

THE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ZEN
BUDDHISM IN AMERICA FROM 1893

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This paper has a very limited scope: a narrative presentation of the institutional development of Zen Buddhism in America. The words "narrative" and "institutional" should convey the notion that my present intention centers on historical figures, places, groups and their interconnections and not on interpretation, writings or explanation. Simply tracing the coming and going of America's Zen personalities is an historical task that should be of interest both to active Zen followers and students of American cultural and intellectual history. Though I have a strong personal (though infant) interest in Zen practice, it is only fair to say that, as a graduate student in American history, I am formally associated only with this latter interest. Consequently, I have limited these writings to historical narrative and leave the weighty task of explanation of Zen forms and practice to more experienced heads. In sum, this paper is simply a brief skeleton of the institutional flow of Zen in America. Criticism, further research, and future revision all promise to make this a first draft and a first chapter.

Most of the information for this paper is derived from the Zen periodicals listed in the bibliography. For access to these periodicals, I am particularly thankful to The First Zen Institute in New York and its secretary, Mary Farkas. She greatly assisted my research by making the Institute's library available and by granting personal interviews. Robert Hall, a member of the Zen Meditation Center of Rochester, New York, also helped me gain information and publications that were invaluable. In addition, various individuals responded to a "feeler questionnaire" that early on helped to focus the direction of my research. Professor Robert Sklar of the University of Michigan has tolerated and supported me throughout. Finally, Kim is most responsible for keeping me in touch, and if a dedication were appropriate, it would be to her. After finally, I am awed by the power of the stillness of mind and helped by those people who share their quiet teachings and their stillness with others.

Definitions of Japanese Words

Though an attempt was made throughout the paper to avoid Japanese Buddhist terms, a few important ones could not be avoided. Below are brief definitions of these words.*

Dharma: Self-nature; from the root "to support or sustain." Also used to refer to the teachings of Buddha--"The Law"; duty.

Dharmakaya: The self-nature or void. Kaya means body or form. The real being in his true nature, indescribable and absolute.

Koan: An exercise of the mind prescribed by a Zen Master appealing to insight rather than logic. There are nearly two thousand known koans. One now famous example: "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" The Zen Master prescribes particular koans to students who then meditate upon them. When the student feels ready to answer, the Master interviews him in a process called sanzen. The koan is a kind of test of the student's depth of enlightenment, utilizing immediate experience rather than abstract, intellectual comparison.

Mahayana: Buddhism's "greater vehicle" or Northern school that is the lineage of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. "Theravada," (also known as "Hinayana"), the "lesser vehicle," or Southern school is the lineage of Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma and Southeast Asia and generally regarded by Zen Buddhists as authentic but less stringent.

Rinzai: A particular sect of Zen founded by Rinzai Gigan (d. 867) in China. Zen in America until the mid-1960's was definitely of the Rinzai type, stressing koan study, sanzen interview and "sudden" enlightenment.

Roshi: The title of a Zen Master given a student by his own Master when the student has demonstrated his own experience of satori and koan understanding (for Rinzai). Entitles one to teach koans (in the Rinzai school) or zazen (in the Soto school). The designation of approval to be a teacher of Zen practice.

Sangha: The assembly of monks; association with the good or the followers of Buddha.

Sanzen: Private interview between Zen Master and pupil. In Rinzai the koan is generally used to promote the dialogue.

Satori: Illumination or Enlightenment; consciousness of pure consciousness itself; the Buddha-mind realized; seeing into one's own nature, finding something quite new which is intuitively known

* In part, these definitions are taken from Ernest Wood's Zen Dictionary (1972).

with great clarity. Such a state cannot be characterized either mentally or physically.

Sesshin: A week of especially long meditation which occurs once each month during April to August and October to February. Monastic manual labor is reduced to a minimum. The Roshi gives daily discourses and grants koan interviews of dharma-dialogue. Other rituals and ceremonies also are conducted.

Soto: A Zen sect founded in China by Tsao Shan and Tung Shan and brought to Japan by Dogen in 1227 where it flourished greatly. This sect does not use koans but stresses cross-legged lotus posture sitting, or zazen. Soto Zen's American following dates from the 1960's.

Zazen: The heart of Zen practice--meditation in the approved posture (generally cross-legged, full lotus position on a stiff pillow). In zazen the back is held straight, the eyes lowered and only slightly opened, the breath is regulated and calm, and the mind is focused on one's own inward nature. As one progresses, zazen is increased, so that, finally, one is able to meditate undisturbed for long periods of time.

Zen: An abbreviation of the Japanese words "Zenno" and "Zenna" derived from the Chinese word "Ch'an" (meditation), which is derived from the Sanskrit word "dhyana." Believed by its followers to be the apotheosis of Buddhism, the direct application of the teachings of Buddha, the striving for the discovery of the Buddha-mind or pure consciousness. In Japan the Soto and Rinzai sects are the most "strictly Zen" of other Buddhist forms. Zen, like Ch'an, is in origin a blend of Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism.

Zendo: Meditation hall, also used for lectures and rituals.

Japanese interest in the teaching of Zen Buddhism to Westerners began with a nineteenth century Rinzai Zen Master named Imakita Kosen (1816-1892),¹ heir to Jito Gasan who was the direct disciple of the famous abbot, Hakuin (1686-1769). Kosen's official government title under the Emperor Meiji was "Superior Overseer of Religious Teaching" in the Education Bureau. One Wave of the Zen Ocean, his central religious writing, is still read today by Japanese students. Kosen's central activities were threefold: First, he had great interest in Western thought, and, like other European-oriented scholars of the time, he had an especially keen attraction for German Idealist philosophy.* Kosen sought to give instruction to Japanese students (including Zen monks) in European philosophy and science. Secondly, Kosen made efforts to create institutions within Zen that would provide for lay transmission, making the rather rigid, establishment temple more approachable. Thirdly, he stressed that a lay education was important for Zen Buddhist monks.

Kosen studied Confucianism until he was twenty-five, and the Confucian savor of his and his disciples' actions is unmistakable. His outward-looking inventiveness must surely have caused some consternation among more traditional Zen priests. He held meditation meetings in Tokyo with a distinguished group that included Tesshu Yanaoka, a famous fencing master and member of the Emperor's body guard, and Chomin Nakae, one of the first students

* Zen scholars found considerable similarity between their own philosophy and that of Kant and Hegel. The essential "subjectivity" stressed in both does not override the recognition of an "objective" reality nor of a disciplined approach to philosophic understanding. The Hegelian dialectic has clear similarities to the union of opposites in Zen's non-dualism. It should be noted here that Indian Buddhism was first brought to Europe formally by the English in the late eighteenth century--Charles Wilkins made the first translation of the Bhagavad-Gita in 1785. However, English interest was soon relegated to esoteric societies, whereas German philosophers, led by the pioneer work of the brothers Friedrich and August von Schlegel, were most zealous in their incorporation of Buddhist thought into traditional academic scholarship in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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of the Western science of physics. Kosen called this group "Ryomokyo-Kai." ("Kai" means association and "Ryomokyo" means abandonment of the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity.)² This organization still exists today as part of Zen's Rinzai sect.

Perhaps Kosen's wisest and most lasting action, though, was the selection of his disciple, Soyen Shaku (1859-1919), whom his teacher called, "a born Bodhisattva."³ Kosen carefully watched over the young Soyen, seeing that the devotee's studies include Western forms as well as the classic texts of a Zen trainee. Or, as Sokei-an characterizes it, "While other Buddhists were sleeping comfortably pillowed on the customs of the feudal period, Soyen was studying Western thought and culture."⁴

Though Kosen had considerable interest in Europe, he was not blind to the values of Asia; consequently, in 1887 he sent twenty-nine-year-old Soyen on a solitary journey to India. Again, Sokei-an tells us, "Here we must not forget that [Kosen] was also an unusual man in that he chose for his disciple an education which was both modern and ancient."⁵ Soyen stayed primarily in Ceylon where he composed the following self-portrait in July, 1888.

This fellow was a son of Nobusuke Goemon Ichenose of Takahama, the province of Wakasa. His nature was stupid and tough. When he was young, none of his relatives liked him. When he was twelve years old, he was ordained as a monk by Ekkei, Abbot of Myo-shin Monastery. Afterwards, he studied literature under Shunghai of Kennin Monastery for three years and gained nothing. Then he went to Mii-dera and studied Tendai philosophy under Tai-ho for a summer, and gained nothing. After this he went to Bizen and studied Zen under the old teacher Gisan for one year, and attained nothing. He then went to the East, to Kamakura, and studied under the Zen master Ko-sen in the Engaku Monastery for six years, and added nothing to the aforesaid nothingness. He was in charge of a little temple, Butsu-nichi, one of the temples in Engaku Cathedral, for one year and from there he went to Tokyo to attend Kei-o College for one year and a half, making himself the worst student there; and forgot the nothingness that he had gained. Then he created for himself new delusions, and came to Ceylon in the spring of 1887; and now, under the Ceylon monk, he is studying the Pali Language and Hinayana Buddhism. Such a wandering mendicant! He ought to repay the twenty years⁶ of debts to those who fed him in the name of Buddhism.

Soyen did in fact repay his debts. The year following the death of his teacher, Soyen was invited to attend the World's Parliament of Religions held at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893). In a sense, Soyen's attendance is the culmination of Kosen's heritage. Gary Snyder reminds us that "The line of Rinzai Zen that has come to the West has been the work, the karmic work so to speak, of one man, Kosen Roshi....no other line in Japanese Rinzai Zen has even looked towards the West...(others said) it was beneath the dignity of a Zen priest to go to a barbarian country." ⁷ Soyen was the first Zen priest to come to America, and though the conference itself did not differentiate between Zen and Buddhism as a whole, the Congress is the "official" introduction of Zen in America.* Soyen, formally recognized as the "Right Reverend Soyen Shaku, Lord Abbot of Engaku-ji and Kensho-ji, Kamakura, Japan," delivered two addresses, "The Law of Cause and Effect as Taught by Buddha" and "Arbitration Instead of War." ⁸ The clear stamp of Kosen can be seen in Soyen's choice of subjects. The attempt to unify religion, philosophy, politics, and science through rational discourse is a hallmark of the Kosen-Soyen Rinzai tradition.

