The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Yantou Quanhuo

Chan Master Yantou Quanhuo

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The recorded sayings Yantou left during his lifetime are relatively few and are scattered throughout various lamp records.

For the convenience of later students, this junior student has collected the accounts of Chan Master Yantou Quanhuo found in the Compendium of the Five Lamps, the Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, the Anthology of the Patriarchal Hall, and the Essentials of the United Lamp Assembly. The master's recorded sayings and biographical accounts have been compiled and arranged chronologically according to his time under Deshan, Yantou's sifting and guidance, and his propagation of the Dharma at Wolong. The section on his propagation of the Dharma at Wolong is further arranged in the order of teachings, records of testing and verification, and questions and answers.

This compilation takes the Compendium of the Five Lamps as its primary text and incorporates relevant material from the other three works. Prepared in haste, it doubtless contains many improprieties, errors, and omissions. May readers examine it discerningly.

Respectfully submitted by the junior student Lianming, July 17, 2011

Full Text

Chan Master Yantou Quanhuo of Ezhou was a son of the Ke family of Quanzhou. In his youth, he paid homage to Master Yi of Qingyuan, left home, and went to Baoshou Monastery in Chang'an, where he received the precepts and studied the various divisions of the sūtras and vinaya. He moved freely among Chan

communities and was a friend of Xuefeng and Qinshan. Later, he made his way from Mount Daci in Hangzhou to Linji, but Linji had just passed into extinction, so he went instead to Yangshan. As soon as he entered the gate, he lifted his sitting cloth and said, “Venerable!” Yangshan picked up his whisk as if to raise it. The master said, “No small skill!”

Later, he visited Deshan. Holding his sitting cloth, he went up to the Dharma hall and looked about.

Deshan said, “What are you doing?”

The master immediately gave a shout.

Deshan said, “Where has this old monk gone wrong?”

The master said, “A double koan!” Then he went down to the monks’ hall.

Deshan said, “This monk bears some resemblance to a traveling practitioner.”

(The Patriarchs’ Hall Collection records this passage as follows: “Later he visited Deshan. On first arriving to pay his respects, he was just about to spread out his sitting cloth and make prostrations when Deshan hooked it with his staff and flung it far down the steps. The master then went down the steps, retrieved the sitting cloth, and, looking at the monastery steward, entered the monks’ hall. Deshan gazed intently at him for a long while and then said to himself, ‘This monk bears some resemblance to a traveling practitioner.’”)

The next day, when he went up to offer greetings, Deshan said, “Ācārya, are you the newcomer who arrived yesterday?”

He replied, “Yes.”

Deshan said, “Where did you learn this empty manner?”

The master said, “Quanhuo will never deceive himself.”

Deshan said, “In the future, do not disappoint this old monk.”

One day, when he visited Deshan, he had barely crossed the threshold when he asked, “Is this ordinary or sacred?”

Deshan immediately gave a shout.

The master made prostrations.

Someone brought this up to Dongshan. Dongshan said, “Had it not been for Master Huo, it would have been very difficult to bear.”

The master said, “Old man Dongshan does not know good from bad and has wrongly applied words of praise. At that time, I raised with one hand and pressed down with the other.”

Xuedou said: “Thus, under Deshan, the grass bends and follows the wind. Yet he could not stop the mouths of everyone under heaven. At that time, just as he made prostrations, Deshan should have struck him across the back with his staff. This would not only have cut off Dongshan; it would also have completely checked Master Huo! Do you understand? A general has his own fine reputation; if he is not made a marquis, it is of no consequence.”

Jiaozhong Guang said: “Do you know where these three great elders came to rest? Deshan fell flat in his entirety, while Dongshan dragged through water and mud. Had Yantou not possessed an all-directional eye, how could his great merit in battle have been revealed? But what is the place of raising with one hand and pressing down with the other? The sword that kills; the sword that gives life!”

Xuefeng asked Deshan, “As for the transmission of the school from ancient times, how does Your Reverence here impart it to people?”

Deshan said, “In my school there are no verbal formulations; truly, there is not a single dharma to give to anyone.”

When the master heard this reported, he said, “Old fellow Deshan has a spine that cannot be bent or broken. Even so, in proclaiming the teaching he still falls a little short.”

