably be dated to that year, when Baisaō was eighty years old.

78. The Mo-yeh Sword, a celebrated sword of ancient China, used as a metaphor for *prajna* wisdom.

79. On New Year's Day in Baisaō's eightieth year, an unidentified friend, probably the master seal carver Kō Fuyō, presented him with a set of three seals to use on his calligraphy inscriptions.

80. Written at the age of eighty-one in the fifth year of Hōreki (1755), when Baisaō moved to Shōgo-in ("temple of guardian sages") village east of Kyoto.

81. Yajnadatta, a figure who appears in the *Shuramgama Sutra* and *Records of Lin-chi*, was delighted at seeing the reflection of his face in a mirror, then possessed by the fear that he had lost his head. He began running through the town like a madman looking for it, until finally his seeking mind ceased, and he realized his mistake.

82. The great change: from illusion to enlightenment.

83. Fukei Genryū (n.d.), a Dharma heir of a priest known only as Gen of the Kōrin-ji, a temple in Ōmi province. He hailed from Baisaō's native Hizen province, hence the reference to the "western ocean."

84. Hsiang-lin Ch'eng-yüan (n.d.) was an attendant of the great Yün-men, whom he served faithfully for many years. Known for his devotion to the Zen pilgrimage, Ch'eng is said to have visited temples in every part of China.

85. The "Old Zen Man Kodō" is Kodō Jōkan, an Ōbaku priest and disciple of Daichō Genkō who served as abbot at Ryūshin-ji. As "librarian" (Zōsu), he would have been in charge of the celebrated sutra collection at Mampuku-ji.

86. Mu-chou: Ch'en Tsun-su (Chin Sonshuku, 780?–877), a T'ang monk who studied under Huang-po. He was noted for his eccentric, untrammeled way of life, subsisting on donations he received for sandals he made, which he left by the roadside for travelers.

87. "flower placed on silk brocade": Normally this would signify needless ornamentation, but here it obviously means that Kodō's presence as librarian will bring even greater distinction to the temple.

88. The Ōbaku priest Hyakusetsu Genyō lived his later years at Hōzō-ji (Dharma Spring Temple) west of Kyoto. See above, p. 84.

89. “Yellow flowers” are chrysanthemums.
90. “Dharma body diamond hard”: A monk asked Ta-lung, “The physical body disintegrates. What is the ‘diamond hard Dharma body’?” Ta-lung answered, “Mountain flowers blossom like brocade. The swelling valley streams are blue like indigo.” *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 82.
91. “on a coral tip”: Case 100 of the *Blue Cliff Record* contains a description of coral branches sparkling in the moonlight, “supporting the moon,” an allusion to Daichō’s sobriquet Geshi, “Moon Branch.”
92. The ninth year of Hōreki: 1759.
93. In the *Zenrinkushū* collection of poetic phrases is a couplet: “One plum flower makes fragrant the entire trichiliocosmic universe.”
94. Baisaō’s holograph dates this to New Year of his seventy-ninth year.
95. Master Shinsan: Shinsan Rokubei (1738–1799), first in the famous line of Kiyomizu Rokubei potters said to have studied tea with Baisaō.
96. The priest Enshō appears in a Baisaō letter (p. 64).
97. The *Brahma Net Sutra* (*Bommō Sutra*) is concerned with the Mahayana Precepts. The *Diamond Sutra* is a sutra of the wisdom class.
98. Daien Genkyō is the lay Buddhist name of a person who has not yet been identified. He may be Matsunami Jibunoshin, a samurai official of Kaizuka in Izumi province who received over a half dozen letters from Baisaō. From two of the letters that have recently come to light, we know that Matsunami, who also went by the name Tsuda, was a serious student of Zen and tea besides being a good friend of Baisaō. In them, Baisaō replies to questions Matsunami had posed regarding Zen and the art of swordsmanship.

The name Daien Genkyō contains a reference to the Buddhist term *Daien-kyōchi*, the “Great Round Mirror Wisdom,” the deepest ground of consciousness that is said to be attained, or “inverted,” in great enlightenment.
99. The Feather Cutter is a fabled sword blade, so sharp it will sever a feather dropped against it.
100. Moon Crossing (*Togetsu-kyō*) is a famous bridge over the Ōi River at Arashiyama.
101. The story of Minister Wang appeared earlier (p. 188, note 55).
102. The Goddess of Virtue, Kudoku-ten, better known as Kijichō-ten, is also the Goddess of Fortune and Beauty. Her sister, Kokuan-ten (literally “Dark Night”), is the Goddess of Calamity and Ugliness.
103. All that is known of Layman Munin is that he was the brother of Kō Bunpaku (n.d.), a Confucian friend of Daichō from Hizen who followed the teachings of Ogyū Sorai. Bunpaku was among those who contributed verses to send Baisaō off when he returned to Kyoto from Hizen in his sixty-seventh year.

Notes to Part 1

1. The first chronology of Baisaō's life, compiled by the Ōbaku priest Fukuyama Chōgan, was published in 1928. The Baisaō scholar Tanimura Tameumi published three versions, the final recension appearing in 1983.
2. His father's full name was Mokunoshin Tsunena, and his mother's name was Miya; they were forty-four and thirty-four years of age when he was born. His childhood name was Kikusen, "Chrysanthemum Spring." Ancestors of the Shibayamas were from Hiroshima, having served for generations as ministers to the Mōri clan of Nagato, present-day Yamaguchi prefecture. In the sixteenth century one of them, Shibayama Tsugimune, resigned his position and retired to live out his days in seclusion in neighboring Hōki province. His son Tsugitada, Baisaō's grandfather, entered the service of the Daimyo Katō Yoshiaki of Matsuyama in Iyo province, on the island of Shikoku. In 1627, when the Bakufu ordered Yoshiaki to move to a fief in Aizu (northern Honshu), Tsugitada accompanied him. There, a serious altercation of some kind involving Katō Yoshiaki's son and chief councillor resulted in the son being stripped of his inheritance. Tsugitada and his sons Gozaemon Tsugitsuna and Mokunoshin Tsunena also lost their positions, and became *rōnin*, or masterless samurai. Both of the sons eventually found employment as physicians to other Daimyo. Tsugitsuna, adopting his mother's family name Kusakawa, became attached to the Shishido clan of Hitachi province (present Ibaraki prefecture) in northern Kantō. Tsunena, Baisaō's father, carrying on the Shibayama name, joined the Hasuike Nabeshima clan in Hizen province, on the island of Kyushu.
3. The province of Hizen (in present Saga prefecture), where Baisaō was born and spent the first half of his life, is located in the northwest part of the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. The province was divided among three

branches of the powerful Nabeshima clan, known for its strong devotion to Confucian learning centered in the study of Chinese literature and for its strict samurai values. With its close proximity to Nagasaki, the open port through which all outside influence filtered into Japan, Hizen had access to foreign ideas and goods, particularly those from China, at a time when they were largely inaccessible to the rest of the country. Chinese loose-leaf tea, which would play such an important role in Baisaō's later life, was imported, consumed, and grown in Hizen province well before it was common elsewhere in the country.

The province had varied sources of income. It gained considerable economic advantage from the export of the famous Imari porcelain that was shipped to Europe in large quantities in the eighteenth century, from the manufacture of superior swords, and as a leading producer of rice. Writing at the end of the seventeenth century, the German physician Engelbert Kaempfer asserted that "the whole Province Fisen [Hizen] is famous for producing rice, to a much greater quantity than any other province in Japan." Most of the income derived from these sources seems to have gone into the coffers of the main Saga branch of the clan, with the much smaller collateral Hasuike branch, whose relations with the main branch were said to have been strained, receiving a quite small share of the total income. On top of that, clan finances were continually drained by the "alternate attendance" system (*sankin kōtai*) instituted by the Tokugawa government. Daimyo were compelled to travel to Edo each year and spend several months in attendance at the Shogun's court. Small armies of attendants accompanied their processions to and from Edo. This system also obliged the Daimyo to maintain a costly second residence in Edo for their wives and families who were forced to reside there permanently as hostages. Records show that during the first half of the eighteenth century Nabeshima Naotsune (1702–1749), fourth head of the Hasuike clan, was forced to borrow large sums annually from moneylenders to pay the enormous cost of making his yearly trip.

Although many members of the clan were affiliated to the newly introduced Ōbaku Zen school, which had a strong presence in Kyushu, Naotsune was also an ardent follower of the great Rinzai teacher Hakuin. Hakuin published two important works, *Oradegama* and *Sashimogusa*, which had originally been written as letters of religious instruction to Naotsune.

4. By the beginning years of the eighteenth century, the passing of the original core of Ōbaku Chinese priests seems to have marked the end of the strong initial impetus the school had achieved, and a slow decline set in. Yet the considerable success it had enjoyed during the second half of the seventeenth century had been instrumental in forcing the established Japanese Zen sects to undertake much-needed reexaminations of their respective ways of doing things. Reformist priests appeared within both Rinzai and Sōtō schools, initiating programs that succeeded in revitalizing their traditional practices to better conform to the new realities of the Edo period.

As is often pointed out, the most lasting influence from this sudden infusion of continental Zen appeared in the cultural sphere, a not unexpected development considering the deep reverence Japanese have traditionally had for almost all aspects of Chinese civilization. Many of the priests and laymen who had originally accompanied Yin-yüan to Japan were highly learned men, skilled in painting and poetry, calligraphy and seal-carving, as well as in the medical arts, sculpture, and architecture. The skills and knowledge they possessed represented the most up-to-date Chinese models, which were largely unknown in Japan, isolated from outside influences for almost two centuries. This rapid influx of Chinese thought and culture, spreading quickly throughout the intellectual classes and then into almost every area of Tokugawa society, ushered in a period of great and vigorous new artistic activity and originality whose effects were felt throughout the Edo period.

5. Kerin Dōryū (1634–1720) was from the city of Yanagawa, located just west of Hasuike in neighboring Chikugo province. He received the tonsure from a Sōtō priest, Sangen Sōchi, and studied under Rinzai priests as well, including a three-year period at Tafuku-ji in Bungo province with the well-known Rinzai master Kengan Zen'etsu. Like many young Japanese priests of the time, Kerin was drawn to the newly introduced Chinese-style Zen and entered Mampuku-ji south of Kyoto, where he studied under the abbot Yin-yüan, and then under Yin-yüan's successor Mu-an Hsing-t'ao. He did not change his filiation to the Ōbaku sect until his mid-forties, when he was studying with Tu-chan Hsing-jung at the Hōrin-ji in Tōtōmi province (present-day Shizuoka prefecture). In 1679, Tu-chan awarded Kerin his Zen transmission, making him one of his Dharma heirs. On returning to Hasuike, Kerin formed close associations with leading members of the ruling Nabeshima family, and in 1683, when the Daimyo of Hasuike built the Ryūshin-ji adjacent to his castle for the repose of his recently deceased eldest son's spirit, he named Kerin as its founder and first abbot. Gekkai was ordained at Ryūshin-ji and resided there, with the exception of his years of pilgrimage, for the next forty years.

