

Kaisei Hôgo
by
Hisamatsu Fûyô

This essay was written by Hisamatsu Fûyô in the year 1838. It has reached us through a copy by Yoshida Itchô, one of his students. The title means “Sermon from the silence of the sea”.

The translation is from Dr. Andreas Gutzwiller and has been taken from his book, “Die Shakuhachi der Kinko-Schule” (i.e. “The shakuhachi of the Kinko school”), published in “Studien zur traditionellen Musik Japans” Vol. 5, Bärenreiter, Kassel 1983). I warmly thank him for his permission to publish this text.

Authentic mind erects no barriers between past and present. Inauthentic mind separates everything into foot-length parts¹. The devout listener hears at the crossing the long sustained sound of founder Fuke’s handbell².

The customs of the Fuke tradition have changed very much over the roughly thousand years since its founding³. Above all its long connection to the military has weakened its faith⁴. Alas, can a person who is busy with arms follow the law of Buddhism and practice *shugyô*?

Fortunately, the doctrine of the Fuke tradition has not perished but has survived thanks to roughly two hundred years of peace⁵. Nonetheless, there are no more true masters, nor is there anyone who shows the true way. These false masters are only skillful in their disdain of patience, and their narrow-minded arrogance dominates. Thereby they have debased the status of the shakuhachi as an instrument of faith⁶ and have extinguished the Buddhist mind. This is an example of how people of war cannot conceal their nature.

Through their bad influence, the intention of the founder, Fuke, has been distorted. They have taken the jewel of his teaching and thrown it away as if it were a fish’s eye⁷. They have the jewel, but let it lay unnoticed like a dirty pebble⁸.

Truly immense are the offenses of these false masters! Truly painful is the illusion of their students! They do not even notice that they are sitting together in the error of their false egotism, and that as they strive for their own profit and personal welfare they are doubly mistaken.

Bit by bit, however, they are remembering that the shakuhachi is an instrument of faith. So they are suddenly ashamed of the injustice they have done to the founder, Kinko. Is it not truly as if they have found a jewel among shards of pottery?

But still, this renewed study of the true teaching has not yet brought forth any fruit. Even Kinko I could not spread the true teaching sufficiently, for he had only limited time left to do

¹ An attempted translation of these first two sentences.

² These first three sentences form an introduction to the main part of this essay.

³ Fuke is said to have died around 845 C.E.

⁴ Membership in the Fuke tradition was by law limited to members of the bushi class.

⁵ This refers to the Edo era.

⁶ Hôki.

⁷ This refers to the Chinese saying “mistaking a jewel for a fish’s eye” which means not recognizing the value of something.

⁸ In the Japanese original in two phrases a square was inserted to indicate a kanji which could not be read in the original handwritten manuscript. I think Mr. Ichikawa Motoo for the tip that perhaps Kurihara could very well read the missing character, but omitted it out of modesty. In both phrases strong or perhaps even obscene expressions would be possible. Throughout this essay, in other respects as well, Fûyô does not mince words.

so⁹. He asked his successors to do so, but there were few good students. As he died, with woeful thoughts, he left behind this request. Alas!

At this time Nyodô¹⁰ seized the opportunity and confused people. He ransacked the name of the master and insidiously spread wild rumors. To the old errors he added a serious new mistake: enjoying great riches. Like flies attracted by the stench, many people gathered around him. They were like a family, poisoned and infected with a serious illness. In the end, they could not escape their grave sins, and like fleeing rats they withdrew from the Fuke tradition. Still today there are many who have not recovered from the remains of this poison.

In the past, they were separate from the true teachings like fish that live in a dirty inlet and do not know the taste of pure, flowing water. But like insects that live in thick grass and seek open land, there are also some that seek the truth but do not yet recognize it. It is not difficult to explain it to them, as it is not easy to admonish those who do not seek the truth. So let us here expose it for those who do not yet know it. Shall we not explain it as well to those who are already looking for the truth?

I have done this already once earlier in Hitori Mondô. In the 20 years that have passed since then¹¹, less than two or three out of ten have understood the problems discussed therein¹². Perhaps in time, it may be half.

Oh, how few understand the *shugyô* of the way! Oh, how difficult it is to choose what is essential to reaching the goal!

Successful *shugyô* depends in truth only on the mind and on the breathing. When the mind is awakened, the breathing becomes mind. When the mind is still, the breath is completed. This is the meaning of completely entering Zen.

Furthermore: concerning enlightenment, the prerequisite is that the mind resides in the body, in the same way that a tone appears when the breath gathers in the form¹³. The shakuhachi is the body-mind and thus the spiritual breath gathers in it. Truly, how can truth not appear here?

When the spiritual breath arises, the ten thousand illnesses cannot break out. But whoever wants to allow the spiritual breath to arise must first free himself from poison. Whoever wants to free himself from poison must not fear the dizziness caused by the antidote. Do not shy away from the dirty sound which arises when the great bamboo is blown. This sound is like an emetic which drives out the evil phlegm.

When someone has gone through this cure, then certainly he will entirely reach the stage where there is no illness. Whoever has become this healthy can also allow the spiritual breath to appear. Whoever really allows this spiritual breath to appear reaches the stage of

⁹ It was only three years before his death that Kinko I assumed the leadership of the shakuhachi schools of both main temples of the Fuke tradition in Edo, although he was already previously active there..

¹⁰ Yamada Benzô. The attacks against him are today no longer understandable. Presumably he was a popularizer of the shakuhachi who managed to achieve personal success and wealth.. Especially the latter seems to have attracted Fûyô's anger.

¹¹ Hitori Mondô was written in 1823; so it was only 15 years that had passed.

