

ZEN NOTES

SOME VERSES FROM ZENRIN KUSHU

Translated by RUTH FULLER SASAKI

Zenrin kushū ("A Zen Anthology") is a collection of phrases and verses well-known to all students of Zen, whether they be monks or laymen.

The original of the work, entitled *Ku zōshi* ("A Phrase Book"), was compiled sometime toward the end of the 15th century by Tōyō Eichō Zenji (1429-1504), a descendant in the seventh generation of Kanzan Kokushi, founder of the Rinzaï Zen Headquarters of Myōshin-ji at Hanazono, Kyoto. It consisted of some 5000 quotations taken from Buddhist sutras, the records of Chinese Zen patriarchs, Confucian texts, Taoist writings, and the works of Chinese poets. These quotations were arranged in

雨 一
過 曲
夜 兩
塘 曲
秋 無
水 人
深 會

sections according to the numbers of Chinese characters in each, beginning with those of a single character, and progressing numerically through those of two, three, four and five characters, five-character couplets, six characters, six-character couplets, seven characters, seven-character couplets, eight characters, and eight-character couplets.

The collection seems to have remained in manuscript form until the end of the 17th century, when a person who styles himself Rakkyō Sengū Sampo Ijūshi undertook to edit it. Ijūshi, in his postscript to the book, states that he was originally a Confucianist, but in middle life became a monk and carried on some Zen practice. Later, how-



One tune, two tunes--
But no man who understands.
The rain has passed, and
in the night-dark pool
Deep lies the autumn water.

Ikkyoku ryōkyoku hito no e suru nashi
Ame sugite yatō shūsui fukashi

Hekigan roku, 37

The boy-child you cherish
Is the man before your eyes.
The golden crow beneath the water
Is the sun in the heaven.

*Ganchū no dōji mokuzen no hito
Suitei no kinu tenjō no hi*

眼中童子目前人
水底金烏天上日

Kaian kokugo, 6

My only wish
Is to receive the favor of my lord.
Before my mirror-stand, how many times
Have I not painted my moth-eyebrows!

*Tada kunnō no aikaerimiru i o negau
Dai ni nozonde ikutabi ka gabi o egaku*

只願君王相願意
臨臺幾度畫蛾眉

Hekigan roku, 97

Across the great moor
A chill gale sweeping,
In the long sky
A thin rain misting.

*Taiya ryōhō sassatsu
Chōten sou mōmō*

大野今涼颼颼
長天今踈雨濛濛

Tōzan Sho Zenji

On the top of Mount Godai
Clouds are steaming rice;
Before the old Buddha-hall
Dogs are urinating toward heaven.

*Godaizanjō kumo han o mushi
Kobutsudōzen inu ten ni yubarisu*

五臺山上雲蒸飯
古佛堂前狗屎天

Hekigan roku, 16

All day long practicing,
Yet not having practiced at all;
All day long speaking,
Yet not having spoken a word.

Shūjitsu gyōjite imada katsute gyōzezu
Shūjitsu toite imada katsute tokazu

終日行而未習行
終日說而未言說

Futō roku, 28

East, west, south, and north
Are gateless;
The great earth, mountains, and rivers
Are not concealed.

Tōzai namboku monko nashi
Daiji senka fukuzō sezu

東西南北無門戶
大地山河不覆藏

Futō roku, 27

Where flowers are luxuriant,
Partridges whistle;
When grasses are fragrant,
Mandarin ducks fly.

Hana zokuzoku taru tokoro shako naki
Kusa kunkun taru toki ennō tobu

花繁處處鳥啼
草薰時時鴨飛

Futō roku, 3

An iron dog baying
Splits the moon above the cliff;
A clay ox charging
Smashes the cloud on the peak.

Tekku beikai su ganjō no tsuki
Deigyū shokuha su reitō no kumo

鐵狗吠巖上月
泥牛觸破嶺頭雲

Shijin gyokusetsu, 8

I know not
Where her lovely face has gone,
But peach flowers, as of old,
Laugh in the spring breeze.

*Nimmen wa shirazu izuku ni ka saru
Tōka wa kyū ni yotte shumpū ni warau*

人面不知何處去
桃花依舊笑春風

Kaian kokugo, 4

The old fisherman sleeps heavily,
The spring pond stretches broad,
The white birds stand motionless,
The boat by itself is at rest.

*Gyōo nemuri omou shite shuntan hiroshi
Hakuchō tobazu fune onozukara yokotou*

漁翁睡重春潭澗
白鳥不飛舟自橫

Mumon In goroku, 8

Walking together
On the path at the foot of the mountain,
Each through his own eyes
Seeing the landscape.

*Ittō tomo ni yuku sankā no michi
Gantō kakuji ni fūen o miru*

一
等
共
行
山
下
路
眼
頭
各
自
見
風
烟

Renju shū, 2

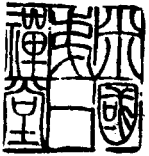
Before the Yellow Crane Tower
At the battle of Dharma,
A hundred-thousand Buddhas
Raise flags of surrender.

*Kōkakarōzen hossen no toki
Hyakusen no shobutsu kōki o tatsu*

黃鶴樓前法戰時
百千諸佛豎降旗

Zen notes

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ever, "due to an unfortunate circumstance," he had to return to Confucianism. Because of his desire to repay the debt of gratitude he felt toward his Zen friends, he decided to edit this work, which he believed would be useful to beginners in Zen study. Ijūshi added an appendix of a number of quotations to each section, bringing the total to about 6000 entries, and to each entry, with the exception of the few whose sources he could not trace, appended the title and section of the original work from which it had been taken. The book was finally published in 1688 under its present title of *Zenrin kushū*. Today *Zenrin kushū* is still the constant companion of every Japanese student of *sanzen*; for within its thousands of phrases he must find his particular koan's one--and sometimes two--traditional *jaku* (a verse or phrase conveying in poetical form the content of the answer to a koan) and present it to his teacher as the final step in his study of a koan. Day by day and week by week, thumbing through this work, usually printed in small type on thin paper in a size convenient for the pocket or the sleeve, the student memorizes a word here and a phrase there, until his mind gradually becomes a repository for many of the famous and beautiful lines from Chinese literature.

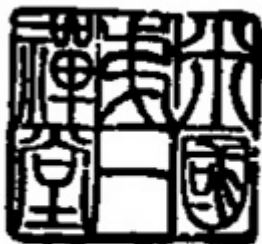
No translation into an European language of the entire *Zenrin kushū* has as yet been published. However, English translations of a number of the verses are to be found throughout the various English writings on Zen of D. T. Suzuki. Others appear in *Zen in English Literature* and *Haiku, Vol. I, Eastern Culture*, both by R. H. Blyth, and still others done by the late Zen Master Sokei-an, in *Cat's Yawn*.

The verses here offered in English translation are from the section of seven-character couplets. Since these translations were originally done for use in my own koan study, I have attempted only to make accurate literal translations in which, to the person of insight, the Zen principle the verse is traditionally used to illustrate will be reasonably clear. They make no pretense of having any merit as poetry.

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