Zen Notes

Joshu Sasaki Roshi

45 years sowing the Dharma

May your footsteps continue

Unfaltering...

A Century on the Buddha trail
BANKEI AND HIS WORLD
by Peter Haskel

Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in their land 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 therefore 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 to as the Muromachi period (1333-1573), after the Muromachi district of Kyoto where the reigning Ashikaga shoguns had their palace. Much of the information cited below 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, #11)
(Continued from the FALL '06 Zen Notes)

The Rinka

While the sorin prospered in the capitals of Kyoto and Kamakura, the rinka had been quietly taking shape, centered in provincial Japan where the influence of the Gozan scarcely penetrated. Many of the founders of the leading rinka groups, however, were not originally rinka teachers, but themselves graduates of the sorin. Despite the advantages of official support, life in the grand temples of Kyoto and Kamakura was not congenial to many Zen priests. Motives for abandoning the sorin varied, from the idealistic to the pragmatic but the pattern of Zen monks leaving the Gozan for rinka temples and teachers is one which appears to continue throughout the Muromachi period.

Already in the Kamakura period, at the time of Zen’s intro-
just gives a shout!

The Master came back from seeing the zashu off, and then asked Rakuho, "Did you roar the Ho! at me or the zashu?" Rakuho said, "Yes." Thereat the Master smote him. Smote him with his staff. Of course, Rinzai's question was to hook him like a fish. "Have you shouted at me or at that one?" Rakuho thought that to shout at him or the Master was the same shout, would be the same, so Rinzai would smite him. What do you say?

I have not much time, but I must speak a little more. Rakuho came into this dilemma of Yes or No. There is a little more of this incident, but there is no time. Later, Rakuho left Rinzai, went to Tan-in Lake, a beautiful lake, built a hut and lived there.

'Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk than to the multifarious Buddhas.' I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk? The monk who asked this question tried to search the mind of Rakuho. This question has two parts; comes this way, that way. I shall not try to explain the attitudes, but you must try to understand them.

"When a white cloud lies
At the entrance of a vale,
Many returning birds vainly seek
Their nests in the night."

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From the Editor

On the cover is the card we sent to Joshu Sasaki Roshi in honor of his 45 years teaching and a century traveling the Buddha trail, perhaps in the footsteps of an earlier Joshu who taught till he was 120. We had many intense sesshins with him in the 70's and 80's and sometimes the Institute seemed to bulge at the seams with the many people attending. It was a lively era and we thank him for the opportunity to practice with a genuine Zen Master.

Again, we wish him well and many days of teaching ahead.

... Successor...

How can you find him, if you look for him?
How can he find himself, if he looks for you?
Yet he knows you and you, him and whenever you meet,
Even if the demons of death are knocking on his door,
He cannot help but smile...
Japanese visitors were frequently attracted to these groups. Evidence suggests that the majority of those abandoning the Gozan temples for the provinces were primarily aspiring literati rather than practicing Zen monks. If their biographies tend to emphasize their literary accomplishments, it may be to conceal the truth that these were, in fact, men who found themselves unable to compete effectively in the literary world of the sorin subtemples and were obliged to withdraw to the countryside. Class considerations also played a role. The intimate connection between the sorin and the aristocratic life of Kyoto bred alienation among those monks of humble background, and members of this group often felt impelled to leave the Gozan for provincial temples.

For others, however, the source of dissatisfaction with life in the sorin was principally spiritual. The tatchu system brought with it not only a rigidification of the existing Gozan lines, but the virtual abandonment of Zen practice in favor of the pursuit of aristocratic literary culture. More and more monks rejected this literary Zen of the Gozan to seek an active form of Zen practice. Many left for Daitokuji and Myoshinji, where the basic features of traditional Zen study had survived. Situated in Kyoto, the Daio-line temples represented a powerful magnet, which, as the bitter complaints of sorin abbots attest, continued to attract the disaffected from the Gozan. Often, however, such dissidents from the sorin left the cities altogether and set off for the provinces, where an entirely new Zen world was evolving.

As with the formation of the sorin, trends in contemporary Chinese Zen also played a role in the emergence of the rinka in provincial Japan. The Wu-shan temples of the Southern Sung had gradually become centers of aristocratic culture whose literary monks became models for their counterparts in the Japanese Gozan. There were other Chinese monks, however, who rejected the effete atmosphere of these temples and favored a life of austere practice in remote provincial areas. These reformers were drawn largely from particular Ts'ao-t'ung (J: Soto) and Lin-chi Yang-ch'i (J: Rinzai) lines, men like Dogen's teacher T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching (1163-1228) and the Yuan Master Chung-feng Ming-pen (1263-1327). While their teachings might differ, such masters shared an abhorrence of the cosmopolitan world of the Wu-shan. Their assemblies adhered to strict monastic discipline and tended to be self-supporting, occupied principally with religious rather than economic, cultural or institutional concerns.

Japanese visitors were frequently attracted to these groups. It means that if we have any notion in our mind, the truth will be closed—we cannot attain the truth. I made such an answer and my teacher shouted at me. My answer was wrong! How many years I have been studying Buddhism! And for many years I was thinking about this. I have made the poem in English. In English the poetical value is none; but in the original it was a poem.

We must make a study of this Rakuho. He died in 898, about the end of the Tang dynasty. He was a younger contemporary of the famous Zen master Rinzai. Rakuho came six generations after the Sixth Patriarch. We must know the tendency of his mind—how he grew up and what type of understanding he attained; and what type of man he was. It is very interesting to us. Not so interesting to other people, perhaps, but to speak of this koan we must give this information. When I began this series, I thought I could surely give twenty-five dramatic stories. But it has become very difficult. I will soon change to something else--but I will finish this first!

Rakuho was a young man who had studied theoretical Buddhism and after twenty years became a monk. He came to northern China, to Shin-chou, not so near as Peiping but quite deep inland. There the famous master Rinzai lived, and Rakuho became his personal attendant.

One day a zashu (lecture master) came to have an interview with the Master. The Master asked the zashu, "On what sutra do you lecture?" The zashu answered, "I have, as best I may, made a study of the Abhidharma of the one hundred laws." The Master said, "Suppose here were one who had no comprehension of the three vehicles or of the twelve divisions of the teachings and here were another who had perfect comprehension of the three vehicles or of the twelve divisions of the teachings; would there be any distinction between them or would they be exactly the same?" The zashu said, "To one who has attained the comprehension, both are the same; but to one who has not, they appear different."

At that time Rakuho was the personal attendant of the Master, standing beside him. Rakuho said to the zashu, "O, zashu, what do you think this place is, discussing whether they are the same or different!" Rakuho was a young man standing behind the Master, and he interfered with the conversation. From this we get a hint of his character—very sharp, very true, too. The real meaning of the Chinese is: "What are you talking about in this place—this world? All is empty." He was young, still standing in the notion of emptiness.

