Zen notes

Baisao

What's the tea seller got in his basket?
Bottomless tea cups?
A two-spouted pot?
He pokes around town for a small bit of rice,
Working very hard for next to nothing---
Blinkering old drudge just plodding ahead...

Bah!

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

FORTY-EIGHTH LECTURE

Wednesday June 28th, 1939

"Because of desires, trisna is aroused; because of Jiva (living soul), all living beings have desire. Sentient beings love their lives and desires are the source of this love. Love of desire is the cause of the love of life, and love of life is the result of love of desire. All circumstances agreeable or disagreeable appear according to the desire of sentient beings. Hatred and jealousy are aroused in their minds by circumstances unfavorable to their love. They create accordingly all kinds of karma. Thus they beget their lives in the naraka or in the preta. If they realized the outcome, they would find their desires abominable. They would find their joy in abandoning the conduct which creates karma and leads them into evil ways. Abnegating evil conduct and enjoying good conduct, they will be born in the way of manusya and deva. Then they will realize that every kind of attachment is abominable. They will therefore abandon the love of attachment and enjoy the practice of renunciation. They will, however, realize that this love of renunciation is still nourishing the root of attachment."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

In this part, the conduct of man, karma and transmigration in many different ways are explained. This is the Buddha's answer to Bodhisattva Maitreya as to "how to eradicate the root of transmigration, and how many kinds of transmigration are there."

"*Because of desire, trisna is aroused;*" —This "trisna" is always translated as "thirst" —intense desire. This desire always has an object; it is an innate desire. It is the seed which arouses the desire, as the seed of fire makes a conflagration.

"*... because of Jiva, all living beings have desire.*" —"Jiva," in Sanskrit, means "the principle of life" or "living soul." "Soul" as used in English is the nearest to the Sanskrit "Jiva." There is a word, "jiva-atman" —the life of the individual being—which is different from "Jiva," the life of the universe. It is called "jiva-atman" because the life of the individual being comes from the life

of the universe. In Sanskrit, there are many words to use for this "living soul." But the word "Jiva" means the soul of the universe, and "jiva-atman" is the individual soul.

"*Sentient beings love their lives and desires are the source of this love.*" —No sentient being wishes to give up his life; he clings to it. This is the instinct of every sentient being. Why do they love their lives? Because, by living they can accomplish their desire. They wish to dance, to sing, to drink, to eat...

When there is no woman to dance with—no song to sing—no wine to drink—when such hopes are destroyed, many sentient beings commit suicide.

"*Love of desire is the cause of the love of life, and love of life is the result of love of desire.*" —So desire isn't the first! "Because of Jiva—all living beings have desire." The first desire is to keep one's own life; by keeping it he can enjoy it—and to enjoy oneself is the whole source of the love of life.

There are five enjoyments in the life of man: To eat, to generate, to make money, to become famous, and to sleep (take rest). To accomplish these desires—men love their lives; sentient beings live for so-called "happiness." "Love, happiness, and success" is the motto; for this human beings have intense desire.

"*All circumstances, agreeable and disagreeable, appear according to the desires of sentient beings.*" —Man creates his own circumstances; it is his karma; some circumstances are agreeable and some are not. When you go to work, the subway is quite uncomfortable—but on your way home, it seems very comfortable!

"*Hatred and jealousy are aroused in their minds by circumstances unfavorable to their love.*" —So they try to make circumstances that are agreeable. Thus they create karma, many karmas!

Someone wishes to go on vacation; he has no money, but his mother keeps some in a Chinese vase in the kitchen. To make his circumstances agreeable, he will steal the money, seduce a woman, tell a lie, go to jail-- and be hanged! Desire causes everything in human life.

To give up this desire in so-called renunciation is the first thing. Therefore, the first day of practice is that of starvation, poverty, no friends, no house, no occupation. One who has practiced this renunciation is called a monk; he must have the philosophy of renunciation; he abominates all the desires by which he transmigrates.

"*They create accordingly all kinds of karma. Thus they beget their lives in the naraka or the preta.*" —There are three ways in which men can fight against unfavorable circumstances: First, revolution; they conspire to upset the social structure, communism. Second, dictatorship; someone takes the power and commands the others. The third way is renunciation; to relinquish the world, go to a mountain cave and die there! These people do not enjoy life but they find friends, they have followers. The Buddha was the first one, and we follow him, but his renunciation is of another kind.

So we are all creating our karma. Naraka is hell, the hell of our own conduct which is in our own mind.

I have among my friends those who are gangsters and gamblers; they are living now in hell (nark) and some will receive life among the preta (demons).

