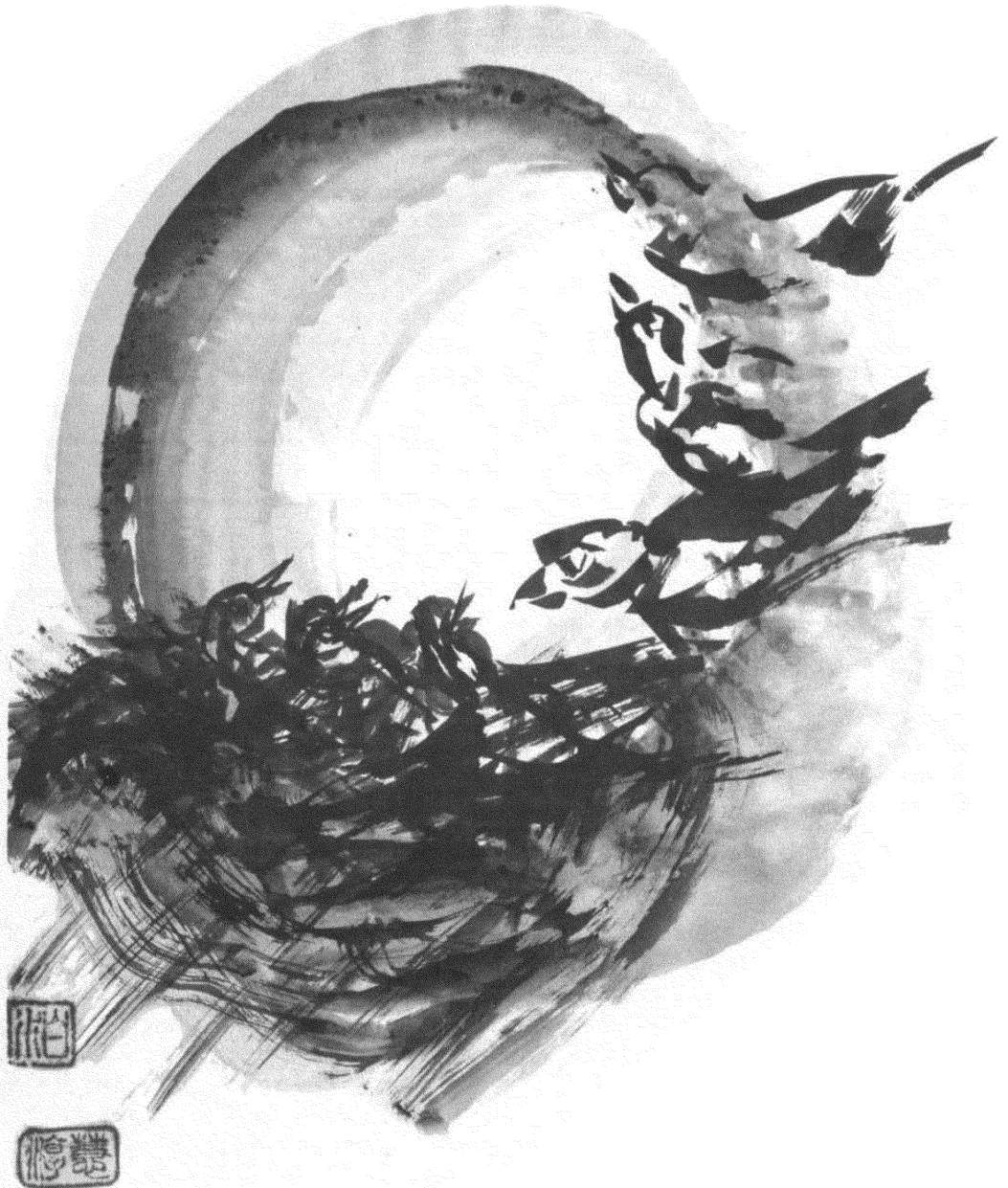


# ZEN NOTES



## SOKEI-AN SAYS

**MINDLESSNESS** In anxiety and agony, the Buddhist takes refuge in the Buddha's teaching.

In sickness, the Buddhist takes the view that the physical body is like a bubble, like morning dew in the garden that the sun will soon melt away. It is not true existence. It is temporal existence that has emerged from Emptiness and will submerge into Emptiness. Knowing this, the dying Buddhist closes his eyes taking refuge in Emptiness.