Apparently, Soyen did not stay long. Returning to Kamakura, he continued his duties which included the instruction of young Zen followers. Among his pupils were later American-bound disciples, Nyogen Senzaki (1876-1958), Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966), and Sokatsu Shaku (1869-1954) who all came to study under Soyen in the dharma lineage of Kosen--and Buddha. Soyen sent Suzuki to America in 1897 to be an editor for the Open Court Publishing Company in La Salle, Illinois. In Chicago at the 1893 Parliament, Soyen had met a German immigrant-turned-millionaire zinc manufacturer, Edward Hegeler, who owned the Open Court Press, and its chief publisher, the religious scholar and philosopher, Paul Carus. These two then asked Soyen to come to Illinois, and though he declined, he sent Suzuki only a few years later. ⁹ Soyen himself was invited back to the United States when a Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Russell of San Francisco came to his Kamakura temple, Engaku-ji,

* The famous Indian religious saint of Vedanta, Vivikenanda, also made a spectacular appearance at this conference.

asking for instruction and eventually enjoining him to return to their home as a guest, which he did, from June 27, 1905 to March 12, 1906.¹⁰

During this stay in San Francisco, D.T. Suzuki came from Illinois to act as interpreter when Soyen gave various lectures, at first only privately to the friends of Mrs. Russell. Nyogen Senzaki, who came to the U.S. in the same year, after being selected by Soyen to teach Zen in a foreign country, arrived in San Francisco from Seattle in late July. He remained a guest in the Russell home for less than two weeks when immigration restrictions forced him to leave their home. Senzaki remembered Mrs. Russell as a key figure in the coming of Zen to America: "This Sister in Dharma passed a few years after my teacher went back to Japan, but we must remember her as the gate-opener of Zen in America. She was the first American who experienced the actual study of Zen koans."¹¹

In March and April of 1906 Soyen went on a lecture tour of several East Coast cities addressing various gatherings in Washington, New York, Philadelphia and Boston. Suzuki compiled his own translations of these talks of Soyen's in a 1906 volume, Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot which is prefaced by the text of the Sutra of Forty-two Chapters. Suzuki included this Sutra for, among other reasons, its "interesting historical background"--it was the first Buddhist literature taken by Hindu missionaries to China in 67 A.D.¹² Soyen left for Japan, by way of Europe and India, leaving Senzaki behind "to do something for Buddhism,"¹³ and Suzuki continued his work with Carus in Illinois until 1909 when he returned to Japan to be an English teacher in Kyoto after writing several books on Buddhism, articles for the Monist, and translating various works including The Tao Te Ching.¹⁴

Soyen Shaku, a graduate of the university, disciple of the outwardly innovative Kosen, author of forty books in Japanese and Chinese, world traveler, and introducer of Zen to the United States, was also not without some degree of humble asceticism, that seemingly necessary hallmark of religious saints. As he visited India on his return to Japan, he went as a simple pilgrim, without notice to either government or temple, begging food door to door. Sokei-an pictures him traveling from India to Japan:

Alone he boarded a native coastal steamer sailing for Shanghai, one bowl in his hand and one kesa on his body. Among his fellow steerage passengers was a beggar who accosted him. Soyen pitied him and gave him the kesa, the last shred hanging from his shoulders. On the tropical sea, under the tropical sky, he spent many nights on the deck sitting in profound meditation. Dawn found the hungry mosquitoes he had fed hanging from his naked body like ripe red berries.

When he reached Shanghai, monks from Engaku Temple were waiting on the wharf, bearing his robes and his rosary. For the first time the Japanese cabin-passengers realized that this deck-passenger was not only their countryman but also the famous Soyen.¹⁵

Soyen spent his last years busily lecturing in many parts of Japan, China and Korea, writing, superintending two Rinzai temples, administering Rinzai College, and tending to successors, monk disciples and lay followers.¹⁶ Soyen is to America what Boddhidharma is to China: the first direct human and institutional bond to Buddha's teaching and fellowship.

Sekibutsu Koji ("Stone Buddha, lay disciple") came to Kosen in his last years and later studied under Soyen Shaku who eventually adopted him and renamed him Sokatsu ("Energetic") Shaku.¹⁷ Sokatsu finished his Zen training at age twenty-nine in 1899 and then spent three years on an ascetic, wandering pilgrimage that took him as far as Burma. Returning from foreign lands, Soyen sent Sokatsu to Tokyo to re-assemble Kosen's dispersed Ryomokyo-kai. It was here that Sokatsu met Shigetsu Sasaki (1882-1945), later known as Sokei-an, who was then a sculpture student at the Imperial Academy of Art.¹⁸ In September, 1906, Sokatsu sailed to the United States* along with six disciples including Sokei-an. They first settled in Berkeley because several of Sokatsu's former disciples were students at the University of California.¹⁹ The group's intention was to establish a firm institutional base for the teachings of Zen in America. Their first attempts at building a monastery began when the disciple with the best command

* Though no available records show the exact month of Soyen's 1906 return to Japan, we can assume that Soyen's outward-looking interest in America was the major source (if not direct injunction) of Sokatsu's first journey there.

command of English. Zuigan Goto, purchased for Sokatsu a ten-acre tract in Hayward, a two-hour trolley ride from Oakland.²⁰ The land was exhausted, however, and the group's attempts at farming proved difficult. Sokei-an remembers:

On clear days we worked hard in the fields cultivating strawberries. On rainy days we meditated. Our neighbors made fun of us. There was not a real farmer among us; all were monks, artists or philosophers...The day finally arrived when Zuigan drove to market the wagon piled high with crates of the strawberries we had grown. A market man picked out one of the smallest of our strawberries and cried in a derisive voice, "What do you call this, school-boys?" "It is a strawberry," we replied. Showing us a strawberry almost the size of his fist he said: "This is what is called a strawberry! You had better send your produce to the piggery!"²¹

Japanese farming neighbors counseled the discouraged group, explaining that they needed real farmers and fertilizer. Sokei-an protested against continuing the "futile effort," was temporarily expelled, and enrolled in San Francisco's California Institute of Art.²² The Hayward group finally abandoned the monastery idea several months later, established a new Zen Center on Sutter Street in San Francisco, later moved to Geary Street, and re-admitted the apologetic (though realistic) rebel, Sokei-an. Sokei-an only remembers the group as consisting of about fifty Japanese students and several anonymous Americans; Ruth Fuller Sasaki, eventually Sokei-an's American wife, gives a more illuminating account:

The majority of Sokatsu's students in San Francisco, aside from the few Japanese in San Francisco who studied with him, were all missionary ladies who were going over to Japan to do mission work. There is somewhere a picture of Sokatsu--who was one of the handsomest men you ever laid eyes on--sitting in his clerical costume, which was a long coat buttoned up to the top something like the Indian swamis wear, with all the big busty missionary ladies in their white blouses with high lace collars and their pompadours and so forth, and a few Japanese sitting on the floor.²³

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The missionary ladies proved to be an inadequate base for a lasting American Zen following. Sokatsu returned to Japan for six months in 1908 at the summons of his teacher, Soyen, and then spent one-and-a-half more years in San Francisco before going back to Japan for good in 1910 taking with him all his disciples but Sokei-an. Sokatsu continued his work in Japan for many more years, maintaining a close link with Sokei-an.

Sokei-an and Nyogen Senzaki were left alone in America to build as best they could upon the momentum of the Kosen-Soyen-Sokatsu efforts. Senzaki, carefully trained since childhood in Buddhist scripture and like Sokatsu a direct disciple of Soyen, had been in the San Francisco area since Soyen's visit to the Russell's. Very little is known of his first years in this country, or as he tells us: "After my arrival in this country in 1905, I simply worked through many stages of American life considering myself a modern Sadhana, meditating alone in Golden Gate Park or studying hard in the public library of San Francisco."²⁴ Soyen had written Senzaki to teach Zen here after staying twenty years, and the disciple followed this advice, spending those years as a houseboy, waiter, cook, and sometime-teacher of Japanese.²⁵ It is likely that Senzaki did have some informal contact with Sokatsu's San Francisco group from 1906 to 1910 through the city's substantial Japanese community. Sokei-an and Senzaki maintained a close friendship and correspondence throughout the thirties, but there were no formal institutional ties between the two until that time.

Senzaki eventually began in the early twenties to hire out lecture halls whenever he saved some money and give talks on Buddhism; he named these various meeting places a "floating Zendo."²⁶ He had eased his way carefully through time and American culture so that by 1928, he established a permanent place at 1988a Bush Street in San Francisco. Here he had a large following of both Americans, who had exclusive use of the hall on Thursday nights, and Japanese, who used the Zendo on other nights--except Sundays when many people of both nationalities came for Senzaki's public lectures.²⁷ In 1929 he began to establish ties in Los Angeles and went back and forth from San Francisco until 1931, when he dedicated a small cottage on Turner Street

in Los Angeles as his first Zendo.²⁸ Throughout the thirties Senzaki maintained a considerable following in both cities holding periodic Sesshins and speaking at various places.