   A Zen priest has two religious names: an *azana* (in this case Gekkai, "Moon Ocean"), the name by which he is known and referred to by others; and an *imina* (here, Genshō), his true religious name, given to him by his teacher at the time of his ordination. Other people always use the priest's *azana* when referring to him, never his *imina*, although the priest may use it when referring to himself.

6. The Chinese priest Tu-chan Hsing-jung was one of the original contingent of monks who accompanied the Ōbaku sect founder Yin-yüan to Nagasaki in 1654. During his teaching career in Japan Tu-chan served at a number of temples, the most important being the Hōrin-ji in Tōtōmi province, which he founded, and where he attracted a large and devoted following that included high-ranking government officials. In 1682 he was installed as the fourth abbot of Mampuku-ji. Although use of the Nembutsu, recitation of the name of Amida Buddha, was used in Ōbaku training halls in combination with zazen, or seated meditation, Tu-chan apparently put a much greater stress on the former

practice, to the extent that he became known as “Nembutsu Tu-chan.” The chances are tolerably strong, then, although there is no reference to it in his later writings, that Gekkai engaged in this combined practice during his training under Kerin at Ryūshin-ji, and also at Mampuku-ji.

7. Gekkō Dōnen (1628–1700) was ordained by the eminent Rinzai prelate Ungo Kiyō, 1582–1659, and studied under him for a number of years, but he later trained at the newly constructed Mampuku-ji as a student of Mu-an Hsing-t’ao, who had succeeded Yin-yüan as abbot. Kerin Dōryū was also among the monks in training at the time. Upon leaving Mampuku-ji, Gekkō returned to the Sendai area, where he attracted as followers many leaders of the local Date clan.
8. Although observance of the Buddhist Precepts, or Vinaya, never received the priority in Japanese Mahayana schools that it had enjoyed on the continent, when the Ōbaku school came on the scene it made the Precepts an essential part of its teaching program. Elaborate ordination ceremonies were held periodically at which monks received sets of Precepts governing monastic behavior, and lay Buddhists were conferred with less restrictive rules of conduct. These ceremonies became extremely popular in lay circles, and were an important element in helping the new sect achieve its initial success in Japan. They stimulated priests in other sects to initiate back-to-the-Precepts movements as well.

   Baisaō regarded the Precepts as an integral part of Buddhist life. He formed close friendships with leaders of Precepts movements within the other established schools, and the records of his stay in Kyoto show that he promoted the Precepts as an important part of Buddhist training.
9. Raizan, “Thunder Mountain,” rises to a thousand meters in the northern part of modern Saga prefecture, linking on the east with Mount Seburi and forming the border between Hizen and Chikuzen provinces (modern Fukuoka and Saga prefectures). It would have been visible from Gekkai’s family home in Hasuike. Raizan was long an important training site for Yamabushi, the mountain ascetics of the Shugendō tradition.
10. This Chinese priest has not been identified. Ōtsuki Mikio has conjectured that he may have been Ch’eng-yi Tao-liang (1608–1691), abbot of the Kōfuku-ji in Nagasaki, but was more probably his successor Yüeh-feng Tao-sheng (1655–1734). Yüeh-feng arrived in Nagasaki and entered Kōfuku-ji in 1686; he succeeded Ch’eng-yi as abbot in 1690, and became a Dharma heir of Tu-chan, the highest-ranking Ōbaku cleric of the time. It is likely, since Yüeh-feng and Baisaō’s teacher Kerin Dōryū were brother disciples of Tu-chan, that Kerin would have paid him a visit in Nagasaki, a short trip from Kerin’s temple in Hasuike. Baisaō may have made the trip he refers to here as Kerin’s attendant.

    In his book on the Ching poet Yuan Mei, Arthur Waley noted that Wu-i tea, known in English as Bohea (the local Chinese pronunciation of Wu-i), is described in the *Oxford Dictionary* as “black tea of the lowest quality,” whereas

in China it was regarded as one of the choicest kinds, and, during the lifetime of Yuan Mei (a generation younger than Baisaō), had a tremendous reputation. It is also interesting to read Yuan Mei's descriptions of how the tea was made (leaves plucked at exactly the right moment, dried according to a secret recipe, and boiled "in exactly the right way") and drunk (in minute cups, about as large as a bullet, which were constantly refilled). *Yuan Mei*, Allen and Unwin, 1958, pp. 163–164.

11. Kerin apparently made the long trip in order to pay his final respects to his teacher Tu-chan, from whom he had recently received a congratulatory verse for his seventy-fifth birthday.
12. Although neither the name Gekkai nor Genshō is found in the roster of monks in training for this period, a document preserved at Mampuku-ji dated 1707 is said to list a *tenzō*, or kitchen chief, named Gekkai as one of those attending the head abbot's lectures.
13. Daichō Genkō (1678–1768), who was three years younger than Gekkai, was born in Matsuura in Hizen province. He became a student of Kerin Dōryū in 1692, and received Kerin's Zen transmission, making him his Dharma heir in 1697, at the surprisingly young age of twenty. That same year he traveled to Mampuku-ji, where he studied for the next four years under head abbot Tu-chan. After once returning to Ryūshin-ji, he set out on a series of travels that would more or less characterize his life until his late sixties. He was a man of great erudition, respected even by the Chinese Ōbaku priests for his knowledge of Chinese literature, and especially for his fluency in spoken Chinese, a talent that was apparently rare among Japanese at the time. Being a recognized authority on Chinese civilization when interest in such was extremely strong, Daichō's advice was sought eagerly by people in government and scholarly circles. He served in important positions at the Mampuku-ji headquarters temple, one four-year term beginning in 1736 in the post of *Kansu* or Monastery Supervisor.

    Judging only from the places he mentions in his voluminous poetry and letters, Daichō was never long in any one location. He seems to have been almost constantly visiting with a wide circle of friends that included priests of the Tendai, Sōtō, Rinzai, and Ritsu schools, Confucian scholars, poets, physicians, aristocrats, high-ranking government officials, as well as emigré Chinese scholars and poets who had taken refuge in Japan at the fall of the Ming dynasty.

    In his youth Daichō had studied the Neo-Confucianism of the great Ogyū Sorai, and like many Zen priests of the time his devotion to Confucian studies seems to have been at least as strong as his dedication to Zen. He published a large number of works during his lifetime, including several volumes of *kanshi* poetry, in which he was deemed especially proficient, and several collections of letters.
14. A note that Daichō attached to one of his verses is the only evidence of a trip to Mampuku-ji: "Gekkai returned home in winter, the 10th month of 1716 [he

would have been forty-one]" (*Rōryō Shakutoku-shū*), but it seems more likely that Daichō is referring not to a trip Gekkai made to Mampuku-ji but to a period of intensive solitary training he undertook in the mountains north of Hasuike. This possibility gains support from a legend recorded in the *Saga-ken kyōdoshi monogatari* ("Stories Relating to the Local History of Saga Province") that tells of Gekkai engaging in such intensive practice on Mount Seburi, a 3,500-foot peak at the northern edge of the Hizen plain, in his forty-first year.

15. In 1721, Kyōshū Genko, who had taken over the duties of abbot at Ryūshin-ji on Kerin's retirement, now for unknown reasons retired himself, leaving the temple without a head priest. Kyōshū and Gekkai (now forty-six) sent a joint letter to Daichō in Kyoto urging him to return and assume the post in accordance with Kerin's final wishes. Daichō waited until summer to reply, and when he did answer (the letter was posted from Izumi province south of Osaka), he repeated what he said were personal instructions he had received from Kerin: "I want you to achieve some outstanding work. The day I die will be the day of your birth. Strive very hard." Stressing that he had "never failed to follow those instructions day or night," Daichō said that he still had some matters he had to finish up but would return to Ryūshin-ji the following year in time for the ceremony in observance of the third anniversary of Kerin's death. It should be mentioned that according to Japanese custom, deaths, like births, were calculated from the time they occurred, hence the day Kerin died was reckoned the first anniversary of his death; the third anniversary would fall in the second year following the death.
16. *Fallen Chestnut Tales (Ochiguri monogatari)*, by an anonymous eighteenth-century author, contains other references to Baisaō (see p. vii) as well. In spite of some obvious errors, the information seems to be generally accurate.
17. In the spring of 1724, after less than a year at Ryūshin-ji, we find Daichō back in Kyoto once again; in the spring of 1725 and in autumn 1726 he is visiting Mampuku-ji, taken up with various projects and apparently reluctant to return to Kyushu. He finally resigned the abbotship in the sixth month of 1727, appointing one of his students as a caretaker priest, and began another frenetic round of travel that took him back and forth between Nagasaki, Edo, Osaka, and Mampuku-ji. In 1729, Shiseki Jōkai, a Dharma heir of the former abbot Kyōshū, was officially installed as abbot of Ryūshin-ji.
18. We can only guess how many more letters and other inscriptions by Baisaō lie forgotten in family storehouses. In personal communication to me, Tanimura Tameumi said he had seen almost one hundred letters. Many are addressed to relatives, friends, and former colleagues in Baisaō's home province of Hizen, one or two to relatives in northern Japan, and most of the others to friends in the greater Kansai area. Baisaō continued his correspondence until the final years of his life, when it became difficult for him to find someone to take his letters to the posting place or fetch the return mail.

    The letters are dated, as is customary for this period, only to the day and month; no years are given. However, it is often possible from internal evidence to date them, if not to the precise year, at least to a small radius of years.

19. The great famine that struck Japan in 1732 killed an estimated twenty thousand people and affected millions of others.
20. Thanks to the biographical sketch Daichō compiled of the nun Taishin (b. 1680), we know that she became a student of Kerin at Ryūshin-ji at the age of eight, and was later ordained as an Ōbaku nun. At the age of nineteen she demonstrated her devotion to her Zen study by reading through the entire *Blue Cliff Record* in five days. She made at least two study trips to Kyoto, the one contemplated here being her second. After returning to Hizen she became a prominent figure in the local Buddhist community as abbess at a small convent named Juon-in.

    Baisaō seems to have been on close terms with Reitan Shōchō, the Kyoto Precepts teacher that Taishin was coming to study with. Reitan was widely known and respected in Buddhist circles for his success in establishing a Ritsu (Vinaya) school within the Jōdo sect. Reitan also originally hailed from Hizen and was a longtime friend of Daichō. In a lengthy memorial Daichō inscribed over an official religious portrait of Reitan, he states that Reitan died in 1734, which would mean he passed away soon after, perhaps even before, Taishin arrived in Kyoto. Reitan's temple Shōrin-an was located in Okazaki village, on the opposite, eastern side of the Kamo River from the downtown area.

