Zen Notes

(Mid Muromachi period) Ikkyu

Crows in the winter sky

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

THIRTY SECOND LECTURE

Saturday, March 11th, 1939

Thereupon Vajra-garbha Bodhisattva arose from his seat among the multitude and worshipped the Buddha, reverently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow and going round him three times to the right. Then, kneeling down and crossing his hands upon his breast, he said to the Buddha:

"O Lokanatha Mahakaruna (most compassionate One!) For the sake of all the multitudes of the Bodhisattvas, preach to them your sermon on the Tathagata's Perfect Awakening, on the spotless Dharani (upholding the Buddha's entire Dharma in awareness), the practice of the Dharma of the causal state, and the method of experiencing the realization of Dharma, step by step. Thus their ignorant minds may be cultivated; thus the various groups in this assemblage may open their clear eyes of wisdom and, by listening to your benevolent teachings, the veil of illusion may be torn from their minds."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

This is the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Sutra of Perfect Awakening. I shall give you a brief commentary on these lines.

This sutra consists of ten chapters. There were ten questioning Bodhisattvas, as the leaders of groups of Bodhisattvas and monks. The first to ask a question of the Buddha was Manjushri, the second was Samantabhadra, the third was Samantanetra. And now, the fourth Bodhisattva is Vajra-garbha.

The Buddha answers the ten questions -- and in these ten sermons, he explains his conception of religion and the true Dharma.

Before I commence my lecture upon the question of Vajra-garbha, I must explain briefly each viewpoint from which the Bodhisattvas asked their questions. This will give you a clear understanding of their questions.

This question of Manjushri is "*how to practice the causal state of Dharma*." Here, Dharma means BEING -- not sentient nor insentient, but BEING itself. In English we can call it the initial state, or the state before creation. But, in Buddhism, we call this the causal state because it is the result of a cause. This and the apriori state are slightly different. The apriori belongs to Samantabhadra.

Manjushri Bodhisattva (Intrinsic Wisdom) received this answer from the Buddha:

> "*All phenomenal existence is like blossoms blooming in the sky, but the blossoms are illusory and have no real existence. Therefore, you must disengage yourself from all phenomenal existence and attain the state of Reality*."

As theory, the Buddha must answer in this way.

The next Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra (Omnipresent Wisdom), asked the question:

> "*While our mind is illusory as well as phenomenal in this illusory world, then by this illusory mind, how can we attain that which is not illusion?*"

Good question -- wasn't it?

The Buddha answered:

> "*Observing illusory phenomena, making a clear analysis upon your illusory mind, one will awaken from illusion to the state of Reality. It is as one who dreams and awakens when the dream is too intense*."

(It is true. When I speak English in my dream, I always wake up because it is too hard for me!)

And the third, Samantanetra (All-seeing Eye), asked of the Buddha:

> "*What are the means to divide Oneness into the million existences?*"

I will speak a little more about these three Bodhisattvas before continuing with the fourth.

Manjushri is the name of a monk -- but he represents intrinsic wisdom. He takes the Dharmakaya attitude.

Samantabhadra takes two views, to Nirmanakaya and to

Dharmakaya, but his question relates only to Dharmakaya, because this wisdom which is common to all sentient beings has just one nature. But, though we have this uniform nature, in the human body we are divided into many shapes. Samantabhadra dwells upon the one nature -- it is like heat or light. It pervades multifold directions at the same time -- not a one-way-road.

Samantanetra dwells on the state relating to Nirmanakaya. He sees all the varying phenomena, the mind in five different states, and the whole world divided into eighteen different worlds. So he takes the analytical view then, all of a sudden, he takes the synthetic view, amalgamates the different views and reaches Reality. He stays with the aesthetic view -- with his own sense organs.

And now I come to Vajra-garbha. Vajra means "diamond" and garbha means "womb" or "receptacle." It also has the meaning of "wisdom" (which is also a womb and which engenders others). In Buddhism this "garbha" is used in many ways -- it is a holy womb -- but primarily it is "wisdom." (Manjushri is not conceived in any womb, he is immaculate! I will take this opportunity to explain the word "immaculate:" the "word" is a womb -- but First Knowledge is not in a "word" -- it is immaculately conceived! It is knowledge that is as hard as a diamond; it is undisturbable; it cannot be destroyed but it destroys everything (all questions). It is the symbol of our enlightened wisdom. It destroys all afflictions of the mind and all suffering of the body and all evil disturbances and temptations with this diamond wisdom.

