

coffee cup, Ho talked about how frightening it had been to be at sea in a small boat. He said that, during a thunderstorm, a friend thought to spread out a nylon windbreaker and use it to collect rainwater for Ho's child, who otherwise would have died of thirst. Since then, I have heard of Vietnamese boat people, floating on the open ocean without food or water, who saw visions of Kannon, or Quan The Am Botat, in the air above them. These visions gave them hope that they would eventually reach a safe shore.

Through the mercy of Kannon, his mother's concern, and the servant messenger's skillful intervention, Ikkyu got through his crisis of grief and went on to be a famously eccentric Zen monk, poet, calligrapher, master of the tea ceremony, and frequenter of brothels. His body did not become food for the fish in Lake Biwa that day.

I discussed all this over lunch in a Korean restaurant in Oakland with my Dharma friend Jim Willems, who practices deeply with chronic pain, and who has had wide exposure to Dharma and other spiritual lineages. This was much more relaxing than going head-to-head in a tiny room with a Zen master waving a stick, as has happened in my past.

"The koan implies this question," Jim said, "*How were the fishes fed?*"

Perhaps the waters of Lake Biwa were cold and dark that day, and the fishes remained hungry. Or maybe it was sunny, and they rose cheerfully to the surface to gulp down mosquitoes. I was not there and I do not know. But I am glad that Ikkyu didn't jump, and I am happy he went instead to see his mother, and I imagine that she hugged him with two of Kannon's one thousand arms.



What would it be like if we saw a possible Kannon in every person we met, in every relative, in every dog or cat? Or in your own mother?

Senjo and Her Soul Are Separated

CHINA, FOLKTALE

SENJO WAS the beloved daughter of Chokan. In childhood she played with her cousin Ochu, and Senjo's father jokingly told them they were betrothed. They believed him and later fell in love. When her father told her she would marry another man, they were heartbroken.

Ochu left the village in a boat before the marriage. As he left, he saw a figure running along the riverbank, calling to him. It was Senjo. Joyfully, she joined him, and they traveled far away, where they married and had two children.

Five years went by, and Senjo longed to see her parents and ask their forgiveness. They traveled back to their village and Ochu went to her father, told him the story, and apologized for them both.

Chokan, astonished, asked Ochu, "What girl are you talking about?"

"Your daughter Senjo," replied Ochu.

Chokan said, "My daughter Senjo? Ever since you left, she's been sick in bed, unable to speak."

Then Ochu brought Senjo up from the boat. As they approached her parents' door, the Senjo who had been sick got up from her bed, smiling. When the two Senjos met, they merged into one.

Senjo said, "I saw Ochu going away, and that night I dreamed that I ran after his boat. But now I cannot tell which was really me—the one that went away in the boat, or the one that stayed at home."

Later, Zen Master Wuzu asked, "Senjo was separated from her soul. Which was the real Senjo?"

EIJUN LINDA RUTH CUTTS'S REFLECTION

"Senjo and Her Soul Are Separated" is a beloved Zen story from *The Gateless Gate* (Case 35). Every time I have brought this case up in a Dharma talk it seems to fully resonate with practitioners, especially with women. The listeners seem to be enthralled with this account of what happened to Senjo. What is it about this Tang dynasty folk tale, brought into the koan literature, that speaks to our life—that allows us to study ourselves and our practice more vividly, and to realize the teachings more intimately?

The conventional elements of the story mirror many of the situations that brought me and many women to practice. Like Senjo we may have grown up in circumstances in which we had little agency; where familial, religious, cultural, gender, and social pressures were strong and where meeting the prevailing expectations was conveyed as more important than anything else. Like Senjo, whose older sister had died, we may have been born into a family ecology with many challenges and intense karmic patterns. Like Senjo, we may have experienced great love, great loss, and deep disappointment. Conditioned by this difficult environment we try to relieve our pain in unskillful ways, resulting in feeling divided and distanced from our once lively self. Like the two Senjos unaware of each other—one drained of energy, sick in bed without speech; the other an active wife and mother, yet riven by contradiction and separation—eventually we begin longing to be whole—for something real, for our true home. Which one is the true Senjo?