    As mentioned before (note 8), Baisaō seems to have been quite sympathetic to the back-to-the-Precepts movement that was enjoying one of its periodic revivals during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, stimulated no doubt by the prominence Precepts study was accorded in the Ōbaku training program. Baisaō had close relationships with leading teachers of all four of the Precepts schools that had recently appeared within the established Buddhist sects. He had studied the Precepts with the Ōbaku teacher Gekkō in Sendai and with Tandō Eshuku of the Precepts branch of the Shingon sect in Ōmi province during his pilgrimage. After moving to Kyoto, he became intimate with Reitan and with Kōken Reikū, leader of the Tendai sect's Precepts movement. It was Kōken who gave Baisaō use of the tiny hall, Gengen-an, literally "Illusion Illusion Hermitage," where he had lived for a time during his early years in Higashiyama, and where he may also have spent his final hours.

    The concern Yukiatsu shows in the final part of the letter over the vacancy at Mampuku-ji requires some explanation. After the founding of Mampuku-ji in the 1660s, the first thirteen generations of abbots, until 1740, were all Chinese, this presumably to ensure preservation of the distinctive teachings, ceremonies, and regulations of Chinese-style Ming-dynasty Zen. But when Gekkai wrote the letter to Yukiatsu in 1735, Mampuku-ji was without a head priest, the previous abbot Kao-t'ang Yüan-ch'ang having recently died. The selection of Kao-t'ang's successor was largely in the hands of government officials at the highest levels, including the Senior Councillor to the Shogun, and Inoue Kawachi no kami, Commissioner in Charge of Shrines and Temples (*Jisha bugyō*). Though evidently most of those concerned in the decision-making process were in favor of following the established precedent of inviting

a high-ranking Chinese priest from the continent to assume the post, it was becoming more and more difficult to entice qualified Chinese priests to come. We know in the present case that Inoue sent two invitations to "an eminent Chinese priest in China" but was turned down both times. This is presumably the meaning of Baisaō's reference to authorities being unable "to just keep waiting for a response from [the Chinese priest]." Gekkai's rather intimate knowledge of negotiations going on inside Mampuku-ji and in government circles most likely came from priests in the Ōbaku community. The most likely source is his close friend Daichō, who was serving during this period in important positions at the monastery and was probably directly involved in the negotiations referred to here.

In any case, events fell out as Baisaō predicted they might. Authorities were unable to recruit a qualified Chinese priest from the mainland and were thus obliged to settle for a Chinese priest already resident in Japan. Chu-yuan Tz'u-yin (1699–1756), whom the government picked from a list of four or five candidates, had arrived in Nagasaki in 1723 and was serving as head of Kōfuku-ji in Nagasaki. Whether Chu-yuan was indeed less qualified than the priests resident in China it is difficult to say, but soon after he was installed as abbot at Mampuku-ji, he had a serious falling-out with the senior Japanese priests serving under him. Daichō was one of these priests, serving in the important post of *Tsūsu* or Temple Supervisor. The situation became so strained that the Japanese priests at Mampuku-ji petitioned the Commissioner of Shrines and Temples in Edo to have Chu-yuan removed from office. Chu-yuan asked to be allowed to retire "for reasons of health," but was refused on the grounds of there being no qualified Chinese priest to replace him. Not long after that, in 1739, the Commissioner ordered Chu-yuan to retire, citing "actions unbecoming an abbot." The next year, the government changed its policy and for the first time installed a Japanese priest, Ryōtō Gentō, from Hagi, as the head of Mampuku-ji.

21. *A Statement of Views in Response to a Customer's Questions* (*Taikyaku Genshi*) remained in manuscript until it was published in the collection of Baisaō's works that appeared in 1935, although it had been known among Baisaō enthusiasts in the Meiji period through a copy made by the celebrated Nanga painter Tomioka Tessai, a great admirer of Baisaō. Questions raised in some quarters about the authenticity of this copy were resolved when in recent years the holograph text resurfaced. It is now preserved in the Tessai Museum attached to the Seichō-ji Temple in Hyōgo prefecture.
22. The criticism of contemporary Buddhism and Buddhist priests throughout the *Statement of Views* is the most vehement anywhere in Baisaō's writings, much more so than the occasional barbs that appear in his verses. Yet it apparently represents his true feelings on the subject at this time, and lends credence to the notion expressed by some contemporary writers that in adopting such a beggar-like life Baisaō was in effect reproaching what he viewed as a decadent religious and social establishment. One of the best-known statements of this notion is in *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times* (1788). The

author Ban Kōkei writes that some people had trouble understanding how a cultured man like Baisaō could take up such a common life, but that the average person could not begin to understand, much less achieve, the profound serenity and scrupulousness that marked all his everyday acts. Baisaō adopted a life of tea selling, Ban said, to raise an impassioned alarm against the Zen monastic community's slide into corruption and decadence. It must be added, against this, that Baisaō himself never alludes to such an agenda.

23. Po Yi and his elder brother Shu Ch'i, princes of the ancient state of Ku-chu, are Chinese exemplars of stern integrity. Renouncing their birthright, they left the palace and wandered into the mountains, supporting themselves on roots and berries until finally they perished of cold and hunger on Mount Shou-yang.
24. Tea drinking in China evolved in three overlapping stages, beginning in the T'ang dynasty (618–906) with "brick tea," tea leaves that had been processed and pressed into cakes. Powdered tea, made from leaves pulverized in stone hand mills, and whipped to a froth in hot water, came into use in the Sung dynasty (960–1279), but by the Ming dynasty (1300–1644), powdered tea was largely replaced by loose-leaf teas, which were brewed in specially designed teapots and became an elegant pastime among the literati classes.

    Although small amounts of Chinese brick tea had been imported to Japan from Heian times, the custom of tea drinking really began in the following Kamakura period, when powdered tea was introduced from China by the Zen priest Eisai (1141–1215) and was adopted in Buddhist temples for use in rituals, for medicinal benefit, and as a stimulant during meditation. As the custom of drinking powdered tea spread to the upper classes, tea gatherings of various kinds became popular, and from these evolved the Chanoyu, or ceremonial tea of the Muromachi period (1333–1568) that was brought to perfection in the late sixteenth century through the genius of Sen Rikyū.

    While Baisaō's Sencha undoubtedly owes a great deal to the Ming dynasty tea culture that Ōbaku priests had introduced to Japan, even more important to his way of thinking was the spiritual legacy of Lu Yü and Lu T'ung, the two great figures of T'ang dynasty tea. The scholar Lu Yü (d. 804) was the author of the *Tea Classic* (*Cha-ching*), the first comprehensive work on tea. The *Tea Classic*, in setting down in a methodical fashion various ways to make the beverage, had a powerful effect on the later development of Chinese tea. The poet Lu T'ung (d. 835) composed the most famous of all poems on tea—the so-called "Tea Song"—which had an even greater influence on later tea devotees, partly due to the way the poem elucidates the ideals of tea, but also because of the character of its author. Lu T'ung rejected offers to serve in high government positions and devoted his entire life to poetry and tea drinking. Baisaō was obviously deeply attracted to Lu T'ung and the attitude to life expressed in his poetry, and on at least one occasion he signed his calligraphy with the words "Baisaō, a follower of Lu T'ung's tea." A translation of the "Tea Song" is given on pp. 188–9.

25. The custom of drinking simmered tea, and probably also some kind of infused loose-leaf teas, known to the Zen priesthood and upper-class Japanese as early as the Muromachi period, was given a great boost in the mid-seventeenth century when Chinese Ōbaku priests and laymen led by eminent priest Yin-yüan arrived in Nagasaki, bringing with them the latest forms of prestigious continental culture. Among them was the tea culture of the Ming literati classes, for whom tea drinking was an integral part of a refined way of life and whose spiritual roots were linked to the T'ang "tea immortals," Lu Yü and Lu T'ung.

The tea drunk in China at the time was a so-called black type processed by a "pan roasting" (*kama-iri*) method, in which leaves were roasted in pans over very high heat, pressed with the hands and feet, then spread to dry in the sun. In Japan this tea came to be known as "Ingen's tea" (Ingen is the Japanese pronunciation of the name Yin-yüan), presumably to distinguish it from the culture of powdered tea prevalent in temples of the established Japanese Zen schools.

Records show that leaf teas produced by the Chinese pan-roasting method had been known in Japan as early as the late sixteenth century, and that in the mid-seventeenth century they were being sold in Edo, where housewives were said to be in the habit of "drinking a few cups before breakfast." Such teas are thought to have been similar to today's *bancha*, the lowest grade of Japanese leaf tea. Chinese-style pan-roasted teas were known and consumed in Hizen and other areas of Kyushu even earlier than that. Several times in his writings Baisaō mentions a tea, apparently of this same general type, that was "produced in large quantities in Hizen province." He describes it as a "very mediocre tea, made using the Chinese methods," although he concedes it is an "acceptable drink if no other tea is available."

In addition to these inferior varieties, Baisaō no doubt had opportunities to become familiar with higher-quality imported Chinese leaf teas during the years he served as a temple priest in Kyushu, owing to his association with Chinese priests in nearby Nagasaki and at Mampuku-ji. Baisaō must have become acquainted at the same time with the simple but elegant utensils and ceramics the Chinese used in making tea. When he later settled in Kyoto his own tea equipment consisted of similar wares, including utensils Japanese artisans had produced from Chinese models, but also some rarer items of Chinese manufacture that he probably had obtained from Chinese residing in Japan.

Most Japanese writing on the subject contends that the brown-colored pan-roasted Chinese teas failed to achieve wide acceptance among the Japanese public because they were too strongly flavored, and that Japanese tea-growers therefore began experimenting with new techniques for processing the leaves to produce a milder-tasting drink more congenial to the national palate.

Although most of the *sencha* available in Japan during the second half of the seventeenth century was apparently still made by the Chinese pan-

roasting method, a tea-maker from Uji Tawara south of Kyoto named Nagatani Sōshichirō (Sōen) is generally credited with perfecting a method for processing leaves that produced a fragrant, jade-green *sencha* with a superior flavor that could be infused quickly in the teapot (see note 41, below). In any case, soon after his discovery in 1738, Nagatani was marketing his product in Edo with great success.

In the early summer of 1742, when Baisaō visited Nagatani Sōen's residence at Yuyadani in the hills southeast of Uji, he wrote a short piece at his host's request describing the visit (for a translation of this document, see p. 50). In it, he praises over and over the tea Nagatani had served him in the most glowing terms, including the assertion that he had "never before tasted such tea."

