

無
門
關

The Gateless Gateway

BY WUMEN HUIKAI (13TH CENTURY)

Edited by Joan Sutherland

Based on the translations of Shibayama Zenkei
(*Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*), Yamada Koun
(*Gateless Gate*), and Robert Aitken (*The Gateless Barrier*)

無門關

CHINESE : WUMENGUAN

JAPANESE : MUMONKAN

THE GATELESS GATEWAY TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>1</u>	ZHAOZHOU'S NO	3
<u>2</u>	BAIZHANG'S FOX	4
<u>3</u>	JUDI RAISES A FINGER	6
<u>4</u>	HUOAN'S BEARDLESS BARBARIAN	7
<u>5</u>	XIANGYAN UP A TREE	8
<u>6</u>	THE WORLD-HONORED ONE TWIRLS A FLOWER	9
<u>7</u>	ZHAOZHOU'S WASH YOUR BOWL	10
<u>8</u>	XIZHONG BUILDS CARTS	11
<u>9</u>	QINGRANG'S NONATTAINED BUDDHA	12
<u>10</u>	QINGSHUI, ALONE AND DESTITUTE	13
<u>11</u>	ZHAOZHOU AND THE HERMITS	14
<u>12</u>	RUIYAN CALLS TO HIMSELF	15
<u>13</u>	DESHAN, CARRYING HIS BOWLS	16
<u>14</u>	NANQUAN KILLS THE CAT	17
<u>15</u>	YUNMEN SPARES DONGSHAN SIXTY BLOWS	18
<u>16</u>	YUNMEN'S VAST AND WIDE WORLD	19
<u>17</u>	THE NATIONAL TEACHER'S THREE CALLS	20
<u>18</u>	DONGSHAN'S THREE POUNDS OF HEMP	21
<u>19</u>	NANQUAN, ORDINARY MIND IS THE TAO	22
<u>20</u>	SONGYUAN'S PERSON OF GREAT STRENGTH	23
<u>21</u>	YUNMEN'S DRIED SHIT	24
<u>22</u>	MAHAKASHYAPA'S FLAGPOLE	25
<u>23</u>	HUINENG'S ORIGINAL FACE	26
<u>24</u>	FENGXUE'S JIANGNAN IN MARCH	28
<u>25</u>	YANGSHAN SPEAKS FROM THE THIRD SEAT	29
<u>26</u>	FAYAN'S STUDENTS ROLL UP THE BLINDS	30
<u>27</u>	NANQUAN'S NOT MIND, NOT BUDDHA, NOT THINGS	31

<u>28</u>	LONGTAN HANDS DESHAN A CANDLE	32
<u>29</u>	HUINENG'S TEMPLE FLAG	33
<u>30</u>	ANCESTOR MA'S MIND IS BUDDHA	34
<u>31</u>	ZHAOZHOU AND AN OLD WOMAN INVESTIGATE EACH OTHER ..	35
<u>32</u>	THE BUDDHA AND THE RACEHORSE	36
<u>33</u>	ANCESTOR MA'S NO MIND, NO BUDDHA	37
<u>34</u>	NANQUAN'S MIND AND BUDDHA	38
<u>35</u>	WUZI'S TRUE QIAN	39
<u>36</u>	WUZI MEETS SOMEONE AT HOME IN THE DAO	41
<u>37</u>	ZHAOZHOU'S JUNIPER TREE	42
<u>38</u>	WUZI'S BUFFALO THROUGH THE WINDOW	43
<u>39</u>	YUNMEN INTERRUPTS	44
<u>40</u>	GUISHAN KICKS OVER THE WATER JUG	45
<u>41</u>	BODHIDHARMA FINDS HUIKE'S PEACE OF MIND	46
<u>42</u>	MANJUSHRI AND THE YOUNG WOMAN IN SAMADHI	47
<u>43</u>	SHOUSHAN'S STAFF	48
<u>44</u>	BAJIAO'S STICK	49
<u>45</u>	WUZI'S SERVANTS OF THAT ONE	50
<u>46</u>	SHISHUANG'S HUNDRED-FOOT POLE	51
<u>47</u>	DOUSHUAI'S THREE BARRIERS	52
<u>48</u>	JIANFENG'S ONE PATH	53

1 ZHAOZHOU'S NO

A student asked Zhaozhou, "Does a dog have buddha nature?"

Zhaozhou said, "No."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Dog, buddha nature —
the full presentation of the whole.

With a bit of *yes* or *no*
body is lost, life is lost.

2 BAIZHANG'S FOX

Once when Baizhang gave a series of talks, a certain old man was always there listening with the students. When they left he'd leave, too. One day, however, he remained behind. Baizhang asked him, "Who are you?"

