

ZEN NOTES



Twilight Zendo

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

FORTY-SECOND LECTURE

Saturday, May 14th, 1939

"There will be no truth for you to attain if you entertain your mind with vain imagination.

O Obedient One! With your false and floating mind you may see many devices; by that mind, however, you cannot attain the device to attain Perfect Awakening. If you observed the Dharma in your way of discerning and asked me this question, it would not be the right question."

Then the Lokanatha, desiring to reaffirm what he had said, recited the following gatha:

"O Vajra-garbha!

You must know that in the nature of the Tathagata's Nirvana

There is never any beginning nor any end.

If you ponder this with your transmigrating mind,

Your thoughts will travel in a circle

And there will be no end to transmigration.

Thus you can never enter the Ocean of Buddha's Nirvana!"

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The last passage on which I gave a commentary last Saturday evening was this: *"If you attempt to attain the state of Buddha by reasoning, it would be as though you waited for the flowers of the sky to bear fruit in the sky!"*... (I shall continue)

"There will be no truth for you to attain if you entertain your mind with vain imagination." Buddhism was explained by means of philosophy through many thousand years, and this philosophical part of Buddhism is sometimes rendered into mythology, legend; and that part was always translated into the Western countries. But the real form, coming from the real state of Buddhism, has never been translated for the Western world!

This Sutra of Perfect Awakening is one of the texts which gives you a view of Buddhism by itself, without explanation by means of philosophy or allegory. I selected this sutra to translate about a year ago, and have been giving a commentary on it every Saturday evening.

Reasoning is like a ferry-boat by which you start to the other shore by philosophy you reach somewhere but this is not the destination to which you are going! Therefore, you must not remain in this philosophy for "*There will be no truth for you to attain if you entertain your mind with vain imagination.*" In Buddhism, the truth is very near! We do not use philosophy to point it out.

When you sit down on your cushion you must at that moment become aware of your mind which is bright as light if it does not contain any thoughts. Thoughts consist of images from the outside, words which you have learned, associations, etc.; we call it "mind-stuff." You pad your mind with this mind-stuff!

I tell you that MIND, without this padding, is pure like pure water. This is the intrinsic mind; it is not created by you or by your parents; it is the long-living mind.

When you die this mind-stuff will be destroyed as well as your physical body, which consists of the four great elements: earth, air, fire, water. But the essential mind exists forever! The essential mind is this mind. So, when you sit down to meditate upon your own mind with the mind, this is the eternal mind the eternal aspect is demonstrated here. This is the foundation of Buddhism.

When you disappear your physical body will become ashes, your mind-padding will be wiped out and scattered in the mental space. In Buddhism, that mental space has a particular name, "Madhyama Skandha" or "Madhyama Bhava." It is mind itself, existing without matter. The human mind does not exist in this material world, it exists in mental space! When we meditate, we find this mental space. Your mind, without the material body and the semi-material body, exists forever. In Buddhism, we call this existence, "non-existence."

In the state of non-existence, there is no fluctuation of mind, no mind-stuff. It contains no physical existence. This is the state of the intrinsic mind. It is not necessary to wait for death. You can know it at this moment.

When you are busy in your routine existence -must write a letter, must count money, must invite a guest-your mind is confused; you have many paddings on your pillow. But when you meditate upon your mind by the mind, it becomes calm, transparent. Of course this does not happen at the beginning of meditation practice, but, day by day, according to your endeavor, the mind will become transparent. You forget your own existence but you will see it through this transparent mind, and realize that you yourself are the universe. (I am using the word "mind" temporarily. It means "consciousness.")

"O Obedient One! With your false and floating mind you may see many devices; by that mind, however, you cannot attain the device to attain Perfect Awakening." The Buddha is addressing Vajra-garbha. "False" attitude of mind is one which, at that moment, is prompted by some idea or emotion. Such a samskara mind cannot be true. You cannot attain anything with that false mind! A "floating mind" is one which has no particular center, no concentration; it is like a merry-go-round.

In the beginning nothing was in the sky; then it filled up with ether. We really don't know what ether is, but we call it "energy." When ether is concentrated in one state, it produces heat, and heat produces energy. So ether and energy are two different states. The energy circles and slowly gathers etheric matter, which produces gas, bursts into space, produces nebulae; the nebulae circles, etc., etc. For many years, this has been thought to be the beginning of the solar system. But such systems of thought never go back to the "original mind."