Although Nagatani's *sencha* would have been available for use at Baisaō's shop sometime after 1738, in view of this visit to Nagatani's home, a more plausible date would appear to be 1742. Since Baisaō first began selling tea in Kyoto in 1735, he would have to have used some other yet-to-be-identified type of tea during the early years. There was a wide variety to choose from. The tea most often mentioned in his verses is that grown in Uji, the tea-growing area south of Kyoto, but they do not tell us what kind of tea it was. Baisaō mentions various "brown" (indicating the color of the infusion) Chinese-style teas in the early verses as well, some of them from Ōmi province, and some "sent from home," meaning that they either were grown in Hizen province or had been imported from China. Although Baisaō could have served any of these teas at his shop, it seems most likely, considering availability and cost, that he would have used Japanese-grown "brown" teas from Ōmi and Hizen provinces. Other tea-growers besides Nagatani were working to improve the Chinese teas and make them more palatable to Japanese tastes, so it is even possible that some forerunner of Nagatani's green *sencha* was available. Whatever type of tea he served at his shop during his early years, it seems fairly clear that Baisaō was offering Nagatani's *sencha* to his customers once it became available to him, and that this was the tea he is credited with introducing to the citizens and cultural elite of Kyoto.

26. Baisaō signed the holograph copy of the verse with his Buddhist name Gekkai, a practice he discontinued in his late sixties.

27. Ekkei tea, like that produced in other Zen monasteries, many of which had tea gardens, was made in small quantities with great care for personal use. Given the importance of powdered tea, or *matcha*, in Zen monasteries, it is probably correct to assume that their tea gardens concentrated on growing leaves for this type of tea. Thanks to this poem, however, we know that at least this temple was also producing leaf teas, although at this time they are said to have been of the "black" Chinese type, dark in color when infused, and a far cry from the "green" *sencha* that began appearing soon afterwards. Later in the eighteenth century, the celebrated writer and Sencha votary Ueda Akinari extolled the virtues of Ekkei tea in his *Seifū Sagen* ("Insignificant Words by Pure Breeze"), according it the highest rank alongside tea grown by monks at

Myōshin-ji in Kyoto, because “it is made by hand by the monks, not for profit,” so it is possible that by Akinari’s time Zen temples were producing leaf teas using the process newly devised by Nagatani Sōen.

28. Because of the large number of allusions to Lu T’ung’s “Tea Song,” not only here but throughout Baisaō’s works, a translation of the poem is given below. The full title of the “Tea Song” is “Thanking Imperial Censor Meng For the Freshly Picked Tea He Has Sent Me”:

    Still sound asleep, the sun having already risen high overhead,
    I was awakened with a start by a sudden knocking at the gate:
    An officer entrusted with a packet from Imperial Censor Meng,
    Folded carefully in white silk, stamped with three official seals.
    Seeing the Censor Ming’s face before my eyes, I opened it up,
    Inside was a gift of three hundred moon-shaped cakes of tea!
    It is said if you enter the mountains at the beginning of the year
    Breezes are stirring, creatures wakening from their winter sleep,
    But until His Majesty tastes the tea from the Yang-hsien fields
    None of the hundred grasses will dare to show their blossoms.
    Afterwards, breezes call forth the new pearl-shaped tea buds,
    First among all the buds of spring to show their golden faces.
    They are picked, fired, quickly pressed into fragrant cakes,
    Sublime leaf-buds, unique without any arrogance or pride.
    Those His Majesty does not imbibe pass to other royal lips,
    How can they have found their way to a mountain rustic’s hut?
    I tightly shut my brushwood gate against all worldly intrusion
    Don my gauze hat, brew some tea, and drink it quietly alone;
    Clouds of blue smoke billow endlessly up, twisting in the wind,
    Bright froth, flower-white, forms over the surface of the tea.
    The first bowl moistens my lips and my throat,
    The second clears worries from my lonely heart,
    The third bowl probes through my empty belly,
    Finding inside it a mere five thousand volumes;
    At the fourth bowl light perspiration forms
    And from every pore of my skin exudes
    Years of pent-up vexation and discontent.
    The fifth cup totally refreshes, purifying skin and bone;
    At the sixth bowl, I am one with the Immortal Sages,
    And before I can even finish the seventh bowl
    I feel the fresh breeze stirring beneath my arms.
    Where is the peak of P’eng-lai, home of the Sages?
    Let me ride this fresh breeze and return there now.
    Dwelling at the summit, ruling the lower realms
    Living untouched by the world’s wind and rain,*

How could they not know of the millions who risk their lives,†
The falls from precipitous cliffs, the endless other trials.
I'd like to question the Censor about these people's lives,
Will the time ever come when they know rest or respite?

*Allusion to high-ranking officials
†i.e., working for those higher up

29. The method Baisaō used to collect donations was probably not uncommon; it is still employed today by members of religious and semireligious groups who receive money from the lay community in exchange for services of various kinds, but are loath to charge a set fee. As voluntary contributions, "payments" thus received are perceived as incurring less spiritual liability than would a direct commercial transaction.
30. Chao-chou asked a newly arrived monk, "Have you been here before?" The monk replied in the affirmative. Chao-chou said, "Have a cup of tea." Later when he asked another monk the same question, the monk replied in the negative. Chao-chou said, "Have a cup of tea." When a third monk asked Chao-chou why he had responded the same way to the two monks' totally different answers, Chao-chou called out the monk's name. When he responded, "Yes, master," Chao-chou said, "Have a cup of tea."
31. This bit of information appears in a description of Baisaō and his life in *Hokō hiroku* ("Little-Known Examples of Hidden Radiance"), a contemporary collection of posthumous writings by Nagatomi Dokushōan, a Confucian physician from Nagato (present-day Yamaguchi prefecture).

    When the flowers bloom in spring, when the leaves turn red in autumn, the Old Tea Seller carries his tea equipment to the hills and temples of Kyoto and sells tea by the wayside. He continues selling only until twenty *sen* has collected in his bamboo offertory tube.

32. The *Miyako meisho zue* ("Illustrated Album of Noted Places in the Capital"), published in 1780 after Baisaō's death, describes what the scene would have looked like in the latter part of the Edo period:

    In front of the Hall of a Thousand Buddhas is the spring known as the *Yonaki-no-izumi*. Beside it is a pond which from the end of spring until the beginning of summer is filled with flowering irises of a deep purple hue, bringing throngs of people to view them. Tea stalls are set up and people come and spend the day appreciating them.

    A statue of Jizō Bodhisattva known as the *Yonaki Jizō*, or "Night-crying Jizō," was enshrined beside the spring. It was a popular pilgrimage spot, bringing parents from as far away as Osaka to petition the Bodhisattva to stop their children from crying at night.

33. Kyoto was famous for the purity of its water and its countless springs and wells. Good water was an essential ingredient in tea making, and most writers on the subject devote pages to their ideas on the best sources and the proper kinds to be used. Although the waters of Kikutani were well-known (they were believed to promote health and longevity), Sencha votaries considered them

definitely inferior to those of the highest rank, such as the springs at the Shimogamo Shrine.

34. The entry on Baisaō in the recent *Biographical Dictionary of Ōbaku Culture* records a painting by the young Ike Taiga (he would still have been in his teens at the time) titled “Baisaō Selling Tea Under the Pines,” which bears the date 1740. If authentic, the painting would not only be the earliest known portrait of Baisaō, it would also suggest that the friendship between Baisaō and the great Nanga painter may have begun at a very early date.
35. It may be remembered that as a young monk on his Zen pilgrimage Baisaō had studied at a temple in Sendai, in northern Honshu. No doubt at that time he had been helped in various ways by the Kusakawa branch of the family, and his friendship with Tsunatada probably dates from this period.
36. Gendō was the literary name of Kusakawa Tsunatada, a physician serving the lord of Miharu in Iwaki, northern Honshu (present Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures). The elder brother of Baisaō’s father, Mokunoshin Tsunena had adopted his mother’s family name, Kusakawa, and served as a physician to the lords of Shishido and Miharu, both in northern Honshū.

    This letter is valuable because it enables us to establish an accurate chronology for the first fifteen years after Baisaō left Ryūshin-ji, a period which would otherwise remain an almost total blank. It tells us that he was sixty-six at the time of writing, dating the letter to 1741; that he had been living as a tea seller for five or six years; and that prior to that time, for ten years, he had led a “wandering life,” without any fixed abode. The letter also informs us that Baisaō decided on settling in Kyoto and selling tea for a living only after he grew weary of life as an itinerant monk.

    The contents of this letter seem to have been unknown to Fukuyama Chōgan, compiler of the first chronology of Baisaō’s life, who places Baisaō’s departure from Ryūshin-ji in 1731, apparently on the assumption that since he returned to Hizen in 1741, he must have left ten years earlier. Tanimura Tameumi, who once owned the letter, was able to amend this chronology and to correctly place Baisaō’s departure from Hizen five or six years earlier, around 1724, the same year Daichō returned to Hizen to assume the abbotship at Ryūshin-ji. This would mean that Baisaō had returned to Hizen at least once before, presumably in 1731, although no such trip is mentioned in the records.
37. As Baisaō was setting out, his friends presented him with a collection of Chinese verses they had dedicated to him. Among the poets who contributed to the collection were the Confucian teachers Uno Meika (1698–1745), Kuwabara Kūdō (1673–1744; also known as a calligrapher), and Yamashina Rikei (d. 1747; a physician and painter) and the Ōbaku priests Goshin Genmyō (1713–1785; a noted painter in the literati style) and Shūnan Kaiseki (1711–1767). See above, p. 32.
38. Most modern writers on Baisaō include the information that his petition to clan authorities included the request that he be attached as a retainer of a lady

named Yoshihime, the daughter of the leader of the Hasuike family who was married to Hino Dainagon, a High Councillor to the Imperial Court in Kyoto. If it is correct (there is evidence it is not), Lady Yoshihimine would presumably have been chosen as one of the most prominent of Hizen's citizens in Kyoto at the time. The Hino family is mentioned in passing several times in Baisaō's letters, showing that he did have some contact with them, but even if he was attached to Yoshihime, it does not seem to have involved any specific duties.

39. It is significant that instead of reverting to his original family name, Shibayama, he adopted a completely new one made up of three characters, a Chinese custom, instead of the four characters common in Japan. It was a practice adopted by many Japanese intellectuals, spurred by the craze for Sinitic culture in Edo Japan. From now on Baisaō signed all his letters Kō Yūgai; and he also used the name, often together with Baisaō, Old Tea Seller, in signing his verse inscriptions.

40. The hall was originally built by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1589, patterned on the Great Buddha Hall of the Tōdai-ji in Nara. Although both the hall and the Great Buddha collapsed in 1596 when a massive earthquake devastated the capital. Hideyoshi's son rebuilt the temple in 1621, this time with a bronze Buddha and a new bell of monumental size. When an earthquake heavily damaged the building and figure once again in 1625, the bronze was melted down to make the coins known as *Kan'ei tsūhō*. The temple was reconstructed later in the century and the Buddha rebuilt in the original style but in wood covered with gold lacquer. This is how it looked during Baisaō's lifetime. In 1870 the Meiji government appropriated the extensive temple lands south of the hall and the hall itself (or a smaller version of it) was moved to the northern extremity of the precincts, where, in 1972, it burned to the ground. The Kyoto Imperial Museum, forerunner of the present Kyoto National Museum, was constructed in 1895 on land that had made up the southern part of the temple's extensive precincts. Soon after, the beautiful pine forests between the Rengeō-in and the Great Buddha, where Baisaō used to set up shop, were cut down in order to extend the wide east-west thoroughfare known as Shichijō-dōri—Seventh Avenue—from the Kamo River up into the Eastern Hills.