The old man replied, "I'm not a human being. In the far distant past, in the time of Kashyapa Buddha, I was head priest at this mountain. One day a student asked me, 'Does an enlightened person fall under the law of cause and effect?' I replied, 'A person like that does not fall under the law of cause and effect.' With that I was reborn five hundred times as a fox. Please say a turning word for me and release me from my wild fox body." He then asked Baizhang, "Does an enlightened person fall under the law of cause and effect?"

Baizhang said, "Such a person doesn't cut the chain of cause and effect."

Hearing this, the old man was himself enlightened. Making his bows he said, "I've been released from my fox body. It's on the other side of this mountain, and I'd like to make a request of you. Please perform my funeral as you would for a priest."

Baizhang had the monk on duty strike the signal board and inform the assembly that after the noon meal there would be a funeral service for a priest. The students talked about this in surprise. "All of us are healthy. There's no one in the morgue. What's this all about?"

After the meal, Baizhang led the students to the foot of a rock on the far side of the mountain. There he used his staff to poke out the corpse of a dead fox. He then performed a cremation ceremony for it.

At the evening teaching, Baizhang told the whole story to the assembly. Huangbo stepped forward and said, "As you say, the old man missed the turning word and was reborn as a fox five hundred times. What if he had given the right answer each time he was asked the question — what would have happened then?"

Baizhang said, "Just come closer and I'll tell you." Huangbo went up to Baizhang and slapped him in the face. Baizhang clapped his hands and laughed, saying, "I thought the Barbarian had a red beard, but right here is a red-bearded Barbarian."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Not falling, not evading —

two faces of the same die.

Not evading, not falling —

a thousand mistakes, ten thousand mistakes.

3 JUDI RAISES A FINGER

Whenever Judi was asked a question, he simply raised a finger. One day a visitor asked Judi's attendant what his teacher taught. The boy raised his finger. Hearing of this, Judi took a knife and cut off the boy's finger. As the attendant ran from the room, screaming with pain, Judi called to him. When the boy turned his head, Judi raised a finger, and the boy suddenly awakened.

When Judi was about to die, he said to his students, "I received this one-finger Zen from Tianlong. I used it all my life but never used it up." With that, he died.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Tianlong made a fool of old Judi
who cut the boy with a sharp blade,
just as the god Zhuling raised his hand,
and Mount Hua, with its many ridges, split in two.¹

¹ This refers to an old Chinese myth that the mountain god Zhuling split Mount Hua in two so that the Yellow River could flow through the gap

4 HUOAN'S BEARDLESS BARBARIAN

Huoan asked, "Why doesn't the Western Barbarian have a beard?" ²

WUMEN'S VERSE

Don't discuss your dreams
in front of a fool.
Barbarian with no beard!
It obscures what was clear.

² The red-bearded or western barbarian is Bodhidharma

5 XIANGYAN UP A TREE

Xiangyan said, “It is as though you were up in a tree, hanging from a branch by your teeth. Your hands and feet can’t reach any branches. Someone appears under the tree and asks, ‘What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming from the West?’ If you don’t answer, you’re not responding to this person’s need. If you do answer, you lose your life. What do you do?”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Xiangyan is just blabbing nonsense;
his poisonous intentions are limitless.
He stops up the students’ mouths,
making his whole body a demon eye.

6 THE WORLD-HONORED ONE TWIRLS A FLOWER ³

Once, when the World-Honored One was at Mount Grdhrakuta, he twirled a flower before his assembled disciples. Everyone was silent; only Mahakashyapa broke into a smile.

The World-Honored One said, “I have the all-pervading true Dharma, the subtle mind of nirvana, and the flawless teaching of no-form. This does not depend on language and is a special transmission outside the scriptures. I now entrust it to Mahakashyapa.” ⁴

WUMEN'S VERSE

Twirling a flower,
the snake shows its tail.
Mahakashyapa breaks into a smile,
and neither humans nor gods know what to do.

³ When Shakyamuni Buddha is referred to as the World-Honored One, it means the story comes from the literature of classical Buddhism and has been repurposed as a koan

⁴ Mt. Grdhrakuta is near the capital of Magadha, Shakyamuni's birthplace, and looks like the head of an eagle; Mahakashyapa was one of the Buddha's chief disciples and was considered his successor

7 ZHAOZHOU'S WASH YOUR BOWL

A student said to Zhaozhou, "I've just entered your monastery. Please give me some guidance."

Zhaozhou asked, "Have you had your breakfast?"

The student said, "Yes, I have."

Zhaozhou said, "Wash your bowls."

The student had an opening.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Because it's so very clear,

it takes so long to realize.

