

ZEN notes



(Courtesy of Donald Harper)

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

FIFTIETH LECTURE

Wednesday July 12th, 1939

"If you endeavor to attain the Tathagata's Perfect Awakening in your pure mind, you will attain it.

O Obedient One! Because of desire all sentient beings bring forth the original unenlightened mind (avidya); and the five kinds of natures which differ each from the other in their fashion of accepting the Buddha's teachings, will be developed from avidya. There are two kinds of obstacles which prevent you from awakening. What are those two kinds of obstacles? The first is notion, which becomes an obstacle in attaining the Right View of the Dharmadhatu. The second is the state of stained nature, which becomes an obstacle in awakening and brings about the succession of birth and death. What are the five kinds of natures? If you do not eradicate those two obstacles, O Obedient One, you cannot call yourself one who has attained Buddhahood."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

"If you endeavor to attain the Tathagata's Perfect Awakening in your pure mind, you will attain it." — This is the Buddha's answer to the question which was asked by the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The Buddha promises Maitreya that, by right endeavor, everyone can attain this awakening. It means that without the practice of the traditional method of Buddhism, no one can attain enlightenment. I must explain what is meant by the traditional method:

First, the young students of Buddhism will observe the order of monks, and follow the commandments of the sects to which they belong.

Second, they must practice meditation.

Third, listening to their teacher's lectures on Buddhism, the student must meditate upon the principles of the teaching.

These practices of Buddhism are therefore divided into three kinds: Vinaya, Sutra, and Abhidharma — morality, practice and philosophy. By observing Vinaya, they keep their tranquillity of

mind. Then they meditate on their own mind; and third, they will find the reason for this meditation: the meditation upon one's own mind.

By this traditional method, any Buddhist will attain the Tathagata's (the Buddha's) Perfect Awakening. Perfect Awakening means that this is not a one-sided awakening, but completes the nature of awakening.

One-sided awakening is our awakening to the nature of Reality. All religious students or followers believe this to be the high point of true religion. For instance, in Christianity, one who has a realization of God thinks that his endeavor has been rewarded and his prayers have been answered— when he has just met God. There are many records of this: "I have met God— but he was invisible." "God appeared to me, revealing a half-figure." "I have met God face to face!" They are expressing their own experiences of meeting God.

When I was studying Christianity at the age of twelve, I heard all these words from the missionaries who came to Japan. In these days, no one seems to say they are meeting God. Perhaps they have lost faith in their own religion.

In Buddhism, we do not use the word "God" —we use the word "Reality," your own philosophical term. When you realize this Reality, you have awakened to the one-sided awakening. Then you must awake to actuality. There is no reality which is not actuality. Abstract reality is intangible and actual reality is concrete; you can experience it with your senses. So when you realize these two sides, the abstract and the concrete, you have experienced Reality. It is Perfect Awakening.

Buddhism is not a mystery; it has no hocus-pocus. It is pure reason and pure aesthetics. When hocus-pocus people go to the Orient, they bring back hocus-pocus Buddhism, but there is no fault in true Buddhism.

And now this "pure mind" must be explained. You think this means "immaculate," or like a child's mind; but it means the mind which has no mind-stuff in it. Mind-stuff consists of preconceived notions, superstition, and dilettante philosophies. When you wipe them out of your mind and keep your mind's original state you will realize the pure mind. We do not mean "pure" in any moral sense. Of course we do not say that we care nothing for morality, but the pure mind is something quite different.

If you think God is in heaven and strain your eyes to heaven, we say that your mind is not pure. If you say that God is within

you, retreat to a shrine, close your eyes and meditate on your inner God, we say again that your mind is not pure. The inner and the outer correspond to each other. You cannot deny one of them! Can you find the inside of this bowl (holding up) while you deny the outside? Don't be foolish at least you must follow logic. If you try to meditate on the inside or the outside, your attitude will be erroneous. Meditation is like this (acted). Can you accept it? No! You meditate this way (strained). It may be dramatic or picturesque but it is not true meditation!

"*O Obedient One!*"—The Buddha called him this because the Bodhisattva knew the law of the universe, of nature, of man and obeyed the law.

"*Because of desire, all sentient beings bring forth the original unenlightened mind.*" —"Desire" in Sanskrit is klesa. When we were born, we were nourished by our mothers' milk, learned the taste of food and became attached to it. This desire gives us agony when we are deprived, and joy when we are satisfied. Thus we accumulate our worldly desires.

Desire is, therefore, not the intrinsic nature of the Atman, the individual. When this soul is born into a certain state of like, or environment, the desire is pulled out and it will bring forth the original unenlightened mind, avidya. I translate this avidya as "unenlightened mind"; it is usually translated by European scholars as "ignorance" or "darkness." Monier Williams calls avidya "ignorance with the state of original reality." One who does not know his original state is in avidya. When you were in your mother's bosom you had no awareness of this avidya. But here I must translate it "unenlightened mind" because of the text: "Desire brings forth the unenlightened mind."

