



Mandalas of the Heart. Two Prose Works by Ikkyū Sōjun

Author(s): Ikkyū Sōjun and James H. Sanford

Source: *Monumenta Nipponica*, Autumn, 1980, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 273-298

Published by: Sophia University

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2384261>

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Mandalas of the Heart

Two Prose Works by Ikkyū Sōjun

by JAMES H. SANFORD

THE medieval Zen monk Ikkyū Sōjun¹ is perhaps best known as the hero of a number of eccentric incidents ascribed to him in several anthologies of 'Ikkyū stories' that were first composed or collected in the Edo period.² People versed in Japanese culture may further recognize Ikkyū as the painter of masterly pieces of calligraphic brushwork or as the author of *Kyōunshū*, a famous anthology of poems in classical Chinese.³ That Ikkyū also wrote a small number of Buddhist prose pieces is much less known, even in Japan, although the illustrations to various editions of his prose-poem *Gaikotsu*⁴ are separately reproduced with some regularity. By presenting translations of two of these almost unknown prose pieces, this article will provide a glimpse into the mind of this important fifteenth-century monk.

Life of Ikkyū

IN order to place Ikkyū's writings into context it is necessary to know something of his life.⁵ He was born, auspiciously enough, on New Year's Day, Ōei 1 (1394), in

THE AUTHOR is Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹ 一休宗純, 1394–1481.

² Chief among these would be the following: Hirata Shusui 平田止水, *Ikkyū Shokoku Monogatari Zue* 一休諸国物語図会, 1836; Tsujimoto Motosada 辻本基定, *Ikkyū Shokoku Monogatari Shūi* 一休諸国物語拾遺, 1844; anonymous, *Ikkyū Banashi* 一休咄, 1668; and Yurai 也来, *Zoku Ikkyū Banashi* 続一休咄, 1731.

³ 狂雲集, 'Crazy-Cloud Anthology', after Ikkyū's title, *Kyōun-shi* 狂雲子, 'Master of the Crazy Clouds'. The collection contains almost 1,100 poems, many of which have historically useful introductions by Ikkyū.

See Itō Toshiko 伊藤敏子, ed., '*Kyōunshū Shohon no Kyōgō ni tsuite*' 狂雲集諸本の校合について, in *Yamato Bunka*, 41, Yamato Bunkakan, Nara, 1964, which provides a critical and numbered edition of all the poems; also,

Hirano Sōjō 平野宗浄, ed., *Kyōunshū Zenshaku* 狂雲集全釈, Shunjūsha, 1976, vol. 1, an annotated study that will, once completed, become the standard text.

About seventy of the poems are available in English translation in Sonja Arntzen, *Ikkyū Sōjun: A Zen Monk and His Poetry*, Western Washington State College, Bellingham, 1973.

⁴ 骸骨

⁵ The basic source is *Tōkai Ikkyū Oshō Nempu* 東海一休和尚年譜, attributed to Ikkyū's disciple and confidant, the painter Bokusai 墨斎 (also known as Mōsurin 沒倫紹等), d. 1492. The text is available in *Zoku Gunsho Ruiju* 続群書類従, ix, pp. 749–66.

The only scholarly study, which also includes the entire text, is Hirano Sōjō, ed., *Ikkyū Oshō Nempu no Kenkyū* [IN] 一休和尚年譜の研究, Zen Bunka Kenkyūjo, Kyoto, 1977, pp. 91–135.

the first year of the reign of the hundredth emperor, Go-Komatsu.⁶ Although his time of birth may have been auspicious, his parentage may be considered a mixed blessing. For while his father was apparently none other than Go-Komatsu himself,⁷ his mother was a court lady who, because of inappropriate rank or unfavorable political connections, was obliged to leave the court and bear her son as an illegitimate commoner.

When Ikkyū was a mere five years old he was sent to Ankokuji⁸ in Kyoto as an acolyte and spent ten years at that temple. He was given solid training there not only in the Buddhist scriptures but also in the Chinese classics, for Ankokuji was a minor temple in the 'Five Mountains and Ten Temples'⁹ system of shogunal patronage and by the early 1400s it, like all the Gozan institutions, was deeply involved in the study of continental literature and arts. Ikkyū adapted quite successfully to the rather worldly atmosphere of Ankokuji and soon developed a precocious reputation as a budding master of classical Chinese poetry; among his surviving poems are some that date to his twelfth and fourteenth years. By the end of his adolescence Ikkyū had grown bitterly discontented with the artistic pretensions and social status-seeking of some of his fellows at Ankokuji, and in 1410 he left the temple to begin an altogether different way of life as a disciple of one Ken'ō Sōi of Saigonji,¹⁰ an establishment so small and unimportant that it seems to have been recorded in no other connection.

Not a great deal is known of Ken'ō, although he appears to have been something of a maverick and a loner. He was, first of all, a follower of the Myōshinji branch of Ōtōkan Zen,¹¹ a fact that in the late 1300s would have placed him outside the orbit of Gozan patronage. He had further removed himself from conventional norms by refusing to accept the certification of enlightenment offered by his master, and this would have severely limited the number of disciples willing to study under him. Indeed, his religious name Ken'ō is said to have derived from his modesty in this regard.¹² But Ken'ō's refusal to accept certification seems to

⁶ 後小松, 1377–1433, r. 1393–1412.

⁷ Whether Go-Komatsu was Ikkyū's father or not has long been the subject of debate; while the evidence is not conclusive, I tend to believe the claim.

⁸ 安国寺. Ikkyū was placed in a temple at such an early age possibly to preclude any later claims for the throne.

⁹ *gozan jissatsu* 五山十刹

¹⁰ 謙翁宗為, d. 1414; 西金寺.

¹¹ 妙心寺. The Ōtōkan 応灯関 line of Zen was named after its three major figures: Daiō Kokushi 大応国師 (also known as Nampo Jōmyō 南浦紹明), 1235–1308; Daitō Kokushi 大灯国師 (Shūhō Myōchō 宗峰妙超), 1282–1336, the founder of Daitokuji 大徳寺; and Kanzan Egen 関山慧玄, 1277–1360, first abbot

of Myōshinji.

Although Daiō and his followers were part of the Rinzaï 臨濟 tradition, the Ōtōkan line made a studied effort to disengage itself from the Gozan system and thus traded a loss of official patronage for a measure of institutional freedom.

A peculiarity of the Ōtōkan line was the existence of two virtually equal temples at the top of its institutional hierarchy. Although Myōshinji was nominally junior to Daitokuji, it was in fact often the more powerful of the two foundations and even attempted, with some success, in the mid-1400s to place its own monks as abbots of the 'senior' monastery.

¹² From *kenson* 謙遜, 'modesty'.

indicate that he was self-sufficient and uncompromising rather than simply modest. Ikkyū's life with this tough-minded hermit must have been quite a remove from his previous existence within the sophisticated walls of Ankokuji. Nevertheless the young monk chose this course knowingly and stayed with Ken'ō until the latter's death in 1414.

The third decade of Ikkyū's life was largely an extension of the sober direction that he had begun under Ken'ō. In 1415 he joined the circle of Kasō Sōdon¹³ at a small hermitage in Katada on the shores of Lake Biwa. Like Ken'ō, Kasō was a member of the Ōtōkan line of Zen, although he belonged to the Daitokuji branch. Kasō, in fact, served for a time as the abbot of Daitokuji, but by 1400 he had retreated from the capital to take up a rustic life of strict Zen discipline with a few chosen followers. Some idea of the character of Kasō's Zen can be obtained from the description of Ikkyū's arrival and reception in Katada that is presented in the hagiographical *Ikkyū Nempu*.

In this year [1415] our Master made his first visit to Katada to seek an interview with the teacher Kasō. Kasō, however, closed the door and sternly refused to admit him. Ikkyū resolved, 'If I don't get an interview, then I'm ready to die right here,' and taking the dew for his roof and the grasses for his bed, he steadfastly refused to leave. At night he slept in an empty boat and by dawn he would be back in front of the retreat again. After this had gone on for four or five days, Kasō happened to come out on his way to a vegetarian meal in the town. When he came out of the door, he saw Ikkyū lying among the reeds beside the gate.