"*If they realized the outcome they would find their lives abominable. They would find joy in abandoning the conduct which creates karma and lead them into evil ways.*" —"Evil ways" means the ways to hell, to demons, to asuras.

"*Abnegating evil conduct and enjoying good conduct, they will be born in the ways of manusya and deva.*" —That is be born as men and devas. I gave a very careful explanation about manusya and deva in some previous lecture and I shall not repeat it.

Everyone would like to enjoy good conduct, but to nourish your body, you must kill pigs and cows! To create one good karma, man usually creates two evil karmas. This world is a maze of good and bad.

"*Then they will realize that every kind of attachment is abominable.*" —"Attachment" is love. Trisna and love are the same; but here I use different words to give different shades of meaning; sometimes I use desire, sometimes attachment or love. But this "love" is different from the usual kind.

"*They will therefore abandon the love of attachment and enjoy the practice of renunciation. They will not, however, realize that this love of renunciation is still nourishing the root of attachment.*" —"I don't like this world! I will give it up and go somewhere else." This, too, is attachment! "I don't want to eat meat, drink wine, do business, tell a lie, so I became a monk." Attachment! You must renounce this love of attachment or you cannot be a perfect man. The Buddha means here that those who have this love of renunciation are practicing "rupa-dhatu" and remaining in attachment.

First, you dislike this world of "love." Here I use this word "love" as descriptive. Then, by the practice of meditation, you open a new world where you can see everything with disinterested attachment. It is as an artist who goes to the country and sketches a vegetable garden. He does not wish to possess the garden and eat the vegetables!

When I studied at the Ryomo Academy of Art in Tokyo, I realized that my world, the world in which I was living, was entirely different from the world outside. We were using nude models and when we exhibited a policeman came and put a hand-kerchief before a plaster-of-paris statue! People are not trained in abstracting their minds from objective existence so that they may see purely. When you can see purely, and see aesthetically then you can see the figure of Arupadhatu. The world exists for your sense perceptions, not for your desire. You may go to the Aquacade at the World's Fair and see many beautiful women. Do you dream of sending love letters to them? To see something beautiful without wanting to possess it is the state of Arupadhatu. It is a state that you can attain!

But if they are "*still nourishing the root of attachment*" —they cannot accept everything that exists on the surface of the earth. Some think they are perfect men. Why then cannot they accept the world? Because they take a snobbish attitude. Such men are not yet detached from "thirst."

From here on the Buddha will speak of Mahayana Buddhism.

BANKEI AND HIS WORLD
by Peter Haskel

ZEN IN THE MUROMACHI PERIOD (Part I, #18)
(Continued from the Summer '08 Zen Notes)

Myoshinji (part 2)

As Myoshinji prospered and attracted powerful supporters under Sekko and his heirs, its line's teachers were able to assume office at Daitokuji. Daitokuji vigorously resisted such efforts, and in 1444 Ikkyu even joined with his archival Yoso in an effort to prevent Myoshinji's Nippo Soshun from receiving Daitokuji's abbacy. With the Hosokawa warlord clan's backing, however, Nippo was finally installed, becoming the first of a series of distinguished Myoshinji priests to serve as Daitokuji's abbot. Through their position at Daitokuji, Myoshinji teachers could also receive the purple robe, a privilege the Myoshinji had lost following its founder Kanzan's death, and in 1453 Nippo's disciple Giten Gensho received the purple robe upon his appointment to Daitokuji's abbacy. Here too, however, the influence of Myoshinji's warlord patron Hosokawa Katsumoto was crucial, and Daitokuji monks remained resentful of what they regarded as the imposition of abbots from a former branch temple.

Their outrage was no doubt compounded when in 1507 they learned that Myoshinji was to become an Imperial temple like Daitokuji. The *chokushi nyuji*, the ceremony by which one assumed the abbacy of an Imperial temple, could only be carried out by an independent temple; so that by assuming the status of an Imperial temple, Myoshinji was in effect declaring itself the equal of Daitokuji and dissolving its previous relationship as a branch establishment of the temple. Daitokuji's monks attempted to have their own military patrons, the Akamatsu clan, intervene to prevent the abbacy ceremony from taking place. But Myoshinji appealed for help to the Hosokawas, who assembled their troops at the temple and forestalled any interference with the ceremony. Myoshinji's independent status was officially confirmed in 1509 when it received the Imperial robe from Emperor Go Kashiwabara (1500-1526) and was recognized as the equal of both Nanzenji and Daitokuji, over the strong objections of the latter. Following this event, relations between Daitokuji and Myoshinji were formally severed.