Senzaki said, "I love and respect Soyen Shaku more than all other teachers, but I do not feel like carrying all my teachers' names on my back like a sandwich man...It would almost defile them...I am really a mushroom without a very deep root, no branches, no flowers and probably no seeds."²⁹ But he also created the first lasting Zen institutional following in America and has introduced his philosophy to thousands through meetings and writings, so that by 1928 he also could think of himself in another metaphor after twenty-three years of obscure struggle:

At last in 1928 I established a Zendo, which I have carried with me as a silkworm hides himself in his cocoon; thus, I came to Los Angeles in 1931. The silk thread surrounds me unbroken. It may weave a brocade of autumn leaves or a spotless spring kimono for the coming year. I only feel gratitude to my teachers and all my friends, and fold my hands palm to palm.³⁰

Sokei-an did not stay long in California after Sokatsu and his group left in 1910. He was twenty-eight, half-artist, half-Zen follower, with neither funds nor a good command of English, but he was free at all times and in all places. In the winter of 1911 he set out from the coast, alone, on foot, intending to roam America, starting northward over snow-covered mountains into Oregon.³¹ He stayed the spring and summer on the farm of an old friend, spending the nights in meditation on a rock over the Rouge River, working on the answers to 100 koans so he would be ready for Sokatsu when he saw him again (which he did some years later, but all his solutions were wrong!)³²

Sokatsu had earlier ordered Sokei-an to marry one of the lay-women disciples of their Tokyo temple group, thinking a married couple would be a good addition. Sokei-an sent for her and they settled in an island shack among Indians offshore Seattle. Although his wife was happy among the "primitives," she disliked the civilized life of America, and when she was pregnant again and Sokei-an's mother was ill, she left him and returned to Japan with their two children.³³

That was in 1914. Alone again, Sokei-an wandered the North American landscape, finally reaching New York City where he scraped a living with his carving tools which he had "cherished from the age of fifteen".³⁴ He lived as a Bohemian, a long-haired artist in revolutionary Greenwich Village where he met, among others, Max Bodenheim and Aleister Crowley.³⁵ Ruth Fuller Sasaki recalls the end of those days:

And while his interest in Zen kept on, during this period he was finding out a lot about life. And then in 1919, in the summer, on an awfully, awfully hot day in July, he was walking down the street and suddenly in the street he saw the carcass of a dead horse, and something happened to him psychologically and he went straight home to his rooms and packed up his things and got a ticket for Japan and went back to Sokatsu. He also went back to his wife and to his mother and the three children and he had apparently a very unhappy time.³⁶

Had Sokei-an stayed on as a Greenwich Village Bohemian artist, perhaps his Zen would have taken a different turn. Certainly he was in a milieu that would have excited him and at the same time treated him as an attractive and interesting figure. Unfortunately, little is known of those first years in New York. He certainly made some contacts in the Japanese community and must have identified elements of American culture that would have an interest in Zen--notably intellectual-artistic exiled offspring of the upper middle class. In any case, he discovered New York as an artist through the rebellious Greenwich Village scene of the 1910's and probably retained an alliance to that first discovery throughout his later years in America.

Back in Japan Sokei-an made a handsome living for his family as a writer, publishing several books and monthly magazine articles in the Chuokoron; in fact, he developed a considerable literary reputation in Tokyo.³⁷ He went back to New York for a short while in the early twenties but again returned to Japan in 1926. Two years later he completed his Zen training there and was ordained a Zen master by his sole teacher, Sokatsu, who told him, "Your message is for America. Return there!"³⁸

Sokatsu, following the original injunction of Kosen years earlier, was intent on establishing a line of lay transmission

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of Zen teachings and did not want Sokei-an, who had always been a lay student, to be a Roshi. He authorized Sokei-an to establish an American branch of the "Ryomo-Zen Institute of Tokyo" which had for its aim "kindling the flame to forge those laymen who wish to attain enlightenment."³⁹ However, Sokei-an felt that orthodox Zen could best be transmitted through the formal priesthood and that Americans would not pay attention to a lay person. So when Sokei-an shaved his head and donned the robes of a priest as he set off to America, Sokatsu was furious.⁴⁰ Sokatsu noted that Sokei-an had never studied flower arrangement, couldn't play Go, didn't know tea ceremony, and his calligraphy was bad.⁴¹ An accomplished Japanese Roshi needed such skills. But Sokei-an refused to be a lay person and gained sponsorship from another priest, Awono Futetsu, of Daitoku-ji, a temple near Tokyo.⁴² Sokatsu never again spoke to Sokei-an, though the new priest often spoke reverently of his teacher in later years. Sokatsu was so angry that he officially declared that Sokei-an was not his disciple, but Sokei-an always regarded himself as very much part of Sokatsu's lineage.⁴³

Sokatsu's extreme reaction illustrates the importance he attributed to the lay Zen line inaugurated by his Zen grandfather, Kosen. Much of Sokatsu's later life was spent actively building this Kosen-Soyen lay innovation both in Japan and in Korea, nations where Zen transmission of teachings was also carefully guarded by centuries of established temple procedure and custom. It is understandable that Sokei-an regarded a formal institutional ground essential for the survival of true Zen in America where no traditional Buddhist institutions or customs existed. Sokei-an believed it would take three hundred years for Zen to develop fully in America.⁴⁴ Lay transmission might be a good idea then, but not in the infant stages. His American followers recalled that Sokei-an's decision about lay transmission came

...after his long observation of the dangers of the laicizing of Zen study pursued apart from the discipline of monastic training. For in practice lay instruction has by its nature a tendency to relax standards for the sake of broad dissemination. The maintaining of genuine and traditional standards
(cont.)

in lay-instruction therefore was always a major consideration in his planning for the future. Though Sokei-an was well aware that Zen in America as it develops will naturally become American Zen, to be Zen it must, until its own maturity, continually draw from the original fountainhead.⁴⁵

Sokei-an did not find his priestly garb an immediate aid to his efforts in New York when he returned in 1928. He was committed now to being a full-time Zen teacher--no longer a part-time artist, part-time writer, wandering free spirit, no longer would he toy with Zen as only one side of his life. But the task of establishing a permanent institution was very difficult at first. Rather than live in Greenwich Village and pick up with his old friends again, Sokei-an lived with various families (Italian, Portuguese, and others; a Negro family was the last of this series), resorted to writing a few articles for a Japanese magazine on foreign people in New York, but eventually was forced to seek aid from a Japanese businessman friend in New York, a Mr. Mia who gave him \$500.00 to begin his work.

A center was opened at 63 West 70th Street on February 15, 1930, and as Sokei-an said, "I had a house and one chair. And I had an altar and a pebble stone. I just came in here and took off my hat and sat down on the chair and began to speak Buddhism. That is all."⁴⁶ On May 11, 1931, incorporation papers were signed for the State of New York and the center took the official name of the "Buddhist Society of America, Incorporated." The Society later changed its name to the "First Zen Institute of America," but at this time the term "Zen" was dropped because of the notion that it might be confusing or even repulsive.⁴⁷ The Society itself recalls the founding of this center as the first Zen temple in the western world,⁴⁸ though Nyogen Senzaki was teaching, perhaps with a less permanent location, in Los Angeles and San Francisco at approximately the same time.

A small but steady group soon established itself around Sokei-an; right away he had, as he said, "about eight" and by 1933 he had "about fifteen members."⁴⁹ Each of these "pillars," as Sokei-an called the members, paid five dollars a month and

other funds were gathered from small donations. Sokei-an still made a little money from occasional articles he wrote for Japanese magazines, from part-time furniture repair work, and from ceremonial services in New York's Japanese community. Regular meetings were held several times a week, and Sokei-an usually lectured on a Buddhist scripture. Questions were fielded and Sokei-an initiated sanzen practice early on. From the start, Sokei-an worked on translations of Buddhist texts which appeared later in the Society's publications. Zazen did not fit so prominently in the group's early development. Sokei-an found that disciplined sitting procedures were not always successful with his crowd of intellectually curious rebels. His first experiences with group sitting had prompted him to say in 1929, "When I came to this country last time, I was teaching American young ladies to meditate--half an hour--and in three days no one came to my place. So five minutes! And that was very long, and I reduced it to one minute, and one lady fainted!"⁵⁰ Despite Sokei-an's proclivity for joking, we can assume that sitting in fact was difficult for his first American audience, which explains his initial concentration on verbal communication in the early years of the Society.

The period from Soyen's first visit in 1893 to 1930, the beginning of Sokei-an's and Nyogen Senzaki's formal institutional teaching, is really the embryonic, introductory phase of Zen in America. Prior to 1930 there were no established centers, no permanently located teachers, only occasional lectures, scattered publications and individual, personal contacts with Zen practice.

Various publications on Buddhist ideas had been available in America since the nineteenth century. The very first western descriptions of Japanese Buddhism appeared in Engelbert Koempfer's 1727 The History of Japan. The New England transcendentalists were clearly influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and other Buddhist writings.* Josiah Royce, America's best-known Idealist philosopher, attempted to utilize the Buddhist tradition in his own scholarship.**

* Van Meter Ames, Zen and American Thought (1962)

** Kurt F. Leideker, Josiah Royce and Indian Thought (1931)

The work of Paul Carus at Indiana, C.R. Lanman, editor of Harvard's "Oriental Series," and Wm. Dwight Whitney, a nineteenth century professor of Sanskrit at Yale, all contributed literature that clearly whet the Zen mind of many American readers. D.T. Suzuki's 1908 Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism, among other books, early established him as a recognized name in American letters, but his 1927 Essays in Zen Buddhism is perhaps the most important of all these pioneer works in the development of Zen institutions and practice in the Western world. This 1927 publication together with the organizational efforts of Sokei-an and Nyogen reflect the start of Zen's institutional growth phase in American culture after 1930.

Suzuki had married an American, Beatrice Lane, in 1911, two years after his return to Japan. They had met during Soyen's lecture tour of the East in 1906. In Japan, Suzuki was a professor of English first in Kyoto and finally at Tokyo Imperial University. He continued to study with his Zen Master, Soyen Shaku, until Soyen's death in 1919. In 1921 Suzuki founded, with his wife, a scholarly publication, the Eastern Buddhist ("An unsectarian magazine devoted to the study of Mahayana Buddhism") and in the late twenties and thirties published a long series of books on Zen.* His wife published Mahayana Buddhism in 1938, a year before her death, a book which had a third edition published in 1959.

Suzuki was an ideal vehicle for the transmission of Zen ideas to the West. Born to a family of the Samurai, his father was a full-time physician and part-time scholar as well (he published a short history of Europe).⁵¹ Suzuki was only six when

* Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series (1927)
Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra (1930) (1932)
Essays in Zen Buddhism, Second Series (1933) and Third Series (1934)
Introduction to Zen Buddhism (1934)
The Training of a Zen Buddhist Monk (1934)
Manual of Zen Buddhism (1935)
Zen Buddhism and It's Influence on Japanese Culture (1938)

Scholars regard these works, and especially the 1927 publication, as the Euro-American equivalent to the transmission of Buddhism to China (fifth century) and Japan (thirteenth century).

the family was thrown into severe poverty upon the sudden death of his father. At the age of seventeen or eighteen the young Suzuki turned to Zen in search of an answer to his personal problems. From that point on he combined Zen practice and university studies first under Kosen and the Soyen.⁵² As noted earlier, he spent twelve years in America from 1897 to 1909 with Paul Carus, and many years before and after that in close study with Soyen. He returned to the United States for a short visit in 1936, the world-famous author of more than a dozen books in English on Zen, the husband of an American graduate of Radcliffe, and the direct disciple of Soyen Shaku--Suzuki is the very embodiment of the movement of Zen from Japan to the West. More will be said about this remarkable person as this narrative of Zen in America continues, because his influence spans the entire chronology of the paper.

