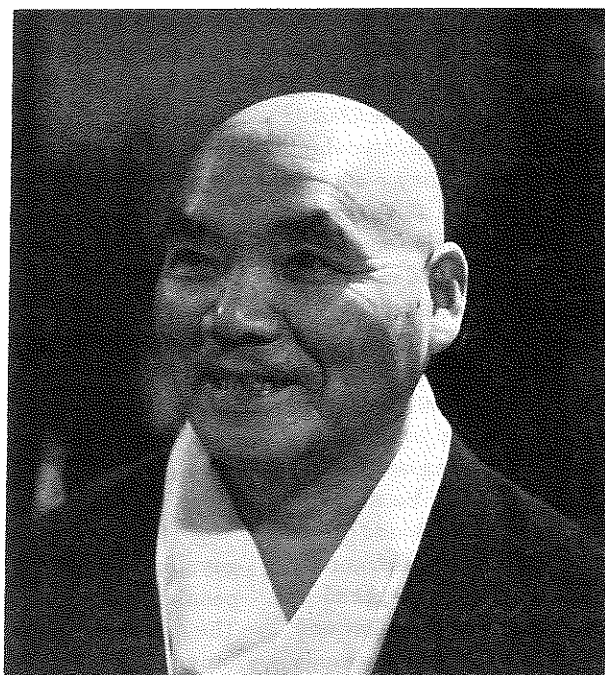


ZEN NOTES



“It will be twenty-one years I have
been here July 21st.”

Joshu Sasaki Roshi

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS

Noted by Mary Farkas

Zen Shugyo: One room, one cup.

In Rinzai's time there were people who became successors without doing much shugyo. Really, that is the way it should be. In Japan you have to have an absolutely fixed framework before you can become a roshi. Everything has to be fitted into it--like a wedge.

America is different--there isn't anything that smells of this kind of Buddhism here. Because of this maybe real Zen could happen.

I couldn't come to the United States without a sponsor. Myoshinji said go to the U.S. They would pay my fare and please go. A man named Robert Harmon and a woman named Weisbart said they would sponsor me, so Myoshinji bought the ticket and gave me \$200. This was like sending me to an island. Of course the U.S. is not an island, it's a mainland much bigger than Japan. But to me it seemed like being sent to an island. I was too noisy so they would send me to an island. I didn't even speak English. But I figured that was OK, as long as I get to go, so I put the \$200 in my pocket and came here.

Of course I had a reason. I was tired of Japanese Zen. I wanted to be able to teach the Zen I had done shugyo with and spread it. So I thought that this was lucky for me and I came.

All Zen in Japan is in a fixed form. If you can pass several hundred koans you can become a roshi. When that's the case it's no different

from being a professor in a school.

But koans don't really matter. You have to understand the function that forms the universe. Without that you can't really become a roshi.

I was the abbot of a temple called Shoju-an. It was at this temple that Hakuin became a successor. A very famous temple, but the most impoverished in Japan. That's why I had no money and couldn't come to the U.S. on my own. Myoshinji gave me the ticket to come. I came. Great. But my lunch money was only \$200. Everybody was surprised. I put my little Japanese-English dictionary in my left pocket and my English-Japanese in the right. Now that I think about it, it was quite nervy.

If I say to you American people, are you going to compensate me, indemnify me for the stains all over my whole face, what do you say? It will be twenty years I have been here July 21st. Maybe I should say "Sayonara."

Anyway, I thought, twenty years ago, Shoju-an was impoverished. I was eating goat's food.

My sponsor borrowed a house, gave one blanket, one tatami. Some people wondered how the abbot ate. They came to give food and a gas stove for cooking. I could light it with a match. In Japan I had been burning firewood and got my hands all black with charcoal. So I was leading an advanced life here, I thought. But when I slept at night, the floor was hard, my back ached and even in California it got cold. In the middle of the night I took out all my clothes and put them on top of me and slept.

As I was doing this shugyo here, as it happened with Fuke in Rinzai's time, an elderly woman came to save me. This was the niece of the abbot who was here before me. She was thirteen years older than I. Women are kind. She said to me, "You don't have a mattress, you need more blankets." So she brought a mattress and blankets I became like a human being.

From Myoshinji a letter had come to the people here that said, "For Zen shugyo, you need only one room, one cup." My American sponsors read this. So that's what they gave. Americans are very honest. When people came, I said I needed nothing. They were very honest, so they didn't give me anything, didn't even leave one dollar.