When I was at the battle front, under fire, I often thought of this teaching: "My existence is like the lightning that flashes through the dark air. My life is so short. It is like a dream. When I draw my last breath, I will go back to that original Emptiness, to that original substance that exists timelessly. Why should I be afraid?" And I did not hesitate to walk into the shower of fire.

Buddhism gives great strength at the end of life or in a predicament, but it is even more wonderful to take refuge in Mindlessness than in Emptiness. We suffer most in our minds. Almost every day, every moment, our minds torture us. Many times I hate my mind.

Our wooden fish drum is the symbol of Mindlessness, for we think the fish has sense perceptions but no mind. Animals have minds, but fish do not, we say. Fish are not blind to what happens outside, but they respond mindlessly. When we beat upon our wooden drum, it too responds mindlessly.

Zen training saves us from being enslaved by our mind, emancipates us from the torture of the mind. We practice for many, many years to reach the

mindless attitude. We think of our mind as a cloud passing through the sky over the moon. It looks as if the moon is sailing but it is the cloud that is sailing. When we are suffering from our mind we think our soul is suffering. But sickness is not soul, sickness is mind, mind passing over the surface of soul. We think the soul is sick, but soul does not suffer. If we stop the suffering of our mind, the illness will be removed.

Many stories of Japanese heroes concern Mindlessness. One warrior who had lost a battle decided to commit suicide. The enemy were surrounding him, weapons in hand. He said: "I wish to write a letter to my mother. Please wait." When the letter was finished, he called an attendant. "Send this." Then he cut his throat. There was no excitement, not because he was cold-blooded, but because he was mindless. He did this as I would drink a glass of water. He was like the fish with five senses and a soul, but no mind.

When I am troubled, I wonder why, then I remember it is my mind and I do not squeeze my face into an uncomfortable expression. I have a friend who squeezes his face as his cigarette grows shorter. I thought it was because he smoked so much, but then I saw that he squeezes his face sometimes even when he is not smoking, so I realized it is not his cigarette, it is his mind.

Since I first came to this country, I noticed that many of the young men walking on the street have disdainful looks on their faces. They must hate everyone. They look at the world as though it were dirty. This is mind suffering.

Buddhists have counted fifty-three kinds of minds--jealous, malicious, egotistic, mocking, fooling, cruel, and so on. These minds are always being carried on the surface of our soul. We look at the world through these minds. No wonder it appears so distorted.

Because my mind was tortured I decided to eradicate it and become mindless. Zen meditation is the practice to become mindless. When you meditate, mind comes up as a bubble from the bottom of a bottle. It struggles to the surface and goes away. If you watch your thoughts, you will see them going round and round in a crazy way

In meditation we practice stopping that mind entirely. This practice will simplify your life and bring you comfort. Zen meditation is not to meditate on something, but to handle the mind as though it doesn't belong to you. Of course it sounds queer to say you will become a mindless man. But it is better than to be a sick-minded man. We say your mind must become pure and transparent. Get rid of your useless mind. Throw it away and become mindless.

*This and the following article were reconstructed by Vanessa Coward and Mary Farkas from the notes of Audree Kepner.*

室 庭  
内 前  
不 紅  
知 花  
春 秀

*Teizen kōka hiide  
Shitsunai haru o shirazu*

In the front garden  
Crimson flowers riot,  
But within her chamber  
She is unaware of the spring.

*Zenrin ruiju*

ZEN, THE LIVING BUDDHISM OF JAPAN

By Mary Farkas

Of the three koji who attained mastership under Sokatsu Shaku with Sokei-an, Chikudo Ohasama is the least known to me though his name was before the public outside of Japan by virtue of his being the co-author, with August Faust, of a book *ZEN: DER LEBENDIGE BUDDHISMUS* (ZEN, THE LIVING BUDDHISM OF JAPAN), published in Germany in 1925. Dr. George B. Fowler, who is at present in Germany, translated this work about ten years ago, but it has not been published in English. The manuscript may be seen at the Institute.

A fifty page introduction by Ohasama describes the method of Zen and its historical development as well as definition. Three charts give the names and dates of the authors of the texts, the founders of the sects and famous patriarchs, and the Japanese patriarchs. Translations of two long poems, The Seal of Faith (*Shinjinmei*) and Chant of the Experience of Truth (*Shōdōka*) follow the Chant of Hakuin Zenji (*Zazen Wasan*) and the brief Repentance and Four Vows. Thirty-one koans are included, seventeen of which are from *MUMONKAN*, eleven from *HEKIGAN-ROKU*. The work is completed by notes on the translations which in quantity more than equal the length of the translations themselves.

