

“A Lineage of Dullards”

Zen Master Tōjū Reisō and His Associates

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This study concentrates on the relatively unknown Rinzai Mino line to illustrate the liveliness of Rinzai Zen practice in Meiji Japan. Even as struggles over the precepts and politics were being waged within the Zen denominations, some clerics attempted to carry on with their quest for awakening in relative isolation. Through a study of three monks, Tōjū Reisō, Tairyū Bun'i, and Seishū Shusetsu, strategies employed to preserve Rinzai Zen's spiritual legacy in the face of the turmoil of Meiji are highlighted. This article illustrates how these monks did their best to continue their eremitic existence and to pick up the pieces left by the widespread destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries in early Meiji Japan.

AMONG THOSE FAMILIAR WITH Japanese Rinzai Zen it is a well-known fact that the lineage of Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1769)—the lineage to which all contemporary Rinzai Zen masters belong—presently consists of two branches, the Inzan 隠山 branch and the Takujū 卓洲 branch. These were founded, respectively, by Inzan Ien 隠山惟琰 (1751–1814) and Takujū Kosen 卓洲胡僊 (1760–1833), two of the foremost disciples of Hakuin's immediate successor Gasan Jitō 峨山慈悼 (1727–1797). Less well known, however, is the subdivision of the Inzan line into two separate currents: that of Tōrin Sōmo 棠林宗模 (?–1837)¹ and Settan Shōhaku 雪潭紹璞 (1801–1873),² and that of Taigen Shigen

* This essay is a translation of Gudon no keifu: Tōjū Reisō to sono shūhen 愚鈍の系譜—洞宗令聡とその周辺, published in *Meiji no Zenshō* 明治の禅匠, Zenbunka henshūbu 禅文化編集部 ed. (1981, Kyoto: Zenbunka Kenkyūsho, pp. 271–90). The translation was done by Thomas Kirchner.

¹ Translator's note. According to the *Zenrinsōbōden* Tōrin died on Tenpō 8/11/10. His other surname is Sōju 宗寿 (OGINO 1973) See also *Zengaku daijiten* p. 733. (All subsequent notes are also the translator's.)

² The reading of Settan's name and his dates in *Zengaku daijiten* p. 585 are wrong. See *Kinsei Zenrinsōbōden* (OGINO 1973) 1, pp. 195–200.

太元孜元 (1769–1837)³ and Gisan Zenrai 儀山善来 (1802–1878). The Tōrin/Settan lineage was originally centered in the domain of Mino (present-day Gifu Prefecture), where Settan, the Dharma successor of Tōrin, established a *sōdō* 僧堂 (training monastery) at Shōgen-ji 正眼寺 near Ibuka 伊深, an area known for its close connections with Kanzan Egen.⁴ The Taigen/Gisan lineage is associated more with the Bizen district (present-day Okayama Prefecture), where Taigen and Gisan taught a number of outstanding disciples at the large monastery of Sōgen-ji 曹源寺 in the town of Okayama. The two lines are often referred to as the Mino school and the Bizen school, respectively, from the areas in which Shōgen-ji and Sōgen-ji are located.

These two currents within the Inzan tradition have tended to be quite different in character. The Bizen line has had a rather high profile, producing—particularly in the Meiji era—a succession of brilliant masters who were highly influential in the contemporary Buddhist world. In addition to Gisan Zenrai, Taigen Shigen's successors included such notables as Daisetsu Jōen 大拙承演 (1797–1855), a fierce master nicknamed “Oni Daisetsu” of Shōkoku-ji 相国寺 monastery; and Dokuon Jōshu 独園承珠 (1819–1895), who, as head of the Meiji Government's Daikyō-in 大教院 (Great Teaching Academy) during the period of Buddhist persecution known as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈, did much to soften the official attacks. Among the successors of Gisan were several remarkable figures including Ekkei Shuken 越溪守謙 (1810–1884), who founded the *sōdō* at the Myōshin-ji headquarters complex; Kōsen Sōon 洪川宗溫 (1816–1892), who rebuilt the *sōdō* at Engaku-ji 円覚寺 in Kamakura; Tekisui Giboku 滴水宜牧 (1822–1899), who was responsible for reviving the Tenryū-ji 天龍寺 branch of Rinzai Zen; and Bokujū Sōju 牧宗宗寿 (1820–1891), who became the first representative of the Hakuin line in the Daitoku-ji 大徳寺 tradition of Rinzai Zen.

