

Wu-men (1183–1260), compiler

Wu-men-kuan (*The Gateless Barrier*, complete)

The Wu-men-kuan, better known in its Japanese pronunciation Mumonkan, was compiled in 1228 by the monk Wu-men Hui-k'ai (Japanese: Mumon Ekai). It consists of a series of forty-eight kōans, meditation questions given to Zen students when they have reached a point in their practice where they can quiet and focus their minds. The first kōan given to Zen students has usually been the first case here, Chao-chou's dog and the meaning of Mu (Chinese: Wu, "not have").

Kōans are intended to break through conceptual thought, and as such they do not have answers that can be reasoned out but instead act as gateways to reaching enlightenment. Most kōans are Zen encounters between Chinese Masters and their monk pupils, although there are exceptions that refer to Indian Buddhism.

The name Wu-men itself means "no gate," and Wu-men-kuan means "gateless barrier." In his preface, Wu-men offers a quatrain that has become very well known in the world of Zen:

The great way has no gate,
But there are a thousand paths;
If you pass through the barrier,
You can walk alone through the universe.

After each of the forty-eight cases, Wu-men wrote commentaries (which are not given here) and then added four-line verses. His commentaries and poems do not explain the kōans, which would defeat their purpose, but they do add further elements, often paradoxical, to encourage students to go beyond linear thinking.

Since Wu-men's time, a number of Zen Masters have also added their own commentaries to the text, so that a full study of the Wu-men-kuan would take many volumes. But since its essence consists of the forty-eight kōans, we present them here with Wu-men's verses.



Figure 8. Nakahara Nantenbō (1839–1925)
Wu-men-kuan (Mumonkan)

Case One

Chao-chou was asked by a monk, "Has a dog the Buddha-nature or not?"
Chao-chou said, "*Mu*."

Wu-men's Verse

Dog—Buddha-nature—

Completely manifested, correctly ordered.

But cross into having and not having,

You will mourn your body and lose your life.

[Note: Although Buddhists believe that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, Mu (Chinese: Wu) means "no," "not," "nothing."]

Case Two

When Pai-chang gave sermons, an old man always followed the monks into the hall and listened; when the monks departed, so did the old man. However, one day he did not leave, so Pai-chang asked, "Who are you, standing before me?" The old man replied, "I am not a human being. In the old days of Kasyapa Buddha, I was the head monk at this mountain temple. One day a monk in training asked, 'Are enlightened people subject to the law of cause and effect or not?' I replied, 'They do not fall into causation.' As a result I have been reborn five hundred times as a fox. I beg you to utter a turning word on my behalf and release me from my life as a fox."

The old man then asked Pai-chang, "Do enlightened people fall into causation?"

The Master said, "They are not in the dark about causation."

At these words, the old man achieved enlightenment. Bowing to the Master he said, "I am released from my fox body, and I shall remain on this mountain. Please have a funeral service for my body as that of a deceased monk."

Pai-chang called his monastery administrator to strike the wooden clapper and inform the monks that after the noon meal there would be a funeral for a dead monk. The monks wondered about this, saying, "Everyone seems in good health, no one is in the Nirvana Hall for the ill, so what could this mean?"

After the meal, Pai-chang led the monks to the foot of a large rock. He poked out the body of a fox with his staff and then performed a cremation ceremony.

That evening Pai-chang ascended to the rostrum and told the whole story to the monks. Huang-po then said, "You have told us that the old man gave



Figure 9. Sozan Genkyō (1779–1868), *Wu-men-kuan Case Two*

Not caused, not free from causes,
A pair of dice of the same color.

the wrong answer and had to live as a fox for five hundred generations. But if he had given the correct answer, what would have happened then?"

Pai-chang replied, "Come closer and I'll tell you the answer."

Huang-po went up to the Master and gave him a slap. Pai-chang laughed and clapped his hands, saying, "I thought the Barbarian had a red beard, but right here is a red-bearded Barbarian."

Wu-men's Verse

Not falling, not in the dark—
Two faces of the same die.
Not falling in, not escaping—
A thousand mistakes, ten thousand errors!

[Note: The "red-bearded Barbarian" is Bodhidharma.]

Case Three

Chü-chih, when asked a question, just raised one finger. Later he had a young follower who, when asked by a visitor what was the primary teaching of his Master, also raised up a finger.