When I said, "Hey, I'm alive too," people began donating to me. I learned from this.

Now everything is very expensive in America. When Americans come to my place to practice these days, they say it is expensive. But it is only natural to have to pay a lot.

From this, perhaps you can understand what kind of person does shugyo and what kind helps.

SILENCE by John Storm

Silence accumulates, like snow. There are wild places in the mountains where the aggregate of noise over the years is so small that a train whistle is swallowed up almost at once and a human voice hardly registers at all.

Not long ago we were snowed in by a spring blizzard in the Canadian Rockies. The place where we were staying had no telephone or television. The only radio was an emergency hookup to the Mounties crackling inside the front door.

Some five feet of snow had built up over the winter; but the new snow was coming down gently enough. Nothing to be wary of, even for city folk like ourselves. So we borrowed snowshoes and tramped around in it for a while.

The late afternoon sky was white; the spruce trees were black and silver; the mountains were a whole spectrum of grays, blues, and purples, and all around us there was this spectacular silence, this solid block of silence.

It was very beautiful, the kind of country that puts you in your proper place; which is to say: nowhere.

The city can be quiet, too, of course (waiting for a subway in Brooklyn, alone, late at night, on a weekend, for example) but it's not the same thing. The city is another kind of wilderness.

NEW TO ZEN NOTES?

RENEW ZEN NOTES?

If you received a renew notice with this issue and would like to receive ZEN NOTES for the year starting here, please send US \$3 if living in the US, US \$ 4 if living outside, with your name and address (be sure to include ZIP), to The First Zen Institute of America, Inc., 113 E. 30th St., New York, NY 10016.

SATYAN
NĀSTI
PARO
DHARMA

BUDDHISM IN ENGLAND.

VOL. 4.
No. 1.

MAY, 1929. C. E.

Zen Buddhism in New York.

We have just heard from a pupil of the Rev. Sokei-Ann Sasaki, a Zen master now resident in New York, concerning his master's work. "He is living very quietly, and making no great effort to gather students. He lectures at the Nippon Club twice a month, but he regards lecturing as of very little importance. He prefers to bide his time, study industriously, and await natural developments. This Zen teaching is, as you know, a very slow-moving force, very quiet, natural, and infinitely patient. It can be explosive enough when you get in voluntary contact with it, but it never rushes about and never pursues. It reminds me of a glacier. It is indeed a powerful polarity to the haste and nervous excitement of this generation. Consequently its influence will only be gradually felt, but it will inevitably be effective in the end."

BUDDHISM IN America.

DECEMBER, 1929.

Mr. George S. Varey.

I thank each one of you for coming to the opening of this new Lodge to-night.

It has been the custom for the pulpits of

every religious denomination of the individual, to bro thinking and acting like one regardless of how alien the individual concerned. about freedom in religious we have any freedom in real played a large part in the re goer, and this has come abo teachers have tried to mo own particular way of th comes to the world to neut the priest-craft prevailing. Buddha did in priest-ridden.

Now, this Lodge of Budd ing to-night is offering to t the Buddhism pure and sim the Way to enlightenment, p

The Western world is sid misunderstanding. What it tion of Buddhism to the nat it can influence the nation nearer home—with you and I are called upon to-night in the West—pioneers for o his Teaching.

We have here a beautif to our noble religion, but ter built with bricks and stor nobler temples built of the and loving hearts. What towards the building of suc numbers in Great Britain. America, are ready for, are ings of the Noble Tathagata. to help in the formation of a light in New York City?

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I am quite sure that the application of Buddhism to our daily lives will make us happier men and women, better and more faithful husbands and wives, better employers and employees, and better American citizens of our great Commonwealth. Buddhism is the religion of the elimination of sorrow, the religion which creates happiness, real happiness; the religion of kindness; kindness to our fellow-men and to the lower forms of life—the animals.

The motto of the world to-day is "Safety First." Buddhism has always taught "Love and Kindness First"—and to every living thing.

There is nothing mysterious in Buddhism, nothing pertaining to vulgarity, and there is no compulsion. No one is going to bind your will to any *ism*. Buddhism—the Buddha Dharma—like the Buddha, only *points the way*, and you are free to accept only as much as your brain and heart can assimilate. When you have digested that, you will come back for more. It neither demands nor commands, but takes the pupil gently by the hand and leads him to the light of understanding and wisdom.

