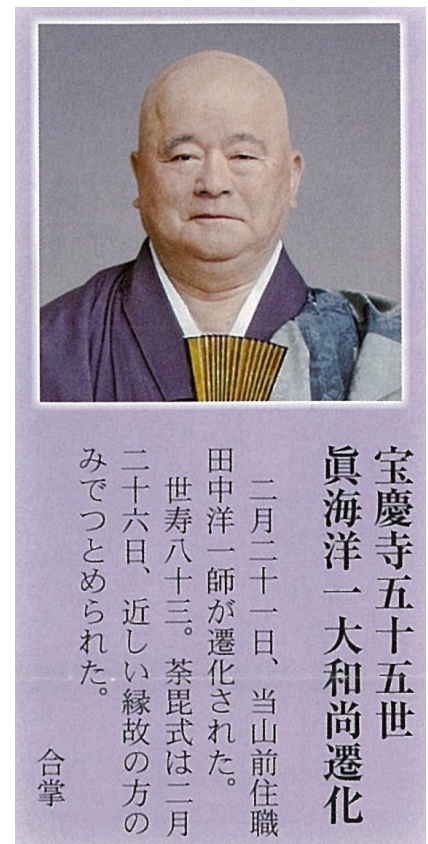


On FEBRUARY 21, 2022, TANAKA SHINKAI YÔITSU RÔSHI, 55th generation abbot of Hōkyōji Zen monastery in Ōno, passed away at the age of 83. Below follows a translation of a memorial notice written by one of the master's dharma successors, Nohara Shinjō, abbot of Ryūunji in Hamada, Shimane prefecture. The original Japanese text appeared in Hōkyōji's newsletter *Hōkyōji Tayori* (May 2022).

REMEMBERING SHINKAI YÔITSU RÔSHI

Nohara Shinjō, abbot of Ryūunji

ON THE 8TH OF DECEMBER in 2005 - right after the meditation retreat commemorating the awakening of the Buddha (*rōhatsu sesshin*) - our teacher suffered a stroke and was immediately taken to the hospital. In October 2013 he was again hospitalized, but as there were no after-effects he soon returned. In November 2018 he was hospitalized for the third time, but unlike before, one side of his body remained paralyzed, and as a result it became difficult to resume his monastic duties. As he had many students in the Kansai area (at Saikōji in Kameoka and Ryūgonji in Kyōtango) he relocated to Osaka and eventually took up residence in a rehabilitation center in June 2019. Later that year, a student from Saiki in Ōita Prefecture offered his personal assistance and suggested he come to that region, which is known for its mild weather, conducive to recovery. He moved to a facility there and from December onwards convalesced in the student's private residence. On the 26th of January 2022, he was rushed to the hospital with respiratory problems. On the 18th of February, in the afternoon, he left the hospital and returned to the student's home. On the 21st his condition suddenly changed; at 8:47 in the evening he passed away, surrounded by his students.



Early on at Eiheiiji monastery, under the guidance of Zen Master Miyazaki Ekihō (1901-2008), our teacher held the position of Monastic Officer (*tantō*), devoting his energy to the skillful instruction of the congregation. On October 10, 1998, in accordance with the master's directives, he was installed as the 55th generation abbot of Hōkyōji through the solemn ritual of Ascending the Mountain (*shinsanshiki*). Lay and monastic dignitaries in attendance all expressed their joy at this event; among them Chinese emissaries from Mount Tiantong, the home monastery of Hōkyōji's founding patriarch Jakuen Zenji (1207-1299). From this day onwards, the ringing of the morning bell – at three-thirty in the summer and four in the winter – always saw the abbot in the monk's hall, sitting upright, with great diligence, together with the assembly.

He often took us on alms-rounds, first in nearby Ōno and Katsuyama, and later across the entire prefecture, and more distant still, all over the Kansai area. Every month he led meditation retreats (*sesshin*) for both monastics and laity, open to all, regardless of nationality or religious background; sometimes we would even be joined catholic priests. Relying on his own experience, our teacher taught us the worth of practicing the way in the manner of the eminent monks of the past. His teaching conveyed the very dharma-bliss that filled his body and mind. In this way, he guided many students towards peace and joy. He traveled to the United States to visit the Shao-Shan temple in Vermont, and transmitted the dharma to his American student Taihaku Seiren (deceased). When monks or trainees encountered hardships, he would take them for a walk up to Mount Ginanpō; with a broad smile and thunderous voice he spared no effort to encourage them: “*The more mud, the bigger the buddha!* Sure, some things or persons may be undependable. But never turn your back on *zazen*! Just try to put a little more effort in your practice!”