When he heard about this, Chü-chih cut off the boy's finger. The boy ran from the hall screaming in pain, but his Master called to him. When he turned, Chü-chih held up one finger. The boy was instantly enlightened.

When Chü-chih was ready to die, he said to the assembled monks, "I received one-finger Zen from T'ien-lung, and I used it all my life without ever exhausting it." With these words, he passed away.

Wu-men's Verse

Chü-chih made a fool of old T'ien-lung
And sliced the boy with his sharp knife,
Just like the deity Chü-leng raised his hand
And split the thousand-peak Mount Hua in two.

Case Four

Huo-an asked, "Why has the Western Barbarian no beard?"

Wu-men's Verse

In front of a fool
Don't explain your dream;
The Barbarian with no beard—
Wisdom accompanying ignorance.

[Note: The Western Barbarian is Bodhidharma.]

Case Five

The monk Hsiang-yen said, "It's as though you are up a tree, hanging onto a branch with your mouth; your hands can't touch a branch and your feet can't reach a bough. Someone under the tree asks you the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the west. If you don't answer, you fail to help the questioner, and if you do answer, you lose your life. What will you do?"

Wu-men's Verse

Hsiang-yen is being careless,
Spreading his poison without end;
He stops up the mouths of monks
So their bodies sprout the eyes of devils!

Case Six

Long ago when the Buddha was on Mount Grdhrakuta, he held up a flower before the congregated followers. At this time everyone was silent, but only Mahakasyapa gave a broad smile. The World-Honored One said, "I have the eye of the storehouse of the Dharma, the mysterious mind of nirvana, the true form of no-form, the gate of wondrous process that cannot be set forth by words and writings. This special transmission, beyond all teaching, I now give to Mahakasyapa."

Wu-men's Verse

He holds up a flower,
The tail of the snake has already emerged.
Mahakasyapa smiles—
Humans and gods, deceived and abandoned.

Case Seven

A monk asked Chao-chou, "I have just entered the monastery; can you give me a teaching?"

Chao-chou asked, "Have you eaten your breakfast?"

The monk replied, "I have eaten it."

Chao-chou said, "Then go and wash your bowl."

The monk was enlightened.

Wu-men's Verse

He has made it extremely clear,
But it takes a long time to get it.
If you understand that flame is fire,
Cooking a meal won't take much time.

Case Eight

Master Yüeh-an asked a monk, "Hsi-chung built a cart with one hundred spokes. If you took off both front and rear wheels and the axle, what would you learn?"

Wu-men's Verse

When the wheel goes round and round
Experts are even more confused;
Four directions, up, down,
North, south, east, and west.

Case Nine

A monk asked Ch'ing-jang of Hsing-yang, "The Buddha of Great Penetration and Perfect Wisdom sat for ten kalpas in the Meditation Hall, but the Dharma did not manifest itself and he did not fully attain the Buddha Way—why was this?"

Ch'ing-jang said, "This question is extremely rich in truth."

The monk said, "But why did he not reach the Buddha Way from sitting in the Meditation Hall?"

Ch'ing-jang said, "Because he did not attain Buddhahood."

Wu-men's Verse

How is calming the body like calming the mind?
 When the mind is peaceful, the body is not distressed.
 When body and mind are both completely serene,
 Why would gods and immortals need to become
 noblemen?

[Note: A kalpa is the time from the beginning of a universe to the beginning of the next universe.]

Case Ten

A monk said to Ts'ao-shan, "I am Ch'ing-shui, alone and poor. I beg the teacher to give me alms."

Ts'ao-shan said, "Master Shui!"

Ch'ing-shui responded, "Yes Sir?"

Ts'ao-shan said, "You have already drunk three cups of the finest wine in China, yet you say you have not moistened your lips!"

Wu-men's Verse

He is poor like Fan-tan,
 And his spirit is broad like Hsiang-yü;
 Although he has no means of livelihood,
 He quarrels about treasure.

[Note: Fan-tan lived a life of poverty, putting his wife and children in a wheelbarrow and traveling around telling fortunes rather than accepting a high government position; Hsiang-yü was a military hero who sang when facing death.]