Kasō turned to his followers and said, 'That monk from the other day is still here. Hurry up and give him a good dousing, then use your staves to drive him off.'

But when Kasō came back from dinner, he saw Ikkyū still sitting firmly in the same spot. So he took him inside to settle the matter. From the very first word they were on good terms and Ikkyū became Kasō's disciple.¹⁴

Life at the hermitage was not easy even for those who were able to get on good terms with Kasō. His disciples were not only pressed into long hours of Zen meditation under the tutelage of an unbendingly critical teacher, but were also required to engage in producing handicrafts which were sold in the capital to provide the meager funds on which Kasō and his circle lived. The impact of this life of poverty on Ikkyū, and Kasō's less than sympathetic response to the miseries that he imposed on his followers, are both captured nicely in the 1416 entry of *Ikkyū Nempu*.

Kasō remained unperturbed in the face of these hardships and in no manner changed his ways. One day he told Ikkyū to chop up some medicine. The exertion caused blood to flow from Ikkyū's hands onto the block.

Kasō glared at him and said, 'You have strong, plump, young hands. How can you be so weak?'

¹³ 華宗叟曇 (also read Kesō Shūdon), 1352–1428. | ¹⁴ IN, pp. 97–98 & 122.

When Ikkyū heard this, his hands trembled all the more. Kasō merely gave him a mocking smile.¹⁵

In spite of the unremitting harshness of life with Kasō, Ikkyū's training progressed rapidly and he attained *satori* in 1420. This event occurred on a summer night on the waters of Lake Biwa. Ikkyū had borrowed a fisherman's boat and was letting it drift on the lake as he himself became lost in deep meditation. Suddenly the unexpected cry of a crow pierced the night and he was plunged into enlightenment. The account of Kasō's response to Ikkyū's *satori* carries almost archetypically comic Zen overtones.

One night our Master heard the cry of a crow and attained enlightenment. He quickly reported this to his master and Kasō replied, 'You have reached the stage of an *arhat* but not that of a Master.'¹⁶

Ikkyū answered, 'Then I am perfectly happy as an *arhat* and don't need to be a Master.'

Kasō responded, 'Well, then, you really are a Master after all.'¹⁷

Ikkyū appears to have followed the example of his first teacher, Ken'ō, and refused to accept the formal certification of enlightenment offered to him by Kasō. One needs to say 'appears' because, although the legitimacy of Ikkyū as Kasō's spiritual heir is a major issue in *Ikkyū Nempu*, it is one that is never credibly resolved therein. It is quite possible that Kasō neither recognized Ikkyū's enlightenment nor appointed him heir apparent among his disciples. It is certain, however, that even before Kasō's death in 1428, Ikkyū had left the master's circle to begin the 'crazy Zen' style of life for which he was soon to become famous.

From about 1425 Ikkyū made the prosperous port town of Sakai his main base of operations, although he paid repeated brief visits to one or another small hermitage in Kyoto and its environs. During this period he openly claimed to spend more time in wineshops and brothels than in hermitages and temples. He began to compose poetry once again and to mix with townsmen, artists, and writers. He may even have returned briefly to lay life, married, and fathered a child, although by 1432 he was living an at least nominally clerical life.¹⁸

There are several ways to account for his radical change in lifestyle. One commonly made suggestion attributes it to the impact of Kasō's death, but since Ikkyū's break with Katada predates Kasō's death, this explanation is only partially convincing. A second understanding would see Ikkyū's wild living as a protest against the false piety of the Zen establishment in Kyoto. This would amount to an extension of his original stormy departure from Ankokuji in 1410, and there is

¹⁵ IN, pp. 98 & 122.

¹⁶ The Japanese term translated as *arhat* is *rakan* 羅漢, while 'Master' is *sakke* 作家. The latter was originally applied to masters of poetry and painting, but in Chinese Zen circles it later came to refer to Zen masters, often in contrast to the Hinayana *arhat*.

¹⁷ IN, pp. 100 & 123–24.

¹⁸ Information regarding Ikkyū's life from the age of thirty to forty is very meager. *Nempu*, for example, has only two entries between 1424 and 1432, and both are perfunctory accounts of single incidents.



Ichimatsu Tanaka, *Japanese Ink Painting: Shubun to Sesshu*, Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1972.

Portrait of Ikkyū by Bokusai

ample evidence in Ikkyū's own writings to support this thesis. However, a third line of interpretation must also be taken into account. This is the recognition that Ikkyū's unorthodox habits were to some degree intended as a model of the non-dual, trans-differential living appropriate to an enlightened master. That is, once Ikkyū had attained intuitive realization under Kasō, he felt it desirable not to simply preach 'the unity of opposites' or to talk of 'the oneness of this life and of the state of enlightenment', but found it necessary to actually embody that ideal in exemplary form. Thus his verbal protests against the merely superficial Zen practices of the Gozan temples were paralleled by an equally demanding need to manifest, in however cumbersome a way, a living alternative to those same artifices and distortions.

As Ikkyū found brothels better for meditation than the secularized temples of the capital, so too he devised his own unique way of propagating the Buddha's *dharma*. In 1435 he marched through the streets of Sakai waving a long wooden sword and proclaiming that Gozan Zen was the same kind of weapon—fine as long as it was kept in a scabbard and used merely for show, but worth nothing at all when set beside the keen steel edge of Ikkyū's Zen.¹⁹ Again, on one New Year's

¹⁹ A number of 'Ikkyū with the Vermillion Sword' portraits, painted during his lifetime, would seem to confirm the historicity of this incident.

Day, he paraded through the streets brandishing a staff topped with a human skull in order to preach the doctrines of sorrow and transience.²⁰

As has been noted above, Ikkyū's bizarre behavior in and around Sakai was partly motivated by a desire to protest against the highly secularized Zen of the Kyoto temples, so immersed in the pursuit of art, culture, and politics. Ultimately this distaste for churchly corruption was extended from the Gozan to include even the Zen of Daitokuji, Kasō's home temple. Ikkyū was particularly bitter toward an elder disciple of Kasō, a monk named Yōsō Sōi,²¹ who Ikkyū claimed had sold off the Zen of the Ōtōkan line in exchange for honors and prestige just like some ambitious shopkeeper. But in spite of Ikkyū's complaints, not only Yōsō but also several of Yōsō's closest disciples served as abbots of Daitokuji in the 1440s and 1450s, an era that witnessed bitter wrangling for the abbotship both within the temple itself and between Daitokuji and the related Myōshinji line. Indeed, Ikkyū might have let his links with Daitokuji wither altogether had it not been for the ravages of the Ōnin War, 1467–1477, which, by the wholesale dispersion of the Daitokuji monks and the nearly complete destruction of the precincts, left the postwar viability of the temple in serious doubt.

Out of this situation Ikkyū agreed in 1474 to become the forty-seventh abbot of Daitokuji and managed to marshal the interest of his wealthy merchant supporters in Sakai so that it was possible after the war to reconstruct the ruined buildings. In addition to this physical restoration, Ikkyū's double link to both the Myōshinji and Daitokuji lines of Ōtōkan Zen through Ken'ō and Kasō may have helped to heal some of the internal divisions. That Ikkyū accepted the post of abbot with mixed feelings is evident from several rather bitter poems that he wrote on the subject. It seems likely that had he not felt the necessity of supporting the temple in a time of extremity, he would have much preferred his life devoted to attending banquets, writing scrolls for his favored disciples, discussing Zen, noh,²² the tea ceremony, linked verse, and Sung painting with his lay supporters, or better still, drafting surprisingly erotic poems to the love-light of his old age, the blind singer called Mori.²³ Indeed, his tenure as abbot of Daitokuji, although important, was quite brief and formed but an atypical interlude in the latter half of his life.

Ikkyū's final years were spent in his Shūon'an²⁴ hermitage located at Takigi, midway between Kyoto and Sakai. There he suffered repeated illness and died quietly on the 21st day of the eleventh month of 1481 at the age of eighty-seven.

²⁰ The basis of this story is a pun on *ome-detō*, the standard New Year's greeting, and *me detō* 目出とう, 'eyes popping out', an apt description of a skull. The incident can be traced no earlier than the popular Ikkyū stories in the Tokugawa collections and it may well be apocryphal.