As soon as you know that a candle flame is fire,

you'll discover your rice has long been cooked.

8 XIZHONG BUILDS CARTS

Yue'an said to a student, "Xizhong made a hundred carts. If you take off both wheels and the axle, what would be vividly apparent?"

WUMEN'S VERSE

Where the wheel revolves
even a master cannot follow —
the four directions, above, below,
north, south, east, west.

9 QINGRANG'S NONATTAINED BUDDHA

A student asked Qingrang of Xingyang, “The Buddha of Supremely Pervading, Surpassing Wisdom sat in meditation on the bodhi seat for ten kalpas, ⁵ but the buddha dharma did not manifest itself and he could not attain buddhahood. Why was this?”

Qingrang said, “Your question is exactly the point.”

The student said, “But he meditated on the bodhi seat; why couldn't he attain buddhahood?”

Qingrang said, “Because he is a nonattained buddha.”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Better than knowing the body is knowing the heart-mind at peace;
when the mind is realized, the body is no longer anxious.
When body and mind are fully realized,
the saintly hermit has no wish to become a noble.

⁵ A kalpa in an immeasurably long period of time

10 QINGSHUI, ALONE AND DESTITUTE

A student named Qingshui said to Caoshan, "I am alone and destitute. Please help me to become prosperous."

Caoshan said, "Venerable Shui!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You've already drunk three cups of the finest wine in China, and still you say that you haven't moistened your lips."

WUMEN'S VERSE

With the poverty of Fandan
and the spirit of Xiangyou,⁶
though he can hardly sustain himself,
he dares to compete with others for wealth.

⁶ Fandan was a Chinese man of ancient times who lived in extreme poverty but never seemed worried; Xiangyou was a courageous general whose spirit was so great it covered the earth

11 ZHAOZHOU AND THE HERMITS

Zhaozhou went to a hermit's cottage and asked, "Anybody in? Anybody in?" The hermit raised his fist.

Zhaozhou said, "This water is too shallow for a ship to anchor," and he left.

He went to another hermit's cottage and asked, "Anybody in? Anybody in?" This hermit too raised his fist.

Zhaozhou said, "Free to give, free to take away, free to kill, free to give life," and he made a full bow to him.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Eye like a shooting star,
activity like lightning —
the sword that kills,
the sword that gives life.

12 RUIYAN CALLS TO HIMSELF

Every day, Ruiyan called “Master!” to himself and answered, “Yes!”

Then he would ask, “Are you awake?” and reply, “Yes!”

“Don’t be deceived by others, anytime or anywhere!”

“No, no!”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Those who search for the Way don’t realize the truth;
they only know the same old discriminating consciousness.

This is the source of endless birth and death;
the fool takes it for the original self.

13 DESHAN, CARRYING HIS BOWLS

One day Deshan came down to the dining hall, carrying his bowls. Xuefeng asked him, "Where are you going with your bowls, Old Teacher? The bell hasn't rung and the drum hasn't been struck." Deshan turned and went back to his room.

Xuefeng brought this up with Yantou, who said, "Deshan, great as he is, doesn't yet know the last word."

Hearing about this, Deshan sent for Yantou and asked, "Don't you approve of this old monk?" Yantou whispered what he meant, and Deshan said nothing further.

The next day, when Deshan took his teaching seat in front of the assembly, his talk was different from usual. Yantou came to the front of the hall, rubbing his hands and laughing loudly, saying, "How delightful! Our Old Boss has got hold of the last word. From now on, no one in the world can outdo him!"

WUMEN'S VERSE

When you realize the first word,
you understand the last.
The first and the last —
it's not one word.

14 NANQUAN KILLS THE CAT

One day at Nanquan's monastery, students of the eastern and western halls were arguing over a cat. When he saw this, Nanquan held up the cat and said, "Everyone! If you can say a turning word, I won't kill it."

No one could respond, so Nanquan cut the cat in two.

That evening, Zhaozhou returned from a trip and Nanquan told him what happened. Zhaozhou took off a sandal, put it on top of his head, and walked out.

Nanquan said, "If you'd been here, you'd have saved the cat."

WUMEN'S VERSE

If Zhaozhou had been there
he'd have taken charge.
He'd have snatched away the sword
and Nanquan would have begged for his life.

15 YUNMEN SPARES DONGSHAN SIXTY BLOWS

When Dongshan came to see Yunmen, Yunmen asked him, “Where have you come from?”

Dongshan said, “From Chadu.”

Yunmen said, “Where were you during the summer retreat?”

Dongshan said, “At Baozi Monastery in Hunan.”

Yunmen said, “When did you leave there?”

Dongshan said, “August 25th.”

Yunmen said, “I spare you sixty blows.”

