

HEKIGAN ROKU

Main Cases

Translated by Yamada Koun and Robert Aitken

For reference within Sangha; do not duplicate. All rights reserved.

HEKIGAN ROKU

Case 1

Bodhidharma's Vast Emptiness

The Emperor Bu or Ryo asked Bodhidharma. "What is the first principle of the holy teaching?"

Dharma said, "Vast emptiness, nothing holy."

The Emperor said, "Who is this person confronting me?"

Dharma said, "I do not know."

The Emperor could not reach an accord.

Bodhidharma then crossed the river, and went on to Gi. The Emperor later took up this matter with Shiko.

Shiko said, "Does your majesty know that person yet?"

The Emperor said, "I don't know him."

Shiko said, "That was the Bodhisattva Kannon conveying the mind-seal of the Buddha."

The Emperor felt regretful and at once sought to have a messenger dispatched to urge him to return.

Shiko said, "There is no use in sending a messenger. Even if everyone in the country went after him, he would not return."

Case 2

Joshu's "The Supreme Way"

Joshu addressed his assembly and said, "the supreme way is not difficult; it simply dislikes choosing." With even a few words, there will be delusion or enlightenment. This old monk does not dwell in enlightenment. Can you value this without reservation?"

A monk stepped forward and said, "If you do not dwell in enlightenment, how can you value it without reservation?"

Joshu said, "I don't know that either."

The monk said, "If Your Reverence does not know, how can you say that you do not dwell in enlightenment?"

Joshu said, "Your questions are well asked. Make your bows and retire."

Case 3

Baso Unwell

Great Master Baso was unwell. The accountant-monk asked him, "How is Your Reverence feeling these days?"

The Great Master said, "Sun-Face Buddha; Moon-Face Buddha."

Case 4

Tokusan Holds His Bundle

Tokusan came to Isan's monastery. Holding his pilgrim's bundle, he entered the Dharma Hall. He walked from East to West and from West to East. Looking around, he said, "Nothing, nothing," and he went out.

(Setcho said, "The critical examination is finished.")

Tokusan reached the gate of the monastery and said, "There is no use in being so hurried." Assuming a dignified manner, he entered again and looked about. This time, Isan was in his seat.

Tokusan spread his meditation mat, and said, "Your Reverence."

Isan reached for his hossu. Tokusan gave a "Katsu," flourished his sleeve, and went out.

(Setcho said, "The critical examination is finished.")

Tokusan turned his back to the Dharma Hall, put on his foot-gear, and departed.

That evening, Isan called the head monk and asked, "Where is that recent arrival?"

The head monk said, "At that time, he turned his back to the Dharma Hall, put on his foot-gear, and departed."

Isan said, "That young fellow will someday ascend to a lonely peak and establish a hermitage there. He will laugh at the Buddha and abuse the Patriarchs."

(Setcho said, "Adding frost onto snow.")

Case 5

Seppo's Grain of Millet

Seppo addressed his assembly and said, "When I pick it up, this great earth is like a grain of millet in size. I cast it down before you. We can't recognize it as it is in a black lacquer pail. Beat the drum, gather everyone and search for it."

Case 6

Unmon's Good Day

Unmon introduced his subject by saying, "I do not ask you about the 15th of the month. Come, give a phrase about after the 15th."

And he himself responded, "Every day is a good day."

NOTE: The 15th day of the month is the full-moon day in the lunar calendar of old China.

Case 7

Echo Asks About Buddha

A monk approached Hogan, and said, "I am Echo. I presume to ask the Master, "What is Buddha?""

Hogen replied, “You are Echo!”

Case 8

Suigan’s Eyebrows

At the end of the summer season, Suigan said to his monks, “All summer I have been preaching to you brothers. Look closely, do I still have my eyebrows?” (Note: It is said that if a master preaches wrong Dharma, false Dharma, his eyebrows will fall off.)

Hofuku said, “The robber is in a funk!”

Chokei said, “There they are!”

Unmon said, “Kan! (Barrier!)”

Case 9

Joshu’s Four Gates

A monk asked Joshu, “What is Joshu?”

Joshu replied, “East Gate, West Gate, North Gate, South Gate.”

Case 10

Bokushu and the Empty-Head

Bokushu asked a monk, “Where have you come from recently?”

Instantly, the monk cried, “Katsu!”

“That’s a katsu on me,” said Bokushu.

“Katsu!” cried the monk again.

“Three katsu, four katsu, what next?” asked Bokushu. The monk did not answer.

Bokushu gave him a blow with his stick, and cried, “Oh, you empty-headed fool.”

Case 11

Obaku and the Brewer’s Lees

Obaku addressed his assembled monks and said, “You are all eaters of brewer’s lees. If you go about on pilgrimages like this, when can you meet today? Don’t you know that in all the land of T’ang, there is no Zen teacher?”

A monk stepped forward and said, “But surely there are those in all regions who reform monks and govern assemblies of disciples.”

Obaku said, “I didn’t say there is no Zen, only that there is no teacher of Zen.”

Case 12

Tozan's Three Pounds of Flax

See Mumonkan Case 18

Case 13

Haryo's Silver Bowl

See Miscellaneous Koan 22

Case 14

Unmon's Preaching in Response

A monk asked Unmon, "What is the teaching which Shakyamuni Buddha preached throughout his life?"

Unmon answered, "One preaching in response!"

Case 15

Unmon's "Right Back at You"

A monk asked Unmon, "This is not the present function of mind. This is not the matter before me. What is it?"

