

Preface

This is a translation of Zanmu's page from the Honchou Shinsenkidan (本朝神仙記伝, published I believe in 1928), first put through DeepL to give me a general idea and then extensively edited to properly match the original text as well as my ability allows.

I have confidence in both my general Japanese language abilities and my ability to translate that into understandable English, however I have no prior experience with Classical Japanese and as such there are bound to be some mistranslations. As best I could I have noted the parts I was especially unsure of in square brackets.

The following text is broken into two parts. The first part is a biography of the man named Zanmu, which is really just a collection of anecdotes and places he was said to be active in. He is said to have died around 1576, however the text implies he only faked his death. The second part is a critical section which lists sources, provides additional anecdotes and sightings, gives additional information for elements which appeared in the main biography, and at the end gives a general outline of his whole life based on all the different sources the author had read. This final outline says that Zanmu was actually born in 585 (or 552-553 if you go off the date of Emperor Kinmei's reign) and became an immortal hermit. Sometime after his supposed death in 1567, the author surmises he ascended to the Pure Land (Senkai).

The author was, as you might guess, a Taoist, or at least wrote the Honchou Shinsenkidan (A collection of biographies about Taoist immortals) in support of Taoism. However, despite the beginning of the biography saying that Zanmu was not a monk (Buddhist priest), it says many times later that he served as Head Priest at various Temples. Perhaps the author wanted to emphasise Zanmu's mystical qualities which transcend those of a mere Buddhist priest.

There are some connections with the Nippaku Zanmu in Touhou, such as him faking his death which lines up with Zanmu going to hell of her own accord while alive. The episode with the Oni-shaped (鬼形, like 鬼形獣, as in the Japanese title for WBaWC) creature brings to mind images of Orin and Chiyari (some even speculate Chiyari may partly be inspired by this anecdote). Zanmu's encounter with a man named Mumu (無々) and their respective poems bring to mind Zanmu's connection with nothingness. Zanmu's identity as a Taoist immortal may help make sense of the curse placed on Enoko for eating Zanmu's flesh - after all a wolf becoming long-lived after eating an immortal's flesh just seems like straightforward cause and effect (though it is also possible that the curse is related to Zanmu's ability to manipulate nothingness instead, or even to Zanmu's status as a kind of Buddha which the game hints at). And Zanmu's death poem or ode, if I have translated it at all correctly, seems to me like the primary inspiration for ZUN writing Zanmu as a human-turned-oni that fell to hell of their own accord.

It is worth mentioning that Zanmu's name in this text is 残夢 instead of 残無 as it is in Touhou. The 夢 of Zanmu's historical name is the same 夢 in Reimu's name, 靈夢, which means dream. I don't think it's a coincidence that their names are so similar (by which I mean that ZUN meant for us to see this connection and draw meaning from it), as UDoALG makes it clear that Zanmu thinks Reimu is just like how she was as a human.

To end, it might interest some readers that Zanmu's historical name, when given a rough translation, means 'Lingering Dream', or even 'Unfinished Dream', like the name of Touhou 19: "Unfinished Dream of All Living Ghost". It is up to the reader to interpret from this what they may.

Research of the Honchou Shinsenkiden (35) - Zanmu -

Zanmu called himself Nippaku, and he also called himself Shufu Doujin [秋風道人, Taoist of the Autumn Wind]. He was neither a monk nor a layman. Some say that he was Hitachibo Kaison. He is said to have been a madman [eccentric], and to have taken Ikkyu as a friend, and to have attained the essence of Zen through him.

He would sometimes talk with others about the Genryaku and Bunji periods, and would say, "Yoshitsune did that," or "Benkei did that," or "a certain person did that," or "a certain person fought with the Taira clan in a certain place," as if he was someone who had witnessed these events. When people doubted and questioned him, he replied, "I have forgotten this."

Zanmu once lived at Jisso-ji Temple in Aizu, where he is said to have been the 22nd Head Priest of the temple, called Zen Master Torin Keigo.

Zanmu had been Head Priest in various places before this, but in the middle of the Tenbun era he came from Ungon-ji Temple in Nasu to Jisso-ji Temple to live there. When he first arrived, there was a man called Mumu, and Zanmu and a man named Sase visited him and met Mumu. Zanmu recited a poem, "Though one says 'nothing, nothing', when I come to look I see that was its original form," and Mumu also recited, "'Nothing, nothing' is the reason for my form, it is the beginning of that which never is." Thus Zanmu quietly said, "This is the first time since the day after Soga's night attack that we have met." Mumu is said to have heard this and nodded his head. [I have no confidence in my translation of their poems]

When asked about his age, he replied, "One hundred and fifty or sixty." When he was questioned, he replied, "I have forgotten." [I think his age could also be translated as 560 here I'm honestly not sure]

Zanmu often knew of events before they happened. One day, a thief came to take some money that was left in the storeroom and tried to take them by punching through the wall. Zanmu knew this and called his attendant, saying, "A thief is now piercing my storeroom to take my money. Go quickly and give him the money, but don't let him pierce the storehouse." The attendant went to see, and it was just as Zanmu said. The attendant turned to the thief and said, "I must give you the money, but do not pierce the wall." When the thief heard this, he fled in shame. When the attendant returned and reported the affair, Zanmu scolded him, saying, "Why didn't you give him the money?"