²¹ 養叟宗頤, 1379–1458. The long and acrimonious rivalry with Yōsō is one of the central features of Ikkyū's life.

²² The Zen-oriented noh master Komparu

Zenchiku 金春禅竹, 1405–68, was, for example, one of Ikkyū's close confidants, as was the early tea-master Murata Shūkō 村田完光, 1422–1502. Some of his disciples were gifted painters, including his biographer, Bokusai.

²³ 森. Mori is not mentioned in *Ikkyū Nempu*, but *Kyōunshū* includes a number of poems that tell of Ikkyū's love for her. Although younger than Ikkyū, she died several years before him.

²⁴ 酬恩庵

Ikkyū's Writings

WHILE *Ikkyū Nempu* provides a useful outline of the major events in Ikkyū's career, it does not take the reader very deeply into his mental or emotional life. In order to gain access to his inner attitudes and religious predispositions, it is necessary to look to Ikkyū's own writings. These fall into two major groups—prose and poetry.²⁵ Of these, the latter is by far the better known, although it is comprised of only two complete works and some scattered fragments. The two complete collections consist of poems in classical Chinese. The shorter of these, *Jikaishū*,²⁶ was written around 1455 and is composed of a number of uncompromising attacks on the Zen of Yōsō Sōi and his followers. The much longer and more significant work, *Kyōunshū*, is a collection of more than a thousand of Ikkyū's Chinese poems that appear to have been assembled and edited by his followers shortly after his death. Although it too contains diatribes against 'corrupt Zen', these constitute only a minor category among a rich variety of poems. Japanese *waka* attributed to Ikkyū survive scattered throughout a number of works. Some of them are undoubtedly his, but only those that are incorporated into his prose works are of certain attribution. By and large, these Japanese poems are not so developed or original as his Chinese poems, and they are of only marginal significance in the totality of his writings.

Nine prose works bear Ikkyū's name, but at least two of these, the *noh* plays *Eguchi* and *Yamauba*,²⁷ are of doubtful attribution. Of the remaining seven works, five fall into the category of religious literature. These are *Maka Hannya-haramitta Shingyō Kai*,²⁸ a rather unusual commentary on the Heart Sutra which intermixes a word-by-word linguistic commentary on the text with interpretative *waka*; and *Kana Hōgo*, *Mizukagami Me-nashi Gusa*, *Futari Bikuni*, and *Amida Hadaka*,²⁹ all of which are relatively conventional popular sermons. The final two prose works also have a religious message, but they are, each in its own way, rather unprecedented pieces. These are *Gaikotsu*,³⁰ a beautiful prose-poem meditation on life, death, and transience, and *Bukkigun*.³¹

The two works translated below, *Amida Hadaka* and *Bukkigun*, both belong to the genre technically known as *kana hōgo*. This form of popular sermon was intended for readers or listeners who might be literate in Japanese but who could

²⁵ Strictly speaking, one could add a third category—the colophons and inscriptions that Ikkyū wrote on calligraphies and paintings—but these are primarily visual rather than literary works.

²⁶ 自戒集, 'Self-Admonitions'.

²⁷ 江口, usually attributed to Komparu Zenchiku; 山姥, also read *Yamamba*.

²⁸ 摩訶般若波羅密多心經解

²⁹ 假名法語, 水鏡目なし草, 二人比丘尼 (also read *Ninin Bikuni* and often confused with a work of the same title by Suzuki Shōsan 鈴木

正三, 1579–1655, who derived much inspiration from Ikkyū), and あみたはだか.

All of the prose works listed above can be found in Mori Taikyō 森大狂, ed., *Ikkyū Oshō Zenshū* 一休和尚全集, Kōyūkan, 1913, although better texts of several have been published elsewhere.

³⁰ A good translation of *Gaikotsu* is available in R. H. Blyth, 'Ikkyū's Skeletons', in *The Eastern Buddhist*, vi:1 (1973), pp. 111–25.

³¹ 仏鬼軍

be expected to have little or no mastery of the basic Buddhist texts and commentaries written in difficult classical Chinese. Although written in relatively colloquial Japanese, *kana hōgo* were not transcribed recensions of oral literature but rather a vernacular literary form. The products of literate and sophisticated priests, most of these works were far from being artless or naive, but they were nevertheless aimed at a general audience and this led to certain almost standard structures and usages. The point of the message was usually straightforward and the style, too, was clear and direct. The pieces were designed to teach, but in order to do so effectively, they were also constructed to catch and hold the reader/listener's attention in as entertaining a fashion as possible. Points were made not by means of the abstruse logic and argumentation of high-culture religious tracts, but through the apt use of striking images, vivid metaphors, familiar poems, and even puns. In this sense the genre shows a continuity with war tales, parables of karmic retribution, *otogi-zōshi*³² 'fairy stories', and other varieties of medieval tale literature.

The initial impression received from reading these two sermons is the highly syncretic nature of their content. At first glance, *Amida Hadaka* appears to be largely a synthesis of Zen and Pure Land which, following the conventional format of a dialogue between master and pupil, tries to show that the attainment of rebirth in Amida's Western Paradise and the this-worldly realization of Zen *satori* are virtually one and the same. *Bukkigun*, more imaginative and exciting than *Amida Hadaka*, is also more syncretic, for it explicitly intermixes Zen, Pure Land, Tendai, Hossō, and Shingon ideas. This is perhaps not too surprising insofar as all of Japanese religious history is characterized by syncretistic tendencies and the social class at which *kana hōgo* were aimed was even more eclectic in outlook than the great tradition.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that Ikkyū's own syncretism as expressed in these two pieces is in any way arbitrary or simply a clever didactic ploy. For beneath the process of conflating disparate ideas, Ikkyū is in fact selecting and emphasizing specific images and philosophical constructs for quite specific purposes. At the center of these sermons he has a particular set of ideas that he wants to transmit. This complex of ideas, like the two works themselves, belongs to the latter part of his life. That is, they are expressive of the radical, post-*satori* Ikkyū of Sakai and Takigi rather than the relatively conventional Ikkyū who studied under Ken'ō and Kasō in Kyoto and Katada. It has already been noted that in his post-Katada behavior Ikkyū chose brusque directness and eccentricity as primary modes of communication. Similar head-on methods are found in his prose works. However, whereas his behavior was at times so unconventional that it defied any easy rational understanding, the statements of his prose works can to a large extent be paraphrased in terms of recognizable categories of Buddhist thought. The main themes of both *Amida Hadaka* and *Bukkigun* are designed

³² 御伽草子

to demonstrate Ikkyū's commitment to three Buddhist tenets: (1) a trans-dual denial of any fundamental difference between this world and the state of enlightenment; (2) the existence of innate buddhahood in all living things; and (3) the belief that these two positions are to be realized and expressed not in the abstract but in the very concreteness of existence.

In terms of Buddhist intellectual history, the first of these themes is a widely held tenet of Mahayana which is often summed up in the phrase, 'Saṃsāra is Nirvana.' Based on Nāgārjuna's doctrine of emptiness, this position argues that any final discrimination between enlightenment and ignorance, salvation and reprobation, or even virtue and sin, is untenable, and that such distinctions are, at best, merely provisional devices.

Ikkyū's second point is more specific to East Asian Buddhism and can be considered as a variation either on the Tendai concept of *hongaku*, 'primordial enlightenment', or on its Shingon equivalent, *honne*, 'innate possession'.³³ It is related to but not identical with the Southern Zen espousal of sudden rather than gradual enlightenment.

The third and most important of the three themes is typically Japanese in its radical concreteness. Statements such as that of Hua-yen Buddhism which allows that unobstructed thingness is the core of meaningful, 'nirvanic' reality,³⁴ may be satisfactory philosophical expressions of a non-dualistic position, but for Ikkyū and other Japanese religious figures such formulation was far too abstract. Hence their preference for more concrete teaching, such as 'Mountains and rivers are already buddhas, just as they are,'³⁵ or the concrete phrase comprising the core of Shingon, *sokushin jōbutsu*, 'Buddhahood in this very body'.³⁶

In *Amida Hadaka*, Ikkyū develops these themes in sequence. First, he construes Amida not as the author of external salvational grace according to the orthodox Pure Land concept of *tarikī*, but rather as an innate presence or essence which/who is omnipresent throughout the universe but is especially, and paradoxically, located in the hearts of living creatures. In case the immanent thrust of this assertion may be missed, Ikkyū restates it in terms of his definition of the

³³ *Hongaku* 本覚 monism is considered by some scholars to be a prototypically Heian modality of religious experience, standing in direct contrast to the more transcendental and dualistic *shikaku* 始覚 ('incipient enlightenment') orientation of the Kamakura age. The *hongaku/shikaku* division is closely paralleled in Shingon by the distinction between the *honne* (or *honnu*) 本有 standpoint and the more gradualist perspective of *shushō* 修生 ('works produced') enlightenment.