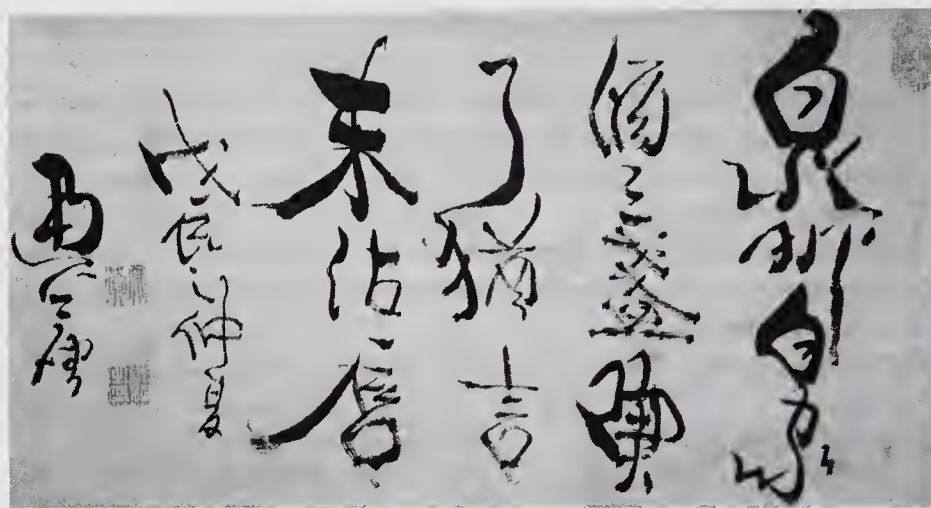


Figure 10. Daien Butsu (died 1825), *Wu-men-kuan Case Ten* (1808)

You have already drunk three cups of the finest wine in China,
Yet you say you have not moistened your lips.

Case Eleven

Chao-chou went to the hut of a hermit and asked, "Anyone here, anyone here?" The hermit lifted his fist.

Chao-chou said, "The water is too shallow here to anchor a boat," and went away. He then went to another hermit's hut and said, "Anyone here, anyone here?"

The hermit lifted his fist.

Chao-chou said, "Free to give, free to take away; free to kill, free to bestow life," and made a deep bow.

Wu-men's Verse

Shooting star eyes,
Bolt of lightning spirit;
A killing sword,
A life-giving sword.

Case Twelve

Every day the monk Jui-yen called to himself "Master," and then responded, "Yes Sir!"

"Wake up, wake up!"

"Yes Sir!"

"From this moment, don't let anyone deceive you!"

"Yes Sir! Yes Sir!"

Wu-men's Verse

Those searching for the Way do not know truth
And learn only conscious discriminations.
These are the origin of endless rounds of birth and
death,
But fools consider them their original self.

Case Thirteen

One day Master Te-shan came down to the dining hall carrying his bowl. Hsüeh-feng asked him, "Old man, where are you taking your bowl? The bell has not yet sounded and the drum has not yet been struck." Te-shan at once returned to his room.

Hsüeh-feng discussed this with Yen-t'ou, who said, "Big or small, Te-shan has not yet penetrated the final word."

Te-shan heard of this, and sent a monk to ask Yen-t'ou to visit him. Te-shan then asked him, "Do you not approve of this old monk?" Yen-t'ou whispered his meaning, and Te-shan silently sent him away.

The next day, Te-shan ascended the rostrum and was not the same. Yen-t'ou, in front of the Monks' Training Hall, clapped his hands and gave a great laugh, saying, "How marvelous. The old man has grasped the final word. After this, no one in the world will be able to match him!"

Wu-men's Verse

If you understand the first word,
You understand the last;
But the last and the first
Are not a single word.

Case Fourteen

When the monks of the Western and Eastern Halls were quarreling about a cat, Nan-ch'üan held it up and said, "If you are able to speak, I will spare it; if you cannot speak, I will kill it." No one could answer, so Nan-ch'üan proceeded to kill the cat.

That evening Chao-chou returned from afar, and Nan-ch'üan told him what had happened. Chao-chou took off one sandal, put it on his head, and left. Nan-ch'üan said, "If you had been there, you would have saved the cat!"

Wu-men's Verse

If Chao-chou had been there,
Everything would have been reversed;
He would have snatched away the knife,
And Nan-ch'üan would have begged for his life.

Case Fifteen

When Tung-shan came to study with Yün-men, the Master asked, "Where have you just come from?"

Tung-shan replied, "From Ch'a-tu."

Yün-men asked, "Where were you for the summer sessions?"

Tung-shan answered, "At Pao-tzu in Hunan [South of the Lake]."

"When did you leave there?"

"On August twenty-fifth."