And now I will continue with tonight's translation.

"*Whereupon Vajra-garbha Bodhisattva arose from his seat among the multitude and worshipped the Buddha, reverently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow and going round him three times to the right. Then, kneeling down and crossing his hands upon his breast, he said to the Buddha: "Lokanatha* (only precious one in the world) *Mahakaruna* (Most Compassionate One!) *For the sake of all the multitude of the Bodhisattvas, preach to them your sermon on the Tathagata's Perfect Awakening, on the spotless Dharani* (upholding the Buddha's entire Dharma in awareness)..." First, uphold this as Reality; next, uphold everything as activity. Sometime I shall give a lecture on Dharani in detail, but for now it means to uphold knowledge, action, and compassion -- these three things.

It means to uphold the Buddha's good law and to destroy the evil laws in awareness. You can follow a good law blindly: "Because my mother spanked me I don't eat candy!" -- A poor way! Your mind must be aware of obeying the law and why.

"Dharani" means "to uphold everything at once." No one can do that -- so finally they put this effort into one word -- as "AUM!" In that moment -- behold all! This AUM is Dharani. I translate it, Dharani, as "upholding the Buddha's entire Dharma in Awareness."

"*... the practice of the Dharma of the causal state, and the methods of experiencing the realization of Dharma step by step. Thus their ignorant minds may be cultivated; thus the various groups in this assemblage (ten groups) may open their clear eyes of wisdom and, by listening to your benevolent teachings, the veil of illusion may be torn from their minds.*" -- You have heard the world "Reality" many times -- but how can you attain it? There is a way, you know.

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Zen Master Ikkyu's funeral for a cat

"While you were still alive
You caught many mice,
Reaped human kindness as a reward
And lived a contented life.
Now, whatever you're born as,
Be sure to catch a Buddha."

EARLY MEMORIES

by

Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki

Part two from an article in the Institute's archives. It was reprinted from the Anniversary Issue of *The Middle Way*, November, 1964, by permission of the publishers. The article was prepared by Miss Mihoko Okamura and Dr. Carmen Blacker from notes taken at a number of interviews with Dr. Suzuki. -ed

In 1891, when I was 21, I remember attending the ceremony of *Toji* at the winter solstice, when the monks all pound rice to make rice cakes and have a general carousal which goes on all night. The first of these rice cakes was always offered to the Buddha, and the second to the Roshi. Kosen Roshi was very fond of rice cakes dipped in grated daikon sauce, and in fact he would eat any amount of them. On that occasion he demanded a second helping, which his attendant monk refused to give him, saying that it was not good for him to eat so much. The Roshi replied, "I shall be quite all right if I take some digestive medicine".

On 16th January of the following year, 1892, the Roshi suddenly died, and as it happened I was present at his death. I was in the anteroom next door to his with his attendant monks, when suddenly we heard the sound of something heavy falling in the Roshi's room. The attendant monk rushed in and found him lying unconscious on the floor. Apparently just as he was coming out of the washroom he had a stroke, fell and hit his head on the chest of drawers. That large body falling on the floor made a big noise. A physician was immediately summoned, but when he arrived and felt the Roshi's pulse he said it was too late. The Roshi was already dead.

Kosen Roshi's successor as Abbot of Engakuji was *Shaku Soen.*[10] *At* the time when Kosen *Roshi* died he had just come back from a visit to Ceylon to study Theravada Buddhism and was already a rising personality. He was not only very brilliant intellectually, but had also received his *inka-shomei,* or certificate to become a Roshi while he was still quite young, 25 - an unusual thing in those days when it took about fifteen years to reach so advanced a stage. After receiving his inka he went to Keio University to study Western subjects, which was again an unusual thing for a Zen priest to do. Many people criticized him for this

10 Shaku Soen is known to the West by the name of Soyen Shaku as the author of Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot, Chicago, 1906. He was the favorite disciple of Kosen, and was only twenty-five when he received his master's "seal" (inka).

step, including Kosen Roshi, who told him that western studies would be of no use to him at all. But Shaku Soen never took any notice of other people's criticisms, and just went quietly on in his own way. So altogether he was a remarkable person, with rather unconventional tendencies.

At Kosen Roshi's funeral he was the chief mourner and performed all the ceremonies, and in the spring of 1892 he was installed as the new Abbot and I started to go to sanzen with him.