Just so, you will find many devices but you will not find the original state. For this, you must stop thinking and meditate.

By the "floating mind," you can never attain Perfect Awakening. The device to attain it is the concentrated mind. So, the floating mind and the concentrated mind are two different states of mind. The meditation which we practice is to cultivate this concentrated state of mind. It is as you develop your muscles by concentration, dashing your body against a sand-bag. With that force of concentration, you must carry on your daily life!

"If you observed the Dharma in your way of discerning and asked me this question, it would not be the right question." This Vajra-garbha Bodhisattva had already asked the Buddha a question. I shall read it once more: *"If all sentient beings have attained Buddha-hood originally, why is there darkness within the sentient mind? If darkness were the original state of sentient mind, how could it have been said by the Tathagata that all sentient beings had originally completed Buddha-dharma, yet that the minds of sentient beings were later occupied by darkness?"* This was the question, and the Buddha answered: *"Everything has this quality of Perfect Awakening. It is the original state of mind. This Perfect Enlightenment is the state of the universe. It is eternal and omnipresent."*

This is the great theory of Buddhism. Everyone learns it when entering Buddhism. Then you think; "Well, when did this darkness come? From whence? Why did this dark, deluded mind begin?"

This is a very plain question, to which the Buddha answered;

"Your idea of darkness and light is wrong. Perfect Awakening is always existing and your deluded mind is your own imagination. The moon is always in the sky; clouds cover it, but when they shift the moon appears. So, afflictions cover your mind, but when your afflictions of the imagination disappear your awakening appears." It is like cleaning the filth off a mirror. You clean off the filth by meditation and the bright mirror appears. So, in the Buddha's ideology, the deluded mind is only the veneer on the mirror, while Vajra-garbha thought the perfectly awakened mind and the deluded mind were different.

But how to clean the mirror? By meditation. And with this concentration you carry on your daily life. So the question is wrong if the ideology is wrong!

Then the Lokanatha, desiring to reaffirm what he said, recited the following gatha: "O Vajra-garbha! You must know that in the nature of the Tathagata's Nirvana, there is never any beginning nor any end." "Buddha's Nirvana" means that the Buddha disappeared in his own mind, and that mind disappeared in the universe; and the consciousness of the universe became conscious of its own existence. This is Nirvana.

Anyone who opens a book on Buddhism will see the word "Nirvana." What is Nirvana? Everyone believes that it means "extinction", that it is the state of annihilation. But you have to find this Nirvana. You meditate upon it and your own mind will be absorbed in the universal mind and the universal mind will become aware of its own existence. This is the state of Nirvana, the Buddha's Nirvana.

And then from this Ocean of Nirvana you become aware of your own existence and of your physical body. You return to this present mind. After all, this present mind and the state of Nirvana are just one mind.

When I was a novice, I asked a question of my teacher: "Is Nirvana and sleeping the same or different?" In sleeping, you forget your own existence, go back to the bosom of nature. Nature uses your body for breathing and your individual mind is completely wiped out; subjectively you do not exist.

My teacher said, "You must find out for yourself!" He did not teach me anything. In the Zen school we must find out things for ourselves. We must concentrate into the center. No, it is not a sleeping state by which we reach the Ocean of Nirvana! My individual existence must come into the center of my wisdom.

"If you ponder this with your transmigrating mind, your

thoughts will travel in a circle and there will be no end to transmigration." -If you don't go straight back to the Ocean of Nirvana-to the state before there was this "floating Mind", you will never reach it. *"Thus you can never enter the ocean of Buddha's Nirvana."* Thinking thus, (posed as Rodin's "Thinker") you will never know Nirvana!

The Srimala Sutra **("The Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala.")**

Translated with Introduction by Alex and Hideko Wayman. Columbia University Press. Reprinted by Motilal Banarsidas Delhi, 1990.

Reviewed by Ian Chandler

In the dramatic setting of the Srimala Sutra, King Prasenajit has just been routed in battle by Ajatasattu. He returns to his own kingdom tired and defeated and enters a flower garden, where he is comforted by beautiful Mallika, the garland-maker's daughter. He thereupon decides to marry her and make her queen of Kosala. Mallika gives him a daughter, Queen Srimala, whose name means "Beautiful Garland". Many years later, Queen Srimala grows up and marries King Yasomitra.

