CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN (Dai sanjūnana shō 第三十七章)

Root Case【本則】

第三十七祖、雲巖無住大師、初參侍百丈二十年、後參藥山。

The Thirty-seventh Ancestor, Great Master Wuzhu1 of Yunyan, first trained as an acolyte under Baizhang for twenty years, after which he sought instruction from Yaoshan.

山問、百丈更説甚麼法。師曰、百丈有時上堂、大衆立定、以拄杖一時趁散。復召大衆、衆回首。丈曰、是甚麼。山曰、何不早恁麼道、今日因子得見海兄。師於言下大悟。

Yaoshan asked,2 “What dharma does Baizhang expound?” The Master [Yunyan] replied: “Baizhang, at one time, held a conversation in the dharma hall. The great assembly was standing still, but he used his staff to suddenly chase and scatter them. Then he called out to them, ‘O great assembly!’ The congregation turned their heads. Baizhang said, ‘What is this’?”3 Yaoshan said: “Why didn’t you speak in this way earlier? Today, because of you, I have been able to see my elder brother Huaihai.”4 At these words, the Master [Yunyan] had a great awakening.

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1 Great Master Wuzhu (C. Wuzhu Dashi 無住大師; J. Mujū Daishi). This is the posthumous honorary title of Yunyan Tansheng 雲巖曇晟 (J. Ungan Donjō, 782–841).

2 Yaoshan asked (C. Shan wen 山問; J. San tou). The block of Chinese text that follows these words is nearly identical to one that appears in the Collated Essentials of the Five Flame Records under the heading “Chan Master Tansheng of Yunyan in Tanzhou” (CBETA, X80, no. 1565, p. 114, b21-24 // Z 2B:11, p. 87, b18-c3 // R138, p. 173, b18-p. 174, a3).

3 “What is this?” (C. shi shenmo 是甚麼; J. kore nan zo). In Case #37 of the Congrong Hermitage Record, the incident that ends with these words is identified as a kōan that has the name “Baizhang’s phrase upon leaving the hall,” and Keizan refers to it as such in the Investigation section of this chapter.

4 elder brother Huaihai (C. Hai xiong 海兄; J. Kai bin). The reference is to Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (J. Hyakujō Ekai; 720–814), whose teaching method Yunyan is explaining to Yaoshan.
Pivotal Circumstances  【機縁】

師は
The Master [Yunyan]¹

鍾陵建昌の王氏の子なり。百丈海禅師に参じること二十年。因縁契はず。後造薬山。山問ふ、甚麼の處より来る。師曰く、百丈より来る。山曰、百丈何の言句ありてか衆に示す。師曰く、尋常曰く、我に一句子あり百味具足すと。山曰く、鹹は則ち鹹味、淡は則ち淡味、鹹ならず淡ならず是れ常味、作麼生是百味具足底の句。師無對。山曰く、目前の生死を奈何せん。師曰く、目前無生死。山曰、在百丈多少の時ぞ。師曰、二十年。山曰、二十年在百丈、俗氣だもた除かず。他日侍立次。山又問ふ、百丈更に甚麼の法をか説く。師曰く、有時道く、三句の外に省去る、六句の外に會取せよと。山曰く、三千里外、且喜すらくは没交渉。又問ふ、更に甚麼の法をか説く。師曰く、有時上堂、乃至、師言下に於て大悟す。was a son of the Wang Clan of Jianchang, in Zhongling. While young, he went forth from household life on Mount Shimen. He

¹ The Master (Shi wa 師は). The long quotation that follows these words, and is elided in the middle using the expression “and so on down to” (naishi 乃至), is a Japanese transcription (yomikudashi 読み下し) of a nearly identical passage in Chinese that appears in the Collated Essentials of the Five Flame Records under the heading “Chan Master Tansheng of Yunyan in Tanzhou”.