In contrast, the masters of the Mino line—masters like Tairyū Bun'i 泰龍文彙 (1827–1880), Taigi Sokin 大義祖勤 (1842–1880), Tōjū Reisō 洞宗令聡 (1854–1916), and Yūgaku Gimoku 熊嶽宜黙 (1848–1918)—were virtually unknown in society at large, and seemed to prefer it that way. They tended to be taciturn in character (at least as far as we can tell from their official biographies), and seemed a bit self-conscious about their own lack of learning and sophistication.

³ Taigen's dates follow KATŌ 1967, p. 57.

⁴ Ibuka was the area in which Kanzan Egen (1277–1361), the founder of Myōshin-ji, is reputed to have done his post-enlightenment training, spending eight years laboring in the fields during the day and meditating at the edge of a high cliff at night. Shōgen-ji was founded in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Kanzan's death.

The quiet, introspective lives of the Mino-line masters, so different from the brilliant careers of the Bizen representatives, are deserving of greater attention than they have heretofore received. I will thus expand the scope of the present study to include not only Tōjū Reisō but also several of the more important figures in the Inzan Mino line's self-acknowledged *gudon no keifu* 愚鈍の系譜 ("lineage of dullards").

Tōjū's Early Life

Tōjū Reisō, the second child of a certain Itō Shinroku 伊藤新六, was born on 1 January 1855 (Ansei 1. 11. 12) in the Owari domain of central Japan (the present-day Nagoya area). In 1867, at the age of fourteen, he was ordained under Kaigan Shūhō 戒巖周奉, priest of Saihō-ji 西芳寺 (popularly known as Koke-dera 苔寺, the Moss Temple), a Tenryū-ji-branch subtemple in Kyoto. Kaigan too was a native of the Owari region, which was probably the link that brought young Tōjū to Saihō-ji's gate.

The Owari region has been known since ancient times as a *Bukkyō ōkoku*, a "Buddhist kingdom" where faith in Buddhism was particularly strong, and it was at one time an established custom for large families in the area to send at least one son off to a Zen temple to be raised as a priest. This was even more the case with impoverished farm families, for whom giving a son to a temple was not only an expression of devotion but also an effective means of reducing the number of mouths to be fed. Although nothing is known of Tōjū's childhood, there is little reason to assume that his entrance into the priesthood at Saihō-ji was motivated by anything more significant than this.

Tōjū had never shown much intelligence as a young child, and at Saihō-ji things were no different. The sutras he memorized in the morning would be cleanly forgotten by nightfall. Kaigan's way of teaching was not the traditional one, in which master and disciple, both sitting ramrod straight, would face each other across a desk and recite texts line by line. Instead, every morning he would join Tōjū in the garden pulling weeds, pronouncing a single line from the sutras for Tōjū to repeat every time he removed a weed. He did the same when the two of them worked in the hills behind the temple. Kaigan, exasperated as he was by Tōjū's dullness, patiently continued with this approach, repeating every word as many times as was necessary.

One rainy morning Kaigan, finally angered by Tōjū's inability to learn, grabbed a small desk by his side and threw it at his disciple, splitting the latter's scalp open and leaving a scar that remained throughout Tōjū's life. If anything, though, Tōjū himself was even

more frustrated than his teacher by his own lack of ability, and any number of times he decided to flee the temple. His plans were always discovered by Kaigan, however, so he had little choice than to remain.

In 1872 Tōjū, then eighteen years old, entered the monastery at Enpuku-ji 円福寺 in Yawata south of Kyoto, where he studied under Ian Sōseki 惟庵宗碩 (n.d.). Soon afterwards, however, he was called back to Saihō-ji by Kaigan, who, fearing for the future of Buddhism under the government's then-current policy of *haibutsu kishaku*, urged his disciples to leave the priesthood. Kaigan had two disciples in addition to Tōjū, one named Ryōgei 令芸 and the other Shūten 周恬. Shūten was still too young to make such a decision on his own, but Ryōgei followed his teacher's advice and decided to return to lay life. Tōjū, however, adamantly refused.

"Even if they tear down every temple, can they tear down the Buddha Dharma?" he asked. "Even if it becomes impossible to remain a monk, I'll continue my Buddhist training with my hair grown out. That's the only road open to a dullard like me." So saying, he rejected Kaigan's suggestion and returned to Enpuku-ji, where, it is said, he applied himself to practice with untiring zeal.

