

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI - AN SAYS

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY When the Buddha was born, he took seven steps. Gazing about him in every direction, he raised his right hand and pointed to heaven, and dropped his left hand and pointed to the earth. He said, "Between earth and heaven I am the one to be most revered."

This passage is always used on the Buddha's birthday, celebrated April eighth in Japan. Of course the nature of this description is religious; it is also symbolically stated. To us this passage is very interesting. In detail, it is written:

This is my last incarnation.
I must attain the highest enlightenment.
Among devas and manus
I am the one to be most revered.

A Zen novice said to his master, "I can't understand that young infant's saying: 'I am the one between heaven and earth to be most revered.' How could he say that?" The master answered, "I'll show you how he said that. Wa-a-ah! Wa-a-ah!"

Well, there is no other commentary. The commentary is "Wa-a-ah!" Nothing is left. Why is he the one to be most revered? From the Zen standpoint we don't have to explain. The answer is "Wa-a-ah!"

Who is this one who made such a monstrous cry? Is it god or man, deva or manu? You ask any baby, not necessarily Sakyamuni Buddha, but any baby, "Are you deva or manu?" He will answer you: "Wa-a-ah!" That is a true word. You speak words which are not true, but infants speak the true word.

From a lecture November 18, 1935

SPRING Spring comes in silence. The tree buds do not announce anything to anyone. They come in silence. When you attain enlightenment, your mind doesn't speak to you, doesn't say, "Here I am an enlightened mind." You cannot say a word. It comes in silence. No one knows about it. But you know.

A SOTO-SHU MONK

Recently I had a visit from a young Soto-shu monk.

His father was a temple priest in Shizuoka province and he had studied English in the Foreign Language School in Tokyo. He had had fifteen months of practice at Soji-ji, the Soto-shu headquarters temple outside Tokyo. Now he had returned to his native place to assist his father at the family temple and to teach English and French in the local high-school. He was about twenty-five. Since he had been at Soji-ji, I asked about his discipline and practice there so you could know how Soto-shu monks are trained. I shall describe to you what he said.

The monastery, which is attached to the headquarters at Soji-ji in much the same way as Daitoku-ji Sodo is attached to Daitoku-ji headquarters, is under the direction of a *Kansu* or *Roshi*, a *Yaku-Riyo*, or head-teacher, and a *Vice-Yaku-Riyo*, or assistant-teacher. When a monk goes to apply for admission, he wears the traditional Zen monk's costume, sits outside the monastery door for some time, then is permitted to enter and spends a week of practicing zazen and reading sutras night and day without ceasing, only breaking this practice to eat.

Then the monk enters the meditation hall. For the first three months his work is only to meditate and to practice striking the bells for services. After that he begins his regular routine. This is as follows:

The monks get up at 4 a.m. in winter, 3 a.m. in summer. They practice zazen two hours in the sodo. Then they go to the hondo (the main building of a Buddhist temple) where they have a service and sutra reading which lasts an hour and a quarter. Then there is breakfast, rice gruel, tea and pickles, as in Rinzai Zen. After breakfast they clean the temples and the grounds for an hour and a half. At 8 a.m. they go into the class-rooms where they study Chinese poetry, the *goroku* and *soroku*--the writings of the old masters, mostly those of Dogen, the founder of Soto Zen in Japan, and Keizan, the third patriarch of Soto Zen in Japan and the founder of Soji-ji. They study the language only, that is Chinese language, not the philosophy or doctrines. When they study the *goroku* and *soroku* they wear *kesa*, that is the large robe over the shoulder. When they study poetry they wear *rakusa* (an apron-like vestment). Teachers lecture to them on these subjects.

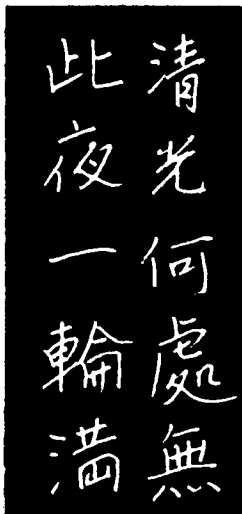
At 11 a.m. they go to the hondo where they are apt to find believers who have come to worship at the Butsuden (hall of images) or their ancestors. For these country people they read sutras or perform little services.