《五燈會元》鍾陵建昌王氏子。少出家於石門。參百丈海禪師二十年。因緣不契。後造藥山。山問、甚麼處来。曰、百丈來。山曰、百丈有何言句示徒。師曰、尋常道。我有一句子、百味具足。山曰、鹹則鹹味、淡則淡味。不鹹不淡是常味。作麼生是百味具足底句。師無對。山曰、目前生死何。師曰、目前無生死。山曰、在百丈多少時。師曰、二十年。山曰、二十年在百丈、俗氣也不除。他日侍立次。山又問、百丈更説甚麼法。師曰、有時道、三句の外に省去る、六句の外に會取せよと。山曰、三千里外、且喜すらくは没交渉。又問、更に甚麼の法をか説く。師曰、有時上堂、乃至、師言下に於て大悟す。
studied under Chan Master Hai¹ of Mount Baizhang for twenty years, but their karma did not tally.² Later, he called on Yaoshan. Yaoshan asked, “What place did you come from?” The Master [Yunyan] said, “I came from Baizhang.” Yaoshan asked, “What sayings does Baizhang have for instructing the congregation?” The Master [Yunyan] said, “He [Baizhang] always says, ‘I have a single phrase that is fully equipped with one hundred flavors.’” Yaoshan said: “Salted food has a salty flavor, and bland food has a bland flavor. If it is neither salty nor bland, then it is an ordinary flavor. What about this ‘phrase that is fully equipped with one hundred flavors’?” The Master [Yunyan] had no response. Yaoshan said, “How will you deal with the birth and death that is before your eyes?” The Master [Yunyan] said, “There is no birth or death before my eyes.” Yaoshan asked, “How long were you with Baizhang?” The Master said, “Twenty years.” Yaoshan said, “Twenty years with Baizhang, and still you have not rid yourself of vulgarity.”

On another day, when [Yunyan] was standing in attendance on him, Yaoshan again asked, “What dharma is expounded by Baizhang?” The Master [Yunyan] said, “At one time he [Baizhang] said, ‘Examine apart from the three phrases, and understand apart from the six phrases.’” Yaoshan said, “Three thousand miles apart: that is wonderful, but it is entirely unrelated.”³

Yaoshan again asked, “What dharma does [Baizhang expound?”] The Master [Yunyan] replied, “[Baizhang,] at one time, held a convocation in the dharma hall” ...and so on, down to...⁴ At these words, the Master [Yunyan] had a great awakening.

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¹ Chan Master Hai (C. Hai Chanshi 海禪師; J. Kai Zenji). → Baizhang Huaihai.
² “their karma did not tally” (innen kanawazu 因縁契はず). In other words, Yunyan did not gain awakening under Baizhang because something in his (or both men’s) karma prevented him from understanding the Master.
³ that is wonderful, but it is entirely unrelated (C. qiexi mo jiaoshe 且喜没交渉; J. shaki suraku wa mokkōshō 且喜すらくは没交渉). This is a set phrase in Chinese Chan texts that means “nice try, but you have missed the mark.” The tone is mocking, sarcastic.
⁴ and so on, down to (naishi 乃至). This expression indicates that part of this repetition of the Root Case has been elided to save space, but that the intention is to quote the entire thing.
Now, inquiring into Zen and studying the way is, from the start, to clarify mind, awaken to its import, and thereby get its essential point. Thus, Reverend Yunyan, too, resided with Baizhang and sought instruction for twenty years. However, “their karma did not tally.” In the end, he [Yunyan] sought instruction from Yaoshan. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that long practice and training is good. The fundamental thing is simply whether mind is clarified. Moreover, the tallying of karma does not depend on having a beginner’s mind, nor does it depend on having a veteran’s mind. It is karma from previous lives that makes things the way they are. It is not that Baizhang was not that person. It was simply that their karma did not tally.

This is not a matter of acting as a good friend, vainly gathering a congregation, and nurturing people. Simply make people penetrate the root source directly, and try to make them quickly accede to their original disposition. Thus the ancients always said, “What place did you come from?” Traveling about seeking instruction is for checking out good friends, so [teachers] want to know the places that [students] have come from. Moreover, when [students] arrive, [teachers] ask, “What matter motivates you?” They tried to clarify the shallowness or depth of those [students’] aspirations, and to learn how remote or close their karmic connections were.