These notes are of considerable interest and are, indeed the very heart of the work as they represent an amalgam of the German philosophical mind and the Japanese "interpreter" of Zen. The difficulty of achieving a satisfactory result in such a case has been recognized by Faust, in his Editor's Foreword, as follows:

*These translations should not be judged from the purely philological or aesthetic viewpoint. What we were most intent on doing was to interpret as clearly as possible what we Europeans might call "the religious contents." Professor Ohasama serves here as a gifted interpreter. He holds an authoritative place among Japanese Zen students of the present day, since he has been appointed a successor of a contemporary patriarch of the Rinzai Sect. As a matter of course the initial choice of words was always suggested by Professor Ohasama himself. Then I had to question him closely in order to be able to formulate the expressions more precisely. I hope that I have succeeded in most cases. The footnotes are largely my own, worked out in connection with occasional remarks of Professor Ohasama. All attempts to make the sense of the text theoretically more understandable or indeed more convincing are also to be reckoned as mine. Not without emotion can I*

recall how many were the hours that we sat together when we sought to reach a common understanding across a wide abyss. Professor Ohasama had read with me some texts of European philosophy (for example, Plotinus, Kant, Fichte, Rickert), and in the language of these philosophers we succeeded in understanding each other. Obvious traces of philosophic terminologies will be noted everywhere in the translation (e.g. Emil Lask's manner of expression), but I believe that only thus can one make Europeans understand this kind of text according to its meaning as well as its wording. Very often, indeed, he had to tell me, "What you want to write is, to be sure, not altogether false, but it is much too rational, much too clear, much too understandable, in short, much too European. The truth cannot be explained, it can only be experienced by oneself." And then Professor Ohasama would suddenly hold up before me a bit of cigarette ash on the tip of his finger and say, "This is the highest truth." And he would look at me with large serious eyes and say finally, smiling, "You don't understand it, do you?" Perhaps through my common labors with Professor Ohasama, I have since then learned to understand somewhat; and perhaps the German reader of this book can sense something of the religious conviction of the Zen Masters and of the man who has translated for us a little from their writing.

Chikudo Ohasama died May 17, 1946, on the same day of the month as Sokei-an, a year later. He was then in his sixties so he was a contemporary of Sokei-an. He must have been a student of Sokatsu's after Zuigan Goto had

left, as the latter seems not to have been acquainted with him. He was not highly regarded by Sokei-an and seems to have had a reputation of being something of a politician and rather smug in manner. The fact that he was Sokatsu's favorite (some believed this was because he provided more financial support than his other students) may have contributed to this reputation.

Ohasama came from a poor family originally, but was adopted by a quite well-to-do man who married him to his daughter in order, as is the custom in Japan, to carry on his name. Four children resulted from the match.

Ohasama was a student in Tokyo, as were many of Sokatsu's other Ryomo-an members. Like many of the intellectuals of his time, he was well-versed in German language and philosophy. Eventually he became a teacher, presumably of "Ethics," at some university. His story particularly interests me as it exemplifies one of the threads in the tangle of modern Japanese Zen. For in some way he represents what I think of as the imprint made on the Japanese, including Japanese Zen, by the image it took of "German" culture. (With apologies to Dr. Fowler, who as a historian is far better equipped to discuss this, "German" is used by me in a broad sense here, and is meant to include Austrian as well as Prussian elements, but not "Gemütlichkeit"). Ohasama may also have been actually influential in the formation of Dr. Herrigel's view of Zen, as expressed in *ZEN IN THE ART OF ARCHERY* and his posthumous *METHOD OF ZEN*.

Somewhere in this area, I suspect, lurks the image of the all-powerful Master-father figure, which exists also in the world of psychoanalysis, des-

tructively, it seems to me. It is my idea that this "image" may possibly have emanated from the same source that produced the "Father Freud," image, that is to say, the "Fatherland" itself where the neurotic need for dependence and authority go hand in hand. To condemn it in both psychoanalysis and Zen, as has been done by Becker for instance, in *ZEN--A RATIONAL CRITIQUE*, is to risk throwing out the baby with the bath water. Not to see its distortion is to risk smearing the wonderful mirror that is Zen at its best. I feel that we modern students of Zen should, in any case, be alert to its menace regardless of its origin. To recognize it would be half the battle.