By the time of Sekko's death, the Myoshinji line was quickly emerging as a leading Zen organization. Not only had the main

temple in the capital been revived, but the Myoshinji line had experienced dramatic success in provincial Japan. Unable to expand its influence in Kyoto in the face of the Muso line's domination of Kyoto Zen and the indifference and, finally, hostility of the Ashikaga,, Myoshinji teachers had increasingly turned their attention to the provinces. There are records of monks on pilgrimage in the 1470's in search of true Zen studying with provincial Myoshinji masters, realizing satori, receiving inka and becoming heirs in the Kanzan line. Although Myoshinji's provincial expansion had already begun in the early fifteenth century, it increased dramatically from the time of Sekko and his four disciples and the institution of the temple's rotating abbacy system.

Like other rinka organizations, the Myoshinji line was welcomed by the new social classes then on the rise in the provinces--country warlords, merchants, doctors--and by the early part of the sixteenth century, Kanzan's line had established substantial power in provincial Japan, with Mine and Hida (Gifu Prefecture) becaming the leading provincial centers of Myoshinji Zen under the patronship of the Tosa clan warlords. Even after the sixteenth century, Myôshinji's presence remained here strong, continuing well into the Tokugawa period.

In common with the other rinka lines, however, the Myoshinji line paid a price for its success in provincial Japan. As in the case of the Soto Keizan line, the conduct of funeral and memorial services and the performance of Esoteric Buddhist rites for patrons became regular features of provincial Myoshinji Zen. The *goroku*, or records, of sixteenth century Myoshinji monks, for example, consist mainly of memorial services and ceremonies for the bestowal of Buddhist names on laypeople. Over a third of the surviving Myoshinji-line Dharma talks concern funeral rites performed for lay followers in advance of their death to secure their happiness in the next world. Such rites were not limited to the Myoshinji line, but represented a common practice in late Medieval Japanese Buddhism, reflecting the general instability of the Sengoku, or "warring states," period (1467-1568). Linked to the performance of funeral rites was a rite known as *jisetsu,* which involved the bestowal of religious names. Such names, in imitation of the names given to monks, consisted of two parts, known as azana and imina, and in Japan were commonly given to laymen after death. During the Sengoku period, however, these names were given during the layman's lifetime as a kind of spiritual "insurance," and jisetsu figure prominently in the records of Myoshinji teachers of the time.

As elsewhere in the rinka, koan study in the Myoshinji temples degenerated and gave way to the practice of missan Zen, the Esoteric-style transmission of koan, which became a fixture of sixteenth century Kanzan line teaching in both the capital and prov-

inces. Examples of missan roku survive from all four leading Myoshinji lines, indicating that missan practice pervaded every branch of the temple. Yet the character of Myoshinji Zen during the late Muromachi period and the precise manner in which it came to incorporate the missan system remain unclear. Sekko, for example, is said to have rejected the "literary Zen" of the sorin, the official temples, and spent thirty-four years in Zen study, first under Nippo and later under Nippo's heir Giten, before receiving Giten's inka; but of what Sekko's Zen study consisted is not known. Toyo's teaching, too, remains a problem. As the founder of the Shotaku line (which gave rise to Bankei, Hakuin, and other famous teachners), he displayed a concern for the Myoshinji's traditions, composing a work tracing the temple's lineage in both China and Japan as well as a history of the temple itself; but to what extent Toyo's Zen actually reflected that of Kanzan, Myoshinji's founder, is unclear. He produced a commentary on the *Blue Cliff Record*, suggesting that this work was as important in the Kanzan line as in the Daito and Keizan lines, and compiled a famous collection of capping words, now known as *Zenrinkushu,* but originally titled *Kuzoshi*.. In the case of Myoshinji's Reiun line, we know that the missan denju was in use among Tokuho's direct descendants by at least the midsixteenth century, but, again, details are lacking.

Whatever the true nature of Zen practice at Myoshinji, the Sengoku period was a time of unprecedented material glory for the temple. Imperial support continued to play an important role. Connections with the emperor and the court were deepened under Tokuho's heir Daikyu Sokyu (1468-1549), who became the teacher of the Emperor Go Nara (r. 1526-1557). Go Nara patronized principally Daio line teachers, and seems to have formed a particularly close relationship with Daikyu, studying with him for many years and finally receiving Daikyu's inka in 1542. Daikyu himself served twice as abbot of Myoshinji, and after his death received the title of National Teacher (*kokushi*) from Go Nara, who became the disciple of Daikyu's successor.

