Zen Notes

Fudo Myo'o by Hakuin

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

SIXTY FIFTH LECTURE

Wednesday December 27th, 1939

"It is as I have said. If the sentient beings of the future world were not to arouse any vain notions in their minds.

Such sentient beings would be Bodhisattvas in that very incarnation. Their merit has already been perfected

By their alms-offerings to the Buddhas, Myriad in number as the sands of the Ganges. They attain awakening through multifold ways, But all attain it, as it is termed, 'according to their own wisdom.'"

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

This is the end of the Buddha's *gatha* which was given to Vimalamatih in answer to his question. It is the end of chapter six (fall '13 issue...ed). I will continue now with chapter seven.

Whereupon Tejovatisvarah Bodhisattva arose from his seat among the multitude and worshipped the Buddha, reverently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow and going around him three times to the right. Then, kneeling down and crossing his hands upon his breast, he said to the Buddha:

"O Lokanatha Mahakaruna! For the sake of all the multitude and of the Bodhisattvas, preach to them your sermon on the nature of the varying degrees of the awakening of sentient beings and of Bodhisattvas according to their innate nature, and let them realize that their splendor of mind is capable of responding to the perfect voice of Buddha and of attaining virtuous benefit without the exercise of any practice. (Long pause, over manuscript, then, "change that to":)... *"so that they can attain virtuous benefit without the exercise of any practice."*

"It is as I have said. If the sentient beings of the future world were not to arouse any vain notions in their mind. " —The details of wiping out these notions were explained by the Buddha in a previous passage on which I have given a very careful commentary.

When you keep all the impressions of the outside world in

your mind, harboring the notion that the outside is really existing—this is called "vain notion."

Buddhism starts from here—it is the first koan. Phenomena is not reality and is not existing. The sky is blue, the grass is green—but all phenomena is illusory.

When I went to Boston, Mr. Robert Paine asked me, "Do Orientals really believe that the outside is not reality?" I answered, "Mr. Paine, we cannot help believing it because it is really so!" "Yes," he answered, "it is really so, but we cannot believe it!"

Well, this seems to be so not only with Mr. Paine but with all the Western world! Even though they know philosophically and scientifically that the outside is illusory—how many of them believe it? I am not speaking of people who have no mind, but of those who can think reasonably.

When you understand that the outside does not exist then you must take some attitude towards it. We Buddhists take the attitude: "The outside is not existing. What can we do about it? We need not destroy it, for it has been destroyed already. We accept it as it is." This is our way of handling the phenomenal world.

It was the Buddha's great decision—to accept everything as it is. I accept myself as I am—a phenomenon—and I accept the outside world as it is.

This acceptance is not easy. When I was three of four years old I looked outside and accepted it; but at seventeen, when I metaphysically questioned everything. I did not really see the outside. I was sleeping—looking at the outside just as a cat or a dog! I did not realize that the outside was not real existence. I accepted it but I did not accept myself—it was a long time before I accepted myself!

There is a kind of awakening every three years. It is the natural growth of man's mind. It is very important and everyone experiences something of this joy.

But we are following the Buddha's awakening. There are many kinds of awakenings: some awaken to the knowledge of money, some to the knowledge of sex—but these are their own followers, not followers of the Buddha.

When you have awakened to the fact that the outside is not real existence—then you will smile and accept it. That is Mahayana. It is different with the Hinayana people, When they realize that this is true—they destroy the outside.

When we have accepted the outside as a phenomenon—then what do we do? We regard all phenomena as clouds in the sky or waves in the ocean, and we know that we, ourselves, physically and mentally are that phenomena. This includes vexations, and sufferings which result from our innate nature as well as contact with the outside. Physically and mentally, we are tormented.

Then what do we do with it? The Hinayana try to suppress it—to wipe out the waves in the ocean and the clouds in the sky. But we do not need to do anything about it! We do not repair it an we do not add any other creation to it. We simply accept everything as it is. And we do not do anything with it. This candle-flame is not doing anything to the wick. Fire does not burn fire; water does not wash water. We simply accept. This is the Mahayana attitude. You must understand how this acceptance affects our attitude toward the world. We just associate naturally and without judgment; it is quite different from the Hinayana way.

"Such sentient beings would be Bodhisattvas in that very incarnation." —But there are many prohibitions. It is very difficult to attain the Mahayana attitude.

"Their merit has already been perfected by their alms-offerings to the Buddhas, myriad in number as the sands of the Ganges. They attain awakening through multifold ways." —There are countless ways and experiences through which we awaken.