At the opening of the sutra, King Prasenajit and Queen Mallika write a letter to Queen Srimala urging her to take up the Buddhist faith. After reading the letter, Queen Srimala implores the Buddha to appear, which he does. In an encapsulated form, the structure of the Sutra mirrors the career of a monk or nun. Queen Srimala starts by making ten great vows to the Buddha:

- 1. To avoid any thoughts of immorality;*
- 2. To avoid any thoughts of disrespect towards gurus;*
- 3. To avoid any thoughts of anger or ill will;*
- 4. To avoid any thoughts of jealousy;*
- 5. To avoid any thoughts of covetousness;*
- 6. To use all her wealth to help the poor;*
- 7. To convert all sentient beings;*
- 8. To liberate all beings from suffering;*
- 9. Not to take sinful persons lightly, but to treat sin seriously;*
- 10. Never to forget the dharma, even in a single thought.*

The Buddha grants her eloquence, and then she launches her discourse, which comprises the bulk of the sutra.

An early sutra, the Srimala Stura was a product of the Mahasamghika sect of Buddhism, from Andhra Pradesh in south India. This brief 54 page sutra influenced the Lankavatara Sutra (which mentions it explicitly), the Awakening of Faith, the Mahayanasutralamkara and the Ratnagotravibhaga.

The Srimala Sutra is perhaps an early feminist writing. There are frequent references to "the good son of the family" and "good daughter of the family". It places women on an equal footing with men, and its heroine, forceful protagonist and principal spokesperson, is a woman. It is one of only a small group of sutras (such as the Vimalakirti Sutra) that mention enlightened laypeople, be they men or women. The Lotus sutra denies the possibility of enlightenment for women, unless they reincarnate as men. Alex Wayman speculates that the *Srimala Sutra* may have been composed to honor some real-life queen or patroness of Buddhism who lived in south India around 100-200 C.E.

This sutra is from the Tathagatagarbha school of Buddhist philosophy. "Tathagatagarbha" is sometimes translated as "suchness" or as the "womb" or "embryo" of the Tathagatas – Alex Wayman uses "embryo" – the wellspring or source from which the Tathagatas are born. The Srimala sutra takes the theory of the Tathagatagarbha as the basis for the Ekayana (the "One Vehicle") – in which all sentient beings arrive at an identical enlightenment. This is in contradistinction to the Prajnaparamita literature, which, as Alex Wayman puts it, promises "...radically different paths and fruits for the Disciples, the Self-Enlightened and the Bodhisattvas." While promoting an identical enlightenment for all, the Srimala sutra discusses at some length the errors of the Arhats and Pratyakabuddhas which are loosely a reference to the Hindu Sadhus and priests living at that time in south India, and sometimes in direct competition with the Buddhists.

The "Lion's Roar" is an expression of the completion of spiritual practice. When Sri Mala—the beautiful garland of flowers—makes its appearance then the practitioner "utters the Lion's Roar," achieves supreme perfect enlightenment, and is able to discourse on the dharma with the eloquence of Queen Srimala.

"Then, as a Tathagata-Arhat-Samyaksambuddha, one gains the unhindered understanding of all natures; is omniscient and all seeing, free from all faults and possessed of all merits; king of the Doctrine and Lord of the Doctrine; and, having gone to the stage which is sovereign over all natures, utters the Lion's roar: 'My births are finished; the pure life fully resorted to; duty is done; there is nothing to be known beyond this.'

What is the beautiful garland of flowers? The beautiful garland refers to the naval center, heart center, throat center, thousand-petalled-lotus, etc. which the meditator experiences in his own consciousness. The Hindus use the term “Chakras,” but the Buddhists handle it differently, using the metaphor of “flowers.” With all due respect to Alex Wayman, he does not mention this in his Introduction, and this is my personal interpretation of the veiled meaning of the sutra.

At the end of the Sutra, Queen Srimala returns to her palace in the city of Ayodhya and converts her husband king Yasomitra to the Great Vehicle. The Buddha levitates off into space and returns to the city of Sravasti. The Queen and King then proceed to convert all the men and women in the kingdom to the Buddhist faith.

