

Versions by William M. Bodiford

*IKKYŪ SŌJUN: THE ERRANT CLOUD COLLECTION*  
(KYŌUNSHŪ)

Ever the eccentric, Ikkyū wrote religious poetry about seemingly irreligious topics, including his personal feelings, brothels, drinking parties, diatribes against false Zen, and especially attacks against his compatriot Yōsō Sōi (1376–1458), whom Ikkyū accused of currying political favor and selling initiations into Zen secrets. Ikkyū more than once vowed to quit Zen in protest of such corrupt practices.

- [38] Anniversary of the Buddha's Birthday  
Past, Present, and Future: One person with many names.  
Today, who knows his alias?  
Appearing in this polluted Sahā world eight thousand times,  
As a horse, as an ass, as a shākya.
- [39] Anniversary of the Buddha's Awakening  
Among gods and humans, only one person is venerable.  
Attaining the way in today's kingdom, receiving whose benefaction?  
This wise monk with the shooting-star eyes,  
I am Gautama's legitimate progeny.
- [40] Anniversary of the Buddha's Parinirvāna  
The complete extinguishing of that Indian, old Shākyamuni;  
For his next life in whose family will he appear?  
Two thousand three hundred years ago they wept;  
And here in Japan we scatter second-month flower petals.
- [45] Yunmen, lecturing the assembly, said: "The old Buddha and the bare pillar intermingle. What functioning is this?" Speaking for himself he answered: "In the southern mountains, clouds arise; in the northern mountains, rain falls."  
How did Mount Xiaogu wed the water spirit Peng-lang?  
Clouds raining love tonight, that's the dream.  
From morning at northern Mount Tiantai to evening at southern Mount  
Nanyue,  
I do not know from where to view Yunmen Mountain.

- [76] Puppets  
The stage presents their whole bodies,  
Some as nobility, some as commoners.  
Forgetting the guide-sticks in front of their eyes,  
Ignorant fools regard them as their original selves.
- [153] The Austerities of Shākyamuni  
For six years starvation and cold pierced his bones.  
Austerities are the essential secret of Buddha and ancestors.  
Believe me when I say that Shākyamunis are made, not born,  
All of you rice-hungry worthless monks.
- [165] Holding Up the Flower, Slight Smile  
From the assembly on Vulture Peak to the here and now;  
From the cave in Cockleg Mountain to the eons yet to come;  
A poisoned person certainly knows poison's use.  
In India and in this land: the same tricky fox.
- [171] Attacking False Zen  
Gautama's forty-nine years of teaching:  
Look at his silence in Vaishālī! Look at his silence in Magadha!  
False teachers distorting his words with *kōan* phrases,  
See if Yama, King of Hell, doesn't yank out your tongues.<sup>6</sup>
- [175] In Honor of Daitokuji Abbot Yōsō Sōi of the Great Function  
Hermitage (Daiyūan) Receiving an Imperial Purple Robe and the Title of Great  
Illuminator of Religious Wisdom Zen Master (Sōe daishō zenji)
- Purple robes and the title of "master" cannot conceal your spiritual poverty.  
The edict alone cost three hundred strings of cash.  
Your great function is perfectly obvious, you counterfeit abbot.  
Look! Here he comes! A real Szechuanese thief.
- [203] Chōroku period, 4th year [1460], 8th moon, last day, a typhoon  
brought floods to everyone's distress. That night there were customers  
enjoying themselves with singing and music. Unable to endure listening to  
them I composed this verse to comfort myself.

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6. Vimalakīrti preached a wordless sermon on the meaning of nonduality in the town of Vaishālī, and Shākyamuni preached a wordless sermon by holding up a flower on Vulture Peak in the kingdom of Magadha.

Typhoons and floods: everyone's miserable.  
 Singing, dancing, music: who's enjoying the night?  
 The dharma flourishes and declines; the times prosper and deteriorate.  
 And now that bright moon has dipped below the western rooftops.

[205] The celebrated poet Bo Juyi asked the Bird Nest Zen master: "What is the ultimate teaching of Buddhism?" Bird Nest replied: "Refrain from all evil; perform every manner of good." Bo Juyi, in disappointment, responded: Even a three-year-old child knows how to recite that verse. Bird Nest said: "A three-year-old child can say it, but even a man of eighty cannot accomplish it." Master Lingshan always instructed: "But for Bird Nest's words, my students would be corrupted by sayings like 'originally there is not a single thing,' 'do not think of good, do not think of evil,' 'the nonduality of good and evil,' 'the oneness of false and true,' and my students thereby would deny the moral truth of karma." In today's world there are many false teachers who engage in impure actions daily. Therefore I wrote the following verse for my disciples.

Student monks who deny karma sink into *samsāra*.  
 That old Zen teacher's words are worth a thousand pieces of gold:  
 "Refrain from all evil; perform every manner of good."  
 Isn't that a line in drunken Bo Ju-yi's singing?

[226] Say nothing; the *kōan* is perfectly complete;  
 The eight-sided stone mortar is stuck in my mind.  
 During a chance encounter, it's difficult to smell the stench of one's  
     own shit,  
 But the other person's faults are as obvious as one's own face in a  
     mirror.

[227] Years past I reverently gazed upon the portrait of Daitō Kokushi. I have  
 now changed my robe and joined the Pure Land school. For this reason I  
 dedicate this poem to that old master dwelling amid the clouds.

I have left the Zen lineage, the supreme vehicle,  
 And changed my robe to become a priest in the Pure Land school.  
 How foolish I was to lightly join Ryōzen Tettō's monastery [Daitokuji].  
 Alas! So many years wasted in the Daitō lineage!

[228] Errant Cloud [Ikkyū] is Daitokuji's very own Demon Pāpiyas:  
 Within the temple grounds fighting with an *Asura*'s titan-like anger.  
 Old *kōan* phrases—of what use can they be?  
 So much elation and suffering just to count up someone else's wealth.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Pāpiyas is the name of a demon who murders innocent victims. By extension, it refers to any exceedingly evil person. Asura refer to a class of Indic demigods, similar to the Titans of Greek mythology, who compete against the true gods.

- [254] Two poems for a painting of an *arhat* visiting a brothel<sup>8</sup>  
 An *arhat* in this polluted world lacks human feelings;  
 A brothel's patrons, however, overflow with feeling.  
 On this side, "no"; On that side "yes":  
 Monks struggling with demonic Buddha feelings.
- [255] In this polluted world an *arhat* is far from the Buddha land;  
 One trip to a brothel, however, will arouse his great wisdom.  
 Deeply laughing Mañjushrī recites the *Shūrangama Dhāranī*,  
 Reminiscing the long eons since his own youthful frolics.<sup>9</sup>
- [Ichikawa, *Chūsei zenke*, pp. 285–341; WB]<sup>10</sup>

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8. An *arhat* is a Buddhist saint who has eliminated the taints of human passions. Although some Mahāyāna scriptures disparage the *arhat* as inferior to the bodhisattva, in others he is seen as the protector of Buddhism who will remain on earth until the time of the future Buddha Maitreya.

9. According to a famous story in the *Shūrangama Sūtra*, the Bodhisattva Mañjushrī, the Crown Prince of Wisdom, first recited the *Shūrangama Dhāranī* (magical spell) to rescue the Buddha's disciple Ānanda from the clutches of a prostitute who was about to seduce him.

10. The poems are numbered in accordance with this edition, which is based on the Okumura manuscript.