Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

This volume presents the poet イッケユ 佐君 (1394-1481), a Zen monk of the Rinzai school in Japan. The main body of the work consists of translations from the Kyōunshū 狂雲集 "Crazy Cloud Anthology," a collection of Ikkyū's Chinese poems. These poems touch upon many subjects, such as the whole of Zen literature, the Mahāyanā canonical texts, Japanese literature, particularly the Nō plays of Ikkyū's own time, and the classics of Chinese poetry and history. There is fairly ample biographical information about Ikkyū but very little textual criticism and commentary. This relative lack is basically due to the very subjective nature of the poetry itself. Ikkyū's originality tends to make for obscurity, and elucidation becomes a thorny problem indeed. Thus it is no wonder that even in Japan few scholars have attempted to write commentaries for these poems. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt at translating into English and commenting on a sizeable number of poems from the Kyōunshū. My translations, however, have suffered both from the inherent difficulty of the poetry and the lack of textual commentary to rely on. Consequently, my translations of many poems must be regarded as only tentative.

Ikkyū's poetry is of special interest because it is so unusual within the context of traditional Japanese poetry. Japanese poetry has been conventionally associated with a contemplative appreciation of nature, delicate and restrained emotions, suggestion rather than statement, and a subtle sense of nuance, qualities which are rather constant throughout the development of the uta 詩歌, renga 連歌 and haiku 俳句. It is thus with some interest
that one greets a poet like Ikkyū in whose poetry very different qualities are present. Ikkyū's poems seldom seem to be the product of quiet reflection; his poems have the quality of being written in the heat of the moment; he boldly expresses strong emotions, defiance, anger, passion, remorse, love. Ikkyū often surprises us with expressions that go against the poetic conventions of his time. The "wind in the pines" has always been considered to be "musical" in traditional Japanese poetry, but Ikkyū says it "grates upon my ears." Again, in traditional Japanese poetry, almost all love poems deal either with the expectant aspect of love, waiting for a lover, longing for a lover, the sad aspect of love, enforced parting, or rejection. By contrast, many of Ikkyū's poems exalt consummated and fulfilled love. Because of his erudition, Ikkyū's poetry also tends to be quite intellectual; many poems would lean toward the extremely abstract, were it not for his strong personal voice which is ever-present. In short, Ikkyū's poetry is very individualistic in a culture which has never set a high store on individuality. Thus Ikkyū adds a new dimension to our conception of Japanese poetry.

Ikkyū is well known as a colorful figure in Japanese history. Legends that grew up around "Ikkyū san" in the Tokugawa period have been passed on to succeeding generations for entertainment's sake so that even today almost everyone knows at least one amusing anecdote about this eccentric monk. Very few people, however, know about Ikkyū's poetry.

There are two main reasons for Ikkyū's obscurity as a poet. The first reason is that due to the high number of poems about love-making, brothels and sake shops, the Kyōunshū, in particular, was kept as a restricted manuscript until very recent times. The second reason is that he wrote his most important work in kambun 漢文, that is Chinese. It may seem odd that a Japanese writer should choose to write in Chinese rather than his native tongue but historical explanations will make this appear less so.
Japan had no system of writing before contact with China, thus it was only natural that people should learn to write in Chinese, indeed, at the time of the first contact, the ability to read and write Chinese constituted the only literate education possible. Even after a phonetic system of writing had evolved from the use of Chinese characters, still a greater part of any person's education consisted of learning to read and write Chinese. This was true right up to the Tokugawa period. Thus, a great number of Japan's gifted and intelligent men wrote in Chinese. This was particularly true in the Buddhist community. It will be remembered that the first contacts between China and Japan were through the medium of Buddhist missionaries and for many centuries Buddhism remained the vehicle for bringing Chinese learning to Japan. In the Tokugawa period, however, a movement against Chinese language and learning gathered momentum with the great scholar Motoori Norinaga. He was the first scholar in Japan to apply himself to things purely Japanese, his great work being the elucidation of the earliest Japanese history, the Kojiki, on the basis of which he drew conclusions about Japanese language and Japanese sensibility. He too was the first to claim the uta or waka and its related forms as the only true Japanese poetry, all the poetry written in Chinese being only imitations. He also criticized Buddhism for being a Chinese religion and thus unsuitable for the Japanese soul which found its true fulfillment in Shintō. These ideas caught on and spread quickly, especially when Japanese identity was newly threatened by confrontation with the West. Thus, by the time Western scholars became interested in Japanese literature, it was a firmly entrenched idea that the only true Japanese literature was that written in Japanese. In poetry, this meant the uta, renga and haiku. So it is that the overwhelming number of translations of Japanese poetry into Western languages has been of these forms. This, coupled with the decline among Japanese people of the ability to read Chinese after the
opening to the West and the necessary rush to acquire Western learning, has removed the enormous store of Japanese literature written in Chinese farther and farther away from the reach of most people in Japan as well as in the West. Western interest in Zen and other forms of Buddhism has, however, initiated some work in the rediscovery of kambun literature. Such is the case with the present work, for it was my own interest in Zen and Buddhism in general that led me to choose Ikkyū's poems as a subject for translation.

It should be noted here that Ikkyū did not write all his work in Chinese. There is much material in Japanese attributed to him, and while some of it may be spurious, much of it is probably Ikkyū's. Among the kana (written in Japanese syllabic script) works attributed to Ikkyū in the Bussho Kaisetsu Daijiten are Gaikotsu Mizu Kagami, Futari Hibikuni, Ikkyū Kana Hōgo, Ikkyū Dōka. The subject of all these works is, of course, Zen. Ichikawa Hakugen says that "although kana works on Zen were not few before Ikkyū, he must be recognized as the master of the popularization of Zen [through kana works]." As the elucidation of Ikkyū's kana writings is a whole subject in itself, I have limited myself to these brief remarks. The reader may refer to the section in Ichikawa's book Ikkyū that deals with Ikkyū's idea of Zen as revealed in his kana works.