"But all attain it, as it is termed, 'according to their own wisdom.'" —This is the conclusion. You pass through many phases before you reach this highest awakening—and now you are completely satisfied to return to ordinary human life! You take off your coat, put on something comfortable, and sit down to your supper. This is the last awakening—to relaxation, to the consciousness which has no restraint, no particular view, which is completely natural. This is the foundation of Dharma, the basic wisdom, called Sarvatha-jnana.

We all attain "according to our own wisdom" —the Tathagata. Early Japanese Buddhism was built upon this. Its adherents just accepted the conclusion. But we strive with our deluded minds: first—to realize it: second—to accept it; third—to do nothing about it; and fourth—to play with this phenomenal world and enjoy it—to stay in it and with it.

Now we come to the seventh chapter, where Bodhisattva Tejovatisvarah asked his question of the Buddha:

"O Lokanatha Mahakaruna! For the sake of all the multitude of Bodhisattvas, preach to them your sermon on the nature of the

varying degrees of the awakening of sentient beings, " —I have already spoken of these "degrees." In our practice of meditation, we have to realize this. When you meditate on something your mind is concentrated into something which is not your awareness. Now, you meditate on emptiness, and you will be aware of all the mind activity. This must be annihilated. By accepting your mind as "something" you are adding to it. You must drop the idea of emptiness.

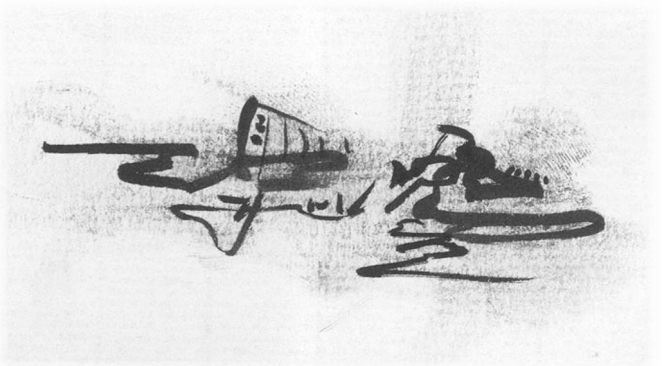
"... and of the Bodhisattvas according to their innate nature, " —The Buddha has already explained this—but the new Bodhisattva asks for more.

"... and let them realize that their splendor of mind is capable of responding to the perfect voice of Buddha,. " —The fishmonger's mind and the washerwoman's mind is capable of "responding to the perfect voice of Buddha." Just relax—stretch yourself on the ground, with your cheek in your hand, and look at the green mountain. At such times even the mind of the fishmonger and the washerwoman is in its "splendor of mind."

"... and of attaining virtuous benefit without the exercise of any practice." —"Can we get all the profit of Buddhism from meditation, observing commandments, etc.? Please explain more carefully so that we may attain more quickly."

The Buddha is very kind. "Very well—I have suffered myself! Now listen carefully..."

The Hindus created Buddhism with much argument. The Chinese accepted it in a type meditation, and Bodhidharma's meditation is less painful. The Japanese accepted it in still another way—each accepted it according to their own nature. Some accept with little pains, and some accept it with great agony—but acceptance is the important thing!



Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse XV, Lecture 1

Someone asked, "What are the four states of formlessness?"

The Master said: "A moment of doubt in your mind you are obstructed by earth. A moment of attachment in your mind and you are drowned by water. A moment of wrath in your mind and you are burned by fire. A moment of joy in your mind and you are stirred by air. If you understand this, you will not be dragged about by circumstances, but will master circumstances everywhere. You will appear in the East and disappear in the West; appear in the South and disappear in the North; appear at the center and disappear at the periphery; appear at the periphery and disappear at the center. You will step across the surface of water as you step across the surface of the earth. You will step across the surface of the earth as you step across the surface of water.

"Why is this so? Because you will have realized that the four elements are but phantoms and dreams. Brothers, at this moment the one who is listening to my sermon is not the body of the four great elements but he who uses the four great elements. If you understand this, you may go or stay at will."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

In this passage, Lin-chi is illustrating the vital function of the one who can appear and disappear at will in various supernatural transformations. This vital function is present in everyone.

Most people believe that our physical bodies are not who we really are, that they are just the houses in which we dwell. Our mental condition, our emotions, our notions are also not who we really are. They are just the garments that we put on and take off. You know quite well that when the spring wind blows your sleeve, it is the wind and not yourself that is moving the sleeve so your own joy flutters your mind. You cannot objectify it, but joy is part of your vesture. This is the difference that Lin-chi is trying to make between circumstances and the self. But practice and theory

are very different. Mistaking a glass of soy sauce for a glass of water and drinking it to be calm during an earthquake is a good example of this difference.