See Ui Hakuju, 'A Study of Japanese Tendai Buddhism', in *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, I, 1960, pp. 33–74.

³⁴ *shih-shih wu-ai* (J. *jiji muge*) 事事無礙

³⁵ Ui, p. 59. Ui has coined the useful pair of terms, 'theoretical immanentism' and 'practical immanentism', to distinguish between Chinese theoretical and Japanese concrete non-dualism.

³⁶ 即身成佛. The importance of the idea that the universe is an embodiment of buddhahood is most aptly caught in this Shingon phrase and is one of the major constants of Japanese Buddhism, especially at the folk or popular level. For an extensive discussion of this embodiment theme in its Shingon context, see Minoru Kiyota, *Shingon Buddhism: Theory and Practice*, Buddhist Books International, 1978, esp. Chapter 5.

‘westernness’ of Amida’s Pure Land. For Ikkyū, ‘west’ is symbolic of innate human purity—a purity which can be clouded by the dust of passions but not fundamentally stained by them. Ignorance is dirt, and purity is the understanding of one’s own Buddha-nature. Once a person knows his innate purity, buddhahood follows automatically without the need for development and maturation.³⁷ From this point of view, Ikkyū continues his argument and states that the true locus of buddhahood is in this world and, in the case of human beings, within our own bodies. Humans are, in fact, the embodiment of buddhas, just as they are—just as mountains and rivers are buddhas, just as the cuckoo whose prayer is ‘to sing its own name in the morning sky’. The central deity of the universe is the Universal Buddha, who may be equally referred to as Dainichi, Amida, Nature, Ikkyū, or Everyman.

In *Bukkigun*, Ikkyū states the same non-dual message, but here he shifts from the contrast, surely only provisional, between this world and the Pure Land, to that between Heaven and Hell. The piece begins with a dualistic war between the hosts of Heaven and the demon armies of Hell, but by the end—significantly under the auspices of Dainichi Nyorai, the central deity of Shingon—demons and buddhas, good and evil, even sin and saintliness, have all been subsumed under the larger unity of the Taizō-kai mandala,³⁸ which Ikkyū locates on ‘an eight-petalled lotus in our very breasts’.

In spite of the standard didactic dialogue structure of *Amida Hadaka* and the unique war-tale fantasy format of *Bukkigun*, in terms of content both works have the same message, a message that has already been prefigured in Ikkyū’s biography. At the most fundamental level these two sermons, Ikkyū’s other prose pieces, most of his poems, and much of his eccentric lifestyle can best be understood as an expression of the three premises outlined above—the non-duality of *samsāra* and Nirvana, *hongaku*, and *sokushin jōbutsu*.

³⁷ Again, for Ikkyū the central issue was not to contrast Pure Land *tariki* 他力 with Zen *jikiri* 自力, ‘self-power’, but to bypass the question of self and other altogether in favor of a prior concern for *hongaku* innatism.

³⁸ It may be noted that Ikkyū chooses not the transcendently toned Kongō-kai mandala

金剛界曼陀羅 of Shingon but the more immanent Taizō-kai mandala 胎藏界閻陀羅, with its likeness of this world of change and transformation to a fertile womb of creation, as the symbolic locus of his preferred non-dual apprehension of reality.

Amida Stripped Bare

Amida Hadaka

by IKKYŪ

ONCE a man called Tametada, the Kozasa Captain,³⁹ came to Ikkyū's residence and said,

'As I'm not a very bright man, I find it difficult to master *zazen* meditation or the scriptures; I simply pray earnestly for the saving grace of Amida and wholeheartedly recite his name. But I feel remaining doubts that are not easily dispelled and so I've come to ask you about them. Now, don't they say that Amida lives in a Paradise of ten-trillion lands? I don't understand how the prayers I can get recite to a Buddha in those far-off ten-trillion lands while I live here in this world. For an ignorant fellow like myself it's all quite incomprehensible. I beg to ask you about this.'

To this Ikkyū replied,

'Since Amida is a Buddha who effuses his radiance from the ten-trillion Western lands to all the worlds of the ten directions and sheds his light on all living creatures, how could your prayers not reach those ten-trillion lands? In response to this question the *Kangyō*⁴⁰ says, "His radiance illumines the worlds on every side and does not abandon those who have recited the Buddha Name⁴¹ and have thus been accepted." If one looks deeply into the matter, it can be seen that Amida is like the fire within a stone. Such fire fills the voidness of *dharm*a-worlds⁴² in every direction; it is a flame that existed before the Age of Universal Emptiness.⁴³ When the universe congealed, this flame shrank to a spark the size of a mustard seed, and although it still exists within the stone, it is invisible, and when we examine the stone we perceive neither heat nor cold. It neither bursts forth into flame nor dies out; it is always there but appears in a sudden flash only when steel strikes the flint.

³⁹ *Kozasa no shōshō Tametada* 小笹の少将為忠

The translation of this piece is based on the version in Mori, pp. 1–9 (but note that the pagination in this book is recommenced at the beginning of each story). This is not a wholly reliable text, but it was the only one available for the present work.

⁴⁰ That is, *Kanmuryōjūgyō* 観無量寿経, one of the three major texts of Amidism.

⁴¹ *nembutsu* 念仏

⁴² The '*dharm*a-worlds' refers here to the realm of ordinary reality.

⁴³ An eons-long period of non-manifestation that precedes phenomenal creation. By placing Amida prior to this age, Ikkyū effectively frees him from all temporal and spatial limits. Amida, like 'buddha-nature', is truly omnipresent.

‘Amida as well, by his very nature, existed in the space of the *dharma*-worlds even before the Age of Emptiness. Never coming into being, never retreating into hiding, he was there emitting his radiance long before living beings developed the faculty of full faith and sincerity and learned to call on his name. Without doubt he is in the Pure Land. It is like saying that the moon in the sky is reflected in all waters, although in fact it does not to our eyes lodge in dirtied waters, but is seen only in pure water. Further, a crystal of quartz which is truly pure both inside and out may be transparently clear, but inside it there is something that partakes of both fire and water. Yet in a soiled gem this is not seen.

‘Amida is like this, never far from view. This is why the *Kangyō* says, “Never far removed.” The ten-trillion lands are not distant. Truly, your chant will reach them. For although Amida is willing to dwell in the heart of anyone, including those who have led lives devoted to evil views and debauchery, the poor and the mean, still so long as they lack a heart of true purity and sincerity he does not appear to them. We can put it like this—if you were to pull a flint up from the depths of the foulest mire and clean it off, it would still give out its spark when struck. The faithful hearts of living creatures resemble the contact of flint and steel. This is the basis on which Amida rests. For the sake of the creatures living in this degenerate age, practically expedient methods are applied and the name “Amida” is given.

‘My sect would say “*satori*” or “Buddha-nature”, which is the same thing. The Scripture of the Wonderful Law of the Lotus⁴⁴ is the manifestation of the fervent desire of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future to put all creatures on the direct path to Buddhahood and is thus King of all scriptures. Thus in one chapter of the Lotus Sutra it says that in the worlds all around there is but One Vehicle, not two and not three, and that statements to the contrary were made by Buddha only out of expediency. But these very words, “not two, not three”, the “Single Law”, were also Buddha’s expedients; the highest limit of Truth is fulfilled in a single word. This single word “wonder” is the wonder of the omnipresent universal Buddha. The eight chapters of the Wonderful Law of the Lotus were expounded simply to express that Wonder. It is the same idea as the expression, “ten-thousand *dharmas* as one”.⁴⁵

The captain then asked: ‘There are four directions, North, East, South, and West, but the Western Land is especially marked off as the one where Amida lives. How is this so?’