The monks Tenkai and Matsuyuki also met Zanmu. Zanmu always ate rice with Kuko (Chinese matrimony vine). Tenkai also ate it. Tenkai told others, "Zanmu's longevity is due to the fact that he does not do things quickly, and that he takes Kuko."

There is also a man in Aizu who polishes mirrors, and he is called Fukusenjin. When he polished the mirror, he would laugh and talk all day long, regardless of his wages. He was not fond of questions from others, and when someone said, "Having polished for many years what does a person do, so that in this way their polishing is so clumsy?" he replied, "I polish with my whole heart [the Japanese

literally means ‘free from thought’]”. Zanmu looked at Fukusenjin and said, "He is Yoshitsune's banner bearer," and Fukusenjin told others, "Zanmu is Hitachibo.”

There is a mound in Ugyu village, and it is called Shungaku Mound because it is the place where Shungaku was buried. The mound by itself burned for several months, and people saw this as very unusual. When Zanmu went there to burn incense and chant chants, the fire was immediately extinguished, but the mound is said to still exist today.

Again one day, when Zanmu went to officiate at a funeral service, a storm of rain and thunder broke out, and an Oni-shaped [鬼形] creature came riding on a fire chariot and tried to snatch away the coffin. Zanmu raised his voice and said, "Forgive this,"[I'm not confident this is the correct translation of Zanmu's words here] and the demon suddenly vanished, and the night dawned.

And so, Zanmu passed away on the 29th day of the 3rd month in the 4th year of Tensho. Acting in a way never done before he set up his own tablet, inscribed the date, and wrote his name and other information on it, and then gathered the people together in his room and wrote an ode to his memory, saying, "Fallen in the ceaseless hell, the offence of the five cardinal sins is heard like thunder, under cries is a blind blackness, and the eye of death opens.”「墮在無間、五逆聞雷、鳴下瞎黧、死眼豁開」[This Ode is very difficult to translate, I think only the first two parts may be correct]

He then threw his brush away and entered the coffin and became silent, but after some time and the Bunroku era had arrived his disciples opened a hole in the coffin to look, only to find it empty with no remains.

Later, another person met Zanmu at Miho no Matsubara and asked him about the past of Genpei. Zanmu replied, "By now as no one has seen these things with me no one can corroborate my words but, in truth, Yoshitsune was an ugly man while Benkei was beautiful. As such Yoshitsune's tale wherever it is told reverses what was beautiful and what was ugly. There are many such cases like this, so it is impossible to talk about them.” It is said that even in Echigo there are people who have met Zanmu there.

According to a legend, after the Genpei Rebellion, Hitachibo Kaison fled from the Mutsu region while disguising himself and hid in Mt. Fuji. For several days he didn't eat a grain of rice, and when he was about to die from starvation he looked up and saw atop a stone something like pith candy. This thing he took and ate, and suddenly his spirit felt refreshed and his body as light as hair. He did not think of eating or drinking again. After more than four hundred years of age passed, a person met him. He said, "You must attain the Way and become an immortal hermit.” [I think this last line is translated wrong but I'm not sure, it might be saying instead, “As such it is said that you must attain the Way and become an immortal hermit.” I just can't figure out the sense in which this line is written.]

Itsuo says that this biography is based solely on the "Aizu Kanseki Monroshi" and "Jinja Kou" from the beginning until when it says, "When people doubted and questioned him, he replied, "I have forgotten this.”” The next part of the story, "Zanmu once lived at Jisso-ji Temple in Aizu," until the part about the ugliness and beauty of Yoshitsune and Benkei being reported in a contrary way, are taken from the "Aizu

Fudoki" under Jisso-ji Temple, and the fact that he met Mumu and Fukusenjin is also mentioned in the "Hagiwara Zuishitsu". The fact that Zanmu knew of something before it happened is also mentioned in "Shin Kojidan", and his encounter with the monks Tenkai and Matsuyuki is also mentioned in "Jinja Koh" and "Ou Kan'ato Kikinroshi" in roughly the same manner.

The meeting between Zanmu and Fukusenjin is also mentioned in the "Shinzoku Kojidan", and the story about the Shungaku Mound is mentioned in the "Aizu Kuji Zakkou". The episode at the funeral where he repels an Oni is mentioned in the "Kojidan", and the events before his death when he prepared his own tablet and wrote his own ode, and after his death the coffin was found empty, these again were mentioned in the "Aizu Kuji Zakkou". The fact that Yoshitsune and Benkei's ugliness and beauty were passed down to the world in an inverted manner is mentioned in "Kojidan", and that there were people who met Zanmu in Echigo Province after his death is mentioned in "Hagiwara Zuishitsu". The rest of the story from "According to a legend" onwards is based entirely on Mototsune Yoshihara's "Fugakuki".

