

# ZEN NOTES



The body of the Sixth Patriarch (died 713) in his monastery at Ts'ao Ch'i

*Then the room was permeated with a strange fragrance, a white rainbow formed an arch over the earth and fowls and beasts cried sadly. In November the officials of the three prefectures, Kwang, Shao and Hsin, and the disciples, both monks and laymen, came scrambling to meet the body of the dead Master, but they had no idea where to bury the body. Thereupon they burned incense to the sun and followed the smoke which indicated the direction where the Master should be buried. The smoke of the incense went straight into the valley of Ts'ao-ch'i (Sokei). On December thirteenth, the multitude moved the sacred coffin and the robe and the bowl which had been transmitted to the Master into the sepulchre in the Ts'ao Valley, and returned home. In July of the following year, the disciples carried the coffin out from the sepulchre and Fang P'ien placed incense upon it.*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

When the Sixth Patriarch died, his disciples buried his body without cremating it in the Valley of Ts'ao. In that place is the main temple in which the Sixth Patriarch lived for quite a long time. This temple is still existing today, but it has become a nest for bandits. We have seen photographs of it, and money has been donated to repair it--also to rebuild the dilapidated buildings. There are three streams that pour into the Yellow River. The northern stream which leads the traveler into the territory where the Sixth Patriarch lived is called Sokei. My name came from this Sokei.

*Then the room was permeated with a strange fragrance. This is mere description in the style of Buddhist scriptures. In this country, no one would notice any strange fragrance, but those who go to Japan or China, after a sudden shower of a summer evening, will realize that the hot wet earth has a strange fragrance. This fragrance in the air will give you a tranquil feeling. In Japan we are living very near to the earth, while in New York we are living on concrete. When I returned to Japan, I said, "Japar's cities seem to be in bare feet, while New York wears concrete shoes." The "strange fragrance" described here evokes the wet cold air of morning. The Sixth Patriarch died at midnight and*

the cold air of the morning penetrated the room.

*A white rainbow formed an arch over the earth.* The white rainbow appears many times in Chinese descriptions. In heroic novels and histories, before some great incident or before the birth of some great hero, a white rainbow is said to cover the mountains. So in any description where this white rainbow appears, you must understand that it is the occasion of some great incident. Therefore, when the Sixth Patriarch died, this white ribbon arched over the earth.

*And fowls and beasts cried sadly.* In the picture of the Buddha's Nirvana, many insects, birds and beasts feel the great loss, crying sadly.

*In November the officials of the three prefectures, Kwang, Shao and Hsin, and the disciples, both monks and laymen, came scrambling to meet the body of the dead Master, but they had no idea where to bury the body.* Kwang is the prefecture in which Canton exists, and Shao is on the northwest side of Canton. Hsin is on the left side shore of the Pearl River, where the Sixth Patriarch was born. So, the disciples, both monks and laymen, came scrambling to meet the body of the dead Master. I am not sure that this "scrambling" is a good word, but they came in a rush because they wished to hold the Sixth Patriarch's dead body in their hands. At the time when the Sixth Patriarch died, his famous old disciples had long before left his temple and only the younger disciples stayed with him. And laymen of the three prefectures came to meet the body of the dead Master. But the Sixth Patriarch did not leave any word where to bury him. He was in Sokei and when he became sick, he went back to his mother's house which had been given him by the Emperor. It was repaired by some rich man who made a temple of it. Here he died. But his body was carried into Shao by boat. There is no description of this transportation, but there was no other way to carry it. As you know, the Yellow River has a tremendous mouth.

But they had no idea where to bury him. The Zen master's bodies were never cremated in China nor in India. They believed that a master never dies, but will rest in his eternal meditation. Even those Indian fakirs, practicers of meditation, will bury themselves under the ground for many days, hiber-

nating for twenty or twenty-one days in meditation. When his spirit comes back into his own body, he will come out of the ground, or out of a cave, his body will be massaged, and he will eat very light food and drink water. Within a week, he will be recovered and be the same as he was before he entered this long meditation. This strange custom was the reason why the people did not bury a Zen master after cremation. Where is the Zen master? They put him under the ground without cremation and dig a hole on both sides of the tombstone. Then they put a bamboo into the grave and the disciples go every morning, calling, "Hello, hello" through the bamboo.