Among the millions who found an introduction to Zen through Suzuki was a woman from Chicago, the wife of a wealthy lawyer, Ruth Fuller Everett (1892-1967). Though Mrs. Everett first studied music (she studied piano abroad), she became acquainted with Buddhist writings, studied Sanskrit at the University of Chicago for two years and studied Pali on her own. She had some early personal contact with Indian religion through a circus performer turned Yoga guru, Pierre Bernard.* When Mrs. Everett and her husband docked in Japan on the way home from a tour of China in 1930, they met Suzuki through a friend.

Suzuki and his wife, Beatrice, aided Mrs. Everett's first efforts in sitting practice in 1930 and during another visit to Japan with her daughter, Eleanor, in 1932. Mrs. Everett also

* Allan Watts describes Bernard as a "phenomenal rascal-master... who maintained an ashram-cum-zoo at the Clarkstown Country Club at Nyak on the Hudson...known to the press as "Oom the Omnipotent," teacher of Tantric and hatha yoga, whose disciples included members of the highest New York Society...formerly in the circus business in San Francisco, picked up his yoga from a traveling Hindu and moved to New York...author of In Re Fifth Veda." 54

continued to practice Yoga as she began to sit.⁵⁵ At the time of her second visit, Suzuki assisted her admission to the Nanzen-ji monastery where she stayed three and a half months under the teachings of Nanshinken, a respected Roshi.⁵⁶ She tells us, "My purpose, as I remember writing it down, was simply to see, by practicing according to the exact method that I was taught...whether this method would produce any results for a foreigner or not. To think in terms of getting satori for oneself never occurred to me. This was some step on the way to Buddhist understanding, but as I say, we were too new at it altogether."⁵⁷ Dr. Eugen Herrigel, Dwight Goddard, and a few others also stayed briefly. Goddard disliked the ceremony, and left after trying to get some documents from Suzuki, deciding that Chinese Zen was more to his taste.⁵⁸ Goddard later published the Followers of Buddha, An American Brotherhood (1934), edited A Buddhist Bible (1932, 1938, 1966), and carried on other private scholarship. He had little contact with Sokei-an's group in New York. The German philosopher, Herrigel, later published Zen in the Art of Archery (trans. R.F.C. Hull) in 1953, a book that contains an introduction about the "everyday mind" written by Suzuki. Herrigel studied archery to move toward an understanding of Zen.

Evidently there were some "results" for Ruth Fuller Everett, because she went to New York in 1934 and met Sokei-an and the other members of the Buddhist Society of America. One of those members, the writer, feminist, and Henry James authority, Edna Kenton, recalled that first meeting:

Sasaki came out, bowed to Mrs. Everett as low as the incense bowl, and then presented each one to her: "Beginning here in this corner, Miss Kepner (a former schoolteacher)...Mrs. Stern, a psychoanalyst, Mrs. Reber, editor of the Evening Journal; Mme. Clare, who comes from Switzerland and has a fashionable dress shop somewhere and designs many beautiful things; Dr. Stern who is Mrs. Stern's husband; Miss Ward who is a pearl of a typist; Mr. (George) Fowler who is a professor of history; that boy there robed as a monk (who later reappeared as a mendicant in Japan)...someone says you are a communist but I think you are not perhaps..." And so on, ending with: "Mrs. Townsend, she is a professor of phonetics and Sanskrit scholar."

In the same letter she mentioned the presence of a Madame Bluestone, a Yoga teacher, and a Baroness Dorpowska, a noble woman supposedly trained at the "Imperial Court of the Hapsburgs." She continues:

Mrs. Everett brought a single orchid, immense (in the five dollar to seven-fifty class)... it would have paid the telephone bill and the gas bill...horrible materialist thought! She put a bill in the basket...probably a one dollar bill....⁵⁹

There were seventeen people present and the average amount of money collected from such occasions was "about three dollars."⁶⁰ From this description, it is clear that the Hermitage of Sokei "was nothing like the Presbyterian church groups of (Mrs. Everett's) childhood in Hinsdale, Illinois, but it was not anything like a Japanese group either."⁶¹ Even though she had seen religious eccentrics before through Bernard and his group, Mrs. Everett's gentility must have been a contrast to Sokei-an's less refined group of New York intellectuals. They surely must have struck Mrs. Everett as a strange bunch of Bohemians.

None of these people knew much about Zen before they met Sokei-an who lectured to them, gave koans to a few, and taught meditation "by example or osmosis."⁶² Sokei-an did not find them in a mood for prolonged sitting practice and did not push the issue (there was some sitting in chairs)--he met his followers with methods that he considered most appropriate for them, usually philosophic discussion and lecture. On the event of Buddha's birthday, Sokei-an utilized a more formal Zen approach admitting some officially to the sangha and having others demonstrate their ability through sanzen.⁶³ But Sokei-an's New York Zen was definitely his own, characterized by the strength of his personal teachings more than formal ceremony or discipline. Certainly, the followers were as much committed to him personally as they were to Zen study in itself. This combination of the members' philosophic curiosity and Sokei-an's personalized teachings was not to the Japanese-trained Mrs. Everett's more traditional and formal inclination. She was to bring them formal sitting, a greater financial security, and also a young Englishman named Alan Watts.

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Watts published his first book, The Spirit of Zen (1936), at age twenty, and had been active in the Buddhist Lodge (his father, brought to the group by Alan, was treasurer and vice president) where he worked closely with Christmas Humphreys, another great popularizer, interpreter, and pioneer of Zen's coming to the West. The precocious Watts had read widely in Buddhist, Hindu, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese religious literature even as a teenager. His first book was a "clarification" of Suzuki's works which he had studied intently with Humphreys.⁶⁴ Suzuki and Watts met in 1936 at the World Congress of Faiths, held at the University of London.⁶⁵ Watts' regard for Suzuki still borders on reverence, though the independent Watts would never think of himself as any one person's follower. (Suzuki's influence on Watts is clearly very strong and more will be said about that influence later.)

Watts met Ruth and Eleanor Everett in 1937 when they visited London and the Buddhist Lodge. Mrs. Everett spoke to the members of the Lodge about her experiences in Japan ("she had a curious way of looking up at a distant corner of the ceiling while talking," says Watts) and young Eleanor caught the Englishman's eye so that, as he says, "it took me just about a week to fall hopelessly in love."⁶⁶ Eleanor and Alan carried on a romance that led to a visit to Chicago and resulted in marriage on April 2, 1938, properly Church of England, even though both of them were self-proclaimed Buddhists.⁶⁷ They moved to New York in the same year taking an adjoining apartment to Mrs. Everett's 87th and Riverside hotel residence,⁶⁸ and lived mainly off Eleanor's stock dividends.⁶⁹

Ruth Everett was studying with Sokei-an during this period and was formally admitted to the Sangha of Buddha in December, 1938, with the name "Eryu." She immediately took command of redecoration of the Society's 63 West 70th Street building, adding a refrigerator and new drapes.⁷⁰ In addition, she advocated a disciplined, sitting meditation for the members. She helped the Society publish Cat's Yawn, a short monthly that ran from July, 1940, through July, 1941. The magazine featured translations of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese texts (prepared by Sokei-an and Mrs. Everett), announcements of meetings, some of Sokei-an's lectures, and a

series, "Our Lineage," by Sokei-an that traced the Zen line of his Rinzai temple (these have served as major sources for this paper). The entire thirteen numbers were published in Cat's Yawn (New York: The First Zen Institute of America, 1947). Sokei-an had planned to publish the "Recorded Sayings of Rinzai" and turned to Mrs. Everett to help him with the translation and compilation. Mrs. Everett had hoped that Alan Watts could help them both publish a journal by serving as its editor, but it seemed that Sokei-an and Watts did not get along well enough for such a project to become a reality.

Watts had never met an authentic Zen Master (Suzuki was a layman) and asked "at once" if he could study with Sokei-an.⁷¹ The usual, private *sanzen* study of koans and lectures served as the principal methods, though Watts learned about *zazen* from Mrs. Everett, "even though she herself was not seriously practicing it at this time."⁷² Watts soon returned to his self-styled, "lone-wolf" approach to learning and decided to observe Sokei-an in everyday activity and study with him "without his knowing it."⁷³ Sokei-an visited the hotel often and accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Everett on frequent visits to restaurants and "drives about the countryside."⁷⁴ Watts felt a kinship to the sixty-year-old Sokei-an's earthy manner, especially as a contrast to his rather proper mother-in-law:

He never fidgeted nor showed the nervous politeness of ordinary Japanese, but moved slowly and easily with relaxed but complete attention to whatever was going on...He loved to reminisce about his childhood in Japan, his training under Sokatsu Shaku, and his adventures in New York during the Depression, many of which he wrote up as short stories (in Japanese) somewhat in the style of de Maupassant. At this time he and Ruth had just fallen in love, and we were the fascinated witnesses of their mutually fructifying relationship--she drawing out his bottomless knowledge of Buddhism, and he breaking down her rigidities with ribald tales that made her blush and giggle. Whenever she was peeved at him he would accuse her of looking like a lantern fish, and make the skin of her slightly jowly face so itchy that she had to laugh.⁷⁵

Mr. Everett died in 1940 after a long illness. His wife had been a very organized and polished Chicago socialite, but since 1930 she had used his wealth to roam the Zen worlds of New York, Japan and London. Her most significant financial contribution to Sokei-an's Buddhist Society of America was the use of her newly purchased brownstone at 124 East 65th Street, in which she installed an elevator, completed a full-scale redecoration⁷⁶ and placed her considerable library and collection of Oriental art.⁷⁷ The Society used the top floors of the home for meetings and administrative affairs. During those first meetings in November of 1941, Sokei-an stated that he thought the "second period" of his work in New York City was just commencing,⁷⁸ a permanent and more financially secure period that would stress scholarship, teaching, and formal transmission of his Zen line. But the coming of war a month later brought enough difficulties to make this second period very short. Like all Japanese in America during the war years, he was subjected to government oppression.