The environment for training was less than ideal at Enpuku-ji, however. The smoldering embers of violence associated with the Meiji Restoration refused to go out, and Enpuku-ji, located near the former capital, found itself used as a temporary barracks for the stragglers of the armies of any number of former feudal domains. Tōjū, left with little choice than to change monasteries, journeyed to the Mino area, where he entered Shōgen-ji and commenced his study under Tairyū Bun'i.

Shōgen-ji in the Early Meiji Period

Shōgen-ji at that time was a flourishing monastery with scores of monks, among whom were such notable figures as Gasan Shōtei 峨山昌禎 (1853-1900), later to become *kanchō* 管長 (chief abbot) of the Tenryū-ji-branch of Rinzai Zen; Tōiku Tsūkō 東昱通晃 (1856-1906), later *kanchō* of the Tōfuku-ji 東福寺 branch; Ryōsui Eigyō 龍水英堯 (1857-1934), later *kanchō* of the Kokutai-ji 国泰寺 branch; Seishū Shusetsu 蜻州守拙 (1849-1921), later *shike* 師家 (training master) of Nanshū 南宗 monastery; and Yūgaku Gimoku, later teacher at both Zuiryō 瑞龍 and Shōgen monasteries. Another priest, Gukei Echū 愚溪恵忠 (1865-1944), later teacher at Shōfuku-ji 祥福寺 monastery in Kobe and *kanchō* of the Myōshin-ji branch, has left us a description of Shōgen-ji monastery under Tairyū in his autobiographical sketch

“Hekisō Yawa” 碧層夜話:

While I was still an *unsui* 雲水 [a Zen training monk] I heard that Tairyū Bun’i was having great success as a teacher in Ibuka, so I set out for Mino Province. Back in those days it took quite a bit of resolve even just to travel from Iyo 伊予 [present-day Ehime Prefecture] to Mino. When I arrived I found ninety-six monks in training, all practicing with such determination that they nearly sweat blood. When I saw this it inspired in me a firm decision to follow the Way even at the cost of my life.

At the time there were at Shōgen-ji a number of *unsui* who later became important figures in the Rinzaï sect,... all earnestly striving under the strict guidance of Master Tairyū. Tairyū was a close-mouthed fellow who kept his own counsel, but in the consultation room [he was a fearsome presence], sitting there with glaring eyes and a staff clenched in his fists.

Gukei’s account continues, recounting something of the severity of Tairyū’s teaching. One day during consultation (*sanzen* 参禅) Tairyū hit Gukei with such force that he broke his staff (*shippei* 竹篋). Throwing down the pieces, he roared, “Bring me a stick of firewood!” This particular incident left Gukei with a broken bone in his shoulder, a bone that still protruded into his chest when he recorded the experience years later.

Tairyū Bun’i

Let us pause at this point to get a bit of background information on several of the figures that helped create the style of Zen taught at Shōgen-ji, starting with Tōjū’s teacher, Tairyū.

Tairyū, the third son of Nakajima Shichiueemon 中嶋七右衛門, a prosperous farmer in the Okada district of the Owari domain, was born on the first day of the eighth month of 1828. On the twentieth day of the third month of 1839, at the age of twelve, he entered a nearby temple named Jiun-ji 慈雲寺 and was ordained under the resident priest, a certain Rev. Shōin 松蔭. By nature he was quiet, upright, patient, and disinclined to show his emotions. He was uninterested in worldly literature and demonstrated little talent for the study of the Chinese characters. At the age of seventeen, realizing the central importance of Zen training, he set out on a pilgrimage that led him to Tentaku 天沢 monastery in Mino, which at the time was a highly regarded *sōdō* under the guidance of Settan Shōhaku. One day after some time of hard training under Settan’s strict guidance he heard the master quoting the koan of Longtan 龍潭 blowing out a paper

lantern (*Shisoku suimetsu no wa*)⁵ and with a sense of ecstasy entered into the very essence of the Zen teachings.

In the spring of 1847, when Settan, at Myōshin-ji's request, established a new monastery at Shōgen-ji, Tairyū accompanied him. Serving as the new monastery's first *tenzo* 典座 (chief cook), Tairyū shared with his teacher many of the responsibilities of seeing the monastery through its first difficult years. The poverty of the temple's kitchen can hardly be described in words, but is hinted at by the fact that the cook had to wait until the monks returned from their begging rounds before he could get enough rice together to prepare their noon meal.