Lunch is at 12 o'clock, and of rice and vegetables. From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. they go again to the hondo and perform services for visiting believers. Some days they are very busy with this, others not busy at all.

Supper is at 5 p.m., again rice gruel. From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. they receive training in sutra reading from the head monk. From 8 to 9 they practice zazen, and at 9 they go to bed.

What sanzen (Zen study) they have takes place during the zazen peri-

CAT'S YAWN, p. 3b, says: "Zenrin Kushu" (lit. "Zen-wood: Verse Collection"), which we have here translated as "Zenrin Collection," is a collection of phrases, verses and poems of varying length found in Chinese literature. This little book is the constant companion of the Zen Buddhist monk, for in it he is sure to find expressed in poetical fashion the identical spiritual experience which he himself has attained. Such verses are presented to the Roshi as final proof of the understanding of a koan.



*Kono yo ichirin miteri
Seiko izure no tokoro nika nakaran?
Kido roku, 8*

Tonight the moon is full.
What place
Untouched by this clear light?

od. Usually it is limited to Monday. Then the monks who wish to do so go to the Kansu's room. If he is busy another teacher will take his place. There is no compulsory sanzen. The monk is not given a koan, but he may ask the Kansu about questions that trouble him. For example, he may ask about a koan, such as the "MU" koan. The Kansu will talk to him about the koan, answer his questions, and then the monk goes away and thinks about what the Kansu has told him. This is called *dokusan*, this interview, I mean. *Dokusan* means "poison interview."

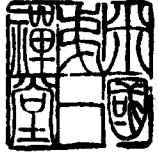
On Sundays the lay-disciples come to practice zazen, but their practice is held in a building separate from that of the monks.

I asked about the principles of Soto Sect. I will give them to you in the young monk's exact words which I took down as he spoke them. "We are Buddhas and Buddha makes zazen, not we. Our zazen is not human being's zazen, not our zazen, but Buddha's zazen. Many people cannot follow the hard zazen (Rinzai Zen zazen practice), but Soto zazen is easy, so many people can enter the gate."

I doubt that you will ever hear a better explanation of Soto Zen than this. This monk stayed only fifteen months at the monastery. Usually monks stay three years at the longest. He had had a good educator before he arrived, so his period of stay was shorter. RUTH FULLER SASAKI

GOINGS AND COMINGS New York, to quote the World-Telegram, "has felt proud and privileged to have seen and heard" the Azuma Kabuki Dancers and Musicians, here for five weeks as the first stop on a world tour to exhibit their culture to the Western World. Perhaps most astonishing was to see on TV (Omnibus) the Zen story, told so many times by Sokei-an, of the education of the lion-cub by his parent. An utterly delightful experience one can hope presages the coming of the Kabuki Theatre itself... On April 1, Dr. George B. Fowler Institute President and Professor of Medieval History at the University of Pittsburgh, now on grant at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, returns to Austria, under Fulbright auspices to complete his microfilming of medieval manuscripts begun two years ago, and to continue his research on Engelbert of Admont... On April 10 Mildred Owen marries another member, George Simon, in Pasadena, Texas... Come from a tour of the Caribbean, Signe Toksvig, author of "Swedenborg", and her distinguished husband Francis Hackett, who is completing the first volume of his long-premeditated autobiography, leave after a month's visit, promising to return in the fall, as part of their regular commuting between New York and Denmark.

Published monthly
Vol. 1, No. 4
April, 1954



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CHINESE CHARACTERS

A clue to the character of Chinese man is his characterization of Chinese woman

Modern Form

Old Form

女

人

Man plus

𡥉

bosom = primitive woman

𡥉

好

女

Woman plus

𡥉

child = good, nice

𡥉

效

女

Woman plus

𡥉

woman = trouble, spite

𡥉

安

女

Woman under

𡥉

hand = safe, quiet

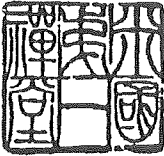
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Published by

THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, Inc.
156 Waverly Place, New York 14, N.Y.

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Founded 1930



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