Yün-men said, "I give you sixty blows!"

The next day, Tung-shan came again, knelt down, and said, "Yesterday you gave me sixty blows, but I don't know what I said or did that was wrong."

Yün-men answered, "You dirty rice-bag! Haven't you been meandering west of the river and south of the lake?"

At these words, Tung-shan was enlightened.

Wu-men's Verse

The lioness has a roundabout way of teaching her cubs—
She kicks them back so they will come forward;
He wrongly went to gain equal achievement—
The first arrow only scratched, but the second went deep.

Case Sixteen

Yün-men said, "The world is vast and broad; at the sound of the bell, why do you put on your seven-piece robe?"

Wu-men's Verse

If you are enlightened, everything is one;
If not, ten thousand divisions, a thousand variations.

If you are not enlightened, everything is one;
If you are, ten thousand divisions, a thousand variations.

Case Seventeen

National Teacher Kuo-shih called his attendant three times, and three times the attendant responded. The National Teacher said, "I thought I had failed you, but now I know you have failed me."

Wu-men's Verse

He has to wear an iron yoke with no hole,
And his descendants also will have no respite;
If you want to support the gate and sustain the house,
You must climb a mountain of swords with bare feet.

Case Eighteen

Tung-shan was asked by a monk, "What is Buddha?"
Tung-shan said, "Three pounds of flax."

Wu-men's Verse

Out pour three pounds of flax,
Intimate words and intimate meaning;
The person who explains this and that
Is also a this-and-that person.

Case Nineteen

Chao-chou asked Nan-ch'üan, "What is the Way?"
Nan-ch'üan answered, "Ordinary mind is the Way."
Chao-chou asked, "Does it lead in any direction?"
Nan-ch'üan replied, "To seek it is to lose it."
Chao-chou asked, "Then how can I know if it is the Way?"
Nan-ch'üan answered, "The Way does not depend upon knowing, and does not depend upon not knowing. Knowing is illusion; not knowing is blankness. If you can achieve the unquestioned Way, it is like vast emptiness and boundless space, so how can it be this or that?"
At these words, Chao-chou became enlightened.

Wu-men's Verse

Spring has a hundred flowers, autumn has the moon,
 Summer offers a cool breeze, and winter has snow.
 When obstructions are not held in the mind,
 Then anytime becomes the best season for humanity.

Case Twenty

Master Sung-yüan said, "Why can't a man of great strength lift up his own leg?"

He also said, "When we open our mouths, it is not with our tongues that we speak."

Wu-men's Verse

Lifting a foot, he kicks scented waters from the ocean,
 Lowering his head, he looks down at the four heavens.
 His body is so big there's no place to put it—
 Please add the last line yourself!

Case Twenty-One

A monk asked Yün-men, "What is Buddha?"

Yün-men replied, "A dried shit-stick."

Wu-men's Verse

A flash of lightning,
 Sparks of fire from flint—
 If your eyes blink,
 It's already gone.

[Note: Before the use of toilet paper, a short stick was used in the latrine.]

Case Twenty-Two

Ananda asked Mahakasyapa, "The World-Honored One transmitted to you the golden robe. What else did he transmit?"

Mahakasyapa said, "Ananda!"

"Yes?"

"Take down the flag at the gate!"

Wu-men's Verse

Is the question or answer more intimate?
 Many people have knit their brows.
 Elder brother asks, younger brother answers, a family
 disgrace,
 But this springtime does not belong to yin or yang.

[Note: Ananda was the Buddha's younger cousin who served as his attendant; the temple flag was raised when a Master gave a sermon.]

Case Twenty-Three

The Sixth Patriarch was pursued by Head Monk Hui-ming to Ta-yü Peak. The Patriarch, seeing Ming coming, laid down his bowl and robe on a rock, saying, "The robe is nothing but a symbol—what point is there in taking it by force? I leave them for you to take away."

When Hui-ming came to the rock, he tried to pick up the robe and bowl but could not move them. Then he shouted, "Lay brother, lay brother, I have come for the Dharma, not for the robe!"

The Patriarch replied, "Thinking of neither good nor evil, at this instant, what is the original face of Hui-ming?" At these words Hui-ming had an awakening, and his entire body dripped with sweat. In tears, he made his bows and asked, "Beyond these secret words is there anything else even deeper?"

The Patriarch answered, "What I have said is not a secret; when you realize your true face, anything deeper belongs only to you."