Ikkyū replied:

‘The West is autumn—it is the quarter wherein the ripened fruits of all things are harvested. All things, all plants, are produced in the East, and as summer passes they ripen and come to fruition in the autumn. Even as fallen leaves are gathered in. The East is the direction of birth. The sun, the moon, and all living creatures

⁴⁴ *Myōhōrengekyō* 妙法蓮華經, the principal text of both the Tendai and Nichiren sects. If Pure Land and Zen are at heart one, then so too are all other forms of Buddhism.

⁴⁵ *Dharmas* are the multitudes of irreducible, although differentiated, constituent ‘bits’ of reality. For the enlightened mind they are, however, all of one flavor—nirvanic.

appear in the East, then pass South through the area of *yang*, then go North to embrace *yin* until they are born again in the East. In this world creatures are buried beneath the errors of wrongdoing, passion, attachment, and stupidity, and they suffer birth after birth. But if a man makes the great realization, all errors will dissipate; he will escape the wheel of transmigration, and be able to mature. For this reason, the very body of the awakened person takes on the aspect of the West and is called a Pure Land, for the Buddha Amida resides within it.⁴⁶

‘If the directions are considered in terms of colors, North is black, East is blue, South is red, West is white, and the Center amidst these four is yellow. The white of the West is a whiteness that is the ultimate color of all things. White snow represents the ultimate in coldness, but even in the ultimate heat of summer the high white clouds that the common people call “Bandō Tarō”⁴⁷ appear. When flame is touched to wood, a red color is produced, but after the wood has been exhausted it turns to powdery white ash. Too, men in extreme age have white hair. An ancient poem says:

On the snowy slopes of Echigo
There are rabbits white not only in body
But even in soul.

‘Of the five colors, white is basic. If things are cleaned until they reach that basic white, they can be freely dyed any other color. If a person applies his intellect and cleans up his mind’s essence, then he will gain Buddha enlightenment and there will no longer be a Pure Land to rely on nor a Hell to fear, nor any passions to escape. Good and Evil will not be separated, Life and Death will become as one, and he will be able to be reborn as whatever he pleases. This is called the Jewel of the Absolute or again the Precious Wishing Jewel,⁴⁸ the inexpressible giver of peace, the ultimate, ineffable joy. It is a state called by those fully awake to it the Pure Land Paradise. It is the gift given to us grumbling fools. By this, you may know in what sense Paradise is set in the West.

‘If we compare the mortal body to the one-thousand universes, we can awaken to the fact that it is like space extending in ten directions and there is no way to say whether a place is in the East, West, North, or South. As the ancients put it, “As there is from the outset neither East nor West, where can North and South be?” If we were to consider the thousand universes as having settled into our body, the

⁴⁶ Both the microcosm/macrocosm equivalences and the focus on the body as a locus of enlightenment (see both here and below) indicate *mikkyō* 密教 influences.

⁴⁷ 萬同太郎, a colloquial phrase for the high cumulus cloud formations of summer. See Maeda Isamu 前田勇, ed., *Edogo Daijiten* 江戸語大辞典, Kōdansha, 1974, p. 831.

⁴⁸ The magic wishing jewel (*cintamani*) stems back to Indian Buddhism. Here two

equivalents are given: *shinnyo no tama* 真如の珠 and *nyoi hōshū* 如意宝珠. There seems to be no particular theological connotations here—the wishing jewel is simply a nice image that Ikkyū wishes to use.

A more substantial question would be just what Ikkyū means when he says that the enlightened person ‘will be able to be reborn as whatever he pleases.’ An answer is not forthcoming from the text itself.

head is Mt Sumeru,⁴⁹ the eyes are the sun and moon, breath is the wind, the hands and feet are the four great continents, hair is the vegetation, bones the rocks, blood the water, and flesh the earth. Thus we are taught, “Hate and avoid the befouled places; seek and rejoice in the Pure Land.” The original meaning of “befouled place” is “impure earth”. Therefore, these words refer to the bodies of those creatures who have gone astray. One should avoid such a state. Likewise, “Pure Land” literally means “fresh earth” and refers to the bodies of those who have awakened. Although we are explicitly taught to seek and rejoice in this state, those who awaken to this fact are few indeed. We can find all the thousand universes contacted within the mortal body. It is equivalent to the *dharma*-worlds, it is no different from them. In the voidness of the *dharma*-worlds there is neither quality nor form, and what maintains these “bodily” manifestations is simply the Buddha Amida.

‘Formless, Buddha is called the *Dharma*-body.⁵⁰ With form, Buddha is called the Bliss body.⁵¹ The Phenomenal Buddha, who comes into the Eight Stages of life for the benefit of living beings, is called the mortal body. These are the three Bodies of Buddha.⁵² When it is understood in this way, we can see that there can be no Pure Land and no Buddha except in these three bodies. Thus we hear of “The Pure Land simply in the heart” and “My own heart is Amida.” Too, the idea that Buddha resides in no other place than the body refers to this *Dharma-kāya* body. Thus in the *Kongō-kyō*⁵³ it says, “Buddha is Being-without-locality and is born in our very hearts.” The six patriarchs and the six teachers by understanding this message awakened to great truth. There is a poem:

Even as men awaken with prayers to Amida,
The cuckoo sings its own name in the morning sky.

And again,

Not knowing Amida was in the South,
I made vain pleas to the West.

The poem says that Amida was “in the South” [*minami ni*], but the essence of the poem means “in every body” [*mina mi ni*]. Such things are your text for *satori*.’

The captain then asked: ‘Well, then neither the Pure Land nor Amida is to be separated from one’s body. But what of the teaching that the ten-trillion lands are far off?’

Ikkyū replied:

‘The ten-trillion lands are not far away either; they too are quite clearly found in

⁴⁹ The pivotal center of Indian cosmology. In the mystical physiology of tantric yoga, it is often equated with the spinal column.

⁵⁰ *dharma-kāya*

⁵¹ *sambhoga-kāya*

⁵² The ‘three bodies of Buddha’, an im-

portant and complex Mahayana doctrine, links the phenomenal and noumenal realms into one seamless whole.

⁵³ 金剛經, probably a reference to the Diamond Sutra.

the mortal body. If we calculate in detail all the hairs, bones, organs, and muscles of the body, they add up to ten trillion. And if living beings let the ten-trillion passions separate them from Amida, he will not appear to them. What is being taught is that until a man develops his spiritual faculty, the Pure Land remains far removed.'

The captain then asked: 'Then are the Pure Land and the Buddhas relied upon by the eight or nine sects all one thing? Or do they have particular significances?'

Ikkyū replied:

'In that the various sects all recognize something like Buddha-heart or Buddha-nature, they all represent the identical oneness of the Universal Buddha. Yet since living beings have differing modes of understanding, the way to Buddha is not simply one. Sects and schools have been established, and instead of just the way that talks about Buddha-nature, living creatures are able to follow whichever path of Buddhism suits their own temperament and come to know the nature of the Universal Buddha. Thus in the orthodox exoteric and esoteric sects it is given the name *Dainichi*⁵⁴ and worshipped as the main symbol, or it is called "the *Vajra*⁵⁵ in its correct form", or called "Original non-birth" and as such the basic essence is realized. The Lotus Sutra takes the word "wondrous" as its main symbol, whose highest expression is contained in the title, Wondrous Law of the Lotus. Zen talks of the "Original Visage", "the Actor", "the *Dharma-kāya* Buddha", or "the Moon of Ultimate Reality".

'Although there exist various names, meditation practices, and austerities, when we inquire into the heart of the matter, the original and persistent Thusness is an identical oneness and represents the Universal Buddha. It is just as in the case of the newborn baby who lies helpless. Although it lacks a name, its parents consider various possibilities, and thinking of the child's future they give him an auspicious name such as *Tsuruchiyo* or *Kamematsu*.⁵⁶ The child may later attain official rank and become *Sadaijin*, *Udaijin*, or *Kampaku Dajōdaijin*.⁵⁷ On such occasions his attitude may alter and he will quickly come to pity his fellow man and try to help the world. If at such a time we ask who this is, it is no new person, but simply the *Tsuruchiyo* of old; and if we were to look for the person who was there before the name, it would be that helpless, naked infant. The Universal Buddha is like this.