As in Sekko's day, however, Myoshinji's principal source of patronage remained the military. Initially, Daitokuji had taken the lead in recruiting patrons, but it had contented itself with the support of its military and aristocratic supporters in Kyoto, and later the merchants of Hakata and Sakai. By contrast, Myoshinji, with its strength in provincial Japan, cultivated the backing of the newly powerful warlords, or *sengoku* ***daimyo***, and as a result eventually outdistanced Daitokuji. With the support of these new warlords, Myoshinji was able to gradually appropriate the bulk of the Gozan branch temples in the provinces and, as the influence of the Sengoku warlords penetrated Kyoto, to bolster its position in the capital itself.

Throughout the sixteenth century, Myoshinji attracted the support of important generals. Within the main temple, this support was reflected in a spate of new construction. The number of new sub temples proliferated, with the Sengoku warlords vying in their erection, a movement that continued at Myoshinji until the Keicho era (1596-1614). Rather than functional organs of the main temple, however, many of these were the memorial temples of the warlords themselves.

The vogue for the erection of sub temples at Myoshinji suggests the influence of the Gozan, and it appears that even as Myoshinji rose to prominence, displacing the Gozan in Kyoto and in the provinces, it assumed certain features of Gozan Zen. Recalling the role of their counterparts in the Gozan, under the Ashikaga, Myoshinji monks became intimates of the new military barons, acting as their political as well as spiritual advisors and probably serving to furnish intelligence on affairs in the capital through their connections with the headquarters temple in Kyoto. Myoshinji even produced literary priests of distinction who were patronized by the warlords, priests such as Tetsuzan Sodon (1531-1617), who had studied under Gozan teachers and served both Takeda Shingen and Tokugawa Ieyasu. The latter was instrumental in promoting Tetsuzan to Myoshinji's abbacy and enabled him to effect completion of the temple's famous entryway.

In an age when the balance of power was often precarious such associations carried risks as well as rewards. Like the monks of the Gozan sub temples, Myoshinji teachers frequently viewed themselves as quasi retainers of their military patrons and found themselves directly involved in their victories and losses on the battlefield. Perhaps the most celebrated such figure in this period was the Myoishinji-line master Kaisen Shoki (d. 1582), abbot of Erinji in Kai, a former Muso line temple infiltrated by Myoshinji's Kaisen line. Kai was the heartland of the Takeda clan, Erinji's principal patron. But with the death of Takeda Shingen and the subsequent defeat of his son by the Oda in 1582, the clan perished, and Nobunaga invited Kaisen to his camp. Kaisen, however, bluntly refused, out of loyalty to his former protector Shingen.

Nobunaga seems to have accepted the refusal with good grace, but when Kaisen subsequently gave shelter at Erinji to fleeing remnants of the Takeda army, Nobunaga was outraged and dispatched his forces with orders to place the hundred remaining Erinji monks in the temple's upper story, pile wood beneath and set it ablaze. The monks are said to have remained seated calmly in meditation, led by Kaisen, who addressed them, saying: "All of you, at this moment, here amid the flames, how do you turn the wheel of the Law? Each of you make your death verse!" When each of the monks in turn had offered a verse, Kaisen himself in-

toned in a loud voice, "When the mind is annihilated, even fire is cool of itself," and was then consumed by the flames.

Nobunaga died shortly after the burning of Erinji, and his former retainer Hideyoshi set about completing the task of unification. Having consolidated his power over the provincial warlords, Hideyoshi gradually proceeded to do the same with the Buddhist establishment including the Zen temples of the capital. Nanzenji managed to retain its traditional position as leader of the Gozan, but it was the "Otokan" temples, Daitokuji and Myoshinji, which emerged superior in rank, with the sorin reduced to merely ceremonial existence. Hideyoshi was an ardent patron of Myoshinji, and under his rule the temple experienced its greatest period of prosperity. Having survived hostility, destruction and near extinction, Myoshinji had risen to be, in effect, the leading Zen temple of the capital. At the same time, it had secured a powerful and enduring foothold in provincial Japan and permanently outdistanced such erstwhile rivals as Daitokuji and Nanzenji.

From Our Lineage

In a recent issue of "The Middle Way" published by the Buddhist Society of London there was an article by Daizan Skinner Roshi on Yamaoka Tesshu (1836-1888) a famous Japanese swordsman of the Meiji era. Tesshu was also one of the founding members of Ryomokyo-Kai, a group set up by Kosen the founding master of our lay line. The following, except for the brush drawings and poems, is an excerpt from a talk given by Skinner Roshi at the exhibition of Tesshu's Zen Calligraphy at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, November 2008. --editor--

Tesshu's "awakening" poem

Perfect when clear
Perfect when cloudy
Mt Fuji's original form
Never changes.