41. Nagatani used a technique that involved briefly steaming the young leaf buds immediately after they were plucked, a method that had long been employed in making powdered tea for *matcha*. They were then placed in a drying pan over a low fire, and rubbed briskly between the hands as they were drying. This prevented oxidation from taking place, preserved their freshness, retained their bright green color to a degree never before possible, and produced a tea with a delicate flavor that could be easily infused in a teapot. Basically, this method is still the one used for processing high-quality Japanese green teas, the various kinds of *sencha*, and the still more refined *gyokuro* that was developed in the nineteenth century.

    As five years had passed since Nagatani had perfected his process and he was now marketing his tea, one would assume that Baisaō would have already had occasion to taste it and, though we have no way of knowing this, even to

use it, or a comparable tea made by a similar process, at his shop. Baisaō was a man of meager means, and the tea may have been more costly than others that were available; still, it was produced nearby, and if the story is true about him closing up shop once he had collected enough for his daily ration of rice, he would not have needed to use very much of it. It is possible that in the following piece he wrote for Nagatani, when he sounds as though he is tasting his tea for the first time, he is in fact referring to Nagatani's very best tea, which may not have been ordinarily available.

42. The Narabi Hills had been a favorite spot for artists and others seeking a reclusive life since at least the fourteenth century, when Yoshida Kenkō, author of the *Tsurezuregusa*, is said to have resided on its western slopes. A number of well-known writers, painters, and potters maintained residences in the vicinity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There were a number of Buddhist temples close by, two particularly large and important ones being Myōshin-ji, the headquarters of an important branch of Rinzai Zen, located just to the east of the hills, and Ninna-ji, the highest-ranking Shingon temple in the country, to the north. Although Baisaō records no visits to Myōshin-ji, he was evidently quite fond of Ninna-ji's late-flowering dwarf cherry trees, which he called "the most celebrated cherry trees in the capital."

43. Kyūraku once wrote a parody of Baisaō's tea-drinking poems in which he described drinking sake under the pine trees. Kyūraku's whole philosophy of life is summed up in one of his sobriquets, "Tail Dragger (Eibi)," which he took from the *Chuang Tzu*: "When a king offered Chuang Tzu a high government post, Chuang declined by citing the case of a sacred tortoise, whose bones had been wrapped in fine cloth and enshrined in a temple, and asking the king whether he thought the tortoise would rather be dead and honored in this way, or alive and dragging its tail in the mud." This Taoist philosophy is seen in action in another story in *Eccentric Figures of Recent Times*.

    > Kyūraku once set out a great cask of sake and invited the poor men and women who lived in the neighborhood to share it with him. When a passerby asked what they were doing, he replied that he had acquired some sake to drink in exchange for some calligraphy he had dashed off on a folding screen. He then began joyously singing out verses and uttering other words of uncertain meaning. When the sake cask was finally empty, ten *ryō* in gold coins were found wrapped in a piece of paper underneath it. "Just what we needed," he said. "Now we can buy some side dishes to go with the sake," and he proceeded to divide the money among his fellow drinkers. Everything he did was like that. I [author Ban Kōkei] once saw a piece of calligraphy owned by the haiku poet Gengen Tsukada, a close friend of Kyūraku's from Ōmi province, on which Kyūraku had written a list titled, "Things Kyūraku likes: Tobacco. Sumo. Horse Racing. Money. Sake is a staple, so I can't count that." Another heading read, "Things Kyūraku dislikes: Theoretical arguments is one of them, I can't remember the others."

44. Perhaps the best-known example of the theme is the poem by the Chinese poet Han-shan (Cold Mountain) that begins, “My mind is like the autumn moon.” Han-shan was long venerated in Japan as an epitome of the carefree, enlightened Zen layman. He left the temple where he was residing and threw off the constraints of organized religion in order to devote himself to a life of total freedom with nature his only teacher. His verses describing this life, written in highly colloquial Chinese, espouse the principles of Zen and Taoism in a celebration of the untrammeled joys of spiritual attainment. Baisaō’s deep admiration for Han-shan’s poetry and lifestyle is seen throughout his work, and this verse seems to have been a particular favorite: he wrote at least seven copies of it in his eighty-fourth year alone. Baisaō’s aspiration for the more unconstrained and congenial atmosphere of the capital was no doubt influenced by the attitudes set forth in Han-shan’s poetry.
45. The Rinkō-in subtemple had been built in 1418 as a family temple of the Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu, on the site of a residence of the famous Heian poet Ki no Tsurayuki. In Baisaō’s day Rinkō-in was located considerably north of its present location, whence it was moved in the Meiji period. Shōkoku-ji was made up of forty-six separate subtemples (compared to today’s twelve) with extensive precincts measuring 1.3 miles north to south, and almost three quarters of a mile east to west. Most of the temple buildings had been destroyed in previous centuries by fire and the rampages of soldier-monks, and the structures in Baisaō’s day were relatively new, having been built in the early seventeenth century by Toyotomi Hideyori.
46. Uno Meika (1698–1745), also known as Uno Shishin, was from a wealthy Kyoto family in the shipping trade. It was said he and his brother Uno Shirō never left their home for ten years in order to concentrate on their studies. Meika first distinguished himself as a pupil of the Confucian teaching of Kinoshita Jun’an (1621–1698). Being unable to travel to Edo to study with the great Ogyū Sorai, whose writings he admired, he succeeded in acquiring a deep understanding of Sorai’s thought from his follower Daichō Genkō. In time Meika came to be regarded as the leading exponent of Sorai’s ideas in Kyoto.

    Meika died the year following this visit, on the seventeenth day of the fourth month; Baisaō sent the news to Daichō on the twenty-eighth, following it with another letter the next day telling him about the visit he had just made to the Uno home to express his condolences. He said he met and discussed Meika’s posthumous affairs with Meika’s brother and his students Katayama Hokkai, Tanaka Goichi, and Daiten. Included in Meika’s final wishes was a request for Baisaō. It seems that Meika had promised someone that he would write two *kanshi* poems and inscribe them as colophons on paintings. He had finished the verses but his illness had prevented him from carrying out the rest of his promise, and he asked that Baisaō, whose calligraphy he admired, inscribe the colophons in his place. The whereabouts of the paintings are unknown, although the drafts Baisaō made of both verses are extant.

    Katayama Hokkai (1723–1790) was a noted poet in the *kanshi* form. Hokkai evidently became close friends with Baisaō, and later wrote an

inscription for one of his tea utensils. Tanaka Goichi is the Confucian scholar Tanaka Taikan (b. 1710), a friend and follower of Meika who later contributed a preface to one of Meika's posthumous works edited by Daiten.

47. The Shōkoku-ji priest Daiten Kenjō (1719–1801), at this time still in his mid-twenties, figured rather prominently in Baisaō's life from this time on and, despite a difference of forty-four years in their ages, he formed what seems to have been a rather close association with the Old Tea Seller. This and his literary skill made Daiten the logical choice to compile the *Life of Baisaō* for the *Baisaō Gego* that was published just before Baisaō's death. He also left a large number of verses to or about Baisaō that are found included among his works.

    Daiten entered religious life at Kazō-in, a subtemple at Mampuku-ji (three of his brothers and one sister had already been ordained as Ōbaku clerics), but he soon shifted to the Rinzai sect, moving into the Jiun-an subtemple of Shōkoku-ji. He studied Chinese literature and Confucian thought with Daichō Genkō and Uno Meika, demonstrating the uncommon ability that would make him one of the most highly respected scholar-priests of the age. He was later employed by the Shogunate to help in the exchange of diplomatic correspondence with Korea and China. When Japanese Confucian teachers criticized the decision to entrust official government business to a "black-robed Buddhist prelate," the government effectively silenced them by inviting Daiten to Edo castle to lecture to them on Chinese literature. Because of his devotion to Confucian scholarship, Daiten was also criticized in Zen circles as someone with "a Buddhist robe but a Confucian heart," a pejorative epithet one authority has suggested was coined specifically for Daiten. However, it could have been applied with equal justification to his teacher Daichō or to many other Zen priests of the period, whose religious calling in some cases seems almost incidental to their study of Chinese literature. Daiten left over seventy works, most of them literary in character, but also including some commentaries on Chinese tea writings that are highly regarded even today.

48. Baisaō's tea equipment, consisting of thirty-three articles, was entirely different from that used in the Chanoyu tea ceremony. Some of them were created to his own design, and almost all are accompanied by poems and inscriptions of various kinds written by Baisaō himself and by his friends. Sixty years after Baisaō's death, Kimura Kōyō, heir of the scholar and painter Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802), published a work titled *Baisaō chaki-zu*, "Illustrations of Baisaō's Tea Utensils," which reproduced color prints of the tea utensils together with the inscriptions that had been written for them. In his colophon to the work, Kōyō wrote, "Thirteen of the thirty-three articles used by Baisaō are now in my collection. Kenkadō made replicas of three more, and he had also made sketches of the articles that old Yūgai had burned in his latter years. He had Aoki Shukuya, a leading follower of Ike Taiga, make final drawings from them and from the articles still extant. In addition, I myself secretly made sketches of other articles in private collections. All of these illustrations have now been brought together for this publication in the 6th year of Bunsei [1823]."

49. Sakaki Hyakusen, well-known as a poet in the haiku form and as a pioneer and master of literati painting, was born in Nagoya into a family of herbalists. After moving to Kyoto and studying the techniques of Kano school painting, he fell under the influence of Ming dynasty Chinese literati painting, thereafter embarking on a career that was instrumental in establishing a school of literati painting in Japan which influenced the following generation of Nanga artists, including Ike Taiga and Yosa Buson. Whereas his contemporaries Gion Nankai and Yanagisawa Kien, also pioneers of Japanese literati-style painting, belonged to the upper class and painted as amateurs, Hyakusen, from a more humble background, chose to earn his livelihood with his brush in the manner of a professional artist, even proclaiming the fact in his seal. This was a flouting of established tradition that could be seen as the equivalent of Baisaō's decision to earn his own living as a Buddhist priest.

    In the two known portraits Hyakusen did of Baisaō, he has depicted him as an elderly figure hunched by his brazier making tea. On one of them, executed in the autumn of 1744, Baisaō inscribed the verse titled "Impromptu" (see above, p. 53) that he had written some years earlier while living at the Narabi Hills. On the other, Hyakusen himself inscribed one of Baisaō's verses.