He changed my koan to Mu, as I was not getting on very well with the sound of one hand, and he thought I might have my kensho quicker and earlier with Mu. He gave me no help at all with the koan and after a few sanzen with him I had nothing to say.

There followed for me four years of struggle, a struggle mental, physical, moral and intellectual. I felt it must be ultimately quite simple to understand Mu, but how was I to take hold of this simple thing? It might be in a book, so I read all the books on Zen that I could lay my hands on. The temple where I was living at the time, Butsunichi, had a shrine attached to it dedicated to Hojo Tokimune.[11] In a room in that shrine all the books and documents belonging to the temple were kept. During the summer I spent nearly all my time in that room reading all the books I could find. My knowledge of Chinese was still limited, so many of the texts I could not understand, but I did my best to find out everything I could about Mu intellectually.

One of the books which interested me particularly was the Zenkan Sakushin, "*Whips to drive you through the Zen Barrier,*" compiled by a Chinese master of the Ming dynasty called Shuko. It was a collection of writings on Zen discipline and of advice given by various masters on how to deal with the koan. One of the examples I found in this book I thought I must try to follow. It said:

> "*When you have enough faith, then you have enough doubt. And when you have enough doubt, then you have enough satori. All the knowledge and experience and wonderful phrases and feelings of pride which you accumulated before your study of Zen - all these things you must throw out. Pour all your mental force on to solving the Mu. Sit up straight regardless of day and night, concentrating your mind on the Mu. When you have been doing this for some time you will find yourself in timelessness and*

11 Hojo Tokimune was the Regent who in 1282 founded Engakuji, the Zen monastery north of Kamakura where Dr. Suzuki lived for many years in the sub-temple building, Shoden-an.

spacelessness -- like a dead man. When you reach that state something starts up within yourself and suddenly it is as though your skull were broken in pieces. The experience that you gain then has not come from outside, but from within yourself."

Then in the way of moral effort I used to spend many nights in a cave at the back of the Shariden building[22] where the Buddha's tooth is enshrined. But there was always a weakness of willpower in me, so that often I failed to sit up all night in the cave, finding some excuse to leave, such as the mosquitos.

I was busy during these four years with various writings, including translating Dr. Carus's Gospel of Buddha into Japanese, but all the time the koan was worrying at the back of my mind. It was, without any doubt, my chief preoccupation and I remember sitting in a field leaning against a rice stack and thinking that if I could not understand Mu, life had no meaning for me. Nishida Kitaro, who was both an intimate friend as well as a brilliant Japanese philosopher, wrote somewhere in his diary that I often talked about committing suicide at this period, though I have no recollection of doing so myself. After finding that I had nothing more to say about Mu I stopped going to sanzen with Shaku Soen, except for the sosan or compulsory sanzen during a sesshin. Then all that usually happened was that the Roshi hit me.

It often happens that some kind of crisis is necessary in one's life to make one put forth all one's strength in solving the koan. This is well illustrated by a story in the book Keikyoku Soden, "*Stories of Brambles and Thistles*", compiled by one of Hakuin Zenji's disciples, telling of various prickly experiences in practicing Zen.

A monk came from Okinawa to study Zen under Suio, one of Hakuin's great disciples and a rough and strong-minded fellow. It was he who taught Hakuin how to paint. The monk stayed with Suio for three years working on the koan of the sound of one hand. Eventually, when the time for him to go back to Okinawa was fast approaching and he had still not solved his koan, he got very distressed and came to Suio in tears. The master consoled him saying, "Don't worry. Postpone your departure for another week and go on sitting with all your might". Seven days passed, but still the koan remained. Again the monk came to Suio, who counseled him to postpone his departure for yet another week. When that week was up and he still had not solved the koan the

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12 The Shariden building in Engakuji (see Note 13) is the only surviving example of Sung dynasty temple architecture. It is quite small and very plain. Although damaged in the great earthquake of 1923, it was later restored.

Master said, "There are many ancient examples of people who have attained satori after three weeks, so try a third week." But the third week passed and still the koan was not solved, so the Master said, "Now try five more days." But the five days passed, and the monk was no nearer solving the koan, so finally the Master said, "This time try three more days and if after three days you still have not solved the koan, then you must die".

Then, for the first time, the monk decided to devote the whole of whatever life was left to him to solving the koan. And after three days he solved it.

The moral of this story is that one must decide to throw absolutely everything one has into the effort. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity". It often happens that just as one reaches the depths of despair and decides to take one's life then and there that satori comes, I imagine that with many people satori may have come just too late. They were already on their way to death.