Tesshu

...In 1853 the American black ships under Commodore Perry appeared, demanding that Japan open up to foreign trade. These gunboats sent a shock wave through the country. Suddenly this fossilized medieval state in which change had been banned, in which the samurai still devoted years to their swordsmanship, was thrust into the world of artillery and steamships. Over the next few years, instability increased to the level where full blown civil war erupted. Tesshu was still in Tokyo at this time.

Over in the far west of Japan is the island of Kyushu. On this island, a small foreign connection had continued, with a few Dutch traders permitted to anchor on an artificial island off the coast. The Kyushu samurai consequently had a more forward looking approach and sought to renew Japan. The plan was to establish the emperor, who had been in the shadow of the shogun for centuries, as a more visible figurehead representing the enduring tradition of Japan. At the same time, they wanted modernization. So a rebel army arose. It was led by Saigo Takamori, a charismatic man of great integrity who ended up dying a tragic death, thus guaranteeing him a place as a true Japanese hero.

Initially his army did brilliantly, as the shogun's establishment had become weakened over the centuries, and this rebel force swept irresistibly through Japan. Soon it had advanced to Shizuoka, fifty or sixty miles from Edo, the capital, in the east of the island Honshu.

Tesshu was by this time a member of the shogun's personal guard. You can imagine the situation he was in. The rebel army had swept everything before it. Now the prospect was of a final battle in the capital. It was likely to be a bloodbath, probably with fire and devastation far beyond anything up to that point. The shogun's advisers were united in proposing to do nothing just to wait for the inevitable. Tesshu thought differently. He sought permission to negotiate with Saigo. The other advisers considered this madness: any negotiator would be cut down in short order. But Tesshu persisted. When permission was granted, he walked alone out of Tokyo along the Tokaido, the main eastwest road, rather like someone walking straight down the middle of the M4 towards Bristol. The accounts say he didn't look to left or right he just walked straight through the sentries of the rebel army. However frightened he might have been, his unwavering focus was such that no one challenged him. He continued straight through the main body of the army itself, straight up to Saigo's tent. He stuck his head in through the door and said, 'I've come to negotiate.' Saigo had him sit down; and between them, they arranged for a peaceful hand over of the capital. It's hard to estimate how many lives Tesshu had saved. At the end of the meeting, Saigo said, "By the way, how did you get here?"

"On the Tokaido."

"Did you see anything unusual?" Saigo asked.

"Yes. The road was lined with your sentries. It was very impressive."

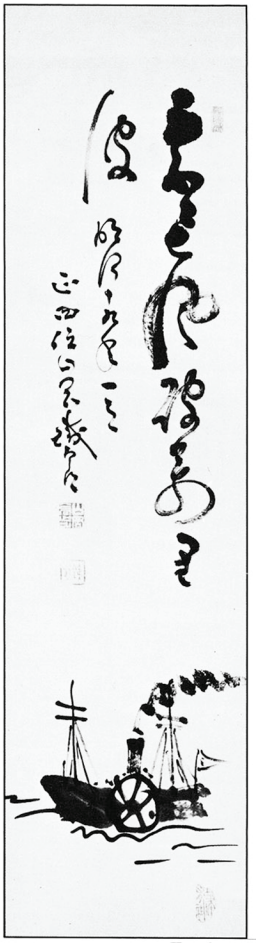
Realizing that he was dealing with someone out of the ordinary, Saigo gave him a safe conduct pass for his return. And Tesshu made it back into Edo unscathed except for being fired at in error by his own troops....

(Upon the Advent of Admiral Perry?)

"Riding the great winds,

shattering the waves

of ten thousand leagues."



Tesshu

The pictures and translation are from John Stevens "The Sword of No-Sword", Shambala, 1984

BOOKS NOTED

Among the most colorful Zen figures in early modern Japan, a period abounding in vivid Zen personalities, was the poet monk Gekkai (1675-1763), commonly known as Baisaô, literally, "Old Tea Seller." Norman Waddell, a longtime translator of Japanese Zen materials, has given us a delightful volume devoted to this free-spirited Zen master, *Baisaô--the Old Tea Seller: Life and Zen poetry in Eighteenth Century Kyoto* (Counterpoint, Berkeley: 2008, $24.00. 222 pp.).