And Buddhism not only teaches you how to live an ethical life, but it teaches you how to die, and furnishes you with sufficient culture, confidence and certainty to take the sting out of death.

A programme along similar lines was carried out each evening at 8.30, culminating in a final service and the "taking of Pansil." At this "Pansil" service—the first ever held in New York City—we were favoured with the attendance of a number of Eastern people—representatives of the Nippon Cultural Club, the Nippon Club, and others. Two Japanese priests were also present, and officiated. Seated in the Gold Throne was our guest of honour, the Rev. Ernest Hunt (Bhikkhu Shinkaku), and at the right of the Shrine was the Right Rev. Sasaki, who was priest at the oldest temple in Japan. Mr. Iwani, of New York, also participated.

The President of the Lodge made the opening speech, the Rev. Sasaki read the Gospel, and the Rev. Ernest Hunt gave a very able address to the candidates on "Brotherhood," taking as his text the Gospel read by Rev. Sasaki. All then repaired to the Library, where refreshments were served, and a very interesting question period followed.

INSIDE THE FZI, XI A House and a Chair

While financial New York crashed to its knees on Black Thursday (Oct. 24) after a frantic dash up to its peak of ill-founded enthusiasm, Sokei-an was quietly carrying on his efforts to bring Zen to America. As nothing emerged in the way of New York records for this bad (1929), year, I looked to London for a report of his activities. (A photostatic copy of what I found in Edna Kenton's research material appears on the centerfold pages.)

At the end of the year, in a rented room in a house under the El on West 53rd Street, Sokei-an was "biding his time," supporting himself by repairing small art objects for a Mr. Farmer, who had a shop, probably on 55th Street.

Mr. Mataichi Miya, connoisseur of ancient Chinese art, and a buyer for Yamanaka Company, returning (sometime in December) from an extended business trip in the Orient, for the second time "discovered" him and, with a donation of \$500, no strings attached, enabled him to open his "small hermitage" at 63 W. 70th Street, first floor front. This "house" was to be "the temple" to Sokei-an's students throughout the thirties. February 15th, 1930, was the formal opening (also the day Sokei-an chose to celebrate his birthday, though it was actually March 10th. He would have been 100 this year!)

February 1st was the date of the Con Ed turn-on of gas and electricity. Monthly rent paid to Ada Myers, the landlady, (with a two-week concession) beginning Feb-

ruary 15th, was \$75. Installation of a telephone plus February calls in advance was \$7.75. Wiring for the altar light was \$9. \$12.50 was put out for 500 letterheads and envelopes. Sessue Hayakawa, the actor (*The Bridge over the River Kwai*), gave a bed and a Chinese rug (still in use). Other furniture was supplied by the Cahn's. Cleaning brought the total expenditures for the month to \$114.25.

Two contributors gave \$50 each that month for the temple fund, Mr. K. Tanaka of Yamanaka Company and Mr. S. Yamada. For current expenses, Dr. Goddard made a contribution of \$25, not to be repeated. Two contributions of \$12 each, three of \$5, three of \$3 and one of \$1 plus, from a Mr. Jokoh, \$10 and \$35 from Sokei-an to carry to March 15th made a grand total of \$731. Iwami and Audrey Kepner were among the \$5 contributors, Robert Sanborn among the \$3.

The Ryomo Zen Buddhism Institute, American Branch, had begun to function. Of this beginning Sokei-an said (1936): "So I began! I did not have all these chairs* then...the house was the important thing; I had a house and one chair...and I had an altar and a pebblestone.

"I just came in here and took off my hat and sat down on the chair and began to speak Buddhism. That is all!" *(Actually, \$22 worth of chairs were bought in November, but it doesn't say how many.)

February income was the high point of the year, from which an immediate descent occurred. By April, single digit contributions (five of \$5, three of \$3) were the rule, except for Sokei-an himself, whose monthly contribution continued in the two-

digit class, \$35, \$25, \$30, most often \$30. It was of this period that Sokeian said in 1937: "When I first came here I spoke to a very small audience. The smallest was two..." Edna Kenton noted: "Osho vowed if it happened again he would put on his umbrella hat and his straw sandals and go back to Japan. Again, the next night, only two. 'This is my last lecture,' said Osho to himself, as he began. Then the door opened and two people from Brooklyn--a very rainy night--came in--Mr. and Mrs. Treadwell. So I stayed on." At another time, he said, adding to this account, "I did not speak anything to any member of my temple--had just one month's rent in the bank and not many people at my lectures. Today I see sixteen people. Then six people was a crowd, and I would say, 'Today was very successful.' I was holding the edge of a hair. 'One month more; then I go elsewhere.' I did not talk about it, it was a predicament. If, in a predicament, we speak about it and make a disturbance, it will hinder the natural development."