Whenever he had a moment of free time Tairyū would go out to till the fields, dig holes, and move earth, never wasting a moment. At night he would submerge himself within the monastic community, carrying on with his *zazen* training steadily and unobtrusively, and never attracting the attention of his fellow monks.

Let me summarize an anecdote—originally appearing in one of Kajiura Itsugai's 梶浦逸外 (1896–1981) early works entitled *Bokugyū Zenwa* 牧牛禪話 [Zen talks of a grazing cow]—that features Tairyū during his *unsui* years.

Once a plasterer from Tairyū's home town of Okada was hired to do a job at Shōgen-ji. Tairyū helped the man whenever his other duties left him free. At first the plasterer, delighted to meet a fellow native of Okada, tried to strike up conversations with him, but regardless of what he said there was never a response—Tairyū would grunt a few times in acknowledgement, “Mmm, mmm,” then continue silently on with his work. If the plasterer commented that the earthen mix was too stiff and needed more water, Tairyū would nod, grunt, and add the necessary water; if the plasterer said the mix was too soft and direct Tairyū to stiffen it, Tairyū, again, would simply grunt and do as he was told. The plasterer began to wonder if Tairyū was asleep, but no, the monk worked diligently at his tasks. Nor was he deaf, as he always grunted in answer to whatever the plasterer said. Finally the man lost his patience, and, shouting “You stupid monk!”, troweled up some mud and flung it onto Tairyū's face. Tairyū, however, remained completely unperturbed—he stopped, took the towel that was hanging at his waist, wiped off the mud, then went calmly back to work. The plasterer stared at him incredulously, then said, “You ought to leave the monastery. Someone like you could train for a hundred years and it would do you no good. Do me a favor and stop helping me.” But, they say, Tairyū went right on plastering the wall.

⁵ Included in the commentary of case 4 in *Biyanlu* 碧巖錄, T. 48, no. 2003.

This apparent fool, silent yet industrious, was named *shike* of Shōgen-ji monastery in the eleventh month of 1868 at the express order of his teacher Settan. At the time the effects of *haibutsu kishaku* had reached even the “Buddhist kingdom” of Mino, the extreme case being the Naegi fief in the eastern part of Mino, where not a single temple was left standing. The new prefectural government passed a law banning the practice of *takuhatsu* 托鉢 (mendicancy), a regulation that, in effect, deprived the training monasteries of their means of livelihood and caused terrible difficulties for those monasteries that had to support large numbers of monks.

In 1872 every Buddhist priest and nun in the nation was required by the government to take a qualifying examination for the position of doctrinal instructor (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職); those who could not pass were to be expelled from the clergy. The test involved questions on the so-called Three Standards of Instruction (*Sanjō no kyōsoku* 三条の教則), which served as a form of religious doctrine for the new Meiji state religion. The Three Standards were:

- 1 To comply with the commands to respect the gods and love the nation.
- 2 To elucidate the principles of heaven (*tenri* 天理) and the way of humanity (*jindō* 人道).
- 3 To revere the emperor and obey the will of the court.

The doctrinal instructors were divided into three ranks, known, from the top, as *kyōshō* 教正 (full instructor), *kōgi* 講義 (lecturer), and *kundō* 訓導 (reader). These ranks were further divided into different grades for a total of fourteen levels. Testees were categorized into one of these levels on the basis of the results of their examination. Tairyū traveled to Tokyo accompanied by an unusually intelligent, well-educated monk named Seishū Shusetsu and attempted to prepare for the test by spending three or four days studying the Three Standards with him.

The cramming did little to help his memory, however. When asked about each of the Three Standards on the day of the examination, he calmly responded to each question, “I don’t know.” In exasperation the examiner loudly demanded, “If you can’t answer these questions, how can you possibly serve as a spiritual guide for the public?” Tairyū is said to have raised his voice in turn and stated, “I don’t know.” The examiner finally lost his patience and slammed his fist on the desk, but Tairyū just sat there utterly unperturbed. With a performance like this there was no way that he could win qualification, of course, and it was only with the timely intervention of the Zen master Ogino

Dokuon, then head of the Daikyōin (Institute for the Great Learning, the agency in charge of conducting the examinations) that he was finally accorded the lowest of the doctrinal instructor's ranks, *gon kundō* 権訓導. In contrast, Tairyū's attendant Seishū, who had always been especially gifted and swift, won a ranking of *dai kōgi* 大講義 (senior lecturer).⁶

When this strange duo—the master a *gon kundō*, the student a *dai kōgi*—returned to Ibuka, the top two temple officers, Taigi and Gasan, went down to the gate to greet them. “So you were awarded the *dai kōgi* rank?” asked Gasan, whereupon Tairyū responded, as though the matter had nothing to do with him, “Yes, and they say the old monk got a *gon kundō*.” He returned to his quarters, sat down heavily on the tatami, heaved a long sigh, and commented, “Aaah, if Dokuon and [Tenryū-ji's chief abbot] Tekisui don't shape up soon Buddhism is finished.”