Hui-ming said, "Although I stayed at Huang-mei, I did not realize my original face. Thanks to your guidance, I now understand, just as someone drinking water knows personally if it is hot or cold. Lay brother, you are now my teacher."

I said, "If this be true, then we are both disciples of the Fifth Patriarch, so maintain with care what you have learned."

Wu-men's Verse

Can't describe it, can't paint it,
 Needn't praise or grasp it;
 There's no place to hide your original face,
 When the world ends, this still remains.

Case Twenty-Four

A monk asked Feng-hsüeh, "Speech and silence are both inward and outward—how can we go beyond dualism?"

Feng-hsüeh said,

"I often think of Chiang-nan in March;
Partridges chirp among the fragrant blossoms."

Wu-men's Verse

You don't need fine phrases;
Before you speak, the answer is there.
If you just chatter on and on,
Knowing will become deceiving.

Case Twenty-Five

Yang-shan had a dream that he went to the realm of the future Buddha and was given the third seat. A senior monk pounded the gavel and announced, "Today the sermon will be given by the monk in the third seat."

Yang-shan stood up and pounded the gavel, saying, "Mahayana teachings go beyond the Four Propositions and transcend the Hundred Negations. Listen carefully! Listen carefully!"

Wu-men's Verse

Bright sun, blue sky,
A dream explained within a dream—
Falsehood and fabrication!
He deceived the entire congregation.

[Note: Mahayana is the "greater vehicle" of Buddhism.]

Case Twenty-Six

Fa-yen of Ch'ing-liang went to the Monks' Hall to speak before the noon meal. He pointed to the bamboo blinds, and immediately two monks went to roll them up. Fa-yen said, "One wins, one loses."

Wu-men's Verse

When they are rolled up, bright, bright, the great sky;
But the great sky does not match our teachings.

Why not cast away everything including the sky?
Then even the wind can never pass through.

Case Twenty-Seven

A monk asked Nan-ch'üan, "Is there a teaching that has never been taught?"

Nan-ch'üan replied, "There is."

The monk asked, "What is the teaching that has never been taught?"

Nan-ch'üan said, "Not mind, not Buddha, not things."

Wu-men's Verse

Too much kindness loses its virtue;
Not speaking is more truly useful.
The blue ocean may be transformed,
But in the end, it cannot be explained.

Case Twenty-Eight

One night Te-shan visited Lung-t'an and asked for his teaching. Lung-t'an said, "It has grown late, so you had better retire."

Te-shan made his bows, lifted the curtain, and went out. Seeing that it was dark outside, he came back in and said, "It's very dark out there."

Lung-t'an lit a candle and handed it to him. Just when Te-shan was about to take it, Lung-t'an blew the candle out. Te-shan was immediately enlightened, and made a deep bow.

Lung-t'an asked, "What have you understood?"

Te-shan replied, "From this moment, I will never again doubt what the sages of old have taught."

The next day Lung-t'an went up to the rostrum and said, "There is one among you with fangs like a tree of swords and a mouth like a bowl of blood. Hit him with a stick, and he won't even turn his head to look at you. One day he will climb to the highest peak and establish the Way."

Te-shan then made a bonfire of his commentaries on the *Diamond Sutra* in front of the Monks' Hall and said, "Even the most profound doctrines are like a single hair in vast emptiness; the greatest wisdom is just a drop of water thrown into a deep ravine." When he had burned his commentaries, he took his leave.

Wu-men's Verse

Hearing the name is not as good as seeing the face;
Seeing the face is not as good as hearing the name.

Even though he was able to save his nose,
He has lost his eyes!

Case Twenty-Nine

In front of the Sixth Patriarch, a temple pennant was blowing in the wind, and two monks were arguing. One claimed that the wind was moving, while the other insisted that it was the pennant that was moving, and they could not come to an agreement.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "It's not the wind moving; it's not the flag moving; it is your minds that are moving." The two monks were amazed.

Wu-men's Verse

The wind, the flag, the mind moves—
A single appearance, and understanding passes by.
We only know to open our mouths
But don't realize how we indulge in talk.

Case Thirty

Ta-mei asked Ma-tsu, "What is Buddha?"

Ma-tsu answered, "Mind is Buddha."

Wu-men's Verse

Blue sky, bright sun,
How foolish to search to and fro;
And asking about Buddha—
Holding the loot, you still declare your innocence.