Ordinarily there are so many choices one can make, or excuses one can make to oneself. To solve a koan one must be standing at an extremity, with no possibility of choice confronting one. There is just one thing which one must do.

This crisis or extremity came for me when it was finally settled that I should go to America to help Dr. Carus with his translation of the Tao Te Ching. I realized that the rohatsu-sesshin[13] that winter of 1896 might be my last chance to go to sesshin and if I did not solve my koan then I might never be able to do so. I must have put all my spiritual strength into that sesshin.

Up till then I had always been conscious that Mu was in my mind. But so long as I was conscious of Mu it meant that I was somehow separate from Mu, and that is not a true samadhi. But towards the end of that sesshin, about the fifth day, I ceased to be conscious of Mu. I was one with MU, identified with Mu, so that there was no longer the separateness implied by being conscious of Mu. This is the real state of samadhi.

But this samadhi alone is not enough. You must come out of that state, be awakened from it, and that awakening is Prajna. That moment of coming out of the samadhi and seeing it for what it is - that is satori. When I came out of that state of samadhi during that sesshin I said, "I see. This is it".

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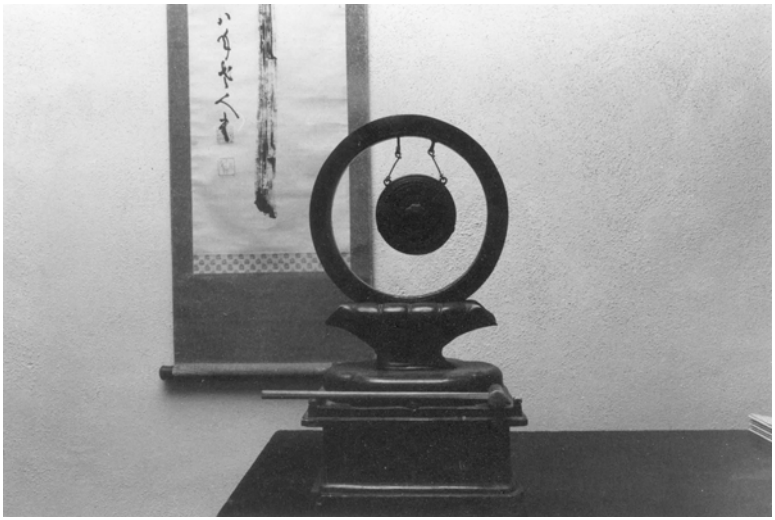
13 Rohatsu sesshin: *Ro* refers to the month of December, and *hatsu* or *hachi* means the eighth. 8th of December is traditionally regarded as .the date of Buddha's enlightenment. Everyone makes a special effort at this sesshin, which begins lst December and ends early at dawn on the 8th, to become enlightened.

I have no idea how long I was in that state of samadhi, but I was awakened from it by the sound of the bell. I went to sanzen with the Roshi, and he asked me some of the sassho or test questions about Mu. I answered all of them except one, which I hesitated over, and at once he sent me out. But the next morning early I went to sanzen again and this time I could answer it. I remember that night as I walked back from the monastery to my quarters in the Kigenin temple, seeing the trees in the moonlight. They looked transparent, and I was transparent too.

I would like to stress the importance of becoming conscious of what it is that one has experienced. After kensho[24] I was still not fully conscious of my experience. I was still in a kind of dream. This greater depth of realization came later while I was in America, when suddenly the Zen phrase, *niji wa soto ni magarazu* "the elbow does not bend outwards." became clear to me. "The elbow does not bend outwards" might seem to express a kind of necessity, but suddenly I saw that this restriction was really freedom, the true freedom, and I felt that the whole question of free will had been solved for me.

After that I did not find passing koans at all difficult. Of course other koans are needed to clarify kensho, the first experience, but it is the first experience which is the most important. The others simply serve to make it more complete and to enable one to understand it more deeply and clearly.



Institute's sanzen bell - photo by Carole Binswanger

14 Kensho. "Seeing into the Self-nature". Can be described as the first glimpse of satori or enlightenment.

BOOKS NOTED

Entangling Vines: Zen Koans of the Shumon Kattoshu. By Thomas Yuho Kirchner. Tenryuji Institute for Philosophy and Religion, Kyoto: 2004. $45.00. Institute for Zen Studies, Hanazono Daigaku, 8-1 Tsubonouchi-cho, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto shi, Japan.