Born in Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's main islands and the principal entry point at this time for foreign, and particularly Chinese goods and trends, the man who in his later years would be known as Baisaô entered the priesthood at an early age at a temple of the Ôbaku sect. This was the last school of Zen to arrive in Japan, introduced in the mid-seventeenth century by refugee Lin-chi monks fleeing the disordered conditions that accompanied the Manchu invasion of China and the collapse of the Ming dynasty. The Ôbaku school (named for its mountain headquarters in Fukien province) and its immigrant Chinese masters attracted many Japanese Zen monks seeking a fresh outlook. The school retained its predominantly Chinese character well into the eighteenth century, by which time its influence was largely cultural, the Ôbaku temples serving as conduits for classical Chinese, and particularly Ming, culture, including literature, art, calligraphy, medicine, and tea.

Baisaô spent his youth and middle years as a priest in the Ôbaku establishment, and this must surely have influenced his lifelong enthusiasm for Chinese-style tea culture. At age fifty-seven, however, after rising to the position of temple supervisor and de facto abbot, he declined to succeed to his master in favor of a junior monk, disappearing from the Ôbaku temples and setting off on his own for Kyoto's Higashiyama district, an area traditionally favored by aesthetes, recluses, and priests. "I live the way I do," he said when pressed for an explanation, "because I have no wisdom or virtue. I would be ashamed to put on a Dharma robe and live on alms I received from others, as though I was special or somehow superior to them."

By age sixty, the former Gekkai was selling tea under the new name Baisaô, a term used at the time to refer to itinerant tea peddlers from the lowest social classes. He would operate from a tea stall, hauling his equipment on a carrying pole to some scenic spot, where he could set up for vending, surrounded by samples of his calligraphy and distinctive Chinese-style tea implements. He always carried a bamboo tube, into which those who wished could drop a copper coin in return for their cup of tea, and would continue selling till twenty such coins had been collected. To those

who objected that Buddhist monks were forbidden to be in business and work for a living, Baisaô cited the old Tang masters like Huang-po and Lin-chi, who labored in the fields. He wrote:

> "*I have always been very much opposed to receiving alms that are tainted because of some design in the mind of the giver or the receiver. It was only because of a strong desire to live in Kyoto that, during the first years, I accepted those donations. At my age I knew I didn't have many more years to live. Realizing that if I went on accepting charity that at heart I was reluctant to receive, my spiritual commitment would be no stronger than a childish whim in a young girl's heart, I made up my mind to accept no more donations.*"
>
> ...
>
> "*I was no longer young, and I wasn't up to imitating those great masters, so I rented a tiny dwelling on the banks of the Kamo River where there was a steady traffic of people, and began selling tea. Now, with the money customers leave me, I am able to purchase small amounts of rice that keep me alive and enable me to pursue a way of life that satisfies my deepest longings. People regard tea selling as one of the meanest occupations on earth. What they despise, I value immensely. It is a life that gives me great joy.*"

And in a poem to his wooden staff, Baisaô explains:

"*Making the busy streets my home*
right down in the heart of things
only one friend shares my poverty
this single scrawny wooden staff.
Having learned the ways of silence
within the noise of human life
I take life as it come to me
and everywhere I am is true."

The tea Baisaô sold was itself something of a sensation. The Chinese Ôbaku monks had introduced a black, pan-roasted tea known as *sencha*, pressed then spread to dry in the sun. In 1738 a green Japanese variant of this tea had been developed, and it was this sencha, similar to the familiar Japanese green tea of today but very different from the powdered and whipped green tea of the the tea ceremony, that Baisaô was helping to popularize in Kyoto. He harked back consciously to the Chinese tea aesthetes of the Tang, and besides his rare imported Chinese tea utensils, even dressed in the sort of billowing white "crane robe" with black borders identified in China with Taoists and the literati.

Despite his often strained economic circumstances, Baisaô's life in Kyoto was hardly that of a solitary or reclusive misanthrope. He

lived surrounded by a galaxy of like-minded artists, calligraphers, writers, tea masters and Zen masters and monks. Some of the artists, like Ike Taiga and Ito Jakuchu, were already celebrated members of the "Nanga" school of painting, nearly all devotees of Ming and classical Chinese culture, especially tea culture.