Turning his head, the Master questioned Rakuho, "What do you think about it?" Thereat Rakuho roared a Ho! This was a Zen expression at that time. He does not talk about it in words,
monk! The mind of an idiot is just stuffed up with unimportant matters. An idiot's head is an ivory head—solid. If you keep much stuff in your mind, you will become ivory-headed. In Buddhism we do not try to keep any stuff in our mind— we try to have an empty mind, empty the sawdust from the mind! And to empty the mind we think that we must put something in the mind to push the sawdust out. So we study science, art, philosophy, religion to push the old stuff out, but then we need to push the new things out also. When you wash your hand with soap, it smells of soap. It is not clean yet for you must wash that soap smell off also. Likewise you need to clean those new things out also, and then your mind becomes pure and empty as it was begotten by nature—this is so-called "empty-minded." Then you will understand its meaning.

Everyone offers alms to those Buddhas of stone, of wood; and to Buddhas made of philosophy, mythology, mystery. The Buddhas outside or the Buddhas inside—they are all images! You create Buddhas by philosophy, make a theology and then make a conviction and think it is a truth—this is also an image.

An empty-minded monk has no image in the mind. He has studied, of course, all those theologies and philosophies, and accepted that mythological religion of Buddha in the middle of the sky, mounted on a white elephant with six tusks...And then, to cast that mythology away, he studied canonical religion—six tusks are the six senses; the six senses, consciousness; six legs, power. And then he pushed all that out by a clear avenue. The clear avenue is Zen. This is the meaning of almsgiving to an empty-minded monk. And then, this monk asked:

I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk. A very good question! This monk was an empty-minded monk, so he cannot make any distinction between those images and the empty-minded monk. Because images are beautiful, why cast them out? One who is educated will study some books and save his own soul. And one who does not need those metaphysical notions will clean up his own mind and find reality. Each one has his own way. Why is one better than another? In this monk's mind were two questions: First, what is wrong about those buddhas? Second, what is good about that monk? Bad and good! Rakuho answered:

When a white cloud lies a the entrance of a vale, many returning birds vainly seek their nests in the night. It is very difficult to grasp the meaning of this answer. A long time ago I made an answer to these words:

The white mist covers the entrance of the vale in the mountain
It closes the returning birds into the vale.

Some only joined them briefly as part of a circuit of continental Zen temples; but others, like Dogen, remained long enough to become heirs in their Chinese teacher's line and returned to Japan as teachers in their own right. Faithful to the examples of their Chinese masters, many of these monks avoided the large metropolitan temples and settled with their followers in the countryside, where they attempted to preserve the authenticity of the teaching they had received in China.

Zen practice in rural retreat, had an important influence on the formation of the rinka. The leading Japanese exemplar was the Rinzai monk Jakushitsu Genko, referred to previously. Jakushitsu had begun his career in the Gozan temples of Kyoto and Kamakura, distinguishing himself as an accomplished student of literary Chinese. At age twenty-one, he left the Gozan to travel to the continent in search of "authentic" Zen, and, like most of his Japanese contemporaries visiting China, studied with the two foremost Zen teachers of the day, the literary monk Ku-lin Ching-mou, leader of the Chi-sung (I: geju) movement, and the Lin-chi Zen Master Chung-feng Ming-pen. Ku-lin and the Chi-sung movement had a profound impact on Jakushitsu's literary style; but it was his contact with Chung-feng and other Chinese recluse monks that seems to have determined his spiritual outlook.

Chung-feng has been called the representative Yuan Zen master. He enjoyed enormous popularity, and his hermitage attracted not only monks from China and abroad but many Yuan government officials. Chung-feng's teaching emphasized strict purity of practice in retreat combined with the syncretism with Pure Land belief that was a popular feature of Chinese Zen during the Sung dynasty. Although an orthodox tradition of pure Zen had continued in both Lin-chi and Ts'ao-t'ung schools, Sung Zen was basically syncretic, emphasizing the unity of Zen with Confucianism, scriptural teaching and, above all, Pure Land belief. Although the synthesis of Pure Land and Zen was rejected by some as a vulgarization contrary to orthodox practice, it became widespread in China and eventually in Japan. From the standpoint of Chung-feng and his Japanese followers, Pure Land thought represented not a dilution of Zen teachings but a reformist element, a kind of pietism counteracting the worldliness and vanity of the official temples, and the particular combination of Zen in rural retreat and Pure Land syncretism taught by Chung-feng and later in Japan by Jakushitsu can probably be viewed within this context.

Returning to Japan, Jakushitsu avoided the sorin and retired to a hermitage in a remote Hiroshima Prefecture. His fame as a poet and teacher spread to the capital, but true to Chung-feng's teaching, he refused the abbacy of Tenryuji and passed the remainder of his career in a series of secluded retreats and provincial temples.
Jakushitsu remained the only Japanese traveler to Yuan China who on his return actively promoted Chung-feng’s particular brand of nembutsu syncretism, but it was Chung-feng’s notion of practice in retreat, that constituted his primary legacy to Japanese Zen.

During the fourteenth century, ‘retreat’ zen attracted many Gozan monks, who, like Jakushitsu, abandoned the sorin for provincial temples and teachers. For some, this was a deliberate reaction to the aristocratic culture of the Gozan temples and reflected a certain current of self criticism within the sorin; for others, a negative desire for withdrawal from the world was paramount, while certain monks adopted ‘retreat’ zen merely as a posture. Yet, in one form or another, zen practice in retreats continued to represent a significant religious alternative for the monks of the Gozan temples and many of their leading patrons. As noted earlier, the Emperor himself cultivated the acquaintance of recluse monks, inviting them to the capital or traveling to the provinces to meet with them, and his example was followed by prominent warriors at the Shogunal court.

Jakushitsu was but one of many outstanding Zen teachers who established themselves in provincial Japan during the fourteenth century. Like Jakushitsu, these early rinka leaders were idealists; priests who, in many cases, had been linked with Gozan teachers or lineages early in their careers but had subsequently chosen an independent course outside the sorin. Among the most famous of these masters were Gettan Soko (1326-1389) of Daimyoji in Tamba (Kyoto Municipal District) and Bassui Tokusho (1327-1387), founder of the Kogaku line, named for his principal temple, Kogakuji in Kai (Yamanashi Prefecture). Both Bassui and Gettan espoused a practical, direct approach to Zen that was popular and accessible without being syncretic. In contrast to the refined literary products of the Gozan monks, their recorded teachings, were for the most part phrased simply in ordinary Japanese, yet dealt with central questions of Zen practice and enlightenment.