Unmon cried, "Right back at you!"

Case 16

Kyosei's Inside Outside

A monk said to Kyosei, "I am pecking from inside. I beg you, master, please peck from outside."
(Note: Kyosei was renowned for his skillful peck.)

Kyosei said, "But will you be alive?"

The monk said, "I am living vigorously like this! If were not alive, I would be laughed at."

Kyosei said, "You, a half-baked fellow."

Case 17

Korin Gets Tired

A monk asked Korin, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming East?"

Korin said, "I am tired from sitting so long."

Case 18

Kokushi's Seamless Tomb

Emperor Shukuso asked Chu, the National Teacher, “After a hundred years (after you have died), what do you want me to do?”

“Build a seamless tomb for this old monk,” replied the National Teacher.

“I ask the National Teacher, please show me the design of the tomb,” said the Emperor.

The National Teacher rested quietly for a while, then asked, “Do you understand?”

“I do not understand,” replied the Emperor.

“I have a Dharma successor, Tangen,” said the National Teacher, “please send for him and ask him about it.”

After the National Teacher’s death, the Emperor sent for Tangen and asked him what was his teacher’s idea. Tangen said,

“South of Sho, north of Tan (Setcho: The single palm of the hand does not make a sound in vain.). Within it there is gold that fills the land. (Setcho: A natural staff without artificial work.) Beneath the shadowless tree, a ferry boat. (Setcho: The sea is calm, the river is clear.) In the crystal palace, there is no intellect.” (Setcho: The teisho is finished.)

Case 19

Guitei’s Finger

See Mumonkan Case 3

Case 20

Suibi’s Chin Rest

Ryuge asked Suibi, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming East?”

“Pass me that chin rest,” said Suibi. Ryuge passed Suibi the chin rest; Suibi hit him.

“I don’t care if you hit me, but that does not show Bodhidharma’s intention,” said Ryuge.

Ryuge asked Rinzai, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming East?”

“Pass me that futon,” said Rinzai. Ryuge passed Rinzai the futon (Note: futon is here the old name for zafu.). Rinzai hit him.

“I don’t care if you hit me, but that does not show Bodhidharma’s intention,” said Ryuge.

Case 21

Chimon’s Lotus Blossom

A monk asked Chimon, “When the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water, what is that?”

Chimon replied, “Lotus flower.”

The monk continued, “After it emerges from the water, what is that?”

“Lotus leaves,” replied Chimon.

Case 22

Seppo's Turtle-Snake

Seppo said to the assembly, "In this South Mountain, there is a turtle-nosed snake (cobra, perhaps). You must all have a good look at it."

Chokei said, "Today, in this zendo there is certainly someone who has lost his life, bitten by the snake."

A monk told Gensha about this. Gensha said, "Only Brother Ryo (Chokei) could put it in that way. I wouldn't say it like that."

"How would you say it, Your Reverence?" asked the monk.

"Why use the South Mountain?" responded Gensha.

Unmon took up his staff and threw it before Seppo, who made a gesture of fright.

Case 23

Fuku and Kei Go on a Picnic

When Hofuku and Chokei went on a picnic in the hills, Fuku lifted his hand and pointed to the top of a hill, saying, "Just this is the top of Myo Peak (The Peak of Wonder, the center of Paradise, according to the Kegon, or Avatamsaka Sutra)."

"That's true, you are right," said Kei, "But a pity," he added.

Setcho said, "Going to a picnic like that—what are you doing?"

"I don't say there will be no one like these two fellows a hundred years from now, but there will be very few."

Later Hofuku told Kyosei about this. Kyosei said, "If it were not for Master Son (Chokei), skulls would appear in every field."

Case 24

Tetsuma, the Old Cow

Ryu Tetsuma (a nun) came to Isan. Isan said, "Oh, you old cow, so you have come!"

Tetsuma said, "Tomorrow there will be a great charity meeting at Tai San. Will your Reverence be going?" Isan lay down sprawling. Tetsuma went away. (Note: The name Tetsuma means, "Iron Brush.")

Case 25

Renge Ho's Staff

The hermit Renge Ho took up his staff before an assembly, and said, "Why didn't the old patriarchs remain here after they reached it?"

The audience was silent. He himself answered, "It has no power for the way (to save people)."

Again he said, "After all, what is it?" The audience was again silent. And again he answered for them, "Carrying my staff across the back of my neck—going to the thousand, the ten-thousand peaks."

Case 26

Hyakujo's Dai Yu Peak

A monk asked Hyakujo, "What is a matter of special wonder?"

Jo answered, "Sitting, alone at Daiyu Peak." (Daiyu Peak is the name of the place where Hyakujo's monastery was located.) The monk prostrated himself, and Hyakujo immediately hit him.

Case 27

Unmon's Manifestation

A monk asked Unmon, "When the tree withers and the leaves fall, what is that?"

Unmon replied, "Golden wind is manifesting itself." (Golden Wind is the name of the deity of autumn, i.e. autumn itself.)

Case 28

Nansen's Non-Explanation

Cf. Mumonkan Case 27

Nansen came to Achariya Hyakujo Nehan. (Note: Hyakujo Isei or Hosko not Hyakujo Ekai). Jo asked, "Is there a secret and supreme Dharma which has not been expounded for people by any of the holy ones in the past?"

Sen replied, "Yes, there is."

"What is this secret and supreme Dharma which has not been expounded for people?" asked Jo.

"This is not mind, this is not Buddha, This is not thing," replied Sen.