The next day, Dongshan returned and said, “Yesterday you spared me sixty blows. I don’t know where I was at fault.”

Yunmen cried, “You rice bag, wandering around like this — now west of the river, now south of the lake!”

With this, Dongshan had great realization.

WUMEN'S VERSE

The lion trains her cub like this,
kicking it and dodging away.

Dongshan had to be struck again :
the first arrow only nicked him, but the second one was deep.

16 YUNMEN'S VAST AND WIDE WORLD

Yunmen said, "See how vast and wide the world is! Why do you put on your seven-piece robe at the sound of the bell?"

WUMEN'S VERSE

With realization, all things are one family;
without realization, all things are disconnected.
Without realization, all things are one family;
with realization, all things are disconnected.

17 THE NATIONAL TEACHER'S THREE CALLS

National Teacher Huizhong called his attendant three times, and three times his attendant responded.

Huizhong said, "I was about to say that I was ungrateful to you. But the fact is that you are ungrateful to me."

WUMEN'S VERSE

You must wear an iron cangue with no hole — ⁷
it's no trivial matter, this curse that passes to our descendants.
If you want to support the gate and sustain the house,
you have to climb a mountain of swords with bare feet.

⁷ A cangue was a form of public punishment like the stocks except that you carried the cangue around with you

18 DONGSHAN'S THREE POUNDS OF HEMP⁸

A student asked Dongshan, "What is Buddha?"

Dongshan said, "Three pounds of hemp."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Thrusting out "Three pounds of hemp!"

Words are intimate, heart-mind is more so.

If you argue about right and wrong,

you are a person of right and wrong.

⁸ Hemp was grown in the monasteries for robes, cushions, pilgrim's bundles, etc. There's a story of a Japanese zen teacher who taught this koan in the West and was baffled by the gales of laughter with which it was met.

19 NANQUAN, ORDINARY MIND IS THE DAO

Zhaozhou asked Nanquan, "What is the Dao?"

Nanquan said, "Ordinary heart-mind is the Dao."

Zhaozhou asked, "Should I try to direct myself toward it?"

Nanquan said, "If you try to turn toward it, you go away from it."

Zhaozhou asked, "How can I know the Dao if I don't turn toward it?"

Nanquan said, "The Dao isn't subject to knowing or not knowing. Knowing is delusion; not knowing is blankness. If you truly reach the Dao, you'll find it as vast and boundless as outer space. How can we talk about this at the level of right and wrong?" With these words, Zhaozhou had sudden realization.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Spring flowers, the moon in autumn,
the cool breezes of summer, winter snow.
When idle concerns don't cloud your heart-mind,
that's your best season.

20 SONGYUAN'S PERSON OF GREAT STRENGTH

Songyuan asked, "Why can't the person of great strength lift up a leg?"
Then he said, "Say something without moving your lips or tongue."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Lifting my leg, I overturn the Scented Ocean;
lowering my head, I look down on the Four Dhyana Heavens.⁹
There's no place to put my whole body ...
Please finish the poem in your own words.

⁹ In the early cosmology of Buddhism, the Scented Ocean surrounds Mount Sumeru at the center of the world, and the Four Dhyana Heavens stretch above

21 YUNMEN'S DRIED SHIT

A student asked Yunmen, "What is Buddha?"

Yunmen said, "A piece of dried shit."¹⁰

WUMEN'S VERSE

A flash of lightning,
sparks from flint;
if you blink,
you've missed it.

¹⁰ There are a number of interpretations of this, including 'shit stick' and 'shit wiper', but the intent is clearly to invoke something dirty and low

22 MAHAKASHYAPA'S FLAGPOLE

Ananda asked Mahakashyapa, "The World-Honored One transmitted the brocade robe to you. What else did he transmit?"

Kashyapa called, "Ananda!"

Ananda answered, "Yes!"

Kashyapa said, "Pull down the flagpole at the gate." ¹¹

WUMEN'S VERSE

The call is good, the answer even more intimate;
how many discuss this with open eyes?
Elder brother calls, younger brother answers, revealing the family shame;
here is a spring that doesn't belong to yin and yang.

¹¹ The brocade robe is a symbol of dharma transmission; a flag flying at the entrance to a monastery indicated that a talk was being given, so pulling it down meant the talk was over.

23 HUINENG'S ORIGINAL FACE ¹²

The Sixth Ancestor Huineng was pursued by Ming the head monk as far as Dayu Peak. Seeing Ming approach, Huineng laid the robe and bowl on a rock and said, "This robe represents the Dharma; we shouldn't fight over it. You may take it back with you."

Ming tried to lift it up, but it was as immovable as a mountain. Trembling with fear and awe, he said, "I came for the Dharma, not for the robe. I beg you, brother, please reveal it to me."

