

ZEN notes



From a scroll painting by Kuin (1704-1787)

The Sixth Patriarch

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

FORTY-NINTH LECTURE

Wednesday July 5th, 1939

"Thus they produce more and more fruits of mundane virtue. Therefore they cannot attain the sacred ways. For if the sentient beings desire to deliver themselves from transmigration, they must first of all renounce avarice and thirst.

O Obedient One! When Bodhisattvas assume various appearances in order to reveal themselves to the world, trisna is not the source of their motive. Because of their compassion the Bodhisattvas' only desire is that sentient beings should abandon trisna; therefore the Bodhisattvas submit to avarice and thirst and undergo birth and death. If all the sentient beings of the future world should be able to relinquish every kind of desire and to renounce both love and hate, they would succeed in eradicating transmigration once and forever."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

In the previous lecture, all the Bodhisattvas are practicing the abandonment of trisna—but the Buddha says that the sentient beings are still nourishing the root of trisna. To accumulate virtuous karma by virtuous conduct does not eradicate transmigration! This is mere theoretical practice. Even those who practice meditation in rupadhatu and arupadhatu are still motivated by their profound desire in kamadhatu. One who practices this aloof meditation cannot escape, through this, from transmigration. In short, accumulating virtuous karma which is based upon kamadhatu, does not eradicate transmigration.

"Thus they produce more and more fruits of mundane virtue." —"They" refers to all sentient beings practicing this aloof meditation, or accumulating virtuous conduct or working for charity and other social activities. Though they produce more and more fruits of mundane virtue, these fruits are nothing but earthly virtue.

"Nevertheless, they remain in the realm of transmigration. Therefore, they cannot attain the sacred ways." —Why? Because these sentient beings have not attained their own enlightenment. They have failed to find their original nature! They have forgotten

their own existence. They may work busily from morning to evening, visiting from door to door, asking for alms and giving alms to establish an old mans' home, for orphans, a public hospital—but by all this merit, they cannot save themselves from eternal transmigration! They have no knowledge of coming back to themselves and looking into their own consciousness in order to eradicate the cause (root) of transmigration. If they are not existing within their own conscious state—they are still wandering beings in the waves of transmigration!

"The Eight Sacred Ways," the Alaya-Marga, are all based upon your own "anasrava" (universal) consciousness.

The first Sacred Way, called Samyak-dristi, is Right Observation or Right View. It is based upon your own unbiased mind. When you look at any object, you must see it with your unbiased mind. It is not so easy!

To give you an example, I shall use the Japanese-Sino incident. Who in the world can see why it has happened? What are the real facts the real motives—and how will it end? Everyone is observing that incident from his own biased view: the Protestant observes from the Protestant view; Russia from the communist view; Japan—from the imperialistic view; and Chiang Kai Shek observes it from the utilitarian view. But one who has attained Right View would see the reality of this war. This view is very important to human life.

There is a koan for the purpose of giving you an unbiased view toward everything: "The Brahmacaria do not enter Nirvana and the Abrahmacaria do not fall into Hell. Why is this?" The "Brahmacaria" are those who follow commandments and practice purity. The "Abrahmacaria" commit all evil practices; it is very strange that they do not fall into hell! From the bottom of hell to the top of Arupadhatu—you must observe with an unbiased eye, in one glance. Do not look twice! This means to observe through one's smṛti—attitude of mind. Such an attitude is called Right View, or Sacred View. It is a "sacred way."

But when your mind is based on Kamadhatu—your view is not sacred! Whatever virtue you may attain is always a mundane virtue. You must understand the Buddhistic view. You must not change your attitude of mind when you observe something. This is called "Samyak-dristi," the Sacred View.

When your mind is based on the mundane view, you observe with biased eyes. You see what you like, but you cannot see that which you don't like; this "like" and "dislike" is stronger than you! So, by your own sacred and true view, observe the world with

out being biased. Only then can you observe the Reality of the world—Reality in the absolute sense, but the Reality of human life! This is very important.

I cannot speak much of the profound principles of Buddhism when strangers are in this place; I must speak about such things to my old audience. But I hope you understand what I am talking about. All the Eight Ways are based on one Principle.

"For, if the sentient beings desire to deliver themselves from transmigration, they must first of all renounce avarice and thirst." In no other religion, save Buddhism, can you observe the two edges of your wisdom. A candle burning from both ends is the symbol of this. First you will attain the abstract state of Reality; and then it will be transformed into the concrete state. In this sense—there is no other religion like Buddhism existing in the world. All other religions talk about this abstract state of Reality—but no one attains it; and if it is possible to attain it no one can prove it. Occasionally one attains it and then fails to come back to this world.... dies in a cave like a hungry fox. They call themselves "sacred men." We call them dung-producing skeletons—good for nothing!