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Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse X, Lecture 10

“Do not be deceived, brothers! Have you not a father and a mother? Why should you seek to acquire something more? Turn your gaze deep into your own consciousness. The ancients said, ‘Yajnadatta mislaid his head and could not find it. When he abandoned his desire to seek, he found there was nothing further for him to do.’”

“Good brothers, be yourselves! Do not be pretentious!”

SOKEI-AN:

Last time Lin-chi told his disciples how to be a true Buddhist. He said a real Buddhist seeks Buddhism in himself, not in the sky, under the earth, or in books. It is nowhere but in yourself. But how do you enter?

Shariputra, a disciple of the Buddha, told his disciples that we have six gates (the six senses) through which we enter Buddhism. The five senses go out from the one sense that is the root. With the senses we see color and form, and we hear sound, that is how we know the outside. But if we had no eyes, we could not be sure whether sound is inside or outside. The same with smell, taste, and touch. Of course, it is all in the sense organ, not outside. We cut our finger and say the knife is painful, but the pain is not in the knife. We say this color is red, but color is in the eye and so on with all the senses. The five senses create phenomena in you, not outside. The creator, the Goddess Maya, is in you. The five senses perceive phenomena and the sixth (the root) perceives Reality.

Then what is really existing outside? If we had no senses, what would exist in the universe? There is essential existence that is not color, form, and so forth. We must see this with the one sense. Essential existence is called by many names: reality, noumena, eternal atom, etc. This part of Buddhism is the same as Western philosophy; it is the real ground upon which to build religion. If you do not understand reality, you cannot understand religion. So the entrance of Buddhism is this consciousness within you. Of course, this consciousness is not your self. You must realize that this consciousness and that Reality are not two, but one elemental

existence. You must drop the conception of ego existence. Buddhism is in that which has no name. We cannot say it is inside, for that is merely relative to the outside. Yet, Buddhism is visible and tangible within you. Do not see it in anything outside.

Lin-chi is certainly talking about non-ego. He dislikes the Buddhists of his time who kept themselves above human beings and took a pretentious attitude. So he pulled them down to earth.

“Do not be deceived, brothers! Have you not a father and a mother? Why should you seek to acquire something more?” Lin-chi is saying, haven't you a mother and father from whom you have inherited the source of wisdom and love?

According to Buddhism, the father within you is *avidya*, ignorance, and *trishna*, craving, is your mother (love with attachment is not pure love.) *Avidya*, the father, is the darkness of ignorance when you were in your mother's bosom—we do not know time or space and have no consciousness of self. After birth, you open your eye and use your ear, but you are still sleeping. You see the blue sky with wide-open eyes, yet you are snoring. That is your life. So you must open your inner eye. *Trishna*, desire—smiling, crying, anger—is pursuing you from morning to evening; it is by them that you are destroying yourself.

But in this case, in its primitive sense, Lin-chi is not talking about this kind *avidya*. He is talking about *avidya* as intrinsic wisdom, as the sky-mirror. *Akasha* is the mirror that has consciousness when something is reflected; thus *avidya* becomes nirvana to the enlightened mind. *Trishna* becomes love. The enlightened one creates happiness on earth, the universal love of Maitreya, the *bodhisattva* that will appear in the future. You have this intrinsic wisdom and universal love in yourself.

“Turn your gaze deep into your own consciousness. The ancients said, ‘Yajnadatta mislaid his head and could not find it.’ Yajnadatta was a man who once lived in Shravasti, India. Each morning as he looked into his mirror, he saw a beautiful man and was enchanted with his own reflection. But one morning he couldn't find his image, nothing was reflected in his mirror. He was so distressed, he ran out crying, “I lost my head! I lost my head! Please help me find it!” Of course, he did not know he was looking at the back of the mirror. This is an allegory for consciousness seeking consciousness, something like looking in the encyclopedia for yourself or searching the sky for nirvana. Truth-itself is undemonstrable, cannot be proved by something else. The logical function of the brain can identify truth, but truth is undemonstrable. So if you try to find your own consciousness by using the mind, you are like the one in the story. You need not

laugh, for some do this today. When the Second Patriarch met Bodhidharma, Bodhidharma asked him what he was seeking. The Second Patriarch said, “My soul is not emancipated.” “Oh,” said Bodhidharma, “Where is your soul? Let me see it!” In that moment the Second Patriarch was emancipated.¹

“When he abandoned his desire to seek, he found there was nothing further for him to do.” That is, you come back home and meet your own father and mother.

