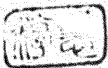
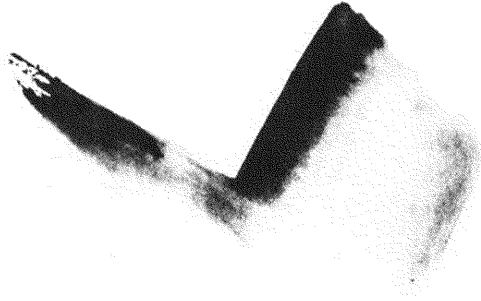


# ZEN NOTES



## SOKEI-AN SAYS

*For some time now we have been attempting to reconstruct the lectures Sokei-an gave on the RECORD OF RINZAI translation made by him in the early thirties. Most of these lectures have so many problems in them it will be a long time before they are ready to be presented to the public, but from time to time we come on one that is so clear and delightful we feel to share it with our readers. The following, No. 130 of the series, concerns the period when Rinzai was still with his teacher Obaku (otherwise known as Huang-po). We have not tried to establish correct spellings of names and places. The relationships of persons mentioned is clear enough to make the points of the story. The text is in italics.*

### THE RECORD OF RINZAI, No. 130

*Five hundred monks were abiding in Kinzan. There were a few who inquired of the Master about Zen. The five hundred monks of Kinzan were not studying Zen, but were worshiping Avalokiteshvara, going around an enormous tree in the temple garden, chanting the mantram for Avalokiteshvara (also known as Kannon or Kwannon, that is, stating the reasons for repeating the name of Kannon). The Pure Land idea, from which the repeating of the name of Amida, or Amitabha comes, is quite old. It was during the T'ang Dynasty that the Pure Land school came up to the surface of Chinese Buddhism and the worship of Avalokiteshvara was slowly developed into the worship of Amitabha Buddha. As in every Zen temple in China the monks worshiped Avalokiteshvara besides practicing*

meditation, this practice was carried down to us along with Zen. Of course we do not care about Avalokiteshvara today, but we still (repeat the Kannon sutra in Zen temples. For its translation, see D.T. Suzuki's MANUAL OF BUDDHISM, pp. 30-38, paperback edition).

*There were a few monks who inquired of the Master about Zen. So the Master wrote to Obaku. Receiving the letter, Obaku ordered Rinzai to go there. He said: "What will you do when you get there?" Obaku is testing Rinzai. His question is very simple but very sharp.*

Rinzai replied: "When I arrive there I shall naturally know what to do." This is the same as if you would say to someone sending you on an errand: "I'll know what to do when I get there." This is the attitude of the Zen Buddhist. We do not make any preparation or preliminary plan. We do not keep such unnecessary furniture in our minds. We have the essential faculty to judge anything the moment we come to it. This is our so-called purposeless purpose. Rinzai did not say: "Well, Master, when I go there I will say so-and-so. If Kinzan says such-and-such, then I will say thus-and-so." Rinzai did not make such a useless plan. He went there with no preconceived idea. We call this dialectics. We just observe the conditions as we come to them and decide.

There is a story about this we tell in Japan.

A young novice, that is, a boy between ten and thirteen years old, was always sweeping the street in the temple district. There were temples on both sides of the street for about eight blocks, so it was known as Temple Street. It was the duty of the novice to sweep in front of his temple every



## THE JAPANESE RELIGIOUS SENSE

By Mary Farkas

Continuing my look into the stuff of Japanese Zen Buddhism, I return to Inazo Nitobe's *JAPAN* (Ernest Benn, Ltd., London, 1931), for a characterization of Japanese religiosity in general.

"Japan's religiosity, in the sense of religion as an institution, can be gauged by the statistics of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, or by the millions whose names are inscribed in the register of different monasteries, according to the old law which required every man, woman and child to be affiliated with some Buddhist sect, and whoever was not so registered was charged with the heresy of "Kirishitan" (Christian). It is obvious that statistics of temples, and of nominal adherents are no reliable index of religious sincerity, and without sincerity there can be no religion rightly so called.

