

ZEN notes



MoonGate

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

SIXTY-EIGHTH LECTURE

Wednesday January 17th, 1940

"O Obedient One! All Bodhisattvas attain the realization of Pure and Perfect Awakening. They use the pure awakened mind and choose quietude as a discipline. Through the practice of quieting the mind, they become aware of all the afflictions within consciousness. When quiet wisdom appears, mind and objective impurities will be annihilated once for all. Thus tranquillity and a feeling of lightness will come forth from the mind. Because the mind is tranquilized, all the Tathagatas of the Tenfold Universe will appear therein. It is as a mirror perceives the reflections of other mirrors. This upaya is termed samatha."

SOKEL-AN SAYS:

Upaya is a Sanskrit word which has no real equivalent in English. English scholars translate it as "expedient," but some translate it as "pious fraud." Also "contrivance" has been used by one scholar; I use simply, "method." As if you are going to Washington, D.C. by what method do you go? By bus, train, auto? You can go by plane, by boat, and this is not all; you can walk, swim, or crawl on the ground! All these ways of arriving are *upayas*.

When I was going to Butte, Montana, by train, I said to the conductor: "This train is not going to Butte, Montana; it is going to Saskatchewan!" He said, "Never mind! This train is wandering through the mountains but it will get there!"

So, according to the method you use you may wander and you may go backward! The religious teachers can create heaven and hell—a pious fraud; and to cure a patient, the physician will sometimes fool him.

When I was a boy, I told a Buddhist monk that I realized there is no underground hell. The monk said, "Ah, but look into your own mind! Something there tortures you!"

Yet when we go to the high church of Buddhism, they say,

"Mind is not real existence." When you understand that your mind is your own production—when you annihilate your mind—there is nothing which tortures you; the hell which is in your mind is annihilated. So, the conclusion: There is no hell. In this way, we can boil everything down to nothing!

The Buddha said that *upayas* are numberless, but there are three types: The first, *samatha*, is through tranquilizing the mind to find the soul within yourself. The second, *samapati*, is by observing your mind and realizing it is a phantom of your own production; it is the dream from which you must awaken to the state of Reality! So the mind is an illusory existence, just as a dream is illusory. You dream that a lion is chasing you—you jump off a fence—and the lion grabs your heel; you scream and awaken!

When I speak English in a dream I always wake up because it is very hard for me! It is so with a deluded mind; when it becomes too painful—one wakes up!

Someone begins to run with no reason; another follows him, and another and another—five, then, hundreds, thousands, millions begin to run—there is no end! Those who cannot run will be trampled on. But, stand outside of this and observe. From what are they running? From nothing; but in this world you must run to live! The little mouse on the wheel is running—thinks he is going somewhere. The wheel stops—and he is in the same place! Sometimes a lazy man (like me) gives up running—and he may starve to death! It is when men realize that they are running like mice and getting nowhere that they awaken. The third *upaya*., *dhyana*., is that you sit down upon the true soul, the true mind—you sit down upon the head of God.

But the part which I have translated for the lecture tonight is the first *upaya*: by tranquilizing the mind you find real comfort.

"O Obedient One! All the Bodhisattvas attain the realization of Pure and Perfect Awakening." —Not only all Bodhisattvas, but all men and women and sentient beings must awaken to pure consciousness—to pure and perfect consciousness.

The first step is to enter some religion—Buddhism, Brahmanism, Mazdaism, Christianity. Some Christians, like the Quakers, will say, "Heaven is in the mind; look into your mind, for God is enshrined there!" Mazdans worship light, believing that the light of their mind is God.

It is true that God is always in our mind—but we must realize it, must awaken to the state of it. You can talk about New York City but to know it, you must come to New York! And so it is with Pure

and Perfect Awakening. "Pure" is like this glass of water; it is not empty—I call it solid-empty. But if it has color (raises glass) then it is not pure. This handkerchief looks white—but it is not white. When you hear this gong (strikes) and you see the form, the sound is not pure. The things created by your senses, and the things you talk about are not pure. Things which you do with your mind and your body are not pure. All phenomenal existences are not pure.

Do you understand the state of purity? It is not so easy! To understand the state of purity you must discard all—everything that you see, hear, think about. This is really the entrance into the "game" of religion. I call it a game. Sounds bad—but when you are initiated into Buddhism, you will understand.