Nor was Baisaô, in his rather offbeat lifestyle, an isolated example of the artistic eccentric. Waddell describes a veritable "pantheon of eccentrics" inhabiting eighteenth century Kyoto, many Baisaô's own neighbors and colleagues. Among these was Baisaô's friend Kameda, who took the comical sobriquet Kyûraku (literally, "delights in extreme poverty") and was known for his accomplished calligraphy and fondness for sake. According to contemporary accounts, whenever he sold copies of his penmanship, he would immediately spend the proceeds on wine and invite all the neighborhood paupers to drink with him. Another similar figure was Baisaô's biographer Daiten Kinryû, a prominent Tendai monk who left the temples in middle age to lead a peripatetic life in Kyoto.

In 1741 for reasons not entirely clear, Baisaô left the Buddhist priesthood and returned to lay status, though his friends continued to refer to him as Zen Master Gekkei. In 1744, however, he settled for ten years at Shokokuji, one of Kyoto's important Rinzai temples, where he was joined by two monk attendants and continued to teach Zen students. Little is known of Baisaô's actual methods of Zen instruction, but there remains one tantalizing document in the master's calligraphy, written when he was eighty-five and addressed to his student Muju:

"Your seeing, your hearing, and all your experience whether you are sitting or standing, active or at rest--What is it!

[A koan] Given to Zen monk Muju"

And an impromptu poem suggests Baisaô's continued dedication to Zen expressed through his tea vending activities:

...Pure water from a clear spring
simmering over the clay stove
battered robe and tattered cap
brown with fume and tea smudge.
Don't think I'm some old gaffer
with a wild-eyed love for tea
my purpose is to waken you
out of your worldly sleep"

Ultimately, Baisaô moved to a modest dwelling in the nearby village of Okazaki, a forested area popular, like Higashiyama, with

aesthetes. By age eighty, however, ill health kept Baisaô from hauling about his shoulder pole and tea equipment, and he was forced to abandon the tea business, though he continued his tea excursions to scenic spots in and around Kyoto. When he was finally confined to home by his increasing frailty, Baisaô burned many of his favorite tea items and at times found himself reduced to selling his calligraphy or cadging food and money from friends. In 1763, Baisaô passed away, but not before his colleagues had presented him with a hastily printed collection of his poems and other writings, including a woodblock portrait of the master's grizzled, sage,like face accompanied by the following poem he had composed:

"He lives in the world
Doesn't know its ways
he worked hard at Zen
gained no understanding;
He totes his shop around
on a shoulder pole
brews tea all over town
but no one comes to buy.
so he packs it all up
moseys aimlessly on
finds a quiet seat
beside a tumbling stream.
Bah!
Why bother drawing a face like that?
People who see it will only laugh."

It is this collection, *Verses and Prose by the Old Tea Seller* (*Baisaô gego*), that forms the core of Waddell's translation section, together with some additional pieces by the master. While I have not seen the original text, the translations seem crisp and fluent, and the biography of Baisaô that precedes them is fascinating, as are the end notes, which offer a rare perspective on Japanese culture and the artistic life of eighteenth century Kyoto.

In reading Baisaô's story and writings I couldn't help but be struck by the resemblance to two other famous Zen eccentrics of the Edo period, Tôsui and Ryôkan. Tôsui (d.1683), who was active in the seventeenth century, also abandoned his high position in the Ôbaku school for a peripatetic life among the beggars of Edo and Kyoto, including time spent in a hut in Higashiyama, working as a teamster, making and selling straw sandals, and finally opening a vinegar stand by the roadside. Ryôkan (1758-1831), a Soto Zen master, was centered in his native Echigo, Japan's snow country, having left the Soto temples to settle in a hut and compose poems in his distinctive, childlike calligraphy. Here, like Baisaô, he lived surrounded by an appreciative group of

supporters, largely amateur writers and artists from the area's merchant classes. Ryôkan's poems, among the most beloved of Edo-period Japanese literature, have much in common with those of Baisaô, and one can't help wondering if Ryôkan was influenced by the career and writings of his colorful predecessor--or if Baisaô had known of the very similar career trajectory followed by the vinegar seller Tôsui in an earlier generation.

All in all, however, Waddell offers us a glimpse of a delightful personality and the world in which he lived. Part bum, part Zen master, part aesthete, the Old Tea Seller leaves an indelible impression, and Waddell and Counterpoint Press are to be complemented for making such an engaging volume available to Western readers.

--Peter Haskel--

[The coverpic and poem are from the book-- ed]

Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse XI, Lecture

"You, however, are neither real nor temporal, secular nor sacred, even though you attach these names to the real and the temporal, the secular and the sacred. Nevertheless, the real and the temporal, the secular and the sacred cannot attach a name to you. Brothers, use it, but do not name it. This is the fundamental principle."