"In a recent essay of Professor J.S. Huxley's, he says that the belief in superhuman beings is not an essential or integral part of the religious way of life; but he makes reverence the exclusive criterion of faith. Such a definition of religion approaches the popular notion in this country -- that even the head of a sardine is good enough and sufficiently efficacious as a deity if it is believed in with due sincerity and reverence. As far as the Japanese are concerned, they do not suffer from the lack of objects to worship. The eight hundred myriad divinities that fill the pantheon of the Yamato race include every single object in Nature and every article of man's handiwork.

"But whence this astounding polytheism? And whence this multiple reverence? The sentiment commonly designated reverence is more than a merely subjective attitude to the outside world. It implies fear, dread, awe -- as well as faith and trust in things and men other than self. Especially true is this of a people as extro-

vertive as the Japanese. They are extremely sensitive to their environment, natural or human. Their herd instinct is so highly developed that their individuality is absorbed in the things around them. Their sympathies go forth to such a degree as to impart their own life to their immediate surroundings. A Shinto priest was once asked how he could seriously elevate a sword, a mirror, a piece of stone, an old cap or the like, to a position of god-head. Said he, 'Anything that has served a man's use, especially when he treasured or liked it, partakes of his spirit; for love is life and power.' We use an implement or other object, and our virtue goes out into it while its virtue steals into us unawares.

"The constraint and mutual inflow of power and life should form the basis of all religions. Emperor Meiji defined faith as the communion of man's spirit with that of the Invisible God. Religion may indeed be defined in the words of Evelyn Underhill as a 'man's response to the call of Supernatural Reality.' In the impersonal mentality of the Japanese, the flowing in and the flowing out of spiritual forces are not always distinguished. He may feel, but he does not analyze. To him the divine and the human are one in character and quality. Only the latter is temporary, the former enduring. The everlasting divinity is called human during the time it resides on this planet. The instant it is liberated from its ephemeral tenement

of flesh it is divine again. *Kannagara* is a term difficult of translation, *kan* from *kami*, and *nagara*, 'as it is.' Perhaps the translation 'man himself divine' may convey some idea of the indigenous belief. Possessed of 'the seed,' to borrow from George Fox's phraseology, the soul, when it places itself in the right surroundings, germinates, grows and thrives. Did we grow to the same stature as George Fox? Decidedly not; and for the reason that we are extroverts by nature, and looking outward too much for the revelation of the Kami, get entangled in the company of the eight hundred myriad gods. Thus, what was primarily meant for a pantheon was turned into a henotheistic labyrinth.

"Nevertheless, it must be admitted that we have started upon the right track in search of spiritual reality--whatever that may be. We look for higher beings, for life beyond, for clean and undefiled living below. How much more should we ask of religion as usually understood? And if our people have not got a higher conception of religious faith who have? Deep down in the inner region of our being, known among psychologists as the primary consciousness, lurk the energies of mind which may be called fundamental instincts. They are so closely intertwined one with another that when one is aroused the others rise to antagonize or to co-operate. Of such primary powers of mind are our mental reaction to external Nature, our per-

ception of beauty, our wonder and awe. All these combine to feed that mysterious psychic activity known as faith. Religion is not the movement of the soul on a single track. It is a complex of diverse elements, as is seen in the likenesses, if not the identity, of the emotions and sentiments which it evokes with those produced by art. "Holiness" and "beauty" spring from a common source. In the diversion and sublimation of *libido* how often religion and aesthetics play the same role! Art has from time immemorial been called the handmaid of religion. Despite the iconoclasticism of ascetics, an artistic and a religious temperament are closely interwoven at the root. Clutton-Brock has defined religion as an 'apprehension gained less by metaphysical reflection than aesthetic intuition, of Divine Personality as the clue to the creative process of the Universe and the living upholder of a live world.' Even if this definition be incomplete, it is true as far as it goes, and we must admit that a people of strongly developed artistic temperament is religious in a sense little suspected by peoples of a different temperament."

Sokei-an's placement of religion in the *vijnana* scale of the five *skandhas*, though differentiating it from the residence of art (*samskara*) in one sense, in another shows this closeness when he describes *samjna*, *samskara*, and *vijnana* as "one piece." The following analysis is taken from a 1941 lecture.