Huineng said, "Don't think good; don't think evil. At this very moment, what is your original face?"

In that instant Ming had great realization. His whole body dripped with sweat, and in tears he made his bows saying, "Beyond these secret words and meanings, is there anything of deeper significance?"

Huineng said, "What I've just conveyed to you isn't secret. If you reflect on your own original face, whatever is secret will be right there within you."

Ming said, "Though I practiced at Huangmei ¹³ with the assembly, I didn't realize my original face. Now, thanks to your pointed instruction, I'm like someone who drinks water and knows for myself whether it's cold or warm. Brother, you are now my teacher."

Huineng said, "If that's the way you feel, let's both call Huangmei our teacher. Maintain your realization carefully."

¹² When the Fifth Ancestor Huangmei gave the robe and bowl of transmission to the illiterate Huineng, he warned him that the other monks wouldn't accept it; he spirited Huineng out of the monastery, advising him to go into hiding. The head monk got wind of this and went after Huineng, on the assumption that he had stolen the robe and bowl.

¹³ Huangmei refers both to the Fifth Ancestor and to the place he taught

WUMEN'S VERSE

It can't be described; it can't be pictured.

It can't be praised enough; stop groping for it.

There's nowhere to hide the Original Face.

Even when the world is destroyed, it is not destroyed.

24 FENGXUE'S JIANGNAN IN MARCH

A student asked Fengxue, "Speech and silence are concerned with equality and differentiation. How can I be free of them?"

Fengxue said,

I always think of Jiangnan in March;
partridges chirp among the fragrant blossoms.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Fengxue doesn't speak with his usual elegance;
before he says anything, it's already expressed.
If you go on chattering glibly,
know that you'll never get it.

25 YANGSHAN SPEAKS FROM THE THIRD SEAT

Yangshan dreamed he went to Maitreya's realm and was given the third seat. A senior monastic struck the stand with a gavel and announced, "Today the talk will be given by the one in the third seat."

Yangshan stood up, struck the stand with the gavel, and said, "The truth of the Mahayana is beyond the Four Propositions and transcends the Hundred Negations.¹⁴ Listen, listen."

WUMEN'S VERSE

In broad daylight, under the blue sky,
he speaks of a dream in a dream.
Absurd! Absurd!
He deceives the whole audience.

¹⁴ The Four Phrases are the assertions that things exist, don't exist, both exist and don't exist, and neither exist nor don't exist. The Hundred Negations are the negations of 100 propositions derived from these four phrases. They stand for the whole of Mahayana philosophy.

26 FAYAN'S STUDENTS ROLL UP THE BLINDS

His students gathered in the hall to hear the great Fayan of Qingliang give a talk before the midday meal. He pointed to the bamboo blinds, and two students went and rolled them up in the same way. Fayan said, "One wins, one loses."

WUMEN'S VERSE

With the blinds rolled up, the vast sky is bright and clear,
but even the vast sky doesn't match our Way.
Why don't you throw away that sky completely?
Then not a breath of wind will come through.

27 NANQUAN'S NOT MIND, NOT BUDDHA, NOT THINGS

A student asked Nanquan, "Is there a teaching that the wise throughout the ages haven't conveyed?"

Nanquan said, "There is."

The student asked, "How would you express it?"

Nanquan said, "It is not mind, it is not Buddha, it is not things."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Trying too hard dissipates your virtue;
silence is truly effective.

Even if the great ocean became dry land,
It can never be communicated to you.

28 LONGTAN HANDS DESHAN A CANDLE

Deshan visited Longtan and questioned him sincerely far into the night. It grew late and Longtan asked, “Why don’t you go to bed?” Deshan made his bows and lifted the door curtain to leave. Seeing how dark it was, he turned back and said, “It’s pitch black outside.”

Longtan lit a candle and handed it to Deshan, who was about to take it when Longtan blew it out. Deshan had sudden realization and made a deep bow. Longtan asked, “What have you realized?”

Deshan said, “From now on I’ll never doubt the words of the old master renowned everywhere in the world.”

The next day Longtan took the teaching seat before his assembly and said, “There is someone among you whose fangs are like swords and his mouth is like a bowl of blood. Hit him and he won’t flinch. Someday he’ll climb the highest peak and establish our Way there.”

Deshan brought his notes on the *Diamond Sutra* to the front of the Dharma Hall and held up a torch, saying, “Even if you’ve mastered all the abstruse doctrines, it’s like placing a hair in vast space. Even learning all the secrets of the world is like throwing a drop of water into a deep ravine.” He burned all his notes and then, making bows, he took leave of his teacher.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Seeing the face is better than hearing the name;
hearing the name is better than seeing the face.
Although he saved his nose,
alas, he lost his eyes.