“Good brothers, be yourselves! Do not be pretentious!” This is very good; ordinary everyday life is more valuable than anything else. If one asks a Buddhist, “Do you understand?” and he dramatizes himself, we would say, “Do not be pretentious.”



¹ See case forty-one, “Bodhidharma and Peace of Mind.” Shibayama, *Zen Comments* p. 285.

BANKEI AND HIS WORLD

by Peter Haskel

Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in their land had been debased and finally destroyed during the preceding two or three centuries. If Zen was to continue, such reformers argued, it had to be thought through again from the beginning, not only revitalized but reinvented. The Zen of Bankei's age, the Tokugawa period, was in many ways a rejection rather than an extension of the Zen that came immediately before. To fully understand Bankei and seventeenth-century Zen, it is therefore necessary to start with a discussion of Japanese Zen in the late Middle Ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the latter part of what is referred to as the Muromachi period (1333-1573), after the Muromachi district of Kyoto where the reigning Ashikaga shoguns had their palace. Much of the information cited below is drawn from the pioneering research of Tamamura Takeji, a leading scholar of medieval Japanese Zen history. The discussion here focuses on the two principal groups identified by Tamamura as dominating Muromachi Zen: the sorin, the official Gozan temples patronized by the shogunate; and the rinka, those temples like Daitokuji, Myoshinji, Sojiji, and Eiheiji that remained largely outside the official system.

ZEN IN THE MUROMACHI PERIOD (Part 1, #12)

(Continued from the Winter '07 Zen Notes)

Missan Zen

In contrast with the sorin, the provincial rinka temples preserved such traditional staples of Zen practice as koan study, zazen and sanzen, and many consequently attracted a huge following of disaffected monks from the Gozan. Some assemblies numbered as many as one or two thousand, but the situation of such rinka groups was fluid, and monks were free to travel and study under various masters regardless of affiliation. These circuits of provincial temples were a popular feature of the rinka.

A monk might study with as many as fifty-five different masters in the course of his travels, testing and judging the quality of each, a process known as *kamben*. The teacher himself was the

nucleus of each community, and assemblies grew up spontaneously around particular masters. At the death of the teacher, some groups simply dissolved, while others appeared to take their place. Amid this process, however, certain assemblies survived and evolved, emerging as distinct lines, many of which remain as important branches of both Rinzai and Soto Zen.

Though organizationally diffuse, the provincial Zen groups gradually developed a certain common identity, shaped as they were by similar circumstances. The rinka had been formed principally by defectors from the sorin, those either unable or unwilling to participate in Gozan literary Zen, and this bred a natural antagonism between the two which led the rinka organizations to evolve largely in isolation from the sorin.

Gozan influence, of course, was not wholly absent, and the continual exodus of monks from the official temples resulted in the rinka establishments absorbing certain formal aspects of Gozan practice--Eiheiji Soto Zen from the time of Tetsu Gikai (1219-1309) and Daitokuji Zen from the time of the temple's third abbot Muin Soin (1316-1410) are conspicuous examples. Generally speaking, however, until the sixteenth century, rinka and sorin, pursued separate courses of development.

Among the rinka groups themselves, meanwhile, communication remained generally open, and students moved readily among the various assemblies, creating constant opportunities for cross-fertilization. In this world, distinctions of sect were of little importance: Rinzai and Soto monks mingled freely in the provincial assemblies, and many Soto teachers studied under Rinzai masters during their training. Rather than a distinct "Soto" or "Rinzai" Zen, what appeared in provincial Japan during the Muromachi period was a common rinka Zen, embodying a range of conventions and practices shared by both schools. As with the factions that had originally composed the sorin, the rinka groups tended to grow more and more alike in substance and the differences that divided them to become largely superficial.