'If a man were able to realize the state of long ago before he had a name—before his parents were even born—and to realize that which neither comes nor goes in the void of the worlds in every direction, that which was ever there, the formless, nameless, ineffable Universal Buddha, he would see a Universal Buddha who

⁵⁴ 大日, or *Vairocana*, the chief deity of Shingon.

⁵⁵ *Kongō* 金剛, the magical 'thunderbolt' of tantrism.

⁵⁶ 鶴千代, 亀松, names containing the ele-

ments 'crane' (*tsuru*), 'tortoise' (*kame*), and 'pine' (*matsu*), all symbolic of long life.

⁵⁷ 左大臣, 右大臣, 關白大政大臣, all senior government officials.

appears in the guise of the ordinary Buddhas and employs various expedients for the sake of living creatures and who is then known by various names. One should be very clear about the reason why this is true.’

The captain then asked: ‘Why does this one Universal Buddha with various names appear in many shapes—now gentle and forgiving, now holding up a sharp sword and grimacing fiercely with flames shooting from his body as he subdues some demon? And why are there different vows of salvation?’

Ikkyū responded:

‘The Universal Buddha follows the example of the container of water. Various changes take place in accordance with the heat or cold of *yin* and *yang*. When cooled, water becomes frost, hail, snow, or ice. Then, warmed by the sun, it rises up to become clouds and mist, rain and dew, after which it falls again and soaks into the ground giving life to plants and sustenance to the world of men. If it is placed next to a fire, it becomes hot steam, but if the steam is cooled, it turns back into water again. If the water is severely chilled, it becomes hard ice, but if this ice is melted, it returns to the state of water. Water in its state of balance between *yin* and *yang* is neither hot nor cold. It holds the Middle Way; it is like the Universal Buddha. The two equinoxes, spring and autumn, are the time of the middle path of *yin* and *yang*. Thus it is called the “Time Appropriate”, and we are taught that it is a time to pray to the Buddhas.

‘If various waters gather into flood, they quickly lay the hillside bare; in an instant they crush dikes one-thousand-feet long, many homes are lost, and living creatures are killed in this harmful change of the original water under the influence of heat and cold. Yet from this cycle of *yin* and *yang* of heat and cold in the real world can be seen the form of the Universal Buddha who teaches through various expedients, all of which are in the hope of saving living creatures. To give knowledge to these foolish creatures, Shaka taught the 80,000 scriptures, but men are all dumb-witted and do not realize the subtle law. Therefore out of great pity the Universal Buddha devised expedients for the easy enlightenment of stupid creatures. The essence of the Universal Buddha—of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the 80,000 worlds and ages—has been condensed in the name Amida and this is prayed to as a Buddha. All the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three ages mentioned in the 80,000 scriptures are in fact Amida. This is what Bodhidharma meant when he said that “Amida” was a general name for all the Buddhas. Although such Buddha-names are very numerous, in the final analysis they do not come to more than the “wonder” of the single heart. Too, Eshin’s explanation, “Amida’s Paradise is proven in the womb,” and “Amida and Maitreya are two names for one thing,” is the same story.’⁵⁸

The captain then asked: ‘But did the founders of the various sects all understand the oneness of this Universal Buddha?’

⁵⁸ Eshin 恵心 (or Genshin 源信), 942–1017, is often considered the founder of Japanese Pure Land. He authored *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要

集 and also seems to have initiated the genre of ‘hell scroll’ paintings.

Ikkyū replied: 'Since these teachers all attained the great *satori* of their natures, how could they not know?'

The captain then asked: 'If they knew about the Universal Buddha, why did they attack other sects, and take pride in their own, and engage in serious arguments about the good or bad of various sects?'

Ikkyū replied:

'These were not fights about the existence of the Universal Buddha; the goal of all sects is to demonstrate his existence. But because the study of the Universal Buddha allows many roads it is necessary to discuss their merits and degrees of difficulty. As in the poem:

Though the foothills are full of roads,
They all give view to one moon in the sky.

'For example, if you go to pay respects at court, there are many roads leading from the countryside to the capital. Some people go along the shore, others climb through the mountains, others go across the plains. But although they may argue about the merit of their various routes, they don't fight about the Universal Buddha.⁵⁹ If a man comes to Paradise from the multitudinous worlds and enters the palace doors, he sees but one Imperial Person. And the reason why the various sects boast about themselves is that they may instill deep faith in creatures and draw them into their school, so that they may come to revere this same Universal Buddha. But *I* don't want to overemphasize my own sect. I'm simply replying to your questions. And if you have any further points of doubt, please feel free to ask. This is the way my sect explains things. Even so, the eight or nine Zen sub-sects have various methods, including some of great interest. For further particulars, you should apply to each sect.'

Having received this explanation of the various sects, the captain was very grateful and thanked Ikkyū, saying:

'Now I seem to have no questions left to ask. I feel as if the long night's darkness is beginning to lift and the rain-swept sky to clear up. It is as if that "Noumenal Moon" were coming out. My heart feels clear, like one mirror shining into another. Further, since you have shown me that the world of my body is equal to whole universes, I feel equal to the voidness of the ten directions.'

Ikkyū told him: 'The state of your heart is the same as that of a fully enlightened Buddha. It is the same as if Amida had come to save you.'

The captain was full of reverence and praise, and thereafter he was never lax in his *nembutsu*. It is said, I believe, that he finally attained his long-cherished pure rebirth at the age of sixty-four.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ It need hardly be stated how weak is Ikkyū's contention that the sects do not argue essentials, given the realities of medieval Japanese Buddhism.

⁶⁰ It is rather pleasing to find that, whatever he imbibed of Zen ideals from Ikkyū's sermons, in the end the captain returns to his *nembutsu*.

The Buddhas' Great War on Hell

Bukkigun

by IKKYŪ

ALL through Heaven there was a great competition as they began to prepare their weapons and match one another in mock battle.⁶¹ The Lords of the Nine Grades of Lotus Thrones and the various nobles were in full regalia. The list read as follows.

Minister of the Left Kannon from Mt Omniscience
 Great Seishi from the Lotus Plain
 The Guardsman Yakuō with his cross-flute
 The Marshall Yakujō with a flageolet
 Lord Fugen from the village of Repentance
 Jizaigorō the Lute Master
 Lion-roaring Shishikūjirō from Sangen Temple
 and
 Darani Saburō
 Kokūzō Kanja who is capable of full wisdom
 Tokuzō Shōji of the Paramuditā Bhūmi
 His brother the Abbot Hōzō
 High Steward Kongōzō
 Kōmyō Tarō
 The warrior Shuhō
 Sankaie with his wooden-shafted arrows
 King Kegon with his Great Sword
 King Gakkō of the long arrows
 King Nisshō of the short bolts
 Speedy Jōjizai
 King Sammai the ever dependable
 King Daijizai the Lance-breaker
 King Byakuzō, match for a thousand
 Sword-girded Daiitoku
 and
 The Fast-running Muhenshin.

⁶¹ The translation of this piece is based primarily on the text in Tsukamoto Tetsuzō 塚本哲三, ed., *Zenrin Hōwashū* 禅林法話集, Yohōdō, 1927, pp. 8–36. Difficult or doubtful

sections were checked against the beautiful blockprint published by Seiundō in Edo in 1823, from which the illustrations have been taken.

Thus gathered the twenty-five bodhisattvas,⁶² each on his favorite mount and each accompanied by retainers numberless as the sands of the nine-hundred million ten-thousand Ganges Rivers. Some floated on purple clouds, some guided lotus thrones, some rode horses, some were mounted on dragons, some on lions, some on great elephants. Besides these, a fleet of one-hundred thousand ships



of the Great Vow of Salvation was drawn up in the broad sea between life and death. Each ship was four-hundred thousand *ri* from stem to stern; even if a man were to walk ninety *ri* a day for eighty years without stopping, he would not reach the far end. Now, if we mark that Japan is 2,870 *ri* from east to west and 537 *ri* from north to south, and then reckon the size of a single ship, we see that it would exceed the size of Japan by more than a hundred or a thousandfold. Over one-hundred thousand such ships, each with a full crew, sallied out of Heaven's East Gate to form the rear guard. Between heaven and the phenomenal world lay a thousand billion buddha-lands. Each of these was recruited and every last man, without a single exception, joined the forces. There were

multitudes like clouds, like haze, so many that just hearing them would make one's blood freeze.