I don't know about Christian schools in this country—but in Japan there are many schools of Christianity. One is asked, "What is the attribute of God?" The student answers, "Nescience!" It is quite ticklish! Well, nescience is a word; if you cannot see it, you must experience it; if you cannot experience it, you must comprehend it; if you cannot comprehend it, you must know it. This is intuition—but you had better not use the word. There is, of course, empirical intuition. When you were born, you knew time and space—but it is not the intuition which knows—it is the pivot—I am talking too much! I come back to my text.

"They use the pure awakened mind and choose quietude as a discipline." —When you are always in noisy places how can you realize the original soul which is enshrined in your mind? In our temples, everything is quiet—in silence we can think very carefully. We must keep silence even in the night; if a novice has a nightmare and wakes up screaming—"Don't dream!" and the monk kicks him out.

"Through the practice of quieting the mind, they become aware of all afflictions within the consciousness." —You are not aware of the thoughts which are passing through your brain from morning to evening! Your brain is like Broadway—everything passes through and you don't know it at all!

When I was a child, eating supper with my mother and thinking deeply, my mother asked, "What were you thinking?" "Oh mother, I don't know." "What were you eating?" "Oh—was it soup or mashed potatoes?"

Practicing meditation is very important in our school.

Once a student came to a teacher to be taught archery. The teacher said, "Before you study archery you must practice the art

of seeing very small things in a very large size. Do this for three years and then come back."

The student found a tiny insect in the eaves and he fastened it there with a strand of his mother's hair. In three years the insect looked as big as an umbrella!

Then the student returned to the Master, who said, "Have you practiced that art?"

"Yes."

"Then you can shoot it with your bow!"

Then the student went back and annihilated the insect!

I am lazy now but I know what meditation is. And I know the "afflictions of consciousness", not only in my consciousness but in that of others.

"When quiet wisdom appears, mind and all objective impurities will be annihilated once and for all." Quietness is essential wisdom. When you are meditating, the five senses do not function. The "objective impurities" doesn't mean anything immoral. In Sanskrit it is rajah, translated by the Chinese as "dusts." When the five senses cease to function all the outside disappears.

When you meditate for the first time, about three hours, you will feel that you cannot lift your hand, that your tongue is heavy, and that your heart beats in slow rhythm; you can hear it in your ears. You are a part of the universe.

I experienced something like this when I went to the desert. There was nothing other than myself. Nothing higher.

"Thus tranquillity and a feeling of lightness will come forth from the mind." Tranquillity is a profound feeling, as if you were in the depths of the ocean. When you attain to true wisdom there is satisfaction and relaxation.

"Because the mind is tranquilized, all the Tathagatas of the Tenfold Universe will appear therein." This place is a little profound. I have no time to explain.

"It is as a mirror perceives the reflection of other mirrors. This upaya is termed samatha."

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 9)

Master Sôgai¹ studied Zen under Hakuin and attained enlightenment. Shortly thereafter he departed for [his native province of] Hyûga and assumed abbacy of [his original teacher Sekiten's] temple.² Over one hundred monks attended the intensive ninety-day meditation retreat (*kessei*), where Sôgai delivered lectures on the *Record of Linji* (*Linji lu*).

At the retreat's end, Sôgai traveled to Suruga³ to see Master Hakuin again.

Hakuin asked, "Have you been here before?"

Sôgai replied "Previously Your Reverence favored me with his compassionate teaching, and that is what has brought me directly to where I am today."

Hakuin asked, "Since assuming abbacy of the temple, have you found someone to stay and do the cleaning for you?"

Sôgai said, "Unworthy though I am, last winter at the insis-

¹ Sôgai Giun (1722-1794). At age eleven he entered the Myôshinji branch temple Hôonji, in present-day Miyazaki Prefecture. At eighteen he set out on pilgrimage, visiting different Zen masters, finally studying under Hakuin for seven years, and in 1753 became heir to his original teacher, the Myôshinji master Sekiten Gisen (n.d.)

² I.e., Hôonji. Hyûga is in present-day Miyazaki Prefecture.

³ Present-day Shizuoka Prefecture, in which was situated Hakuin's temple Shôinji, located in the master's native village of Hara.

tence of the more than one hundred monks attending my retreat, I delivered lectures on the *Record of Linji*--"

The words were hardly out of Sôgai's mouth before Hakuin leapt up, grabbed his stick, and glaring fiercely at Sôgai loudly berated him: "What's a pip-squeak like you doing sounding off with such a big mouth! And what makes you think the *Record of Linji* is easy to lecture on? You go mouthing off again and I'll beat you to a pulp!"