But Buddhism will lead you to the abstract state of Reality—and at some moment—this abstract state will break into the concrete state of Reality! Standing upon this concrete state—you will attain Right View, Samyak-dristi. And keeping your eye open in this state, you will awake again into the human world.... to observe the spring flowers and the autumn leaves. Now you can appreciate the beauty of it!

Buddhism is the only religion in the world which teaches this to an fro—come and go—back and forth. I am very grateful for this religion; it belongs to this scientific civilization. But to attain a concrete state of Reality, you must renounce avarice and thirst; and you must not love any man or woman who is being drowned in this state of avarice and thirst. Yet you must stay in this world with the Right View.

"O Obedient One! When Bodhisattvas assume various appearances in order to reveal themselves to the world, trisna is not the source of their motive." —"To assume various appearances in order to reveal themselves to the world" means the Arhat who assumes thirty-two different appearances. When he tries to save a king—he appears as a king; when he must save a warrior—he appears as a warrior, and so forth. He transforms himself into numberless bodies to save men, the suffering creatures of the world.

There are many stories on this theme. Even a Western woman

(I forget her name) wrote a curious story: Some angel asked her to save a woman from the gutter. She tried to do so in many different ways—but finally she lay in the gutter with the woman! There is an analogy here. There is also the famous story—an allegory—about a king who saved his son from being a dung-scraper. He disguised himself as a dung-scraper and gradually saved his child.

There are some monks who, remembering this story, think they can manifest themselves in all ways. To save a drunkard—he will drink wine; to save a gambler—he will become a gambler. This is not the same thing. I will try to explain:

When Avalokitesvara appeared as a child, and saved the child—it means that the child himself was Avalokitesvara and saved himself. The woman of the gutter also saved herself. In such a way you must understand this.

Trisna is not the source of the Bodhisattvas' motive. This is the usual Mahayana speech. Theoretically, I accept it—but sometimes it gives too much credit to Bodhisattvas!

"Because of their compassion, the Bodhisattvas' only desire is that sentient beings should abandon trisna; therefore, the Bodhisattvas submit to avarice and thirst and undergo birth and death." —You must realize the true nature of a Bodhisattva: there is no Bodhisattva who is different from a true man. The Bodhisattva has no crown on his head or jewels upon his chest; he does not go downtown and eat flesh for the salvation of others. There is no such profession! Such ideas give an excuse for someone to "play" the part of a Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva is your own mind; the minds of all men and women are the mind of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. It is the mind of each sentient being, therefore, that submits to avarice and thirst, and undergoes birth and death. It is in this struggle that they attain a higher view of this world.

There was such a period in Buddhism—as in the end of Greece—my art teacher spoke of the many who called themselves Eros or Venus, and that was the end of their glory. Christianity came and cleaned them out.

"If all the sentient beings of the future world should be able to relinquish every kind of desire and to renounce both love and hate, they would succeed in eradicating transmigration once and forever!" —Well—it is true! You must not stay in avarice and thirst. You must put your mind and body into shape; follow some method by which you can attain enlightenment!

The ancient Buddhists took this very seriously. You must, too!

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 I, #19)

(Continued from the Fall '08 Zen Notes)

The Genju line

The Genju line has been called the representative sect of the Sengoku period. During its brief span of glory, it epitomized the success of the rinka in late Medieval Japan, rising from the status of an obscure provincial school to embrace virtually the entire Gozan and even penetrating the principal Rinzai and Soto lines.

The Japanese Genju line takes its name from Huanchu an (J: Genju-an), the hermitage of the Yuan Zen Master Chungfeng Mingpen. Founded by Japanese heirs of Chungfeng, the Genju line formed a division of the Rinzai school. Various branches developed in Japan, but for practical purposes, the Genju line that became significant in the late Medieval period refers to the Onkei line, of Chungfeng's Japanese disciple Onkei (or Enkei) Soyu.

Certain early Genju line teachers served in the Gozan temples and identified themselves with the sorin, but most shared Chungfeng's reclusive life style and settled in provincial temples.

As the line of Muso kokushi monopolized Bakufu patronage and came to dominate the sorin, however, even those Genju line monks who had established themselves in the Gozan were forced to withdraw to the countryside or to change their affiliation to the Muso line.