Despite Gettan’s popularity during his lifetime, little is known of the details of his character or career. He studied for a time with Muso and various other sorin teachers and later with the Hotto line master Koho Kakumyo (1271-1361) of Izumo (Shimane Prefecture) before becoming the heir of an obscure provincial Daio-line teacher. Gettan’s teaching stressed the importance of original enlightenment as the basis for Zen study, and certain statements in the Gettan kana record are curiously similar to passages in Bankei’s sermons. Gettan insists that all that is needed in the study of Zen is a thoroughgoing realization of the source of the mind (kokoro no kongen). Students are wrong to bother their teachers to assign them koans: the superior student comes...
Reasoning is not the true aspect of mind. One plus one equals two but if there is no one? And zero is not the true aspect of existence -- zero and one are relative. These numbers are the knowledge of you. So, in Reality, one plus one may make, not one, but twenty-five hundred million!

Vimalakirti, in his ten-foot room, invited 10,000 Bodhisattvas to sit down. No, reasoning is not the true aspect of mind.

"It is like the flowers blossoming in the sky. If you attempt to attain the state of Buddha by reasoning, it would be as though you waited for the flowers of the sky to bear fruit in the sky!" I hope you will know the state of Reality in your lifetime!

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Twenty-Five Zen Koans
Selected and Translated by Sokei-an Sasaki

Sixth Koan
(Saturday, February 12, 1938)

A monk asked (Zen Master) Rakuho the following question:

"It is said: 'Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk than to the multifarious Buddhas.' I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk."

Rakuho said:

"When a white cloud lies
At the entrance of a vale,
Many returning birds vainly seek
Their nests in the night.

As for these wandering thoughts, there's nothing which arises and nothing which arouses, either.... When there's no discrimination, deluded thoughts won't arise. All deluded views come from the discriminations of deluded minds''.

As with the other rinka teachers of this period, it is unclear precisely how practice was conducted in Gettan's assemblies. Despite his critical remarks concerning formal meditation and koan study, for example, he gives detailed instructions on zazen and urges his students to ''look into and doubt the mind existing before you were born''. All in all, it seems likely that what Gettan actually opposed was attachment to particular techniques, viewing these as ends in themselves rather than methods of revealing ones "originally possessed self-nature."

Bassui's teaching, though essentially a simplified form of koan Zen, appears very similar to Gettan's, rooted firmly in the concept of original enlightenment. Bassui became a monk at age twenty-eight after a strenuous but unsuccessful period of solitary zazen practice. He subsequently set off on pilgrimage, living in the mountains and later traveling to Kamakura and visiting a host of Zen teachers throughout Japan. During this time, he particularly sought out masters of Chung-feng's line, and Bassui's devotion to Chung-feng's style of practice in retreat seems to have continued throughout his career. Fittingly enough, Bassui's initial experience of enlightenment is said to have occurred as he meditated listening to the sound of a valley stream. He finally became the successor of the Hotto line Master Koho Kakumyo, Gettan's one-time preceptor. Like Bassui himself, Koho had a varied background. Besides being the heir of Shinchi Kakushin, the Hotto-line's founder, he had visited Yuan China, where he practiced under Chung-feng, and he later studied with the noted Soto master Keizan Jokin (1268-1325). Bassui is said to have experienced "great enlightenment" under Koho upon passing the Mu koan, and received from him the name Bassui. He then set off once more on pilgrimage, visiting Keizan's heir Gazan Shoseki (or Joseki) (1275-1365) and eventually establishing a retreat in Kai, where in 1380 he founded Kogakuji with the support of the local governor.

For Bassui, as for Gettan, the crucial element of Zen study is not a particular practice or technique, but the source of the mind at
work. Students, Bassui says, are liable to be distracted by the words of the koans and to forget that the basis of the koan is the mind itself. Any other approach to the koan betrays its true purpose, which is to realize "the one who sees and hears." It is not even enlightenment that is at issue, but "the one who realizes enlightenment". Bassui therefore urges his students to "return to the one who realizes enlightenment" (satoru shu ni kaeru).

This emphasis on the mind underlying all experience is reflected in Bassui's choice of such koans as "the one who sees and hears", "your original face", "the one who is listening to this sermon"), and "What is this!". Of all these, Bassui is most closely identified with the koan "the one who sees and hears." He urged his students to concentrate their practice on this single problem rather than dissipate their attention on a variety of cases. Yet, although Bassui's approach is based on such koans, the focus of his teaching remains the "self nature" (jisho) by which the koans are made clear. In Wadegassui shu, a collection of sermons published in 1386, shortly before his death, Bassui observes:

"The (old) masters, for the sake of others, gave out words and phrases to match the capacity of students and point directly to the mind of man. They never said, 'Use these as "koans" and get enlightenment.' There are students who, at the fall of a word, are enlightened -- and others who, after gradually puzzling over things for three or five days come to realization, while still others are enlightened after puzzling things over for three, five, ten or twenty years. The period while they do this is provisionally termed 'koan study'...."

Bassui's view of the koan is perhaps idiosyncratic but his succession in the Hotto line places him near the center of the most dynamic tradition of koan Zen to evolve in China. Koho's principal teacher, Shinchi, has been referred to previously as the founder of an important Gozan teaching line that emphasized a syncretism with esoteric teachings. But Shinchi was also a disciple of the Sung-dynasty Master Wu-men Hui-kai (J: Mumon Ekai), author of the famous koan collection Mumonkan and his studies with Wu-men in China made him direct heir to the forceful brand of Sung koan Zen promulgated by Wu-men and by Ta-hui Tsung-kao.

Ta-hui had revolutionized koan Zen. He opposed the style of koan study popularized by the Blue Cliff Record, a collection of one hundred koans with verses and comments by his own teacher Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in (J: Engo Kokugon) 1063-1135. The plethora of cases and the emphasis on literary format exemplified by the Blue Cliff Record Ta-hui believed, diluted the student's concentration and have discarded many thoughts and ideas, you will ask, "What is this? I am here in my body and something is shining in my mind. The sutras speak of emptiness, but how can I be empty when I have this consciousness?"

This is a great question. When you have come to this question, you are really standing at the gate of Nirvana. When you open the door of this question you will go inside. How do you open the door of this great question? You have in the bottom of your mind a mirror and everything is reflected in it! That is your mind as big as the universe. Now your consciousness does not seem so small -- it is like the sky!

You are standing on the surface of this mirror; how do you get into it? For six years, I was in agony asking this question of myself. I had been studying Zen for a long time.

One evening, when I was folding my arms on my breast and looking at the ceiling, all of a sudden I realized that the door had been opened a long time ago.

I will say no more about this -- you must experience it for yourself -- but when I returned to Japan and demonstrated my understanding to my teacher, he acknowledged the genuineness of my experience. I was very glad that I had a true teacher to give me this assurance.