The German influence on modern Zen attributable to the central position of Germany in cultural matters in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth has not been discussed in detail in any work that has chanced to come my way, yet I feel it may exist in areas that someone more familiar with this period might easily document. As Germany was a world leader in philosophical thinking at that time as well as in science and industry, it was only natural that Japan (as was the United States to some extent) should have been impressed to the extent of imitation unconsciously as well as consciously. The seedbed would clearly have been in cultural education.

A remark of Fosco Maraini in *MEETING WITH JAPAN*, Viking Press, New York 1959, set me thinking my guess about this had known grounds. "There is," Maraini says, "... a subterranean level at which Japanese and German hearts easily beat in unison--that at which there is an obscure, imperious need to

live in a spirit of heroic self-dedication to something or somebody...The German influence in Japan has been much deeper and more widespread than the British...The universities, the army, certain public services, have Prussian roots of extraordinary tenacity. The mournful black uniform worn by students comes within this order of influence."

I. Nitobe, a Japanese writer, in *JAPAN*, Ernest Bean, Ltd., London, 1931 adds confirmation: "...the admiration--stimulated more or less artificially by State functionaries and German-bred professors and army officers--for the autocratic Kaiser, the efficient administration, the police system, and the scientific and industrial progress of the "Fatherland", had all combined.."

One could speculate that the Prussian-like flavor one could sense in the super-authoritarian attitudes of some Roshis and monastic establishments might have contributed to the rigidity that can be detected in the official portrait of Soyen Shaku in *CAT'S YAWN*, for instance. Also, it seems reasonable to suppose that it was the direction given his thinking by his German studies that led Ohasama to Heidelberg, where, according to his statement, he studied philosophy and theology at the University. The list of his teachers there includes, along with Privatdozent Dr. Herrigel, Dr. Faust, and Prof. Rudolph Otto (of the University of Marburg), a Prof. Jaspers who, I assume must be, from his subject, the very famous one of today. As to the relationship of any of the Heidelberg group to later Nazism, I have no information, only rumors. It was at Heidelberg also that Ohasama engaged in discussions of Zen with Dr. Faust

and Dr. Eugen Herrigel, who read the translations, and collaborated with the former in writing what I suppose may well be the only book by a Zen Roshi published originally in German. The difficulties of such a collaboration should not be underestimated and, in spite of various complaints made against Faust's understanding, I have only sympathy with his efforts. To convey the content without presenting it direct from mind to mind is impossible. To explain it, particularly to persons of a developed philosophical bent, is bound to become misleading. No matter how the master tries, he cannot avoid the other person's immediately transposing what he says into his own language. And as soon as he has, the content is gone or distorted. Dr. Suzuki, who was also in contact with German thinking through his early work with Dr. Paul Carus, has spent more than an average lifetime attempting to present his Zen without falling into this trap for foxes, yet at best its shadow is always near.

As we now have had several modern Japanese Roshis lecturing in the United States and anticipate more in the future, this point can scarcely be over-emphasized.

The poems, which are part of the comment by the great masters of the past, are the nearest, in my mind, to a written word that is not distorting, but because their translation is so extremely difficult, their content nearly always seeps away with their untranslatable form. It must always be remembered that their essence is as untransmittable as a sight-joke. But let us by all means get what we can.

As an example of Ohasama's style, we conclude this issue by going to the beginning of his Introduction, in which

is told the origin of Zen. Next time we shall present other sections, for though this work has its faults, it is still an important historical document that should be familiar to the students of Zen.

*After devoting six years to search for the truth, Śākyamuni Buddha sat in solitude under the Bodhi Tree. He was immersed in the deepest contemplation for seven weeks. He conquered all temptations of devils and finally the great experience came to him. There he discovered the almost incomprehensible: All men originally possess the truth, the virtue and the form of The One That Exists, and just as man is, so also everything else is Buddha--all things, plants, trees and the whole earth. This experience of "Buddha-nature" is the origin of Zen. For forty-five years afterward the Buddha preached the truth. One day, before the assembled multitude of his disciples, he silently held up a flower. In this moment of silence lay the deepest revelation of truth, for such a silence is all-embracing and the source of his whole doctrine. But no one understood him except Kāśyapa, who was the Buddha's highest disciple. Kāśyapa's face broke into a faint smile. Then Śākyamuni Buddha said: "I hold the complete, the all-embracing view of the real truth, the marvelous spirit of Nirvana, and the wonderfully delicate doctrine of the true form of the formless. I entrust all of this to you. Guard it well." And the Buddha transmitted to Kāśyapa his sacred gold-embroidered robe as the seal of the Buddha-mind. This straight entrusting of mind is the origin of Zen.*