*Thereupon they burned incense to the sun and followed the smoke which indicated where the Master should be buried.* This was also an old tradition. The smoke of the incense went straight into the Valley of Ts'ao (Sokei) and indicated the way. The river becomes very narrow and the land is almost like a desert. On the yellow earth are little forests at Paolin. And there was the temple of the Sixth Patriarch.

*On December thirteenth, the multitude moved the sacred coffin and the robe and bowl which had been transmitted to the Master into the sepulchre in the Ts'ao Valley.* According to this description, the Sixth Patriarch's body was preserved for a while in his temple at Pao-lin. Usually a dead master's body is packed in vermilion earth, and some kind of quicksilver in this vermilion earth is mixed up, making a kind of cement or putty--a composition which keeps things preserved. The same material was used in Egypt. Where mummies are found, that red clay is always found, still clinging to the corpse and among the draperies. The Chinese use this material to preserve dead bodies.

The sacred robe and bowl had been transmitted from Bodhidharma to Hui-k'o, to Seng-ts'an, to Tao-hsin, to the Fifth Patriarch, and to the Sixth Patriarch. But the Sixth Patriarch told his disciples: "Hereafter I will not transmit my robe and bowl to my disciples because it is a source of trouble and causes quarrels as to who has the true lineage.

Under my teaching, those of you who are permitted

to teach will be teachers." From these last words, the disciples understood that he ordered the robe and bowl to be buried with him.

*And returned home.* They always stayed with the coffin about one to three weeks before returning home.

*In July of the following year, the disciples carried the coffin out from the sepulchre.* The Chinese make a sepulchre of stone and keep the master's coffin under the ground among the stones. That country has no moisture in the air, so the body will not decompose in a year. Then they carry it out again and pack it with mud and incense and vermilion clay.

*And Fang P'ien placed incense upon it.* Fang P'ien was a sculptor who trained to make Buddhist figures in art. Once when the Sixth Patriarch was at the back of the temple washing his robe at a spring, this monk suddenly appeared. He said he had come from eastern Tibet, a great distance, to be shown the robe and bowl handed down to the Sixth Patriarch. He had been in India and, having heard that the disciples of Bodhidharma were still teaching in China, he came there. The Sixth Patriarch said to him: "What is your occupation?" Fang P'ien answered: "My occupation is clay work." The Sixth Patriarch asked: "With clay, what do you make?" "With clay, I make human figures." The Sixth Patriarch said: "Can you make an image of my figure?" This question has some Zen element in it. The Sixth Patriarch was a Bodhisattva of the Dharmakaya; one who has opened the eye can see my figure. Can you make my figure which is Dharmakaya? One whose eye is open would understand this. This question was a very profound one. But poor Fang P'ien did not realize the deep significance of the Master's question, and replied: "Oh, yes, I can make a portrait of you, Master." And he made a portrait of the Sixth Patriarch. This portrait existed for quite a time. In the Sung dynasty, some monk went there and saw it. And a reproduction was made during that dynasty which is still existing at Pao-lin.

So this Fang P'ien mixed the incense mud and spread it upon the body of the Sixth Patriarch, and then put it back into the sepulchre.

ON BREATHING From *"The Zen Way to the Martial Arts,"*  
by Taisen Deshimaru, translated by Nancy Amphoux.  
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In zazen, concentrating on breathing out is what  
creates liaison that balances consciousness and  
posture. \*\*\*

When posture is correct, the breathing is correct,  
too, and natural. The outward breath is longer than  
the inward breath, powerful and calm as the lowing  
of a cow. At the end of the outward breath, the in-  
ward one comes automatically. During the expiration  
there is a downward pressure on the intestines and  
the lower abdomen, beneath the navel, expands.  
Breathing should be inaudible and natural, never  
forced and always the same in both zazen and kinhin.

\*\*\* We ordinarily breathe 15 to 20 times a minute  
and we breathe superficially, using only one-sixth  
of the capacity of our lungs. Deep, full breathing  
does not take place only at the level of the thorax  
or diaphragm but is supported by the intestines. One  
can learn to breathe more slowly, five or six deep,  
calm breaths a minute...

Through the practice of zazen, this type of  
breathing gradually becomes a regular, basic habit,  
especially while we sleep. The life energy of the  
universe that is contained in the air is transformed  
into human energy. The more receptive we are to that  
universal life, the greater our own energy grows and  
the fewer calories we need.