The force of the Master's words was like the crash of raging thunder. Prostrating himself, Sôgai expressed his profound contrition. He subsequently spent an additional three years studying under Hakuin.

Later, Sôgai lived in seclusion at Ryûkokji in Harima [Hyôgo Prefecture], [but soon found himself] surrounded by students.

On one occasion he remarked to Gankyoku,¹ "Master Hakuin used the *Wu* (J: *Mu*) koan² [about manifesting] original nature within karmic consciousness. Yet I have never managed to penetrate the koan. Why?"

Angrily, Gankyoku replied, "Here you are an old man and still making up your mind. If you try to understand about manifesting original nature within karmic consciousness, do you think it's ever going to happen?"

Admitting defeat, Sôgai withdrew.

(No.18, 174-176)

Master Sôten Hôsai³ studied under Hakuin for many years. When he subsequently assumed abbacy of Ryûshôji in Shinano Province,⁴ Sôten came to take his leave from Hakuin. As a farewell present Hakuin brushed a picture of Bodhidharma, to which he added a verse [in Japanese]. He also presented Sôten with a self-portrait, inscribed with the following poem:

¹ The Myôshinji-line Zen master Gankyoku Zenko (d.1794).

² The first and most famous koan appearing in the collection *Wumen guan*. It was a particular favorite of Hakuin's. As translated by Thomas Kirchner in *Entangling Vines: Zen Koans of the Shumon Kattôshû* (Kyoto: 2004), the relevant passage reads: A monk asked Zhaozhou Zongshen, "Does a dog have buddha nature?" Zhaozhou answered "*Wu!* (No!)" The monk replied, "All sentient beings have buddha-nature. Why would a dog not have it?" Zhaozhou said, "Because it has karmic consciousness..." (29-30).

³ 1722-1782.

⁴ Present-day Nagano Prefecture.

*Beneath the cliff there flows a stream
Rushing on, never ending
If your practice is like this
Can the mountain of awakening be far off?*

This poem had been composed by the master when he was traveling on his Zen pilgrimage and stopped at a mountain temple in Harima. Here, as he watched a stream passing through a gorge, he was moved to write this verse.

(No. 23, 194-195)

Master Suiô was invited to visit [the Confucian scholar] Zeigan⁵ at the latter's home. Zeigan received the master and seated him in the formal reception room, where the two talked together.

It happened that Zeigan's son, a youth of fifteen or sixteen, was on his way out, and he paused to bow to his father. Seeing him, Suiô bowed in return.

Zeigan's son angrily declared, "I'm bowing to my father. Why should I bow to a Buddhist monk!"⁶

Suiô patted Zeigan on the back and said, "What a precocious child!"

Later, Zeigan was heard to remark, "Hakuin is a true Buddhist teacher. He does not truckle to the times or seek favor with others. Suiô is merely a run-of-the-mill monk."

My own view of the matter: Zeigan is just a trivial Confucian; Hakuin is like a thunderclap sundering a stone wall; Suiô is like a man stroking one's head with hands gentle as the softest cotton. With someone like Zeigan who follows a different teaching [i.e., Confucianism], one will never be able to find common ground.

(No.27, 65-66, 201-202.)

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⁵ Yanada Zeigan (1672-1757). Zeigan was also conversant with various schools of Buddhism and was friendly with monks of different Buddhist sects, including Sôtô and Rinzai monks, the latter including Hakuin, whom Zeigan is said to have first encountered in 1750 and with whom he later exchanged poems.

⁶ Throughout the Tokugawa period there was a certain antipathy toward Buddhism on the part of many Confucians, who viewed the Buddhist teaching, and Zen in particular, as amoral and worse. The behavior of Zeigan's son toward Suiô seems to reflect this sort of attitude.

Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse XIV, Lecture 3

“Brothers, if you wish to live by the Dharma, you must have the spirit of a great man. But if you haphazardly dawdle your days away, you cannot live by the law. A cracked jug is unfit to store divine soma! To be a great vessel, one must not be deluded by others. Wherever you are, be a master, and wherever you stand is the place of truth. You need not accept every circumstance that comes along. A moment of doubt, and evil enters your mind. When even a bodhisattva harbors doubt, evil seizes its opportunity. When anything comes to you, illuminate. Believe in that which you are using in each actual moment; there is no other existence. In this moment, your mind begets the three worlds and in accordance with circumstances divides itself into the six senses. In this moment you enter the pure and the impure; enter into the Tower of Maitreya and into the Land of the Three Eyes. Wherever you travel, you will observe only empty names.”