29 HUINENG'S TEMPLE FLAG

Two students were arguing about the temple flag flapping in the wind. One said, "The flag is moving." The other said, "The wind is moving." They argued back and forth but couldn't agree.

The Sixth Ancestor Huineng said, "It's neither the wind nor the flag that moves; it's your mind that moves." The two students were struck with awe.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Wind moves, flag moves, mind moves —
all miss it.

Knowing only how to flap their mouths,
they didn't see they were caught by words.

30 ANCESTOR MA'S MIND IS BUDDHA

Damei asked Ancestor Ma, "What is Buddha?"

Ancestor Ma said, "This very heart-mind is Buddha."

WUMEN'S VERSE

On a bright day under a blue sky

don't keep hunting around.

If you ask "What is Buddha?"

it's like declaring your innocence while clutching stolen goods.

31 ZHAOZHOU AND THE OLD WOMAN INVESTIGATE EACH OTHER

A student asked an old woman, “Which way to Mount Tai?”¹⁵

The old woman said, “Straight ahead.”

As the student set off she’d say, “A fine student, and he leaves like this.”

When Zhaozhou heard about this, he said, “Hold on! I’ll go and thoroughly investigate that old woman for you.”

The next day, Zhaozhou went and asked her the same question and she replied in the same way. He returned and announced to his assembly, “I’ve thoroughly investigated that old woman of Mount Tai for you.”

WUMEN'S VERSE

The question was the same each time,
and the answer was the same, too.

Sand in the rice,
thorns in the mud.

¹⁵ Mount (Wu) Tai is one of China’s most sacred mountains, the home of Manjushri and the location of many supernatural events; it was a common though officially frowned-upon pilgrimage destination for Chan monastics

32 THE BUDDHA AND THE RACEHORSE

A follower of another tradition asked the Buddha, “I’m not asking about what you can say in words; I’m not asking about what you can’t say in words.” The Buddha sat for a good while.

The follower sighed and praised him, saying, “World-Honored One, with your great compassion you’ve parted the clouds of my delusion, and now I can enter the Way.”

After the follower left, Ananda asked, “What did you prove to that person so that she said she could enter the Way?”

The Buddha said, “She’s like a racehorse who runs at the mere shadow of a whip.”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Walking along the edge of a sword,
running along an iceberg’s ridge,
no steps, no ladders,
jumping from the cliff with open hands.

33 ANCESTOR MA'S NO MIND, NO BUDDHA

A student asked Ancestor Ma, "What is Buddha?"

Ancestor Ma said, "No mind, no Buddha."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Present a sword if you meet a swordsman;

don't offer a poem unless you meet a poet.

When speaking to others, say only a third of it;

don't give the whole thing at once.

34 NANQUAN'S MIND AND BUDDHA

Nanquan said, "Mind is not Buddha; wisdom is not the Dao."

WUMEN'S VERSE

When the sky clears, the sun appears;
rain falls and the earth gets wet.
He wholeheartedly explains everything,
but I'm afraid no one understands it.

35 WUZI'S TRUE QIAN

Wuzu asked a student, "The woman Qian and her spirit separated. Which is the true Qian?"

This koan is based on an ancient Chinese folktale, an English version of which was published by Lafcadio Hearn in 1898:

In a provincial town a long time ago lived a young girl named Qian. She often played with her cousin, a boy named Zhao. They loved each other a great deal, and one day Qian's father teased them, "When you grow up, you two will marry." They remembered these words and believed they were betrothed. But when Qian came of marriageable age, her father felt he had to acquiesce to a powerful older man's desire to marry her.

This grieved the cousins, and Zhao decided it would be better if he moved away. At sunset the next day, he left home without saying goodbye to anybody and sailed away to start a new life. In the middle of the night, he heard a voice calling, "Wait! It's me!", and he saw a figure running along the bank. He realized it was Qian, and joyfully he welcomed her onto the boat. The two of them sailed away together to the next province.

They got married and had two children, and they were by all measures exceedingly happy. But, as time went by, Qian began to feel the weight of what she had left behind, and the nagging feeling that she had betrayed her parents. So after six years had passed she and her husband agreed to return home to see if they could reconcile with her family. They got back in the boat, went down the river, and docked near her family home. Zhao said, "You wait here; I'll go first and see how things stand." He went up to the house, not knowing what kind of reception he would find.

To his surprise, his uncle and father-in-law welcomed him with open arms, saying, "Oh, it's so good to see you. We were worried about you; we always wondered what had happened to you."

This was not at all the reception Zhao expected. He asked, "Aren't you mad at me? I came to ask for your forgiveness for running away with Qian."