Jo said, "You have expounded like that!"

"Just that is my exposition," said Sen, "how about you, Achariya?"

"I am not a great Zen master," said Jo, "how can I know whether or not there is a Dharma that has never been expounded for people?"

"I don't understand," said Sen.

"I already explained too much to you," said Jo.

Case 29

Daizui's Kalpa Fire

A monk said to Daizui, "When the great thousands of universes are altogether and utterly destroyed in the kalpa fire, I wonder whether it perishes or not."

"It perishes," said Daizui.

"If so," persisted the monk, "do I follow the other and perish?"

"You follow the other and perish," said Daizui.

Case 30

Joshu's Giant Radishes

A monk said to Joshu, "I've heard that you directly met with Nansen. Is this true?"

Joshu replied, "Chin Shu (the name of a place) produces giant radishes."

Case 31

Mayoku Circles the Zen Seat

Mayoku, holding his bell staff, went to Shokei and walked around his Zen seat three times. He brought his staff firmly to floor, shaking the bells, and stood straight.

Kei said, "Right, right!"

Setcho said, "A mistake!"

Mayoku then went to Nansen and walked around his Zen seat three times. He brought his staff firmly to the floor, shaking the bells, and stood straight.

Sen said, "Not right, not right!"

Setcho said, "A mistake!"

Mayoku said, "Shokei said, 'Right, right!' and Your Reverence said, 'Not right, not right!' Why is that?"

Sen said, "Kei is right, but you are not right. Your action is the movement of the wind (the wind is one of the four elements in Chinese physics, earth-water-fire-wind, and is the element of movement). Finally it will perish."

Case 32

Jojoza's Great Enlightenment

Jojoza asked Rinzai, "What is the essence of Buddhism?" Rinzai descended from his Zen seat, grasped Jo by the lapels of his robe, shook him, slapped him, and pushed him away. Jo just stood there.

"Jojoza! Why don't you bow?" asked a monk.

As Jo bowed, he suddenly had great satori.

Case 33

Chinso Has an Eye

Chinso, the National Secretary, came to see Shifuku. Shifuku saw him arrive, and drew a circle in the air.

Chinso said, "I have come like this, but even coming like this is straying from the world of essence. Adding to that, you draw a circle. That is trespassing on the essential world."

Shifuku closed the door of his room.

Setcho said, "Chinso has but one eye."

Case 34

Kyozan's No Visit to the Mountain

Kyozan asked a monk, "Where have you come from lately?"

"Ro Mountain," replied the monk.

"Did you go to Goro Peak?" asked Kyozan. (Goro Peak is the most famous part of Ro Mountain.)

"I didn't visit there," answered the monk.

"Then you have never been to the mountain at all," said Kyozan.

Unmon commented, "These words were all spoken out of benevolence. The conversation fell into grasses."

Case 35

Monju's Three Three

Monju asked Mujaku, "Have you come from near or far?"

"From the South," replied Jaku. (Southern China).

"How is Southern Buddhism being maintained?" asked Ju.

"In this Corrupt Age of the Dharma, priests are venerating the precepts a little," replied Jaku. (Note: There are said to be three Ages after the life of Shakyamuni. The first five hundred years is called, "The Age of the True Dharma." The next 500 years is called, "The Age of Imitative Dharma," and the time after that is called, "The Corrupt Age of the Dharma.")

"How many are there?" asked Ju.

"Three hundred here, five hundred there," replied Jaku, "How is Buddhism being maintained here?"

Ju said, "Ordinary people and saints live together. Dragons and snakes are mixed."

"How many are there?" asked Jaku.

Ju said, "Front three three, back three three."

Case 36

Chosa Goes Picnicking

Chosa, one day, went on a picnic in the mountains. When he returned to the gate, the Head Monk asked, "Your Reverence, where have you been wandering?"

"I have come from strolling about in the hills," said Sa.

"Where did you go? (Literally, where did you come and go?)" asked the Head Monk.

Sa said, "First I went following the scented grasses; then came back following the falling flowers."

"That is spring mood itself," said the Head Monk.

Sa said, “It is better than the autumn dew falling on the lotus flowers.”
(Setcho: “I am grateful for that answer.”)

Case 37

Banzan’s Three Worlds, No Dharma

Banzan gave words of instruction saying, “In the three worlds; there is no Dharma. Where shall we search for the mind?” (Note: The three worlds are the worlds of delusion.)”

Case 38

Fuketsu’s Mind Seal

Fuketsu was in the government office of Eishu (a province of China). He ascended the rostrum and said, “The mind-seal of the Patriarch (Bodhidharma) is like the activity of the iron ox (an iron ox was set on the bottom of the Yellow River to regulate its flow). When the seal is removed, the impression remains. When it remains, the seal is violated. If the seal neither remains nor is removed, would it be right to give permission, or not?”

At this point, the senior monk Rohi stepped forward, and said, “I have the activity of the iron ox. However, I ask Your Reverence not to give me permission.”

Fuketsu said, “I am accustomed to fishing for whales and to cleaning the great ocean. Today, I am distressed to see a nasty little frog wriggling about in the mud.” Rohi stood there, hesitating.

Fuketsu shouted, “Katsu,” and said, “Why don’t you say something?” Rohi seemed to be debating with himself about what to say.

Ketsu beat him with his whisk, and said, “Do you have anything to say? Say it and I’ll check it for you.” Rohi was about to speak, when Ketsu gave him another blow.