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The Buddhism in China of the eighth and ninth centuries was a very complicated philosophy, impossible of application to daily life, and entirely useless. But then it took on a new aspect, an esoteric one. The masters of the time were saying that you could realize this esoteric aspect in one's self. It wasn't necessary to talk about it, or to study it; it could be applied to daily life.

The word “esoteric” sounds a bit mysterious, but if you understand, it's not so mysterious. It is like an axiom, self-evident. You can see it and handle it; it is not necessary to dream up a metaphysical system. The great axiom of the universe is clear to us, but if we try to see it through knowledge, it is difficult to grasp.

“Brothers, if you wish to live by the Dharma, you must have the spirit of a great man.” Dharma has many meanings. The subjective *Dharma* is the law written in oneself, and the objective *dharma* is all phenomena arranged by the law of the universe. You feel this law of the universe. If you eat too much you are sick; if you steal, you feel compunction. You do not know the law; you merely feel it and are not quite sure of it. Instinct, too, is written law; you feel it but are not clear about it.

To understand the law written in the self, you must be very true to your self at every moment, and you must think deeply; otherwise you cannot live in the law. You must make right judgments and act accordingly; you must have the axiom in your mind. Where do you get this axiom? Lin-chi said there is no other place to find it but within one's self. You must be a human being. Do not compromise and do not flatter. You must be clear as the blade of a sword. It is with your own wisdom that you will judge and perform. But you cannot do this unless you are what Lin-chi calls a great man. You can talk about swimming and how it is done, but how different it is when we go into the water!

To live in the law you must understand the law of the universe, the law of nature, the law of self, and you must understand the relation of yourself to the universe. Is there a great consciousness in the universe as you have consciousness within you? Does it plan and develop? Or has that great power of the universe no plan at all? Is this great flowing universe just accidental or like your dreams? This is a great question. You think if the universal law has a plan, there must be a relation between it and you, that it is not a mere accident. There must be something between this and that, like karma. All such questions must be settled before you enter into the real path of religion.

“But if you haphazardly dawdle your days away, you cannot live by the law. A cracked jug is unfit to store divine soma!” Do you know the principle of the law? If you do not, there is no use keeping commandments. Each commandment has a particular viewpoint that penetrates the law of nature and the law of the universe. Buddhism really grasps the principle of all law. You must realize it in your system, your heart and soul. Whatever you do, have no compunction and no anxiety.

If you do not know the law, you are managed by it. But if you know it, you will succeed. If you are managed by nature, you will fail; you will be conquered by nature. So, in actual daily life, practice the law and you will know compassion and love. You will manage by knowing the wonderful law that is written in you. But without light and wisdom, you cannot use the law. Buddhism emphasizes this innate wisdom, the real light. To discover this is not so easy, yet you can do it, you can use the hard to conquer the hard. To live in the law is difficult.

In the Zen school knowledge must be clear as crystal; you must study all of life a long time to come to the point where you can drill through the wall. It is like a wood worm which, not eating, will die within the wood. Eating, however, he will finally come forth and see the outside. This “drilling through the wall” means to realize *shunyata*, clear nothingness. When the Buddha uses the

terms *shunyata* and nirvana, it means coming out of the wood.

"To be a great vessel, one must not be deluded by others." Do not say your Chinese teacher says this, your Hindu teacher says that, and your Japanese teacher says something else. All law is written within your self. Return to the your self and think deeply.

"Wherever you are, be a master, and wherever you stand is the place of truth." If you know the law, the principle, then you can master it and come to the place where the truth will be seen from all angles. Some call it God, some call it Allah, some call it Brahma, and some call it Tao. You will see the one thing from all aspects. If you enter into real religion, you will come to that place where all is one. Christianity is the true place. Buddhism is the true place. Taoism is the true place. Find that one place in yourself.

"You need not accept every circumstance that comes along." Every standpoint is the true standpoint. When screaming, drinking water, entering a temple, or bowing before a symbol, if you understand one thing, then whatever place you are in is the true place. In Lin-chi's understanding, the true place is never outside, so it is not necessary to care about circumstances.

