



Ikkyu: Crow With No Mouth: 15th Century Zen Master

Stephen Berg

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When Zen master Ikkyu Sojun (1394-1481) was appointed headmaster of the great temple at Kyoto, he lasted nine days before denouncing the rampant hypocrisy he saw among the monks there. He in turn invited them to look for him in the sake parlors of the Pleasure Quarters. A Zen monk-poet-calligrapher-musician, he dared to write about the joys of erotic love, along with more traditional Zen themes. He was an eccentric and genius who dared to defy authority and despised corruption. Although he lived during times plagued by war, famine, rioting, and religious upheaval, his writing and music prevailed, influencing Japanese culture to this day.

Stephen Berg is the Editor and founder of *American Poetry Review*.

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