Baofu raised this and asked Changqing, “What teaching did Yantou give during his life that surpassed Deshan’s, such that he said, ‘he still falls a little short’?” Changqing cited the master’s instruction to the assembly: “A person who has attained the essential meaning naturally knows how to make a living. Every movement and action is effortless and uncontrived; at all times, one is serene and at ease. On encountering things, one responds and communicates; the intent lies in that communication. When staying, one cuts off staying; when going, one cuts off going.”

He continued: “You must realize this at the point of wanting to go yet not going, and wanting to stay yet not staying. Do not cling to things or rely upon things. It is not like obstructed people who tightly grasp matters and cannot let them flow, like dead people clutching jade and rubbing jade. Even if they could let it flow, what use would it be by the year of the donkey? One should be ashamed to crowd in here without any separate functioning. Investigate it, bore into it, grind into it, until it is

thoroughly penetrated and completely understood. Have you not heard it said, 'When one learns archery, only after a long time does one hit the mark'?" Someone asked, "What is it like when one hits the mark?" The master said, "Do you not recognize pain and itch?"

While Xuefeng was serving as the rice steward under Deshan, one day the meal was late, and Deshan carried his bowl down from the Dharma hall.

Xuefeng, who was drying the meal cloth, saw Deshan and said, "The bell has not rung and the drum has not sounded. Where are you going with your bowl?"

Deshan then returned to his quarters.

Xuefeng reported this to the master.

The master said, "Great Deshan has not yet understood the final word."

When Deshan heard of this, he ordered an attendant to summon the master and asked, "You do not approve of this old monk, do you?"

The master quietly disclosed its meaning to him.

Deshan then let the matter rest. The next day, when he ascended the hall, he was indeed unlike his usual self.

When the master came before the monks' hall, he clapped his hands and laughed aloud, saying, "How fortunate! The old fellow in the abbot's quarters understands the final word. In the future, no one under heaven will be able to do anything with him! Even so, he can live for only three more years." [Deshan indeed passed into extinction three years later.]

One day, he was conversing with Xuefeng and Qinshan.

Xuefeng suddenly pointed to a bowl of water.

Qinshan said, "When the water is clear, the moon appears."

Xuefeng said, "When the water is clear, the moon does not appear."

The master kicked over the bowl of water and left.

One day Deshan said to the master, "Two monks have entered the mountains here and have lived in a hermitage for some time. Go and see how they are."

The master therefore took an axe and went. He found the two men sitting inside the hermitage.

The master raised the axe and said, “Whether you can speak or cannot speak, you will get one stroke of the axe.”

The two paid him no attention at all.

The master threw down the axe and said, “True masters! True masters!” He returned and reported this to Deshan.

Deshan said, “What do you say of them?”

The master said, “Under Dongshan there is not said to be none at all; but among those under Deshan, they have not even dreamed of such a thing.”

The master and Xuefeng took leave of Deshan together. Deshan asked, “Where are you going?”

The master said, “For the time being, I take leave of Your Reverence and go down the mountain.”

Deshan said, “What will you be like in the future?”

The master said, “I shall not forget.”

Deshan said, “On what basis do you say this?”

The master said, “Have you not heard: only when one’s wisdom surpasses one’s teacher is one fit to receive the transmission; when one’s wisdom equals one’s teacher’s, one diminishes half the teacher’s virtue?”

Deshan said, “So it is, so it is. Guard and uphold this well.”

The two men made prostrations and withdrew.

The master and Xuefeng arrived at Eshan Monastery below the mountain. Heavy snow kept them there for several days. Each day, the master simply slept, while Xuefeng simply sat in meditation.

After seven days, Xuefeng called out, “Elder brother, please get up.”

The master said, “What is it?”

Xuefeng said, “In this lifetime I have failed to realize it. Together with Wen Sui, I have traveled to several places, only to be burdened by him. Now I have come here with you, elder brother, and you do nothing but sleep.”

The master shouted, “Are you dozing too? Every day you sit on the long communal bed, just like an earth spirit in a lacquer village! Someday you will go and mislead the

men and women of other households!"

Xuefeng pointed to his chest and said, "This place in me is not yet settled. I do not dare deceive myself."

The master said, "I had thought that someday you would build a grass hut atop a solitary peak and spread the great teaching. Yet you still speak like this?"