At the time the new Meiji government backed a religious policy in which Buddhism was subordinated to Shinto; Buddhists were directed to teach only the Three Standards and were forbidden to proselytize or teach the doctrines of their own faith. Apparently even the taciturn Tairyū couldn't help expressing his dissatisfaction with priests like Dokuon, who at the government's behest went along with the ill-conceived plan to subject the clergy to qualifying examinations.⁷

Seishū Shusetsu

The monk Seishū who was appointed *dai kōgi* was a rich farmer's son from the town of Unuma 鵜沼. From his childhood he showed a keen intelligence and later traveled here and there in his studies. He was particularly interested in statecraft and often visited politically active figures like Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1827–1877), Yamaoka Tesshū 山岡鉄舟 (1836–1888), and Katsu Kaishū 勝海舟 (1823–1899) in order to discuss government policy. All in all he was a bright, talented youth from whom much was expected in the future. However, following his arrest for involvement in disturbances in the Hida region⁸ (in present Gifu prefecture), he lost interest in the ephemeral affairs of the world and entered the Buddhist priesthood. At the age of twenty-two he commenced Zen training under Tairyū at Shōgen-ji.

⁶ There are other historical materials, however, that record Tairyū as having received the rank of *shō kōgi* (junior-lecturer), and Seijū the rank of *chū kōgi* (middle lecturer).

⁷ The Meiji government's early religious policy did in fact prove to be unworkable and was scrapped in 1875.

⁸ This apparently refers to the Umemura *sōdō* in Meiji 2/2.

Even in *sanzen* Seishū, quick as ever in mind and tongue, attempted to engage Tairyū in abstract discussion, but Tairyū refused to go along. In many ways Tairyū, clumsy in speech and lumpen in appearance, was Seishū's diametric opposite. Seishū finally lost respect for his teacher, and, deciding he lacked the necessary "causal connection" (*kien* 機縁) between master and disciple, quit the monastery. Every time he attempted to leave, however, he felt as though there were someone behind him pulling him back, so time and again he reconsidered his decision.

Then one day in *sanzen* he once again pressed Tairyū with intellectual arguments, whereupon Tairyū flew into a rage and had Seishū thrown out of the monastery. The latter, considering this a stroke of good fortune, betook himself first to Kamakura, where he attempted to enter Engaku-ji under Imakita Kōsen, a master renowned for his deep understanding of Confucian thought. Kōsen, however, upon hearing Seishū's reasons for coming, urged him to return to Shōgen-ji. Seishū, not yet prepared to do this, journeyed next to Sōgen-ji in Okayama to meet Gisan Zenrai. Here too, however, he felt no affinity with the master and finally decided to leave.

He thus made his way to Shōgen-ji, apologized, and begged for readmission. This entreaty was rejected at first, but after Seishū spent three days in supplication at the temple gate he was finally allowed back into the community. From this time on Seishū devoted himself completely to his training under Tairyū. Tairyū's teaching methods were severe, and (as we saw in the case of Gukei above) it was nothing unusual for his master's staff to break when he applied it to the backs of recalcitrant monks in the consultation room. Though Seishū was a strong-willed fellow and uninclined to give in to others, as his understanding gradually deepened during his long training he came to see the true strength and profundity of his master's practice. In later years, when asked about Tairyū, Seishū is said to have responded, "I was once an intelligent man, but under his guidance I became a fool."

Let me conclude my discussion of Seishū by recounting one more story about him and his master. One year at the time of the *jōdōe* 成道会, the ceremony held on 8 December in commemoration of Śākyamuni's enlightenment, Tairyū, as always, had prepared the verse he was to recite when offering incense to the Buddha. He was particularly proud of the concluding line, "The skies are filled with wind-blown snow / Cold I am to my very bones." At tea the day before the ceremony Tairyū proudly showed his composition to the senior monks.