So-called religion must reside somewhere in this scale of consciousness (the five *skandhas*). When you understand where, you will understand the nature of religion. So-called religion, as you see, builds magnificent cathedrals, depicts the story of heaven on their walls as fresco paintings, has singing choirs and vibrating pipe-organs. Monks appear in their robes and chant their incantations. They talk about this and they talk about that. They explain God theologically, talking about sin and hell and atonement--all kinds of things. They entirely forget what religion is. If religion can be paintings, philosophy, singing, statuary, what then is religion? Well, I think it is very plain what religion is and where religion resides. Let me talk a little about this.

First, like primitive people, we observe the outside. We live in *rupa*. Our body and the outside give our soul a residence to live in. We build buildings of architectural beauty and make gardens with flowers like mosaics to please our eyes.

Then we come to *samjna*. We don't need to talk of *vedana* because without *vedana* we cannot see the outside. *Rupa* and *vedana* are one--like the front and back of a handkerchief--we cannot separate them. Or, like a hand--*rupa* is one side, *vedana* the other. *Samjna*, *samskara* and *vijnana* are also one piece. Like a box of incense--the top and the box make one piece. *Rupa* and

vedana, a pair, make one, and the second three elements, samjna, samskara, and vijnana, make the other. In samjna all our reasoning faculties can be counted in: mathematics, logic, sometimes literature, philosophy, and theology--all constructive thinking belongs to samjna.

And samskara--this is a very difficult field. All art and poetry belong to samskara. According to the poem:

Someone asked me, "Why do you live in the mountains?"

I gave no answer, but I was smiling.

Peach blossoms flow down the stream three thousand miles.

There is a world nobody knows.

There is no reasoning here. This is poetry. It doesn't belong to logic, to the mind, or to the eye. It belongs to samskara; it is the production of samskara. All oriental paintings and poetry belong to samskara. A Zen monk is sitting on the corner of a rock watching a cascade tumbling down. His samskara jumps out of his mind, and with water and ink he puts it on the space of the canvas. All Japanese seventeen syllable poetry is the product of samskara, in English, 'mood'. You say it is a motif only, with no explanation. In samskara there is no counting, no reasoning. It is lightning-like intuition. In one moment you grasp it and the many rich qualities within it.

Now we come to vijnana. Vijnana has no word. You cannot call it feeling. If you invent some word to express it, the only word is faith. When the Sixth Patriarch was being pursued by the monks, he placed the bowl and the robe on a rock. Myojoza tried to grasp them, but they were heavy as a mountain and could not be moved. The Sixth Patriarch said to him, "Faith cannot be carried by force." That "faith" is a good word. It is not necessary to believe anything, it is not necessary to have faith in God or in the Devil, but there is something in the human mind which is the pivot of all consciousness, and we base all our attitudes upon it.

There is something in human beings which is grand, penetrating, pure, and sacred. It is not tinted by any color; it has no particle of sound, no taste. It is like air. We feel it. It is vijnana. Vijnana is the residence of our religion.

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morning. Sometimes the Zen master of the temple at the end of the street would pass through as he was sweeping. The novice felt that he ought to take advantage of this opportunity to ask the master some question, but he could not think of any, so he asked his own master what question to ask. His master said: "Why don't you ask him, 'Where are you going?'" This kind of question in Zen is never simply "Where are you going" or "Where did you come from" but is a very deep question. The master told the novice to seize the passing master's sleeve and observe how he answered.

One morning about six o'clock, as the novice was sweeping the street as usual, the Zen master from the end of the street appeared. The novice seized his sleeve and asked: "Where are you going?"

The Zen master replied: "I go at the mercy of the wind."

The novice could not utter another word. He came back to his own master and told what had been said, then asked: "What can I say to him now?"

His master said: "Well, that wind he goes at the mercy of is no good. You must get rid of that wind. Next time ask him: 'If there is no wind, what will you do?'"

There is a saying, "Nature will take care of it." That is the same thing as this. But if Nature doesn't take care of you, what will you do? If there is a typhoon or earthquake, Nature will not take care of you. "If there is no wind, what will you do?"

The novice said, "All right" and went back to work, but although he swept the street every morning as before, he never saw the master from the

end of the street again.

About a month later, another Zen master came by as the novice was sweeping in the morning. The novice thought, "Oh, what a wonderful opportunity. I'll ask him the questions."

So he asked the Zen master: "Where are you going?"

The Zen master said: "I am going to a funeral service."

The boy was quick with his second question: "If there is no wind, what will you do?"