What Lin-chi is saying here about not accepting every circumstance is a dangerous bit if you swallow it as written. He abominated the idea that man must be a monk and keep himself in a cave, living only as a "soul" and abominating the "flesh." This is not real Buddhism or real religion. Lin-chi would call it filthy rubbish. There is a frog that alters its color according to circumstances, on a leaf, a rock, and so on, so no one knows its real color. It does not accept any circumstance as final. It is entirely independent. It changes its color according to its situation, its place.

Lin-chi does not mean to say that he does not agree with all existence on the outside but is pointing out that the truth is in yourself. Therefore, do not care about eating, sleeping, and whatnot. You must be entirely alone and must not accept anything that is in form or no-form wherever you are. You must not perceive anything or think anything. If you think this way, you will find yourself in a cave like the old *arhat* who thinks he is enlightened. Lin-chi does not consider this great enlightenment.

When the moon reflects upon water, the water shines until the moon vanishes. Like a mirror, the water does not hold onto the light. Yellow flowers, yellow mirror; blue flowers, blue mirror; the mirror does not keep anything at all, but changes according to circumstances. When one enters hell, one changes into a hell-being, etcetera. Consciousness enters into all circumstances but does not change its form. You are not patterned by any circumstances.

But ...*"A moment of doubt, and evil enters your mind. When even a bodhisattva harbors doubt, evil seizes its opportunity."* When a bodhisattva conceives a doubt about the Buddha's teaching of *prajnaparamita*, the vehicle of wisdom that reaches the other shore of nirvana, he is thinking, Is there such a thing? Is there such a shore? Is there salvation? Is there anyone to be delivered from agony? The Buddha said there is no one to be delivered. Evil, the evil of mind-stuff and emotion has seized its opportunity. The bodhisattva's mission to save others from agony and to carry them into a land of peace has become in doubt. And all these doubts come finally to one point: Is this consciousness really existing or not? This is the final question. One must kill the last *alaya-consciousness* and come into *parinirvana*. This is a dreadful moment of doubt, almost impossible to settle. This is that moment of doubt when all day long the mind is not clear.

"When anything comes to you, illuminate. Believe in that which you are using in each actual moment; there is no other existence." Anything, man, woman, money, food, philosophy, mind-stuff, outside, or neutral, you must reflect it with the action of the natural mind, and you must believe that this reflecting action is the real treasure. Nature is a glass reflecting God, and this reflecting action must be free. If it is bound by any idea or theory, it will not reflect because it is not true nature.

Lin-chi always emphasizes that the master is not dependent upon any-thing. He is a free man. There are all kinds of men in yourself, so you can respond as the frog that adapts to its situation. In all circumstances adapt yourself. There is no other existence than that man who reflects everything upon this consciousness. In the first and second stages of *kamadhatu* and *rupadhatu*, there is consciousness, but in the third stage, that of *arupadhatu*, there is no consciousness.

Peace does not exist. To make peace, you need war. To be happy, you must know sadness. To enjoy yourself, you must weep. There is no particular joy, pain, or agony. They are not really existing. These are notions of the human being. If you observe this existence carefully, however, there is no particular existence that is like a die cast in some particular mold. There is only one existence, the man who does not depend upon anything. Real enlightenment will come upon the one who is master of all circumstances. Phenomenal existence is not an object to be analyzed in order to obtain enlightenment, one's self alone is the study to open that door.

"In this moment, your mind begets the three worlds and in accordance with circumstances divides itself into the six senses." Your mind, *this* mind, begets the three worlds, be they *kamadhatu*,

rupadhatu or *arupadhatu*, past, present, and future, or desire, passion, and ignorance. But your mind is begotten in these worlds, and runs up and down like a worm. *This* mind is like a child of Great Existence. *This* mind that begets the three worlds and relates to all circumstances is the pure mind that has had no contact with the outside, like an infant in his mother's bosom. He is still in the Tushita Heaven, still in the womb of Vairocana, the bosom of God. But undergoing experience, he will slowly realize the outside world by the function of the sense perception of the six senses. The master is not in the six senses, that is, relative existence.

Of course, there is no time, space, mutability, or eternity in Mind-itself. The body of the ocean of mind, from our observation, looks eternal, but eternity is related to mutability; to deny one is logically to deny the other. So this mind is beyond all existence, and all supernatural power is in your possession. You must understand that your body is not limited in using this power, but only if you kill this separate ego and come to one with that Great Life, possessing the six supernatural powers.