The next day dawned clear, though, without a trace of snow. The

senior monks quietly joked among themselves, "Too bad for the old man, he won't get to read that closing line he's so proud of." At the time of the ceremony, however, Tairyū went right ahead and recited the entire verse. Seishū, ever the logic-splitter, couldn't let the incident pass uncommented upon despite the advice of the other officers to keep quiet about it. When the officers went for their daily tea with the master, Seishū, ignoring the advice of the others, turned to Tairyū and observed, "Master, it certainly was a cold, snowy day today, wasn't it." Tairyū fixed Seishū's face with a penetrating glare, then gruffly remarked, "So that snow was visible to your eyes too. How excellent." Seishū and the others, properly chastened, left the master's quarters with drops of cold sweat trickling down their backs.

Tōjū at Shōgen-ji

Let us now return to Tōjū. After leaving Enpuku-ji and entering the large community at Shōgen-ji, he applied himself with renewed vigor to the life of Zen training. His daily contact with talented monks like Gasan and Seishū, however, left him more deeply conscious than ever of his own lack of ability, and he came to feel that the only path open to an ignoramus like himself was the accumulation of "hidden merit" (*intoku* 陰徳, merit attained through the performance of acts done without the knowledge of others). Thus every night he took it upon himself to secretly gather clogs and sandals whose straps were worn through, take them to the top of the nearby mountain, and repair them by moonlight for the community's use the following day. When there was nothing to be repaired he would go to the Founder's Hall and pray fervently to be given opportunities to accumulate more merit by working for others.

On one occasion Seishū, Gasan, and Tōjū journeyed together from Kyoto to Mino along the Nakasendō 中仙道,⁹ performing *takuhatsu* along the way. Whenever he saw a sake shop Seishū would rush in, order a cup of sake, and promptly empty it. Then as the cup was being refilled he would pluck something from the stewpot, place it on the palm of his hand, and ask how much it cost. Regardless of the price he'd always say "That's too much," return the tidbit to the pot, then hurriedly lick up the broth on his hand to serve as a kind of snack for his second cup of sake. Gasan, meanwhile, would wander over to the local teahouse and look through the heap of discarded straw sandals

⁹ The ancient route connecting Heian (Kyoto) and Edo (Tokyo) through the mountains of central Japan.

that was always to be found at the side of such establishments. There he would find a few pairs that were still usable and save them for later in the pilgrimage. Tōjū, in turn, would wait until Gasan had finished looking through the pile, then pick out a few sandals that even Gasan had rejected as too worn for further use. When the three stopped for meals or lodgings at believers' homes Tōjū would invariably arrive first to make preparations and leave last to complete the cleanup. In this way Tōjū persevered with his *intoku* training, always taking a subordinate position to Gasan and Seishū and regarding the two as men of far greater ability than himself.

In the winter of 1880 Tairyū passed away, designating his disciple Taigi Sokin 大義祖勤 as his successor. Gasan, Ryōsui, Tōiku and most of the other senior monks felt uncomfortable studying under their former colleague, until that time a monk like themselves, and so, after a year helping the monastery get through the period of transition, they moved en masse to Tenryū-ji in Kyoto to study under Tekisui Giboku. They invited Tōjū (who, as we recall, was a Tenryū-ji-branch monk)¹⁰ to accompany them, but the latter decided to remain at Shōgen-ji, where he supported Taigi through his difficult first years of adjustment.

At about this time momentum was finally picking up within the Tenryū-ji branch to restore the buildings of Tenryū-ji's main-temple complex, which had been destroyed during the *haibutsu kishaku* years. Tōjū, learning that his first teacher, Kaigan of Saihō-ji, had been appointed administrative head of the building committee, and that his old friends Gasan and company were traveling far and wide soliciting donations, decided that he too had to contribute what he could to the restoration effort. Thus when the next monastic off-season (*kaisei* 解制)¹¹ arrived he put on his straw sandals and begged funds throughout the Mino and Owari regions. Hearing of this, Kaigan assured him that the fund-raising could be adequately handled by Tenryū-ji personnel, but Tōjū merely smiled and said it was the least he could do to repay Tenryū-ji for everything he had received in the past. At the conclusion of his collection activities he was able to send Kaigan a donation of 100 yen, a quite considerable sum of money at the time.

In 1883, when Tōjū was thirty, he became priest at Daian-ji, the temple

¹⁰ Zen monks are registered as members of the Rinzai Zen branch to which their home temple belongs. Thus Tōjū, whose home temple was Saihō-ji, a Tenryū-ji-branch temple, belonged to the Tenryū-ji branch.