"What are the four states of formlessness?" Lin-chi is talking about the four great elements--earth, water, fire and air--and the four mental states--birth, growth, decay, and annihilation. The One enters into these elements and mental states, yet always remains pure, like a lotus flower growing from muddy water--always safe and not mutable.

The Master said: "A moment of doubt in your mind and you are obstructed by earth." You feel something like a lump of clay in your breast and you cannot eat or digest. I had this sickness of doubt in my youth. I could not read, study, or eat. I was shivering and pale. I was called "Grasshopper-legs" and "Blue-spike." Somehow I had to settle the question. I was a spoiled child, who thought no one was like myself. I was that type of young man. It was not till after thirty-seven that I came into a world of some sunshine, where I could enjoy the outside and associate with friends. Before that, I was ill natured and quick tempered. I really felt that the earth filled up the mind, and it was the end of joy. If I could not pass my koan within a month, I was sick and could enjoy nothing. Sometimes I wondered how anyone could live, and what would happen after death. Reincarnation was just talk. Transmigration was just talk. Karma was just talk. I have five senses, but how were they connected after death? What senses would stay, and what would go? So many questions. What is love? What is morality?

Then I settled from corner to corner. It was like peeling the skin of an orange. I did very careful work, very tedious work; otherwise I thought there is no use living. I am doing something very important, but will I starve to death? Even so, I had to get everything settled and come to terms with myself. Otherwise, I could not go on. It was like settling one's accounts at the end of the month. If you can't find the error, you can't sleep. The question of everyday life is the same. You must think deeply into it, for no one else's sake but for your own. Otherwise, your life is just nonsense. If I don't know what will happen after death, how can I lie down comfortably to die?

Heaven and hell--just talk. Angels and gods--just talk. Can I go to death believing such things? Life is a little more serious than that! If I am not clear as to the conclusion of life, I cannot continue.

"A moment of attachment in your mind and you are drowned by water." When I was young, I went down to a foreign bookshop in Tokyo and saw a volume of poetry by Poe. I had heard of his

fame and I wanted to buy it, but I had no money. That night I could not sleep, so I got up at six o'clock and ran to the shop and stood at the entrance for fear someone would get the book before me. I read it, cleaving to it, drowning myself in its poetry. Most love is cleaving, and it is like water. You do not mind if the water takes your body away if you can swim back to shore. But sometimes the water takes you away from the shore, and if you go too far you cannot come back.

"A moment of wrath in your mind and you are burned by fire." Shakyamuni Buddha said: "Wrath is the fire in the mind which burns the forest of consciousness." He thought that anger was more dangerous than sensuous passion; passion can be controlled more easily than anger. One must not be angry for one's own sake, but the father can be angry for the child's sake. The angry god does not agree with the Western idea of love. In the East, the mother gives to the child, but the father takes everything away. To our idea, the Western father is just like a sweet uncle.

"A moment of joy in your mind and you are stirred by air." In the happy nature, there is too much air in the mind; in the melancholy one, too much water; but the four elemental states are circumstances, not yourself, they are just your vesture.

"If you understand this, you will not be dragged about by circumstances, but will master circumstances everywhere." In the East, a gentleman will not show his feelings; he will not express anger, sadness, or joy. When a Russian admiral met General Maresuke Nogi, who had lost two sons, young officers, on the battlefield in one night he told him that he was very sorry. Nogi just grunted. To him there was nothing to say. There is fear of being controlled by emotion, but then it is very hard to be one's self.

The Zen Buddhist always grunts because he is taught to put has strength in the abdomen, but it is not good to do for this is artificial. You must learn how to find your own center of balance.

"You will appear in the East and disappear in the West; appear in the South and disappear in the North; appear at the center and disappear at the periphery; appear at the periphery and disappear at the center." This is exactly what I do: appear in the West, appear in the South, appear in the North and East, center and periphery. Every standpoint is the true standpoint. For example, I am reading a newspaper in Japan while this body is seated upon this chair. This is not strange, but true. If you stand upon your own particular base it is no good; but if you stand upon the One as base, you do all. After all, religion is to see through all this personal existence, to observe the whole universe as one person. This is *dharmakaya*. It has emotion in it like a human being. But if a

scientist looks at it, he will not find any emotion in it. He cannot kneel down before this great universe; he cannot weep.