The Chief Magistrate said, “Buddha’s law and the king’s law are of the same nature.”

Ketsu said, “What is the reason you have found for that?”

The Chief Magistrate said, “When called upon to make a judgment, one must judge. Otherwise, one invites disorder.” Ketsu descended from the rostrum.

Case 39

Unmon’s Flower Fence

A monk asked Unmon, “What is the Dharmakaya (Pure and clear law body)?”

Unmon answered, “Flower fence!”

The monk asked, “What if one has realized, ‘That’s it!’?”

Unmon said, “Golden haired lion!”

Case 40

Nansen's Flower Plant

While conversing with Nansen, the high official Riko said, "The priest Jo said, 'Heaven and earth and I are of the same root. All things and I are one.' That's extraordinarily wonderful!"

Sen pointed to a flower plant in the front garden, and called to the official, saying, "People of the present day (meaning Riko) see this one flower plant as though they were in a dream."

Case 41

Joshu's Great Death

Joshu asked Tosu, "What if a man who was truly dead comes back to life? How would you treat him?"

Tosu replied, "I don't admit walking about in darkness. Come out to the daylight!"

Case 42

Ho Koji's Beautiful Snow

Ho Koji was leaving Yakusan's temple. San ordered 10 of his monks to see him off at the gate.

Koji pointed to the falling snow in the air, and said, "Beautiful snow flakes! They don't fall on the other place."

Among the monks was one named Zen, who asked, "Where do they fall?" Koji gave him a slap.

Zen said, "Don't be so rough, Koji."

Koji said, "If you speak of yourself as a Zen monk in such a poor condition, Emma (the judge in the next world) will never release you."

"What about you, Koji?" asked Zen.

Koji slapped him again, and said, "You see with your eyes, but you are just like a blind man. You speak with your mouth, but you are just like a dumb man."

(Setcho: "At the first words, I would only have hit him with a snow ball. How glad he would be!")

Case 43

Tozan's Cold and Heat

A monk asked Tozan, "When cold and heat visit us, how should we avoid them?"

Tozan said, "Why not go where there is neither cold nor heat?"

The monk asked, "Where is there neither cold nor heat?"

Tozan said, "When it is cold, kill yourself with cold. When it is hot, kill yourself with heat."

Case 44

Kassan Beats the Drum

Kassan, giving instruction, said, said, “Learning by study is called ‘Mon (hearing)’—completing learning is called ‘Rin (next door to truth).’ Having passed through these two is called ‘true passing.’”

A monk stepped forward and asked, “What is true passing?”

San replied, “Kai da ku (I know how to beat the drum).”

The monk asked, “What is the supreme truth of Buddhism?”

San said, “Kai da ku.”

The monk asked again, “I do not ask about ‘Just Mind, Just Buddha.’ What is ‘No mind, No Buddha?’?”

San said, “Kai da ku.”

The monk asked once more, “When a truly enlightened man appears, how will you treat him?”

San said, “Kai da ku.”

Case 45

Joshu’s Cloth Robe

A monk asked Joshu, “The ten thousand Dharmas come to one. Where does the one come to?”

Joshu said, “When I was living in the province of Sei, I made a robe of cloth. It weighed seven kin.”

Case 46

Kyosho’s Voice of Raindrops

Kyosho asked a monk, “What is the sound outside?”

“The sound of rain dripping,” replied the monk.

Sho said, “Ordinary people are upside down, falling into delusion about themselves, and pursuing outside objects.”

“What about yourself, your Reverence?” asked the monk.

Sho said, “I am on the brink of falling into delusion about myself.”

The monk asked, “What do you mean, ‘on the brink of falling into delusion about yourself?’”

Sho said, “To attain the world of emptiness may not be so difficult, but to express the bare substance is hard.”

Case 47

Unmon’s Six Ungraspables

A monk asked Unmon, “What is the Dharmakaya?”

Unmon replied, “The six ungraspables.”

Case 48

Tea at Shokei Temple

Note: The “tea hearth” in this koan is a brazier with three legs shaped like demi-gods. These legs are called “Borojin,” hearth-holding deities.

The high official O visited Shokei Temple and was offered tea. The young monk Rojoza served him, with Myosho (Note: Myosho is thought to have been master of a neighboring temple, so he was another guest.)

When Rojoza took up the kettle, he let it fall over the tea hearth. Seeing this, the official asked Joza, “What is there, under the hearth?”

“Borojin,” replied Joza.

“They are deities holding up the hearth,” said the official. “Why did they upset the kettle?”

Joza said, “Even a high official may make a mistake in a thousand days of official service.” The high official flourished his sleeve and went out.

Myosho said, “Rojoza, you get your livelihood as a monk in this temple, but you only chatter idly.”

Joza asked, “What would Your Reverence have said?”

Sho said, “The non-human beings created a vigorous action,”

(Setcho said: “If I were there, I would have upset the tea hearth!”)

Case 49

Sansho Passes Through the Net

Sansho asked Seppo, “When the Golden Scales passes through the net, then, I wonder, what should he eat?”

Seppo said, “I will wait for you to pass through the net, and then I’ll tell you.”

Sho said, “A great Zen master with 1500 disciples doesn’t know how to speak.”

Po said, “I am sorry the old monk is too busy with temple affairs to attend to you.”

Case 50

Unmon’s Dust Particle

A monk asked Unmon, “What is the dust-particle Samadhi?”

Unmon replied, “Rice in the bowl, water in the pail.”

Case 51

Seppo’s “What is this?”