Sadly, the most conspicuous of these shared characteristics was the progressive degeneration of Zen study in the rinka temples. As in the case of the degeneration of Gozan Zen, this was a gradual and complex development, to which a variety of factors probably contributed. Many of those who had initially abandoned the sorin were true idealists, dedicated to pursuing a pure form of Zen practice in the company of likeminded colleagues or disciples. Others, however, were merely ignorant or untalented monks for whom a provincial career was the only recourse. Often as not, the rigors of authentic Zen study were beyond the capacity of such individuals.

Koan practice presented a particular problem. Regardless of sect, Zen study in the rinka meant koan study. But the cases themselves were written in an often abstruse Chinese that bristled with difficulties for the average Japanese monk, and "passing" even a single koan could be a timely and painstaking process, involving extensive individual meditation and the guidance of a skilled instructor. The teacher would attempt to lead the student to satori, demanding that he demonstrate his understanding on the "battlefield of Dharma," in the lightning give-and-take of Zen dialogue, or mondo. Only on satisfactory completion of his koan study would the student receive the teacher's inka, his "seal of approval."

However, increasingly in provincial Zen temples there was a tendency to formalize koan study, mondo and inka, and to reduce these to conventions that could be ritually transmitted from teacher to disciple in a style closely resembling that of the secret oral transmissions popular in Tendai and Shingon. From the beginning of the Muromachi period, there is evidence of a strong tendency toward such transmission of koans in many areas of the rinka, a tendency which continued to grow. This approach to the koan, frequently referred to as missan, retained many of the formal elements of Sung koan practice, but was quite different in its actual orientation. Much of the history of *missan* Zen in Medieval Japan remains obscure. The final portion of this section attempts to examine what little we know of the details of the missan system's character and development, but it will be helpful at this point to tentatively outline its essentials.

Missan Zen particularly emphasized the importance of *agyo* or "capping words"--brief Chinese phrases that were a feature of such popular Medieval koan collections as the Pi-yen lu and Wu-men kuan. The *agyo*, a distinctly Chinese innovation, were drawn from a wide variety of sources, and ranged from folk sayings and poems to various cries and imprecations current at the time. Inserted between the lines of the koan texts, they seem to have served as a type of pithy commentary or response by the teacher.

In Medieval Japan, however, "capping words" came to assume the role of "answers" to particular koans. Arcane Chinese-language materials thus occupied a central place in the life of the rinka temples, as they had in that of the sorin tatchu. The difference was that in the rinka they became an integral part of Zen practice rather than merely the object of literary interest, as in the Gozan.

Each group involved in missan Zen had its own secret and jealously guarded "family tradition" indicating which "capping words" (at times there were several acceptable alternatives) consti-

tuted the answer to a given koan. This information, together with various explanatory comments, was transmitted to the disciple in a private meeting with the master--hence the term *missan*, literally, "secret study." The student might even keep a written record of the transmission, a *missan* notebook (*missancho*), preserving the details of the encounters in which he received the teacher's secret instruction on a particular koan or series of koans. While frequently presented within the format of a *mondo*, the type of transmission elaborated in the surviving transmission records resembles less a dynamic confrontation than a staged event or initiation. Although it preserved the traditional framework of Zen study--koan practice, *mondo*, *sanzen*, *angya* and *inka*--the *missan* system seems to have had little connection with the enlightenment experience as such. It did, however, allow ambitious students to progress quickly through a large number of koans and obtain the transmission in a particular line together with the teacher's seal of approval.

While deplored by some, by the early 15th century, *missan* Zen had become popular throughout the *rinka*. It was not uncommon for students to undertake *missan* study with teachers of various lines, accumulating multiple credentials and, in turn, synthesizing the diverse transmissions they had received into new *missan* embracing the secret transmissions of both Rinzai and Soto masters. Many such *missan* notes list Rinzai and Soto transmissions side by side, clearly demonstrating that both sects participated in the *missan* system. Occasional voices of protest notwithstanding, *missan* Zen ultimately swept the entire *rinka* and became the dominant mode of Zen practice in late medieval Japan.