A religion such as Zen is almost not a religion. The Zen monk just sits in quiet and meditates. He has no tears. But every standpoint is a true standpoint. It is not necessary to attach to just one standpoint. Most religious people confine their lives within a narrow scale, for they do not observe from the many different angles, and that is no good.

To "appear at the center" is the same as non-existence. As an example, I ask you: "Before father and mother" (standing in the center), "what is your original face?"

As for the periphery: "There is a stone at a fathomless depth. How do you bring it up without wetting your sleeve?" When you can bring this stone up from the depth of the ocean, that is your appearance at the periphery.

"You will step across the surface of water as you step across the surface of earth. You will step across the surface of the earth as you step across the surface of water." When Christ walked upon the waters, his disciples suddenly discerned his real body. But the blind do not understand. To take this liberty of transportation, one must transcend the four great elements of the physical, mental, and emotional body-- growing, subsisting, decaying, and annihilating.

"Why is this the truth? Because you will have realized that the four elements are but phantoms and dreams." The real base upon which we stand has no name. All that we can perceive by the five senses on the ground of that sense does not cover the whole reality that has no color or form. We cannot conceive this reality. No one can conceive wholeness from his own standpoint. He sees only a part. The great "one-horned ox" is impossible to demonstrate. In koan study, we have to prove this impossible one. It is difficult. We can realize it, but how to prove it? The Buddha said to Subhuti, "If you try to see the *tathagata* or to hear him, you are using the wrong method." This point is always emphasized in Buddhism.

"Brothers, at this moment the one who is listening to my sermon is not the body of the four great elements but he who uses the four great elements. If you understand this, you may go or stay at will." Who is this "one"? Mahakashyapa called, "Ananda!" and Ananda answered, "Yes?" But Ananda did not understand who had answered; not Ananda but someone in Ananda answered the call.

A Chinese Zen student was once asked (from the *dharmakaya* standpoint): "The universe is long and broad. Why do you put on

a robe and go to the temple when the gong sounds?" Terrible question! The answer comes to purposelessness, to egolessness.

You may think, If the universe has no particular purpose, what can I do? You feel helpless. All your plans, all your ideas are no good. Your life has no meaning. But the Buddha told us that ego has no purpose and Dharma has no purpose. I hesitated to enter Buddhism when I heard this!

Can you learn to trust this life? You must think deep, really attain faith in this universe without purpose, the faith to sit, to sit to attain enlightenment.

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 (*kanbun)* text and its reading into classical Japanese (*yomikudashi*), 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).

(Part 6)

Master Ryôsai Genmyô, abbot of Kagakuji in Mikawa, was a native of Owari. He first experienced enlightenment under Master Kogetsu in Hyûga (Miyazaki Prefecture), and subsequently went to see Hakuin at Shôinji.

Hakuin took one look at Ryôsai and declared, "Here comes Manjusri!"

Ryôsai remained at Shôinji several years, profoundly penetrating the mysterious essence of Zen, and Hakuin formally sanctioned his realization. Subsequently, he assumed abbacy of Kagakuji, on which occasion he delivered the folllowing verse:

Some grow long, some grow short--
a thousand pines
Some grow crooked, some grow bent--
a dense clump of bamboo
Don't let those who come understand this
as referring to the world outside
Ringing the gong,
a monk stands amidst the rays of the evening sun

...When Ryôsai began to teach, he attracted an assembly of over four hundred and was extremely active in propogating Hakuin's Zen...Nevertheless, Hakuin once declared, "I gave Ryôsai my sanction too soon. That's why he's still incomplete. If only I'd waited three more years and then given him my sanction, no one in the land would have been able to touch him!"

An attendant monk asked, "Why then did your Reverence sanctiton him so soon?'

"At that time I thought I'd never find such a man again," Hakuin replied. "Ah! When it comes to confering the sanction of enlightenment, a Zen master must take great care!"

(*No.1, pp. 5-8, 121-123.)*

Daikyû Ehô[2] was investigating the koan "Nan-chuan's Flower."[3] At this time Hakuin was to pay a visit to Unzan,[4] and Daikyû accompanied him. Along the way, Daikyû presented Hakuin with his understaning of the koan.

"You couldn't even feed a dog that kind of bad understanding!" Hakuin chided Daikyû and struck him with his staff.

When Hakuin arrived at [Unzan's temple] Kongoji, he looked back, but Daikyû was nowhere to be seen. "He must have fallen behind," Hakuin thought, and he and Unzan spent the whole night talking together.