Case Thirty-One

A monk training under Chao-chou asked an old woman the way to Mount T'ai.

The old woman said, "Go straight ahead." After the monk had taken three or five steps, she added, "He looks like a real monk, but he goes just like that!"

Later another monk told Chao-chou about it, and he replied, "Wait, and I'll go check on her."

The next day he went, asked the same question, and got the same reply. On his return, Chao-chou told the monks, "I have now completely investigated the old woman of Mount T'ai for you."

Wu-men's Verse

The question is the same;
The answer is also the same:
There's sand in the rice
And thorns in the clay.

Case Thirty-Two

A non-Buddhist asked the World-Honored One, "I don't ask for words; I don't ask for non-words." The Buddha just remained seated.

The non-Buddhist said admiringly, "The World-Honored One, with great pity and compassion, had parted the clouds of my illusions and allowed me to enter the Way." Making his bows, he departed.

Ananda then asked the Buddha, "What did this outsider realize that he can praise you in this manner?"

The World-Honored One replied, "A first-class horse moves at even the shadow of the whip."

Wu-men's Verse

Moving over a sword-edge,
Walking on ridges of ice;
Without steps or ladders,
Climbing the peaks with open hands.

Case Thirty-Three

A monk asked Ma-tsu, "What is Buddha?"

Ma-tsu replied, "Without mind, without Buddha."

Wu-men's Verse

To a swordsman, give a sword,
But don't give poems to non-poets.
To those you meet, explain just three-quarters;
It's no good to give people the final part.

Case Thirty-Four

Nan-ch'üan said, "Mind is not Buddha; wisdom is not the Way."

Wu-men's Verse

The heavens are clear and the sun appears;
Rain falls and the earth gets wet.
With exhaustive kindness he explains everything,
But through fear, people do not trust him.

Case Thirty-Five

Wu-tsu asked a monk, "Ch'ien and her soul were separated—which is the real Ch'ien?"

Wu-men's Verse

Moon and clouds, always the same;
Valleys and mountains, always different;
Ten thousand blessings, ten thousand blessings,
This one and this two.

[*Note: In a famous ghost story, Ch'ien's body stayed with her family while her soul was with her lover.*]

Case Thirty-Six

Wu-tsu said, "When you meet true followers of the Way, do not greet them with words, do not greet them with silence. How will you greet them?"

Wu-men's Verse

Meeting attained persons on the road,
Not using words or silence,
Smash them with your fist—
Those who can understand will understand!

Case Thirty-Seven

A monk asked Chao-chou, "What is the meaning of the Patriarch coming from the west?"

Chao-chou answered, "Oak tree in the front garden."

Wu-men's Verse

Words can't explain things,
Phrases don't connect with spirit;
Those who cling to words are lost,
Those attached to phrases are befuddled.

Case Thirty-Eight

Wu-tsu said, "Suppose a water buffalo passes by a window. The head, horns, and four legs go past—why can't the tail pass by?"

Wu-men's Verse

If it passes by, it falls in a ditch;
If it goes back, it is destroyed;
But this little tail,
How wondrous it is!

Case Thirty-Nine

A monk said to Yün-men, "The radiance shines over the entire universe . . ." but before he could finish the first poetic line, Yün-men asked, "Aren't those the words of Chang-cho?"

The monk replied, "Yes," so Yün-men said, "You have made a slip of the tongue."

Later, Master Ssu-hsin took this matter up and asked, "Tell me, in what way did the monk make a slip of the tongue?"

Wu-men's Verse

Fishing in a swiftly flowing stream,
The greedy will be captured;
Just open your mouth,
And your life is already lost.

Case Forty

When Kuei-shan was studying with Pai-chang, he was the monastery's head cook. Pai-chang wanted to choose an abbot to found a temple on Mount Ta-kuei, so he invited the head monk and his other disciples to make presentations. Then he took a water-bottle and placed it on the floor, saying, "Don't call this a bottle, so what is it?"

The head monk said, "It can't be called a tree-stump."

Pai-chang then asked Kuei-shan, who walked up and kicked the bottle over.

Laughing, Pai-chang said, "The head monk has been defeated by Kuei-shan," and therefore ordered Kuei-shan to found the temple.

Wu-men's Verse

Throwing baskets and ladles aside,
With one blow he cuts off all obstructions;
Pai-chang's barrier did not stop him,
From his toes come innumerable Buddhas.

