

PART ONE

*Ascending the Hall*

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Constant Attendant Wang, head of the prefecture, and his various officials requested the Master to step up to the lecture seat.<sup>2</sup>

The Master ascended the hall and said, "Today, having found it impossible to refuse, I have complied with people's wishes and stepped up to the lecture seat. If I were to discuss the great concern<sup>3</sup> of Buddhism from the point of view of a follower of the sect of the Ch'an patriarchs,<sup>4</sup> then I could not even open my mouth, and you would have no place to plant your feet. But today I have been urged to speak by the Constant Attendant, so why should I hide the principles of our sect? Perhaps there are some valiant generals here who would like to draw up their ranks and unfurl their banners. Let them prove to the group what they can do!"

A monk asked, "What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"

The Master gave a shout.

The monk bowed low.

The Master said, "This fine monk is the kind who's worth talking to!"

Someone asked, “Master, whose style of song do you sing? Whose school of teaching do you carry on?”

The Master said, “When I was at Huang-po’s place,<sup>5</sup> I asked a question three times and three times I got hit.”

The monk started to say something. The Master gave a shout and then struck the monk, saying, “You don’t drive a nail into the empty sky!”

A study director said, “The Three Vehicles and twelve divisions of the teachings make the Buddha-nature clear enough, don’t they?”<sup>6</sup>

The Master said, “Wild grass—it’s never been cut.”<sup>7</sup>

The study director said, “Surely the Buddha wouldn’t deceive people!”

The Master said, “Buddha—where is he?”

The study director had no answer.

The Master said, “Are you trying to dupe me right in front of the Constant Attendant? Step aside! You’re keeping other people from asking questions!”

The Master resumed, saying, “This religious gathering today is held for the sake of the one great concern of Buddhism. Are there any others who want to ask questions? Come forward quickly and ask them!

“But even if you open your mouths, what you say will have nothing to do with that concern. Why do I say this? Because Shakyamuni said, did he not, that ‘the Dharma is separate from words and writings, and is not involved with direct or indirect causes.’<sup>8</sup>

“It’s because you don’t have enough faith that today you find yourselves tied up in knots. I’m afraid you will trouble the Constant Attendant and the other officials and keep them

from realizing their Buddha-nature. It’s best for me to withdraw.”

With that he gave a shout and then said, “People with so few roots of faith—will the day ever come when they see the end of this? Thank you for standing so long.”

### Notes

1. Hui-jan, as mentioned in section 68, was a Dharma heir of Lin-chi. San-sheng Temple was in Chen-chou.
2. *Constant Attendant* (*ch’ang-shih*), an abbreviation for *Supplementary Cavalryman and Constant Attendant*, was originally an official title, but here is purely honorary. The identity of Wang, the head of the *fu*, or prefecture, is uncertain. Yanagida tentatively identifies him with Wang Shao-i, who from 857 to 866 served as *chieh-tu-shih*, or military governor, of Ch’eng-te-fu. To “ascend the hall” and “step up to the lecture seat” means to give a religious address to a group of monks or lay believers.
3. The “point” or basic meaning of Buddhism (*ta-shih* or *i-ta-shih*)—the reason that Buddha appeared in the world—a term deriving from chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*.
4. I.e., the Ch’an sect.
5. Huang-po is Hsi-yün (d. ca. 850) of Mount Huang-po, a famous Ch’an master of the time.
6. A *study director* (*tso-chu*) is a high-ranking monk of some sect other than Ch’an who devotes himself to the study and teaching of Buddhist scriptures. The Three Vehicles and twelve divisions represent all the teachings of Buddhism. The monk is asking why there is any need for the kind of “separate transmission outside the scriptures” such as Ch’an speaks of in order to understand the Buddha-nature.
7. The statement is very laconic, but seems to refer to a person’s natural state. That is, human nature just as it is constitutes the Buddha-nature; there is no need to study the scriptures.

8. The first part of the quotation derives from the *Lankavatara Sutra*, chapter 4, the latter part from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, chapter 3.

## 2

The Master one day had occasion to go to the Ho-pei prefectural office. Constant Attendant Wang, head of the prefecture, requested the Master to step up to the lecture seat.

At that time Ma-yü came forward and asked, “Of the eyes of the thousand-armed thousand-eyed bodhisattva of great compassion, which is the true eye?”<sup>1</sup>

The Master said, “Of the eyes of the thousand-armed thousand-eyed bodhisattva of great compassion, which is the true eye? Answer me! Answer me!”

Ma-yü dragged the Master down from the lecture seat and sat in it himself.

The Master went up close to him and said, “How are you?”

Ma-yü was about to say something when the Master dragged him down from the seat and sat in it himself.

Ma-yü thereupon walked out of the gathering, and the Master stepped down from the lecture seat.

### Note

1. Mount Ma-yü in P'u-chou is the place where the monk lived; his name and identity are unknown. See section 42. Kuan-yin, or Kannon, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, is often depicted with multiple arms and eyes to symbolize the bodhisattva's abundant and all-seeing compassion.