50. A large number of these portraits have survived (some of them are reproduced here), including two each by Ike Taiga and Sakaki Hyakusen, and at least a dozen by Itō Jakuchū. As might be expected, Baisaō himself inscribed colophons on Taiga's portraits and on one of Hyakusen's; but for some reason I am unable to explain, there is only one Baisaō inscription on any of the Jakuchū portraits, and that one is of questionable authenticity.

51. The two brooks that flow through the grove, Izumi-gawa and Semi-no-ogawa, have been extolled by Japanese poets from the earliest times, and the waters of the Mitarashi Spring that emerge at the smaller Goi Shrine to the east of the main Shimogamo sanctuary were said to be the best in the entire city. The Tadasu grove has always been popular with citizens seeking a respite from Kyoto's unbearably hot and humid summers, and in the Edo period they would sit and cool themselves on scaffoldings erected over the streams. Bathing one's feet in their waters at the summer solstice was believed to ward off sickness for the rest of the year.

52. Another verse, "Going with Zen Master Baisō [Daiten] to the Tadasu Woods," is dated the same year and may have been written at the same time.

    An eminent priest has joined me
    on an excursion to Duck River,
    watery passions meeting and merging
    meeting and merging without end;
    The basket I carry on my shoulder
    is filled with an infinite flavor
    now I'm going to share it with you
    let you savor the pleasure it gives.

"Meeting and merging" alludes to the confluence of the Kamo and Takano rivers at the tip of the peninsula where the Tadasu Woods is located. Daiten, who was often Baisaō's companion on these excursions, has a poem titled "Master Daichō Came From Hizen to Receive the Precepts at Mampuku-ji" containing the line "Going along on an outing to drink green tea at Duck River," and a note that states: "Many years ago when Daichō was visiting Kyoto, he and Layman Kō [Yūgai] made an excursion to the Tadasu Woods to simmer tea. I went along [as a friend of] Daichō."

53. Daiyū and Mujū (who appears here as "Brother Kyō," the religious name he used prior to 1755) are known almost exclusively from references to them in Baisaō's poetry and letters. They were apparently Ōbaku monks from Hizen, perhaps sent by Kodō Jōkan, abbot at Ryūshin-ji, to train at Mampuku-ji. Tanimura asserts that later in their careers they served in important posts at Tenryū-ji, a Rinzai temple in western Kyoto, but he offers no evidence to substantiate the contention. Although Daiyū's dates are unknown, we know that he was senior to Mujū, who was twenty-six years younger than Baisaō. Baisaō refers to them as his "personal attendants" (*jisha*). They were already in their forties or fifties at the time they lived with him, suggesting that they entered the priesthood late in life. Baisaō's letters to Daiyū consist largely of religious advice to encourage his Zen study. He also wrote each man a number of religious verses (translated in the text, pp. 95–104) whose dedications are worded in the authoritative manner of address Zen teachers typically employ in imparting instructions to pupils. Enshō is an unidentified Zen priest, perhaps the incumbent at one of the Shōkoku-ji subtemples. A verse Baisaō wrote at services that Enshō held on the fiftieth anniversary of his parents' death, included in the *Baisaō Gego* (p. 159), tells us that he was roughly Baisaō's age.

    Although few of the particulars of their relationship with Baisaō are known, both Daiyū and Mujū may have been with him from the earliest years at Rinkō-in, suggesting the possibility that Baisaō's original decision to move to Shōkoku-ji may have been dictated in part by the need for a settled temple atmosphere in which to attend to their teaching needs. In reading the letters, one is struck by Baisaō's deep concern for the spiritual (and physical) welfare of his pupils (one letter from his early eighties mentions him nursing Mujū through a high fever). After Baisaō's death the two men disappear from history, except for one tantalizing reference, in a verse by Daiten, to an outing to view the cherry blossoms he had planned with Ike Taiga, Itō Jakuchū, and Mujū.

54. Baizan, "Plum Mountain," is a Sinified way of reading the Japanese Togano-o, which is both the location and "mountain name" of Kōzan-ji. Kōzan-ji was established as a Kegon temple in the Kamakura period by Myōe Shōnin, though at this time it was affiliated to the Shingon sect. Kōzan-ji and its abbot Myōe Shōnin played an important role in introducing tea to Japan during the Kamakura period: Myōe created one of the first tea fields in Japan from seeds the Zen priest Eisai had brought back from China. Seedlings from the Kōzan-ji

gardens were later distributed to other sites around the country and were instrumental in spreading the custom of tea drinking throughout Japan.

55. These sentiments are echoed in an impromptu verse titled “Warning Young Monks Against Aping My Tea.”

> The tea kettle overturned in master Wang’s face
> Has been a vital koan for over a thousand years
> But unless you have it in you to lift that right up
> Don’t spoil the reality by prattling about “tea.”

The first line alludes to a well-known Zen koan in which Senior Priest Lang overturned a tea kettle he was carrying to the temple abbot, who was serving tea to Minister Wang. “What’s that under the stove?” asked the Minister. “It’s a stand used for supporting stoves embossed with guardian gods,” Lang replied. “If you had the gods with you,” said the Minister, “how did you overturn the kettle?” “You’ve served here as prefect for a thousand days,” Lang said, “but you lost it all in a single morning.” The Minister shook his sleeves and left.

Although for the most part Baisaō acceded willingly to requests for his calligraphy, many of which at this time were tea-related, as the following inscription reveals, in some cases he felt obliged to refuse. The inscription is addressed to a young man who had asked him to write the three large Chinese characters meaning “Have a cup of tea.” “In your own interest,” Baisaō wrote, “I have inscribed instead these two lines to caution you against superficial attachments:

> “Attaching fruitlessly to words about tea will get you nowhere,
> You can’t expect to understand it emulating a parrot’s tricks.”

56. The term “Twelve Teachers” (also Twelve Elders), referring to the tools and utensils employed in brewing tea, was first used by Shen-an Lao-jen (Tung chen-ch’ing) of the Southern Sung dynasty, who personified the articles, giving each of them proper family names and artistic sobriquets. Since at the time the tools would have been used to prepare and brew brick tea, they do not correspond exactly to those used in Sencha.

There are numerous sets of Zen “turning words,” phrases contrived to trigger enlightenment in students. The reference here is to the turning words of the T’ang priest Pa-ling, who formulated them to express his understanding to his teacher Yün-men. They are couched in the form of answers to questions: “What is the Way?” “A clear-eyed man falls down a well.” “What is the Feather Cutting Sword?” “Branches of coral holding up the moon.” “What is the school of Kanadeva?” “A silver bowl heaped with snow.” Yün-men, “joyful beyond measure,” remarked that if any of his followers wanted to requite their debt to him after he died, all they had to do was to recite Pa-ling’s Three Turning Words. The “seven emperors” whom Musō Soseki (1275–1351) taught all honored him with the title of *Kokushi*, National Teacher.

57. Shin (New) Hasedera, named after the more famous Hasedera temple established in 736 south of the old capital at Nara, was built in 859 shortly after the founding of Kyoto, and thrived under the patronage of the powerful

Fujiwara clan. Both temples enshrined large figures of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. When the temple was abandoned during the disestablishment of Buddhism in the Meiji period, a few of its smaller buildings, including a Kannon Hall, were transferred to nearby Shinnyo-dō.

58. The name of the friend to whom Baisaō sent the letter and maple leaves is missing from the holograph text. The only portion of the address that remains is the words "who lives before the gates of Kurodani." Kurodani is the popular name for Konkai-Kōmyō-ji, a large monastery complex of the Jōdo sect located near Baisaō's dwelling at Shōgo-in. Although a number of Baisaō's friends and acquaintances lived in the general area, I believe there is a good chance the recipient of the letter was the Ōbaku priest Goshin Genmyō (1713–1785). Although this letter cannot be dated precisely, it seems likely Baisaō wrote it before he moved to Okazaki, when he was still at Shōkoku-ji; that is, prior to the autumn of 1754, at which time Goshin was residing at Ichiu-an (One Rain Hermitage), whose address is invariably given as "Ichiu-an, [located] before the gates of Kurodani."

59. It has been conjectured that the person who gave the seals to Baisaō was the master seal carver Kō Fuyō (1722–1784), another of the scholarly young men whose lives had been influenced by the passion for Sinitic culture current in Edo Japan. Fuyō, reluctant to follow in the family tradition as a Confucian physician, traveled to Kyoto, where he taught himself painting and seal-carving. It was as a seal carver that he excelled, and in time he came to be regarded as one of the great seal artists of the Edo period. His friendships with the painter Ike Taiga (with whom he made several sightseeing trips around Japan) and other members of Kyoto's artistic community are fairly well documented. His acquaintance with Baisaō is not so easy to trace, although he dedicated at least one painting to him, and it seems clear that they were good friends. Fuyō is said to have served for a time as a Confucian teacher at the Nabeshima clan headquarters in Hasuike, though it is not known what, if any, part Baisaō played in securing the appointment.

    Seal-carving, practiced with the "iron brush," as the cutting tool was known, was considered a high art in China and Japan, an aspect of calligraphy in which the brushwork of the ancient seal-script was transformed into a sculptural form, expressing the carver's artistic purpose just as the brush does. In signing his calligraphic inscriptions during his eighties, Baisaō generally added his precise age as well, which was perhaps a way of further clarifying the words incised on one of the seals describing him as an "eighty-year-old tea seller."

60. "Mind-seal" is a common Zen term used in describing the way the eternal truth of enlightenment is transmitted in unchanging form from master to disciple—from one enlightened mind to another. An enlightened person, like the Dharma he embodies, is often said to have transcended the stage where his movements (his "comings and goings") can be perceived through ordinary human perception. Here Baisaō says that although he has received the Dharma transmission, he will nevertheless be "leaving tracks behind."