Although the *missan* system originated within the temples, it enjoyed great success among lay students as well. Sung-style koan Zen and *sanzen* were probably beyond the ability or understanding of most *rinka* patrons. By contrast, *missan* Zen offered a relatively simple and practical alternative that allowed laymen and women of limited accomplishments to participate in *mondo* and *sanzen*, and even to obtain the secrets of koans and to receive the seal of an authenticated master. Like the *rinka* monks, such lay patrons often studied under a variety of teachers, both Rinzai and Soto. By the fifteenth century, complaints occur of teachers handing out transmission to laymen for a fee, and at the close of the century we hear of lay teachers giving instruction in *missan*. Broadly speaking, the *missan* system offered tangible benefits to both teachers and patrons. Receiving *missan* transmission was considered to enhance one's social and professional standing, and the popularity of *missan* among the *rinka* patrons clearly provided the temples with a significant source of income and prestige.

As seen in the case of the *missan* system, many aspects of the transformation of *rinka* Zen reflected not only changing concep-

tions of Zen study within the priesthood but efforts to accommodate the needs of the temples' lay supporters. Japanese Zen temples were rarely self-supporting, and the rinka, like the sorin, depended on its patrons for survival and protection. In Kyoto and Kamakura, the Gozan temples in their heyday enjoyed the lavish patronage of the Ashikaga and other leading bukke clans, and even in the provinces, Zen frequently retained the aura of an aristocratic sect catering to the elite. Here, however, there were few individual patrons capable of supporting single-handed a given monastic establishment, and as a rule, patronage in the rinka temples had to be drawn piecemeal from a variety of donors representing a cross-section of provincial society. While certain Soto temples relied heavily on peasant support, most rinka patrons were members of the new classes that eventually came to dominate provincial society in the late Middle Ages. Wealthy merchants formed the majority of these patrons, followed by doctors, government magistrates low-ranking samurai and masters of renga, tea and the martial arts.

For many of the newly arrived, often risen from the lower ranks of Japanese society, Zen represented a kind of aristocratic connection. But in order to encourage and retain the support of these groups, the rinka temples had to take into account their particular religious needs and predilections and to offer to them a brand of Zen that was both familiar and accessible. Like the Gozan temples, they accomplished this in part by assimilating popular features of the old Buddhist teachings, particularly Esoteric Buddhism, or *mikkyo*. The Soto Keizan line, for example, owed much of its rapid expansion in the provinces to the incorporation of esoteric practices. Indeed, the missan system itself, which involved all the rinka sects, represented the distortion of Zen study into a secret oral transmission, closely based on esoteric prototypes, and Zen's association with similar transmissions for the various arts, such as tea, Noh and the martial arts, was probably a related development occurring during the late Middle Ages.

Another "popularizing" feature of the rinka temples incorporated from the older sects was the conduct of funeral and memorial services for patrons. Ironically, Zen teaching had generally tended to minimize the role of an afterlife. Yet funeral services in the sorin for both abbots and patrons, became increasingly elaborate and important events, and in the rinka too, popular demand soon made the "funeral business" a mainstay of the temple economy. Certain curious attempts were even made to amalgamate Zen with the rites of the deathbed. For a patron to receive instruction from a Zen master at the moment of death, for example, was considered to signify that he realized satori as he died, and the subsequent funeral and memorial services "guiding" the deceased also fostered this connection between the moment of death and the si-

multaneous realization of enlightenment.

Elements of folk religion too were incorporated by Zen in its efforts to assimilate and to gain acceptance in the countryside. Legends were constructed in which the local gods were said to have been converted by Zen priests traveling through the vicinity on pilgrimage, and stories were promulgated of Zen monks overcoming vengeful ghosts and other malevolent spirits through their "samadhi power." Such measures were calculated to assert the superiority of Zen over indigenous beliefs, and were similar to tactics employed by esoteric-oriented Heian Buddhist sects such as Tendai and Shingon and by Shugendo.

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Levitation

“Visualizing Out-of-Body Experience in the Brain.”

The New England Journal of Medicine. Vol 357, No. 18

November 1, 2007. Pages 1829-1833.

(Reviewed by Ian Chandler)

For thousands of years, in all of the world’s religious traditions, there are references to “Levitation”. Christ levitates off into the sky at the end of the Gospel of St. Paul. Catholic saints such as St. Teresa of Avila and St. Joseph of Cupertino were reported to have levitated, and levitation was supposedly used as a form of transportation by the Buddha at the end of the Srimala Sutra, and by the Tibetan Saint Milarepa, as reported in the “Thousand Songs of Milarepa” – sort of a direct door-to-door helicopter transport—very convenient for a person living in the Himalayas!