Their Commanding General, Amida, wore a brocaded silk robe striped in blue, yellow, red, and white under his armor, gauntlets of Awful Majesty, and the helmet of Great Mercy and Compassion. For ironwork atop his helmet he had the Three-Bodies-As-One and eighty-four thousand white stars. The quiver of the Forty-Eighth Vow hung at his side and he carried the rattan striped bow wrapped in Flourishing-Merits-Laid-Up-by-the-Sangha-Through-Countless-Ages and banners of the Wondrous Meditations and Judgments. When his eyes like blue lotuses gazed around, a brilliant light shone throughout the worlds. Nor did a single coward serve this great general.

⁶² The twenty-five bodhisattvas make up the retinue which comes at the death of a faithful Pure Land believer to escort him into Amida's Western Paradise.

In fact, Ikkyū's list is not quite accurate. He has left out Konzō 金藏 and Jōjizai 定自在 (apparently taking them as identical with Kongozō 金剛藏 and Daijizai 大自在) and has construed Muhēn-shin 無邊身 ('Limitless Bodies'), a collective title for the whole group of

twenty-five, as if it were a separate name. Hence only twenty-four heroes are listed, despite the reference to 'the twenty-five bodhisattvas' in the text.

The fact that many of these figures do not appear again while others are re-introduced later in the story as if for the first time, shows that they are being used here for dramatic effect rather than a doctrinal statement about Amidism.

It was determined that the fifteenth day of the following month would be an auspicious day and that the Bodhisattva Jizō would lead them into battle after morning meditations.

In the east, Yakushi Nyorai was given charge. The eighth was the auspicious day and again an exceptionally large force was to be seen.

In the Western Paradise, twenty-five mounted vassals gathered with Yakushi and these buddhas and a retinue of fully seven *kotis*⁶³ of men-at-arms sat together, passing the cup from hand to hand and discussing their plans. The commanders, Bodhisattva Nikkō and Bodhisattva Gakkō, were surrounded by the twelve divine generals, each with a company of eighty-four thousand mounted men.

Iō Zenzei⁶⁴ advised that if they did not keep a war diary they would not be able to judge each man's valor and they would be going into battle with only one chance in a hundred of winning. So, taking the *Yakushi-kyō* as his diary⁶⁵ and repeating a Shingon ritual, he began the advance. In the diary it was recorded that the twelve marshals were decisive figures from the outset, that they did not lay their arms down day or night. Now 'Lord This', now 'Lord That', the generals Kubira, Hasara, Meikira, Anchira, Anira, Sanchira, Indara, Haira, Makora, Shindara, Shōdora, and Bigiyara acted as the successive marshals. These twelve marked the hours, the general of the Dragon hour wearing a helmet topped with a dragon's head, the general of the Serpent hour a helmet with a snake's head, and so on for each successive hour.⁶⁶

The other buddhas and bodhisattvas did not require weapons. They held lotus flowers or wishing jewels, or they made *mudrā* gestures or prayed. Instead of armor they wore their usual everyday robes, since by their own powers they were able to smear themselves with a salve called the Medicine-of-Buddha-Wisdom so that even though they wore neither helmet nor armor, the enemy's arrows just bounced off and swordcuts left no wounds. But surpassing even these buddhas was their Lord Yakushi Nyorai, the healing Tathagata of the Sapphire Light, who challenged, 'Even though the demons lay up seven layers of iron before me, I will advance as I please.' And when he turned his sapphire beams on that iron castle which arrows could not pierce, it fell to pieces. Then he said, 'I will take every sinful creature off to become a hostage in my paradise without handing a single one over to some other buddha,' and he raised the five-colored flag that is mentioned in *Gikihon-kyō* and took for a shield the Great Round Mirror of Wisdom, which was forty-nine *shaku* high. On the eve of the eighth, his retainers took forty-nine lamps in their hands and swore, if victory were theirs, to fulfill the Great Twelfth Vow to save all living beings of all the worlds and give them long lives free from illness.

⁶³ A huge number, sometimes equated with ten million.

⁶⁴ 伊王善逝, that is, Yakushi.

⁶⁵ The war diary or record was a standard feature of Japanese warfare, which consisted largely of matched combat between individual champions. A related practice, the champion's

shouted challenge to the enemy, also occurs repeatedly in this piece.

⁶⁶ The twelve marshals were originally Hindu deities. Their connection with the twelve zodiacal double-hours of the day and their role as guardians associated with Yakushi are quite standard.

From the north came the Bhagavat without Superior, Shakamuni, foremost of teachers. This event was most portentous for he said,

‘The Three Worlds are all mine;
Their every creature is my child.
Against all the miseries of the here and now
I alone am the Salvation.

‘All living beings are my children, but not one in ten reaches the Pure Land. They kill deer and birds; they take perch and carp. They criticize and wound each other and go to hell, all to my deep regret. The five-hundred great vows are all for them. For the sake of snatching away even a cauldron or two of sinners for my Pure Land, I would go alone into the jaws of hell. Consider, then, how much greater is my joy at the sight of this mighty host fulfilling my will.’

They set out from the Ryōzen Paradise above Magadha in Middle India. Of the four levels of saints of the past, present, and future mentioned in the Lotus Sutra, not one was omitted from this great assembly of buddhas, bodhisattvas, men, and gods. Even the noumenal and phenomenal bodhisattvas that rose out of the ground in the Lotus Sutra came forth again.

The great vice-general, Saintly Monju, attended by King Shishi, came out the portal of Mt Shōryō. His ten-thousand followers drew out swords of the Word-of-Monju and with a single motion raised them on high. The saintly old buddha, Hari Sanzō, seemed ready to do or die. And wasn't King Uten the flag bearer? The bodhisattva Fugen was accompanied by King Byakuzō and two saints, two *devas*, and ten *raksas*⁶⁷ as his guard just as in the Lotus Sutra. Holy Maitreya, the Buddha of the next age, came from the Paradise of Forty-nine Wishing Jewels with eighty-four thousand mounted retainers. They came forth without a single exception, kings and commoners, all of the heavenly host. The twenty-thousand princes of Shakutai Kan'in came out from the Zengen Castle. From the Jisō tower Prince Sankō and the four great kings issued forth.

From the outset the Great Teacher, Shakamuni, was a major general. He sent this challenge to Mara, the evil king of the Sixth Heaven: ‘Are you, then, unaware of the obvious—that the arrows of the Buddha can pierce twelve layers of iron and conquer anything?’ Thus was the great general. Was he not fearful to behold? He drove the Great White Ox-cart with its shield of Perfected Wisdom. He marched to the northern skies of hell and there brought forth as marshals each and every word in the Lotus Sutra from the first to the eighth chapters, mounted them on 69,384 steeds, and sent them charging through the illusory worlds among those wicked creatures of no good will at all, those who had heard the Lotus Sutra once, and those whose destiny was certain buddhahood.

In the south, the Buddha Hōshō accepted appointment as the Commanding

⁶⁷ *Devas* were the more positive ‘gods’ of Indian mythology, while *raksas* were a class of man-eating demons.

General. This seldom-heard-from buddha had no company of soldiers nor any retinue of followers. But he was a buddha of powerful virtue and possessed a certain kind of gem. He took these wish-giving jewels and placed them in the Halberd of Uniform Wisdom, and although he had neither bow nor arrow he went to the attack with the jewels, crying out, 'To demons I give no quarter!' But



although he attacked without forces, his jewels fell down thicker than a thunderstorm and became an army as limitless as the sands of the Ganges. What had at first seemed an absurdity was seen in the end to be the greatest force of all, pressing in from every side, striking everywhere like a holocaust. It was as if the demons' very sins had caught up with them.