Daikyû, meanwhile, had gone to the house of the local village

[2] Daikyû's dates are 1715-1774. He studied Zen under both Kogetsu and Hakuin.

[3] Referring to case 40 of the *Blue Cliff Record*, a dialogue between the Zen master Nan-chuan and his Dharma heir the government minister Lu Hsuan (764-834). Lu remarked, "Dharma Master Chao said, 'Heaven, earth, and I are of the same root; the ten thosand things and I are one substance.' How wonderful!" Nan-chuan called Lu's attention to a flower in the garden and said, "Men of today see that flower as if in a dream." T48:178.

[4] The Rinzai master Unzan Sotai (1685-1747), a close colleague of Hakuin's.

headman and sat in meditation until, without realizing it, he had cut off both past and future. Suddenly opening his eyes he noticed that the moon had gone down, birds were singing, and the eastern sky was beginning to brighten.

At that moment, Daikyû grasped the meaning of "Nanchuan's flower." He hastened to Hakuin and presented his insight, and the master praised him lavishly.

(*No.4, p.14, 133-134*)

Kaigan and Daikyû were staying at Hakuin's temple.

Hakuin told them, "Our temple kitchen hasn't much and can't feed you. Tomorrow go to beg food from the villagers."
The two monks bowed in assent and withdrew.

The next morning there was fierce wind and rain, and the two were waiting in the quarters for newly arrived monks for the rain to stop when Hakuin appeared carrying his stick. "What do you think you're doing here?" he demanded.

Kaigan explained, "The rain and wind were so bad we weren't sure what to do."

"You layabouts!" Hakuin scolded them, "Are you going to be frightened off by some wind and rain? Aren't there plenty of people traveling back and forth along the Tôkaidô[1] Get going this minute or I'll beat the living daylights out of you both!"

Cowering in fear, Daikyû and Kaigan made their departure, turning to one another at the temple gate to exclaim, "What a harsh teacher!" Then, donning bamboo hats and straw raincoats, they set out into the pounding rain.

By noon they had reached Kashiwabara, and the sky was gradually beginning to clear. That evening they returned to the temple with some seven or eight measures of rice offered by the townspeople.

Hakuin was delighted when he saw them. "Now that's just what you young monks should be doing!" he exclaimed.

(*No.6, pp. 16-17, 135-136.*)

[1] The old highway linking Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto, whose stations were immortalized in the early nineteenth century by the woodblock artist Hiroshige.

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, #11)

(Continued from the Fall '13 Zen Notes)

The "Popularizers"- Shosan

The stress on the dynamic function of Mind and the practical application of Zen in ones's ordinary activities is especially prominent in the teaching of Takuan's younger contemporary, Suzuki Shosan (1579-1655). Unlike Takuan and other early Tokugawa teachers discussed before, Shosan was not a career monk but a samurai, who only entered the priesthood in middle age. Born into a Mikawa samurai family allied with Ieyasu, Shosan fought under the Tokugawas at the battle of Sekigahara and again in the winter campaign at Osaka, receiving a fief for his services. Since youth, however, Shosan had aspired to become a monk, and in the spare time from his military duties, he continued to visit and interview

various Zen teachers. Between 1620 and 1621 he finally renounced his secular life and became a Buddhist monk, undertaking an extensive *angya*, or Zen pilgrimage, traveling widely and studying under a series of Zen teachers that included the Rinzai masters Daigu and Gudo.

Shosan was formally affiliated with the Soto sect, and the temples he founded, as well as those in which his disciples served as abbots, were all Soto. He seems, however, to have been primarily an independent, whose teaching style remained highly personal and defied classification as either "Soto" or "Rinzai." Critical of the Zen masters of his time, Shosan does not seem to have acknowledged any teacher of his own, and when he experienced enlightenment in 1639, it was apparently without benefit of any teacher's assistance or sanction. Indeed, Shosan may never have received sanction or been formally accepted into a Zen teaching line.

In 1648, Shosan settled in Edo, where his disciples erected a small hermitage for him in the capital's Asakusa district. Here, he regularly instructed both lay and religious students and composed a number of vernacular works dealing with Buddhism, including Moanjo Banmin tokuyo, and Nembutsu soshi.

Shosan's writings were popular in both style and approach, incorporating stories, poems and cautionary tales, and enjoyed a wide readership, becoming "best sellers" of a sort. Compared with his celebrity as an author, however, Shosan's career as an active teacher of Zen seems to have been somewhat less than successful by conventional standards. He never founded a line, never received any honorary titles, and left no heirs to his teaching. Shortly before his death in 1655, he moved to quarters in his brother's Edo mansion. His last words were: "Thirty years ago, Shosan died."'