¹¹ The Rinzai Zen monastic year is divided into four main sections: two training periods (from, generally, 15 April to 31 July and 15 October to 31 January) and two off-seasons (1 February to 14 April and 1 August to 14 October).

in Fukui where Kaigan had been ordained as a monk. At first Tōjū had declined the appointment, claiming that he had not yet finished his practice, but in the face of Kaigan's earnest entreaties he was unable to refuse. Daian-ji was the family temple (*bodai-ji* 菩提寺) of the Matsudaira family, whose head had served as the *daimyō* of the feudal Echizen domain (present-day Fukui Prefecture), an illustrious history that was reflected in the magnificent size of the temple structures. However, the previous priest, Kenzui 賢瑞 (n.d.) raised from childhood in the temple system and accustomed to Daian-ji's affluence, had been a weak, indulgent personality with a taste for ostentation. That plus a poor sense of management and a seeming inability to recognize swindlers had left him heavily in debt. On top of everything support from the *daimyō* had dwindled during the disturbances accompanying the Meiji Restoration, leaving the temple bereft of its major source of support. The dilapidated state of the large halls bore silent witness to the decline in Daian-ji's fortunes.

After entering Daian-ji, Tōjū lived frugally, subsisting on a diet of rice boiled with a bit of radish as he worked to restore the temple buildings. His life took on a regular pattern: during the monastic training periods he would return to Shōgen-ji to continue his formal Zen training, while during the monastic off-seasons he would oversee affairs at Daian-ji. After more than ten years of refining his practice in this way he received his full certification (*inka* 印可) from Daigi, who acknowledged his mastery of the most minute details of the teachings.

Tōjū moved back to Shōgen-ji to become its abbot in May 1895, having been designated the new master by Daigi before the latter passed away in February 1894. At Shōgen-ji, Tōjū, following his teacher's final instructions, separated himself from worldly contacts and directed all his energies to promoting the essentials of practice. Under Tōjū's conscientious and humble guidance Shōgen-ji maintained a community of forty or fifty monks (quite large for a Rinzai monastery) and acquired a reputation for severe training.

Taigi, one of the former abbots, had hoped to rebuild several of Shōgen-ji's larger buildings, but his brief thirteen-year tenure as master did not afford him sufficient time to realize his plans. Tōjū took on the task following Taigi's dying wishes, and soon embarked upon several large renovation projects. In 1902 construction work was begun on a new main hall (*hōjō* 方丈) and administration building (*kuri* 庫裡), and in 1907 the structures were completed. The imposing, beautifully crafted buildings lent, it is said, an entirely new appearance to the Shōgen-ji compound.

The year 1910 marked the 550th anniversary of the death of Kan-

zan Egen, the founder of Myōshin-ji. To mark the occasion Emperor Meiji had already in 1909 bestowed upon Kanzan the posthumous title of Musō Daishi 無相大師. Tōjū, as priest of Shōgen-ji (a temple closely associated with Kanzan, as noted above), was accorded the responsibility of hosting at his newly reconstructed temple a large ceremony at which the *Rinzai-roku* 臨濟錄 was read in Kanzan's memory. The verse that Tōjū composed for the occasion is as follows:

Shōbō genzō Musō no zen

Musō's Zen—the treasury
of the true Dharma eye

*Zokuki sude ni kuchō no ten o
ugokasu*

His [word about the]
thief's activity has shaken
the nine-layered [realm
of] the gods.

*Hansen hanbyaku seimei no
akatsuki*

Half a millenium and half
a century [after Musō's
death, today] dawns clear

*Dokuzui kaori o morasu mishō
no saki*

The poison stamen
exudes its fragrance
before a subtle smile
[acknowledges it]

Tōjū died on 12 December 1916 at the age of sixty-three. In spite of an ongoing illness he had led the week-long *Rōhatsu ōzesshin* 臘八大接心, the severest Zen meditation retreat of the entire monastic year.¹² Four days after its completion Tōjū knew he would never stand again, and finally passed away in sitting position by the side of his charcoal hearth. Tōjū was succeeded as master of Shōgen-ji by Yūgaku Gimoku.

The Myōshin-ji authorities, in recognition of Tōjū's contributions, posthumously awarded him the exalted priestly rank of *Myōshin san jūshoku* 妙心三住職. Tōjū's ordaining priest, Kaigan, living then in a subtemple at the Tenryū-ji headquarters complex and still hale despite his advanced age, mourned the passing of his eminent disciple.