Xuefeng said, "Truly, I am not yet settled."

The master said, "If this is truly so, then set forth each and every point of your understanding. Where it is right, I will verify it for you; where it is not right, I will cut it away for you."

Xuefeng said, "When I first arrived at Yanguan, I heard a Dharma-hall discourse on the meaning of form and emptiness, and gained an entry."

Yantou said, "For the next thirty years, take great care not to bring this up."

Xuefeng said, "I also saw Dongshan's verse on crossing a stream: 'Take care not to seek it from another; far and wide, it is estranged from oneself. It is now precisely I, yet I am not it.'"

Yantou said, "If that is so, even self-deliverance has not yet been complete."

Xuefeng continued, "Later I asked Deshan, 'In the matter of the school transmitted from ancient times, does this student have any share?' Deshan struck me once with his staff and said, 'What are you saying!' At that moment, it was as though the bottom had fallen out of a bucket."

Yantou shouted, "Have you not heard it said, 'What enters through the gate is not a family treasure'?"

The master said, "What, then, will it be in the future?"

Yantou said, "If in the future you wish to spread the great teaching, let every word flow forth from your own breast, and then cover heaven and earth for me."

At these words, Xuefeng had a great awakening. He immediately made prostrations, rose, and repeatedly cried out, "Elder brother, today is truly the day of attaining the Way at Aoshan."

After the two parted, the master lived at Yantou in Ezhou. During the persecution, he became a ferryman by a lakeside. There was a plank on each bank, and anyone wishing to cross struck a plank once. The master would call, "Who is it?" If someone

said, “I want to cross to the other side,” he would dance the oar and row out to meet them.

Xuefeng went to Fuzhou and established a hermitage. After the persecution had ended, two visiting monks suddenly came to pay homage to him.

As soon as the master saw them approach, he braced the wooden door of the hermitage with his hand, thrust his body outside, and said, “What is this?”

The monks replied, “What is this?”

Xuefeng lowered his head and entered the hermitage.

Three or five days later, the monks took leave.

Xuefeng said, “Where are you going?”

They replied, “To Hunan.”

Xuefeng said, “I have a fellow practitioner there. Can I entrust a letter to you?”

The monks said, “Yes.”

Xuefeng then wrote a letter, which said: “Since attaining the Way at Eshan, up to the present, this letter from your fellow practitioner is sent to my elder brother.”

When the monks arrived at Yantou, the master asked, “Where have you come from?”

They said, “From the south.”

The master said, “Did you go to Xuefeng?”

They replied, “We did. When we left, there was a letter for Your Reverence.”

They then drew out the letter and handed it to the master.

When the monk had received this, the Master asked, “What teaching has he given recently?”

The monk said, “When I first arrived, there was a certain encounter.” He then recounted the preceding exchange in full.

The Master said, “What did he say?”

The monk replied, “He said nothing, but lowered his head and went into his hermitage.”

The Master clapped his hands and said, “Alas! At the time, I regretted not telling him the final word. Had I told him the final word, no one in the world could have done anything to Xuefeng.”

At the end of the summer retreat, that monk fully related the previous encounter and asked the Master, “You said, ‘I regret not telling him the final word.’ What is the final word?”

The Master said, “Why did you not ask sooner?”

The monk said, “I did not dare ask lightly.”

The Master said, “Although Deshan and I sprang from the same root, he and Xuefeng do not die on the same branch. If you wish to recognize the final word, this very thing is it.”

One day, an old woman came carrying a child and said, “I will not ask about presenting an oar and dancing with an oar; just say, where did the child in this old woman’s hands come from?”

The Master immediately struck her.

The old woman said, “I bore seven sons. Six did not meet one who knew their tune; this one is no use either.” She then threw him into the water.

During a period of purgation, the Master wore a bat-sleeved shirt and a straw hat and went to a nun’s convent. As the nun was eating, he strode boldly into the kitchen and asked for food for himself.

A novice saw him and reported it to the nun, who came out carrying a staff.

Just as she crossed the threshold, the Master lifted the brim of his straw hat with his hand.

The nun said, “So it is Venerable Huo.”

The Master drove her out with a shout.