The poem commentary on Case 35 by Wumen (Mumon) is:

The moon above the clouds is ever the same;
valleys and mountains are separate from each other.
All are blessed, all are blessed,
are they one or are they two?

The Dharma teachings on the nature of self pervade this story. Actions of body, speech, and mind that are based on ignorance, or the belief in a separate self, create more and more causes and conditions for suffering. When one practices, especially sitting still, one can reunite not only with a lost self of flowing energy, buoyancy, and active compassionate concern for oneself and others, but also with a fuller acknowledgment of shadow and delusion. The fruit of our practice and of integrating all parts of ourselves may be experienced as a blessing and a reprieve after a ghost-like existence. And yet, right from the start one hears the teachings of the emptiness of a separate self, an ungraspable nonabiding self—the compassionate clear-seeing of which relieves all suffering. Which is the true self?

Senjo, after five years living with her husband and children, found she was not at peace and longed for home. Her decision to leave her home, though understandable, had not been wholehearted, not complete. After following after our desires again and again, we find that this way of life does not satisfy. Understanding how *samsara* (the world of suffering and rebirth) works, coming back home, taking refuge in the practice of just sitting down and stopping, is itself peace. Senjo's longing to return and reunite with her family expresses the innermost longing to find true contentment, which comes only through realizing our true self.

The big surprise at the end is the discovery that there appear to be two Senjos. The koan asks us, "Which is the real Senjo?" When the two saw each other face to face, they smiled. And with that smile, closer and closer they moved toward each other and became one. This smile of recognition is the same as Buddha's successor Mahakassapa's smile when the World-Honored One on Vulture Peak held up a flower and winked. This was their transmission ceremony of nothing-to-transmit. Mahakassapa understood that the Buddha and he himself were not actually separated. Though we appear in different forms and colors, mountains and valleys, all phenomena are equal in the moonlight of their dependent coarising. Senjo's smiling and realizing "not one, not two" in her practice body is the way it has always been. Even if she

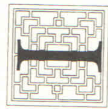
doesn't know it she is intimately living it. Even if we have not realized it we must practice it as realization itself.



The longing to be good, the longing to be true, the longing to come home, the longing to be whole . . . What longings call you now? And what is this "self" that can be so insistent, shimmering like a rainbow, arcing between the boundless sky and our tremendous passions? Are there times when life requires you to divide yourself in parts?

Iron Grindstone Liu's Feast

CHINA, NINTH CENTURY



RON GRINDSTONE LIU went to Master Guishan Lingyou. Guishan said, "Old cow, so you've come?"

The Iron Grinder said, "Tomorrow on Mount Wutai there's a big gathering and feast—are you going, teacher?"

Guishan lay down and sprawled out. The Iron Grinder immediately left.

PAT ENKYO O'HARA'S REFLECTION

A perfect *pas de deux*: This jewel of a koan reveals the intimacy and playfulness possible between two Zen masters, in this case a man and a woman. Iron Grindstone Liu, or "The Grinder," left home at an early age, entered a convent, and was ordained. After a few years, she left and wandered through China, seeking a teacher and challenging those who would engage her about the Dharma. She had encounters with various Zen teachers and eventually gained a reputation as a brilliant and devastating opponent in Dharma combat: she was said to be a steely stone who could grind up—and also sharpen—the wits of those whom she encountered.

Eventually, she studied with the revered Zen master Guishan and became his Dharma heir. At the time of this encounter, she had completed formal study and had settled on a mountain nearby. We can assume that she would visit her old teacher from time to time. The koan itself, appearing in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Case 24) and in the *Book of Serenity* (Case 60), reads like a classic *pas de deux*, with *entrée*,