In addition to this, the "Aizu Shikake Gappou" says, "There is one named Zanmu, who called himself Shufu Doujin. According to the legend, he often talked about the Juei and Genryaku periods, which means that he was the vassal of Yoshitsune, Hitachibo." Further, in the "Yufo Meisho Oyaku" it is written, "There is a hermit on Togakushi Mountain in Hanishina County, Shinano Province, whose name is Shufu Doujin, commonly called Hitachibo Kaison. Around the time of the Kenkyu period village lumberjacks sometimes saw him." According to this, Zanmu can be seen to have lived in Togakushi as well.

The Shoso Zasshu also states, "On August 9, Kansei 5, he left Mito and went to Yasu Shiobara to take a bath and returned on the 26th. In a text from a man of the Eiroku period it is said that Hitachibo Kaison, calling himself Zanmu, stayed at a temple in Shiobara called Myouun-Ji [I don't think this sentence translation is right]. It is said that Kaison became a hermit and called himself Zanmu, and that he is in this area. There is also an oblong plaque with two characters of Zanmu's calligraphy, '東山,' at a large Zen temple called Reigon-Ji in Nasu."

In the "Aizu Fudoki," which is taken from the main biography, it is written that "Zanmu was Head Priest at Ungon-Ji Temple in Nasu until he came to Jisso-Ji Temple in Aizu." There is no doubt that this Ungon-ji is the same temple as Reigon-Ji, as the 霊 and 曇 characters [in their original Japanese names], having similar forms, were mistaken for each other.

The calligraphy of Zanmu at Myouun-Ji Temple in Shiobara and Reigen-Ji Temple in Nasu, etc., must have been written by Zanmu, who served as Head Priest in various places and wrote at these temples at one time or another.

In a book titled "Meike Fukiden" it is written, "Zanmu, whose name is Hozan. He was the Chief Priest of Fukuhara-Ji temple in Hitachi Province during the Eiroku period. He died at the age of 139." There must be many other [stories like this] outside these texts.

Indeed in "Inuhariko" by Shaku Ryoyi it is also written that, "around the time of the Genki and Tensho periods, a man named Shimaoka Yajiro from Settsu climbed Mt. Fuji and met Hitachibo Kaison - Zanmu, and heard stories from Zanmu as if they were out of Yoshihara Mototsune's

"Togoku-ki". And on top of this he was offered Koku with rice." Again, in the "Kaitoku Zasshi," from publications No. 119 to No. 122, under the title of "The Origin of the Jisenzuka Mound in the Mountains of Oshu Shirakawa," it is written, "In the Jokyo Era of Emperor Reigen, a farmer found a cave to the side of his arable land in a mountain village in Shirakawa, which had been revealed due to collapses caused by heavy rain. Inside the hole was a small hall, and inside the hall there was an old man who appeared to be over sixty years old, wearing a black robe, and he was also known as Hitachibo Kaison, who asked and received all manner of questions."

Such kinds of things are said about him, but if Zanmu was originally a completely different person who had acquired the Way of the Dao, and so was able to appear and disappear as he pleased, and left behind various miracles, it should not be surprising if there are such differences in his legends.

Having come to this point there is something more that must be said. It is about the Chinese matrimony vine, Kuko, which Zanmu is said to have been fond of and always ate. In the "Sacred Medicine Scrolls" written by the late Chisen, it is said to be called "Hermit's Staff," "Seioubou Staff," "Tensei," "Chikotsu," and "Kuko," and among the herbs of grass and trees it is said to be equal to "Jutsu," "Ousei," "Tenmontou," "Bukuryou" and "Jiuou" as the most important herbal medicines. Even among them, the fact that this Koku is called "Hermit's staff," "Seioubou Staff," "Tensei," "Chikotsu," and even "Kyakurou," is enough to understand that it is the most beneficial medicine.

Furthermore, the book "Honso Mousen" mentions the effects of Koku as follows: "It makes the ears and eyes clear, soothes the mind, gives resistance to cold and heat and lengthens life, strengthens the marrow, makes the bones healthy, strengthens the muscles, nourishes yin so that yang will not decline, and stimulates yang to always rise up." It is no wonder then, that Zanmu and Tenkai ate it readily and obtained long life.

To say further, "Hermit's Staff" and "Seioubou Staff" are names for the stem, "Chikotsu" is the name of the root, and "Tensei" is the name of the fruit. They are all effective when used, and so Koku should be called the easiest Sacred Medicine to benefit from.

Shufu Doujin, or Hitachibo Kaison, was originally born in the fourteenth year of Emperor Kinmei (585). When he again appeared to the world it was as Hitachibo Kaison, and after Yoshitsune's death he became a mountain man called "Seiri-Senjin" in the hermitage of Mount Reika in Kumano, which can be seen in the "Tale of Yuukai". However for some reason he appeared again in the world as Zanmu, after which he returned to his hermitage, and at last ascended from an earthly immortal to a heavenly immortal, and was transferred up to the Chinese Pure Land [Senkai].