When Seppo was living in a hermitage, two monks came to pay their respects. When he saw them coming, Po thrust open the gate of his hermitage with his hand, and jumped out, saying, “What is this?”

One of the monks also said, “What is this?” Seppo hung his head and retired within.

The monks went on to Ganto. Ganto asked, “Where have you come from?”

“From Reinan,” one monk replied.

“Did you visit Seppo?” To asked.

“Yes, we went there,” he answered.

“What did he tell you?” To asked. The monk related what happened.

To asked, “What did he say after, ‘What is this?’”

“He hung his head without a word, and retired inside,” said the monk.

To said, “What a pity! In those days I did not tell him the last words. If I had told him, nobody in the world could deal with him.”

This monk spent the summer season with Ganto, and at the end, asked him what he meant by his observation about Seppo.

To said, “Why didn’t you ask me sooner?”

The monk said, “It is not so easy to ask you about that.”

Ganto said, “Seppo and I were born on the same stem, but we do not die on it. If you want to know the last words, it is, ‘only just this.’”

Case 52

Joshu’s Stone Bridge

A monk said to Joshu, “I have heard about the stone bridge of Joshu for a long time. But I’ve come and found just a simple log bridge.”

Joshu said, “You see only the simple log bridge, and you don’t see the stone bridge.”

The monk asked, “What is the stone bridge?”

Joshu said, “Donkeys or horses cross.”

Case 53

Hyakujo’s Wild Duck

Ba Daishi (Baso) and Hyakujo were taking a walk, and saw a wild duck flying by.

“What is that?” asked Daishi.

“A wild duck,” said Jo.

“Where did it go?” asked Daishi.

“It flew away,” answered Jo. Daishi twisted Jo’s nose, and Jo cried out in pain.

“Why! It didn’t fly away,” said Daishi.

Case 54

Unmon Stretches His Arms

Unmon asked a monk, “Where did you come from lately?”

“From Saizen,” answered the monk.

“What words does Saizen use these days?” asked Unmon. The monk stretched out his arms. Unmon slapped him.

“I have something to tell you,” said the monk. Unmon stretched out his arms. The monk said nothing. Unmon slapped him again.

Case 55

Dogo’s Condolence

Dogo and Zengen went to a house to express condolences. Gen rapped on the coffin, and asked, “Living or dead?”

Go said, “I don’t say either living or dead.”

Gen asked, “Why don’t you say?”

Go said, “I won’t say! I won’t say!”

On the way home, Gen said, “Your Reverence, please tell me right away. If you don’t, I shall hit you.”

Go said, “If you like, I’ll allow you to hit me, but I’ll never say.” Gen hit him.

Later, after Dogo passed away, Gen went to Sekiso, and told him this story. So said, “Alive, I don’t say! Dead, I don’t say!”

Gen asked, “Why don’t you say?”

So said, “I won’t say! I won’t say!” With these words, Gen was enlightened.

One day, Gen appeared in the lecture hall, with a hoe, and walked from East to West, and from West to East.

So asked, “What are you doing?”

Gen said, “I am seeking the sacred bones of our late master.”

So said, “On the billows of the great ocean, whitecaps swell to the sky. What do you search for as our teacher’s sacred bones, other than that?”

(Setcho said, “Alas! Alas!”)

Gen said, “That is good for my training.”

Daigenfu said, “The sacred bones of our late master still exist.”

(Setcho said, “Alas! Alas!”)

Gen said, "That is good for my training."

Daigenfu said, "The sacred bones of our late master still exist."

Case 56

Kinzan's One Arrow

Ryo, a Zen devotee, said, "When one breaks through the three barriers with a single arrow, how about it?"

Kinzan said, "Drive out the master of the barriers and show him to me."

Ryo said, "I failed to catch him before. Next time I will succeed without fail."

Zan said, "No need to wait until next time."

Ryo said, "I have made a nice shot, but no one can discern it." And he went out.

Zan said, "Come back here." Ryo turned his head. Grasping him, Zan said, "I will put aside 'breaking through the three barriers with one arrow!' Just make a shot for me. I will see it." Ryo hesitated. Zan said, "I will allow you to keep doubting for thirty years."

Case 57

Joshu's Country Bumpkin

A monk asked Joshu, "'the supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes choosing.' What is non-choosing?"

Shu said, "'above the heavens, beneath the heavens, I am alone and the honored one.'"

The monk asked, "Isn't that still choosing?"

Shu said, "You country bumpkin! Where is the choosing?" The monk said nothing.

Case 58

Joshu's Non-Vindication

A monk asked Joshu, "[You say] 'the supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes choosing.' Isn't that a pit into which people today have fallen?"

Shu said, "Once someone asked me about that. Since then, for five years, I haven't been able to apologize for it."

Case 59

Joshu's "Simply the Way."

A monk asked Joshu, 'The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes choosing.' If there are words at all, that is choosing. How can Your Reverence give instruction to others?"

Shu said, “Why don’t you complete the quotation?”

The monk said, “I just wish to know about this.”

Shu said, “Only this ‘The supreme way is not difficult, it simply dislikes choosing.’”

Case 60

Unmon’s Staff-Dragon

Unmon showed his staff to the assembly and said, “This staff has become a dragon. It has swallowed up the whole universe. The mountains, rivers and great earth, where do they come from?”

Case 61

Fuketsu’s The Nation

Fuketsu gave instruction, saying, “If one raises a speck of dust, the nation prospers. If one does not raise a speck of dust, the nation perishes.” (Setcho held forth his staff and asked, “Is there anyone who lives and dies with this?”)