Some Genju line monks, like Daisetsu Sono (d. 1376) and his disciple Hyakugai Hosho (1343-1414), became noted rinka leaders, but for the most part, the early Genju line remained a relatively minor branch of the Rinzai rinka. Evidence suggests that it developed in common with other provincial Zen groups both Rinzai and Soto, adopting such fixtures of rinka Zen as the missan system and shedding much of its original imported character.

As previously noted, missan Zen in the late Muromachi period tended to be synthetic in nature. It was common for Zen monks to study with rinka masters of various schools and lines, accumulating their particular secret oral transmissions of koan and synthesizing these into composite teachings of their own. Such masters might retain multiple credentials, instructing students in all of the missan traditions in which they were certified; and these traditions, in turn, could either be taught separately or combined within a personal synthetic missan transmission the teacher had evolved. This trend dates from at least the early fifteenth century and increased rapidly in popularity in the years following the Onin War. The principal groups participating in synthetic missan Zen during this period were the Soto Eihei and Rinzai Daio and Genju lines, the three leading rinka organizations. For the Genju line these developments were of particular importance, and the dramatic success of the sect in the postOnin period under its "second founder," Ichige Sekiyu (1447-1507), appears to be closely linked with the widespread practice of synthetic missan in the rinka as a whole.

Like other rinka teachers, Ichige began his career in the Gozan, but soon left the metropolitan temples for the rinka in search of authentic Zen, declaring that the sorin had abandoned actual Zen study in favor of literary pursuits. The missan kuketsu, or secret oral transmission of koan, dominated Zen study in the rinka at this period, and Ichige trained under a variety of teachers, receiving transmission for a number of koans from a lay disciple of the Daitokuji Master Yoso Soi and a missan transmission for the Five Ranks from a Soto master of the Gazan line. He was finally enlightened when he passed the Mu koan, culminating six years of study with the master Genshitsu Sekikei. In 1487, Ichige received Genshitsu's inka in acknowledgment of having passed the Genju

line's "Three Barriers" (J: sankan), apparently a reference to the established order of koans in Genshitsu's line. It was at this time that he received the name Ichige and joined the Genju line.

While assuming the role of Genshitsu's heir in the Genju line, Ichige continued nevertheless to teach in several different styles reflecting his varied background. In Genju-line temples, he would teach Genju style Zen, though the precise character of Genju line teaching at this point is uncertain; with Soto or Rinzaï students, he could readily switch to instruction in Eihei or Daio line missan. Simultaneously, however, Ichige evolved a composite teaching of his own, representing an amalgam of Genju-, Eihei-, and Daio-line missan traditions. This was embodied in a synthetic treatment of some one thousand koans, drawn from the *Blue Cliff Record* (*Pi-yen lu*), *The Record of Lin-chi* (*Linchi lu*), and *Gateless Gate* (*Wumen kuan*), sometimes referred to as the "Hekirinmu" after the Japanese reading for the first character of each work. Ichige assigned capping words (*aqyo*) to each koan, arranging the whole in a secret oral transmission of capping words and related comments. Once again, the koans were divided into three "barriers" or stages, apparently patterned after the three barriers in Genshitsu's line, but encompassing Ichige's synthetic interpretation of the secret oral transmissions of koan (*missan denju*) of all the principal rinka schools, based presumably on his early eclectic studies. Ichige's "new" missan was probably not original, and may have been modeled closely on other contemporary missan traditions, such as that of the Soto school. But Ichige's particular approach to systematizing the various secret transmissions for the Hekirinmu koans seems to have been highly successful and catapulted the Genju line from the minor provincial sect it had been in Genshitsu's time to the forefront of the rinka.

In many respects, the success of the Genju line in sixteenth century Japan paralleled that of the Myoshinji Kanzan line. Both lines stressed missan-style Zen, though the Myoshinji later preferred to deny the fact, and both received the enthusiastic patronage of the Sengoku ("warring states") daimyo, the new generation of warlords, whose growing power enabled them to extend their lines' influence throughout the provinces and even within the capital. What chiefly distinguishes these two groups that became the leaders of the Rinzaï rinka is the nature of their relationship to the sorin.

During the late Middle Ages Myoshinji's attitude toward the Gozan remained generally hostile, even predatory. As the central government collapsed and the Kanzan line's military patrons rose to the fore, it was able to seize the bulk of the Gozan's provincial branch temples, while in Kyoto, it sapped the strength of the main sorin temples, whose disaffected monks continued to defect to

Myoshinji. By contrast, the Genju line's approach to the Gozan was accommodating rather than confrontational, and instead of opposing or threatening the Gozan establishment, the Genju line used it to advance its own interests and influence.