'Do you think of buddhas as the highest paragons of honesty?' he called out. 'Well, quite to the contrary, we are the greediest of all beings—ever hungry for sentient beings to save. Here, take an arrow from the Bow of One's Own Karma!' But a demon deflected the blow by using the Mirror that Reflects Former Deeds as a makeshift shield.⁶⁸ And a fully drawn seven-foot-long arrow from hell grazed Vice-General Kannon's Helmet of Forebearance and passing through the trillion worlds buried itself in the floor of the East Gate of Paradise. The newer bodhisattvas were frightened and hid among the crowd.

⁶⁸ This mirror was used by Yama (J. Emma 曼魔), the King of Hell, and his attendant judges to discern the sins of a man's life. If a person had been virtuous, he would be al-

lowed to pass on the rebirth in the Western Paradise, or return to earth, or wherever else might be his appropriate due.



Rokukannon, the generalissimo, was accompanied by Birurokusha, Biruhasha, and the rest of the twenty-eight attendants, each of whom came accompanied by five-hundred *yaksas*⁶⁹ with great swords, just as is related in the Sutra of the Thousand-Armed One. Kannon fitted the singing Arrow of the Great-Vow-Deep-As-the-Sea to the Bow of Great Meditation, Wisdom, and Compassion, and shouted out, 'Now hear what is to be heard, see what is to be seen! I am the vice-general of great compassion and willing-suffering who has resolved to delay the final step into Truth until all living creatures have been saved.' And demonstrating his skill he pulled his mighty bow full back and let fly an arrow fifty *yojana*⁷⁰ long. One by one, it went through all eight hells, and catching onto the handle of a cauldron in the Avīci Hell,⁷¹ it lifted a portion of hell itself toward the sky.

⁶⁹ Aboriginal Indian tree spirits incorporated first into Hinduism and later into Buddhism.

⁷⁰ An Indian unit of length; like the *koti*, it

is of heroic proportions.

⁷¹ The lowest and most terrible of the Buddhist hells. Its name implies unceasing torment.

lumbering heavily over the battlements in a westerly direction—until the weight of sins pulled the cauldron back down to the ground. Seeing this the demons in disarray yelled out, ‘Don’t be struck by *his* arrows!’

In the east the lesser generals, Nikkō and Gakkō, and their twelve *deva*-generals, lined up chest to chest and launching their attack burst through one or two wooden palisades and fought all the way to the banks of the River of Three Ways.⁷² There was no real passage on the north, which was protected by a steep mountain of swords several hundred *yojana* in length and by a spring of molten iron which gushed forth like a waterfall. But Fugen and Monju wrapped the Lotus Sutra about their bodies and gathering their resolve they plunged ahead. The Rains of Uniform Taste fell all over, freezing the lake of molten iron. Monju and Fugen manifested themselves everywhere and taking the mountain of *yojana*-long swords into their palms they blew on it turning it into motes of dust which then became blue-lotus seeds. Nonetheless, the forces of demons did not lose heart and rushed forward without apprehension. As the demons on the south were hit with a rain of wishing jewels, the bodhisattvas cried out, ‘Smash them down!’ For seven days and seven nights the battle raged without victory until it no longer seemed that the demons would lose.

At last, word of this reached the great King Dainichi and he dispatched a large force from the Mitsugon Paradise. From the town called Kongōkai over seven-hundred deities from the nine and thirteen halls were sent and from the city of Taizōkai⁷³ over five-hundred deities from the three sections and four ways came forth. From space itself came the saintly and compassionate Bright King Fudō. From the west came the Bright King Daiitoku. In the north the Bright King Kongō Yasha set up fortifications. Again and again they shouted out, ‘Quickly! Quickly! Don’t hold back! Don’t let the devils win!’ as they began their conquest. Evil karma and good merit were thrashing and kicking each other, now on the top, now on the bottom, giving real meaning to the phrase, ‘Higher and Lower revolve as one.’ As it says in the sutras, ‘In the dwelling place of Ignorance, where its strength is greatest, there Bodhi-Wisdom can best cut it off.’ By incantations the World of Flames was itself put to the torch and King Yama’s palace turned into a long column of smoke. At that, hell’s nobles and commoners and all the demons began to lose heart and to fight among themselves. ‘You are the one who led me away from buddhahood and made me fall into this hell!’ ‘No, yours is the crime to end all crimes,’ they quarreled.

Unable to meet the onslaught they were hunted down and carried off to the Pure Land in every direction. There they were soothed and comforted; their spirits were renewed and they became buddhas. Their forms were not changed and,

⁷² A mythological river equivalent to the River Styx of the Western tradition.

⁷³ Kongōkai 金剛界 and Taizōkai 胎藏界 are the two basic Shingon mandalas and represent Dainichi in his noumenal and phenomenal

aspects.

At this point the ‘plot’ of Ikkyū’s story comes to an end and he moves into the ‘message’; the remaining pages are in almost pure Shingon idiom.

just as they were, hellish nobles and hellish commoners were placed beside the Saints of the Mandala while the Omnipresent Dharma-kāya turned hell itself into paradise. Across its ground were strewn manifestations of the *bija* letter 𑖀⁷⁴ which transformed into eight-petalled lotuses. In the central terrace of hell, King Dainichi established his capital. In the east Yakushi was enfeoffed and in the south, Hōshō. Amida received the west and Shakamuni was made lord of the north. At the four quarter-corners Fugen, Monju, Kannon, and Maitreya were given estates. This is why the Ichiō *mandala* is so arranged with the deities all there in the same order. This was King Dainichi's capital and also the Body of Maha-Vairocana.



The hundred-*yojana*-long flames became the Myriad Virtues of the Buddhas. What had been thought of as the Mountain of Swords became the Mountain of Wondrous Enlightenment. The Lake of Molten Iron became the Pool of Merit. It

⁷⁴ 'A', the first letter of the Sanskrit syllabary and as such represents the creation of all things; but since 'a-' is a common negative

prefix, the syllable also represents all endings. Thus this briefest of symbols can stand for the paradoxical unity of all opposites.

was the very capital of the Five Wisdoms. For hell and paradise are not different. In the Hossō sect they talk of ‘The snake and the rope’: one sees a rope, mistakes it for a snake, and is stricken with fear. When we are stricken with the fear of hell, it is due to error. When we awaken to *bodhi*, there is nothing to fear.⁷⁵ In *Yuishikiron* it says, ‘Fools’ trust of appearance is the ultimate illusion and perpetually brings misery. The saints’ rejection of appearance is the source of enlightenment and brings the ultimate joy of Nirvana.’

According to the scriptures, those who know this are the enlightened, those who do not are common mortals. The gist of both the exoteric and esoteric schools is no more than this. People tend to think that the capital of Five Wisdoms is somewhere else, but there is an eight-petalled lotus in our very breasts upon which the thirty-seven enlightened buddhas sit. This is the Dharma-kāya of the Heart-Devoted-to-Primordial-Enlightenment. How are we to become such buddhas? By maintaining a faithful heart and by incanting the five-syllable Shingon *darani*⁷⁶ as a talisman. In this life one can have the protection of these buddhas and bodhisattvas and the mandala, and need fear neither the bow and the arrow nor grave sickness. For with the buddhas enfeoffed in the heart, all wishes and hopes are fulfilled and the body, be it male or female, becomes a worthy vessel for easy buddhahood. Fearsome hell is paradise. The Dharma-kāya is unchanging, yet easily becomes this or that buddha. For the wise, who know this, there is no sin in any action.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the ignorant must seek a teacher. The world has no higher creation than the man of wisdom. This story of a great battle has merely drawn on the terminology of the worldly attitude in order to express the true character of dharma. It ought not to be criticized for using such an expedient.

I vow to take these merits,
And spread them everywhere;
That both I and mortal creatures,
May enter buddhahood together.

⁷⁵ ‘For hell and paradise are not different . . . When we awaken to *bodhi*, there is nothing to fear.’ A succinct statement of Ikkyū’s whole message.

⁷⁶ *Darani* 陀羅尼 are magical invocations. Here Ikkyū probably has in mind the *abiraunken* mantra, which, like ‘A’, unites the dualities

of noumenal and phenomenal.

⁷⁷ This statement is, of course, quite antinomian or tantric. It is curious to note how Ikkyū follows this strong statement with a concluding few sentences of almost apologetic tone.