"... and the five kinds of natures which differ each from the other in their fashion of accepting the Buddha's teachings, will be developed from avidya." —This means the sentient minds which correspond to the five different Vehicles.

The first is the mind of a man who cannot accept any religion at all. He is deaf and blind to religion; his mind is not conducive to it. He is called "agotara." In the sutras, you will hear the Buddha calling his disciples by this name.

The second accepts sravakhayana, one whose mind accepts the lowest type of teaching.

The third accepts pratyakabuddhayana—a higher teaching.

The fourth accepts Bodhisattvayana.

The fifth accepts Buddhayana.

Explanations of these technical terms are written in many books and perhaps some are translated in English. Please find out if this has been done.

Those who follow the Sravaka take the attitude of renouncing the world, go into a mountain cave and never speak another word to human beings. They have nothing more to do with this world, eating hardly enough to support their bodies. In Buddhism, we consider these to be the lowest but many worldly people think they are the highest. Such people go to Tibet to find a Mahatma.... such wonderful men! (Is my watch moving? This is a question of time).

These five types of religious minds are developed from avidya. Therefore they are not true. Buddha's disciples and the Buddha himself denied that there is any teaching called Buddhayana. If anyone thinks there is, their mind is deluded and they are not true students of Buddhism! All five types are a bias in one direction.

"There are two kinds of obstacles which prevent you from awakening." —One more than the other (long pause). The first is notion, which becomes an obstacle in attaining the Right View of Dharmadhatu." "Notion" is the shallower one. It is the idea, a conception from which one, deductively, observes the world. For instance, Plato in his dogma said, "The ideal is the conglomeration of truth, goodness and beauty, the perfection of intellect and morality and art. But there is an objective state which is called 'IDEA.' It is behind this phenomenal existence which is distorted. There is the ideal chaos, woman, tree, etc."

This is absolutely different from our view. We think this is a preconceived notion, a dogma. But this "idea" is an inevitable notion which the human mind conceives. The "idea" of a "perfect man" was conceived in India at a very early period.

I do not, however, mean to speak of what Plato said, but of "notion" from the Buddhistic view as an obstacle in attaining the Right View of the Dharmadhatu. "Dharma" means "world"; "dhatu" means, in this case, "entire existing world, including kama, rupa, and arupa-dhatu—sarva-dharma-dhatu.

"The second is the state of stained nature, which becomes an obstacle in awakening and brings about the succession of birth and death." —There are six kinds of "stained nature" —and these are deep, karma-bound nature. The nature which you "conceive" came perhaps from your teacher, or from reading a book; perhaps you took an idea from some religious teaching and it became planted in your mind. But these six kinds of "stained nature" go very deep. I shall not have time to explain them now. But in this

karma-bound (stained) nature you will continue samsara and never attain Nirvana.

"*What are the five kinds of natures?*" —It seems to me that this is not translated correctly or is not written correctly in the original text. The order is distorted here.

"*If you do not eradicate these two obstacles, O Obedient One, you cannot call yourself one who has attained Buddhahood.*"

Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse XI, Lecture 5

"My discourse on the Buddha's Dharma differs from that of everyone else under the sun. Even if Manjushri or Samantabhadra were to appear before me, manifesting themselves in my presence to ask me about the Dharma, the moment they open their mouths I would understand [the falseness of their attainment]."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The Buddhism of Lin-chi is different from that of other Buddhists of his time. As a Zen master he did speak much philosophy. Other Buddhist of the time differentiated the subjective from the objective, outer phenomena from inner phenomena—that is, phenomena from noumena. In this way, they classified all existence until finally coming to a conclusion, giving it such names as "God," "Buddha," "universal consciousness," and so forth. Lin-chi did not care to name anything, however:

"What is this?" "This is that."

"What is the universe?" "Where are you?"

"What is consciousness?" "Can't you prove your own?"

Very simple. If you ask a Zen master, What is silence? he gives no answer; he *is* the answer. The others will say that silence has profound meanings, that if you penetrate Buddhism you will enter nirvana. The Zen method puts you into IT directly—take it and use it; do not put a name to it! *This* is fundamental. The Buddha's

Buddhism was the same sort of religion. When some Brahman asked him the question, Are you eternal or mutable? the Buddha's answer was silence. But this silence is speaking louder than thunder, so loud the human being cannot hear it.

In Zen all words are symbols. They have nothing to do with Reality. Calling this glass of water "phenomena" or "noumena" has nothing to do with it. All concepts are relative; if it is absolute you cannot speak of it. Oneness exists relative to many, monism to pluralism, etc. Logically, the theory of monism is wrong because they insist on oneness that is proved only by the many. When a monist has to affirm the many, it is no longer monism. Nothing can stand absolutely alone. All is relative. If you deny pluralism, you must deny monism and dualism; if you affirm one, you must affirm the other. So none of these views are logical. In philosophy, consciousness cannot prove anything, nor can it prove the absolute. This is the point of our school. In this school there is no word for anything. It says just take it and use it. However, you cannot bend the elbow in all directions, going against nature. This "take it and use it" must be understood or it can be dangerous. If you understand, you are emancipated from a useless puzzle. The law of the temporal is in words, but the law of the sacred has no words; it is written in our hearts. And, though it is not written in any terms, we know it.

"Even if Manjushri or Samantabhadra were to appear before me, manifesting themselves in my presence to ask me about the Dharma . . ." Samantabhadra and Manjushri are Bodhisattvas. They are in Buddhism the personified doctrines of fundamental wisdom. All sentient beings have fundamental wisdom, not knowledge or intellect or information, but the wisdom that everything has innately. It is wisdom in the absolute, not relative, stage. So when the kalpa fire reduces all to nothingness, this is not pure nothingness; it is energy itself, not manifested but waiting for manifestation. In Buddhism that stage is not pure materialism like the atom. In Buddhism, every atom has consciousness, BEING. Even dust has consciousness. Look at the dust in a sun ray dancing; it is a gliding, microcosm of the great universe moving in perfect harmony.

Manjushri is absolute consciousness. Samantabhadra is the consciousness in each existence, the same consciousness. Lin-chi uses Manjushri and Samantabhadra as substantives for the student. Any wise monk who understands would be called a Manjushri or a Samantabhadra.

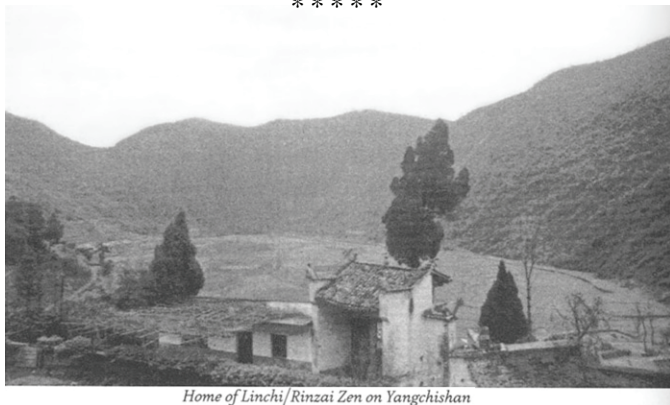
" . . . The moment they opened their mouths, I would understand [the falseness of their attainment]. So how do you manifest your consciousness without uttering a word?" Such a person un-

derstands that state of Samantabhadra, which is *sambhogakaya*. If you say no word, you cannot demonstrate that simultaneous consciousness, for you are in the absolute. If you do say a word, you are in the stage of variegated consciousness. So how do you manifest?

Such states of realization cannot be expressed in words, and if you try to demonstrate them you will fail. Lin-chi is saying even if Manjushri and Samantabhadra never said a word, is there any question to ask? “Ha!” Lin-chi understands the falseness of their attainment.

If a student went to Lin-chi declaring he understood absolute consciousness, Lin-chi would just shout, “HAAAA!” It was as if a small tower made by an ant is suddenly crushed by a thunderbolt. Religion endeavors to attain something fundamental. You cannot invent anything. We cannot use this for personal ends, but we can safely sit upon it. There is nothing utilitarian in Oriental religion, but it brings us the real ground of our life. Without it we cannot live.

* * * * *



Home of Linchi/Rinzai Zen on Yangchishan

Book Review

Members of the first Zen Institute’s publication committee, longtime admirers of Bill Porter/Red Pine, were delighted with the recent publication of *Zen Baggage*. Two things that we really enjoyed were his journeys to and photographs of the historical locations of the Chinese Chan Patriarch’s home temples as well as the temples and retreats of Bodhidharma, Lin-chi and Yunmen. The second delight of *Zen Baggage* is that in the midst of Porter’s honest and forthright comments on his journey through modern China’s Buddhism he suddenly will drop astonishing biographical notes, like “My father was a bank robber”. We begin to piece together an understanding of a man who pursued his interest in the Dharma with an eccentric determination and as a result has produced translations that reflect an awakened intimacy with the su-

tras. For those who want more biography we recommend the *Kyoto Journal* issue #73 article 9, *Dancing With Words: Red Pine's Path into the Heart of Buddhism* by Roy Hameric, which we also hope to reprint in a forthcoming *Zen Notes*.

While contemplating a review we came across an excellent one in the *Middle Way*, Vol. 84 #4, by Michelle Bromley and with kind permission from her and the *Middle Way* we republish it here. -- (the accompanying pictures are from the book)... Michael Hotz

* * * * *

Zen Baggage: A Pilgrimage to China,

by Bill Porter, Counterpoint Press, Berkeley, 2009,
ISBN 978 1 59376 132 5, pp. 359, £16.23 hardcover.

Reviewed by Michelle Bromley

For those of us who eagerly look forward to each of Bill Porter's new publications, *Zen Baggage* is another welcome arrival. It takes us on a journey through present-day China, from Beijing to Hong Kong, visiting sites associated with the six patriarchs of Zen. Along the way we get a running account of life in China today, as well as the historical background to the early development of Zen – the masters, monks and monasteries and their role in the society of the Tang Dynasty.

Bill Porter spent 22 years living in East Asia, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and he is fluent in Mandarin as well as familiar with Chinese culture and history. Since 1989 he has also made several visits to mainland China, and one of those trips resulted in his first travel book, *Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits*, which inspired Edward A. Burger's film *Amongst White Clouds*. However, it is under the name Red Pine that Porter is best known as a passionate and prolific translator of Chinese Buddhist scriptures and poems. His translations always have a very personal touch to them, reflecting his devotion to the subject as well as his background as a practicing Buddhist. Compared with academic translations, his seem much more alive and inspired, though occasionally somewhat idiosyncratic. He really shares his passion for the subject with the reader, and his beautifully produced books often contain the original Chinese text, excerpts from ancient exegeses and his own commentaries. Less influenced by academia, his approach is perhaps more comparable to that of the individual scholar in the tradition of John Blofeld, who was his mentor for many years.

It is with this knowledge and experience that Bill Porter takes us on his travels. This is not, however, a Baedeker guide but an account of a personal journey: if a monument on his itinerary isn't open on the day he is traveling in an area, it simply doesn't get de-

scribed. But everything he encounters on the way does get recorded. We find out about the coach rides, taxi drivers, hotels, restaurants, shops and his penchant for exquisite Chinese teas and pumpkin cookies, when he can find them. We are guided inside and outside temples and get involved in the daily bustle of busy modern-day monastery life with its temple- and guest managers juggling the great influx of visitors. His narration is always engaging and often quite humorous.

Frequent visitors to China are always amazed at the rapid change and the enormous developments that take place there between each visit. This phenomena is also evident in *Zen Baggage*. Many of the places described on this journey were already known to Bill Porter from some of his previous visits. The comparisons between those visits are really very interesting, especially with regard to the development of Buddhism in China over the past few years. Quite a few of the temples he visits in this book were in ruins when he last saw them; and some of the monks he got to know earlier have become abbots of monasteries, some of which are completely new, built from scratch. So one of the main themes of this book is really the revival of Buddhism in China today; visiting the ancient sites of the Zen patriarchs gives the work its structure and provides the historical background.

With the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, religion in China was slowly overshadowed by Western political systems and ideologies – first the efforts to establish a republic and then communism; and it became ever more difficult for Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, to endure the upheavals of the Second World War, ‘Mao’s Great Leap Forward’ in 1958 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In 1979 the Chinese government reaffirmed the freedom of religious practice, but one does ask oneself how much of the genuine religious tradition was able to survive in those intervening years. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, when monks and nuns were derobed, monasteries destroyed and books burned, all practice and scholarship came to a halt. It is therefore difficult to assess the development of the present revival, the speed and scale of which is astounding. At the beginning of the book Porter talks to his friend Ming-yao in Beijing, who is the editor of the Chinese Buddhist magazine *Chan*. Ming-yao tells him, ‘More and more people are becoming interested in Zen, especially young people and people with a college education. But it’s going to take a while to reach a wider audience. Also, more and more temples are being built, or rebuilt. But more important than restoring temples is restoring the spirit of Zen...it’s going to take time to teach people how to manifest Zen in their daily lives in the modern world.’ He also admitted that although there was growing interest in it, there was a serious lack of competent teachers.

During the course of his journey, we repeatedly witness this burgeoning enthusiasm and bustling activity, for example the 4,000 monks, nuns and lay people who show up at Pailin Temple at the dawn in freezing temperatures to chant the 600 chapters of the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, which lasts for six hours. Likewise, when Bill Porter visited the temple of the third patriarch at the foot of Tienchushan, he learned that in 1980, when restrictions on religious practice had just been lifted, a thousand pilgrims came to offer incense at the temple; by 1990 it was 90,000 and by 1996 it was 240,000. Having to take care of so many visitors is obviously a distraction from running a temple or monastery and training monks, but many abbots all over the country feel that besides working towards reestablishing the monastic system, it is their duty to reacquaint the general public with Buddhism and to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of it. This in turn encourages patronage from private individuals and financial support for building projects from the local governments, who recognize the economic benefits from pilgrims and tourists. Perhaps this enthusiasm is after all proof of an abiding legacy that could not be suppressed during the long years of unrest and religious oppression.

This is a very enjoyable and informative book. *Zen Baggage* gives a very objective overview of the Buddhist revival in China today. The author just reports what he sees and hears and passes no value judgments; it is left up to the readers to draw their own conclusions. The book also provides a Chinese lexicon of names, titles and terms used throughout. Travelers who have read this book after their visit told me that they found it resonated with their experiences and refreshed their memories; others have used it as an introduction and guide to visiting Buddhist sites in China. But even for armchair travelers interested in Buddhism and China, it is an engrossing read and a rewarding experience. And hopefully it will tempt the reader to explore Bill Porter's/Red Pine's other books.



Bodhidharma's cave

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, #20)

(Continued from the Winter 09 Zen Notes)

Missan Zen

The subject of missan Zen is a difficult one. Despite its pivotal role in the Zen schools of the late Middle Ages, we lack precise knowledge of much of its history and workings, and any attempt to treat it in more than general terms must be based largely on conjecture. The missan transmission apparently had its roots in the Kamakura period, dominated the Zen world of late Muromachi Japan, and in certain instances persisted into the early nineteenth century. But while spanning a period of more than four hundred years, the actual details of the evolution and character of missan Zen remain obscure, and in documenting its development we must draw what clues we can from materials that are scattered and incomplete, undated, or derive largely from the later periods of missan history, in particular the early Tokugawa period.

To recapitulate, the missan system was essentially a product of

the rinka. But while rinka Zen had developed apart from the sorin, it was to a great extent shaped by the same key elements that had formed the Zen of the Muromachi Gozan temples. These were the influence of Esoteric Buddhism and the central importance of Chinese-language materials, combined with what was perhaps a historical Japanese penchant for closed transmissions, or *denju*, particularly the transmission of literary secrets.

While in the sorin Chinese-language materials were primarily the object of scholarship and connoisseurship, in the missan transmission of the rinka such materials were related directly to Zen practice, and, particularly, to koan study. Thus, in the rinka, the two spheres, the literary and the Esoteric, were not maintained concurrently but separately, as in the Gozan, but merged in what became the missan system of the late medieval period: a secret transmission of arcane Chinese phrases whose form and, at times, content, reflected the influence of Esoteric Buddhism.

Compared with the original Zen of the early founders such as Dogen and Daito, or with the teachings of later masters such as Bankei and Hakuin, missan Zen appears curiously formalized and degenerate. In place of non-reliance on words and letters, it substitutes a transmission based on often cryptic foreign phrases and their interpretations, inscribed in secret memoranda; instead of spontaneity and the lightning flash of intuition in the confrontation between teacher and disciple, it offers a series of ritualized encounters; perhaps most damning of all, the experience of Zen enlightenment--the special transmission from mind to mind outside the scriptures--is reduced to the confines of a formal initiation. Yet it should be remembered that to many Muromachi priests, the missan transmission of the rinka schools represented authentic Zen, as opposed to the literary Zen of the sorin, and despite the denunciations of Gozan teachers, large numbers of young idealists continued to leave the sorin for rinka temples in pursuit of this "authentic" teaching.

While their ready acceptance of missan Zen may seem to us naive, the priests of the late Muromachi period may simply have lacked any real basis for comparison. The teachings of Daio, Daito, Dogen and Onkei, the Genju line's founder, had changed so completely in the course of succeeding generations that even those rinka masters who decried the excesses of the missan system seemed to accept many of its fundamentals.

Tamamura Takeji maintains that Zen, as such, largely ceased to exist in late medieval Japan; but given the relative paucity of information on which we must rely, it seems difficult to make any categorical judgment of this sort. Although late medieval Japanese Zen included many degenerate elements and was clearly dominated by

the missan secret transmission, it is impossible to say that orthodox training and practice did not at times coexist with the more formalized aspects represented by the missan system. Some of the later rinka masters spent long years in training; others were advocates of zazen. Whether such activities were merely empty gestures to tradition or sincerely motivated is probably a qualitative question that lies beyond the scope of the historian.

At the least, missan Zen managed to preserve, albeit in a distorted form, koan study, sanzen, and inka, while making these available to a broad spectrum of the population, both urban and rural, lay and religious. And, though its practitioners were probably unaware of the fact, the missan system also embodied a uniquely Japanese adaptation of Buddhism and, specifically, of Zen.

The first part of this section attempts briefly to examine the history of missan study as it evolved in Japan, based on the scanty records that remain to us; the latter part addresses the content and format of the missan documents themselves in order to present some idea of the substance of missan teaching.

Missan Zen: History and Development

As previously noted, Zen in Sung-dynasty China had important connections with the world of the Chinese literati, and Sung Zen teachings frequently displayed a strong literary cast. Such influences carried over into the development of the koan method, which probably attained its distinctive form during the Sung. The origins of the koan itself are obscure, but in Sung China it became popular to make collections of "cases," generally, but not exclusively, exchanges between the early masters and their disciples, and to append to them comments in poetry or prose as a kind of individual "appreciation." One of the earliest of these compilations was produced by the Yun-men (J: Unmon)-line Master Hsueh-tou Ch'ung-hsien (J: Setcho Juken, 980-1052), who assembled a collection of one hundred koans to which he added his own juko (CH:sung-ku), or comments in verse. In the twelfth century, the Yang-chi (J: Yogi)-line Master Yuan-wu Ko-ch'in delivered a series of lectures on Hsueh-tou's collection in which he offered his own comments on both the hundred cases and Hsueh-tou's verses. Recorded by his disciples under the title *Pi-yen lu*, or "*Blue Cliff Record*", and published in 1128, the resulting collection combined Hsueh-tou's original one hundred cases and their accompanying poems with Yuan-wu's introductions and comments. Among the latter were short remarks known as capping phrases (*agyo*, CH: *hsia-yu* or *jakugo* (CH: *cho-yu*), interlinear notes inserted after each phrase of the main case and the poem. The earliest form of capping phrases is uncertain, but they appear to have originated as

footnotes and evolved into a distinctive form of Zen comment, linked indissolubly with the development of Sung koan Zen.

While capping phrases appeared in other Zen works, they received their greatest impetus from Yuan-wu and the *Blue Cliff Record*. There was considerable variety among the *Blue Cliff* capping phrases. They might represent alternative responses or critical comments, and drew freely upon poetry, proverbs and contemporary slang, including a variety of shouts and imprecations. The *Blue Cliff Record* itself represented a marriage of Zen and Chinese culture, both literary and popular, and its impact on the development of Zen in both China and Japan was perhaps greater than that of any other work. Similar collections soon made their appearance, among them the *Gateless Gate* (CH: *Wu-men kuan*, J: *Mumonkan* 1228-1229), Wu-men Hui-kai's celebrated collection of forty-eight koans and comments.

The overall impact of the *Blue Cliff Record* on medieval Japanese Zen was related as much to the form of the work as to its content--in particular the text's literary character, its treatment of a large number of cases and its frequent use of capping phrases. Zen practice, as it survived in the rinka temples of the late medieval period, meant primarily koan study, and koan study in turn meant above all the selection of capping phrases, according to the Sung style exemplified in the *Blue Cliff Record*. Following Yuan-wu's example, Japanese teachers began to assign their own individual capping phrases, not only to the cases of the *Blue Cliff Record* but to other koans, including those of the *Record of Lin-chi* and *Gateless Gate*. Unlike Yuan-wu's phrases, however, the capping phrases selected by the Japanese teachers came to be regarded as "answers" to the koans, and "family traditions" detailing which capping phrases corresponded to particular cases were preserved in secret within each line, orally transmitted from master to disciple. In late medieval Japan, this koan transmission was commonly referred to as *tokuho* or *missan*. The course of study leading to inka called for accumulating transmission to a large number of koans in private interviews with the teacher. These interviews, including the presentation of the capping phrases, frequently adhered to a *mondo*, or question-and-answer-type format, and their contents were set down in notebooks known as *missancho*, records of the teacher's secret oral transmission that were treasured by the student and jealously guarded from outsiders.

Such *missancho* might contain transmissions from one line or from several different lines, depending on the compiler's background and orientation. All, however, were maintained in strict secrecy, and while numerous commentaries to the *Blue Cliff Record* and the other classic koan collections were published in medieval Japan, the master's own capping phrases for the cases were never

printed or made available.

The Chinese capping phrases posed particular problems for Japanese students. The language of the *Blue Cliff Record* and the other Sung koan collections was highly specialized. It contained many technical and colloquial expressions whose nuances were immediately familiar to the priests of the Sung Zen temples but relatively obscure to their Japanese counterparts in the Muromachi rinka. Apart from scholars and those with a strong grounding in literary Chinese, the capping phrases must have constituted an unwieldy vehicle for the rapid give-and-take of mondo, and ultimately part of the secret transmission of koans in the rinka became the explanation of the capping phrases themselves. At times, it was necessary to explain not only the meaning of the capping phrases but their reading into Japanese, where the Chinese original might give rise to confusion, ambiguity or plain misunderstanding. But rather than diminishing the attractiveness of the capping phrases their arcane qualities only seemed to increase their appeal. The allure of Chinese culture remained strong, even in provincial Japan, and mastery of a particular koan's capping phrases represented a kind of exclusive knowledge, blending Chinese language and religion.

We do not know precisely when the *Blue Cliff Record* first arrived in Japan. Dogen is said to have brought a copy with him on his return from China, and it seems likely that other early Japanese teachers who had studied in the Sung temples introduced the text to their students. What is certain is that throughout the Muromachi period, the *Blue Cliff Record* occupied a position of special importance in the rinka, and was intimately associated with the formation of missan Zen.

This seems to have been particularly true in the Daitokuji line, where the *Blue Cliff Record's* popularity surpassed that of even the *Record of Lin-chi*. From the outset, the line was imbued with the atmosphere of Chinese literary culture, even while actively promoting orthodox Zen practice. Daio's Chinese master, Hsueh-tou, was noted for his literary orientation, and is probably responsible for the conspicuous influence of Sung literary Zen on the teachings of Daio and Daito. The literary styles of Hsueh-tou and Yuan-wu are apparent in the *Daio goroku* and both the *Daio goroku* and *Daito roku* are strongly literary in flavor, with frequent references to the Chinese Zen records and constant use of highly specialized terminology, imagery and allusions. The *Daito roku* seems to explicitly pay tribute to Hsueh-tou's brand of literary Zen: its second volume, contains a section, consisting of forty-eight koans with verse comments appended by Daito, while volume three is devoted to lectures and commentary on the the record of Hsueh-tou.

The *Blue Cliff Record* itself seems to have occupied an important place in Daito's teaching program. Like Yuan-wu, Daito gave capping phrases for the "Blue Cliff Record" koans. From the outset, however, Daito's capping phrases to the "Blue Cliff Record" seem to have been preserved as a secret manuscript to be transmitted from teacher to disciple and guarded from outsiders. There are indications that a transmission for the *Blue Cliff Record* koans was already apparent in Daitokuji at an early period.

While the full details of the *Blue Cliff Record*'s early history in the Daitokuji line are unclear, its central role in Daito's line seems indisputable. This impression is reinforced by the seventeenth-century Daitokuji Master Takuan Soho (1573-1645) in his famous protest letter to the Tokugawa Bakufu, or military government. Describing the traditional course of study at Daitokuji, Takuan writes:

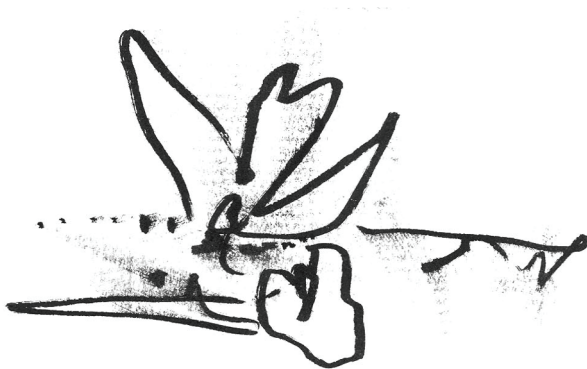
"From the time of our temple's founder, through that of his second- and third-generation successors, [a course of study] was established for future generations of students [based on] the koans which [these three teachers] had taken up, comprising the one hundred cases of the Blue Cliff Record and the various koans contained in its associated poems and comments, as well as the koans of the Lin-chi Record and Yunmon Record, along with the capping phrases for one hundred twenty koans which [Daito] had selected for study, and essential poems and phrases drawn from various sutras and records. One studies these all intensively, so that the course of study in our temple [can] be completed in about twenty years"

Other accounts suggest a secret transmission of the *Blue Cliff Record* at Daitokuji. Ikkyu, in the *Jikaishu*, accuses Yoso of "selling" to merchants and nuns the transmission for what seems to be a secret precis of the *Blue Cliff Record* belonging to Daitokuji and bearing the title *Kuchu shoshutsu*.

Another facet of the *Blue Cliff Record*'s influence on the early Daito line and on the evolution of missan Zen in the line seems to have been Daito's emphasis on capping phrases in his teaching method.

Besides his capping phrases for the *Blue Cliff Record*, for example, Daito composed a famous work known as the "One hundred twenty cases, consisting of capping phrases which he presented for one hundred twenty selected koans. Even in mondo with his students, Daito's replies, like Daio's, tended to be given in capping phrase style, using Chinese phrases spoken according to their Japanese reading. Students were expected to master the capping phrases in order to proceed in their Zen practice. Even in

his *kana hogo*, composed in simple Japanese, Daito presents cap-ping phrases and asks his nameless but apparently aristocratic listener to realize their meaning. Daito acknowledges that the phrases are difficult to understand, but says that all that is needed is to grasp their "basis" and then all doubts will be banished.

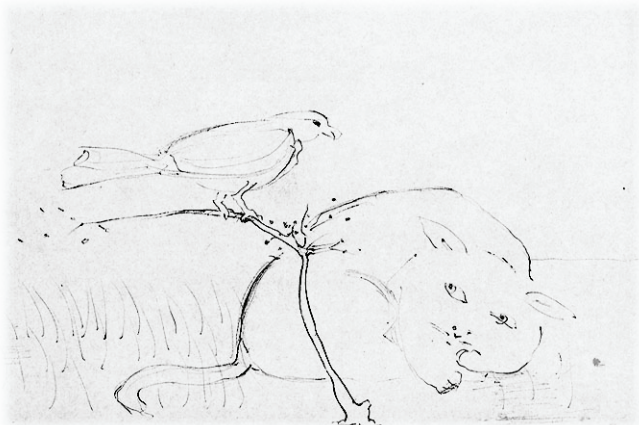


COVER ART:

The cover of the current issue depicts the *Baize* (J: *Hakutaku*), literally "White Swamp," a legendary Chinese creature whose image was used to ward off calamities. From the early Chinese Middle Ages, Baize pictures were apparently displayed in people's homes. The custom is the subject of a koan in the ninth century collection *Hall of the Patriarchs* (*Zutang ji*), and is remarked on in Japan in the early seventeenth century by the Zen master Takuan near the conclusion of his work *The Sword T'ai-a* (translated in an earlier *Zen Notes*):

"The Baize is a dumb, living creature," Takuan writes, "said to have a body like an ox and a head like a man. It devours dreams and calamities, so that in China pictures of it are made and affixed to gates or stuck onto the pillars of homes. So putting up a picture of the Baize is a means of warding off domestic calamities."

In late eighteenth century Japan, a vogue for such works (known as *Hakutaku zu*, "Hakutaku images," or *Hakutaku hikai zu*, "Images of the Hakutaku for banishing spirits"), produced Baize pictures like that on the cover, painted by one Fukuhara Gogaku. It is inscribed by a Zen priest, Bansen of Manshōzan, with an account of the Baize, and dated to late autumn of the fifth year of Tenmei (1785). We are indebted to Professor Donald Harper of the University of Chicago for both the graphic and the information on the Baize in China and Japan.



A limited number of complete sets of **Zen Notes**
(from Vol. I, 1954 to Vol. LVI, 2008)
are available for sale. Price - \$300.00.
If you are interested, contact the Institute at the phone
number below.

zen notes

Copyright 2010

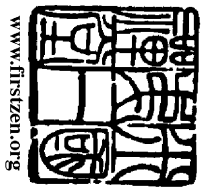
PUBLISHED BY

FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

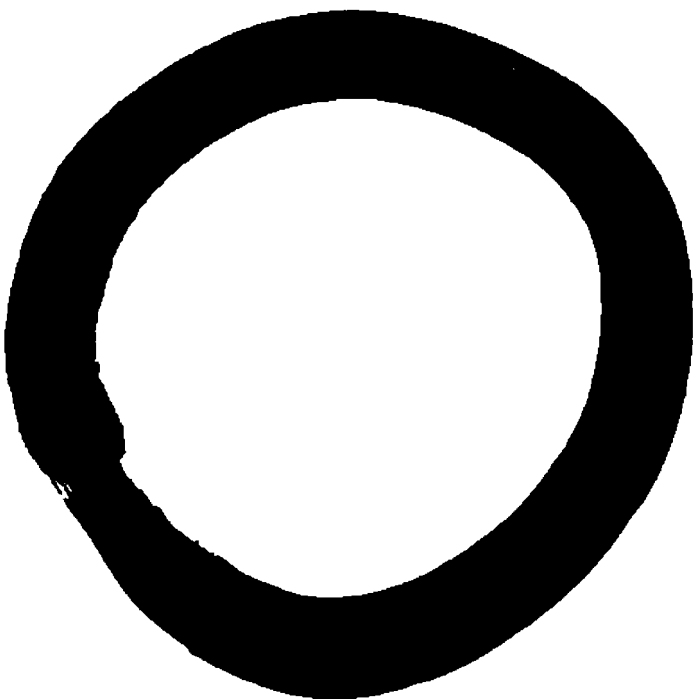
113 East 30th Street
New York City, New York 10016
(212) 686-2520

VOLUME LVI, NUMBER 2 SPRING 2009
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



First Zen Institute of America
113 East 30th Street
New York, New York 10016
(ZN Vol 56, No. 2)



Copyright of Zen Notes is the property of the First Zen Institute of America, Inc., and its content may not be copied or e-mailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or e-mail articles for individual use.

**Founded in 1930 by
Sokei-an Sasaki**



**First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212)-686-2520
www.firstzen.org**

美國第一禪協會