"What are you talking about?" Qian's father replied. "Qian has been sick in bed all this time, ever since you went away."

"But Qian has not been sick. She and I have been married for six years, and we have two children. Don't mock us like this!"

The two men stared at each other for a few moments, and then Qian's father said, "Come with me." He took his son-in-law into the house, to an inner room where a woman lay sick in bed. It was unmistakably Qian, though thin and pale. "She cannot speak," explained her father, but she can understand." He spoke to Qian, "Zhao tells me that you ran away with him!" The sick woman looked at Zhao and smiled but remained silent.

A bewildered Zhao then said, "Come with me to the river, because I assure you that Qian is down there." He took the old man down to the boat, where Qian was waiting.

When she greeted her father, he said to her, "If you really are my daughter, I have nothing but love for you. But there's something I don't understand ... Come with me back to the house." As they walked up the path they saw that the sick woman was coming down to meet them, smiling. The two Qians approached each other and then embraced, melting into each other so that only one Qian remained, showing no sign of the one's sorrow or the other's illness.

Her father said, "My daughter has seemed like someone in a drunken stupor. Now I understand that her spirit was absent."

Qian herself said, "I never realized that I was still at home. I saw Zhao leaving in anger, and that night I dreamed that I ran after his boat ... But now I can't tell which one was really I — the one who went away, or the one who stayed at home."

WUMEN'S VERSE

The moon and the clouds are the same;
mountains and valleys are different.
All are blessed, all are blessed.
Is this one? Is this two?

36 WUZI MEETS SOMEONE AT HOME IN THE DAO

Wuzi said, “On the road, you meet someone at home in the Dao. How will you greet her without using either words or silence?”

WUMEN'S VERSE

On the road, meeting someone at home in the Dao,
don't greet her with words or silence.

A punch in the jaw!

If you want to realize, just realize.

37 ZHAOZHOU'S JUNIPER TREE

A student asked Zhaozhou, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?"

Zhaozhou said, "The juniper tree in the front garden."¹⁶

WUMEN'S VERSE

Words don't convey reality;

language isn't expedient.

Attached to words, you're lost;

stuck among phrases, you remain confused.

¹⁶ This is often translated as 'oak tree' but that's a Japanese reading, and the Chinese juniper's uselessness for lumber (in contrast to the majesty of the oak) is part of Zhaozhou's response

38 WUZI'S BUFFALO THROUGH THE WINDOW

Wuzi said, "It's like a buffalo passing through a latticed window. Its head, horns, and legs all pass through, but why can't its tail?"

WUMEN'S VERSE

If it passes through, it falls into a ditch;
if it turns back, it will be lost.

This tiny little tail —
what a strange and wonderful thing it is! ¹⁷

¹⁷ 'Strange' and 'wonderful' are terms of Chan art, meaning 'of the vastness' and 'of the material world'

39 YUNMEN INTERRUPTS

A student said to Yunmen, “The light serenely illumines the whole universe ...”

Before he’d finished the line, Yunmen interrupted him. “Aren’t those Zhangzhuo’s words?”¹⁸

The student said, “Yes, they are.”

Yunmen said, “You have misspoken.”

Later, the teacher Sixin took up this story and asked, “Tell me, where did the student misspeak?”

WUMEN'S VERSE

A line is cast in the stream

to catch the greedy.

If you open your mouth the tiniest bit,

you’ll lose your life.

¹⁸ Zhangzhou Xiucai was another Chan teacher; this is the first line of his enlightenment poem

40 GUISHAN KICKS OVER THE WATER JUG

When Guishan was studying with Baizhang, he was the monastery cook. Baizhang wanted to choose a founding teacher for Mount Dagui, so he invited all the students to make a presentation, explaining that the outstanding one would be sent. Then he set a water jug on the floor and said, "If you don't call this a water jug, what would you call it?"

The head monk said, "It can't be called a wooden sandal."

Baizhang then turned to Guishan, who kicked over the water jug and walked out. Baizhang laughed and said, "The head monk loses to Guishan." And so Guishan was made the founding teacher at Mount Dagui.

WUMEN'S VERSE

Tossing baskets and ladles aside,
he sweeps all impediments before him.
Baizhang's barrier can't interrupt his momentum;
thousands of buddhas emerge from his toes.

41 BODHIDHARMA FINDS HUIKE'S PEACE OF MIND

Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. Huike, who would become the Second Ancestor, stood in the snow and cut off his arm. He said, "My heart-mind is not yet at peace. I beg you, please put it to rest."

Bodhidharma said, "Bring me your mind and I'll put it to rest."

After awhile the Second Ancestor said, "I've searched for my mind, but I can't find it."