All this is beyond reasoning. Your will reacts immediately. It is some-thing like instinct. You react, you feel, you judge. If you are free from everything, you are just like this bell sitting here. You realize your adaptability. But if you have preconceived ideas, there is no adaptability. Then you must sanctify your impure mind by meditation, where nothing is lacking.

It is your own choice. If you see the world from a so-called "impure" standpoint or wish to see it from a so-called "pure" standpoint, that is your own choice. You can see the body either way. All this is your own attitude, however; no one limits your mind. You put yourself into a dungeon, binding your body and mind so that you cannot act freely. There are many that bind themselves with these views. The Buddha said the Middle Way is not outside. Search it out and you can enter into the true Dharma instantaneously, at this moment. But where is this moment, and when is it? Lin-chi is pointing out the truth directly.

"In this moment you enter the pure and the impure; enter into the Tower of Maitreya and into the Land of the Three Eyes." Do you wish to enter into the Tower of Maitreya, the bodhisattva of universal love and friendship, and meet him? How? By meditating upon your self. Then the door of your mind will open and you will enter and see that the whole world has instantly changed its aspect. And when the door closes, you will realize that the inside is empty; no form, no sound, no figure, no flower, no sun or moon. It is *shunyata*, emptiness. But suddenly you will see from every standpoint, multiplied; you will be standing in front millions of Maitreyas in worship. You can enter now, at this moment, the tower

of Maitreya or the Land of the Three Eyes; *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*.

To become a bodhisattva, to manifest as a bodhisattva, giving is the first deed of every Buddhist. Giving wisdom opens your mind and opens the mind of others. Giving is the Eye of all deeds. Giving opens your wisdom, and taking does too, for giving cannot exist without taking; it is one action, for there are no two men in the world, only one. But if one does not know this and tries to take without giving, the world does not run smoothly. Giving opens the Eye of Wisdom, not only between men, but between man and a little chick. You give him care and he belongs to you, and he takes and you enter into him and he loves you.

The second deed of every Buddhist is the giving of fearlessness. This is benevolence.

The third is the giving of Dharma, religion. This opens the Eye of others to reality. If you do not grasp reality, it is just as though you went to the city of a king and did not meet him. To meet him, you must have wisdom and benevolence, must have *Dharma*. But, as Lin-chi has said many times, "Wherever you travel, you will observe only empty names."

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, #13)

(Continued from the Spring '14 Zen Notes)

The "Popularizers"- Mu'nan and Ungo

Though it clearly has much in common with Shosan's teachings, Mu'nan's persistent emphasis on the evils of the flesh is probably somewhat unusual for a Japanese Zen Master. Both Mu'nan and Shosan entered the priesthood in middle age after having married and pursued secular careers, and it is possible that their shared abomination of the body stemmed from a personal need to reject decisively their former "worldly" lives. Certainly, Mu'nan's views on the dangers of women have much in common with Shosan's, and spring directly from his notion of the body as a constant source of evil despite the fact that, like Shosan, Mu'nan had several female followers. In *Sokushingi*, Mu'nan observes:

"One who wears a monk's robe shouldn't go near women under any circumstances. When the body goes astray, the mind follows. That's why being around women is a sure way to end up as a beast. The reason I avoid women is that I've got something of that beast mind left myself."

Mu'nan's conception of Zen practice seems to have been shaped in part by this negative vision of the body. "Religious practice means for people to rid themselves of the sins of the body"; religious practice means not to be defiled by the body's evils." Zen practice, according to Mu'nan, was democratic, open to participation by all; but it required sustained, intense, even painful effort to purify the body. As an example, Mu'nan recalls for his readers his own arduous practice as a lay student under Gudo and attacks those who urge people to realize enlightenment "just as they are (*sono mama*) without casting off the evils of the body."

"To the highly gifted, I point it out directly; those of middling capacity, as an expedient, I have practice *zazen*; those of inferior capacity, I urge to seek rebirth by practicing the *nenbutsu*...." Munan's writings make it clear that he also dealt with an assortment of koan and made use of *mondo*-style encounters, complete with Zen-type expressions from the Chinese and the

application of blows from the master's stick.