Everyone in Zen will experience this. I thought there was a question, thought there was a gate. But when I came to the experience, the gate had vanished. Then I thought of the Gateless Gate that the ancients wrote about, and I thought I was fortunate to have a teacher who was not talking from a book but one who can speak from experience. Therefore he can judge the experience of his disciples.

This experience happened 2,500 years ago and 500 years ago it was brought to Japan from China. China got it from Bodhidharma of India. From his time, teacher and pupil have reflected each other as two mirrors, eye to eye. Not words!

"O Obedient One! When reasoning begins, the mind begins to function. This mind activity results from the six illusory rajas. - Color, sound, etc. The six rajas are produced by our Alaya consciousness, the consciousness of the whole being. A different being sees a different world. This mind produces this reflection.

My consciousness as a human being is as large as the universe. It is Alaya consciousness. You must open the door and go inside this Alaya consciousness. The reasoning mind is like someone
4. Why deny it? Without denying it, everything is in it. It is like an idiot talking about fire reflected in a mirror: One says, "The fire is hot," and the other says, "No, it is not hot because it is reflected."

We do not need all these words! The quickest way to solve the problem of Nirvana is to destroy the name and to really experience "Tathagata's Great Ocean." You must feel that you are in this Great Ocean existing from the beginningless beginning to the endless end. In this boundless, bottomless, empty ocean, there is neither mountain, sea nor sky. There is no transmigration. Your mind is endlessly transmigrating but there is no transmigration in Nirvana.

When you are an infant you are in samskara, but it is different from the samskara of the Five Shadows--it is of the Twelve Nidanas. In that darkness your consciousness is sleeping. Therefore, you are not really existing--the existence of you yourself is nothing but a name and then you will grow into 6 subdivided organs of existence. It is as water goes into something; air goes into something. So consciousness goes into these 6 sense organs, through which you make contact with the world. In the true sense, this outside world is also consciousness. And this consciousness makes contact with another consciousness. The sky, the wind, fire, water, earth, air, all are consciousness. We observe it with our senses and call it by different names, the "word" of consciousness.

Then we realize that something is existing outside and we desire to possess it. You take it, and create the karma, that causes you to transmigrate! You die, and you will be born again out of the darkness, and you will start once more. According to the karma of the past, you will repeat the new reincarnation. It is like the turning of a wheel called the Great Transmigration. I speak too much!

In the Ocean of Nirvana, there is no transmigration, which appears like waves on the surface of the still ocean. But if you adhere to the view of transmigration and refuse to relinquish it with such a mind you cannot attain the Great Ocean. You must eradicate the cause of transmigration!

"For this reason I assert that all Bodhisattvas and the sentient beings of the future world must eradicate the root of the' beginningless transmigration. "Beginningless"- darkness, the first cause of the twelve Nidanas.

When you were in the mother's bosom you did not know of your own existence. What were you before father and mother? Where were you? You never question this! You go to bed, go to sleep and awake without a question. But when you practice medi-
"It is as though you attempted to burn down the Sumeru mountain with the fire of a firefly! You could not succeed despite all your endeavors. You may attempt to enter the Tathagata's great ocean of Nirvana, but if you have the mind which transmigrates and maintains such a view, you will fail to reach there. For this reason I assert that all Bodhisattvas and the sentient beings of the future world must eradicate the root of the beginningless transmigrations.

"O Obedient One! When reasoning begins the mind begins to function. This mind activity results from the six illusory rajas. Reasoning is not the true aspect of the mind. It is like the flowers blossoming in the sky. If you attempt to attain the state of Buddha by reasoning, it would be as though you waited for the flowers of the sky to bear fruit in the sky!"

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The prescription for medicine is not the medicine itself. The menu of Delmonicols Restaurant is not the food itself. And the philosophy of Buddhism is not Buddhism.

By reasoning, you cannot attain the principle of Buddhism. How marvelously you may explain the state of Reality! But if you have not experienced this state, you are like a parrot taking the words from the human being without knowing the meaning.

Do you not desire to know the true state of Reality? If you were faithful to your own mind-you could not pass through even one day without knowing the state of reality of your own mind! Human beings are living as in a dream.

"It is as though you attempted to burn down the Sumeru mountain with the fire of a firefly. "Sumeru mountain" means the "earth." Ancient people thought this earth was standing in the center of a great ocean and that men were standing on this earth like little insects standing upside-down on a beam. They did not speak of gravity-yet somehow they knew that the small insects above the great ocean on Mount Sumeru were standing sideways and did not fall into the great ocean.'

"You could not succeed despite all your endeavors. So if you try to attain the state of Reality by reason you are like the man who "tries to burn down this earth with the fire of a firefly." This is our attitude. We throw away all reason, root out the reasoning of our mind, sit down upon the floor and with this body and mind-enter IT! We do not sit with clenched fists supporting the chin. We do not furrow the brow with reasoning. How can anyone in such a way enter the Great Ocean?

"You may attempt to enter the Tathagata's great Ocean of Nirvana, but if you have the mind which transmigrates and maintains such a view, you will fail to reach there.

When the Buddha speaks about himself he always says, "Tathagata," the general name for Buddha's meaning, as I have explained many times. "He has come thus and he goes back thus."

In this "great ocean" there is neither time nor space! The state of Nirvana is neither bright nor dark; nothing exists in the terms of existence.

There are four different conceptions of Nirvana:

First, Nirvana in the conception of the Sravaka. To them, Nirvana is absolute annihilation. It is really death--the state in which our body becomes ashes and our mind becomes void. They analyze all existence and realize that the origin is empty.

The second type affirms all existence, but it has no beginning and is illusory. Keeping all illusory images in the eyes, and all illusory sounds in the ears, he disengages himself from all illusory existences.

To recapitulate:

1. I take this glass in my hand, put it down and take away my hand. Nothing there.

2. I hold the glass in my hand. It has been here from the beginning. We are always in it.

3. We deny our five senses and thoughts. Everything is in Nirvana.
"It is as though you attempted to burn down the Sumeru mountain with the fire of a firefly! You could not succeed despite all your endeavors. You may attempt to enter the Tathagata's great ocean of Nirvana, but if you have the mind which transmigrates and maintains such a view, you will fail to reach there. For this reason I assert that all Bodhisattvas and the sentient beings of the future world must eradicate the root of the beginningless transmigrations.

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Do you not desire to know the true state of Reality? If you were faithful to your own mind—you could not pass through even one day without knowing the state of reality of your own mind! Human beings are living as in a dream.

"It is as though you attempted to burn down the Sumeru mountain with the fire of a firefly. "Sumeru mountain" means the "earth." Ancient people thought this earth was standing in the center of a great ocean and that men were standing on this earth like little insects standing upside-down on a beam. They did not speak of gravity—yet somehow they knew that the small insects above the great ocean on Mount Sumeru were standing sideways and did not fall into the great ocean.'