Later, the Master established a hermitage on Wolong Mountain at Dongting, and disciples gathered there in great numbers.

He addressed the assembly: “In the matter of the great ancestral framework, you must recognize the phrase. If you do not recognize the phrase, it is difficult to make any meaningful response. What is the phrase? When not a hundred thoughts arise, this is called the correct phrase; it is also called abiding at the summit, gaining a

foothold, clear and distinct, wakeful and alert, precise and unmistakable, before the Buddha was born, gaining the ground, or at such a time."

"Take this 'such a time' and smash through all right and wrong. The moment it is thus, it is not thus, and one turns freely and fluently. If you cannot see through it, then as soon as someone pricks you, your eyes stare wide, like a sheep that cannot be killed. Have you not seen the ancient's saying: 'Sinking into dullness is no good; you must be able to turn'? When touched, turn at once. The moment it is thus, it is not thus."

"A phrase of affirmation is swept away; a phrase of negation is swept away. Naturally, one turns freely and fluently. Before one, everything is utterly exposed and at ease, incapable of rejecting or biting. Have you not heard it said: 'Turning away from things is higher; pursuing things is lower'? The slightest stirring of feeling, and you have already fallen to the ground. If you are like a dog or pig snapping with glaring eyes, what is there close at hand?"

"If someone asks, 'What is Chan?' tell him, 'Shut up your shit-hole!' If he still has a little breath in him, you will know his depth or shallowness. Stiff and unyielding—recognize this cat's face. At such a time, do not deliberately prop him up; do not measure him."

"There are fellows who, upon encountering something, do not know how to turn; when pricked, they babble on and on. Even if you beat a hundred thousand such fellows to death, it would be no offense."

"Those of genuine capacity rise as soon as they are stirred; in biting people they are urgent as fire. They are like hedgehogs: before being touched, they groom their own fur—how pitiful! But as soon as someone touches them, they bristle, fight, and curse. What intimacy is there in that?"

"If you have not yet attained this, drifting along in this way is called practicing in reliance on phrases; once there is something, you must smash through it. At such a time, not a single thing remains. Then you know that all the words and phrases you have learned since long ago merely congest your chest—what use are they? This is not the Way. Screen off views and phrases: let nothing enter from without, let nothing emerge from within, and cut off both ends. Then naturally there is a bright radiance, and you do not set yourself against any thing. This is the samādhi of non-contention."

"Brothers, if you want to understand easily, simply clarify it at the root. When you are about to come out but do not come out, you must turn. Once you bite through in a single bite, do not seek where it goes or stays, whether near or far. Simply let it go, and naturally everything stands bare and exposed. Do not keep attaching

thoughts to it and lapse into dullness. As soon as you place weight upon something, it becomes a fixed rut. The ancients called this the sickness of clothing stuck to the body; it is most difficult to cure."

"When I traveled in search of the Way in earlier days, I visited one or two venerable masters. They only taught us to maintain continuous awareness day and night. We sat until calluses formed on our buttocks and saliva ran from our mouths. At first it was like being inside Dīpaṃkara Buddha's belly—pitch-black—and I said that I was guarding meditation by sitting. At such a time, desire was still present. Have you not heard: 'Without reliance and without desire, one is the Capable One'?"

"The ancients said, 'Place poison in milk, and even when it becomes ghee, it can still kill.' This is not something acquired through your learning; it is not found in your comings and goings, nor within your form. Do not mistake the doorway and household entrance, only to be deceived on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, left utterly naked and with no benefit. At present, do not fabricate strange things. Simply know how to put on clothes, eat food, defecate and urinate, and pass your time according to your means. Do not become confused."

"Some falsely call themselves people of the Way. They have a garment but dare not take it out to dry, fearing that others will see it and they will lose their reputation as people of the Way. Seeking others' praise, how can they practice with such a mind that does not take this seriously?"

"Brothers, do not believe those old wooden clappers sitting on rope beds, babbling away and thinking it fine to deceive people, while setting up a separate hell for you to enter. Truly, the ancient style is excellent. Have you not heard: 'What is, is nothing; what is nothing, is.' Once this is brought forth in such a way, you know depth and shallowness. This is the ancient standard. Yet there are fellows who simply blurt things out at random—what inscription attests to it? They only know to call it Chan or call it a phrase, soft and tender. It is truly a holeless iron hammer: even if you gather ten thousand of them, what use are they?"