61. It should probably be noted that the exceptions to this are his letters, which are dated to the day and month, but never to the year, and some of the large character one-line calligraphies from his eighties, which he often neither dated nor signed.
62. Three other examples of this verse that Baisaō inscribed are extant, all done for Zen students: one in the fifth month of this same year at the request of his student Mujū, another dating from the following year, and a third at the age of eighty-four in response to a request by the Zen nun Shōen of Osaka.
63. Shōgo-in, a Tendai temple originally established in the eleventh century in Iwakura, north of Kyoto. Later moved into the city, the temple was destroyed by fire several times over the centuries, and the present buildings, those with which Baisaō would have been familiar, date from 1676. It had close ties with the imperial family; all abbots of Shōgo-in from the Kamakura period up until the Meiji Restoration of 1868 were tonsured imperial princes, and following the great Kyoto fire of 1788, the royal family used the temple as a refuge and temporary palace.
64. At the end of the Heian period, during and after the reign of Emperor Shirakawa (1072–1086), this entire district between the Eastern Hills and the Kamo River was known as Shirakawa, taking its name from the Shirakawa or "White River" that flowed down from the hills and emptied into the Kamo. The district was covered with magnificent imperial palaces, detached imperial residences, villas of the nobility, and many magnificent temples, all of which were destroyed during the civil wars of the Ōnin period (1467–1477).
65. The house where Baisaō lived was located just off what is called Monzendōri, a narrow road running between Shōgo-in and Kurodani. It apparently survived into the postwar period and was still standing as late as the 1970s.
66. Baisaō inscribed this verse on the portrait Ike Taiga painted of him (illustration, see frontispiece), which was done while he was living in Shōgo-in village; it may have been composed expressly for the painting. Baisaō signed the inscription with a sobriquet not used elsewhere: *Sanpi Dōnin*, literally "The Three Nots Man of the Way." This alludes to a verse statement he had made some years earlier about "not being a Buddhist or a Taoist or a Confucian either" (see above, p. 53), with the words "man of the Way" indicating that in spite of the negations (or rather because of them), he was utterly devoted to the religious path.
67. These circumstances are known because in 1762, the year before his death, Baisaō had Daiten Kenjō transcribe them. Daiten used this information in the life of Baisaō that he compiled soon afterwards.
68. Two indications that the letter was written to O-Yoshi are: the manner in which Baisaō expresses his thanks to the recipient for forwarding messages to him from her daughters (this passage is omitted from the translation) is found in almost identical wording in other letters to his sister; also, he mentions a Mr. Kiyota, apparently a family friend, whose name appears in a letter to O-Yoshi but nowhere else.

Mr. Kiyota also seems to be the only possible clue to dating the letter. Baisaō mentions that Kiyota is having trouble walking. Since his reference to Kiyota in the other letter to his sister (translated below, p. 81), dating from his eightieth year, also mentions Kiyota's health, remarking that it had improved, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the references are to the same infirmity. If the supposition is correct, the letter about the trip to Ishiyama would date from this same general period, that is, from around Baisaō's eightieth year.

69. Iwama-dera (the official name is Shōbō-ji) is located in the mountains between Mount Daigo, in the southeastern corner of present-day Kyoto prefecture, and the southern tip of Lake Biwa. The haiku poet Bashō's Genjū-an hermitage was located not far from Iwama-dera; a temple legend has it that a frog from an Iwama-dera pond inspired his famous verse. Baisaō would probably have climbed Mount Daigo from the Yamashima, or western, side and descended on the opposite eastern side on his way to Iwama-dera.

70. Miya, Baisaō's mother, had died in 1723, just before Baisaō left Ryūshin-ji for Kyoto. Her remains were interred at Ryūshin-ji. The small sum (*chadai*) O-Yoshi sent her brother was apparently part of an offering she made at services held at Ryūshin-ji commemorating Miya's important thirty-third death anniversary. Although she had died on the eleventh of the first month, the Shibayama family had decided to hold the services early, during the twelfth month of the previous year, no doubt to avoid the New Year period.

    The identities of Hōchi-in and Jōkū Koji, two other posthumous names that appear in the letter, cannot be determined, beyond the obvious fact that they had been close friends and may have been related to the family. Since the Chinese character *Jō* in the posthumous name *Jōkū Koji* (Layman Jōkū) also appears in the posthumous names awarded to other of Baisaō's brothers, Jōkū may also have been a brother or nephew who had at some point served as head of the Shibayama family. The other two names mentioned, Sōjun and Kiyota, who appear in other letters as well, can only be identified as family friends in the Hasuike area.

71. The *Kusha-ron* (the full title is *Abidatsuma Kusha-ron*; Skt. *Abhidharma Kosha Shastra*), "A Compendium of Analyses of the Dharma," is a metaphysical work by the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu which includes among its exhaustive study of Buddhist doctrine a discussion of the concept of transmigration.

72. It is hard to know what to make of Nakanoin's visit to Baisaō. The Nakanoins were an important noble family with close ties to the court, but Michieda was the only member of the family at this time who held the rank of Chūnagon, Imperial Councillor. He was a good friend of Daichō, and his wife was a daughter of the Nabeshima Daimyo, either of which might explain Baisaō's acquaintance with him. He seems to have been chronically ill, and spent his final years in precarious health, which would account for the visit to Baisaō and for the way he responded to Baisaō's explanation of the Buddhist doctrine of transmigratory rebirth. The trouble is, records show that Michieda died at the age of thirty-one in 1753, at least two years before Baisaō's letter was written.

It seems doubtful that Baisaō would have mistaken the name of such an important man who had just visited him. Is the date recorded for Michieda's death mistaken? Or perhaps Baisaō was deliberately stretching the facts in this case in order to impart a greater sense of immediacy to the advice he was giving his sister.

73. The opportunity Baisaō refers to here may be the arrival of a friend to whom he could entrust the letters or the arrival of the *hikyaku*, literally "flying legs," the letter carriers of the day. The government placed these runners at the post stations on the Tokaido to carry official letters and goods in a relay system; they covered the three hundred miles between Kyoto and Edo, the administrative capital, which took two weeks on foot, in three or four days. The government also maintained a regular service to Nagasaki on the western coast of Kyushu, which was under direct government jurisdiction. Many provincial Daimyo had their own carriers, going between their domains and Kyoto or Edo; they were generally less frequent and considerably slower. The Nabeshima clan had some sort of service between Hizen in Kyushu and Kyoto that Baisaō, most of whose letters went to relatives and friends in Hizen, may have been allowed to use. When writing people in less centrally located areas (he had regular correspondents in Izumi province and Nagoya), he would probably have been obliged to turn to one of the private commercial carriers that had sprung up in the previous century.

74. There are several versions of this inscription, with slight variations in wording. According to Tanimura, on one of them (which I have not seen) Baisaō also inscribed a "death verse."

    "Hiding oneself inside the Big Dipper" (*hokutō ni mi o kakushite*), a Zen phrase that first appears in the sayings of the Chinese master Yün-men, is based on an ancient Chinese belief that the North Star, fixed at the center of the sky, was the vehicle of the great Lord who rules the universe. In Zen the phrase signifies attainment of a realm of total freedom where a person is master of all situations, untouched by the circumstances of samsaric existence. Baisaō implies that his remaining years will be devoted to enjoying the tranquillity and spiritual pleasure of this enlightened state.

    Senka was made by a craftsman named Kitagawa Shōsaku of woven bamboo. It had four steam vents in the top or roof so the brazier could be used without being taken out. At the time he burned *Senka* Baisaō also disposed of some other tea articles. He gave the Ōbaku monk Baizan, a student of Daichō residing in Kyoto, a tea jar, an iron brazier, a blowing tube (used for raising a fire), and a gourd dipper. Baizan later passed the articles on to Daichō.

    The Ōbaku priest Monchū Jōfuku (1739–1829), a Zen student of Daiten Kenjō who studied tea with Baisaō and is often cited as one of the few people who succeeded in grasping its essential spirit, gives a somewhat different slant on Baisaō's motive for burning his tea utensils in a manuscript he compiled in his eighties. In the manuscript, Monchū quotes some informal remarks Baisaō had made to him when he was a young monk (Monchū was only twenty-four

when Baisaō died). The remarks begin with a caution against becoming involved in tea:

> If a person who dedicates his life to the practice of the Way involves himself in the amusements of tea, it will sap his aspiration to pursue the wonderful refining process that the Zen school offers. It was my fear that I would become addicted to such secular pastimes that led me to burn my tea articles so that not one would be left.
>
> I (Monchū) have always placed the highest value on the path of enlightenment and have always deeply aspired to attain the Way. Followers of Baisaō in the Way of Tea, the people (including Gessen and myself) to whom he gave his tea utensils, have abstained from engaging in such tea activities in order to remain true to our master's intent in forbidding such practices.
>
> Baisaō particularly stressed that I should not be like other Ōbaku priests and spend my time with tea, writing, or reading books. He said that I could do nothing more praiseworthy than to make the achievement of great enlightenment my most urgent concern, to make zazen and investigating the Dharma my most essential business.

The Ōbaku priest Gessen Jōtan (1718–1769), a Dharma heir of Hyakusetsu Genyō, is said to have been one of the few people, along with Monchū and Yasuda Zesui, who succeeded in grasping the essentials of Baisaō's tea.

75. Hyakusetsu Genyō was one of the most prominent of the Japanese Ōbaku priests during the first half of the eighteenth century, having distinguished himself as a poet, calligrapher, and painter. He had been a central figure of the celebrated Kyoto cultural circle that formed around Konoe Iehiro (1667–1736), a leading courtier of the period, who in 1710 rose to become Dajō Daijin, Prime Minister (the highest official in the government, directly below the Emperor). Hyakusetsu was abbot and founder of Hōzō-ji, which had been built as a Konoe family temple on land donated by the Confucian calligrapher Kuwabara Kūdō, another of Baisaō's friends, on a site that had formerly been used by the potter Ogata Kenzan.

Baisaō and Hyakusetsu may have become acquainted even before Baisaō settled in Kyoto, since it seems likely they would have met during one of Baisaō's stays at Mampuku-ji, where Hyakusetsu had studied and later served for many years. Verses Hyakusetsu dedicated to Baisaō are found in collections of his poetry; three of them were written to thank Baisaō for gifts of a rare type of bitter orange that was taken medicinally for chest ailments. Hyakusetsu prefaces one of the verses with the information that Baisaō had made a trip all the way to the "western hills" (Hozō-ji) to bring him some "Chinese" oranges, suggesting that the fruit may have been imported through Nagasaki. Hyakusetsu also wrote the calligraphy for the carrying basket (*tsuzura*) Baisaō ported around on his carrying pole, four large characters in white ink brushed directly onto the woven basket surface, reading:

Rocks & springs

Good friends.

76. The image of the autumn leaf fluttering through the sky appears in Hyakusetsu's death verse. The "yellow flowers" are chrysanthemums. The enigmatic "North of T'an, south of Hsiang" is from the koan "National Teacher Chung's Seamless Tower": Zen master Hui-chung told the Chinese emperor Tai Tsung to erect a "seamless tower" in his memory after his death, and when the emperor was unable to understand what he meant, Hui-chung said that he had sanctioned a qualified Dharma successor who would be able, when the time came, to tell the emperor all he needed to know. After Hui-chung died, the emperor asked Hui-chung's successor to explain his teacher's meaning. He replied, "South of Hsiang, North of T'an. Enough gold in that to fill the whole country. Beneath the shadowless tree is a ferryboat for all to use, but no one in the world truly understands it."

    In the context of Baisaō's verse the words "South of Hsiang, North of T'an" apparently are meant to indicate the proper manner of honoring Hyakusetsu and his spiritual legacy, which the verse also praises as possessing the all-pervasiveness of the Dharma itself.

77. This, and his decision to begin adding seal impressions to his works, helps explain the relatively large body of calligraphy that survives from the final decade. In what is an added boon to the biographer, Baisaō was now writing his age when he signed the works, making it possible to date most examples of his brushwork during this period to the precise year.