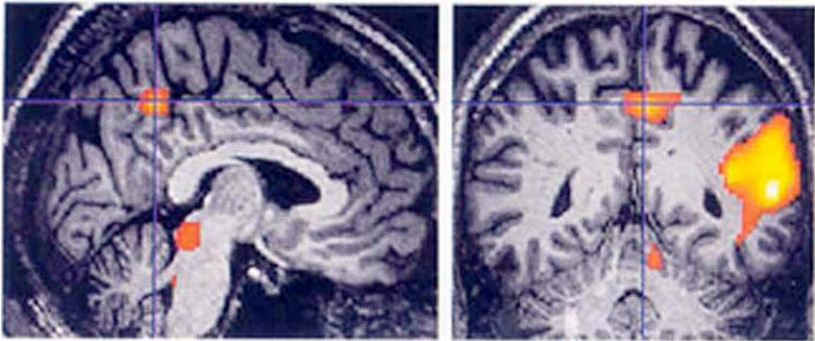
Of course, many interpretations can be given to these ancient stories, but I find intriguing a recent brief report from the New England Journal of Medicine which discusses out-of-body experiences. This comes from the Department of Neurosurgery at the University Hospital in Antwerp, Belgium.

An out-of-body experience is a brief subjective episode in which the self is perceived as being outside the body, with or without the impression of seeing the body from an elevated and distanced perspective (autoscopy).

“It has been suggested that out-of-body experiences are the result of a transient failure to integrate the visual, tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular information that converges at the temporoparietal junction, especially on the right side of the brain. Out-of-body experiences have attracted the most interest when reported by people who have had near-death experiences, but they have also been reported to occur spontaneously in patients with epilepsy or migraine, and have been induced by electrical stimulation of the temporoparietal junction on the right side in patients with epilepsy. “

“Disembodiment refers to a disrupted sense of spatial unity between self and body, because the self is not experienced as residing within the limits of the body.

“The general area of the superior temporal cortex has been thought to embody an internal map of self-perception, as one component of human self-consciousness. During disembodiment, self-perception is altered, but global self-consciousness is retained.”



One can speculate that perhaps this region of the brain is one of those involved during the most intense meditative trances. These MRI scans from the Nov 1 2007 article show, in the cross-hairs, the precise area in the cerebral cortex which undergoes the most dramatic change when their research subject was having his out-of body experience.



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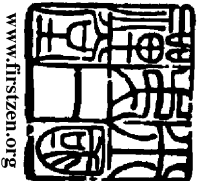
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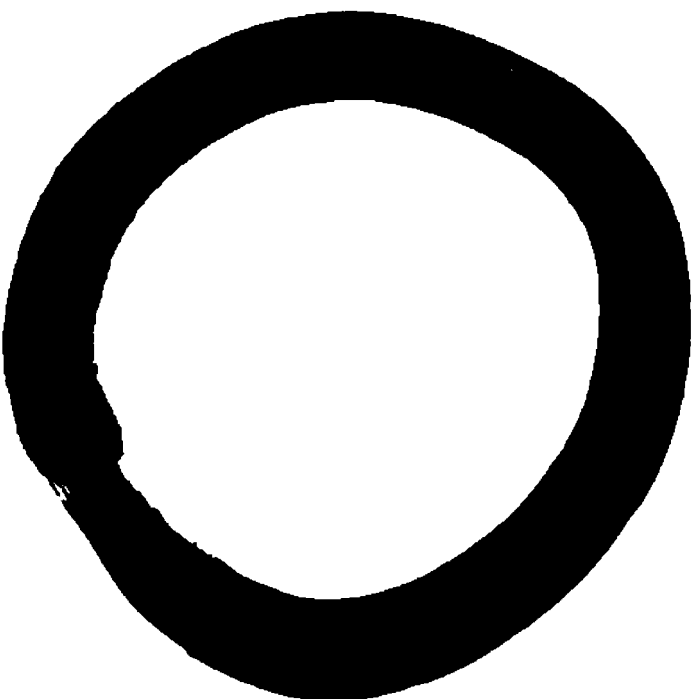
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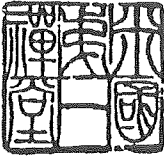


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