F.B.I. agents covered the house twenty-four hours a day, interviewing Mrs. Everett and Sokei-an on many occasions, even though meetings continued; however, on June 16, 1942, Sokei-an was interned.⁷⁹ He was taken first to Ellis Island and then to Fort Mead in Washington, D.C. where he stayed until August, 1943 when the extensive legal efforts of Mrs. Everett resulted in his release.⁸⁰ Nyogen Senzaki was also interned from 1942 to 1945 in a concentration camp at Hart Mountain in Wyoming.⁸¹ Both men faced an abrupt halt in their work just as firm footholds were being established. Senzaki was able to set up a Zendo in his camp and continued with his following in Los Angeles immediately after the war. Sokei-an, unfortunately, had less time. The concentration camp ruined his already failing health. Just prior to prison life he had an operation for hemorrhoids and the latrine in camp was "fifty muddy yards" from his shelter.⁸² Sokei-an died on May 17, 1945, a year after his marriage to Ruth Everett. Theirs was a marriage of legal convenience, to aid Sokei-an's freedom, but also one of love.

Meanwhile, Alan Watts had gone to the Union Theological

Seminary just before the war broke out in an effort to keep himself in the Western tradition both religiously and socio-economically.⁸³ He went from there without a degree to suburban Chicago where he secured a position at Northwestern University with the help of personal connections--mostly friends of the Everetts. He was eventually ordained an Anglican priest in 1945 and stayed in that role until 1950. Eleanor, who had been suffering from overweight and depression, had a redemptive vision of Christ⁸⁴ which also hastened their move to suburban Christianity. Watts and Eleanor separated in 1950 and he moved on to California and the Academy of Asian Studies.

Though Watts' connection with Sokei-an was mostly informal and often indirect through the Everetts, their association was central to Watts' career. Traditional Japanese training had given Sokei-an some rather formal notions about just how Zen should be studied and just who was qualified to speak about it. Consequently, he was suspicious of Watts' precocious and independent intellectualizing about Zen. On the other hand, Watts has always been critical of formal religious institutions as stifling. However, despite this element of mutual suspicion, Watts today recognizes a debt to Sokei-an and senses a personality affinity that to him obscures some of their differences.

Much of what I learned from Sokei-an and Ruth has so become part of me that I cannot now sort it out. If I have overstressed the wayward elements of Sokei-an's personality, it is only because I felt that he was basically in the same team as I; that he bridged the spiritual and earthly, and that he was as humorously earthy as he was spiritually awakened.⁸⁵

The Society had changed its name in 1944 to the present "First Zen Institute of America, Inc." After Sokei-an's death the group was maintained essentially by three women whom Sokei-an had named "Eryu" (now Ruth Fuller Sasaki), "Enen" (Mary Farkas), and "Ejun" (Vanessa Coward), the latter two joining about the same time that Eryu settled in New York. Mary Farkas first came with a friend primarily to watch Sokei-an's graceful movements. At that time she was a young dancer from suburban New Jersey. For the past several decades she has confined her dancing to the

halls of the Institute where she has acted as general secretary, editor of Zen Notes since 1954, and principal archivist of American Zen. Vanessa Coward, an artist who has exhibited her Zen-inspired paintings in New York,⁸⁶ has been a constant support of the Institute since the late thirties, supplying poems and art for Zen Notes as well as the use of a country home for weekend Sesshins.

Needless to say, the decade following 1945 was a difficult time in this country for anything remotely Japanese; however, these three women were unified in purpose by their commitment to Zen and to the impressive legacy of teaching left by their beloved Sokei-an. In 1942 Sokei-an told his students:

You say, "When I die nothing is left. All becomes nothing. There is neither karma nor reincarnation. My individual life comes to an end with death." This is a one-sided view. In the world of desire your desire remains. When you were living you wanted to do something--as I wanted Buddhism to be transmitted to America. This desire remains after my death. Every mother and father leaves his or her desire behind after death and those who join the funeral service, having heard the desire of this dead man, wish to carry on his desire after his death. Someone lives in the dead man's house and enjoys the house if it is beautiful. Someone remembers the dead man's words and lives in them and thinks of them. Shakyamuni Buddha left Buddhism to us; we are living in it. Christ left Christianity to the world; we are sucking that milk. Every footstep is kept in the invisible world.⁸⁷

Mary Farkas recalls that she and her friends were usually known as "the girls," Sokei-an's attendants, and his "children."⁸⁸ As their spiritual "father" he left them with a keen desire to preserve his teachings (in Cat's Yawn and Zen Notes) and promote the development of Zen in America. Sokei-an's death mask hangs today in the foyer of the Institute, a tangible reminder of his desire, his words, his footsteps in the invisible world.

Ruth Fuller Sasaki was bequeathed two tasks by Sokei-an at the time of his death: find a successor for him and complete his translation of The Recorded Sayings of Rinzai.⁸⁹ She decided that both tasks required moving to Japan which she did, permanently, in 1947, to Kyoto. There she rebuilt Ryosen-an, a deserted temple structure on the grounds of Daitoku-ji, the temple where Sokei-an

received sponsorship in 1928.⁹⁰ She also began long, hard study of Japanese and ancient Chinese so that she could make accurate translations. By 1958 the construction efforts were complete, Mrs. Sasaki had been appointed priest, and a formal ceremony was held in May of that year to inaugurate the Ryosen-an building which housed the first organization in Japan or China formed to make traditional Zen studies available to westerners.⁹¹ This complex, headed by the first non-Oriental Zen priest (and likely the first woman Zen priest ever), was known as "The First Zen Institute of America in Japan" and corresponded to the New York branch--many firsts for the original Ruth Fuller. This Kyoto branch at Daitoku-ji was to serve as an initial port-of-call for hundreds of Americans who came to Japan in the 1950's and 60's in search of Zen instruction. Mrs. Sasaki tended to these visitors as well as to her own careful scholarship which is well represented by Zen Dust: A History of the Koan in Rinzai Zen (1966).

Back in New York the small group of Sokei-an's followers moved into the home of Nicholas Farkas, the motion picture producer-husband of Mary, at 156 Waverly Place in Greenwich Village. There they held public meetings that were conducted "as Sokei-an would have."⁹² Sokei-an's lectures were replicated from student notes, collated and read to small groups which studied these writings. With this device, the group continued to use Sokei-an as a teacher. The group also practiced zazen. However, the teachings of Sokei-an in sanzen could not be reproduced. Mary Farkas remembers him as a "great teacher" who attempted to bring students to dharma-kaya through koan study; he used all koans and would "give people as many as they could pass;" "he could bring people to what they were seeking in zazen more immediately, even without sitting practice." Mrs. Sasaki stated that "Sokei-an's power in sanzen could be blasting."⁹³ But without his actual presence, zazen, lecture readings, and interpretations of writings served as substitutes for Sokei-an's powerful sanzen.

The Institute's small group consisted of basically the same personalities in the fifties as the thirties, though some had died and there were a few new faces. Edna Kenton died in 1954 before she could publish her work on a biography of Sokei-an.⁹⁴

George Fowler, a historian of Medieval History at the University of Pittsburgh, had joined in the thirties and assisted in Sokei-an's release from prison when he served in the navy as a commander. He remained a member and supporter of the Institute throughout the fifties and sixties. Zen Notes began in 1954 and continues into the seventies as a source of Sokei-an's writings in the column, "Sokei-an Says." The monthly publication, usually about ten pages in length, also had until 1967 Ruth Fuller Sasaki's occasional "Letter from Kyoto," various announcements about the Institute, and its members, and other articles and letters about Zen in America and Japan. The circulation list, though modest in numbers, is still world-wide and includes libraries, schools and religious institutions.

The Institute membership grew to about twenty in 1955 when Ruth Fuller Sasaki brought a potential replacement for Sokei-an, Miura Isshu Roshi, a student of Seigen Hogaku, an heir of Soyen Shaku.⁹⁵ Miura had been studying English in Kyoto and was at that time the personal teacher of a young American named Gary Snyder.⁹⁶ The eager members of the New York Institute studied koans in preparation for Miura's six-week visit which began on April 18 when he arrived with Mrs. Sasaki. The group was able to have sanzen experience with Miura Roshi, some for the first time, others after a ten year lapse following Sokei-an's death; zazen had been practiced during this ten year period but there had been no sanzen, a key characteristic of Rinzai Zen and especially of Sokei-an. Miura also performed ceremonies of communion which Zen Notes solemnly described before his arrival: "During the visit of Miura Isshu Roshi those who have made their decision for Buddhism will be admitted to the universal communion of Buddhists by the repetition in his presence of the formula of the three refuges instituted by Sakyamuni Buddha two thousand-five hundred years ago."⁹⁷ Clearly, the group was exhilarated by Miura's visit, a formal link to the Buddha himself.

Miura came for a second visit in March 1959, "this time not a stranger...it was our teacher."⁹⁸ There was a week of sitting and large crowds for the first meeting. However, after a trial period, Miura decided not to serve as the Institute's

teacher, though he continued to live in New York City where he presently studies privately and quietly with a small number of people.⁹⁹ Sokei-an's desire for a successor remains unfulfilled as the Institute has functioned from the time of Miura's visits without a permanent priest even though guest roshis occasionally visit for public meetings, zazen, sanzen and Sesshins.