The pattern of Genju-line rapprochement with the sorin was established by Ichige. Unlike Daitokuji's Ikkyu, Myoshinji's Sekko, and other leaders who had left sorin temples for the rinka, Ichige did not permanently abandon the sorin, but returned to it after completing his missan studies, assuming the abbacy of several Gozan temples. The relationship with the Gozan was broadened under Ichige's principal successor, Koshin Sekitei (d. 1564), a graduate of the sorin who reportedly adhered to all the external forms of Gozan Zen. Under Koshin, certain Genju line temples were admitted into the Gozan hierarchy, and eventually the Genju line was numbered among the Gozan lines. With the political and material backing of the Sengoku daimyo, the Genju line soon outstripped the older Gozan lineages, whose traditional sources of support, the Muromachi shogunate and Ashikaga military elite, were faltering before the onslaughts of a new generation of provincial warlords. The school's influence reached its pinnacle under Koshin's heir Shogaku Teiko and his disciples.

Shogaku's period marks the inception of the practice of transmitting the Genju line's inka (Dharma transmission) to Gozan monks in addition to their Gozan lineages, a practice which led to the introduction of Genju teaching lines within the sorin and revolutionized the character not only of Gozan Zen, but of the Genju line itself.

As in the case of the rinka, the success of the secret oral transmission of koan within the sorin was rooted in a complex mixture of practical motives and idealism. The practical causes are perhaps the most obvious. The Gozan temples in the midsixteenth century confronted an increasingly difficult situation. Beyond the confines of Kyoto and Kamakura, their branch temples and estates had been largely confiscated, and as the provincial warlords entered the capital itself, the sorin saw its traditional base of support seriously eroded. The victorious Sengoku daimyo brought with them to Kyoto the provincial rinka line they had patronized, principally the Genju and Kanzan lines. To survive, the sorin, which had formerly disdained the rinka schools, sought some suitable means to affiliate themselves with these newly successful provincial groups.

To this dilemma, an association with the Genju line no doubt offered the most convenient solution. Not only did the Genju line maintain favorable relations with the sorin, but its elastic structure permitted Gozan monks to receive transmission in the Genju spiritual lineage without abandoning their own temple lines.

Yet expediency alone could never have prompted the enthusiasm with which the Gozan embraced Genju line teachings. For many in the sorin the Genju line's secret oral transmission must have represented a genuinely refreshing element when contrasted with the stultified Zen of their own establishments. With the introduction of the Genju line transmission, such rudiments of Zen practice as inka, sanzen and koan study once again attained importance in the Gozan, albeit in the degenerate form of the missan system. Most conspicuous was the revival of authentic teacher-disciple relations through the Genju spiritual lineage, resulting in a sort of internal restructuring of the sorin.

Heretofore, the Gozan temples had remained splintered into their component factions, each quartered in its respective sub-temple with little communication between the various lines and sublines or even with members of the same line in other Gozan temples. Teaching lines had been neglected in favor of succession within the temple lines, for particular subtemples. Yet though the old temple lines remained, the focus of activity in the sixteenth-century Gozan became the spiritual lineage, with members of all the lines coming together in each Gozan temple to study under a main Genju-line teacher, ignoring the distinctions which had previously divided their groups. Consequently, the temple as a whole once again became the functional unit within the sorin, rather than the individual lines of which the temple was composed, while the Genju lineage provided an even broader lateral affiliation between the various Gozan temples themselves. Gradually, many of the remaining Dharma lines dissolved, replaced by the Genju line spiritual lineage. Though formal succession would still be carried out within the old temple lines of the subtemples, Dharma succession, the student's direct transmission from a Zen teacher now took place within the Genju lineage. As a result, many Gozan monks of the late Medieval period retained a kind of dual identity. At times, two sets of names were even used, one within the particular temple line and another within the Genju lineage.

Generally speaking, the expansion of the Genju line lineage was confined to the Gozan. Eventually, the two organizations became so identified that the Genju line was virtually submerged within the sorin. There remained instances of Genju line teachers transmitting "pure" Genju line teachings, but for the most part, Genju line monks seem to have been overwhelmed by the superior erudition and pedigree of their sorin counterparts. Rather than becoming polarized between the two groups, however, the Gozan incorporated the characteristics of both, maintaining its old literary and ceremonial traditions alongside the new rinka style transmission of the Genju line.