"If you have sinew and bone, you need not wander extensively from one place to another, but you must have eyes; do not be deceived. Have you not heard: 'To give rise to understanding in dependence on the Dharma is still to fall into the realm of Māra'? When teaching, one must bring forth every word from one's own breast, thereby serving as a model for others. Are there any such people today? First of all, you must recognize the right and left phrases; this is where one emerges. Recognize what goes and recognize what stays; these are the phrases of the two ends, also called the right and left phrases, also called phrases of affirmation and negation. As soon as they arise, bite through them, and naturally there is nothing to do."

“Brothers, having heard me speak in this way, do you understand? Do not spend all day in muddled bustle, with no end in sight. If you want to understand easily, simply do not let the myriad circumstances confuse you in the presence of sights and sounds. Then everything will naturally stand bare and exposed; naturally there will be nothing to do. Set forth amid sights and sounds, open and unconfined, like a ball of fire: touch it and you burn. What further matter is there? Have you not heard: ‘It is not that dust does not intrude; it is that I have no mind’? The weather is hot. Take care!”

The Master ascended the hall and said, “For seven or eight years I have studied the Nirvāṇa Sūtra. I found two or three passages whose meaning resembles the speech of Chan monks.”

He also said, “Enough! Enough!”

At that time a monk came forward, bowed, and asked the Master to expound them.

The Master said, “The meaning of my teaching is like the three dots in the character . First, place one dot toward the east: it opens the eyes of all bodhisattvas. Second, place one dot toward the west: it touches the life-root of all bodhisattvas. Third, place one dot upward: it touches the crowns of all bodhisattvas. This is the first passage. Again, the meaning of my teaching is like Maheśvara splitting open his face and erecting a single vertical eye. This is the second passage. Again, the meaning of my teaching is like a poison-smeared drum: strike it once, and all who hear it, near or far, perish. This is the third passage.”

At that time Venerable Xiaoyan asked, “What is the poison-smeared drum?”

The Master pressed both hands on his knees, bent forward, and said, “Like Han Xin appearing before the court.”

Yan said nothing.

A monk took leave, and the Master asked, “Where are you going?”

He said, “I am going into the mountains to pay respects to Xuefeng.”

The Master said, “If Xuefeng asks, ‘How is Yantou?’ just tell him, ‘Recently he has been living by the lakeside. With only three coins, he bought a small scoop-net and catches shrimp and clams. That is how he passes his time.’”

When the monk arrived at Xuefeng’s, Xuefeng asked, “Where have you come from?”

He said, “From Yantou.”

Xuefeng said, “What words did he give?”

The monk recounted the preceding words.

Xuefeng said, “Though a poor wretch, he still manages to enjoy himself like that.”

A monk from below Jia Mountain went to Shishuang. As soon as he crossed the threshold, he said, “I have not yet paid my respects.”

Shishuang said, “No need, Venerable.”

The monk said, “Then take care.”

He then went to the Master and, as before, said, “I have not yet paid my respects.”

The Master gave a single huff.

The monk said, “Then take care.”

Just as he turned to leave, the Master said, “Though a junior, he is capable of maintaining himself.”

When the monk returned, he recounted this to Jia Mountain.

Jia Mountain ascended the hall and said, “Let the monk who recently went to Yantou and Shishuang come forth and recount the preceding exchange exactly as it occurred.”

The monk recounted it.

Jia Mountain said, “Does the assembly understand?” No one replied.

Jia Mountain said, “If no one can speak of it, this mountain monk will not begrudge losing two layers of eyebrows in speaking!” He then said, “Although Shishuang has a sword for killing people, he lacks a sword for giving people life. Yantou has both a sword for killing people and a sword for giving people life.”

The Master and Luoshan were selecting a site for a stūpa. On the way, Luoshan suddenly said, “Reverend!”

The Master turned and looked back, saying, “What is it?”

Luoshan raised his hand and pointed, saying, “This is a fine piece of ground.”

The Master scolded, “A melon seller in Guazhou!”

After they had gone several more li and stopped to rest, Luoshan bowed and asked, “Reverend, were you not at Dongshan thirty years ago and yet did not approve of Dongshan?”