Case 62

Unmon’s One Treasure

Unmon said to the assembly, “Within heaven and earth, in the midst of the cosmos, there is one treasure, hidden in the body. Holding a lantern, it goes toward the Buddha hall. It brings the great triple gate [Sanmon] and puts it on the lantern.”

Case 63

Nansen Kills the Cat

See Mumonkan Case 14

Case 64

Joshu’s Straw Sandals

See Mumonkan Case 14

Case 65

A Philosopher Questions the Buddha

See Mumonkan Case 32

Case 66

Ganto's Sword

Ganto asked a monk, "Where have you come from?"

The monk said, "From the Western Capital."

Ganto asked, "Did you secure the sword of Koso [a rebel king], after he passed away?"

The monk said, "I secured it."

Ganto stretched out his neck and approached the monk, saying, "Ka!"

The monk said, "The Master's head has fallen." Ganto laughed loudly.

Later the monk went to Seppo. Seppo asked, "Where have you come from?"

The monk said, "I have come from Ganto."

Seppo asked, "What sort of thing did he say?" The monk told him what had happened with Ganto. Seppo gave him 30 blows with his stick and sent him away.

Case 67

Fu Daishi Expounds the Sutra

The Emperor of Ryo invited Fu Daishi to lecture on the Diamond Sutra. On the rostrum, Daishi struck the lectern once with his stick, and immediately descended. The Emperor was astounded.

Shiko asked, "Your Majesty, do you understand?"

The Emperor said, "No, I do not."

Shiko said, "Daishi has finished the lecture."

Case 68

Kyozan's 'What's Your Name?'

Kyozan asked Sansho, "What's your name?"

Sho replied, "Ejaku."

Kyozan said, "Ejaku? That's my name."

Sho said, "My name is Enen." Kyozan roared with laughter.

Case 69

Nansen Draws a Circle

Nansen, Kisu and Mayoku set out together to pay their respects to Chu Kokushi. Halfway there, Nansen drew a circle on the ground and said, "If you can say something, then let's go on to see Master Chu."

Kisu seated himself in the circle, and Mayoku made a woman's bow before him.

Sen said, "If you can do it like that, then we won't go on."

Kisu said, "What do you mean? We have come so far!"

Case 70

Isan's "Please Say"

Isan, Goho and Ungan were attendants of Hyakujo. Hyakujo said to Isan, "How would you say something with your lips and throat closed?"

Isan said, "I would rather ask Your Reverence to say it."

Jo said, "I might well say it for you, but if I do, then later my Dharma descendants would be lost."

Case 71

Goho's "Closed"

Hyakujo said to Goho, "How would you say something with your lips and throat closed?"

Ho said, "Your Reverence, too, should close your lips and throat."

Jo said, "I will hold my hand to my forehead and look up to you respectfully, in the place where no man is."

Case 72

Ungan's "Have You Any?"

Hyakujo said to Ungan, "How would you say something with your lips and throat closed?"

Gan said, "Can Your Reverence do that?"

Jo replied, "My Dharma descendants will be lost."

Case 73

Baso's One Hundred No's

A monk asked Ba Daishi, "Apart from the Four Phrases and the One Hundred No's, please tell me directly why Bodhidharma came from the West."

The monk asked Chizo about it. Chizo said, "Why don't you ask His Reverence?"

Chizo said, "I have a headache today and cannot explain it to you. Go and ask Brother Kai."

The monk asked Brother Kai about it. Kai said, "I don't know at all about that matter."

The monk told Ba Daishi about this. Daishi said, "Zo's head is white, Kai's head is black, aren't they!"

Case 74

Kingyu's Rice Bucket

Before each meal, the Master Kingyu himself would bring the rice bucket to the zendo, dance and laugh loudly, saying, "Little Bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice!"

(Setcho said, "Although he did it like that, he was not being cordial.")

Later, a monk asked Chokei, “Long ago, a monk said, ‘Little Bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice!’ What was his meaning?”

Chokei said, “That was a sort of grace before the meal.”

Case 75

Ukyu’s Blind Stick

A monk came to Ukyu from the assembly of Joshu Osho. Ukyu asked him, “What difference do you find between Joshu’s Dharma path and ours?”

The monk said, “No difference.”

Ukyu said, “If there is no difference, then go back there,” giving him a blow with his stick.

The monk said, “Your stick should have eyes on top. You should not strike me so wantonly.”

Kyu said, “Here is a fellow who is good to beat today,” and gave him three blows.

The monk went out. Kyu called after him, and said, “I gave a blind stick, as there is a fellow who deserved it.”

The monk turned and said, “It can’t be helped, as the stick is in the hand of Your Reverence.”

Kyu said, “If you need this stick, I will let you have it.”

The monk came nearer and snatched the stick from Kyu’s hand and gave him three blows.

Kyu said, “Blind stick, blind stick.”

The monk said, “There is a fellow who deserved it.”

Kyu said, “It is a pity to beat a fellow wantonly.”

The monk promptly made obeisance to him.

Kyu said, “You made a bow—it is right for you?” The monk laughed loudly, and went out.

Kyu said, “Right, right!”

Case 76

Tanka’s Eating Rice

Tanka asked a monk, “Where have you come from?”

The monk said, “From the foot of the mountain.”

Ka asked, “Have you eaten your rice?”

The monk said, “Yes, I have.”

Ka said, “What sort of fellow would bring you rice to eat? Did he have open eyes?” The monk said nothing.