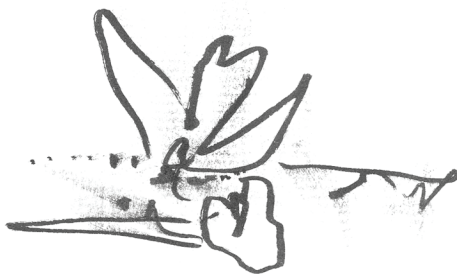
By the beginning of the Tokugawa period, the Genju line, as

a discrete branch of the Rinzaï rinka, had begun to disappear. Perhaps more than any of the other rinka schools, it was the product of a specific time and place, identified with the circumstances of a particular age, the sixteenth century, a particular group of supporters, the Sengoku daimyo, and a particular method, the secret oral transmission of koans. As circumstances changed and Japan entered a new era, the Genju line lost much of its reason for being. In the Kamakura Gozan, where the Genju line teaching only began to attract serious attention in the Momoyama period, elements of the Genju transmission survived for a time. But, for the most part, the leaders of the new age turned their attention to other Zen groups, and with the passing of the sixteenth century, the Genju line faded into obscurity.

The Genju line, however, prefigured certain of the changes that were to mark the leading Tokugawa Zen organizations. Of particular importance was its creation of a large, overall teaching line uniting previously disparate groups within each temple and even establishing a bond between the temples themselves. Despite the persistence of the old temple lines within the sorin, the Genju line provided an emphasis on large teaching lines held in common that was to become one of the distinguishing features of the Zen school in the succeeding period and remains to this day a key aspect of both the Rinzaï and Soto sects in Japan.

In certain respects, the history of the Genju line bridges the division between rinka and sorin that had existed in Muromachi Zen. Rinka Zen had been formed largely by dissidents from the Gozan, but through the Genju line *missan* transmission, it rapidly became a powerful force in the Gozan temples. Though the Genju line itself was ultimately absorbed into the sorin, its distinctive rinka-style transmission remained. It was thus due to the Genju line that in the course of the sixteenth century, the secret oral transmission of koan (*missan kuketsu*), originally identified with the rinka temples, engulfed the entire Zen establishment, and became the principal form of Zen practice throughout Japan.

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Hakuin Stories

Master Chôdô of Chikugo (present-day Fukuoka Prefecture, in Kyushu) studied under Kogetsu¹ and attained realization of the *Mu* koan. At the time the Dharma teaching of Hakuin was enjoying great popularity, and monks were flocking to his temple. Chôdô, too, determined to set off for there, hoping to engage the master in a Zen dialogue, and went to take his formal leave of Kogetsu.

"Kogetsu told him, "Postpone your departure for a while."

Chôdô, however, refused.

"Very well," Kogetsu said, "if that's how it is, I'll write an introduction for you." And writing out a note, he handed it to Chôdô.

Chôdô went off to interview Hakuin, whom he found in the bath. Chôdô went right into the water, introduced himself, and presented his understanding of Zen.

Hakuin told him, "One may say that your coming here was not in vain. Now withdraw."

"He's approved me," Chôdô thought to himself.

When Hakuin emerged from the bath, Chôdô dressed in his most formal monk's robes and entered the master's room to interview him again and present Kogetsu's letter. Hakuin opened the seal and read the following:

It's not that this youngster lacks any merit, but he's simply a person of limited capacity. I beg your Reverence to find some suitable expedient to teach him."

When Hakuin had finished reading this, he turned on Chôdô. "Even if someone of your meager endowment and inferior spiritual potential were to realize the great matter," Hakuin berated him angrily, "what would be the use?"

At that moment, feeling that his whole realization had been snatched away, Chôdô became deranged, and from then on he was never normal again. Hakuin was often heard to lament, "I have always taught huge numbers of students. But among these, I only went wrong with two: Chôdô of Chikugo and one other, whose name I don't recall."

¹ Kogetsu Zenzai (1667-1751), a noted cotemporary of Hakuin's in the Myôshinji line. Kogetsu and Hakuin were regarded as the two leading Rinzai teachers of their day.

Subsequently, Chôdô returned to Chikugo and became abbot of a temple. He erected a small monk's hall where all alone he carried out the Zen temple observances. Every Rohatsu he would bring the child priests and cats into the zendo with him to do zazen. When the cats would run out, he'd grab them and hit them with the *keisaku*,¹ scolding them, "Why won't you follow the rules in my temple!" In this way countless cats died at his hands.