As seen in the cases of Shosan and Munan, popular Zen teachings of the early Tokugawa period might include elements of Pure Land Buddhism centering particularly upon practice of the *nenbutsu*. As an easy and familiar Buddhist practice, the *nenbutsu* was ideally suited to those unable or unwilling to master the difficulties of koan study or to endure the rigors of formal zazen. Certain teachers valued the practice for its own sake, however, and the fusion of Zen and Pure Land, or *zenjo*, boasted a long history in both Japan and China.

Perhaps the Tokugawa Zen teacher most closely identified with Pure Land style Zen was the Myoshinji master Ungo Kiyō (1582-1659), whose enlightenment story was touched upon previously. For Ungo, the synthesis of Zen and Pure Land practice offered a means to broaden the appeal of Zen and at the same time to reform the teaching, countering the abuses that infected Zen by injecting elements of piety and devotion found in Pure Land Buddhism. Humble and self effacing, Ungo's own personality seems to have reflected the plain and unaffected character of his teaching.

After his enlightenment on Mount Ochi, described previously, Ungo wandered the countryside, discarding his monk's robes and living among the common people. Concealing his previous rank, he became a temple worker in a provincial monastery, and was given a small hut, where he planned to spend the remainder of his life. Eventually, however, word of Ungo's whereabouts leaked out, and he was finally pressed by Myoshinji to assume the abbacy of Zuiganji a temple in Sendai (Miyagi Prefecture) belonging to Date Masamune (1566-1636) a daimyo patron of Ungo's late master Itchu.

Arriving at the temple, Ungo disconcerted the envoys who had gathered to receive him by appearing in his accustomed garb, straw sandals and a plain cotton robe. The simplicity of Ungo's character never seems to have varied. At Zuiganji, Ungo shared his meals with the other monks, and on his trips to Myoshinji, where he served a second term as abbot in 1645, he never provided himself with travel money, but would beg his way to and from Kyoto.

Despite his unassuming way of life, Ungo numbered many prominent men and women among his followers, including the consort of the Shogun Iemitsu. In 1639, in Edo, Ungo delivered a lecture to Iemitsu himself, recommending to him the practice of the *nenbutsu* and inscribing the name of Amida in his own calligraphy for the Shogun. Ungo returned to Edo again in 1649 at the invitation of another aristocratic patron, Masamune's widow, Lady

Yatoku.

On this trip he composed *Ojoyoka*, or *Song of Rebirth in the Pure Land*, a long religious poem emphasizing Pure Land belief and designed as a kind of meditation for calming the mind. The poem consisted of one hundred and eight verses divided into three thirty six verse sections. Each section was introduced by a three-fold repetition of the *nenbutsu*, which was also recited before each verse, so that a complete recitation contained six hundred and forty-eight *nenbutsu* repetitions. Ungo himself conducted daily recitation sessions, seated in the instructor's position, with Lady Yotoku and her ladies in waiting ranged around him, chanting the poem together in what onlookers reported to be a strikingly beautiful and moving manner.

Such group recitation of the *Ojoyoka* gained quickly in popularity, and assisted in spreading Ungo's popular style of Zen teaching. At Myoshinji, however, the poem aroused strong criticism from teachers who regarded Ungo's synthesis of Zen and Pure Land as a violation of the temple's orthodox "pure Zen" teaching. In response to the attacks of his contemporaries, Ungo pointed to the long tradition of combining Zen and Pure Land practice, a tradition that included such illustrious Chinese teachers as the Yuan master Chungfeng Mingpen, who had maintained that Zen and Pure Land were one and that only the ignorant attached to names. It was thus his critics, and not himself, Ungo argued, who were violating the teachings of the patriarchs. Nevertheless, controversy over Ungo's Zen persisted at Myoshinji and reached a head in 1659, when Ungo was invited to the temple for a ceremony commemorating the three-hundredth anniversary of the founder, Kanzan's, death. Hearing that he would be required to officiate at the memorial as the senior representative of his branch and that his participation was opposed by certain elements at the temple, Ungo withdrew. He passed away later in the same year, after striking the temple gong for the evening service.

Despite the hardships endured in his own search for enlightenment, Ungo attempted to teach his followers what he referred to as the "easy practice of calming the mind" (*igyō anshin*).