Later, Chokei said to Hofuku, “Surely it is one’s role to repay Buddhas and Patriarchs by giving people food. How is it that the one who served had no eyes?”

Kuku said, “Server and receiver are both blind.”

Kei asked, “Is the one who makes the utmost charitable effort still blind, or not?”

Fuku said, “Do you call me blind?”

Case 77

Unmon’s Kobyō/Sesame Rice Cake/

A monk asked Unmon, “What are the words that transcend the Buddha and the Patriarchs?”

Unmon said, “Kobyō.”

Case 78

The Bodhisattvas Take a Bath

In the old days, there were sixteen bodhisattvas. When they entered their bath together at their usual time, all of them realized the cause of water, and said, “The essence of touch is subtle and clear. We have attained the place where the sons of Buddha dwell.”

(Setcho said, “How do you understand these words? You can realize this by penetrating it from all directions.”)

Case 79

Tosu Buddha’s Voice

A monk asked Tosu, “It is said that all voices are the voices of the Buddha. Is this correct, or not?”

Tosu said, “Correct.”

The monk said, “Don’t make the sound of pissing and breaking wind.” Su struck him.

The monk said, “It is said that rough words and gentle phrases fall under the first principle. Is this correct, or not?”

Su said, “Correct.”

The monk said, “Then may I call Your Reverence a donkey?” Su immediately struck him again.

Case 80

Joshu’s Newborn Infant

A monk asked Joshu, “Does a newborn infant have the six senses, or not?”

Joshu said, “Throwing a ball on the swift current.”

The monk returned to Tosu and asked, “What does ‘throwing a ball on the swift current’ mean?”

Tosu said, “Moment by moment, it never stops flowing.”

Case 81

Yakusan’s “Look! The Arrow!”

A monk asked Yakusan, “On the grassy plain of Heiden, there is a herd of deer, with king-deer among them. How may I shoot the king of the king-deer?”

Yakusan said, “Look! The arrow!” With that, the monk fell to the floor.

San said, “Attendants! Come and carry this dead fellow out of here.” Hearing this, the monk ran away.

San said, “You’re a fellow playing with a mud ball. Is there no limit?”

(Taking up the story, Setcho said, “This monk was alive for three steps, he might die in five steps.”)

Case 82

Dairyu’s Dharma Body

A monk asked Dairyu, “The body of color perishes. What is the solid Dharma Body?”

Dairyu said, “The mountain flowers bloom like brocade. The river between the hills is blue and indigo.”

Case 83

An Old Buddha and a Pillar

Unmon addressed the assembly and said, “An old Buddha and a pillar intersect each other. What number of activity is that?”

Answering for them, he said, “Clouds gather over the South Mountain; rain falls on the North Mountain.”

Case 84

Vimalakirti’s 'Not Two'

Vimalakirti asked Manjusri, “What is the Bodhisattva gate to the Dharma of not-two?”

Manjusri said, “My idea is this: In all phenomena, there are no words, no explanations, no consciousness; there is freedom from all questions and answers. That is the gate to the Dharma of not-two.”

The Manjusri said, “We have all of us finished giving our explanation. Now you should give your explanation regarding the Bodhisattva gate to the Dharma of not-two.”

(Setcho said, “What will Vimalakirti say?” Again he said, “I know all about that.”)

Case 85

Toho’s Great Tiger

A monk went to the hermit Toho and asked, “What if you abruptly met a great tiger?”

The hermit instantly gave a tiger-roar. The monk made a gesture of fear. The hermit gave a great laugh.

The monk said, “You old robber!”

The hermit said, “How can you deal with me?” The monk said nothing further.

(Setcho said, “After all, they are right, but these two robbers only knew how to steal the bell with their ears stopped up.”)

Case 86

Unmon’s Bright Light

Unmon gave instruction, saying, “Everyone has his own light. If you want to see it, you can’t. The darkness is dark, dark. Now, what is your light?”

He himself answered, “The storeroom. The gate.”

Again he said, “It would be better to have nothing than to have something good.”

Case 87

Unmon’s Medicine and Sickness

Unmon said to the assembly, “Medicine and sickness mutually correspond to each other. The whole universe is medicine. What is the self?”

Case 88

Gensha’s Three Kinds of Sickness

Gensha addressed the assembly, and said, “All experienced Zen masters everywhere say, ‘Touch beings and save them.’ Suppose three kinds of invalids suddenly appeared—how would you treat them?”

“The blind invalid can’t see, even though you twiddle a clapper or raise a hossu. The deaf invalid can’t hear even words and phrases that are spoken fluently. The dumb invalid can’t speak even if you allow him to explain. How will you treat them? If you cannot treat such people, then Buddhism has no miraculous efficacy.”

Later a monk sought instruction about this matter from Unmon. Unmon said, “You! Make a bow.” The monk made obeisance and stood up. Unmon poked his staff at him. The monk retreated.

Unmon said, “So you are not blind,” and he told the monk to come closer. The monk did so.

Unmon said, “So you are not deaf. Have you understood?”

The monk said, “No, I haven’t.”

Unmon said, “So you are not dumb.” With that the monk realized a bit.

Case 89

Ungan’s Hands and Eyes

Ungan asked Dogo, “How does the Bodhisattva Kanzeon use all those many hands and eyes?”

Dogo answered, “It is like a man in the middle of the night reaching behind his head for his pillow.”

Gan said, “I understand.”

Go said, “How do you understand it?”