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Thus, in the case that we are presently considering, too, [Yaoshan] asked, “What place did you come from?” To show that he had not traveled mountains and rivers, aimlessly seeking instruction from this one and that, [Yunyan] said, “I came from Baizhang.” Yaoshan and Baizhang had appeared in the world in the same way, and they were standouts in the Qingyuan and Nanyue lineages, respectively. Therefore, [Yaoshan] asked, “What sayings does Baizhang have for instructing the congregation?” Here, if Yunyan had been that person, he would have raised a matter that he merely heard, saying, “He [Baizhang] always says, ‘I have a single phrase that is fully equipped with one hundred flavors.’” It is not that a single phrase is insufficient, nor that it is not complete and full. Nevertheless, [what counts is,] are people able to hear and get1 that one move or not? So that [Yunyan] might know and see this in detail, [Yaoshan] asked: “Salted food has a salty flavor, and bland food has a bland flavor. If it is neither salty nor bland, then it is an ordinary flavor. What about this ‘phrase that is fully equipped with one hundred flavors’?” After all, this was not a matter that [Yunyan] was able to hear and get. Because he used the ears born of his father and mother to vainly listen to the utterings of frogs, he was at a loss and did not know how to answer.

Yaoshan asked, “Since you first went on pilgrimage, how many years have you been cultivating the way?” [Yunyan] responded, “Twenty years.” Actually, although the ancients, when training for the sake of the way, did not

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1 able to hear and get (montoku su 聞得す). Above, it is said that if Yunyan had any genuine understanding, he would have raised a matter that “he himself had been able to hear and get” (mizukara kiki uru 自ら聞き得る), not one that he had merely “heard” (kiku 聞く).
waste a moment throughout the twelve periods of the day, the twenty years of the present case [of Yunyan] do look as if they were passed over in vain. Responding to this, Yaoshan said, “How will you deal with the birth and death that is before your eyes?” Truly, this is what beginners and latecomers should regard as the single great matter. “Impermanence is swift,” and the “matter of birth and death is great.” Even if you arouse the thought of bodhi, set off on pilgrimage, and fully adopt the appearance of one with a rectangular robe and round-shaven head, if you have not clarified the matter of birth and death and have not succeeded in the way of liberation, then you know nothing of the “secret matter for those in patched robes.” Thus, you do not get out of the cage of grasping in the three realms and find it difficult to escape from the old nest of birth and death. Really, it is as if you uselessly wear a patched robe and uselessly hold an alms bowl. Therefore, the ancients did not allow people even a momentary rest from their striving.

Although [Yaoshan] tried to moderate his own hands and feet1 when he questioned [Yunyan] in this way, Yunyan gave his mouth free rein and said, “There is no birth or death before my eyes.” Yet, if [Yunyan] had only sought and found the place of ease and joy in his own self, and had meticulously fulfilled the original purpose of his pilgrimage, then he could not have had such a viewpoint. Yaoshan asked, “How long were you with Baizhang?” He asked, [in other words.] “How many years have you been cultivating the way since you first went on pilgrimage?” Then [Yunyan] said, “twenty years.” Actually,2 although the ancients, when training for

1 tried to moderate his own hands and feet (shukyaku odayaka narashimen toshite 手脚穏かならしめんとして). The expression “hands and feet” refers to the sometimes harsh teaching methods of Chan/Zen masters.

2 Actually (jitsu ni 實に). The sentence that begins with this word is identical to one that appears earlier in this section, the only difference being that the expression “passed over” is written saka 差過 when it appears above and shaka 差過 when it appears here. Because the context in which the sentence occurs is also redundant, the repetition is indicative of some kind of inadvertent corruption of the text of the Shūmuchō edition of the Denkōroku.
the sake of the way, did not waste a moment throughout the twelve periods of the day, the twenty years of the present case [of Yunyan] do look as if they were passed over in vain. Therefore, [Yaoshan] instructed him, saying, “Twenty years.” Yaoshan said, “Twenty years with Baizhang, and still you have not rid yourself of vulgarity.”