Yet strictly maintaining his monastic practice, it is said Chôdô ended his days at the temple.

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BOOKS REVIEWED

The Platform Sutra: the Zen Teaching of Hui-Neng. Red Pine, Translation and Commentary. Counterpoint, Berkeley:2006. 346 pp.

Bill Porter is an American who has lived and traveled extensively in the Far East. Under the pen name Red Pine, he has published numerous translations from the Chinese including poetry and Buddhist, particularly Zen, classics. He has now produced a highly readable translation of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Probably the most celebrated of early Zen works, the *Platform Sutra* purports to be the teachings of Hui-neng (638 - 713), an illiterate woodcutter from South China who became the last of Chinese Zen's six patriarchs. Red Pine's highly readable translation of and commentary on the sutra is based, like Philip Yampolsky's 1967 translation, on a handwritten copy discovered in the ancient western Chinese frontier city of Tunhuang. This second Tunhuang version was found in 1935 by a local scholar, but remained unpublished till 1993. Referred to by Red Pine as the Tunhuang Museum Text, it is a copy of the same edition as the first manuscript and was originally conceived in the same period, the Tang dynasty, specifically the closing decades of the eighth century. The Museum Text does not, however, according to Red Pine's interesting introduction, suffer from many of the errors and omissions that plague the first Tunhuang version. Red Pine hypothesizes that the first portion of the sutra (chapters 1-37), was compiled during the Sixth Patriarch's lifetime, while the second (chapters 38-48) was added by Hui-neng's disciples in the decade following his death. The remainder was produced some twenty to thirty years later by the faction of his disciple Shen-hui (670-762) to advance Hui-neng's importance as the sixth patriarch of Zen in China and to boost its own "Southern School" of Zen.

¹ The warning" stick used by the head monk to correct students in the Zen meditation hall.

The *Platform Sutra* continued to be reworked during the succeeding Sung and Yuan dynasties, leading to the more extended 1291 version of the text published in the Ming dynasty and used by Sokei-an in his own translation and commentary. Some modern Chinese scholars have even speculated that this later Ming version is closer to the "original" text than those from Tunhuang, which, they claim, were distorted by Shen-hui and his agenda of promoting Hui-neng's southern teaching as the only legitimate Zen transmission. The twentieth century scholar Hu Shih's contention that the *Platform Sutra* is actually a concoction of Shen-hui, however, has now been generally discredited, according to Red Pine, and there is broad agreement that various versions of the work already existed by around 780. The Chinese character text of the "Museum" edition is printed in full at the back of the volume, and an appendix cross-references the Tunhuang and later editions. Differences between the various editions are translated in "textual notes" and appendices. It's an altogether complicated business, and summing up the complexities, Red Pine confesses, "I have to step back at this point. Recounting the convoluted textual arguments involved in this matter is not something I feel like doing and probably not something more than a handful of readers want to wade through--and my apologies to all those who would. Personally, I'd rather garden. Or, isn't it time for tea?"

Red Pine presents first the complete translation of the sutra, followed by his introduction and finally the translation repeated with his own notes and commentary. The commentary is in Red Pine's distinctive voice--nontechnical, straightforward, informative but never preachy or pretentious. It is addressed, as was the core of the *Platform Sutra* itself, to ordinary lay persons, not specialists or metaphysicians, and it seeks to explain basic Buddhist and Zen concepts in terms readily understandable to Western readers. Red Pine's commentary is personal in the sense that he is writing not primarily as a scholar so much as an enthusiast and a contemporary practitioner of Chinese Buddhism. As such, the commentary contains a certain amount of guesswork based on Red Pine's own extensive experiences in Chinese Buddhist temples and with Chinese Buddhist teachers, and the text is also enlivened with many firsthand details about the places and things mentioned in the sutra. Thus, Red Pine tells us that the stone the Sixth Patriarch wore around his waist in operating the monastery millstone to pound rice still survives at the Fifth Patriarch's temple at Huang-mei, along with the original millstone itself. And regarding the original pronunciation of "Zen," he remarks: "When Buddhist meditation was introduced to the Chinese, the Sanskrit term *dhyana* was rendered *zen-na*, and later shortened to *zen*... Nowadays this term is pronounced *ch'an* in Mandarin Chinese. But Mandarin is the Manchu pronunciation forced on the Chinese by the founders of the Ch'ing dynasty in the seventeenth century, whereas the pro-

nunciation retained in Japan and in that part of China where Zen began comes much closer to the original pronunciation, which was something like *dzian*. Because Zen is closer to the pronunciation of Hui-neng, and because the Japanese version of the teaching is better known in the West, I have used Zen throughout..."