"You could not succeed despite all your endeavors. So if you try to attain the state of Reality by reason you are like the man who "tries to burn down this earth with the fire of a firefly." This is our attitude. We throw away all reason, root out the reasoning of our mind, sit down upon the floor and with this body and mind-enter IT! We do not sit with clenched fists supporting the chin. We do not furrow the brow with reasoning. How can anyone in such a way enter the Great Ocean?

"You may attempt to enter the Tathagata's great Ocean of Nirvana, but if you have the mind which transmigrates and maintains such a view, you will fail to reach there.

When the Buddha speaks about himself he always says, "Tathagata," the general name for Buddha's meaning, as I have explained many times. "He has come thus and he goes back thus."

In this "great ocean" there is neither time nor space! The state of Nirvana is neither bright nor dark; nothing exists in the terms of existence.

There are four different conceptions of Nirvana:

First, Nirvana in the conception of the Sravaka. To them, Nirvana is absolute annihilation. It is really death—the state in which our body becomes ashes and our mind becomes void. They analyze all existence and realize that the origin is empty.

The second type affirms all existence, but it has no beginning and is illusory. Keeping all illusory images in the eyes, and all illusory sounds in the ears, he disengages himself from all illusory existences.

To recapitulate:

1. I take this glass in my hand, put it down and take away my hand. Nothing there.

2. I hold the glass in my hand. It has been here from the beginning. We are always in it.

3. We deny our five senses and thoughts. Everything is in Nirvana.
4. Why deny it? Without denying it, everything is in it. It is like an idiot talking about fire reflected in a mirror: One says, "The fire is hot," and the other says, "No, it is not hot because it is reflected."

We do not need all these words! The quickest way to solve the problem of Nirvana is to destroy the name and to really experience "Tathagata's Great Ocean." You must feel that you are in this Great Ocean existing from the beginningless beginning to the endless end. In this boundless, bottomless, empty ocean, there is neither mountain, sea, nor sky. There is no transmigration. Your mind is endlessly transmigrating but there is no transmigration in Nirvana.

When you are an infant you are in samskara, but it is different from the samskara of the Five Shadows--it is of the Twelve Nidanas. In that darkness your consciousness is sleeping. Therefore, you are not really existing--the existence of you yourself is nothing but a name and then you will grow into 6 subdivided organs of existence. It is as water goes into something; air goes into something. So consciousness goes into these 6 sense organs, through which you make contact with the world. In the true sense, this outside world is also consciousness. And this consciousness makes contact with another consciousness. The sky, the wind, fire, water, earth, air, all are consciousness. We observe it with our senses and call it by different names, the "word" of consciousness.

Then we realize that something is existing outside and we desire to possess it. You take it, and create the karma, that causes you to transmigrate! You die, and you will be born again out of the darkness, and you will start once more. According to the karma of the past, you will repeat the new reincarnation. It is like the turning of a wheel called the Great Transmigration. I speak too much!

In the Ocean of Nirvana, there is no transmigration, which appears like waves on the surface of the still ocean. But if you adhere to the view of transmigration and refuse to relinquish it with such a mind you cannot attain the Great Ocean. You must eradicate the cause of transmigration!

"For this reason I assert that all Bodhisattvas and the sentient beings of the future world must eradicate the root of the beginningless transmigration. "Beginningless"- darkness, the first cause of the twelve Nidanas.

When you were in the mother's bosom you did not know of your own existence. What were you before father and mother? Where were you? You never question this! You go to bed, go to sleep and awake without a question. But when you practice medi-
work. Students, Bassui says, are liable to be distracted by the words of the koans and to forget that the basis of the koan is the mind itself. Any other approach to the koan betrays its true purpose, which is to realize "the one who sees and hears." It is not even enlightenment that is at issue, but "the one who realizes enlightenment". Bassui therefore urges his students to "return to the one who realizes enlightenment" (satoru shu ni kaeru).

This emphasis on the mind underlying all experience is reflected in Bassui's choice of such koans as "the one who sees and hears", "your original face", "the one who is listening to this sermon"), and "What is this!". Of all these, Bassui is most closely identified with the koan "the one who sees and hears." He urged his students to concentrate their practice on this single problem rather than dissipate their attention on a variety of cases. Yet, although Bassui's approach is based on such koans, the focus of his teaching remains the "self nature" (jisho) by which the koans are made clear. In Wadegassui shu, a collection of sermons published in 1386, shortly before his death, Bassui observes:

"The (old) masters, for the sake of others, gave out words and phrases to match the capacity of students and point directly to the mind of man. They never said, 'Use these as "koans" and get enlightenment.' There are students who, at the fall of a word, are enlightened -- and others who, after gradually puzzling over things for three or five days come to realization, while still others are enlightened after puzzling things over for three, five, ten or twenty years. The period while they do this is provisionally termed 'koan study'."

Bassui's view of the koan is perhaps idiosyncratic but his succession in the Hotto line places him near the center of the most dynamic tradition of koan Zen to evolve in China. Koho's principal teacher, Shinchi, has been referred to previously as the founder of an important Gozan teaching line that emphasized a syncretism with esoteric teachings. But Shinchi was also a disciple of the Sung-dynasty Master Wu-men Hui-kai (J: Mumon Ekai), author of the famous koan collection Mumonkan and his studies with Wu-men in China made him direct heir to the forceful brand of Sung koan Zen promulgated by Wu-men and by Ta-hui Tsung-kao.

Ta-hui had revolutionized koan Zen. He opposed the style of koan study popularized by the Blue Cliff Record, a collection of one hundred koans with verses and comments by his own teacher Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in (J: Engo Kokugon) 1063-1135. The plethora of cases and the emphasis on literary format exemplified by the Blue Cliff Record Ta-hui believed, diluted the student's concentra-

tation and have discarded many thoughts and ideas, you will ask, "What is this? I am here in my body and something is shining in my mind. The sutras speak of emptiness, but how can I be empty when I have this consciousness?"

This is a great question. When you have come to this question, you are really standing at the gate of Nirvana. When you open the door of this question you will go inside. How do you open the door of this great question? You have in the bottom of your mind a mirror and everything is reflected in it! That is your mind as big as the universe. Now your consciousness does not seem so small -- it is like the sky!

You are standing on the surface of this mirror; how do you get into it? For six years, I was in agony asking this question of myself. I had been studying Zen for a long time.

One evening, when I was folding my arms on my breast and looking at the ceiling, all of a sudden I realized that the door had been opened a long time ago.

I will say no more about this -- you must experience it for yourself -- but when I returned to Japan and demonstrated my understanding to my teacher, he acknowledged the genuineness of my experience. I was very glad that I had a true teacher to give me this assurance.