Even if [Yunyan] had understood that “there is no birth or death,”1 or come to see that there is neither self nor other, such a viewpoint does not “gain consciousness of the original boss of one’s own self.”2 Indeed, he lacked the disposition to “let go his hands from the sheer cliff.”3 If you do not quickly

1 “there is no birth or death” (mu shōji 無生死). These are Yunyan’s own words, quoted above in the Japanese transcription of the Chinese original: “There is no birth or death before my eyes” (C. muqian wu shèng sī 前目前無生死; J. mokuzen ni shōji nashi 前目前に生死なし).

2 “gain consciousness of the original boss of one’s own self” (jiko honrai no kōbe wo shiki- toku 自己本來の頭を識得). This is a quotation, in Japanese transcription, of a saying found in the Extensive Record of Chan Master Hongzhi: 《宏智禪師廣錄》但知識自本來頭。 Just be conscious of the self’s original boss.

In another passage of the same text, Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (J. Wanshi Shōgaku; 1091–1157) says: 《宏智禪師廣錄》若識得本來頭。一切心皆是箇心。一切法皆是箇法。 If you gain consciousness of the original boss, all minds are this mind, and all dharmas are this dharma.

3 “let go his hands from the sheer cliff” (te wo dangai ni san suru 手を断崖に撒する). A quotation, in Japanese transcription, of words that appear in the following passage from the Extensive Record of Chan Master Hongzhi: 《宏智禪師廣錄》但莫推賢讓聖。如著衣喫飯。念念無異恩悟。心心不容染污。脫身空劫。撒手斷崖。透根塵窮頂底。孤明獨照。廓徹妙存。 Just do not yield to excellence or surrender to sageliness. Just like [Mazu’s saying] wear clothes and eat food,” from moment to moment have no other considerations, and from thought to thought do not harbor defilements. Release your body to the kalpa of emptiness; let go your hands from the sheer cliff. When you penetrate the sense faculties and their objects and reach the ultimate, it shines alone in solitary illumination: a permeating, wondrous existence.

A similar expression that occurs frequently in Chan/Zen literature is “let go the hands when hanging from a precipice.” Both mean to stop clinging to deluded thoughts and
“return your body to the kalpa of emptiness,” then this is still “not yet rid of vulgarity.” You still have not seen through deluded consciousness, and you still have not destroyed the cage that imprisons you. How could that not be pitied?

Thus, in order to make Yunyan hit upon matters in detail, Yaoshan questioned him a second and third time. However, Yunyan still lacked the capacity for perceiving and knowing. Even if he Yunyan acceded to Baizhang’s saying “apart from the six phrases,” that was still an “iron hammerhead without a hole for a shaft,” which did not amount to a set of guidelines. Even if this had served to cut off divergent paths of countless discrepancies, he would still have been unclear about the original luminosity of his own self. As for Yaoshan’s saying, “three thousand miles apart; that is wonderful, but that is entirely unrelated,” it again indicated that their face-to-face encounter seemed as if it had been of no use.

At this point, although Yunyan raised [the kōan] “Baizhang’s phrase upon leaving the hall,” he was still involving other people’s tongues, and “fall” into the freedom of realizing the emptiness of dharmas, which is a frightening prospect but liberating when accomplished.

1 “return your body to the kalpa of emptiness” (mi wo kūgō ni mawasu 身を空劫に回す). While not an exact match, this saying is very similar to one found in the Extensive Record of Chan Master Hongzhi: “release your body to the kalpa of emptiness” (C. tuoshen kongjie 脱身空劫; J. dasshin kūgō). That the sayings are related is evidenced by the fact that they both appear in conjunction with the phrase “let go your hands from the sheer cliff.” See previous note for the original Chinese passage.