Kattoshu is perhaps the most famous of the Japanese koan collections in use today in Rinzai temples. It consists of 282 cases, all of which are translated here by Thomas Kirchner, an American Rinzai monk who has spent most of his adult life studying Zen in Japan. The work's title signifies, literally, vines or creepers, and by extension, we are told, "complications, difficulties, struggles" and in Zen the verbal snares trapping practitioners, including koans themselves.

The koans in *Kattoshu* are drawn almost entirely from Chinese sources, roughly a third from the *Record of Lin-chi* (J: *Rinzai roku*) , *Blue Cliff Record* (J:*Hekigan roku*), and *Gateless Gate* (J:*Mumonkan*); and the remainder from other Chinese Zen classics, including the collections of biographies known as the "Lamp records" (J: *dentoroku*), and the record of Daio's master Hsu-tang, progenitor of the Myoshinji-based Hakuin line, which currently dominates Rinzai Zen. The eight cases in the collection involving Japanese teachers all center on medieval masters belonging to this important Japanese line, strongly suggesting that *Kattoshu* was somehow connected with this lineage, which includes Daio's heir Daito and Daito's heir Kanzan. Little is known of the work's origins. Kirchner states it was compiled in the Middle Ages, while in his forward, Shizuteru Ueda, professor emeritus at Kyoto University, says simply that *Kattoshu* cannot be dated, apart from the fact that the earliest printed version appeared in 1689.

Ueda has provided a fine opening to the book, effectively introducing Kirchner and Kirchner's experience in the Japanese temples along with some of the problems involved in the translation of collections of koan materials like *Kattoshu*. In particular, he discusses the place of such texts in koan study itself, a process he intriguingly describes as proceeding "from language into language."

"*During the one-on-one encounters known as sanzen,*" Ueda writes, "*koans like those in the Kattoshu are given to the monk in the form of questions or problems that the monk must respond to. These questions are presented in the form of language, and the responses too are expressed in the form of language (including body language and silence.) Yet the trajectory that connects these two linguistic endpoints is not itself a step-by step progression of words. There occurs during the deep samadhi of zazen a leap that*

separates and yet bridges the language of the question and the language of the response. This process may be characterized as one of 'from language into language,' with the inquiry emerging from words and the response emerging into words."

Kirchner's fine translation makes use of earlier koan translations and critical works by modern Japanese Zen scholars and Zen masters, including his advisor on the project, Seiko Hirata, abbot of Tenryuji. The volume includes not only the Chinese-character texts, but helpful and often fascinating footnotes. These offer interpretations by modern Rinzai teachers, along with the results of modern linguistic research into Tang colloquial Chinese that has enabled Japanese scholars to augment some of the traditional Japanese readings of Zen texts. Kirchner points out, for example, that the Sixth Patriarch's famous question "*What is your original face before your father and mother were born?*" (case 2 of *Kattoshu*), can also be translated, "What was your original face before your father and mother gave birth to you?"

His book, Kirchner states, is primarily intended for English-speaking students engaged in Rinzai koan study--as was Victor Hori's *Zen Sand*, an extensive translation of the capping verses for koans, reviewed previously in *Zen Notes*. In this connection, Kirchner sensibly alerts readers that in handling koans, different masters will offer different interpretations. "One lesson that that was particularly impressed upon me," he notes, ""...was that there are various ways of viewing and working with these koans."

My only, admittedly minor cavil is the absence of the traditional Japanese readings for the koan texts included here. While the originals are indeed Chinese, the work is designed for Western koan students, most of whom will be studying in Japanese temples or at least with Japanese teachers, and the readings of the medieval texts into classical Japanese (included in Hori's *Zen Sand*) are a useful and important tool. An index of names, places, terms, etc. would also have been helpful. But the heart of the book remains the clear, straightforward, highly readable translations. Kirchner has done an admirable job of clearing away the countless vines and brambles in the translator's path, and making available to Western readers this often difficult and hitherto inaccessible Japanese koan text. At a time when most new Zen-related publications in the West are little more than warmed-over works of theory or self-help manuals, the Tenryuji Institute is to be complemented for making its publications debut with such a substantive work. It is certainly to be hoped that the institute plans more such skilled presentations of original texts, edited by dedicated students with a background in Zen practice.

--Peter Haskel--

Three-Hudred-Mile Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

(Edited by Mary Farkas and Robert Lopez)

Discourse X, Lecture 4

"Brothers, as I understand it, you differ in no way from Shakya. Is there anything you lack to perform your manifold functions today? The light of your six divine senses has never ceased to shine. Once you understand this, you need not seek any further.