¹² *Rōhatsu ōzesshin* is held every year in Zen monasteries from 1 December to early in the morning of 8 December to commemorate the enlightenment of Śākyamuni Buddha, who, according to legend, experienced his great awakening when he saw the morning star on the eighth day of December. The entire week is devoted to Zen meditation, with sleep being forbidden in many monasteries for the entire duration of the retreat.

The Calligraphy of the Mino-Line Masters

Let us conclude with a few words about the brush-and-ink calligraphy (*bokuseki* 墨蹟) of the figures we have been discussing, since such work is often regarded in Japan as an important aspect of a teacher's cultural legacy. As we have seen, Tairyū, Taigi, and Tōjū were all men of few words who chose to live unobtrusive, rather sequestered lives, avoiding official appointments to the Myōshin-ji headquarters and other such public posts. This characteristic seems to have applied to Tōjū's successor Yūgaku as well. Nor were they of particular longevity—Tairyū died at fifty-four, Taigi at fifty-three, and Tōjū, as noted above, at sixty-three. Hence the Mino-line masters remained relatively unknown to the world at large, resulting in a very low output of *bokuseki* for all of them.¹³ For the past twenty years I have been an avid devotee of the calligraphy of the early modern Zen masters, and during that period I have seen several thousand pieces. Yet of the *bokuseki* produced by Tairyū, Taigi, Tōjū, and Yūgaku I have come across precisely one example on the ordinary art market: a piece of calligraphy by Tōjū. None are listed among the thousand entries in the catalogue of *bokuseki* owned by Dr. Awakawa Kōichi, the preeminent collector and aficionado of early modern Zen art.

Several years ago I was finally able to see the brush-and-ink works of these masters in the collection of Shōgen-ji, thereby realizing a twenty-year dream of mine. My impression was that among Tairyū, Taigi, Tōjū, and Yūgaku the finest calligrapher was Taigi. I was struck, however, by the fact that his work included none of the simpler, more elegant genres such as *ichigyō sho* 一行書 (an informal style with a single line of characters) and *chagake* 茶掛 (a smaller form of *bokuseki* displayed during tea ceremonies)—all were more formal pieces involving verses of the kind used in ceremonies. Yūgaku's work was the most unrefined and artless; Tairyū's, too, was of this type. Tairyū, as noted above, had little aptitude for the Chinese characters, a trait that hardly lent itself to skill in producing *bokuseki*, which is perhaps why his remaining works are particularly few in number. Most of his limited body of brushwork consists of large renditions of the character 忍 (*nin*, perseverance), with the following verse from the *Yuikyōgyō* 遺教經 (Sutra of the Buddha's last admonitions) written to the side: "For [the development of] virtue nothing matches severe practice (*kugyō* 苦行) and maintenance of the precepts (*jikai* 持戒)." It struck me that

¹³ *Bokuseki* are most often produced at the request of a master's believers or disciples, who view the pieces as precious expressions of their teacher's inner understanding. Consequently those masters with low public profiles tend to leave behind a rather limited body of such work.

Tairyū, always looked upon as rather slow-witted and uncommunicative, may indeed have lived a life marked above all by the practice of perseverance.

In contrast to the pieces by Tairyū, Taigi, and Yūgaku, all of which are calligraphy, Tōjū's *bokuseki* include a few ink paintings. Every one of these paintings, however, are on the same theme: "Bodhidharma's Dialogue with Emperor Wu." Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty was a devoted patron of Buddhism; known as "the Buddha-mind Emperor," he wore a Buddhist surplice over his secular robes and delivered lectures on the sutras. The story of the meeting between Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu is told in the first case of the *Biyanlu* 碧巖錄 [The Blue Cliff Record], one of the most important koan collections used by the Rinzai school. The verse inscribed by Tōjū above the painting, which features the emperor standing before a seated Bodhidharma, reads:

Master Bodhidharma met Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty.
The emperor asked, "I have had temples built and monks
ordained. What merit has there been in this?" Bodhidharma
replied, "No merit whatsoever!"

The fact that the only remaining paintings of Tōjū, who rebuilt much of Shōgen-ji and who may be justly referred to as the temple's second founder, contain these words boldly inscribed: "No merit whatsoever!" provides a telling insight into the true depth of Tōjū's spirituality.

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