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Mary Farakas, Editor  
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**THREE WAYS OF EMANCIPATION** We are like the water in a pail. Water takes many shapes according to the form of the utensil. There is no particular form in water itself, yet it will have form according to its container. Soul, like water, transforms into many shapes: tree, insect, animal, man, deva, pratyeka--like electricity that runs a little machine or a locomotive or an iron to press clothes. It can send messages from country to country, send sounds through the sky or come into a lamp and give light. Electricity is invisible. It transforms itself according to the shape of the utensil. When life comes into a plant, it starts up from the earth; man eats and runs; the deva jumps from the lips and goes around the world seven times in one minute. But what you see is the body, not life itself, not soul. If we grasp soul itself, we are not bothered by the body. We are emancipated, freed from the body, so we are not afraid of death, of life, of the agony of pain and joy.

There is an easy way to emancipate yourself.

1 You can emancipate yourself from your garments. This has a deep meaning. It is not just the garments you wear on your body that is meant, but all you wear as body and soul. If you wear very beautiful and valuable clothes--a variety of silks, furs, jewels--you will tire of them. You will emancipate yourself from the desire for that three-thousand-dollar coat.

2 Emancipation from food. Perhaps you enjoy delicious food--maybe a swallow's nest or snake wine. You may enjoy it three times, but eat it eight times and you can emancipate yourself from the desire for it.

3 You can emancipate yourself through your ear. Listening to a story, to philosophy and religious teaching, you can hear the voice of the Buddha himself--a voice like the roar of the ocean or the sigh of the wind. It can reach into your heart and take the pain and agony from your soul. While listening, you are emancipated.

4 If you live calmly and quietly in a beautiful place, enjoying music and painting, you can be emancipated.

5 If you associate closely with someone who is good-natured, you can emancipate yourself.

6 If you go to Japan or some other place, you can emancipate yourself.

These are the so-called easy way that sentient beings pursue. A second way is called the Hinayana.

At the time of the Buddha, his disciples took clothes from the refuse

pile, even from sepulchres, washed and patched them and made them into robes; they wore no robes of new cloth. When Rahula, the Buddha's son, came into the Buddha's community, he begged food in Shravasti. There he met a beautiful courtesan, and she invited him to visit her. When he refused, she said: "So you think you are higher than any human being--you refuse my offer! You think you are pure so you refuse the other's heart." Poor Rahula could not answer a word. Then all the women insulted him, throwing at him the clothes that were nearest to their skin. Rahula took the garments back to Jeta, washed and straightened them out, and made a robe, put it on and came again to Shravasti. In this way, humbling himself, he emancipated himself from the desire of "wearing." And so with food--eating once at noontime the Buddha's followers emancipated themselves from the desire of "eating."

The Buddha's disciples opened no books, did not entertain any ideas, but practiced intense meditation. They left their homes, living out under the trees in the mountains. They bore the abuse of mankind and the wound in the heart for the sake of emancipation.

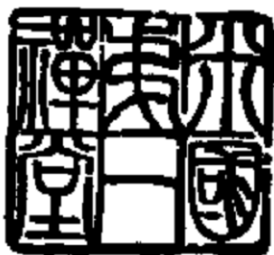
These are two ways to emancipate yourself.

If you emancipate yourself while still satisfying your desire, you cannot keep your emancipation--it will crumble like ashes. One who follows the second way may keep himself in intense meditation while sitting under his tree, but in the center of the battlefield, can he keep it? If he is not eating any food and comes to despise it, he is no more emancipated than the one who is attached to taste! He may sleep upon weeds, but if he is brought upon a soft bed covered with brocade and he cannot keep his pure meditation--he is not emancipated. In the calm of the woods, he is emancipated, but in the scent of perfume and the sound of music he loses it.

A third way is called Mahayana. There is a story about an old patriarch, a Zen sage, who was called to the palace by a queen of China. She put him into a bath where one hundred maidens, not wearing a stitch, bathed him from head to foot, and the Queen was peeping. But the sage looked as though he were quite alone--indeed he felt that there was no one there. Funny, isn't it? This story has been made into a koan. How do you understand it? It is not difficult to understand this koan. But each will choose his own way of emancipation.

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