Though he ultimately took the tonsure and became a priest Shosan stressed that it was not necessary to become a monk or to live in a temple in order to study Zen. Rather than leaving society to practice Buddhism, Shosan's teaching emphasized bringing the practice of Budhism into the secular world itself. Indeed, the most effective way to practice Buddhism, according to Shosan, was in the midst of one's daily activities, while performing one's allotted tasks and fulfilling one's particular role in society. For Shosan there was a direct connection between the practice of Zen and the complete acceptance of one's place in the Tokugawa social order. While his approach to Buddhism was original and even, in some respects, iconoclastic, Shosan's secular outlook was genuinely conservative and "establishment"oriented. A former samurai, he subscribed without qualification to the principles of the Tokugawa class system, and insisted on the importance of accepting one's

"lot" or "calling," one's place within the established social structure. This Shosan refers to as the *seiho* or worldly law, which he maintains to be one with the Buddhist law, or *buppo*. Shosan held there to be an indissoluble unity between the world of Buddhism and the secular world represented by the Tokugawa social order and its Confucian-inspired ethical values of loyalty, obedience and the maintenance of social harmony. "The worldly law," Shosan avers, "is none other than the Buddhist law." Moreover, "If you fail to follow the principle of realizing the Buddhist law through the worldly law, you fail to grasp the meaning of all the buddhas." The secular world is thus the proper locus of Buddhist practice, and to his lay students Shosan stressed wholeheartedly following one's calling as the way to realizing enlightenment. In *Banmin tokuyo*, Shosan articulates his belief that rank, wealth, and class are all determined by karma from one's previous lives, and that by accepting this, one can realize buddhahood within one's own calling. Addressing a group of farmers, for example, Shosan declares: "Farming is the practice of Buddhism. You don't need to look for any other way to train your mind. Your bodies are all buddha bodies, your minds, buddha minds, your tasks, the buddha's tasks....

In Shosan's view, it was not only unnecessary to retire from secular life to seek enlighenment, but undesireable. Despite his own example in becoming a monk, he advised samurai who were contemplating such a course against taking the tonsure, insisting that "For religious practice it is good to be a samurai, bad to be a monk." Generally critical of the monastic establishment ("Nowadays, unlike in times past, people with some feeling for the Way will leave the temples ....), Shosan seems to have regarded his own mission as a radical secularization and democratizing of Zen. No longer was Zen to be a special study carried out by monks in temples, but an essential component of daily life, as much the property of laymen as of priests:

"When it comes to the distinction between monks and laymen, there have been a lot of followers of the Way since ancient times, but they've all concerned themselves with the understanding of Buddhism, and not with actually putting their wisdom to use in worldly affairs. If there was someone like this, I've never heard of him. It seems to me that, all in all, I'm the the first."

Shosan's aim was a kind of merger of the secular and Buddhist laws. Buddhism was not contrasted with daily life or devalued, but only that Buddhism which was realized in daily life was deemed of real importance. Consequently, Shosan's task was to make it possible for everyone to practice Zen, however lowly their vocation, and to find ways for them to do so in the midst of their ordinary activities. Largely dismissing such contemplative methods

as koan study and formal zazen, which he believed only ended in making people people ill or insane. Shosan sought to substitute more active and dynamic forms of Zen practice.

To a great extent, Shosan's approach to this problem was conditioned by his samurai background, and the ideal of the warrior spirit animates much of his teaching. Many of Shosan's students were samurai, and as he himself admitted, "Few apart from the samurai have taken up my teaching." At the core of Shosan's Zen is the cultivation of vital energy, *ki*, a manifestation of physical and spiritual power comparable to the fierce determination of the warrior in battle. The martial influence is also evident in two related concepts stressed by Shosan, *yumoshin*, the spirit of daring and valor, the dauntless, intrepid mind; and *fushin* the mind that is always supple, alert, ready for whatever comes. When Shosan does recommend zazen, it is a warrior style meditation; '*battlecry zazen*', or '*zazen with eyes burning fiercely*.'

To rouse the fierce energy needed to do battle with the forces of delusion, Shosan devised a distinctive practice embracing all of these concepts, which he referred to as Nio zen. The Nio are twin guardian kings of wrathful aspect whose lifesize wooden images are often placed at the gates of Buddhist temples. The pair generally consists of an "*a* king," whose mouth is open wide in what seems to be a fearful roar, and an "*un* king," whose jaws are closed tightly in an exaggerated grimace. For Shosan, these muscular giants appear to symbolize the spiritual power that protects the Dharma and stands guard over the mind itself, defiantly facing down the forces of ignorance.

