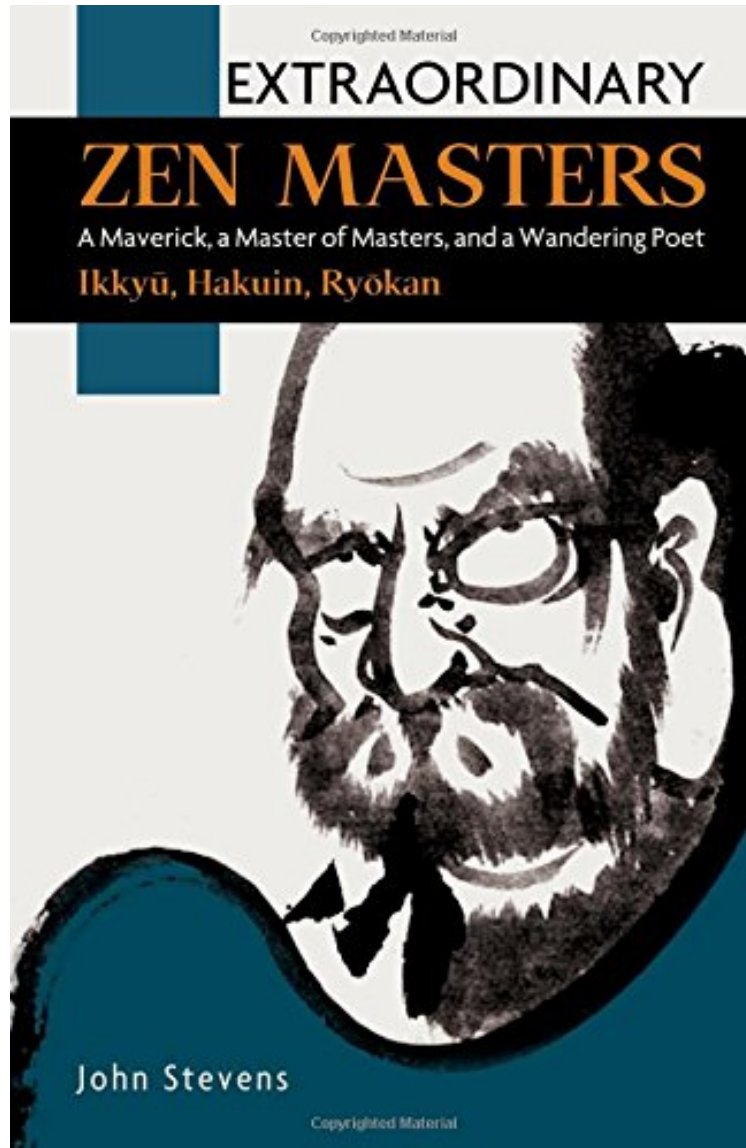


(Read now) Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet

Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet

John Stevens

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#1552592 in Books 2013-02-28Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.99 x .34 x 5.24l, .40 #File Name: 1626549923160 pagesShips from Vermont | File size: 39.Mb

John Stevens : Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. If you don't like Ikkyu, you just don't get it.By Richard L.

RankinVery good little biographies of three zen "masters".3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. IkkyuBy Harvest MountainAn informative and well written book, with interesting anecdotes and insight into the famous Japanese Zen masters Ikkyu and Hakuin.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Only the bestBy Terry MacDonaldExtraordinary Zen Masters is a slim paperback devoted to the three zen masters, Ikkyu, Hakuin, and Ryokan. Iconoclastic, funny, and artistically vital, these men represent that which drew many of us Westerners to Zen in the first place. John Stevens gives a neat, concise compilation of the traditional biographies of these men, culled from traditional biographical materials, autobiographical primary sources, and scholarly literature.What's not to like? Only for the description of Ikkyu did I want for a bit more description on who he really was. The brevity of the text leaves out some aspects of history, such as periods of sectarianism, that help you understand these men even more. Overall - this is a great resource! I keep it handy for inspiration.

Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet tells the life stories of Ikkyu (1394-1481), Hakuin (1686-1768), and Ryokan (1758-1831). Each was an outstanding figure who manifested Zen in his own way. Ikkyu was unconventional and uncompromising, a relentless enemy of the sham and hypocrisy that pervaded the religious circles of his day. Hakuin underwent a lengthy and strenuous apprenticeship to become a Master Teacher of Zen, training hundreds of disciples and insisting that they endure the same trials and surmount the same massive barriers that he had. Ryokan, in contrast, was a gentle, self-effacing recluse who never became an abbot but lived in quiet hermitages, savoring nature and writing poetry. All three were artists of the highest order, employing brush, ink, and paper as a means of transmitting Zen teachings and creating unique works of art. These are three of the greatest Zen masters in history--each unique, each an outstanding artist, and each a teacher of future generations. The biographies of these three men, in one volume, constitute an enlivening reading experience, full of insight on leading a meaningful life. John Stevens lived in Japan for thirty-five years, where he was a professor of Buddhist studies at Tohoku Fukushi University in Sendai. Stevens is a widely respected translator, an ordained Buddhist priest, a curator of several major exhibitions of Zen art, and an aikido instructor. He has authored more than thirty books and is one of the foremost Western experts on aikido, holding a ranking of 7th dan Aikikai. Stevens has also studied calligraphy for decades, authoring the classic Sacred Calligraphy of the East. Other John Stevens titles that are likely to be of interest include The Philosophy of Aikido, and The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei.

"... a highly readable and entertaining book." -- John Andrew Taylor, Tokyo Today"... communicates a highly nuanced image of Japanese Zen in its most eccentric form." -- Journal of Developing Societies"The portraits of these three Zen masters are excellently drawn." -- John Haylock, The Japan Times"These three men come alive in direct, colloquial speech that is free of archaisms and cliches." -- Joseph LaPenta, The Daily YomiuriAbout the AuthorA professor of Buddhist studies and Aikido instructor at Tohoku Fukushi University in Sendai, Japan, John Stevens is the author of more than thirty books on Aikido, Buddhism, Zen and Asian culture. Previous works include The Philosophy of Aikido and Three Budo Masters.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Ikkyu Sokun (1394-1481) [the opening pages of the chapter] Ikkyu was born at sunrise on the first day of 1394. Although rumored to be the son of the young emperor Go-Komatsu (1377-1433), at birth Ikkyu was registered as a commoner. His mother, a lady-in-waiting at the court and a favorite of Go-Komatsu, had been unjustly ousted from the palace by the machinations of the jealous empress and her supporters. Consequently, the circumstances surrounding Ikkyu's birth were humble, although his earliest biography states that even as an infant he "bore the signs of a dragon and the marks of a phoenix." At the age of five, Ikkyu was sent to be an acolyte at Ankoku-ji, a Zen temple in Kyoto. There he would be assured of a good education, as well as protection from scheming court officials and suspicious generals. This was important in medieval Japan since even the bastard son of the emperor--given the right circumstances and powerful backers--could claim the throne. At Ankoku-ji, Ikkyu was drilled in Buddhist scriptures and the classics of China and Japan. A brilliant student whose genius was recognized by all, Ikkyu was also a quick-witted and mischievous child. Here are a few anecdotes from his days as a precocious acolyte. Not long after entering the temple, the abbot ordered Ikkyu to extinguish the candles on the altar before turning in for the night. When Ikkyu returned to pronounce the act done, the abbot asked, "By the way, how did you put the candles out?" "By blowing," Ikkyu replied. "Never do that," the abbot scolded him. "The Buddha is holy and human breath is dirty. Extinguish the flames by waving your hand or using a fan." The following morning, when the abbot entered the main hall for the morning service, he noticed Ikkyu chanting away with his back to the altar. "What are you doing, you little fool!" the abbot exploded. "You told me that human breath was dirty and should not be directed toward images of the Buddha. How can we chant without breathing?" "This is different," the nonplussed abbot mumbled, and he ordered Ikkyu to turn around. Ikkyu, though, was irrepressible. The abbot was very fond of a certain candy and kept the treasured sweet in a jar in his room, warning Ikkyu and the other temple boys, "This candy is beneficial for grown-ups but if a child eats it he will die immediately." Ikkyu was not fooled for a second, and as soon as the abbot was away he emptied the jar and shared the contents with his friends. Ikkyu then broke one of the tea bowls in the abbot's room. When the abbot returned he found Ikkyu in tears. "While cleaning your honored room," Ikkyu sobbed convincingly, "I accidentally broke this precious bowl. To

make amends for my terrible misdeed, I swallowed some of the poisoned candy. Nothing happened so I took all of it, sure that it would finish me off as you said it would. I didn't die, unfortunately, so please forgive me." Another time, one of the other acolytes accidentally broke the abbot's favorite tea bowl while cleaning his quarters. Terrified of the abbot's fury, the acolyte pleaded with the resourceful Ikkyu to get him out of the jam. "Leave it to me," Ikkyu reassured him. When the abbot returned to the temple, Ikkyu met him at the entrance hall. "Master," Ikkyu said softly, "you have often taught us that everything that is born must die, and whatever possesses material form will eventually perish." "Yes," the abbot responded. "Those are the inescapable realities of life." "Master, I have bad news for you," Ikkyu said sadly. "It was time for your favorite tea bowl to die."