Gan said, “The whole body is hand and eye.”

Go said, “That is very well expressed, but it is only eight-tenths of the answer.”

Gan said, “How would you say it, Elder Brother?”

Go said, “Throughout the body, the hand and eye.”

Case 90

Chimon’s Prajna

A monk asked Chimon, “What is the essence of Prajna?”

Mon said, “The clam encloses the bright moon.”

The monk asked, “What is the function of Prajna?”

Mon said, “The rabbit conceives her young.”

NOTE: According to Chinese folklore: the clam rises to the surface of the water at the time of the full moon, opens its shell, and envelops the light of the moon, thus forming a pearl; the rabbit is only female, and conceives by opening her mouth and swallowing the full moon-light.

Case 91

Enkan’s Rhinoceros Fan

One day, Enkan called to his attendant, “Bring me the rhinoceros fan.”

The attendant said, “It is broken.”

Kan said, “If the fan is broken, bring back the rhinoceros.” The attendant did not answer.

Later, Tosu said, “I wouldn’t mind bringing that rhinoceros, but probably its head and horns would not be complete.”

(Setcho said, “I want to see the incomplete head and horns.”)

Sekiso said, “If I brought it back to you, nothing would remain for me.”

(Setcho said, “That rhinoceros still exists.”)

Shifuku drew a circle and wrote the ideograph, “Ox” in it.

(Setcho said, “Well done! Why didn’t you bring it out sooner?”)

Hofuku [on behalf of the attendant] said, “Master, you’re too venerable. The task you set is too hard. Let someone else do that job for me.”

(Setcho said, “All efforts have proved fruitless.”)

NOTE: Rhinoceros fan—one with a picture of a rhinoceros on it, or one made of rhinoceros horn, or bone. The ideograph “Ox” is part of the compound meaning “rhinoceros” in Chinese. It is a simple ideograph, readily recognized when drawn in the air, and in this context, means “rhinoceros.”

Case 92

The Buddha Ascends to the Rostrum

One day, the World-Honored One ascended to the rostrum. Manjusri struck the white gavel and said, “Contemplate clearly the Dharma of the King of the Dharma. The Dharma of the King of the Dharma is just this!”

Case 93

Daiko Does a Dance

A monk asked Daiko, “Chokei said, ‘That was a sort of grace before the meal.’ [See Case 74] What did he mean?”

Daiko did a dance. The monk made obeisance.

Ko said, “What did you see to make you bow?”

The monk did a dance.

Ko said, “You fox bogy.”

Case 94

No Seeing in the Surangama

The Surangama Sutra says, “When we don’t see, why can’t we see the world of not-seeing. If we think this is not-seeing, that is, of course, not the world of not-seeing. If we can’t see the world of not-seeing or the appearance of not-seeing or the appearance of not-seeing, then that world is naturally not the world of things. Why isn’t it yourself?”

Case 95

Chokei’s Three Poisons

Chokei once said, “It is better to say that the Arhats have the three poisons than to say the Tathagata has two kinds of words. I don’t say the Tathagata has no words. I only say he does not have two kinds of words.”

Hofuku asked, “What are the words of the Tathagata?”

Kei said, “How can a deaf man hear?”

Fuku said, “I understand. You are speaking on the second level.”

Kei said, “Well, what are the words of the Tathagata?”

Fuku said, “Have some tea.”

Case 96

Joshu’s Three Turning Words

See Miscellaneous Koans 19

Case 97

The Diamond Sutra and Evil Karma

“If you are despised by others and are about to drop into hell because of your evil karma in your previous life, then because you are despised by others, the evil karma of your previous life will be extinguished.”

Case 98

Tempyo’s Two Wrongs

Tempyo Osho visited Sai-in, while on pilgrimage. He was always saying, “Don’t say you have understood Buddhism. There is no one who can make a mondo with me, and examine me.”

One day Sai-in saw him at a distance, and called to him, “Come here, Jui.” Hyo raised his head.

In said, “Wrong!” Hyo went on for two or three steps.

In said again, “Wrong!” Hyo turned and came closer.

In said, “I have just said, “Wrong,” twice. Is it I who am wrong, or is it you?”

Hyo said, “It is I.”

In said, “Wrong.” Hyo was silent.

In said, “Stay here for the summer retreat, and I’ll examine this matter of two wrongs with you.” Tempyo, however, departed.

Years later, when Tempyo became an abbot, he addressed his assembly and said, “Once in my days of pilgrimage, I visited Sai-in by chance, and he twice said, “Wrong.” He advised me to stay with him for the summer retreat to examine this matter of two wrongs with him. I don’t say I was wrong then, but when I left for the South, I realized for the first time that I had completed saying, ‘wrong.’”

Case 99

Shukoso’s Ten Bodies

The Emperor Shukuso asked Chu Kokushi, “What is the controller of the Ten Bodies [of the Buddha]?”

Kokushi said, “Your Majesty continues to trample on the head of Dai Nichi Nyorai.”

The Emperor said, “I don’t understand.”

Kokushi said, “Never consider yourself to be the pure and clear Dharma body.”

NOTE: The term, Your Majesty, in Sanskrit, is Danapati. This Dana refers to one who donates to temples or monks, and to the act of donating. In Sino-Japanese the term is Dannotsu (Your Majesty). Dana Sama in Japanese means Master of the House. Danka is a house that supports a particular temple. These terms all derive from the Sanskrit Dana.

Case 100

Haryo Blows a Hair

See Miscellaneous Koan 22.