Shosan urged his students to study the images of the Guardian Kings (occasionally Fudo would be substituted) and to take them as their models in meditation practice, imitating precisely the deities' fearsome attitude, eyes wide open and glaring, fists clenched, teeth gnashing fiercely. As Shosan puts it:

> *"The practice of Buddhism means just one thing: to get and to practice the great, unshakable energy of Fudo and the Guardian Kings ... to attack and destroy the body and mind with this energy ... as if subjugating demons .... You have to fix your gaze unwaveringly on the image and mount guard around the clock over the diamond mind...."*.

Not only samurai, but ordinary commoners, both male and female, were encouraqed to perform this practice, which Shosan would demonstrate personally. "Nio *zazen*," however, with its stress on the vigorous, immediate physical demonstration of Mind, seems particularly suited to the needs of the warrior and may well have grown out of Shosan's own military experience. In *Roankyo*,

for example, Shosan gives the following explanation of Nio Zen to a visiting samurai:

> *"It is good to practice doing* zazen *in the midst of pressing circumstances. For the samurai, particularly, it is essential to practice the sort of, zazen that can be put to use in the thick of battle. At the moment when the guns are blazing, when lances cross, point to point, and the blows of the enemy rain down, amid the fray of battle here is where he must practice, putting his meditation immediately to work. In a spot like this, what good is going to be the sort of zazen that calls for a quiet place! However much a samurai claims to love Buddhism, if it doesn't do him any good when he finds himself on the battlefield, he'd better give it up. That's why you've got to constantly cultivate the mind of the Guardian Kings."*

Another practice recommended by Shosan that seemingly blends the warrior ethic and elements of Buddhism is a kind of meditation on the immanence of death. This practice depends on generating what Shosan calls *shiki* or 'death energy,' an intense awareness of death akin to what the warrior experiences on the battlefield and which, when pressed to its limits, reveals the vanity and emptiness of worldly attachments. In *Moanjo* Shosan argues that a constant, relentless awareness of death enables one to transcend birth and death alike by exposing the transitory character of the self and its desires. Elsewhere he counsels students to place the character for death, *shi*, on their foreheads when they meditate, and remarks that, "Right from the start, the only thing I've ever spoken of is death."

A more familiar method of meditation espoused by Shosan was the *nenbutsu*, which he regarded as a simple and efficacious means to clear the mind of impediments. Shosan taught a syncretism of Pure Land belief and Zen common to many Zen priests of his day, employing such expressions as *koshin no Mida* ("One's own being is Amida") and quoting the Pure Land Priest Ippen's statement that "You must know the Pure Land of Mind, the Amida of Mind." Shosan himself is said to have practiced the *nenbutsu* regularly, and he insists in his teachings that it has the same purpose as *zazen* and the koans of the old masters. By using the *nenbutsu*, he maintains, one can cut off the root of thoughts (*nen*) and readily "exhaust the self" (*ga o tsukusu*).

Shosan even endorses such fixtures of Pure Land belief as reliance on "other-power" (*tariki*) and faith in Amida's Original Vow (*hongan*). Shosan's own *nenbutsu*, however, besides being strongly tinged with Zen, is distinctly active in character and very much attuned to the workaday world. Describing his brand of *nenbutsu* practice to a group of farmers, he explains:

"...With every stroke of the hoe you should chant, 'Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!' *And when you perform your farming singlemindedly, the fields themselves become a Pure Land, while the Five Grains become a pure food and those who consume them will rejoice in ridding themselves of evil passions."*

Shosan describes this practice as the "valorous *nenbutsu*" (*yumo no nenbutsu).*

Unlike Takuan or Bankei, who stress the importance of naturalness and harmony, Shosan's teachings indicate a strong dichotomy between enlightenment and ordinary "deluded" mind. Perhaps again reflecting his warrior background, he urges a vigorous stance against the weaknesses of the flesh and the spirit, and regards the practice of Zen itself as a kind of battle, a relentless confrontation of one's physical and spiritual resolve with the everpresent forces of ignorance. "See your body and mind as foes," Shosan advises. "Just glare fiercely at them and annihilate them with the *nenbutsu*." And elsewhere, he observes that "What I have ... is the energy to glare all the time at this bag of filth ... and to think of it always as a hateful mass of pain."