Breathing in is taking in supplies; breathing out  
slowly and deeply, spreads them through the body.

The Japanese martial arts use this form of breath-  
ing, and any attack must take place while breathing  
out (yang), if possible while the adversary is  
breathing in (yin), because he is then at his most  
vulnerable.

The katsu is also based on this form of breathing:  
it is a cry OUT, a KWATZ! that can paralyze or resus-  
cite. It can revive a person who has just died,  
because it transmits the life energy of the universe  
to someone who can still receive it...

When we chant the Hannya Shingyo we push the sounds  
out, long and deep, pressing down on the intestines.

Through the practice of zazen we learn to use

this kind of breathing unconsciously in our everyday lives, and so we can store up a good supply of energy from the universe... \*\*\*

The powerful vibrations of the kiai paralyze the adversary for a brief instant... Push out your shout with everything in you, starting from the hara, the lower abdomen or intestines--the place the Japanese call kikai, the ocean of energy. To do it right you also have to know Zen breathing, which is the same as in budo--the long exhalation, as deep as you can. At the very end of it one's energy is at its greatest. The kiai is that same exhalation, combined with a loud voice; the sound springs naturally from the depths of the body, and for that one obviously has to know how to breathe, which few people do. After zazen, when I conduct a ceremony and we chant the Hannya Haramita Shingyo, the sutra of great wisdom, I do it as a kind of training in breathing; the voice must go to the utter limits of breath. It is good practice for the kiai. The word kiai is composed of ki, energy, and ai, union, so it means the union of energy. One cry, one instant, containing all space-time, the whole cosmos... It is not the loudness of the voice that makes the strength of the sound! The sound must start in the hara, not in the throat. Observe how a cat meows or lion roars; that is real kiai. \*\*\*

Traditionally, the old masters never taught breathing. It does not come until posture is right. To teach properly, I should have to take my clothes off, but you must understand through your own body.

There is a short, natural inhalation at the level of the solar plexus, then a long exhalation, pushing down on the intestines beneath the navel. For one inhalation, the exhalation can last one, two, three, four, even five minutes... During the exhalation there is a very slight in-and-out motion of air in the nostrils, so one can continue for a very long time.

In Japan people do not practice yoga because they have learned Zen breathing. Once you have understood it, it will serve you well in your everyday life. Try it next time you grow heated in an argument; it will calm you, you will not lose your self-control... If you are ever frightened, or suffering from

gongxi

anguish, or if you feel unsure of yourself in some situation, try the long breath out. It will calm you and give you strength and assurance. It concentrates your energy and awareness. \*\*\*

While one is alive, one is taking in ki all the time, mainly by breathing but also through food and one's interdependence with other existences.

Cosmic energy does not vary; it is. Its transformation by our body produces ki, the vital energy. There is nothing abstract about ki; it is the source of mind. If ki is not strong, the life force is weak; if ki is strong, the life force is strong. In the martial arts, and in life, one must have plenty of ki.

The best way to build it up is through breathing, the right kind of breathing, concentrating on breathing out. In zazen, the body is motionless, but ki becomes strong through breathing. The great masters of the martial arts, too, move as little as possible, so they can continue to concentrate on breathing out and down into hara--while their students leap about and waste their ki.

*EDITOR'S NOTE* In 1957 we received some photos from Charles Luk, of Hong Kong, with a letter stating that they were of the bodies of the Sixth Patriarch and Master Han-Shan. The one on the cover is apparently of the one purporting to be the Sixth Patriarch but differently dressed. It also looks as though it had been lacquered.

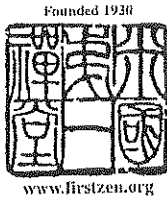
Mr. Luk wrote: "I visited in 1937 the Nan-Hua monastery where I saw myself these two bodies which were real human bodies left by the two masters and very well preserved since their passing away in spite of the lack of chemicals used in Egypt and in the West. I have heard recently that since the change-over in China, these two bodies and that of an Indian Master remained untouched in the same monastery which is situated at Nan-Hua, north of Canton, South China. The ashes of my father remain also untouched in the stupa of the same monastery, according to those who are still in correspondence with the monks there."

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