SOKEI-AN:

Lin-chi is again speaking about the law of the ground of soul. From the soul everything is produced, as all plants sprout from the ground. The soul is a law in itself, as the earth is its own law. In winter it holds the seeds; in spring it gives life to the seeds; in summer it gives strength to trees; in autumn it receives the fruit of the trees and again holds their seeds. Anyone who cultivates a garden knows the earth's law. In the same way, anyone who wishes to do something in this life must know the law of this ground.

Lin-chi said the law of this ground is unwritten, but that it manifests itself in you. You feel sad, angry; by this feeling you know what you are going to do. Your reaction is your guide. When

you are insulted, you feel angry; when you are smiled at you become quiet. That is the law operating in you. But you must understand this law, not abuse it. If you follow the law that is written in your heart, it is not much trouble to go through life. But even though all law is written in your own heart, you do not realize it until the day Tathagata Buddha comes to you and proves it. The teaching is like the coming of spring; it shakes you into the realization of what is in you, as seeds in the ground sprout when spring comes. You may say, "My conscience is the guide that tells me to do this or not." But how obedient are you to that whisper of conscience? Do you follow it faithfully? If you do, you are not different from Buddha.

When a ship swings to the left, its compass points to the right, and vice versa. A weight in your mind tells you exactly how to take a balance. If you are deceived by preconceived ideas and do not hear the true voice, you do not get the message. So man's real work is to destroy preconceived ideas and if you do not hear the true voice, you do not get the message. So man's real work is to destroy preconceived ideas and old habits and to listen at every moment to the directions of the law that is written within. This human life can then be a new adventure at every moment. If you cultivate your awareness of the law, it will tell you the exact truth, like the hand of a boxer that moves for defense or offense. If you do not cultivate this, it grows faint and loses the power of commanding. The true man does not need to listen for this voice; it is always guiding him. Of course, one must understand all three laws--the individual law, the group law, and the universal law.

"Brothers, use it, but do not name it. This is the fundamental principle." Lin-chi tells us to grasp and use it, but to put no name to it; it is fundamental.

Soul embodies everything, as electric current enters every lamp of the city, as water enters utensils. Soul enters man, woman, black and white, good and bad. The Buddha's teaching of just one soul is peculiar to Buddhism—no cat nor dog soul, frog nor snake soul, man nor woman soul, dragon nor tiger soul, but just one soul in everything. It may seem that each one has a different soul. Buddha tells us that variety is made by the conditions of time and place. Soul itself has no differentiation, receives no karma. Karma itself makes karma. One who has a logical mind knows that the essential power of the universe must be one power, yet diversified, like a tree and its branches, flowers, and fruit, which is the result of the power that is in the tree.

*****

Keep your feet on the ground as you leap to greet the New Year
of a hungry tiger patiently waiting...

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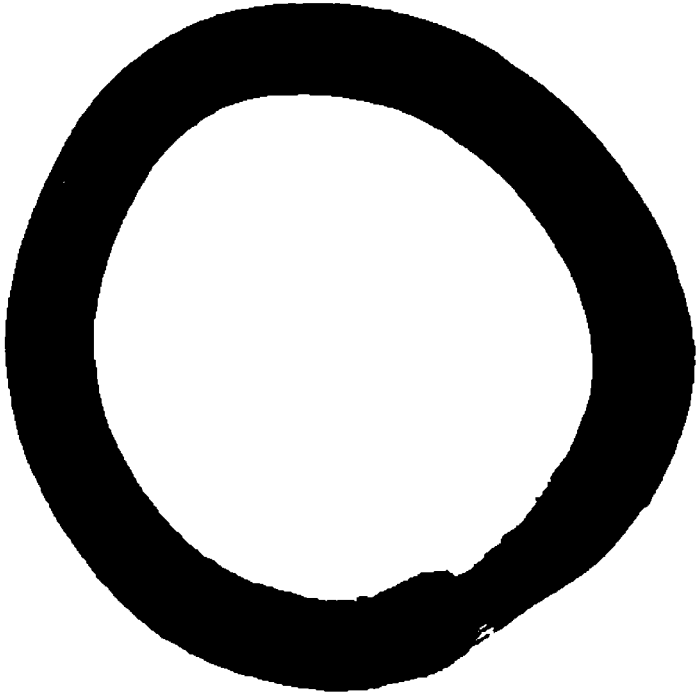

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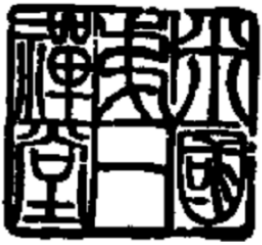

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