Shosan's view of the body is particularly negative; it is, above all a source of contamination to be conquered and abjured. In *Roankyo*, a samurai who questions Shosan about the essential teaching of Buddhism is told:

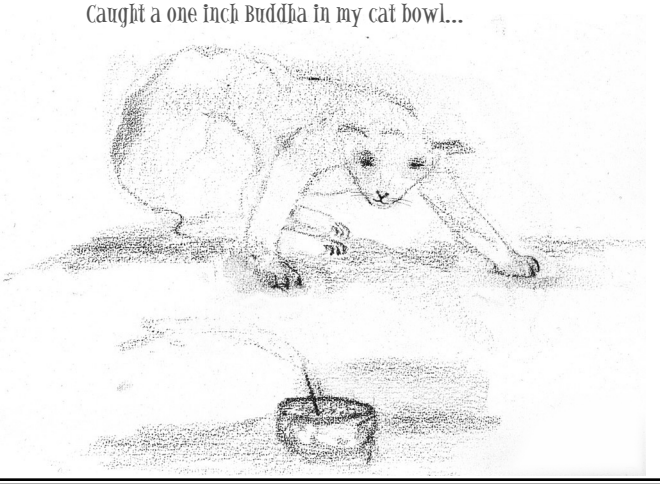
*"Salvation means to completely disregard and reject this bag of ordure (*i.e., the body*). Apart from practicing this, I don't know any other Buddhism. Ever since I was young, that's the only thing I've practiced ...."*

Shosan's attitude toward women is probably related to this abhorrence of the flesh. Shosan had female followers and addressed various teachings to women, but on the whole he regarded them with suspicion, as creatures provoking lust in men and leading them astray. Again in sharp contrast to Bankei, Shosan appears to consider women spritually inferior, and suggests that to realize enlightenment they may first have to gain rebirth in a male body.

Cover

Fudo (the Immoveable) as depicted by Hakuin is one of the wrathful, guardian kings (myo'o) that protect the dharma and occasionally used by Shosan instead of the Nio to energetically enhance his "warrior zazen" teachings.

Caught a one inch Buddha in my cat bowl...



A limited number of complete sets of **Zen Notes**
(from Vol. I, 1954 to Vol. LVII, 2010)
are available for sale. Price - $300.00.
If you are interested, contact the Institute at the phone number below.

Zen notes

PUBLISHED BY

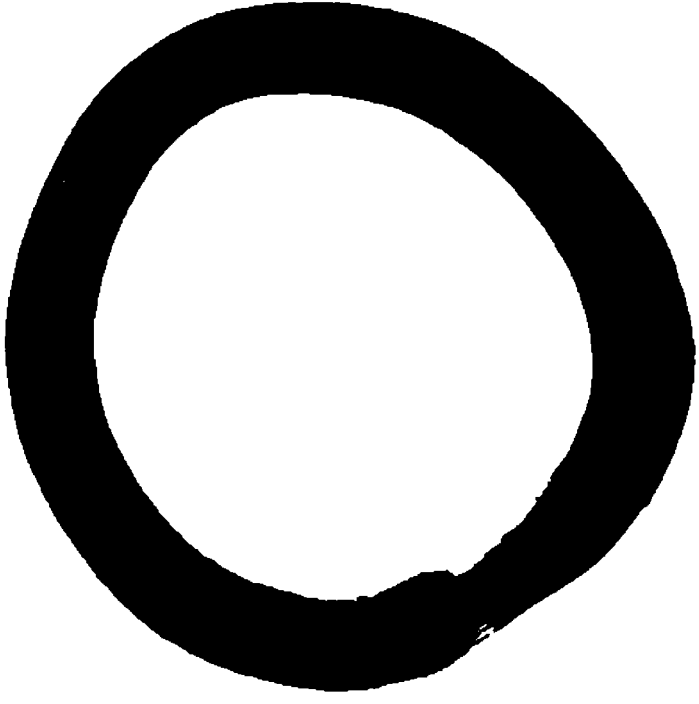
FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

113 East 30th Street
New York City, New York 10016
firstzen@verizon.net www.firstzen.org
(212) 686-2520

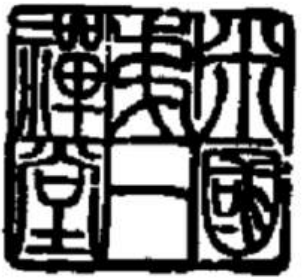
VOLUME LX, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2014
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

First Zen Institute of America
113 East 30th Street
New York, New York 10016
(ZN Vol 60, No. 1)

www.firstzen.org



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