The master said: "I don't need any wind for a funeral service."

This is like a story that was told of a Japanese who came to see President Taft, having first studied hard to make answers in English to three hundred questions that President Taft might ask him. But when he came to the White House, President Taft didn't ask him any of the three hundred questions, so he couldn't say a word.

Rinzai's attitude was different. "When I arrive there I shall naturally know what to do."

When Rinzai arrived at Kinzan, he came up into the *hatto*. The *hatto* is in the center of the temple grounds. Usually it has a paved floor and is raised off the ground.

*Without divesting himself of his traveling garb:* The Zen monk puts on a very big umbrella hat made of weeds which half covers his back. His sandals are straw and he carries his *kesa* (apron-like vestment) in a knapsack which he fastens around his waist. Rinzai came up into the *hatto* in his sandals, holding his hat in his hand, and looked at the Master of Kinzan sitting on his chair. He came up unexpectedly and looked at the Master.

When the Master raised his head Rinzai gave a HO! Before the Master could utter a word, Rinzai went out, sweeping his sleeves behind him. He turned his back upon the Master and went out. The distance from Obaku to Kinzan is about that from Chicago to St. Louis. Rinzai came to Kinzan just for this--to come up into the hatto, look, and HO! A strange Zen discourse.

After Rinzai went out, one of the monks asked: "Why did that monk give you a HO? What thoughts were in his mind?" It would have been a disgrace for a Zen monk to ask such a question after Rinzai had left. We call this "the medicine bottle after the coffin." It was like offering medicine after the patient has died, or like making a rope after the thief is gone.

Why did that monk give you a HO! What thoughts were in his mind? Do you know what thoughts were in Rinzai's mind? If Rinzai had any thoughts in his mind he would not have come from Obaku to Kinzan. This Kinzan was not a bad Zen master--but he was timid.

The Master said: "That one came from Obaku's group. If you have a desire to know what was in his mind, you had better ask him." The Master's answer was good. But if anyone were to ask Rinzai what thoughts were in his mind, he'd better stuff cotton in his ears first.

More than half of the five hundred monks dispersed. They went to Obaku. So Kinzan's temple was emptied. This was Zen in the time of the T'ang Dynasty. No lecture--no discourse--Rinzai came, said HO and turned on his heel before five hundred monks.

I hope such a time will come again. We do not need words. If you talk about truth there is no truth.

## DIAMOND SPACE

Laotzu is a very familiar name to those who have studied Oriental culture. He was the original teacher of the Tao in China. His name means old boy. He is said to have been born at the age of seventy--to have been in his mother's bosom for seventy years--quite a long time! Of course this is just a religious expression, meaning one who stays in his material body without yet having opened the spiritual eye to see the world beyond matter. When the time comes, you are brought forth into the world that is purely spiritual. I stayed in my mother's bosom for forty-six years.

First, we are brought into the animal body. We come out from the gate of the animal. We stay in this unenlightened condition for a while, and then we are conceived in the bosom of a purified being--a deva, in Sanskrit. Through the gate of the eyes we are conceived in the bosom of a purified being. Our body is not ourselves, but just a utensil. There is no visible being in this utensil. Man and woman, as spiritual beings, are exactly the same--only the utensils are different; the substance of steam is the same whether it be in a fast locomotive or a slow-moving street roller. The same spiritual condition is in the various forms of animals. It is not necessary to see the self with the eyes, you know the self that is abstracted from the body. So these spiritual beings are a little while in the body which comes from the mother of the earth, pass through the gate of the eyes and are conceived in a different sphere. You think that all experience--all that you have studied and heard--and kept in memory is one sort of condition, but we know religiously that these memories are not registered in the brain, but in infinite space. Like radio waves, they are sent out and registered in infinite space where they will stay forever. If you are finely tuned, you can recall these vibrations at any time. As on television, we picture the face of the Buddha and see his attitude in giving his teaching. When the time comes, there is no past or present--all that we have done is understood and we can recall all impressions as we wish. If your mental condition comes to the same point as that when a certain thing was radiated out into space, you will receive it again. It is spaceless and timeless in your brain. We call this Vajradhatu, Diamond Space.

*Journal*

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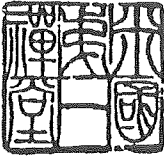
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