Bodhidharma said, "I have put it completely to rest for you."

WUMEN'S VERSE

Coming from the West and pointing directly at it —
all our troubles spring from this transmission.
The troublemaker who stirs up the monasteries
is, after all, you.

42 MANJUSHRI AND THE YOUNG WOMAN IN SAMADHI

Once Manjushri set out for a place where many buddhas had assembled with the World-Honored One. When he arrived, he found that all the Buddhas were returning to their original dwelling place. Only a young woman remained, seated in deep meditation, near the Buddha's seat.

Manjushri asked the Buddha, "Why can the young woman get near your seat when I cannot?"

The Buddha replied, "Awaken this young woman from her samadhi and ask her yourself."

Manjushri walked around the young woman three times, snapped his fingers once, took her to the Brahma heaven and exerted all his supernatural powers, but he couldn't bring her out.

The World-Honored One said, "Even a hundred thousand Manjushris couldn't wake her up. Down below, past lands as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges, lives the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom. He will be able to bring her out of her meditation."

Instantly the Bodhisattva of Delusive Wisdom emerged from the earth and made bows to the World-Honored One, who gave him his order. Delusive Wisdom stepped in front of the young woman and snapped his fingers once; at this she came out of samadhi.

WUMEN'S VERSE

One can bring her out, the other can't;
both of them are free.
A god mask, a devil mask —
even in failure, an elegant performance.

43 SHOUSHAN'S STAFF

Shoushan held up his short bamboo staff in front of the assembly and said, "If you call this a staff, you're stuck in the facts. If you don't call this a staff, you ignore the facts. Tell me, what do you call it?"

WUMEN'S VERSE

He holds up a staff,
which faithfully gives and takes life.
Getting stuck and *ignoring* interweave;
buddhas and ancestors beg for their lives.

44 BAJIAO'S STICK

Bajiao said to his assembly, "If you have a stick, I'll give it to you. If you don't have a stick, I'll take it away from you."

WUMEN'S VERSE

The depths and shallows of the world
are all in his grasp.
It supports the heavens and sustains the earth;
everywhere it promotes the spirit of the Way.

45 WUZI'S SERVANTS OF THAT ONE

Wuzi said, “Shakyamuni and Maitreya are servants of that one. Tell me, who is that one?”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Don't draw another's bow,
don't ride another's horse,
don't discuss another's faults,
don't interfere in another's affairs.

46 SHISHUANG'S HUNDRED-FOOT POLE

Shishuang asked, "How do you step from the top of a hundred-foot pole?"

Another eminent teacher of the past¹⁹ said :

You've entered the Way and are perched on a hundred-foot pole,
but it's not yet real.

Take a step from the top of the pole
and your whole body manifests in every direction.

WUMEN'S VERSE

You blinded the eye in your forehead
and clung to the mark on the scale.²⁰
Throw away your body and lay down your life,
and the blind will lead the blind.

¹⁹ Changsha Jingcen (d. 868), called Tiger Cen

²⁰ This is a Chan image of clinging to the measuring device rather than the thing being measured, like focusing on the map instead of the territory

47 DOUSHUAI'S THREE BARRIERS

Doushuai set up three barriers for his students :

1 People poke through the weeds and explore the dark, all in an attempt to see their true nature. Right now, honored one, where is your true nature?

2 When you realize your own nature, you're free from birth and death. When the light dims in your eyes as you die, how are you free?

Checking question : So, are you dead?

3 When you're free of birth and death, you know where to go. When your four elements separate, where do you go?

WUMEN'S VERSE

In an instant you see the whole of eternity;²¹
eternity is nothing other than the present moment.
If you see through this one instant,
you see through the one who is seeing.

²¹ The word translated 'instant' is *nian*, meaning both 'thought' and 'moment' (Jap. *nen*, as in *nen nen ju shin ki*, *nen nen fu ri shin*)

48 JIANFENG'S ONE PATH

A student said to Jianfeng, “‘Bhagavats ²² in every direction, one path to nirvana.’ I wonder where that path is.”

Jianfeng picked up his stick, drew a line in the air, and said, “Here it is.”

Later a student asked Yunmen about this. Yunmen held up his fan and said, “This fan jumps up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods and strikes the nose of Sakradevendra. ²³ Strike a carp of the Eastern Sea with a single blow, and the rain comes down in torrents.”

WUMEN'S VERSE

Before you take a step, you're already there;
before your tongue moves, your presentation is complete.
Though your every step is ahead of the last,
remember the vast all-encompassing crater.

²² Bhagavat, World-Honored One, is another of a buddha's titles

²³ Sakradevendra is the divine ruler of the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods