

# ZEN notes



Year of the Snake

# THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

## SIXTY FIRST LECTURE

Wednesday November 29th, 1939

*"O Obedient One! If your mind assumes the attitudes of illumination and of awareness, these attitudes are termed hindrances. The mind of a Bodhisattva does not remain in the attitude of awareness. Thus both the attitude of illumination and he who assumes this attitude cease to exist. It is as though someone cut off his own head. By the mind which hinders, hindrances are annihilated. When hindrances are annihilated, there will also be no one to annihilate hindrances. It is as the metaphor in the sutra, of the finger pointing out the moon. When one has seen the moon, that which indicates the moon—one knows is after all not the moon itself. This metaphor applies to all the various teachings of the Tathagata which have been disclosed to the Bodhisattvas. When a Bodhisattva has entered this state of awakening, he is called the 'Bodhisattva who has attained the true state of awakening according to the nature of ultimate awakening.'"*

### **SOKEI-AN SAYS:**

In these lines are two important points: The first is that Buddhism always teaches us that everything flows from one center to the outside; nothing exists on the outside. And the second is that the sutras, those systems of philosophies are not Buddhism. They, the sutras of Buddhism, are like a ferry boat which carries you to the other shore; they are the angling hook, they are not the Buddha's attainment. But they are wonderful contrivances to lead you to this attainment. And you, in accordance with this contrivance, will attain awakening to the real state of existence.

So, in these several lines, the ultimate teachings of the Buddha are described. This sutra is called "The Sutra of Perfect Awakening," written by some anonymous Buddhist in the period about 800 years after the Buddha's death. It is called Mahayana scripture.

"*O Obedient One!*" —So the Buddha addresses his disciple, the Bodhisattva. These Bodhisattvas are those who know the law of the universe, of nature, and of man. They live in accordance with the law—just as one would row a boat according to the flow of a stream. Therefore, the Buddha called them "Obedient Ones." The Chinese character for this means "good man."

"*If your mind assumes the attitudes of illumination and of awareness,*" — I use the word "illumination" according to the Chinese character "illumine." (Sokei-an pointed out the third character from the right, above the door to the Zen room) To understand this "illumine," you must have some knowledge of Buddhism. You must have the wisdom to attain the state of "illumine". Western philosophy terms it "reality". It is not related to the five senses; it is known only by pure intellectual intuition—not empirical intuition.

The idea of consciousness is very clear: the ear, the eye, all those branches are consciousness. It is within this physical body but it has no particular center; the whole organism creates consciousness. This present consciousness which we have is called "Manu" consciousness. When it shines, it is called "Mana" consciousness; when it sleeps, it is called "Samsara." Consciousness exists alone, without the five senses. We call it "Alaya consciousness". The Buddha never used this term, but Mahayana Buddhism divided consciousness into many states.

"Alaya" consciousness is the consciousness of insentient beings. It is pure consciousness—it exists alone without any disturbance from our five senses. To reach there, we retreat into our inner consciousness through many states. Quite a clever abstraction!

The Buddha, although he suggested this deeper consciousness, expressed everything in this present consciousness. This elaborate system was developed later. It is with this present consciousness that we illumine the abstract state of reality. We call it "illumination". The Chinese character *sho* has a very deep meaning.

When the European scholars try to translate the Chinese sutras, they miss the true meaning and need much commentary. To him who does not know the meaning of this "illumine", it is just hypothetical. He annihilates the thoughts on the shelf of consciousness, enters under the shelf and thinks he has reached the state of Reality. It is, therefore, just his idea, his hypothesis of "illumine."

"... *these attitudes are termed hindrances.*" —But we must begin with the practice of wiping out all thoughts—the mind becoming like a hibernating frog. This is the state which is taken for illumination. Reality has nothing to do with this. Without birth and death we are always in Reality. Reality has nothing to do with the

states of birth and death—just as the reality of water has nothing to do with waves on the surface.

Next we meditate with open eyes, denying neither the outside nor the inside (you cannot deny one without denying the other)—and all of a sudden we attain the knowledge of Reality. This is what is called "the attitude of awareness."

*"The mind of a Bodhisattva does not remain in the attitude of awareness."* —First stage, "I am drinking water." Second stage, "I am—glup-glup." Third stage is written here and I shall explain a little more. (Again, Sokei-an explains the meaning of a Bodhisattva)

*"Thus, both the attitude of illumination and he who assumes this attitude, cease to exist."* —One who takes this attitude is like the sun in the sky taking the attitude of illumination, and then like the sky which embodies the sun. This is not the true state of illumination! We do not need to hold this attitude of awareness. The sun shines in the sky—the sky is transparent. To be aware of this state is artificial, entirely unimportant! But you must pass through these two states.

*"It is as though someone cut off his own head. By the mind which hinders, hindrances are annihilated."* —First, "No, this is not true!" Then, "No, this is not true either." It is as one awaking from a dream.

*"When hindrances are annihilated, there will also be no one to annihilate hindrances. It is as the metaphor in the sutra, of the finger pointing out to the moon. When one has seen the moon, that which indicates the moon one knows is after all not the moon itself."* —So this attitude and that attitude are the fingers pointing to the moon. When you realize the third state then you realize that the finger is not the moon. All these teachings are fingers not Buddhism itself. You make a cage to keep birds in but the cage is not the birds! This teaching is the cage for us but when one has really attained, no cage is needed. All religions are cages, so why should we squabble between Christianity and Buddhism.

*"This metaphor applies to all the various teachings of the Tathagata which have been disclosed to the Bodhisattvas. When a Bodhisattva has entered this state of awakening, he is called 'the Bodhisattva who has attained the true state of awakening according to the nature of ultimate awakening.'"*... I cannot add anything to this...

# Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

## The Record of Lin Chi

### Discourse XIII, Lecture 4

*“Brothers, just because you have been stamped with the seal of approval of some old master or other, do not go around saying, ‘I understand Zen! I understand the Way!’ Even though your eloquence flows like a river from heaven, It is nothing but hell-making karma. If you are a real Dharma student, you will not look to the world for [the right] and wrong of anything; you will urgently require true understanding, an understanding that is clear and perfect. Thus you will really finish [your study of the Dharma once and for all.”*

#### **SOKEI-AN SAYS:**

When a Zen master acknowledges your understanding, we call it “the seal of sanction.” With this “sealing” you may say, “I understand Zen and Dharma.” But Lin-chi gives warning that you should not blindly call yourself an enlightened one simply because some Zen master has stamped you with his seal of approval. I think that in Lin-chi's time some Zen masters were not good enough to be the masters of students. There were also other Buddhists of different schools giving lectures with whom Lin-chi did not agree. Not only were there false Zen masters in the golden age of Tang, but here and there in Japan there are false masters today also, though not so many because the country is civilized and false teachers (foxes and badgers) can be pulled from the temples. In Lin-chi's time, however, many were giving false teachings.

To pass a koan given by a teacher is not so difficult, but to pass a koan given by actual life, that is wonderful! Studying Zen in the sanctuary of a Zen master is like learning to swim in a pool. But to swim in the ocean of life is the koan given by *Tathagata*—that is the koan one has to pass.

Lin-chi did not like too much talking. Some teachers give beautiful lectures, like vaudeville artists, but it is nothing but hell-making karma. The information they give is only for the brain, causing more brain-stuff and more torment. The real Zen student does not look to others for the right and wrong of things. Until you understand for yourself, you cannot call yourself enlightened, nor do you really know what to do, nor can you love or help others. One who cannot swim is not equipped to be a lifesaver. With-

out understanding, you cannot know what is right, what is wrong. Confucius said, "Anyone who comes to me to speak of right or wrong is a man of right and wrong; the wise man never talks about it." From the standpoint of the Dharma, you see through everything.

When you attain true understanding, everything will become perfectly clear. This is how you will really finish your study of the Dharma once and for all.

You may think you finished Zen long ago. I thought so when I completed all my teacher's koans, but I know now that I did not finish Zen at that time.

The real understanding that you conceal in your mind must be clear and perfect. You must not show it like a bouquet; it is dangerous to show it to everybody. If you come to real understanding, "Ah, this is it once and for all!" That is the end.

Love is the first thing in daily life. You cannot promulgate the law without love. Without love a bodhisattva can do nothing.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Fruit looking for a bowl...*

# **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. The previous sections, therefore, concerned Japanese Zen during the late middle ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "Tokugawa Zen" deals with the Zen of Bankei's own period and how it emerged amid the changed conditions of the new age. The Tokugawa period, which lasted from approximately 1600 to 1867, was of key importance in the development of Rinzai and Soto Zen as we know them today, and many of the features of Japanese Zen that we now take for granted evolved during the more than two and one half centuries of rule by the Tokugawa shoguns. Bankei's age, the seventeenth century, is a particular focus of this section. Bankei was an original and highly individual teacher, but as will be seen, he shared many characteristics with other Zen teachers of his day, not least the very originality and individualism of his approach. The concluding section, "Bankei's Story," will detail Bankei's biography and the manner in which he arrived at his distinctive teaching of the unborn Buddha Mind*

## **TOKUGAWA ZEN (Part III, #7)**

(Continued from the Fall '12 Zen Notes)

### **Tokugawa Zen**

Only a handful of the plethora of Medieval Zen lines continued into the Tokugawa period. Of these, four groups alone remained important: the Soto school (Dogen line), the Daitokuji and Myoshinji lines (the Daio line), and the Gozan organizations of Kyoto and Kamakura. The latter, having survived only by dint of participating in the Genju line during the Sengoku period, were greatly weakened and no longer retained the special privileges and the status of "official temples" that they had enjoyed under the Muromachi Bakufu. The real focus of the Zen school was now the Dogen and Daio lines, and the early Tokugawa decree directed to Sojiji, Eiheiiji, Daitokuji and Myoshinji represented a positive rec-

ognition of the eminence achieved by the leading *rinka* organizations.

As observed previously, the Zen sect was subject to the same pattern of government control as the other schools of Japanese Buddhism, with the decrees serving the dual purpose of legitimizing the various Zen organizations and regulating them according to Bakufu religious policies. As elsewhere, organizational discipline was strictly enforced through the hierarchical structure of the headquarters and branch temple system. From the earliest period of Tokugawa rule, Bakufu injunctions call on the Zen temples to acknowledge the headquarters temple's authority, forbidding them to defy, disregard or in any way alienate themselves from the headquarters temples. Zen temples were ranked as either main headquarters temple, headquarters temples, direct branch temples or collateral branch temples and the ranks and privileges of their monks were specified as well, even to the character of the robes and bowls to be used by each.

Linked with the overridingly conservative, authoritarian character of the early decrees and their emphasis on hierarchy was complementary stress on tradition. This was reflected in provisions urging the need to observe temple precedent in all matters, even the most minute. In the Zen school, as in other Japanese Buddhist sects, this led to efforts at codifying and systematizing the particular practices associated with each group, and many of the complex customs that survive today in Japanese Zen temples were elaborated during this period.

The Bakufu was not, however, uniformly committed to the status quo, and aspects of temple history or tradition that were perceived to impinge on the feudal order established by the Tokugawas were expunged by fiat or by force. While none of the Zen organizations, *sorin* or *rinka*, had harbored standing monastic armies like those of the Ikko, Nichiren or Tendai schools, the special relationship between certain of the leading Zen temples and the emperor and court in Kyoto was initially a matter of concern for the Shogunate. As it had over other areas of Japanese society, the Tokugawa government sought to assert its absolute authority over the emperor and the court, and even such largely traditional and symbolic expressions of autonomy as the emperor's appointment of abbots within the imperial temples was viewed as a potential challenge to the Bakufu's monopoly of power. Although establishments of the other Buddhist sects were connected with the emperor and court as well, the relationship between certain Rinzai temples and the palace was especially intimate. Thus, of the seventeen temples connected with the imperial household, the largest number (ten) belonged to the Rinzai sect while, of the seven establishments privileged to receive the purple robe from the emperor



by imperial decree two, Daitokuji and Myoshinji, were also Rinzaï Zen temples.

In addition, the nature of the imperial abbacy in the Daio-line temples was distinct from that in temples of the other Buddhist sects. Elsewhere, the instigation for imperial abbacy was complex, and the temple's recommendation had to proceed through the government's chief religious official, or *soroku*, to the Bakufu before an imperial order could be issued. At Daitokuji and Myoshinji, both the *soroku* and Bakufu were bypassed, and on receiving the temple's letter of recommendation, the emperor directly issued an order for the candidate to receive imperial abbacy, known in the Daio line temples as *shusseï juin*. For *shusseï*, a monk over fifty, selected for recognition by the emperor, would receive the imperial messenger at the main headquarters temple, perform the ceremony known as *kaido* ("opening the hall") and thereupon assume the purple robe.

At Myoshinji, with its distinctive system of alternating abbacy, a unique "second" imperial abbacy was observed, known as *saiju rinshi*. The "first" imperial abbacy, involved headship of one's particular sub temple, and was accompanied by the titles of *zogen* and *osho* and the presentation of a black robe. The purple robe was presented on the occasion of the "second" imperial abbacy, or *gyokuho shoku*, when the designated priest became abbot of the main temple itself, receiving the honorary titles of *choro* and *dai osho*.

The four Myoshinji lines alternated in the abbacy of the main temple, each one assuming the office twice. Moreover, in contrast with other imperial temples, where the purple robe was kept only for the tenure of one's abbacy and thereafter passed immediately to one's successor, the purple robe bestowed by the emperor upon a Myoshinji abbot became the permanent property of that individual. The monk thus honored continued to wear the purple robe even after his return to his own temple, and it remained with him throughout his lifetime, however humble his subsequent situation.

This unique tradition of direct appointment by the emperor, remained a source of considerable pride for Daitokuji and Myoshinji, but was a sore point with the Tokugawa Bakufu, who regarded it as an unacceptable encroachment by the temples and the palace upon the government's authority.

In 1613, the Bakufu issued a *shie* or "purple robe" decree, directed to all the imperial temples. The decree mentions Daitokuji and Myoshinji by name, and recognizes their status as imperial temples, but stipulates that before an abbot may receive the imperial command for his investiture, the matter must first be reported

to the Bakufu and be submitted to its judgment." Only then was the imperial abbacy to be permitted.

The purple robe decree dealt only with the specifics of abbacy at the imperial temples, and it was not until 1615, the first year of the Genna era, that the Bakufu issued a series of brief, individual decrees directed to the leading Zen organizations and designed in consultation with the monk Suden of Nanzenji.

For the Soto sect, decrees were issued for the school as a whole as well as for Eiheiji and Sojiji. The Rinzaï decree tacitly observed the old distinction between *sorin* and *rinka* schools, and the Genna decree appears to divide the Rinzaï sect into three groups: the Gozan lines and the lines of the Daitokuji and Myoshinji. The Gozan decree confirms the Gozan hierarchical system, with Nanzenji as the organization's premier temple, followed in importance by Tenryuji. The Daitokuji and Myoshinji decrees are identical documents of five articles, issued simultaneously by the Bakufu and bearing the vermilion seal of Tokugawa Ieyasu. In familiar fashion, they open with the statement that "Priests are to observe temple precedent in all matters, from assuming temple office to the conduct of ritual and practice," and include exhortations to respect the authority of the headquarters temples and to strictly maintain priestly ranks. But the decrees also reveal the Tokugawa authorities' pique at what they considered indiscriminate bestowal of imperial abbacies at Daitokuji and Myoshinji, and in this connection they present certain interesting statements specifying requirements for Zen study within the two temples. According to the decree,

*"In the practice and study of Zen, one consumes thirty years of diligent training under a qualified teacher, and, upon completing seventeen hundred koans, travels throughout the land, studying with different masters, everywhere pursuing the [Zen] teaching ....*

*"All those who aspire to become abbots of temples should receive permission by informing the proper authorities by means of [a document bearing] the signature of a qualified teacher. Lately we have received indiscriminate imperial authorizations conferring abbacy upon people who, at times, have not been priests for very long or are inexperienced in religious discipline. Such appointments not only sullies the imperial temples but earn the scorn of all the people and grossly violate the Buddha's precepts. Hereafter, those who scheme in such a manner are to be permanently expelled...."*

These articles of the Daitokuji and Myoshinji decrees are

plainly critical of the two temples, suggesting as they do that Zen study in the Daio line had become degenerate and possibly corrupt. The charge that unqualified monks were being routinely installed, as teachers and abbots, for example, hints at a system of organized simony. Not surprisingly, the terms of the Genna code provoked a storm of controversy within Daitokuji and Myoshinji. On the question of how to respond to the decree, the priesthood of the temples was divided between "moderates" and "hardliners." The former, in both establishments, dispatched written apologies to the Bakufu, while the latter voiced their opposition through statements that sought to vindicate the temples by critically examining the articles of the Gonna codes.

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## **TWENTY-FIVE KOANS:**

### **(THIRTEENTH KOAN)**

Delivered by Sokei-an, April 2, 1938

*One day Sankok paid homage to the Osho Hui-t'ang.*

*Hui-t'ang said: "There is a line or two in the book which, I believe, you have learned by heart. Chung-ni [Confucius] said: 'Do you think, my disciples, that I have any concealments? I conceal nothing from you.' These words contain an idea in common with our Zen. Have you observed it?"*

*"No, I have not," answered Sankok.*

*While Hui-t'ang Osho was taking a walk through a mountain path with Sankok, the mountain was pervaded with balmy air. The Osho asked Sankok:*

*"The air is faintly scented with the sweet odor of the flowers of the fragrant magnolia. Have you been conscious of it?"*

*"Yes, Osho," answered Sankok.*

*Hui-t'ang said: "I am concealing nothing from you."*

*Sankok understood the Osho's viewpoint.*

*After several months, Sankok came to see Shi-shin Zen-shi [the name signifies "Dead Soul"]. Zen-shi questioned Sankok:*

*"The elder Shing, a deceased scholar, will be reduced to two heaps of ashes. At that time, where do you meet him?"*

*Sankok was disconcerted and could not say a word.*

*Later, when he was traveling through the road of Ch'ien-nan, he took a nap. When he awoke from the nap, all of a sudden he awoke to the attainment of Shi-shin Zen-shi. Ever since he has enjoyed the freedom of emancipation. He sent a word to Zen-shi:*

*"Once, a certain stonecutter shaved of the dust from the tip of a man's nose with one blow of his ax. If any one could shave the dust for me without using his hand, the blow of the ax would be more directly upon my nose."*

## **Sokei-an:**

This koan drives you into the home of Buddhism you are Buddhism if you really understand it.

*One day Sankok paid homage to the Osho Hui-t'ang (Kuedo). This Sankok was the governor of Chang-chou. This territory is in the southern part of Jiangsu province. He had a fame as a man of letters—a literary man. He was known as the man of so-called "soft literature"—like stories which were written by women. We call it romance today—erotic literature. Before he met this Muedo he met a master who talked about a painter who was always painting a horse and said that painter would incarnate in the stomach of a horse. He then asked: "What about yourself? You always portray erotic literature. You will incarnate in the belly of a pig." After this Sankok gave up his writing. Here Sankok takes an insignificant appearance, but in Chinese literature he is one of the noted writers.*

Kuedo was one the famous Zen Masters in China. Under the Sixth Patriarch were two famous Zen disciplines; Huai-jang of Nan-yueh and Hsing-szu [Seigen Gyoshi] of Ch'ing-yuan. Obaku and Rinzai are of the lineage of Huai-yuan, thirteen gen-

erations from the Sixth Patriarch. Kuedo's teacher was of Yellow Dragon Mountain. Kuedo died 1010 A.D. He was 76 years old. There are many stories connected with this Kuedo, but today I am avoiding all those stories.

Kuedo said: *"There is a line or two in the book which, I believe, you have learned by heart. Chung-ni [Confucius] said: 'Do you think, my disciple, that I have any concealments? I conceal nothing from you.'"*

When I was young, a child, the teacher who taught this line to me in the Chinese classic, said that Confucius never did anything in secret. He did everything openly. Of course he was a man of good conduct—did not hide anything from his disciples. In such a way he must explain this. But the Buddhist's eye penetrates deeper than those Chinese explorations. We say esoterically or mysterically—from this point of view we must read this line.

"Do you think, my disciples, I have some mystical or have some esoteric teaching. All the teachings which I give you are not esoteric. There is no mystery in it at all. All is manifested." This view is the Buddhist standpoint. Of Confucius who had twenty-four wives in his lifetime—that he would not speak anything about it—it is foolish to think in such a way of this line!

Every one can think that I have some esoteric teaching, but it is because you are blind. All is exposed under your eye. You think that Dharmakaya is a mystery. In such a way this line might be understood. Of course those teachers of the Chinese classics are just learned men never think of anything deeper than the skin of their own mind!

*"These words contain an idea in common with our Zen. Have you observed it?" "No, I have not," answered Sankok." For the first time in his life somebody pointed out for him this line in Confucius and told him there was some common, point in our Zen.*

*"While Kuedo was taking a walk through a mountain path with Sankok,..." --* Some days after, perhaps the summer had passed and autumn had come, he was taking a walk through this mountain. On one side was a view of the Yangtae fading into the sunlight and this mountain was abundant with woods—it is very seldom in China, but that mountain was a green mountain; that district had many trees.

*"...the mountain was pervaded with balmy air. The Osho asked Sankok: "The air is faintly scented with the sweet odor of the flow-*

ers of the magnolia [fragrant olive]. Have you been conscious of it?" Just a common question, an everyday question.

"Yes, Osho," answered Sankok. Kuedo said, "I am concealing nothing from you." Sankok understood the Osho's viewpoint." --When I was young, in the monastery, when I read this part I thought that Kuedo was talking about our consciousness. Of course everything which exists on the outside can be reduced into our consciousness. All "mystery" or "esoteric teachings" are in our state of consciousness. So he was talking about the odor of the magnolia which was pervading in the air: "Are you aware of it?"... "Yes, because I understand my Osho's viewpoint."

In such a way I understood this story when I was young. Of course I cannot tell my private understanding to my teacher unless I am brave enough to take his stick! I talked about it to my elder brother. Of course I limited it when I said "consciousness." It is greater than consciousness.

After several months, Sankok came to see Shi-shin Zen-shi (the name signifies "Dead Soul").--- Zen-shi was a discipline of this Kuedo. Everyone called him Shi-shin but it was like a nickname, "Dead Soul". He died 1115 A.D. He was ninety-two years old. He was of the Sung dynasty. He also stayed in Kuedo's mountain. After Kuedo's death his name was Zen-shi. He called himself "Dead Soul" and in his own soul he made a little writing. Everything he did, he called it a "Dead Act".

Zen-shi questioned Sankok: "The elder Shing, a deceased scholar, will be reduced to two heaps of ashes. At that time, where do you meet him?" Sankok was disconcerted and could not say a word. One who believes in consciousness, that consciousness is God, would be disconcerted when asked this. We share this objective existence, therefore we have this consciousness. When the objective existence is destroyed, it is not fundamental it is just blind consciousness, we must find some other name. But you do not need a name, just find IT which was transmitted from Buddha to us through generations. "At that time, where do you meet him?"... Sankok was disconcerted and could not answer a word!

Later, when he was traveling through the road of Ch'ien-nan,... this Ch'ien-nan is way down in southern China. He was dismissed, I think, and..." he took a nap. When he awoke from the nap, all of a sudden he awoke to the attainment of Shi-shin." He was really enlightened which is the climax of Buddhism. He understood and grasped true Buddhism. This is very clearly described. Through many koans this is the concluding koan to bring people to Buddhism.

*Ever since he has enjoyed the freedom of emancipation. He sent a word to Zen-shi: If he had entered a queer conception he would enter a mountain cave and never come out, would die. But he was not that kind. He made a beautiful poem. I will translate it some day. This poem is not described in the koan book from which I translate, but is in a different book.*

*"Once, a certain stonecutter shaved of the dust from the tip of a man's nose with one blow of his ax. If any one could shave the dust for me without using his hand, the blow of the ax would be more directly upon my nose."---* This story is of a stonecutter who shaved off the dust on a plasterer's nose with one blow of his ax. The stonecutter said, "There is a little mote of plaster on your nose! Shall I shave it off?" The plasterer said, "O, please do!" So the stonecutter whirled his ax to hit that dust on his nose tip and the tip of the nose was not injured at all. Like William Tell!

But Sankok said, *"If any one could shave the dust for me without using his hand, the blow of the ax would be more directly upon my nose."* These "without using the hand" koans are not very rare. "Without using the hand plow the ground." "Without using the hand ride on the back of an ox." They are famous in Zen.

The Third Patriarch, after attaining enlightenment, was hiding among the beggars because all the other monks were trying to annihilate the Zen sect. His teacher before he died said to him, "I have just one disciple who can succeed me, hide yourself."

He was lame and he liked muskmelons very much. The monks trying to find him heard he was among the beggars. They recalled his fondness for melons and ordered that on a certain day all the beggars of the place would be given melons. Kyoto was famous for beggars so on the appointed day a great crowd gathered reaching for the melons.

All of a sudden the monk in charge cried, "Take the muskmelons without using your hand!" And all the beggars replied, "Without using the hands, how can we?" But one beggar cried, "Bring that melon without walking!" And the monk cried, "Oh, he is that one!" And he was caught. He knew the trick in the koan. But most students will fall into this conception "without using the hand", will drown in it, die in it and never come up any more.

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## TALES OF HAKUIN'S FOLLOWERS

Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769) is generally acknowledged as the key figure in formulating the Japanese Rinzai school of Zen as we know it today. The following anecdotes are taken from *Hakuin monka itsuwasen* (*Tales of Hakuin's Followers*), a translation into modern Japanese of *Keikyokusôdan* (*Tales From the Forest of Thorns*), composed in 1829 by Hakuin's fourth-generation disciple Myôki Seiteki (1774-1848) and published in 1843. *Tales of Hakuin's Followers*, which along with the modern Japanese-language version includes notes, the original Sino-Japanese text and its reading into classical Japanese, was prepared by Nônin Kôdô and issued in 2008 in Kyoto by Hanazono University's Zen bunka kenkyûjo, (Institute for the Study of Zen Culture).

### Tales #2

Yamanashi Heijirô, Layman Ryôtetsu<sup>1</sup> (Penetrating Realization), belonged to the powerful Ihara family, heirs to a large fortune. By nature he was self-indulgent, sunk in debauchery. His wives and concubines were of great beauty, and even his female servants were alluring and flirtatious, so that his days were passed in laughter and amusement.

On a late spring day Heijirô was disporting himself by the falls of Isabu. Sake and fish had been set out, and there was flute and biwa music, making for an altogether delightful excursion. Clearing mist cloaked the trees, and wildflowers bloomed everywhere in profusion. Heijirô's wives and courtesans ambled about, picking and gathering new-grown grasses. Suddenly realizing that everyone was gone, Heijirô began to stroll alone. The waters of the mountain stream and the falls poured down in a rushing torrent, sweeping along countless rocks, some of ordinary size, others as large as a foot or as small as an inch, but all vanishing in the end. Ryôtetsu suddenly perceived the impermanence of things and lamented to himself, "Human existence too is like this. Whether our span of life is long or short, is it really any different from a bubble?" Overcome with grief and losing all sense of enjoyment, the layman summoned his palanquin and returned home.

On another occasion, the layman happened to overhear one

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<sup>1</sup> Yamanashi Heijirô (1707-1763) became a retired lay practitioner in 1744. Originally a warrior clan, in Hakuin's day the Yamanashi were a wealthy and prominent family, with long-standing ties to the sake brewing industry.



of his child servants reciting [a passage from] Takusui:<sup>4</sup> "He who would realize the Buddha Way must first see into his own nature. Those sentient beings of dauntless courage will realize buddhahood instantaneously, while those who are feckless will never attain nirvana, even with the passing of innumerable *kalpas*."

On hearing these words, Ryôtetsu considered, "According to Takusui's words, even a useless old nag like myself must make one supreme effort to crack the whip and spur himself on!"

That very evening Ryôtetsu went into seclusion and sat firmly in meditation. He contended with the demons of thought, and perspiration bathed his whole body. By the fifth watch (3-5 AM) he had fainted from his exertions. Suddenly he revived and saw the first pale light at the corner of his window and heard sparrows twittering busily in the garden. He opened the door and stepped outside. His whole world seemed totally different. He thereupon wished to see Hakuin, and mounting his palanquin ascended the slopes of Mount Satta.<sup>5</sup>

When his bearers, panting with exhaustion, paused for breath at the mountain's summit, Ryôtetsu slid open the palanquin's door and gazed at the surrounding scenery. The landscape of fields and bays resembled that depicted in a painting. All at once, without realizing it, Ryôtetsu found he had lost all traces of self. He went and saw Hakuin, who examined him with several koan, all of which Ryôtetsu answered without the slightest difficulty.

Hakuin told him, "You have experienced great penetration."

On a subsequent occasion Hakuin remarked to someone, "Not since Shih-kung<sup>6</sup> has there been such a man as Ryôtetsu!"

(No.46: 248-249)

\* \* \*

Master Chôsa Ehô (1710-1781) was abbot of Zuiôji in Tôtômi (Shizuoka Prefecture). He subsequently became an ardent devotee of Hakuin's, longing to realize the master's teaching. He would at-

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<sup>4</sup> I.e., from the *Takusui kana hogo*, by the Rinzaï Zen master Takusui Chômo (d.1740). Nonin Keidô points out that this particular passage does not appear in the *Takusui kana hogo* as it survives today.

<sup>5</sup> A mountain near the town of Okitsu (modern Shizuoka Prefecture). It was said to be one of the hazardous spots along the Tokaido, the road that in Hakuin's day linked Edo and Kyoto.

<sup>6</sup> The Ch'an master Shih-kung Hui-tsung (n.d.), an heir of the celebrated master Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788). Originally a hunter, Shih-kung is said to have continued to use his bow and arrow to test students, confronting them with a drawn bow and an arrow aimed at their hearts.

tend Rohatsu<sup>1</sup> every year at Hakuin's temple, with no thought to the long journey involved,<sup>2</sup> always coming and joining in the intensive meditation practice. Yet he had never managed to find an entrance to enlightenment.

Once, at the conclusion of the Rohatsu observances, Chôsa, as was customary, came to bid farewell to the master.

Hakuin told him, "Your being at the Rohatsu every single year is just like 'ducks huddling in the water when it's cold,'<sup>3</sup> traveling all this way for nothing, not even the tiniest result. Don't you realize all the sandals you're just wearing out year after year? I won't have that sort of worthless person here, so don't come back again!"

Chôsa thereupon redoubled his courage, vowing to himself, "Unless I win through to realization now I won't return home alive. Better to die like a real man trying to solve my koan once and for all!"

For seven days Chôsa secluded himself in a fisherman's hut by the seashore, practicing meditation. He neither ate nor slept, yet when the seven days had expired, he had still failed utterly to realize his object. Preparing to throw himself into the sea and die, he removed his sandals and stood on a jetty, when suddenly he caught sight of the morning sun reflected off the ocean, which seemed washed in crimson. At that moment, Chôsa experienced great enlightenment.

Chôsa ran to the temple and entered Hakuin's room. The master took one look at him and declared, "You have penetrated!"  
(p.31, No. 14, 155-156.)

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## Cover Pic

The cover picture is courtesy of Throckmorton Fine Art Gallery, NYC. The image is a Qing Dynasty snake pendant carved in white jade.

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<sup>1</sup> Rohatsu is the intensive period of practice traditionally observed at Zen temples from December 1 to dawn of December 8, in commemoration of the Buddha's enlightenment.

<sup>2</sup> It is some 75 miles from Zuiôji to Hakuin's temple, Shôinji.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to a Zen phrase appearing in *Zenrinkushû*: "When chickens are cold they go up into trees/ When ducks are cold, they go down to water." See Victor Hori, *Zen Sand*, 351.

Good year to catch wriggly things...

*zen notes*

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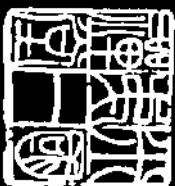
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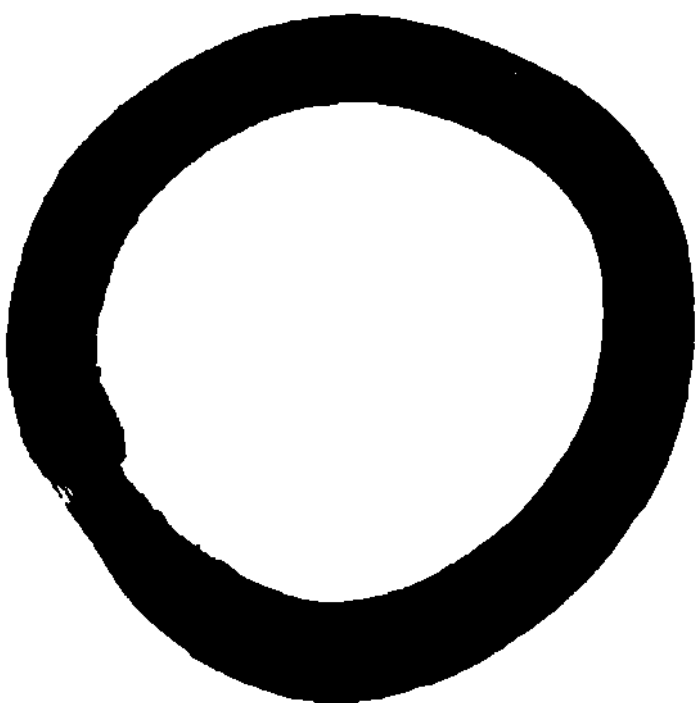
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