"Good brothers, the three worlds are like a house afire.[3] *They are not places in which to dwell for long! The demon death, the hand of mutability, does not for one moment discriminate between rich and poor, old and young. So if you do not want to differ from the Buddha, do not search for Buddha in the outer world."*

In this passage, Lin-chi is emphasizing the Buddha in oneself, the "personal" Buddha. When you realize buddha-nature in yourself, you are Buddha. Therefore, it is not necessary to seek Buddha outside.

Today there are students of Buddhism who are attempting to recreate the Buddha's own original Buddhism, the teaching that came from the Buddha's own golden lips. These modern students imagine that the Buddha's own original Buddhism might be found somewhere in the so-called *tripitaka*, the three baskets of Buddhist teachings, which are the *sutras*, the *abhidharma*, and the *vinaya*.[4] Of course, the Buddha's words can be comparatively studied in the records of various languages, but in Zen there is a shortcut to what the Buddha really taught: instead of looking through the *sutras* for it, you can look for it in your own soul. After all, the Buddha found his religion in his own soul, and we are the same human beings. So if we dig deeply into our own hearts, we will find that same religion. There is no difference. That is the reason Lin-chi does not refer to the Buddha as Lokanatha, ("Lord of the World") or Tathagata ("Thus come"), but as "Shakya," a man of the same rank as himself. So when you meditate upon your own soul

3 Famous metaphor in the *Lotus Sutra* comparing the world to a burning house.

4 The *tripitaka* is comprised of discourses attributed to the Buddha (*sutras*); early Buddhist discourses on philosophy and psychology (*abhidharma*); and monastic rules and regulations governing the communal life of monks and nuns (*vinaya*).

and open your own Eye to Reality, your vital point will be no different from the Buddha's, and it will not be necessary to call it Buddhism.

"Is there anything you lack to perform your manifold functions today? The light of your six divine senses has never ceased to shine." According to the Buddha's teaching, all the intrinsic functions of the human body are important, so Lin-chi is referring to the five senses and the mind. They are the elemental powers of the universe, the six divine senses. It is with our senses that we observe various universes. We sense color and form with the eyes, sound with the ears, odor with the nose, taste with the tongue, touch with the skin, and with the mind, *dharma*.

Can you imagine anything that is not observable with one of these senses? If we had different eyes, perhaps we would see something that is not color or form, but it is impossible for us to imagine it. The root of these senses is *this* consciousness. To *this* consciousness the whole universe is one—*Dharma*. The philosophers call it noumenon—Reality. Of course, this is a metaphysical conception. This [holding up a box] is phenomenon, but if we hide it away and say "box," this is no phenomenon but a conception. The five senses create the physical base but do not function as perception; it is another function. So altogether there are six. These days, scientists are trying to find more, but so far they have not been successful.

"Once you understand this, you need not seek any further." A table has legs; a snake has none. If a snake had legs, the legs would be a nuisance to him. We have everything we need to perform our daily functions. More would be a nuisance.

"Good brothers, the three worlds are like a house afire. They are not places in which to dwell for long!" Well, where shall I go?

In the world of desire, we are pursuing something from morning to evening. Our viewpoint is not right. We have to separate our view from our desire and look at everything with a cool mind, as an artist looks at a field and observes the green grass and the blue sky, not like a farmer who looks at the same field with desire. In the world of form, we discriminate between the beautiful and the ugly; we see by understanding. In the world of formlessness, all is pure existence; there is no purity or impurity. All is real manifestation; nothing is good or bad.

To really live in this life, you must know the existence of formlessness. Here, one observation is the truth. It is necessary at least once in your life to separate from the phenomenal and come upon noumenal understanding. The world of form must be

practiced as well. However, if in your meditation you attach to form or formlessness, you are still in the world of desire. Do not be deceived by theory!

The Buddha said that there are four inverted views or wrong observations of the universe: thinking it is eternal; thinking life is a joy; believing in ego; thinking this existence of desire is pure. That is why the Buddha pointed out that all our conceptions about the world are inverted. To cure these inversions, we practice meditation. These stages of meditation are written within you, ascending to the opening of the Universal Eye.