The Master said, “Yes.”

Luoshan again said, “Did you not succeed Deshan and yet not approve of Deshan?”

The Master said, “Yes.”

Luoshan said, “I will not ask about your not approving of Deshan. But what deficiency did Dongshan have?”

After a long silence, the Master said, “Dongshan was a fine Buddha, but he lacked radiance.”

Luoshan bowed.

When Seat-holder Dayan first came to see the Master, the Master was weeding the grass before the gate. Seat-holder Yan arrived grandly wearing a bamboo hat, went straight up before the Master, slapped his hat with his hand, raised his hand, and said, “Do you still recognize me?”

The Master stood holding a clump of grass, flung it across his face, and said, “No place! No place!”

He had no reply, and the Master gave him three slaps.

Later, having properly arranged his deportment, he was about to ascend the Dharma hall. The Master said, “We have already met; do not come up!”

Yan then turned away. The next morning, after eating gruel, he went up again.

As soon as he crossed the abbot’s quarters’ threshold, the Master sprang down from the bed, seized him by the chest, and said, “Speak quickly! Speak quickly!”

Unable to reply, he was pushed out by the Master. Dayan sighed and said, “I had thought there was no one in the world; it turns out there is an old tiger here.”

When the Master saw Shushan arrive, he stretched out comfortably and went to sleep.

Shan stood before him, but the Master took no notice.

Shan struck the rope-bed once. The Master looked back and said, “What are you doing?”

Shan said, “Reverend, please go on sleeping,” and then went out.

The Master laughed heartily and said, “For thirty years I have handled horses and ridden them; today I have been thrown by a donkey.”

Once, while Reverend Guishan was plastering a wall in the corridor, Military Commissioner Li, dressed in full official robes, came directly to ask Guishan about the Way. He stood behind Guishan, holding his tablet upright.

Guishan turned his head and tilted the mud tray as though receiving mud. The minister then turned his tablet as though offering mud.

Guishan immediately threw down the mud tray, took the minister arm in arm, and returned to the abbot's quarters.

When the Master later heard of this, he said, "Alas! The Buddhadharma has become ever more feeble in later times. Throughout the whole land, they have not even finished Guishan's mud wall."

Baizhang presented this saying: "Thus, not thus."

Someone repeated this to the Master. The Master said, "I would not speak of it as 'thus, not thus.'" Then he said, "Thus, thus; not thus, not thus. Among a thousand or ten thousand people, it is hard to find even one or half of one who understands this."

When Changqing and Luoshan were at Linshui's residence, they raised this case. Changqing asked Luoshan, "I will not ask about 'thus, not thus.' What is the meaning of 'thus, thus; not thus, not thus'?"

Luoshan said, "Both bright and both dark."

Changqing said, "How are they both bright and both dark?"

Luoshan said, "They are born together but do not die together."

Later someone asked Changqing, "What does it mean that they are born together but do not die together?"

Changqing said, "Both of you, close your mouths."

That monk then repeated this to Luoshan, but Luoshan did not approve of it.

The monk then asked, "What does it mean that they are born together but do not die together?"

Luoshan said, "Like a great tiger with horns."

"What does it mean that they are born together and die together?"

Luoshan said, "Like an ox without horns."

At Linji there was a monk who boasted loudly, saying, “If I saw him, I would pull out his whiskers.”

One day he arrived, made prostrations, and was just about to rise.

The Master suddenly brushed his face with the corner of his robe.

The monk had no reply and departed in tears.

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

He said, “From the Western Capital.”

The Master said, “After Huang Chao passed through, did you recover your sword?”

He said, “I recovered it.”

The Master stretched out his neck close before him and shouted, “Ha!”

The monk said, “The Master’s head has fallen!”

The Master laughed heartily.

Later the monk went to Xuefeng. Xuefeng asked, “Where have you come from?”

He said, “From Yantou.”

Xuefeng said, “What words were spoken?”

The monk recounted the preceding exchange. Xuefeng gave him thirty blows with the staff and drove him out.

Dahui Zhe said, “After Huang Chao passed through, this monk had indeed recovered his sword, yet he displayed it at Yantou’s place; even before Xuefeng, its edge did not show. Why? Because Yantou’s single great laugh made heaven and earth suddenly grow dark and silenced the four quarters. Had it not been for Xuefeng, he would almost have sunk without trace. Have you not heard: the sword that kills people, the sword that gives people life?”