Everyone in Zen will experience this. I thought there was a question, thought there was a gate. But when I came to the experience, the gate had vanished. Then I thought of the Gateless Gate that the ancients wrote about, and I thought I was fortunate to have a teacher who was not talking from a book but one who can speak from experience. Therefore he can judge the experience of his disciples.

This experience happened 2,500 years ago and 500 years ago it was brought to Japan from China. China got it from Bodhidharma of India. From his time, teacher and pupil have reflected each other as two mirrors, eye to eye. Not words!

"O Obedient One! When reasoning begins, the mind begins to function. This mind activity results from the six illusory rajas. - Color, sound, etc. The six rajas are produced by our Alaya consciousness, the consciousness of the whole being. A different being sees a different world. This mind produces this reflection.

My consciousness as a human being is as large as the universe. It is Alaya consciousness. You must open the door and go inside this Alaya consciousness. The reasoning mind is like someone
talking in the night while sleeping!

Reasoning is not the true aspect of mind. One plus one equals two but if there is no one? And zero is not the true aspect of existence -- zero and one are relative. These numbers are the knowledge of you. So, in Reality, one plus one may make, not one, but twenty-five hundred million!

Vimalakirti, in his ten-foot room, invited 10,000 Bodhisattvas to sit down. No, reasoning is not the true aspect of mind.

"It is like the flowers blossoming in the sky. If you attempt to attain the state of Buddha by reasoning, it would be as though you waited for the flowers of the sky to bear fruit in the sky!" I hope you will know the state of Reality in your lifetime!

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Twenty-Five Zen Koans
Selected and Translated by Sokei-an Sasaki

Sixth Koan
(Saturday, February 12, 1938)

A monk asked (Zen Master) Rakuho the following question:

"It is said: 'Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk than to the multifarious Buddhas.' I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk."

Rakuho said:

"When a white cloud lies
At the entrance of a vale,
Many returning birds vainly seek
Their nests in the night."
Jakushitsu remained the only Japanese traveler to Yuan China who on his return actively promoted Chung-feng’s particular brand of nembutsu syncretism, but it was Chung-feng’s notion of practice in retreat, that constituted his primary legacy to Japanese Zen.

During the fourteenth century, ‘retreat’ zen attracted many Gozan monks, who, like Jakushitsu, abandoned the sorin for provincial temples and teachers. For some, this was a deliberate reaction to the aristocratic culture of the Gozan temples and reflected a certain current of self criticism within the sorin; for others, a negative desire for withdrawal from the world was paramount, while certain monks adopted ‘retreat’ zen merely as a posture. Yet, in one form or another, zen practice in retreats continued to represent a significant religious alternative for the monks of the Gozan temples and many of their leading patrons. As noted earlier, the Emperor himself cultivated the acquaintance of recluse monks, inviting them to the capital or traveling to the provinces to meet with them, and his example was followed by prominent warriors at the Shogunal court.

Jakushitsu was but one of many outstanding Zen teachers who established themselves in provincial Japan during the fourteenth century. Like Jakushitsu, these early rinka leaders were idealists; priests who, in many cases, had been linked with Gozan teachers or lineages early in their careers but had subsequently chosen an independent course outside the sorin. Among the most famous of these masters were Gettan Soko (1326-1389) of Daimyoji in Tamba (Kyoto Municipal District) and Bassui Tokusho (1327-1387), founder of the Kogaku line, named for his principal temple, Kogakuji in Kai (Yamanashi Prefecture). Both Bassui and Gettan espoused a practical, direct approach to Zen that was popular and accessible without being syncretic. In contrast to the refined literary products of the Gozan monks, their recorded teachings, were for the most part phrased simply in ordinary Japanese, yet dealt with central questions of Zen practice and enlightenment.

Despite Gettan’s popularity during his lifetime, little is known of the details of his character or career. He studied for a time with Muso and various other sorin teachers and later with the Hotto line master Koho Kakumyo (1271-1361) of Izumo (Shimane Prefecture) before becoming the heir of an obscure provincial Daio-line teacher. Gettan’s teaching stressed the importance of original enlightenment as the basis for Zen study, and certain statements in the Gettan kana record are curiously similar to passages in Bankei’s sermons. Gettan insists that all that is needed in the study of Zen is a thoroughgoing realization of the source of the mind (kokoro no kongen). Students are wrong to bother their teachers to assign them koans: the superior student comes

Sokei-an:

This is all about this koan -- koan means Zen question. The question which the monk asked is a question, and the answer which was given this monk by Rakuho is also a question.

We study why this monk asked this question and why he was answered thus. In the Zen temple the Master gives this question to his disciples and he places emphasis upon the answer. The student endeavors to disclose the hidden meaning of these words. It is so-called Zen study. To make a study of a Zen question, we must understand the history of this particular question. What period is this? Who is Rakuho? And this answer by Rakuho -- was it his or the words which were written in some other previous sutra? Or the question asked by the monk: was it his own invention or was it also written in some previous sutras? We must make a research, gather all the knowledge, then meditate upon it and find the real meaning of this question and answer.

Of course this study was made by our foregoing students, but sometimes their study was not deep enough, so we must make the study once also.

The monk’s question is written in a sutra that was a description of Indian teachings, translated by Indian monks into Chinese and brought to China in the first century. The translation was made in Kotan -- now the Chinese call it Wutan -- in Turkestan. Kotan is near the Caspian Sea and was a colonial city of India in ancient days. Then China conquered that country. Today it is under the control of Soviet Russia.

On the border of the Takla-Makan desert, there was a highway from China to India; also from China to Samarkand and Kotan and all those countries west. Near Kotan are many still famous cities like Samarkand, one of the famous cities of Russia. The Buddhists came to China from India through that route. And Chinese monks went that way to India also and met there. Many translations were made there.

"Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk than to the multiform Buddhas." "Multiform" means many different Buddhas, many different natures. There was Sakyamuni Buddha and before him Kasyapa, Kanaka and other remote, historical Buddhas. Sakyamuni was born in India. Some of the Buddhas may have been born in Egypt, some in the Tibetan mountains and perhaps some even in Atlantis!

"Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk... What is an empty-minded monk? An idiot? An idiot is not an empty-minded
monk! The mind of an idiot is just stuffed up with unimportant matters. An idiot's head is not made of ivory. If you keep much stuff in your mind, you will become ivory-headed. In Buddhism we do not try to keep any stuff in our mind -- we try to have an empty mind, empty the sawdust from the mind! And to empty the mind we think that we must put something in the mind to push the sawdust out. So we study science, art, philosophy, religion to push the old stuff out, but then we need to push the new things out also. When you wash your hand with soap, it smells of soap. It is not clean yet for you must wash that soap smell off also. Likewise you need to clean those new things out also, and then your mind becomes pure and empty as it was begotten by nature -- this is so-called "empty-minded." Then you will understand its meaning.