He also taught us about the three diseases or poisons: ignorance, passion, and anger. To cure these sicknesses, we need not seek remedies outside ourselves. For ignorance the remedy is to educate ourselves, to open our inner eye with which to see the Reality of the universe. At seventeen or eighteen we can only open a doubtful eye. Why do we live? Where do we come from? Where do we go? What is our relation to our father and mother? Were we here before? After death is there only nothing? So we peer into books or go to teachers. We become like animals searching for water. For everyone it is the same problem. If you have never sought to understand these great questions, I would say you are sleeping. They come to everyone, even before we open our eye to sex. Sex, like a flower, will come a little later; but first, a leaf appears, the questioning of everything. This is wisdom curing ignorance. As for passion, we have the power to control it. It is not necessary to take a vow: all commandments are written within us. And we have tranquillity with which to cure anger.

"The demon death, the hand of mutability, does not for one moment discriminate between rich and poor, old and young." In "one moment" there are nine *ksanas*, the smallest unit of time, and in one *ksana* sentient beings reincarnate nine hundred times. We think we are living now, and we think we are not dead, but in one *ksana* we repeat life and death nine hundred times, and that *ksana* is not different from our fifty years, and nine hundred lives are not different from one *ksana*.

"So if you do not want to differ from the Buddha, do not search for Buddha in the outer world." The Buddha said we must give up all theories and conceptions and observe the universe from our own hearts. It is not necessary to search outside of ourselves; all is within. This is emancipation from all names and all conceptions. In the *sanzen* room, if you understand the real existence of the universe, you can take the Himalayan Mountains out of an incense box, pass through a keyhole, and so forth.

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BANKEI AND HIS WORLD

Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in Japan had been debased and finally destroyed during the preceding two or three centuries. If Zen was to continue, such reformers argued, it had to be thought through again from the beginning, not only revitalized but reinvented. The Zen of Bankei's age, the Tokugawa period, was in many ways a rejection rather than an extension of the Zen that came immediately before. To fully understand Bankei and seventeenth-century Zen it is necessary to start with a discussion of Japanese Zen in the late Middle Ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the latter part of what is referred as the Muromachi period, after the Muromachi district of Kyoto where the reigning Ashikaga shoguns had their palace. Much of the information cited is drawn from the pioneering research of Tamamura Takeji, a leading scholar of medieval Japanese Zen history. The discussion here focuses on the two principal groups identified by Tamamura as dominating Muromachi Zen: the sorin, the official Gozan temples patronized by the shogunate; and the rinka, those temples like Daitokuji, Myoshinji, Sojiji and Eiheiji that remained largely outside the official system.

ZEN IN THE MUROMACHI PERIOD (Part 1,#5)

(Continued from the Fall Zen Notes)

Literati Zen

During the Muromachi period, Japanese monks continued to follow the lead of Zen culture on the continent, where under the newly inaugurated Ming dynasty (1358-1644), the Zen establishment was once again in close contact with the highest levels of Chinese officialdom, leading to a renewed secularization of Zen literature similar to that in the late Southern Sung. Poems on Buddhist themes (geju) continued to be composed, though treated separately from secular poetry, which now returned to prominence. The group most conspicuous in this development was the Ta-hui line, which had become strongly literary in character, producing a series of eminent poet monks. Returning Japanese monks tended to become exponents of the Ta-hui style of literary Zen, and it was the early Ming monk poets who became the models for the Gozan literati of the Kitayama period.

Many Gozan monks developed a thorough grasp of contemporary Chinese poetry, able to work faithfully in the Ming style and, in essence, becoming Chinese literary figures in their own right. The prime example of this trend are Muso's heirs Zekkai and Gido (see previous Zen Notes). Zekkai's poetry was praised by his Ming colleagues for bearing no trace of its Japanese origins, and Gido, who, unlike Zekkai, had never studied in China, was delighted to find his works being mistaken on the continent for those of a Chinese poet. Other Muso-line monks became devotees of *suiboku* (CH: *sui-me*) the austere style of ink painting popular in the Sung and Yuan Zen temples. During the final years of Mongol rule, Ryushu Shutaku (1308-1388), another important disciple of Muso's, personally received a title from the Khan in appreciation of his skill in this medium. Such examples illustrate the perfect familiarity with contemporary Chinese culture that became the trademark of the leading Gozan literati.

Increasingly, however, cultural concerns were developing at the expense of actual Zen practice. In the age of their Chinese founders, the sorin had fostered both formal Zen study and literary activity, and so long as Chinese abbots remained in the Gozan temples, zazen, sanzen and *angya*--the pilgrimage in which a Zen student travels to study under different masters--continued to hold their place in the training of monks. Afterwards, however, the enthusiasm for literature in the temples began to overwhelm, and even to distort, such practical aspects of Zen study. Gido still had his disciples perform zazen on occasion and even instructed the Shogun Yoshimitsu in the essentials of meditation, but complained of "too much learning and too little zazen in our sect."