The major stimulation of America's broad interest in Zen in the fifties began when D.T. Suzuki returned to this country for his first extended visit in forty years from 1950 to 1958. Immediately after the war, Suzuki had had Sunday afternoon visits in his Kamakura home with a few Westerners including Albert Stunkard, an army physician, and Philip Kapleau, a court reporter.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Stunkard later served as Suzuki's personal physician when he visited this country. In the early sixties Stunkard was a founder of the Philadelphia Zendo of the Zen Studies Society. Kapleau, after a brief return to Connecticut in the early fifties, spent over a decade in Zen monastic study in Japan from 1953 to 1966 and later founded the Zen Meditation Center in Rochester, New York. (of which more will be said later). Both of these Americans continued their contact with Suzuki in New York in the early fifties where he taught and gave public lectures at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia. In 1949 Suzuki spent a year at the University of Hawaii, participating in the second East-West Philosopher's Conference held in the summer in Honolulu (he also went to the first conference in 1939). There he read a paper, "Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy" which his friend, Christmas Humphreys, says, "is regarded by many as one of the greatest works ever produced by the author."¹⁰¹ In 1950 Suzuki spent a year at Claremont College in California where in the summer he held talks with Mary Parkas and Nyogen Senzaki, among others, talks which formed the nucleus for the later Columbia seminars, famed for their creation of the "Zen rage of the 1950's (that spread from) the intelligentsia (psychoanalysts, artists, writers, other thinkers) to beatniks and students."¹⁰² These seminars catapulted Suzuki into the orbit of a world personality. During his prior visit to Columbia in 1936, Suzuki talked primarily about

the tea ceremony in Zen. Columbia in 1951 had different interests perhaps, because the interest in Zen now revolved around the notion of satori.

Suzuki gave Friday afternoon lectures at Columbia. He was assisted by a young Japanese-American woman, Mihoko Okamura whose family gave him a room and study in their home on West 94th St.¹⁰³ Suzuki was a frequent lecturer at the Eranos Conferences held in Ascona, Switzerland where he had frequent contacts with Carl Jung,¹⁰⁴ who wrote a preface for the 1949 edition of Suzuki's Introduction to Zen Buddhism. Other psychoanalysts sought Suzuki's presence as well. Karen Horney had gone to Japan in the last years of her life to study links between psychoanalysis and Zen. Suzuki attended summer workshops with psychoanalysts in Mexico City in 1956 and 1957 which stimulated Erich Fromm to print Suzuki's lectures with his own essays in their collaboration, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (1960). Fromm praises Suzuki's translation of Zen into western culture and readily admits that Zen is an aid, kindred to psychoanalysis, toward meeting the spiritual crises of western people.¹⁰⁵ The shared accents on insights that positively affect behavior and on unconscious impediments to health make for considerable fellow-traveling among practitioners in the fields of Zen and psychoanalysis. The two very much come together as possible curative responses to the problem of anxiety and as explorers of the unconscious.

Suzuki is much criticized by some traditional Zen practitioners who cite his lay status, intellectual-university "verbal" orientation, and "romantic" presentation of Zen that are perhaps at odds with the traditionalist's accent on Japanese and Chinese language studies, long disciplined periods of sitting, authoritative *sanzen*, monastic rigor, and ceremonial proprieties. Alan Watts, also criticized on these same grounds, shared the spotlight in the 1950's interest in Zen as a writer and lecturer. These two were the most famous of the "Square Zen" intellectuals. 'In [his] own way,' Alan Watts naturally enough accents the supposedly iconoclastic Zen of Suzuki. Remembering his first impression in 1936, Watts says, "Actually, the mood or atmosphere of Suzuki was more Taoist than Zen Buddhist. He didn't have the skin-headed

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military zip that is characteristic of so many Zen monks, nor their obedient seriousness....¹⁰⁶ ... He was, in fact, highly critical of traditional Zen as practiced in Japan, and once remarked that the best thing for Zen would be for all the monasteries to be burned down."¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Suzuki was very much in the spirit of established Zen thanks to his formal training with Soyen Shaku, his scholarly compilations and translations of classic Zen works, and his role as Zen's ambassador to the world. In true Soyen-Kosen fashion, Suzuki addressed himself to both laymen and the West. "In some sense Zen in the West was created by Dr. Suzuki, at least Zen as an alternative, and so it is impossible to evaluate his importance and influence. As was said of him by his dharma brother Zuigan Goto Roshi (to Vanessa Coward), 'He led many to the gate'."¹⁰⁸ One that he led, Gary Snyder, a respected poet who spent a decade himself in Japanese Zen monasteries, helps us capture the 'impossible' as he evaluates Suzuki's influence:

The reason people criticize Suzuki is that there almost aren't enough words to say how big he was. What other Japanese person has had so much influence on the world at large? We don't think of it that way because we take him to be so much our own, but he is Japan's greatest cultural contribution to the world so far. In Europe and America he has influenced everything--psychology, music, aesthetics, architecture, landscape design--and through his 'disciples' like Christmas Humphreys, Edward Conze, Hubert Benoit, Bernard Phillips, John Cage, and Alan Watts, he has permeated all levels of society. He has been the catalyst of some real social changes, in attitudes towards the self, towards effort, towards involvement, in attitudes on the nature of creativity, on the value of verbalization and articulation as against the intuitive approach. All these things which are not 'pure Zen' or Zen practice are nonetheless very important humanly. You can say about Alan Watts' books that they have done a lot of people a lot of good in terms of turning down their anxiety, and in stimulating them towards a more creative attitude towards themselves. Whether or not his books are 'real Zen' is beside the point. You meet people all the time who say, 'I owe so much to Alan Watts' writings. They helped me lead my life!' And that is how great Suzuki is. He is more than just a part of bringing Zen to the West. He entered deeply into new social attitudes in the world.¹⁰⁹

Snyder himself is a reflection of "new social attitudes," a key representative figure of a "counterculture" that began with the "beats," was nurtured with the warmth of "California dreamin'," energized by psychedelia, and in many came to rest in meditation. Raised in the mountains of Oregon, Snyder went to Japan after college studies at Reed that included Indian anthropology and mythology and university studies in Chinese and Japanese in California. Before he actually went to Japan in 1956, Snyder was already an influential poet-personality in the beat generation, "Japhy Ryder" in Kerouac's The Dharma Bums,¹¹⁰ the archetypic stereotypic example of "beat Zen." Snyder published a number of poems in various magazines while he was in Zen monasteries in Japan and traveling in India. These publications established him as a national poet, so that by his return in 1964, he was already a well-known figure of the "counterculture." Though he was first attracted to Zen by Suzuki's books,¹¹¹ stayed in Kyoto at Daitoku-ji with Ruth Fuller Sasaki, studied with her teacher, Oda Sesso Roshi (who was an heir of Zuigan Goto, one of Sokatsu's 1906-1910 San Francisco group, and Sokei-an's dharma "brother"),¹¹² adored by Alan Watts* with whom he studied at the Academy of Asian Studies in the mid-fifties, and is informally associated presently with the Zen Center of San Francisco, Snyder is not formally affiliated with any Zen institutions or personalities. Despite this absence of official connection, Snyder's charisma makes him one of today's most widely known and universally respected figures in American Zen. His twelve years of monastic training, principally at Daitoku-ji, places him in a small group of Americans who have studied traditional Zen for a significant

* "...but when I am dead I would like to be able to say that [Gary] is carrying on everything I hold most dearly, though with a different style. To put it another way, my only regret is that I cannot formally claim him as my spiritual successor. He did it all on his own, but nevertheless he is just exactly what I have been trying to say. For Gary is tougher, more disciplined, and more physically competent than I, but he embodies these virtues without rubbing them in, and I can only say that a universe which has manifested Gary Snyder could never be called a failure." 113

period of time. Nevertheless, being a true 'dharma revolutionary bum,' he lives quietly and alone with Masa, his Japanese wife, and their child in a remote cabin in California.

Before embarking further on descriptions of native American Zennists, we should return for a moment to those Japanese who brought Zen to America. Nyogen Senzaki, who came to America in 1905, died in 1958. From the time of his release from concentration camp in 1945 until the time of his death, he had small groups of students (never more than about 25), lectured occasionally in public, and received many people in his Los Angeles Zendo, "among them psychologists, artists, writers, leaders of other religions and people from out-of-state."¹¹⁴ His last words were:

Friends in Dharma, be satisfied with your own heads. Do not put any false heads above your own. Then minute after minute watch your steps closely. Always keep your head cold and your feet warm. These are my last words to you.¹¹⁵

Senkaki had asked Soen Nakagawa Roshi, whom Senzaki had first met through the latter's poetry in the late 1930's, to attend to his Zendo's affairs after his death.¹¹⁶ Soen joined with Senzaki's followers to form the California Bosatsukai which is the official name for this group. Soen had earlier asked one of his own students, Eido Tai Shimano, to join Senzaki as an attendant monk, but Senzaki's death ended that plan. However, Shimano went to Hawaii in 1960 to help one of Senzaki's students, Robert Aiken, create a Zendo in Honolulu, which stands today as the Diamond Sangha. Soen made a tour of the United States in 1961 conducting Sesshins in Hawaii and at the home of Dr. Bernard Phillips in Delaware, sponsored by the Zen Studies Society. He planned another tour, but sudden illness forced him to cancel these plans; however, he did ask Shimano to assist another man, Yasutani-Roshi, who was originally going to accompany Soen.¹¹⁷ Yasutani, though not linked in any particular dharma lineage to Soen (he was the disciple of Sogaku Harada), had been receiving American students who had come to study with Soen (among these was Philip Kapleau). Beginning in 1962, Yasutani began to conduct annual Sesshins throughout the United States. The Zen Studies Society, originally founded in 1956 by Cornelius Crane to support the work of D.T. Suzuki, invited

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Shimano to come to New York and establish a Zendo there which he did in 1965.¹¹⁸ This group acquired a large former carriage house in Manhattan located on East 67th Street and converted it into the New York Zendo which is growing rapidly and houses many of the belongings of Nyogen Senzaki.¹¹⁹ Soen's 1961 visit and Yasutani's annual Sesshin tours assisted in the founding of the New York Zendo and the formation of centers in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia (where Albert Stunkard, Suzuki's personal physician, is one of this group's founders.)¹²⁰ Soen and Yasutani's tours between 1961 and 1963 also stimulated the growth of the Cambridge (Mass.) Buddhist Association, founded between 1957 and 1959, whose first president and inspiration was D.T. Suzuki.¹²¹

All of these figures and centers trace their American histories through the figures of Senzaki, Suzuki and Sokatsu, the three American-oriented followers of Soyen Shaku and Imakita Kosen. This flowering of Zen interest in America in the fifties and early sixties is directly linked to the influence of this Rinzai tradition of Kosen and Soyen. The mid-sixties are the turning point of this particular line. D.T. Suzuki died in 1966, and a year later Ruth Fuller Sasaki's remains were divided between Kyoto and a New York grave beside Sokei-an's. There were solid Zen centers established in various locales and the Zen writings of Suzuki and others were well-distributed. Sokei-an's group in New York, the First Zen Institute of America, remained about the same modest size and continues to this day carrying on Zen practice, publication, and archival work. Americans who had discovered Zen through the writings and lectures of Suzuki in the fifties and gone to Japan were now returning. Philip Kapleau published The Three Pillars of Zen in 1965 in Japan and returned to America the following year after spending thirteen years in monastic study. Likewise, Gary Snyder's decade of Zen study in Japan ended in the mid-sixties. These events mark a turning point in the institutional development of Zen in America. Kapleau's Japanese training had been in a newer line that stressed a Soto-Rinzai rapprochement, the Yasutani-Harada school. The Soto influence of strict monastic zazen was to take precedence over the Rinzai emphasis on lay integration and sanzen with zazen in both Kapleau's work and in the efforts

of other groups, particularly in San Francisco. This shift is not only a result of training backgrounds, but also reflects changes in the American "audience" as well.