Red Pine's commentary tends to be rather freewheeling, imaginative, even humorous, and therefore often great fun. Of the Sixth Patriarch's teaching in the sutra, he warns us in the introduction: "Normally readers would expect an explanation of the various concepts that appear in this text. Normally, this is what we think a teaching consist of: concepts, ideas, constructs of the mind and the relationships among them. But Hui-neng's teaching is not a teaching of concepts, just the opposite. It is, instead, a teaching of no concepts. Hui-neng addresses an audience numbering in the thousands, and every word he speaks is directed at freeing people of whatever concepts block their awareness of their own nature. This is the teaching of Hui-neng: see your nature and become a buddha. The rest is simply an attempt at deconstruction, the deconstruction of the walls that imprison us in our dungeons of delusion—including the delusions that arise in the course of studying and practicing the teachings of the Buddha." On the Sixth Patriarch's somewhat elusive term "One Practice samadhi," Red Pine observes: "Hui-neng does not teach one kind of Zen for beginners and another kind for advanced students. He only teaches One Practice Samadhi, for one mind, the buddha mind, which is no mind, and which is our original nature." And a bit further on in the text, he adds: "Hui-neng does not want to encourage more distinctions, more stuff, that will only lead to more yard sales of the mind. One day [the eighth century Zennist] Layman P'ang loaded all his stuff into a boat, rowed to the middle of a lake, and sank it. Of course, this only works if you know how to swim." And he comments on the Sixth Patriarch's repeated emphasis on the relation between meditation and wisdom: "...Unless we can sit still long ought to discover our own minds and to see our own natures, we are doomed to spend our lives in the infirmary of existence. But there comes a time when sitting still becomes just another disease, just another cause of suffering. this is why meditation is always paired with wisdom..."

As to the text itself, compared with some of his Western predecessors Red Pine often gives different and at times highly informal translations of familiar terms and phrases, which make this version of the sutra particularly lively. At the close of the Sixth Patriarch's spiritual autobiography, at the beginning of the sutra, for example, Hui-neng sums up for his audience the truths he has realized, "yelling out" to them, according to Red Pine, versus Yampolsky's more literal "Hui-neng called, saying..." And for the sutra's famous passage on "straightforward mind (*chih-hsin*), Red Pine has

the Sixth Patriarch explain, "...The Way has to flow freely. Why block it up? The Way flows freely when the mind doesn't dwell on any dharma [i.e., particular thing--ed]. Once it dwells on something it becomes bound..." Compare this with Yampolsky's also good but more intellectual and less hard-hitting "Tao must be something that circulates freely; why should he [i.e., the deluded man] impede it? If the mind does not abide in things the Tao circulates freely; if the mind abides in things, it becomes entangled..." (Yampolsky here follows the Koshoji rather than Tunhuang text, but the meaning is essentially the same.) Also, at times Red Pine's notes offer alternative translations. For "straightforward," as above, for example, he suggests honest, sincere, or direct.

If Red Pine's translations are at times less literal than others, in most cases they strike me as being more free and to the point. Altogether, I quite enjoyed this version of the *Platform Sutra* and the accompanying commentary, and believe it can be heartily recommended to students of Zen and Zen history, to beginning and longtime practitioners alike.

--Peter Haskel-



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 Yamakata 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, is a second 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--.

Asari Gimeï was a famous sword teacher. He was half the size of Tesshu and much older. When they faced each other in a sword match, the contest lasted half a day. Finally, Tesshu was defeated. The custom of the day was for the defeated party to become the victor's student. When Tesshu turned up for training, Asari faced him, sword to sword, and beat the bigger man backwards, forced him out of the door, knocked him down to the ground and slammed the door in his face. You can imagine how it felt. The younger man, regarded as a fearless hero and swordsman of the first rank, now had the rug pulled out from beneath him. Before, he was unsurpassed. Now he'd lost the indomitable confidence that had buoyed him up. He could slink away in defeat, perhaps even give up the sword and put his energies into his administrative work, or he could search within himself for the resources to master this challenge. How often in your own life have you achieved an early success only to find that there's still more demanded of you? It's often easy to find ways to avoid facing the truth of the setback. Tesshu, however, went at it straight on.