1930 ended with \$271.50 cash on hand.

BOOKS NOTED by Haskel

A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters, Translated by Soiku Shigematsu; fore word by Gary Snyder. Weatherhill, Tokyo, 1981, 178 pages, \$19.95. Hardcover.

From the Country of Eight Islands: An Anthology of Japanese Poetry, Edited and translated by Hiroaki Sato and Burton Watson. Anchor Books, New York, 1981. 652 pages, \$9.95. Paper.

An interesting aspect of the development of koan Zen was the use of *jakugo*, or *agyo*, phrases of varying length with which the teacher or student expressed the gist of a particular case. The *jakugo*, sometimes referred to as "capping phrases", were drawn from a variety of Chinese sources, ranging from classical poetry and popular sayings to the records of the Zen Masters. *Jakugo* played a key role in Japanese Zen, both Rinzaï and Soto, during the Muromachi period (1336-1573) and eventually came to be regarded as "answers" to the koans, with each teaching line developing secret oral transmissions of which *jakugo* corresponded to particular cases from the *Mumonkan*, *Hekigan roku* and *Rinzaï roku*. The records of these secret transmissions are generally known as *missan roku* and were jealously guarded by their owners. After the Muromachi period, the *missan* system gradually disappeared, but the *jakugo* themselves remained important in the revival of koan zen by Hakuin and his heirs, and Rinzaï Zen masters in Japan today still test a student's understanding of a particular koan by having him select a suitable *jakugo* from one of the many collections. Their particular history aside, the phrases themselves are often fascinating, combining natural imagery, folk wisdom, myth, paradox and even love lyrics. In *A Zen Forest*, a handsome volume from Weatherhill, Soiku Shigematsu, a Zen priest and teacher of English in Japan, has translated a wide range of *jakugo* drawn from various anthologies. The phrases make fascinating read-

ing, and Weatherhill is to be particularly commended for including with the English translations the original Chinese characters themselves and the traditional readings of the *jakugo* in classical Japanese. Also recommended is *From the Country of Eight Islands*, a new volume of Japanese poetry translated by Burton Watson and Hiroaki Sato. This is a sizable paperback edition which includes examples of Japanese poetry from the seventh century to the present. Among other features, there is an unusual and extensive selection of haiku by Basho, Issa and others, several verses by the fifteenth century Zen Master Ikkyu, a Noh play and a series of poems by the Soto priest-poet Ryokan.

CONVERSATIONS WITH FARKAS
Noted by Hackney

Those who have fallen into the way of the preta, the hungry ghost, are always whining and screaming for something they feel they are missing and ought to have been given. Or something they think they ought to do but can't. But when what they say they want is offered them it appears no good. Their caresses turn into bites or pinches. If they are offered a present they are insulted or suspicious.

Consumed with resentment for those who have more power than he, the preta battles against following what Sokei-an called Nature's order. Resenting IT, he

complains, "IT's not fair...IT's against me...I won't be IT's puppet...I'm not going to do what IT wants me to..."

The preta has only one word in its vocabulary. It is "no." Where one's natural self would press forward, seize an opportunity, this one draws back, hesitates, says "not now."

Such people may continue to do battle with the "universe" for years...you can see them on the street arguing with invisible enemies. In a Japanese movie, one was shown throwing rocks at the sky. We all know them.

Who are the ones they blame for not giving them what they crave? It's your fault, they tell you. Or his. Or hers. God's. Or the President's. Someone is to blame. Mostly, it's mommy and daddy who are the actual targets of their raging. For it is an infant's raging. Saying its little "no" against greater powers. Having discovered the only power the individual has to oppose a greater power, the finger in the dyke, the friction that is a brake, individuality, resistance, he refuses to take anyone's order, especially his own. Instead of getting "with" IT, he drags back, won't be hurried. If he hears nature's call, he holds back, not yet. If someone says "Giddap," he shrinks back, may even lie down.

At two and a half, he learned the power of "no." He is like a little puppy on a leash. He's going along, but protesting every inch, dragged on his little behind.

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