Everyone offers alms to those Buddhas of stone, of wood; and to Buddhas made of philosophy, mythology, mystery. The Buddhas outside or the Buddhas inside -- they are all images! You create Buddhas by philosophy, make a theology and then make a conviction and think it is a truth-- this is also an image.

An empty-minded monk has no image in the mind. He has studied, of course, all those theologies and philosophies, and accepted that mythological religion of Buddha in the middle of the sky, mounted on a white elephant with six tusks...And then, to cast that mythology away, he studied canonical religion--six tusks are the six senses; the six senses, consciousness; six legs, power. And then he pushed all that out by a clear avenue. The clear avenue is Zen. This is the meaning of almsgiving to an empty-minded monk. And then, this monk asked:

I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk. A very good question! This monk was an empty-minded monk, so he cannot make any distinction between those images and the empty-minded monk. Because images are beautiful, why cast them out? One who is educated will study some books and save his own soul. And one who does not need those metaphysical notions will clean up his own mind and find reality. Each one has his own way. Why is one better than another? In this monk's mind were two questions: First, what is wrong about those buddhas? Second, what is good about that monk? Bad and good! Rakuho answered:

When a white cloud lies a the entrance of a vale, many returning birds vainly seek their nests in the night. It is very difficult to grasp the meaning of this answer. A long time ago I made an answer to these words:

The white mist covers the entrance of the vale in the mountain
It closes the returning birds into the vale.

Some only joined them briefly as part of a circuit of continental Zen temples; but others, like Dogen, remained long enough to become heirs in their Chinese teacher's line and returned to Japan as teachers in their own right. Faithful to the examples of their Chinese masters, many of these monks avoided the large metropolitan temples and settled with their followers in the countryside, where they attempted to preserve the authenticity of the teaching they had received in China.

Zen practice in rural retreat, had an important influence on the formation of the rinka. The leading Japanese exemplar was the Rinzai monk Jakushitsu Genko, referred to previously. Jakushitsu had begun his career in the Gozan temples of Kyoto and Kamakura, distinguishing himself as an accomplished student of literary Chinese. At age twenty-one, he left the Gozan to travel to the continent in search of "authentic" Zen, and, like most of his Japanese contemporaries visiting China, studied with the two foremost Zen teachers of the day, the literary monk Ku-lin Ching-mou, leader of the Chi-sung (J: geju) movement, and the Lin-chi Zen Master Chung-feng Ming-pen. Ku-lin and the Chi-sung movement had a profound impact on Jakushitsu's literary style; but it was his contact with Chung-feng and other Chinese recluse monks that seems to have determined his spiritual outlook.

Chung-feng has been called the representative Yuan Zen master. He enjoyed enormous popularity, and his hermitage attracted not only monks from China and abroad but many Yuan government officials. Chung-feng's teaching emphasized strict purity of practice in retreat combined with the syncretism with Pure Land belief that was a popular feature of Chinese Zen during the Sung dynasty. Although an orthodox tradition of pure Zen had continued in both Lin-chi and Ts'ao-t'ung schools, Sung Zen was basically syncretic, emphasizing the unity of Zen with Confucianism, scriptural teaching and, above all, Pure Land belief. Although the synthesis of Pure Land and Zen was rejected by some as a vulgarization contrary to orthodox practice, it became widespread in China and eventually in Japan. From the standpoint of Chung-feng and his Japanese followers, Pure Land thought represented not a dilution of Zen teachings but a reformist element, a kind of Pietism counteracting the worldliness and vanity of the official temples, and the particular combination of Zen in rural retreat and Pure Land syncretism taught by Chung-feng and later in Japan by Jakushitsu can probably be viewed within this context.

Returning to Japan, Jakushitsu avoided the sorin and retired to a hermitage in a remote Hiroshima Prefecture. His fame as a poet and teacher spread to the capital, but true to Chung-feng's teaching, he refused the abbacy of Tenryuji and passed the remainder of his career in a series of secluded retreats and provincial temples.
Japanese visitors were frequently attracted to these groups. Evidence suggests that the majority of those abandoning the Gozan temples for the provinces were primarily aspiring literati rather than practicing Zen monks. If their biographies tend to emphasize their literary accomplishments, it may be to conceal the truth that these were, in fact, men who found themselves unable to compete effectively in the literary world of the sorin subtemples and were obliged to withdraw to the countryside. Class considerations also played a role. The intimate connection between the sorin and the aristocratic life of Kyoto bred alienation among those monks of humble background, and members of this group often felt impelled to leave the Gozan for provincial temples.

For others, however, the source of dissatisfaction with life in the sorin was principally spiritual. The tatchu system brought with it not only a rigidification of the existing Gozan lines, but the virtual abandonment of Zen practice in favor of the pursuit of aristocratic literary culture. More and more monks rejected this literary Zen of the Gozan to seek an active form of Zen practice. Many left for Daitokuji and Myoshinji, where the basic features of traditional Zen study had survived. Situated in Kyoto, the Daitoku-line temples represented a powerful magnet, which, as the bitter complaints of sorin abbots attest, continued to attract the disaffected from the Gozan. Often, however, such dissidents from the sorin left the cities altogether and set off for the provinces, where an entirely new Zen world was evolving.

As with the formation of the sorin, trends in contemporary Chinese Zen also played a role in the emergence of the rinka in provincial Japan. The Wu-shan temples of the Southern Sung had gradually become centers of aristocratic culture whose literary monks became models for their counterparts in the Japanese Gozan. There were other Chinese monks, however, who rejected the effete atmosphere of these temples and favored a life of austere practice in remote provincial areas. These reformers were drawn largely from particular Ts'ao-t'ung (J: Soto) and Lin-chi Yang-ch'i (J: Rinzai) lines, men like Dogen's teacher T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching (1163-1228) and the Yuan Master Chung-feng Ming-pen (1263-1327). While their teachings might differ, such masters shared an abhorrence of the cosmopolitan world of the Wu-shan. Their assemblies adhered to strict monastic discipline and tended to be self-supporting, occupied principally with religious rather than economic, cultural or institutional concerns.

Japanese visitors were frequently attracted to these groups.

It means that if we have any notion in our mind, the truth will be closed—we cannot attain the truth. I made such an answer and my teacher shouted at me. My answer was wrong! How many years I have been studying Buddhism! And for many years I was thinking about this. I have made the poem in English. In English the poetical value is none; but in the original it was a poem.