2 seen through... destroyed (ha sezu... ha sezu 破せる... 破せず). In the original Japanese, the same verb — ha su 破す (to “break,” “destroy,” “expose,” “lay bare,” “see through”) — is used twice. The English translation differs here to match the objects of the verb, which are “deluded consciousness” and the “cage that imprisons.” However, it is suggested by the use of the same verb that the two are to be regarded as one and the same thing. That is to say, what (metaphorically) imprisons people is their own deluded consciousness.
had not himself broken through to a place of verification. Nevertheless, he
raised a comment [on the kōan] in this way and quickly came to present
our singular lineage style, which was not at all a deviant path. That is why
[Yaoshan] said: “Why didn’t you speak in such a way earlier? Today, be-
cause of you, I have been able to see my elder brother Huaihai.”

The meaning of [the part of the Root Case that reads] “the great assembly
was standing still, but he used his staff to suddenly chase and scatter them”
comes down to [Baizhang] signifying that, in reality, it is a matter of being
“independently liberated, relying on nothing.” There was no need for him
[Baizhang] to bother with any further testing of them. Nevertheless, if he
had simply raised the matter in that way, even if kalpas as numerous as
motes of dust were to go by, in the end it would be as if they had no capaci-
ty to get it. Therefore, in order to startle them, he called out in a loud voice,
“O great assembly!” [As the saying goes,] “If you hit the southern edge, it
moves the northern edge.” Thus, without realizing what they were doing,
they turned their heads. The place of awakening, in the end, is like coming
to nod in assent; it does not involve thinking. On that account [Baizhang]
said, “What is this?” Regrettably, Baizhang’s community of disciples did
not understand even a bit! In that place, nothing was said, but from far off
Yaoshan said, “Because of you, I have been able to see my elder brother.” In-
deed, from such a standpoint, when an ancient made a statement in a single
phrase, it was said that the “face-to-face encounter is complete.” This is also
similar to [the saying] “a thousand miles, the same wind,” and similar to1
“not a single hair of separation.” Thus [Yunyan] first sought instruction
from Baizhang, and then was able to climb Mount Yao, such that in the

1 similar to (nitari 似たり). The three aphorisms quoted here are “similar” in that they
are all metaphors for the close relationship that exists between Chan/Zen masters and
disciples when the latter understand the former and they have a “meeting of minds.”

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end there was no separation between master and disciple, and each was able to learn from the other.

If you accede to this standpoint, then not only will you have no doubts about the matter of your own self from vast kalpas past, but also, with a single glance you will see through the buddhas of the three times, the six generations of ancestral teachers, and patch-robed monks who have noses, and with a single jabbing remark you will puncture them. Quickly, you will have a face-to-face encounter with Yaoshan and Baizhang, and straight off, your eyes will meet with those of Yunyan and Daowu.

Now, how can I communicate this principle? Great assembly, do you wish to hear?

VERSE ON THE OLD CASE  頌古

A solitary boat, without rowing, advances in the moonlight; there is a turning of heads, but the duckweed along the old shore is not moved.

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1 patch-robed monks who have noses (u bikutei no nōsō 有鼻孔底的衲僧). To “have a nose,” in this context, means to understand what is essential. → nose of the patch-robed monk.

2 turning of heads (kaitō 回頭). A reference to the heads that turned when Baizhang called out, “O great assembly!”

3 duckweed (C. pin 鵝; J. ukikusa). A water grass that floats unrooted. In Chinese literature, a metaphor for: (1) casual acquaintances; (2) having no fixed abode; and (3) a wandering monk such as Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (J. Chūhō Myōhon; 1263–1323), a famous Chan master who sometimes lived on a small boat.

4 shore (C. an 岸; J. gan). In Buddhist literature, nirvāṇa is referred to as the other shore (C. bian 彼岸; J. higan), whereas samsāra is “this shore” (C. cian 此岸; J. shigan).

5 not moved (C. weiyao 未摇; J. miyō). That is to say, the weeds are not stirred up because the boat is not being rowed. When Baizhang called out, the monks of the great assembly turned their heads, but the attempt to startle them into awakening did not work: they remained unaffected along the “old shore” of samsāra.