Though the *nenbutsu* was a prominent feature of his teaching, like Shosan, Munan and others, Ungo seems to have adopted a variety of techniques, including repentance and devotional practices such as invocations to Kannon. For the monks of his temples, Ungo emphasized strict observance of the precepts and maintained the regular periods of zazen and chanting that were standard in Zen monasteries. Koan study, too, seems to have played a role in Ungo's teaching, particularly the *Wu-men kuan* koan referred to in Japanese as *Zuigan shujinko*. ("Zuigan's 'Master,'" or "Zuigan's

'true self"). Ungo's interpretation of the koan, however, was highly individual, and revealed his penchant for combining Pure Land and Zen. According to the case, the Chinese Zen Teacher Juiyen Shih-yen (J: Zuigan Shigen, ca. 9th c.) is said to have called aloud to himself each day: "Master!" (J: *Shujinko*.) Ungo would do the same, but for "Master," he substituted "*koshin no Mida*" ("the Amida within oneself"), declaring: "Zuigan would call, '*Shujinko*' every day; I call '*koshin no Mida*.'"

Ungo's teaching was phrased in easily understood language, frequently in the form of vernacular religious poems of multiple verses, of which the *Ojoyoka*, cited above, is Ungo's most celebrated example. A collection of Ungo's verses, *Ojoyokashu* was published posthumously in 1681, and achieved great popularity. The poems stress not only Ungo's brand of "*nenbutsu*" Zen, but aspects of popular morality and the importance of the Buddhist precepts. Here, too, however, Ungo often tends toward a broad and popular, rather than a literal, interpretation. (On the precept against drinking, for example, he states that it is all right to drink so long as you don't get roaring drunk.) And despite his appeal to morality and concern with Pure Land thought, Ungo's basic orientation remains that of mind practice. "*Even if you uphold the precepts, perform zazen and repeat the nenbutsu,*" Ungo says in the *Ojoyoka*, "*if there is evil in your mind, you are just creating hell karma.*" And again: "*The real teaching of Buddhism has nothing to do with a particular school, but with the mind itself.*" Similarly, Amida Buddha, heaven, hell, and rebirth are all interpreted metaphorically in the *Ojoyoka*:

*"By realizing rebirth in the original emptiness
of the Western Paradise,
you yourself become the eternal Buddha Amida."*

*"Heaven and hell are not to be found somewhere outside,
but in the good and evil within men's minds."*

And at the beginning of each of the three sections of the poem, appear the words:

*"Amida Buddha:
when you're enlightened, he's close at hand;
when you're deluded, he's far off in the Western sky."*

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Cover

The cover is by Michael Hotz catching the February full moon making a worm hole through the clouds.

Year of the goat
Lazy monk dreaming of scapegoats...



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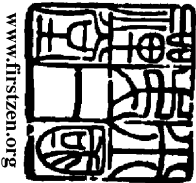
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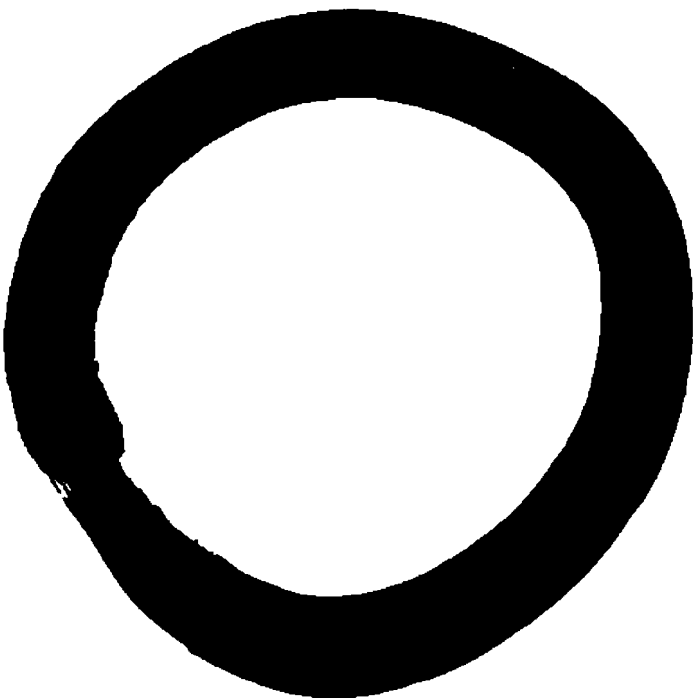
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VOLUME LX, NUMBER 4 FALL 2014
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

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First Zen Institute of America
113 East 30th Street
New York, New York 10016
(ZN Vol60, No.4)



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