

ZEN notes



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Having knocked at the gate
And meticulously polished himself
A second time
He traverses the pathless place.
I, the old monk Kidō,
Make this prophecy:
The children of the eastern seas
Will increase in number day by day.

Montei o kōkō shite komaka ni suima su;
Botō tsukuru tokoro futatabi keika su.
Meimei ni setsuyo su Kidō sō
Tōkai no jison hi ni utata o shi.

A PORTRAIT OF DAIO KOKUSHI On April 27, 1955, when the American Kojis and Daishis for the first time taking the Three Refuges and the Four Vows in the presence of a Zen Master were thus formally accepted into the lineage of Zen they were brought even more fully to awareness of their debt to past masters of the teaching by the presentation to the Institute of a handsome portrait of Daio Kokushi from great Daitoku-ji in Kyoto, as a token of the feeling of close relationship this temple feels to the group founded by one of its priests. This treasured painting is the work of Zengyu Kunmoku, a priest whose name and seals are to be seen at the bottom of the painting, currently on display in the garden room of the Institute.

In this, our 25th anniversary year, we were thus permitted to feel ourselves truly part of a great and living tradition, doubly so as this presentation was made in connection with the commemoration of the founding of the temple, presently called Rosho-ji, now the sodo, or monastery of Daitoku-ji (Daitoku-ji itself was established about fifty years later by Daio Kokushi's heir).

Even more affecting was our discovery that the inscription and poem at the top of the painting, reproduced on Page One, was written by none other than Goto Zuigan Roshi, former Kancho, that is, administrative head, of Daitoku-ji, elder Dharma brother of Sokei-an, and the eldest heir of the famous Soyen Shaku of Engaku-ji, who came to San Francisco in 1906 with Sokei-an, both under the leadership of Sokatsu Shaku, with the idea of transmitting the Dharma to America.

It was because of these connections that, when Mrs. Sasaki, heir to Sokei-an's literary works, went to Japan bearing his instructions that the texts he had worked on so many years should be published only after the polishing of them had been completed in his native land, her first call was upon Goto Zuigan, now a great Roshi, who had embarked with Sokei-an nearly half a century before to bring Zen here. During the years of her stay in Japan, still continuing, Goto Zuigan, now in his seventies, has, to the limits of health and strength, helped Mrs. Sasaki with the monumental task of making available the major texts of Zen in authentic translation. From him, too, our students in Japan have received the valued privilege of having him hear their sanzen. Now, once again, out of his benevolence, Goto Roshi has given thought to the Zen orphans struggling by themselves in America to find their way and taken the trouble to send an inspiring message written in his own hand. The recipients of such kindness from an "old monk", as well as that of all the patriarchs of the past, how could our hearts be so cold as to fail to try with all our power to requite it?



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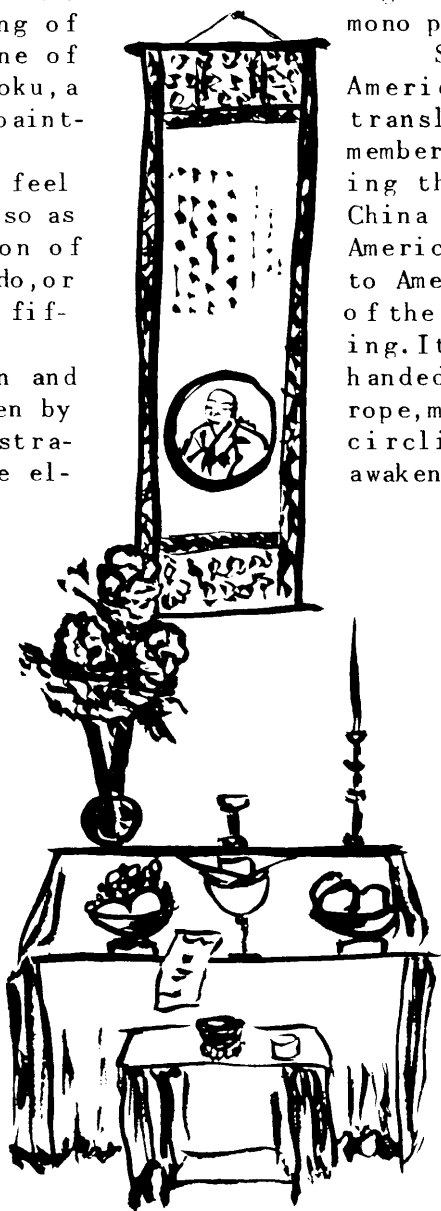
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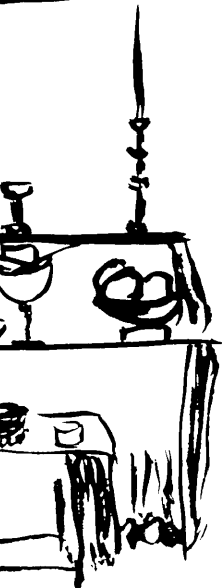


AN ANCIENT PROPHECY RENEWED Kido Osho, the "old monk" of the poem, was a famous Chinese Zen priest who lived on Kinzan in eastern China. It was to him that Nampo Shomyo, later known as Daio Kokushi, went in 1265 to study Zen. When Nampo was about to return to Japan after four years at Kinzan, Kido Osho gave him at parting the verse which Goto Zuigan Roshi chose to inscribe on the kake-mono presented to the Institute.