Late in 1998 I initially entered Eiheiiji as a trainee. Under the teacher’s care I ordained as a monk in April of the following year. From then on I had the privilege of serving as his attendant. Up to this day I experience his extraordinary guidance. Our teacher always had a profound sense of gratitude for the heavy responsibility entrusted to him by Zen Master Miyazaki Ekihō. In accord with the master, he gave us practical instruction in *just sitting* (*shikantaza*), that is to say, the practice of seated meditation that cuts off the root of thought and abandons past and future. When clarifying essential points from the inner chambers of Buddha’s house, he invoked the words of Hakuzan Rōshi (1914-2007): “Authentic transmission of the authentic dharma is accomplished only when a student fully dedicates body and mind to the path of the Buddha, and unites with a true teacher in a face to face encounter.” Every year, excellent scholars and monks – Nagai Seishi Rōshi (director of Komazawa University), Yoshida Dōkō Rōshi (Emeritus Professor of Aichi Gakuin), Takahashi Shūei Rōshi (Director of Kanazawa Bunko) and Professor Yamabe Nobuyoshi (Waseda University) – visited Hōkyōji to give lectures in the fields of Buddhist and Yogācāra studies. Thus we were not only taught to practice *zazen*, but also learned the importance and dharma-joys of studying Buddhist philosophy.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the virtuous elders of Eiheiiji, the devout adherents of Hōkyōji, and the various Buddhist groups and individual supporters all over the country, who sustained the community for the past twenty plus years. I am deeply aware of the many kindly acts and tremendous support we received, first in regards to issues with the road, and later with the restoration work following the disastrous rains of 2004, and many other things. Please accept our heartfelt thanks.

When our teacher’s condition declined, Tōdō Shikō Rōshi of Chōshōji, Takahashi Shinzen Rōshi of Chigenji Sōdō, Ishiguro Eishin Rōshi of Jūdenji and Satō Jōkō Rōshi of Kōkenji kindly offered their generous guidance. Likewise, the Director of Eiheiiji Kobayashi Shōdō Rōshi, and many other teachers of the monastery, counseled us with great care and compassion. On behalf of our late teacher’s remaining students, I sincerely thank the Sōtōshū Head Office and affiliated temples, who in these difficult times made great efforts so as to allow the concluding funerary observances to be held at Hōkyōji.

In the disarray of today's world, in a society engulfed in news reports, it is easy to become anxious, and swing back and forth between happiness and sorrow. Not to be shaken amid the tumult of phenomena — pain, joy, good, evil, fortune, misfortune, birth, death — but to be aware of the workings of the reality-principle that primordially underlies all phenomena; to recognize your own original face, free of taints in past, present and future; and to realize that the sublime path you personally wake up to is precisely the dharma that the Buddha authentically transmitted: Together with concrete praxis, this is what I endeavor to transmit to those with a connection to the dharma, in gratitude for all I received, and in hope that the light of peace may shine upon the local community and the world at large.

I composed this eulogy in gratitude to Venerable Śākyamuni, Dōgen Zenji, Jakuen Zenji, and our teacher Shinkai Yōitsu Daishō, whose guidance links us with Buddha. Let us earnestly pray for world peace. May all those who feel connected to the dharma find tranquility.

On behalf of the departed master's remaining students,

Nohara Shinjō
Nine bows

Hōkyōji Tayori (Nr. 91) May 1, 2022, pp. 2-3. Translation: Vincent Breugem 大海敏仙



translator's note:



In memory, Shinkai Yōitsu Rōshi.

Long ago you gave this lousy horse a wooden stick
To this day its blows penetrate the marrow
But my eyebrows have grown white,
and the debt of gratitude can never be repaid.

大海敏仙 九拜