Ever the fighter, he threw himself into his Zen practice. He continued working with the sword, and eventually Tekisui Roshi, the master of Tenryuji in Kyoto, gave him a koan to penetrate in his meditation:

*Crossed swords; neither permits retreat.
The swordmaster, like a lotus in the fire,
Has a heavensoaring spirit.*

This is an advanced koan. In the Rinzai system, if you're studying koans in *sanzen*, by the time you reach this one you've come a long way. It comes from sequence of five poems written by the Tang dynasty Chinese Zen master Tozan Ryokai. You can see the relevance for Tesshu.

Day and night Tesshu wrestled with this koan, seeking to penetrate the experience it represented. We're told that he was spotted acting out swordfights with chopsticks or longstemmed smok-

ing pipes. He kept a couple of practice swords by the bed and more than once he woke his poor wife, demanding that she hold one as he worked out whether he'd found a solution or not....

For three years Tesshu struggled with the crossed swords koan until, one morning as he was sitting in zazen, BOOM! The walls crumbled and he was free. He went to face Asari in the dojo. The sword master realized straight away that Tesshu was through. Very soon afterwards, Asari formally named Tesshu as his successor. It is said that after that, Asari never again picked up a sword.

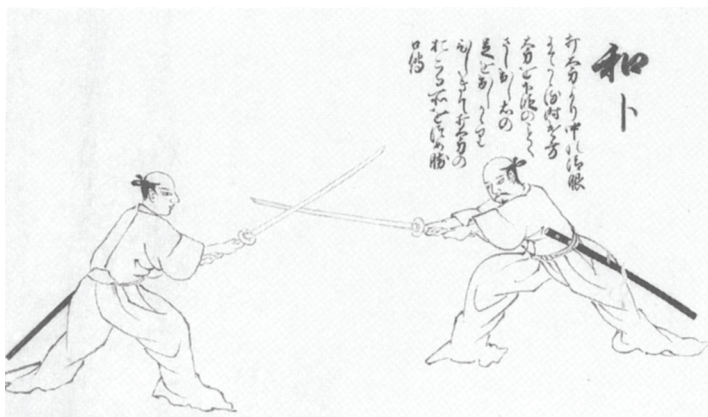


Illustration from "Life Giving Sword" by the famous swordsman Yagyu Munenori (~1632).

Cover

The cover is of the Sixth Patriarch carrying a laundry beater on his shoulder. The accompanying poem, not in the closeup, reads:

*Brush the dirt from the robes
with the diamond laundry pounder
Serenely he manifests his whole being.*

*We call him the Sixth Patriarch
A mote of dust lodged in the eye.*

While winter springs

through 2009,

a Tiger glares

from 2010.

If you have no beard,

whose whiskers

can you pull?...



(Tiger by Susan Seiko Morningstar.)

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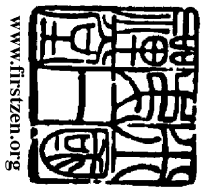
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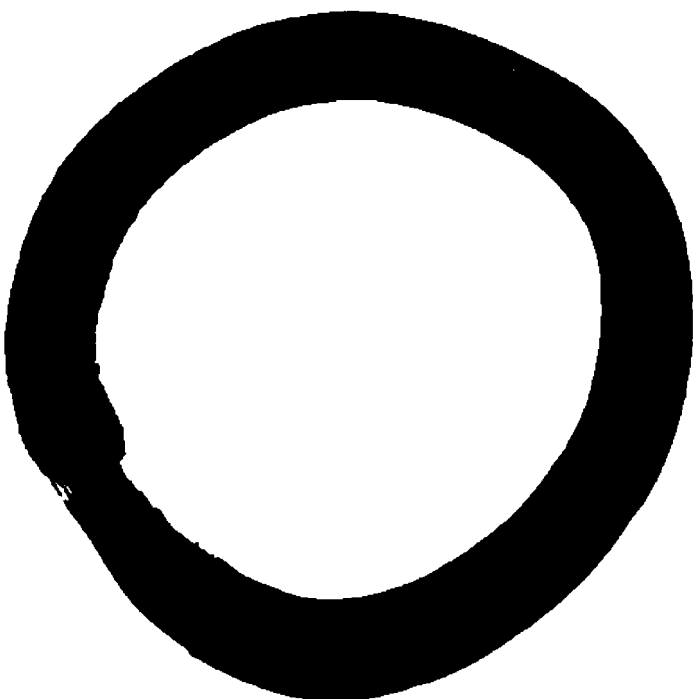
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