We must make a study of this Rakuho. He died in 898, about the end of the Tang dynasty. He was a younger contemporary of the famous Zen master Rinzai. Rakuho came six generations after the Sixth Patriarch. We must know the tendency of his mind—how he grew up and what type of understanding he attained; and what type of man he was. It is very interesting to us. Not so interesting to other people, perhaps, but to speak of this koan we must give this information. When I began this series, I thought I could surely give twenty-five dramatic stories. But it has become very difficult. I will soon change to something else—but I will finish this first!

Rakuho was a young man who had studied theoretical Buddhism and after twenty years became a monk. He came to northern China, to Shin-chou, not so near as Peiping but quite deep inland. There the famous master Rinzai lived, and Rakuho became his personal attendant.

One day a zashu (lecture master) came to have an interview with the Master. The Master asked the zashu, "On what sutra do you lecture?" The zashu answered, "I have, as best I may, made a study of the Abhidharma of the one hundred laws." The Master said, "Suppose here were one who had no comprehension of the three vehicles or of the twelve divisions of the teachings and here were another who had perfect comprehension of the three vehicles or of the twelve divisions of the teachings; would there be any distinction between them or would they be exactly the same?" The zashu said, "To one who has attained the comprehension, both are the same; but to one who has not, they appear different."

At that time Rakuho was the personal attendant of the Master, standing beside him. Rakuho said to the zashu, "O, zashu, what do you think this place is, discussing whether they are the same or different!" Rakuho was a young man standing behind the Master, and he interfered with the conversation. From this we get a hint of his character—very sharp, very true, too. The real meaning of the Chinese is: "What are you talking about in this place—this world? All is empty." He was young, still standing in the notion of emptiness.

Turning his head, the Master questioned Rakuho, "What do you think about it?" Thereat Rakuho roared a Ho! This was a Zen expression at that time. He does not talk about it in words,
just gives a shout!

The Master came back from seeing the zashu off, and then asked Rakuho, "Did you roar the Ho! at me or the zashu?" Rakuho said, "Yes." Thereat the Master smote him. Smote him with his staff. Of course, Rinzai's question was to hook him like a fish. "Have you shouted at me or at that one?" Rakuho thought that to shout at him or the Master was the same shout, would be the same, so Rinzai would smite him. What do you say?

I have not much time, but I must speak a little more. Rakuho came into this dilemma of Yes or No. There is a little more of this incident, but there is no time. Later, Rakuho left Rinzai, went to Tan-in Lake, a beautiful lake, built a hut and lived there.

'Better offer your alms to an empty-minded monk than to the multifarious Buddhas.' I wonder what is wrong about the Buddhas and what is good about an empty-minded monk? The monk who asked this question tried to search the mind of Rakuho. This question has two parts; comes this way, that way. I shall not try to explain the attitudes, but you must try to understand them.

"When a white cloud lies
At the entrance of a vale,
Many returning birds vainly seek
Their nests in the night."

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From the Editor

On the cover is the card we sent to Joshu Sasaki Roshi in honor of his 45 years teaching and a century traveling the Buddha trail, perhaps in the footsteps of an earlier Joshu who taught till he was 120. We had many intense sesshins with him in the 70's and 80's and sometimes the Institute seemed to bulge at the seams with the many people attending. It was a lively era and we thank him for the opportunity to practice with a genuine Zen Master.

Again, we wish him well and many days of teaching ahead.

... Successor...

How can you find him, if you look for him?
How can he find himself, if he looks for you?
Yet he knows you and you, him and whenever you meet,
Even if the demons of death are knocking on his door,
He cannot help but smile...

duction, important Japanese teachers were forsaking the temples of the capital cities for provincial retreats. Some, like Muso's teacher Koho Kennichi, were monks naturally inclined to a life of seclusion, and many of the Gozan lines had their genesis in the provinces, only later becoming identified with the centers of power. Other early teachers however, had more practical reasons for settling in the countryside. As noted earlier, Kyoto Zen tended to be highly syncretic, incorporating practices from the old Buddhist sects that had traditionally dominated religious life in the capital. The Tendai establishment on Mt. Hiei, in particular, remained a powerful political and military organization and jealously opposed any attempt to promote a non-syncretic form of Zen in Kyoto. Zen monks who defied Engakuji on this score were often forced to leave the capital. Some, like Daito, fled to Kamakura, but others withdrew to the provinces. Dogen, whose efforts to teach a pure Sung Zen at Kenninji led to his expulsion from Kyoto by the Hiei soldier-monks, retreated to the countryside and eventually established himself in the mountains of Echizen, in what is now Fukui Prefecture.

In time, it became possible to circumvent the pressures of the Hiei monks and orthodox Zen was able to make its appearance in Kyoto--first, briefly, at Nanzenji and, later, in the Daio-line temples under the patronage of the Emperor and the court. However, as the Muromachi period progressed, the supremacy of the Gozan lines, and particularly of the Muso-lines, effectively foreclosed participation in Kyoto Zen to most other groups. Perhaps because of their Imperial connections, the principal Daio-line temples--Daitokuji and Myoshinji--managed to maintain their independence. But other less influential Kyoto Zen lines were faced with the choice of joining the Muso line or leaving the capital.

This was, for example, the fate of the early followers of the Genju-line, a Rinzai lineage founded by Yuan Master Chong-feng's Japanese disciple Onkei Soyu (1286-1344). Despite Chong-feng's preference for rural seclusion, various Genju-line monks had remained in the cities and assumed office within the Gozan temples. Those who refused to change their affiliation to the Muso line, however, were eventually forced to join their brethren in the provinces. Within the established Gozan, meanwhile, the teaching lines soon became frozen, and little flexibility remained. As the construction of substemples within the sorin reached the saturation point, new lines could no longer be accommodated, and teachers or groups of disciples seeking to establish independent lines were now obliged to do so in the provinces.

The character of Gozan Zen and the literary atmosphere of the Gozan tatchu (substemples) were themselves responsible for many of the defections from the sorin. Participation in the life of
BANKEI AND HIS WORLD
by Peter Haskel

Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in their land 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 therefore 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 to as the Muromachi period (1333-1573), after the Muromachi district of Kyoto where the reigning Ashikaga shoguns had their palace. Much of the information cited below 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, #11)
(Continued from the FALL ’06 Zen Notes)

The Rinka

While the sorin prospered in the capitals of Kyoto and Kamakura, the rinka had been quietly taking shape, centered in provincial Japan where the influence of the Gozan scarcely penetrated. Many of the founders of the leading rinka groups, however, were not originally rinka teachers, but themselves graduates of the sorin. Despite the advantages of official support, life in the grand temples of Kyoto and Kamakura was not congenial to many Zen priests. Motives for abandoning the sorin varied, from the idealistic to the pragmatic but the pattern of Zen monks leaving the Gozan for rinka temples and teachers is one which appears to continue throughout the Muromachi period.

Already in the Kamakura period, at the time of Zen's intro-
EN NOTES

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