78. Yasuda Zesui (1701–1785) was the head of an old Kyoto family of metal-workers that had accumulated considerable wealth as purveyors to the government. Zesui's closeness to Baisaō is clear from the letters and verses Baisaō wrote to him, and he was obviously someone Baisaō felt he could turn to for such a delicate request. The letter was reproduced in the early nineteenth-century work *Suiyo shōroku* ("Notations Made upon Waking"). One other version of this letter is known to exist, addressed to the wealthy Zen layman Shiba Denzaemon who, like Zesui, lived in the Narutaki area of western Kyoto. Both men are known to have helped Baisaō on other occasions with gifts of food and money.

79. The poet Rikunyo wrote that his friend Taiga dressed in ragged clothing, had a head of hair "like a ball of mugwort," but was gentle, unassuming, and of an infallibly cheerful disposition. "His words were like Zen utterances and his appearance was that of a sage. He kept his distance from the world, but he had at the same time a deep aspiration to save it." In fact, Taiga seems to have been a serious Zen student. He was in contact with Chinese Ōbaku priests from a very early age, and he took *sanzen* later in life with the famous Rinzai teacher Hakuin and his followers. An enlightenment verse Taiga is purported to have written and presented to Hakuin is extant, and two paintings on traditional Zen subjects bearing inscriptions by Hakuin have recently come to light as well.

80. His deep admiration for Baisaō is said to have been one of the inspirations behind the book. Ban Kōkei devotes more pages of *Eccentric Figures* to Baisaō than to any other figure.
81. It seems odd that Taiga and Baisaō would collaborate twice, four years apart, in creating identical works with identical inscriptions. Could Taiga, widely known for his selfless generosity, have made Baisaō a gift of the two paintings for him to inscribe and use as the need arose? There is no real evidence to support this speculation, but we know that at the date the first painting was executed Baisaō was in rather dire need, living primarily on what he received for his calligraphy, and often lacking the means to supply his most basic needs, a situation even more serious the year Taiga did the painting because he was laid up with back pains. A highly successful artist whose works were avidly sought after, Taiga was undoubtedly aware of the trouble Baisaō was having, and it is not difficult to imagine him wanting to help his elderly friend in this way. Daichō's verse, which seems to have been written expressly for the painting, can perhaps be viewed in a similar light, as his contribution to this act of charity.
82. In the traditional sexagenary cycle that was used for calculating dates, each year has its own name, made up of a combination of two ordered sets of symbols, one using terms from the natural world, the other using the names of animals. Baisaō's twenty-second year (1697) fell under the "Fire-Ox" combination of the sixty-year cycle, and now in his eighty-second year (1757) that same combination had come again.
83. Baisaō's acquaintance with Jakuchū probably began during his residence at Shōkoku-ji, where Jakuchū also had close associations. The name Jakuchū, "like a void," had been given him by the Shōkoku-ji teacher and Baisaō's great friend, Daiten Kenjō, who several years earlier had used the identical words in an inscription for one of Baisaō's tea utensils. Jakuchū painted Baisaō the greatest number of times by far of any contemporary artist. I have seen over ten examples, and there are undoubtedly more, some of them probably commissioned by Baisaō's friends and admirers. It is somewhat surprising, in view of the rather close relationship that seems to have existed between the two men, that none of these portraits has a Baisaō inscription. As Baisaō was now, nominally at least, a layman, the paintings probably should not be classed as *chinsō* portraits of the type traditionally painted of eminent Zen prelates, although it is quite possible that some of his admirers regarded them as such.

    The large number of portraits people seem to have been commissioning in the final decade or so of Baisaō's life is a reflection of the admiration and respect in which Baisaō was regarded. From the letters we know that he received, and on occasion complied with, many requests to inscribe colophons —usually a verse—over the portraits. But we also know from the letters that for various reasons, including no doubt modesty, Baisaō sometimes declined these requests. In one case he apologized for being unable to write an inscription because of the pain in his back. Another time he said that he was

afraid he might ruin a portrait because it was painted on silk, a medium he had never written on before. His own feelings about these developments can probably be summed up in a comment he made to one of his correspondents: “For the life of me, I can’t understand why these people want my portrait. They must be out of their minds.”

Five years later, in December of 1760, Baisaō presented Itō Jakuchū with a piece of calligraphy, written in a single line, that read: “Paintings brought to wondrous life by the hand of a master.” Apparently, he had visited Jakuchū’s studio; seen some of the series of paintings of birds, flowers, fish, and insects titled *Dōshoku sai-e*, “Colorful Realm of Living Beings,” that Jakuchū was working on at the time; and wrote the inscription as a way of offering tribute to the artist’s talent. Jakuchū was probably extremely honored to receive such a gift from a person he deeply admired, someone who had by now become an almost mythic figure in Kyoto’s cultural circles. He had a seal made engraved with the words of Baisaō’s inscription to use on his paintings. Five years later, when Jakuchū donated the entire *Doshoku sai-e* series to Shōkoku-ji, he included Baisaō’s calligraphy as part of the set.

84. Arrowroot, in the form of *kuzu-kiri*, which could be dried and kept for long periods, was eaten as a popular summer treat.

    Although the *kamiko* or paper kimono was sometimes made of thick softened paper, the more expensive ones were fashioned of cloth woven from thin paper strands. They were often stained with persimmon juice to strengthen and waterproof the fibers. Given Baisaō’s enthusiastic response, he may have received the second, more expensive type of garment.

    Daishō-no-miya, a high-ranking Zen nun known by the clerical name Tengan Eikō (1732–1808), was an imperial princess who had taken the tonsure and was serving as abbess of the Daishō-ji imperial convent situated just west of Shōkoku-ji. The seventh daughter of the Emperor Nakamikado (r. 1709–1735), Tengan was twenty-five years old at the time of this letter. She had entered Daishō-ji at the age of eight, was ordained at ten, installed as (nominal) abbess at fourteen, and died in 1808 at the age of seventy-six. The reigning emperor at the time, to whom she would have been a great aunt, was Momozono (r. 1747–1762). The padded garment Tengan presented to Baisaō was a *watako*, a vest or jacket made with a thick lining of cotton padding that was worn to ward off the winter cold.

85. Although the precise manner in which Baisaō taught his students will probably never be known, it is probably safe to assume that it reflected the training he himself had undergone as a young monk in Ōbaku temples, and that it was generally limited to guiding and encouraging pupils, as opposed, for example, to the harsher, hands-on teaching methods usually associated with Japanese Rinzai teachers.

86. The name “bitter melon,” *niga-uri* in Japanese, is used both for the litchi and for a cucumber-shaped bitter gourd, so this could refer to either of them. The

gourd becomes quite sweet if left to ripen until its pulp turns a vivid orange color, and was considered a summer delicacy.

87. Kanshō's daughter was married to Miyake Nariaki, a physician from Hizen who resided near Shōgi-an. Miyake was also a nephew of Kodō Jōkan, the fifth abbot of Ryūshin-ji, a close friend and former colleague of Baisaō. In the course of a long inscription Miyake wrote for one of Baisaō's tea articles, he confirms that Kanshō was a "disciple" of Baisaō, and had come into the possession of certain of his tea articles after his death. Miyake also wrote an inscription that has been transmitted together with the *rakusu* Kanshō received from Baisaō. It is difficult to ascertain the religious significance of this gift, which Miyake's inscription describes simply as a "present from old Zen master Kō Yūgai." Miyake refers to it as a *kesa*, the Buddhist surplice; today this garment is called a *rakusu*, an abbreviated *gojō* (five-strip) *kesa* that hangs around the neck and down over the stomach, with a shape a bit like a short apron. It is worn by priests and by laypeople who have received the Precepts.
88. Yasuda Zesui (1701–1785; Zesui, his lay Buddhist name, means literally "Who is this?") was a serious student of both Sencha and Zen, and apparently studied both under Baisaō's tutelage. He was also a well-known tea master in the Chanoyu tradition. After Baisaō's death he continued his Zen training under the well-known Tenryū-ji priest Keijū Dōrin (1714–1794), who had studied with the great Hakuin. Keijū was a good friend of Baisaō, addressing a number of verses to him and writing inscriptions for some of his tea utensils. Since Zesui was handing over the family business to his son in order to focus on his primary interests of Zen and tea, we may presume that he was at least middle-aged at the time. The words "ultimate self" in Baisaō's verse allude to Zesui's Buddhist name, "Who is this?"—the quintessential Zen koan. The line about building a career "over the brazier's glowing flames" perhaps echoes a Zen "capping phrase" (*jakugo*) from the *Blue Cliff Record* (Case 12) about "casting oneself headlong into the flames of fire [in order to attain full awakening]," which Baisaō used in other inscriptions.
89. Kodō was about the same age as Baisaō, or perhaps a little older, and everything indicates that they had a particularly close relationship. As mentioned before, Kodō was an uncle of the physician Miyake Nariaki of Osaka, the son-in-law of Baisaō's student Kanshō.
90. Although few of these one-line inscriptions are dated or signed, I follow Tanimura in tentatively assigning them to this final period.
91. In their preface and epilogue, Kinzan and Baizan describe how they hit upon the idea of having a collection of Baisaō's verses printed while they were chatting and drinking tea. Upon consulting Baisaō's attendants Daiyū and Mujū, they found that Mujū possessed a collection of verses which had been assembled by Baisaō himself, and that Daiyū had his own separate collection. These two anthologies were thus the basis of the *Baisaō Gego*.

    The original edition of *Baisaō Gego* containing all of the parts described above is an extremely rare article. Baisaō's friends, aware that the end was

near, were probably primarily concerned with having the collection in his hands as soon as possible, and as a result only printed a few copies of the original edition. The work is most often encountered in a later, revised edition from which the preface and epilogue are deleted, and the words “Carefully checked by Daiten Kenjō” added prominently to the title page. In fact, only a few very minor revisions were made to the text. The main alteration was the deletion of the preface and epilogue. Tanimura suggests that these were deleted because Baisaō’s students were unhappy with Kinryū’s preface, that they “felt it was an embarrassment to have the words of a man of Kinryu’s erratic character introducing their teacher’s book.” Kinryū had studied on Mount Hiei, and later resided at the famous Kinryū-san Sensō-ji in Edo, whence his name. After serving as abbot of several other important temples, he returned to Kyoto in 1758 at the age of forty-six and took up residence in a hermitage at Kagura-ga-oka on the southern slope of Yoshida Hill, not far from Baisaō’s place at Shōgo-in. After Baisaō’s death he lived for a time in Higashiyama, selling tea and sake. Although a prolific writer with over thirty works to his credit, Kinryu’s penchant for strange behavior frequently got him into trouble, and once, in his later years, forced him to resign the abbotship of the temple where he was serving.

92. Daiten Kenjō, *Shōun-seikō*, published in 1775.

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