The late fifties were a time when the word "Zen" was referred to often. Increased media attention, the underground "beat" generation's interest, and ties with psychoanalysis brought Zen to the entire public. Watts' and Suzuki's writing ("square Zen") were the major source of this new interest, an interest that was also fueled by social conditions: personal and collective anxiety, loss of faith in traditional religions, urban aggressiveness, and the widespread search for "cures" through promising methods. Speaking from monasteries in Japan, Ruth Fuller Sasaki and Philip Kapleau criticized this particular type of interest. First, Mrs. Sasaki: "The vogue for Zen in the U.S. is based on the most unfortunate nonsense. The wrong views have attracted the wrong kind of people and have discouraged the right kind. I hope the movement reaches bottom in America soon so it can start all over." ¹²² Kapleau, speaking from Engagu-ji in Kamakura claimed that "Zen is not a philosophy to be studied but a religion to be practiced."¹²³ He regarded Zen as useful therapy for tensions but dangerous when submitted to intellectualism. Just before his return to the U.S., Kapleau claimed that the "beatnik phase has passed" and that more rigorous Zen would now be possible.¹²⁴

Mary Farkas also saw Zen developing in divergent directions in the decade between the mid-fifties and the mid-sixties. She recalls that in the late fifties many people came for a "taste of Zen" and "hundreds" would show up if a roshi came to visit the Institute (among these was Alan Ginsburg). She felt that the "pioneer phase" of the Soyen-Kosen line was ending and a new combination phase of Suzuki-type romantic-reason and Soto practice was taking over.¹²⁵ Among a number of questions she raised in a 1958 Zen Notes article called "Zen in New York," "Will (Americans interested in Zen) want to settle for their own idea of Zen, or will they be willing to make the all-out effort needed for the real thing?"¹²⁶ She characterized the new interest this way:

The current Zen craze may be presumed to be no different from the others. It will go to its extremes and subside. But among the many who come and go through our open door these days ("Those who come are welcome, those who go are not pursued"), we hopefully note there are some of a more promising nature. Their faces we are coming to know. They are young, not necessarily in physical age but in spirit. They are serious, questioning, responsible, alert. They may not know exactly what they are looking for, but they know what they don't want. They don't want the merely conventional, the superficial or the phony. They don't expect to be entertained or comforted. They might be willing to submit to discipline, bow their heads, risk their necks even, once they assure themselves Zen is the real thing. They sense its depths even as they damn its perversions; they sigh for its ideals with the very breath with which they kiss its false prophets. Though they have never met any persons who completely fulfill its promises, they are tantalized by its clues, haunted by its mysteries, uplifted by glimpses of its heights. Their questions are tough to answer, though they are not argumentative. They are looking for something to depend on in sickness or in health, in business or in art, in wealth or in poverty, at births and weddings and funerals, something that will see straight through their eyes, be immune to tyranny and corruption, act fearlessly in war and peace, in short, a true working principle. Principle is not a very good word, they have pointed out to me, for what we are talking about, but up to now we haven't found a better. The Emperor Wu asked Bodhidharma, "What is the highest principle of truth?" Bodhidharma replied: "Kakunen! Nothing sacred." It is this principle we are referring to.

Though someone said recently: "Zen is strictly for geniuses," we do not at all take this view. Those who sincerely persist will find the way to go. In the eyes of some of these fine young people who are coming our way, there is what we believe is a first requisite for a Zen student, the faith that there is something to find, that the universe is not a chaotic mess, and the determination that man's future lies in his own hand. They sense a mighty current as they are dizzied by its whirlpools, jolted by its waves, exhilarated by its foam. But to jump into it? That's another matter, isn't it? 127

The "mighty current" is indeed dizzying, complete with whirlpools, waves and foam. Professor Hoseki Shinichi Hisamatsu, who taught seminars on Zen and Japanese culture at Harvard in the late fifties, used similar metaphor as he discussed the coming of Zen to America in a Zen Notes article:

...we believe the coming of major Zen personalities to America and their resultant impact on Western thought is an important means of speeding the belt-flow if Zen eastward. As you know, we like to cultivate the quite probably mythical notion that Zen originated with Sakyamuni Buddha in India, that it came to China from the West, that it moved eastward from China to Japan and that it is now on the move again, from Japan eastward to America.¹²⁸

When another Harvard professor went to the source, to India, in the late 1960's, he brought with him the mechanical source of his own journey. Psychologist Richard Alpert gave huge quantities of his favorite drug to various holy men. Some liked it and asked for more. Others ate up immense quantities but seemed immune. One said, 'It is only natural that in the most material culture of the world, God should come in the most expedient, material form. God is coming to America in L.S.D.'¹²⁹ In the 1960's, psychedelic drugs indeed did speed the "belt-flow of Zen" and caused a great number of people to 'jump into the mighty current.' After jumping in, some decided that they best settle on the "real thing" rather than "their own ideas" about Zen and meditation. Many of these went to established Zen institutions.

The relationship between American Zen and the psychedelics is strong yet very touchy. The two most active Zen centers in America today, in Rochester and San Francisco, reflect this difficult relationship. A brief description of the development of each center, with some reference to their printed attitudes about drugs will aid our answer to this question, help determine where institutional Zen is presently going in this country, and conclude the narrative of the institutional development of Zen in America.

Philip Kapleau returned from Japan in 1966 after publishing The Three Pillars of Zen a year earlier, a book that serves as a capstone for his thirteen years of monastic study and the introduction for his own monastic work in this country which started in Rochester, New York in August of the year of his return. The book is like a manual, designed to introduce monastic practices

to Westerners, and includes lecture commentaries by Yasutani-Roshi (Kapleau's principal teacher), transcribed interviews with Western students, the letters of the ancient Rinzai master, Bassui (1327-1387), the letters of a student of Harada-Roshi (Yasutani's Rinzai-Soto teacher), and the enlightenment experiences of eight contemporary Japanese and Americans. Among the eight portraits is "Mr. P.K., an American Ex-Businessman" aged 43.¹³⁰ The story is taken from Kapleau's diary and begins in New York in April, 1953.

"Belly aching all week, Doc says ulcers are getting worse... allergies kicking up, too...can't sleep with drugs...so miserable wish I had the guts to end it all."¹³¹ Later in the same month he complained that Suzuki's lectures and books were not helping him with his pain, restlessness and despair. Admitting he's "hung up on satori" Kapleau contemplated going to Japan and asked a Japanese friend, "If I go to Japan to train in Zen, can you assure me I'll be able to find some meaning in life? Will I absolutely get rid of my ulcers and allergies and sleeplessness? My two years of attending Zen lectures in New York have neither mitigated my constant frustration nor, if I'm to believe my friends, lessened my intellectual conceit."¹³² In September he quit his court reporting business in New Haven, sold his belongings and went to Japan in search of a teacher. After some frustrated looking, he went to Soen Nakagawa, the man Nyogen Senzaki had brought to America in hopes of finding a successor. Nakagawa's connections with Senzaki and Suzuki made him, as Gary Snyder says, "like a target for foreigners and he sent them over to Harada Roshi."¹³³ When Nakagawa first received him, Kapleau had no practice in sitting meditation, much less in 3:30 a.m. bells and gongs that started the day, rice diets, cold, or ritual bowing and chants. His philosophical skepticism and impatient fixation on satori made these features of Zen monastic life a bit unpalatable at first. But Kapleau endured the cracking of the stick, the leg and back pains, and the hours, weeks, months, and years of sitting at first with Nakagawa, with Harada beginning in the spring of 1954, and finally, starting in the winter of 1956, with Yasutani. In the summer of 1958 Kapleau got the feeling he had been thirsting for, which he describes at the end of "P.K.'s" enlightenment experience.

Feel free as a fish swimming in an ocean of cool, clear water after being stuck in a tank of glue...and so grateful.

Grateful for everything that has happened to me, grateful to everyone who encouraged and sustained me in spite of my immature personality and stubborn nature.

But mostly I am grateful for my human body, for the privilege as a human being to know this Joy, like no other.¹³⁴

Kapleau translated these elated feelings into a missionary zeal. Yasutani sanctioned Kapleau as a teacher of Zen in 1966 and told him that his destiny was to carry Zen to the West.¹³⁵ The very favorable response to The Three Pillars of Zen greatly assisted Kapleau's efforts in Rochester (a locale chosen in part because of its austere weather). Opening in August, 1966, in a small house on Buckingham Street, the Zen Meditation Center of Rochester started publishing a monthly news letter, Zen Bow ("The mind of the Zen adept is taut--ready like a drawn bow."), by the end of 1967, and less than a year later moved to its present location in a large house in residential Rochester at 7 Arnold Park.