A monk came to consult the Master. He made a circle-sign on the left, another on the right, and then another in the center.

Before he had completed it, the Master brushed it aside with his hand.

The monk had no reply. The Master shouted, “Out!”

As the monk was about to cross the threshold, the Master called him back and asked, “Are you Guanyin from Hongzhou?”

He said, “Yes.”

The Master said, “What did the circle-sign on the left just now mean?”

He said, “It was the statement of being.”

The Master said, “And the circle-sign on the right?”

He said, “It was the statement of nonbeing.”

The Master said, “What did the circle-sign in the center mean?”

He said, “It was the statement of neither being nor nonbeing.”

The Master said, “Then what about my doing this?”

He said, “Like drawing a knife across water.”

The Master struck him.

A monk asked Xuefeng, “Śrāvakas see their nature as one sees the moon at night; bodhisattvas see their nature as one sees the sun by day. How does the Reverend see his nature?”

Xuefeng struck his staff on the ground three times.

Later the monk repeated the preceding words and asked the Master, who gave him three slaps.

Ruiyan asked, “Who is Vairocana’s teacher?”

The Master said, “What did you say?”

Ruiyan asked again. The Master said, “You are seventeen or eighteen years old.”

At the end, someone asked, “What about when the bow is broken and the arrows exhausted?” The Master said, “Go!”

A monk asked, “Does one without a teacher still have a place from which to emerge?”

The Master said, “Before sound, the ancient fur is rotten.”

Someone asked, “What about when one comes in full dignity?”

The Master said, “It pierces the eyes.”

A monk asked, “When a sharp sword cuts through the whole world, who can meet it head-on?”

The Master said, “Dark.”

As the monk was about to ask again, the Master rebuked him, “You dull fellow, get out!”

Someone asked, “What about that which does not pass through past or present?”

The Master said, “Thrusting into the ground.”

He said, “What about the affairs of past and present?”

The Master said, “Let them rot.”

Someone asked, “What is the true intent within the cliff?”

The Master said, “Thank you for pointing it out.”

He said, “Please, Reverend, answer the question.”

The Master said, “Take care!”

Someone asked, “Two dragons contend for a pearl. Which one obtains it?”

The Master said, “Both are mistaken.”

Someone asked, “Who is the ruler of the three realms?”

The Master said, “Can you swallow an iron rod?”

Someone asked, “What about when the three realms rise up in contention?”

The Master said, “Sit down!”

He said, “What is the Master’s meaning?”

The Master said, “Bring Mount Lu here, and then I will tell you.”

Someone asked, “What about when arising and ceasing never stop?” The Master shouted, “Who is it that arises and ceases?”

Someone asked, “What about when one cannot turn within the wheel?” The Master said, “Stuck.”

Someone asked, “What about when one encounters a fierce tiger on the road?” The Master said, “Press on!”

Someone asked, “What is the Way?” The Master said, “Take a worn-out straw sandal and throw it into the lake.”

Someone asked, “How does one reach the bottom of a ten-thousand-fathom well?” The Master said, “Bottom.” When the monk asked again, the Master said, “It has passed beneath your feet!”

Someone asked, “What about when the ancient sail has not yet unfurled?” The Master said, “A small fish swallows a large fish.” When another monk asked as before, the Master said, “The donkey in the back garden eats grass.”

Thereafter, whenever people asked about Buddha, Dharma, the Way, or Chan, the Master would make a hushing sound.

The Master once told the assembly, “When this old fellow goes, he will give one great roar and then depart!”

After the Tang reign-period Guangqi, bandits arose in the Central Plains, and everyone fled elsewhere. The Master remained composed and at ease. One day a large band of bandits arrived and reproached him for having no provisions to offer them; they then stabbed him with a blade. The Master’s expression remained unchanged. He gave one great shout and died; the sound was heard for dozens of miles. This was the eighth day of the fourth month in the dingwei year, the third year of Guangqi. Later, his disciples cremated him and obtained forty-nine relics. The assembly erected a stūpa for him and bestowed on him the posthumous title Chan Master Qingyan.