## 3

The Master ascended the hall and said, “Here in this lump of red flesh there is a True Man with no rank.<sup>1</sup> Constantly he goes in and out the gates of your face.<sup>2</sup> If there are any of you who don't know this for a fact, then look! Look!”

At that time there was a monk who came forward and asked, “What is he like—the True Man with no rank?”

The Master got down from his chair, seized hold of the monk and said, “Speak! Speak!”

The monk was about to say something, whereupon the Master let go of him, shoved him away, and said, “True Man with no rank—what a shitty ass-wiper!”<sup>3</sup>

The Master then returned to his quarters.

### Notes

1. *True Man (Chen-jen)* is a Taoist term deriving from Chuang Tzu and signifying an enlightened person; it was often used in Buddhist writings as a translation for the word *buddha*.
2. “Gates of the face” means the mouth or forehead, but here it refers to the sense organs and the six senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and intellect.
3. Literally, a “shit-wiping stick,” used in place of toilet paper, which was not in use at this time. Another interpretation would make it a “lump of dried shit.” The effect is the same either way.

## 4

The Master ascended the hall. A monk came forward and made a deep bow. The Master gave a shout.

The monk said, "Old Reverend, it would be well if you didn't try to spy on people!"

The Master said, "Then tell me, where have you gotten to?"

The monk immediately gave a shout.

Another monk asked, "What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"

The Master gave a shout.

The monk bowed low.

The Master said, "Do you think that was a shout of approval?"

The monk said, "The countryside thieves have been thoroughly trounced!"<sup>1</sup>

The Master said, "What was their fault?"

The monk said, "A second offense is not permitted!"

The Master gave a shout.

The same day the head monks of the two parts of the meditation hall<sup>2</sup> caught sight of each other and simultaneously gave a shout.

A monk asked the Master, "In this case, was there any guest and any host, or wasn't there?"<sup>3</sup>

The Master said, "Guest and host are perfectly obvious!" Then the Master said, "All of you—if you want to understand what I have just said about guest and host, go ask the two head monks of the meditation hall."

With that he stepped down from the lecture seat.

## Notes

1. The monk speaks as though he were a government official reporting the defeat of a band of peasant rebels.
2. The meditation hall was divided into two parts, the front hall and the rear hall.
3. That is, can one monk be said to have come out any better than the other?

## 5

The Master ascended the hall. A monk asked, "What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"

The Master held his fly whisk straight up.

The monk gave a shout.

The Master struck him.

Another monk asked, "What is the basic meaning of Buddhism?"

Again the Master held his fly whisk straight up.

The monk gave a shout.

The Master also gave a shout.

The monk was about to say something, whereupon the Master hit him.

The Master said, "All of you—if it's for the sake of the Dharma, don't hesitate to sacrifice your bodies or give up your lives! Twenty years ago, when I was at Huang-po's place, I asked three times what was clearly and obviously the real point of Buddhism, and three times he was good enough to hit me with his stick.<sup>1</sup> It was as though he had brushed me

with a sprig of mugwort. Thinking of it now, I wish I could get hit once more like that. Is there anyone who can give me such a blow?"

At that time a monk stepped forward from the group and said, "I'll give you one!"

The Master picked up his stick and handed it to the monk. The monk was about to take it, whereupon the Master struck him.

### Note

1. See section 48.

## 6

The Master ascended the hall. A monk asked, "What is meant by this matter of the sword blade?"<sup>1</sup>

The Master said, "Fearful! Fearful!"

The monk was about to speak, whereupon the Master struck him.

Someone asked, "How about the lay disciple Shih-shih who worked the pestle but forgot he was moving his feet—where has he gotten to?"<sup>2</sup>

The Master said, "Drowned in a deep spring."

The Master then said, "Whoever comes here, I never let him slip by me, but in all cases understand where he comes from.<sup>3</sup> If you come in a certain way, you'll just be losing track of yourself. And if you don't come in that way, you'll be tying

yourself up without using a rope. Whatever hour of the day or night, don't go around recklessly passing judgments! Whether you know what you're doing or not, you'll be wrong in every case. This much I state clearly. The world is perfectly free to criticize or condemn me all it likes! Thank you for standing so long."

### Notes

1. The sword of wisdom that cuts through and annihilates all discriminative thinking.
2. Shih-shih Shan-tao, an older contemporary of Lin-chi. A monk who had been forced to return to lay life during the Buddhist persecution under Emperor Wu-tsung, he remained as a *hsing-che*, or lay disciple, and worked at the temple treading a pestle to pound grain. "Where has he gotten to?" means What mental state or degree of enlightenment has he reached?
3. That is, I will understand the person's mental state or degree of enlightenment. But this passage is very obscure, and it is unclear how, if at all, it relates to the passages preceding it.

## 7

The Master ascended the hall and said, "One person is sitting on top of a lonely mountain peak, yet he has not removed himself from the world. One person is in the middle of the city streets, yet he has no likes or dislikes.<sup>1</sup> Now which one is ahead? Which one is behind? Don't think I'm talking about Vimalakirti, and don't think I'm talking about Fu Ta-shih!<sup>2</sup> Take care."

