

# ZEN NOTES



## SOKEI - AN SAYS

BUDDHISM has existed in the world for two thousand five hundred years. To us in the Orient it is an everlasting religion.

Whoever wishes to understand the Orient must first understand Buddhism. To the Oriental, Buddhism is the criterion of life; so, to understand the law of the Orient, one must truly know Buddhism. The converse is true also; if any Oriental wishes to understand the Western world, he must first understand Christianity; without that true knowledge he, too, will fail of his aim. Although the civilizations of the West and the East are entirely different, we have now reached a period in history when we must look at them both, must understand them both, neither as Oriental nor as Occidental, but with the eye and the mind of a citizen of the world, of a universal human being.

The people of the West have long heard their scholars talk about Buddhism, but they have had no opportunity to hear an authentic Buddhist scholar speak about his true conception of Buddhism. There is an old Chinese proverb which says: "To polish the jade of this mountain, the jade of another mountain must be used." Jade can be polished only by jade but never by that of the same mountain; we must use, instead, a jade from a different mountain.

When we of the East study Western philosophy, we realize its great value in opening our eyes to our own philosophy. When we study Christianity, we realize that it aids us in opening our eyes to our own Buddhism. I myself am convinced, from thirty years' experience and observation, that the Westerner who studies Buddhism must open his eye likewise to unrealized values in his own Christianity. This is not my imagination; it is a fact. I am not trying to convert Christians into Buddhists, but I hope that Christians will more and more use the jade of Buddhism to polish the jade of Christianity.

Buddhism is the religion expressed by the Buddha. His expression of his own attainment was not mythological or symbolical; it was direct and intuitive. You will come to realize, when you study Buddhism, that this religion contradicts neither the scientific view nor the metaphysical view of the world. Buddhism can be illus-

trated by modern science and also by modern philosophy.

I am of the Zen sect. My special profession is to train students of Buddhism by the Zen method. Nowadays, there are many types of Zen teachers. One type, for example, teaches Zen through philosophical discourse; another, through so-called meditation; and still another, directly from soul to soul. My way of teaching is the direct transmission of Zen from soul to soul.

Zen is a form of Buddhism which developed in southern India. From there it was carried into China where it developed further. From China it was carried into Japan where it was applied directly to the daily life. How the Japanese applied this Zen principle to everyday life is a very interesting study. Japanese life, from abstract art to personal morality, all has a source in Zen. Without knowing Zen, one can know little about the Japanese.

But the system of Zen can be expressed in words also. It can be expounded, according to the philosophy of Buddhism, from three different standpoints. What are these three different standpoints from which we can view our daily life? They are:

First: The standpoint of the absolute.

Second: The standpoint of consciousness which is common to all beings.

Third: The standpoint of the activity of consciousness which manifests itself in all states and circumstances.

*The absolute of which I speak is reality itself, the law of the original state of existence.*

*The consciousness which is common to all beings is the wisdom which exists as the intrinsic law of life.*

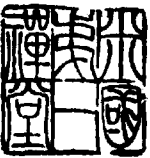
*The activity of consciousness which manifests itself in all states and circumstances is the process of human life. When one consciousness makes a contact with another, the result is conflict or harmony. The Buddhist who views life from these three standpoints enjoys the minimum of conflict in his daily life.*

February 15, 1954 marks the twenty-fourth anniversary of the founding by Sokei-an of The First Zen Institute of America, formerly The Buddhist Society of America. It is also the birthday of the founder. To commemorate this occasion we reprint these words of Sokei-an written in the year 1937 but of equal application today.

#### WHEN I WAS A CHILD\*

JAPANESE children at first use their finger tips to write; then, when they have to make Japanese characters with a brush, the teacher says, "Don't touch the table with your hand, hold your hand this way." And when the child says, "How can I draw this way?" the teacher says, "Put your strength in your shoulder and let your hand relax; don't move hand or elbow, but draw from the shoulder. And when it is a big character, draw from the hip!"

\*This title comes from the beginning words of many such stories told by Sokei-an of his own childhood.



# CHINESE CHARACTERS

Written Chinese began with simple pictures (primitives).

We begin with primitive *MAN*.

*Early Form*

*Modern Form*

丌

人

尸

尸

匕

匕

𠂇

匕

*MAN* is a simple picture of two legs.

*But man is not always pictured the same way.*

Here he is sitting . . .

Here he is overturned . . .

And here he has turned his back

*By multiplying or combining such simple pictures it became possible to convey more complex ideas.*

*Early Form*

*Modern Form*

For example, a man following another man suggests the idea "to follow."

𠂇

从

A man with his back turned to that of another man suggests the idea "to disagree."

𠂇

北

*Man is always trying to get into the picture. Can you find the man in each of these modern characters? See last page for key.*

他誰坐北囚

**PEOPLE** On January 29, Walter Nowick, one of our Zen students, left New York, to return for the third time to Japan, via the freighter Surabaya Maru. It will take him about one month to reach Kyoto, where he plans to continue his studies. Accompanying him is a newly-acquired but ancient piano. Trained at the Juilliard School of Music, last year Walter exercised his talents at the piano to good advantage in music-loving Japan when he was featured as the soloist at a Doshisha Symphony Concert. He also performed for the Japanese radio. Another skill is farming. But how surprised those Japanese farmers must have been when this blond and blue-eyed American farmer-musician, pulling his cart with the other novices on *takuhatsu* (begging) came asking for the turnips which are an important item of the monastery diet.

**BOOKS** We are gratified to report the great and growing interest both here and abroad in our publication, **THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE ZEN after the Sixth Patriarch**, by Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J. and Ruth Fuller Sasaki. Dr. Yamaguchi Susumu, President of Otani University and renowned Japanese Buddhist scholar, recently commented that it was to be expected that this work would revolutionize the methods of presenting Buddhist material and texts in Japan, where it will be used as a textbook in Buddhist schools and universities.

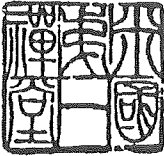
**KEY**

他誰坐比因

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Founded 1930



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