Case Forty-One

Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. The Second Patriarch, standing in snow, cut off his arm and said, "Your disciple's mind is not at rest. I beg you, teacher, give it peace."

Bodhidharma replied, "Bring me your mind and I will give it peace."

The Second Patriarch said, "I have searched for my mind, but I cannot find it."

Bodhidharma answered, "Then I have given peace to your mind."

Wu-men's Verse

Coming from the west and pointing directly—
That's what caused all the trouble!
All the fuss and bother at temples
Is just because of you.

Case Forty-Two

Long ago, Manjusri came to a place where Buddhas assembled with the World-Honored One, but they had departed. Only a young woman remained, seated in deep meditation, near the seat of Buddha. Manjusri asked the Buddha, "Why is this woman so close to your seat when I cannot be?"

Buddha told Manjusri, "Try to awaken this woman from her meditation and ask her yourself."

Manjusri walked around her three times, snapped his fingers once, then took her up to the Brahman Heaven and practiced supernatural powers, but he could not awaken her. The World-Honored One said, "Even a hundred

thousand Manjusris could not bring her out of meditation, but down below, past twelve hundred million lands as numerous as sands on the Ganges, there is the Bodhisattva Mōmyō who will be able to bring this woman out of her profound contemplation.”

Instantly the Bodhisattva Mōmyō emerged from the earth and bowed to the World-Honored One, who gave him an order. Mōmyō went to the woman, snapped his fingers once, and she came out of her deep meditation.

Wu-men's Verse

One could bring her out and one could not,
Yet both are completely free.
The god face opposes the devil face;
The failure is quite marvelous.

[Note: Manjusri is the evolved Bodhisattva of Wisdom, while Mōmyō is a beginning Bodhisattva.]

Case Forty-Three

Shou-shan held up his bamboo staff and said, “Monks, if you call this a staff, you offend; if you don’t call it a staff, you bear its burden. Tell me, everyone, what will you call it?”

Wu-men's Verse

Lifting up the bamboo staff—
The law of killing and giving life;
Where offending and bearing the burden interfuse,
Buddhas and Patriarchs beg for their lives!

Case Forty-Four

Pa-chiao said to the assembled monks, “If you have a staff, I will give you a staff; if you don’t have a staff, I will take it away from you.”

Wu-men's Verse

In every direction deep and shallow,
Everything in his hand;
Holding up heaven and earth,
Everywhere spreading the truth.

Case Forty-Five

The Patriarch Wu-tsu said, "Shakyamuni and Maitreya are servants of another. Tell me, who is this other?"

Wu-men's Verse

Don't draw another's bow,
Don't ride another's horse,
Don't discuss another's faults,
Don't stick your nose into another's business.

[Note: Shakyamuni is the historical Buddha; Maitreya is the Buddha of the future.]

Case Forty-Six

Shih-shuang said, "How do you step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole?"

Another sage of old said:

"The person sitting on a hundred-foot pole
Has entered the Way but not fully penetrated truth;
This person must step forward from the hundred-foot pole
And reveal the complete self in every direction."

Wu-men's Verse

The eye in the forehead is darkened,
The pointer on the scale misleads us;
Throwing away body and spirit,
The blind are leading the blind.

Case Forty-Seven

Tou-shan created three barriers to test his followers.

"Penetrating your way through the underbrush is accomplished by seeing our own nature. Monks, at this moment where is your self-nature?"

"When you see your own nature, you are free from life and death. When the final light dims in your eyes, how can you be released from birth and death?"

"When you are free from birth and death, you know where you have been. When the four great elements of life have separated, where will you go?"

Wu-men's Verse

One instant of full attention fills immensity,
Endless time exists right now;
If you focus on this moment of attention,
You can see the person who is seeing.

Case Forty-Eight

A monk asked Kan-feng, "The Buddhas of the ten directions have a single road to nirvana. I wonder, where does this road begin?"

Kan-feng drew a line in the air with his stick and said, "Right here."

Later, the monk asked Yün-men for help on this question.

Yün-men held up his fan and said, "This fan jumps up to the thirty-third heaven and hits the nose of the god residing there. The carp of the eastern sea leaps up, and rain falls in buckets."

Wu-men's Verse

Before you lift your foot, you have already arrived:
The tongue has not yet moved, but the teaching is
complete;
Although each step comes before the next,
Know that you must still face the great void.

—Translation by Stephen Addiss