The practice of mondo, originally a spontaneous public dialogue between the teacher and the monks of the assembly, who sought instruction and an opportunity for enlightenment, gradually degenerated into an empty ceremonial in which all the elements had been carefully prearranged. What had once been a dynamic method of teaching was transformed into little more than an exercise in literary skill, and the formalized mondo that constituted part of the ceremony of assuming abbacy of a Gozan temple demanded principally that the candidate display his wide-ranging command of Chinese literary sources, Confucian, Buddhist, and classical. Those students who still sought some vital contact with the teacher turned to private sanzen interviews (*nisshitsu sansho*) in which they would present their understanding to the teacher in residence. Muso observed this practice as a student, and later followed it with his own disciples but it is questionable whether it played a significant role in his teaching. We have only one possible instance of a student being enlightened by Muso under these circumstances, and no evidence that Muso's key disciple and heir Gido had ever taken sanzen with

him. There are indications that the concept of transmission (*shiho*) itself was undergoing important changes from Muso's period on, with membership in a particular teacher's assembly considered sufficient to qualify a student to succeed to his Dharma, regardless of whether the student had actually received the teacher's *inka*, or formal sanction of the enlightenment experience.

The mid Kitayama period, nevertheless, marked the height of Gozan culture, which flourished under the leadership of Muso's major disciples. Gido and Zekkai rank as the key founders of Gozan literature, and Shunoku as the central figure in Gozan scholarship, distinguished for his publication of various Buddhist and non-Buddhist classics, which, along with other so-called "Gozan" editions, had a profound impact on every field of learning in medieval Japan. Under their successors, however, traditional Zen practice, already seriously eroded, was weakened still further, and henceforth the Gozan temples passed into the hands of monks who were exclusively literary or else occupied with primarily bureaucratic functions. Eventually, even the intellectual character of the Gozan movement was perverted and the works of the Gozan literati became mainly pedantic. Rather than a basic knowledge of the Chinese classics, Gozan poetry came to stress such aspects as the use of obscure allusions and the inclusion of arcane phrases known as *kien no goku*, expressions drawn from Chinese sources and operating on two levels of meaning, one overt and one hidden.

Konoe Nobutada
Tenjin the patron diety of scholarship,
A favorite theme of Muromachi artists.

A vast and at times excessive erudition coupled with a prodigious skill at memorization were requirements for those wishing to participate to any extent in the cultural or ceremonial life of the sorin, and the mainstream of the Gozan became this purely literary teaching. Under these circumstances, little time or interest remained for actual Zen practice, and the situation was further exacerbated by the widening influence of Esoteric Buddhism.

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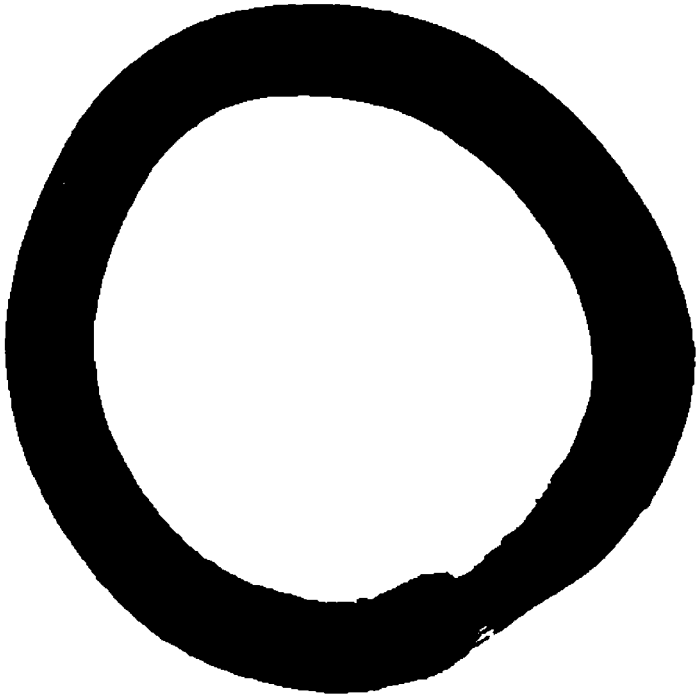

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