¹² Mondô.

¹³ An attempted translation. The possibility of a misprint is not to be rejected. The two phrases follow a parallel construction: "The mind which resides in the body is *ki*; The breath which flows into form, is tone" In this translation the kanji *ki* was interpreted in a secondary meaning (*kongen*) as "reason, cause, requirement" and taken to refer to both parts of the phrase. This has little effect on the argumentation of the essay as a whole.

the true tone¹⁴.

Do not doubt! Those who are most decisive do not fear dizziness and after long *shugyô* will reach the true way. For those who are less decisive, who fear the bitter difficulties of the cure and do not take the medicine, it is difficult to avoid the wrong path. The undecided, those who learn of the difficulties of the cure and out of fear do not take the medicine is one who loves the “little bamboo”¹⁵. Someone like this is self-complacent with respect to the spiritual breath. He is only playing around on the path, and the tone he produces is like absurd blathering¹⁶. Someone like this is a dishonest person and one who only sees illusion. Keep away from people like these!

The difficult way¹⁷ of renunciation is the prerequisite to achieving the true way. Those who follow the easy way¹⁸ are descendants of an evil spirit. Those on the difficult way forget how difficult it is, but those on the easy way even forget how easy it is. The solution is not to be found in the mind tied to reality¹⁹, but do not strive either to free yourself from this reality²⁰.

*No striving
Endlessly going
No stopping
No goal
Become like the silence of the sea!*

What I said above about the shakuhachi as a tool of Zen was known to various branches of Zen. But the teachers of different directions have distanced themselves from this, sutras are not terribly respected and the writings are studied too rarely. Thus it must be explained how the shakuhachi is a tool of Zen with the expressions *mur*²¹ and *kisoku*²². Additionally, Fuke’s words, “tomorrow there is a ceremonial celebration in Daihiin” must be studied well.

Above I said that warriors cannot deny their nature. They do not fear death, nor are they attached to life. When ominous clouds approach, they stomp upon them; and when an evil wind rises, they smash it to pieces²³. One must not shirk the trials of the difficult way. Then one recognizes that also with the image of the stomped cloud Fuke’s words “bright-dark-strike” are to be applied²⁴.

They way of bamboo was founded in China and came to our country later. Those who

¹⁴ Tettei no oto.

¹⁵ In contrast to the “great bamboo” referred to above, the blowing of which is a part of the “cure”.

¹⁶ Fûyô uses here four characters of his own invention. The possibility of a misprint can be excluded, since Kuriharas printer created at least two of these characters by splitting other standard characters. All four characters are seemingly intentionally incomprehensible, have though as radical *gonben* (speech), which is why they have been translated here as “absurd blathering”. A more radical translation would be something like “Blablaba”.

¹⁷ Nangyô.

¹⁸ Igyô.

¹⁹ Ushin in contrast to mushin.

²⁰ Mushin. In the translation, this sentence is connected to the previous sentence, which means “being on the easy way” was understood as the subject. It is, however, also possible to understand the sentence as a general remark without any specific subject, similar to the following.

²¹ The principle of inactivity, or better, of non-goal-oriented activity.

²² Spiritual breath.

²³ This passage means that warriors tend to favor absurd “solutions” to all problems which arise, like “stamping clouds” and “smashing the wind”.

²⁴ This means that also in the case of “stomping clouds” (problems solved falsely, i.e. through violence) the dualistic contraction of reality (“bright-dark”) remains unresolved. Further below Fûyô terms this contradiction as “the bright-dark rain” that cannot be escaped.

The words “bright-dark-strike” come from a saying passed on from Fuke

want to understand the founder, Fuke, and strive for the truth, can no longer understand the way of bamboo. What can one then do to recognize it?

There are only very few writings and not a single clarifying word. The next two expressions for example: “in the three existences²⁵ everything is an articulation of the infinite and wondrous”, and “the voice of the ethics of the soldier class²⁶ is an articulation of the five elements²⁷ and the five virtues²⁸” are nothing but illusions of *yûi*²⁹. These expressions are misrepresentations and fabrications and explain nothing. They do not bring even a little bit of understanding. But the members of the Fuke tradition who love these sayings are not few, and thus they do not practice *shugyô*.

Today we have indeed reached the end of time³⁰. The teachings of the founder Fuke and the path transmitted by him must nonetheless realize their greatness and significance.

*Soku*³¹!

*Deep sayings are nothing more than many words and false notes³².
That blowing sounds like ten thousand howling dogs.
In no cave can you escape the bright-dark rain.
Who completely understands the fearless founder Fuke³³?*

In the first month of the ninth year of Tempô (1838)

Chikuin Fûyô³⁴ Sei

²⁵ See Hitori Mondô on this term.

²⁶ *Budô*, also *bushidô*, “way of the warrior” or class ethic of the warrior (samurai). It is possible that this expression *budô onsei* (“Voice of the ethics of the soldier class”) refers to the shakuhachi, as shakuhachi playing was originally limited to members of this class.

²⁷ Wood, fire, water, earth, metal.

²⁸ Justice, manners, wisdom, loyalty, goodness.

²⁹ *Yûi* is the complement to the above-mentioned *mui*, the principle of goal-oriented activity. Both expressions are thus characterized as illusions of the world of purposeful, goal-oriented activity.

³⁰ cf. similar closing words in Hitori Kotoba.

³¹ Fûyô apparently often uses *soku*, “breath”, as a closing exclamation, similar to Rinzai’s “*katsu!*”

³² An attempted translation.

³³ These four lines in Chinese style, each consisting of seven characters, conclude this essay.

³⁴ *Chikuin fûyô* can also be read as “Bamboo is yin; wind is yang”.