

## **A DRAGON SINGS ON A WITHERED TREE**

With the assistance of the late Rev George Gatenby, and Rev John Paraskevopoulos, ten poems written in ancient Chinese by Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012) were compiled into a booklet entitled *“A Dragon sings on a Withered Tree”* (*Koboku Ryūgin*). All ten poems are presented in their original Chinese form, preceded by Japanese readings, and followed by a translation into English. Just one of those poetic pieces, *‘In Praise of Kannon’*, and original related text is featured below.

Rev Inagaki dedicates the collection *“to the memory of my father and mentor, Rev Zuiken Inagaki (1885-1981) and Mr. Harold Stewart, my teacher from Australia (1916-95)”*. DGR

### **EXTRACT FROM THE PREFACE OF IN PRAISE OF KANNON**

Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012)

*“It was not until my father Zuiken died in 1981 that I thought of composing a Chinese poem. When I saw him on his deathbed and marveled at the glorious scenery attending his cremation, I felt that I could not express my deep emotion in Japanese, whether in prose or in a waka poem. After some time, I found myself writing a poem in classical Chinese. I was amazed by the depth of my feelings that could be expressed in that way. Besides, I was able to follow the lingering pathos created by the mystical Chinese words.”*

This small collection is a classic of religious and philosophical truth expressed in Zen-Shin Buddhist terms that goes beyond the written or spoken word.

### **EXTRACT FROM THE AUTHORS NOTES ON IN PRAISE OF KANNON**

Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012)

It is stated in the Heart Sutra that when Kannon (Avalokeshvara) Budhisattva practiced deep Prajnaparamita, he realised that the five *skandas* (the five constituent elements of one's existence), beginning with form, were void. He realised that *rūpa* (form) was *shūnyatā* (voidness) and that *shūnyatā* was *rūpa*.

Additionally, he realised that the other elements, that is, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness, were equally void. He further realised that other elements, such as objects and other spheres of perception were also void.

## ***A DRAGON SINGS ON A WITHERED TREE***

The Mahayana asserts that all existing things are non-existent. If one realises the total negation of all existents, one gets rid of all attachments and attains Nirvana. This realisation is a reversal

of the general Hinayana (Theravada) theory that all *dharmas* (elements) do exist. Mahayana breaks this view and clarifies the truth of universal voidness. This reversal of the common-sense view brings to light the Mahayana teaching that nothing really exists.

Next, in the general Mahayana view, *bodisattvas* make vows of saving all beings. Without clinging to the earlier realisation of *shūnyata*, they plunge into the realms of samsara and undertake the work of removing causes of suffering. This shows that *shūnyata* is *rūpa*.

In the advanced Mahayana teachings, such as Tendai, *dharmas* are seen in the light of absolute reality as well as *shūnyatā*. Here nothing is negated or abandoned. Things are accepted as they are.

In other words, one perceives *rūpa* as *rūpa*.



My one and only personal meeting with Rev Zuio H. Inagaki, Kyoto 2012

***A DRAGON SINGS ON A WITHERED TREE***

**IN PRAISE OF KANNON**

Renditions in Chinese calligraphy Romanized Japanese by Rev  
Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012). Piece dated 12<sup>th</sup> December 1982.

觀音讚  
大悲救世觀世音  
行深般若色即空  
大願度生空即色  
如如實實色即色

**KANNON-SAN**

**DAIHI KUSE KANZEON GYÔJIN**

**HANNYA SHIKI SOKU KÛ DAIGAN**

**DASHÔ KEN SOKU SHIKI**

**NYONYO JITSU JITSU**

**SHIKI SOKU SHIKI**