Shortly before Mrs. Sasaki left Japan for her recent visit to America, Goto Roshi, explaining the verse in detail for its better translation, asked her to convey also his personal greetings to the members of the Institute and to ask all of them to assist in fulfilling the prophecy of Kido Osho. For, while Japan lies to the east of China and therefore Zen in moving to Japan moved eastward, no less do America and Europe lie to the east of Japan. Thus the movement of Zen to America is the carrying on of Kido Osho's prophecy and we children of the eastern seas are heirs of this long line of teachers and teaching. It is the expressed hope of Goto Roshi that the torch of Zen, handed to those in the still more easterly lands of America and Europe, may continue to burn brightly, until it forms one continuous encircling light, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and bringing awakening to men in all lands.

Calligraphy and art students will find it of interest to note that, because the portrait of Kido faces to the left, Goto koshi's signature and the poem are written from left to right rather than from right to left, the usual manner of writing in Japanese and Chinese, which would have applied had the portrait been full face or facing to the right. In the next two issues ZEN NOTES will bring you a special message from Goto Zuigan Roshi concerning the doctrine and transmission of Orthodox Rinzai Zen.



ZEN TRANSMISSION Zen is always transmitted from eye to eye, direct from a teacher to his immediate disciples, like lighting one candle from the other, or pouring water from one vessel into another. You cannot all of a sudden call yourself a Zen student, inventing your own Zen. If you attain Zen knowledge without a teacher, you must go to see a recognized Zen Master and have your Zen attainment acknowledged by him. For instance, when you have been meditating a long time alone and have attained some realization, you think: "This is what is called Zen enlightenment. I will go to see some Zen Master and ask him whether my Zen attainment is the same as his." When you go to see him and demonstrate your attainment, he will say, "Very well, your Zen is exactly the same as mine." Then you are a Zen student.

Sokei-an, 1939

FROM AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY U NU, PRIME MINISTER OF BURMA, AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY JULY 6, 1955... The Lord Buddha has clearly said that there is but one way which will lead to freedom from suffering. This way is no other than the way of complete awareness. The nature of this awareness will be understood better if one practices contemplation, but I will attempt to explain its nature in very general terms.

All human beings have the same sense organs. One of these sense organs is constantly in contact with some kind of sensation. As a result of these sensations we experience, roughly speaking, either a pleasant or an unpleasant reaction. Close on the heels of this sensation, there arises in us a mental state of liking the sensation or disliking the sensation. And with this liking or disliking, there arises a mental state of attachment or revulsion.

Pleasant sensations breed attachment, and unpleasant sensations breed revulsion. These mental states of attachment or revulsion recur continuously in us, and just as we cannot see when our eyes are covered with cataracts, so we cannot get a true perception of ourselves when our minds are occupied with either attachment or revulsion. We also fail to get a true perception of the things around us, both animate beings and inanimate objects...

What is therefore required, is the sense of awareness at the first impact of sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, and thought. If you open the door, all visitors waiting outside the door will enter the room. But if you close the door after the entry of the first person, the rest of the visitors will be kept outside. In the same way, if you apply a sense of awareness every time you see, or hear, or eat, or smell, or touch, or think, mental states of attachment or revulsion will not occur in you so long as that awareness lasts. An angry man, at the instant application of "awareness" of his anger, will find that his anger subsides. I believe many of you must have had such an experience of awareness at one time or another, but I think there are only a very few people who have attempted to strengthen this ability to be "aware."

This awareness of mind can be strengthened if it is continuously applied in the correct manner on all occasions. It will certainly be difficult at first, but a constant application of this awareness of mind to all your senses will preclude the possibility of the encroachment of attachment or revulsion. After a sufficient practice, awareness will become firm and constant. When it becomes "firm and constant"... if you continue and persevere (through three stages) you will reach the Fourth Stage, called the "Arahatta Magga."

This is the end of the long road of existence for you will now obtain serenity and tranquility of mind. From this point onwards, whatever you see, or hear, or smell, or eat, or come in touch with, or think of, there will not arise in you attachment or revulsion. You will no longer have an incorrect perception of yourselves or of all things around you. You will now have the right perspective, and you will see all things in their truth...

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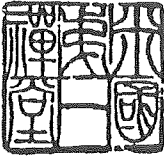
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www.firstzen.org

First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212-686-2520)

(Open House Wednesdays: 7:30-9:30 PM)
Meditation and tea: 8-9:30 PM

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