Today there are five hundred regular members of the Center, many of them from out of town. The Center's rather rigid, tiered membership procedure requires attendance in introductory seminar workshops, trial membership, and participation in Sesshins. There is a waiting list of 200.¹³⁶ The membership is made up of people whose backgrounds are not unlike those of a college community. At first the group was made up essentially of middle-aged, spiritually-minded people of the educated middle and upper classes. Now, most of the membership is under thirty. The Center has extensively remodeled the Arnold Park house and owns another house on Meigs Street and a large country tract south of Rochester where Sesshins are held. The Center has more than twenty affiliate zazen groups and Zendo's in the United States, Canada and Germany.¹³⁷ Kapleau gives weekly lectures and there are five morning and four evening meetings for those who can attend. Workshops for out-of-town groups also constitute part of the Center's busy schedule. A regular staff enacts this complicated effort and there is a budding group of monastics that lives in. Vegetarian diets are common to many members and universal for meals at the Center itself.*

* January/February, 1969, Zen Bow carries a detailed account of diet practice.

The entire operation is extremely well-organized, neat, tight, and businesslike. Unless one is having a "crisis," curious visitors are told to sign up for seminar workshops and dismissed at the door.

Most of the members who are young have at some time and at varied levels of experience used psychedelics. The very first number of Zen Bow includes a question about the usage of drugs and their relationship to satori.¹³⁸ Such drug experiences are dismissed by experienced Zen practitioners as "makyo"--delusions. Nonetheless, references to psychedelics appear in several Zen Bow numbers. Kapleau himself, though he requires that hallucinogenic drugs be given up before membership is granted, adds that such drugs can provide insights that "open doors for some people who would otherwise never have known such doors existed."¹³⁹ He claims a positive use of drugs is possible as "an expression of a deep and desperate longing to break out of this passivity (that material comfort can bring) to FEEL something."¹⁴⁰ Kapleau quotes from Center members "who had once used a lot of psychedelics": "After the psychedelic scene there's no place to go but Zen."¹⁴¹ (Personal interviews could further explore this transition.)

Kapleau's Zen style apparently is very much a product of his own personal experiences. The emphasis on "crisis" enlightenment and on the therapeutic benefits of zazen are derived in large measure, it seems, from his own "enlightenment experience" described earlier. His Soto discipline is a stark contrast to the Zen of his generational peer, Alan Watts, who stresses the playful, imaginative and spontaneous 'flow of the tao.' Kapleau criticizes Watts' presentation of Zen in The Three Pillars of Zen as intellectual dilettantism and warns of the "futility of the artificial, cerebral approach to the illuminating experience of genuine satori... the heart of Zen discipline is zazen...remove the heart and a mere corpse remains."¹⁴²

It might also be added here that Kapleau remembers the 'calm' surrounding the Engagu-ji monastery as a lure for his own return to Japan in 1954.¹⁴³ Certainly the captivating atmosphere of the monastery was much affected by the spirit of its former abbot, Soyen Shaku, who had no fear of the intellect and sought to transcend the supposed antagonism of the spiritual and the

intellectual. Again, we are reminded of the dramatic and never-ending legacy of this man in the history of Zen in America.

One of the most important founding members of the Rochester Center was a middle-aged man who likely had no experience with psychedelics but much with the intellect. This was Chester Carlson, the Rochester native who invented Xerography. When Carlson died suddenly of a stroke in New York City on September 19, 1968, he was reported to be worth sixty million dollars.¹⁴⁴ He generously supported the founding of the Rochester Center and participated with his wife in Sesshins and other meetings. His interest in Zen also included support for Tai Shimano's Zen Studies group in New York and the San Francisco Zen Center which was able to purchase the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center retreat in large part due to a gift from Carlson.¹⁴⁵ Carlson is the most important financial benefactor of Zen in the West. These three centers--Rochester, New York, and San Francisco--are presently the most vibrant and influential Zen organizations in the West, and Carlson's support was essential to all of them, especially in their early stages. Carlson died a few days after attending the dedication ceremony of the Zen Studies Society Zendo. "The day before he died he went across the street to buy a balloon in the park. Right away he let it fly and followed it for a long time with his eyes--smiling. If this gesture was a beautiful anticipation of his death, it is also a non-verbal expression of what Yasutani Roshi may have meant when he said: 'Who knows the real meaning of today's dedication!'" (from a description by Brother David in Wind Bell).

It should be noted that Zen in the West has received key support from the wealthy at several junctures. Soyen Shaku's lectures in Chicago in 1893 had attracted the attention of the German immigrant-turned-millionaire, Edward Hegeler, and Paul Carus, who ran his Open Court Press. Soyen's envoy, D.T. Suzuki, gained his first access to both print and America from this contact with and support from the wealthy Hegeler. Later the well-to-do Alexander Russells of San Francisco brought Soyen back to this country for his 1905-06 lecture tour. Sokei-an received aid from three Japanese-American plumbing manufacturers just in time to keep him in New York in the late twenties and a Mr. Mia, who owned the Mia Furniture Company, gave Sokei-an work on occasion

as well as outright help. Ruth Fuller Sasaki's independent income, provided by her wealthy Chicago lawyer husband, Edward Everett, provided needed support for her own work, Sokei-an's, and Alan Watts' when he first came to this country in the late thirties. But Carlson's support for the San Francisco Zen Center's purchase of Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara may well prove to be the most important of all these assists from the wealthy.

The San Francisco Zen Center started in 1960 around the teachings of Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971), a roshi of the Soto school of Japanese Zen. Suzuki-Roshi was fifty-six when he left Tokyo Airport for America in 1959. The son of a Soto Zen roshi, trained at Zoun-in Monastery, educated at the Soto Komazawa University, a monk and disciple of his father's disciple, Gyakuju So-on, and of the scholar Kishizawa, responsible for two-hundred temples in the 1930's, opponent of Japanese militarism, twice-married and father of four, he had had vast experience when he suddenly accepted a three-year position as the resident priest of the Japanese community's Sokoji Temple in San Francisco.¹⁴⁷ This Soto temple, residing in an abandoned synogue, was in the midst of a shift toward America's own interest in Zen, and moving away from strictly formal Japanese ceremony. At first Suzuki-Roshi did zazen alone, and if asked about Zen, he simply replied that he sat every morning at half-past-five.¹⁴⁸ Around this practice a small group of about fifteen persons soon formed a steady group which incorporated as Zen Center in August, 1962.¹⁴⁹

These fifteen "received the robe" as a symbol of one or more years of Zen practice in September, 1962,¹⁵⁰ the same month that the group began to publish a one-sheet-monthly, Wind Bell, named by Suzuki-Roshi. The Zen Center was first located in the Soto temple at 1881 Bush Street in San Francisco (Nyogen Senzaki's first zendo was at 1988a Bush Street). Zen Center began to hold two-day Sesshins as early as November which cost a modest \$2.00 per day. The group soon began to grow in reputation, making contacts with other Zen groups, including the Cambridge Buddhist Association and Reirin Yanada of Los Angeles (head of the Soto sect in America), and with brain-wave researchers who were interested in Zen from an experimental psychology point-of-view.¹⁵¹ In June of 1964 the first Soto Zen Conference in America was reported in

the Wind Bell. By 1965 the group began to receive support "from all over the world," but "the main support of Zen Center (which then had an annual income of about \$5,000.00) rested upon the regular contributions of only about fifteen people in the Bay area and on the Peninsula."¹⁵²

By the summer of 1966 Zen Center had small, affiliate centers in Berkeley, Los Altos, Palo Alto and Mill Valley. In December, Zen Center purchased a 100-year-old resort, Tassajara Springs, a health spa in the mountains south of Monterey, also described as once "an exotic far-out place to imbibe liquor," but soon, "what was the bar became the meditation hall."¹⁵³ The price of this property, dedicated in 1967 as Zen Mountain Center, was about \$300,000.00¹⁵⁴. Benefit rock concerts, fund-raising drives and other gifts (one from IBM)¹⁵⁵ partially constituted the source for the initial payments. The generosity of Chester Carlson ("the first founder of Zen Mountain Center"), however, appears to be the major source of the money that brought Tassajara to Zen Center.¹⁵⁶ In 1969 Zen Center moved into a fifty-room former residence club at 300 Page Street in San Francisco, thus leaving the Sokoji temple and the "patient" Japanese laity.¹⁵⁷ In 1972 Zen Center purchased a seventy-acre farm in the Green Gulch Valley in the foothills of Mount Tamalpais that stretch down to the Pacific.¹⁵⁸ This Zen Farm Center is complete with several buildings, cultivated fields, swimming pool, and egg-laying hens. The Nature Conservancy assisted in the acquisition of this land, and another non-profit organization, the Point Foundation, gave \$5,500.00 to Zen Center to form the "Work Company," a group that does odd jobs of the semi-skilled variety--"to work within our economic system and to try alternatives to the usual ways of collecting and dispersing money, and of course to find the conditions for work that allow it to be a natural flow of the desire to make and do with others...one way of trying on a small scale to find out how to combine work and practice and develop a craft tradition."¹⁵⁹

All of these properties constitute a very large and busy community that serves not only much of California, but much of the country. Tassajara is the first ongoing Zen monastery in the West, one of the largest in the world, and the first anywhere to

admit women.¹⁶⁰ It has been called "the hara, the center of gravity, of Zen Buddhism in America."¹⁶¹ Appropriately, some of Nyogen Senzaki's ashes are enshrined there.¹⁶² By the time of Suzuki-Roshi's death on December 4, 1971, his decade of work in America resulted in the most elaborate structure and largest following that any Japanese Zen priest had engendered. Together with the Rochester group, this Soto line constitutes a new, vigorous form of disciplined practice and marks the beginning of the monastic-community phase of Zen in America.

It should be noted that the boom in monastic practice in Rochester, San Francisco and at New York's Zen Studies Society in some ways is directly attributable to two forces: Chester Carlson's gifts and the "graduation" of many from the psychedelic experience. All of these Centers have extremely well-organized communities, including affiliate groups, large city dwellings and rural land. They stress disciplined sitting that begins at five in the morning and advocate vegetarian diets. They have maintained close ties with Japanese monastic custom.* These groups have American leaders who have experimented, some extensively, with psychedelic drugs. Philip Kapleau's assistant was at one time very much a part of the mid-sixties hippie culture, a member of a rock-and-roll band, very likely a heavy tripper.

* Kapleau's efforts to create an American Zen, though still very much infused with Japanese custom, led to certain "trimmings" of ritual that caused a break from Yasutani Roshi in 1967.¹⁶³

** Another assistant priest to Suzuki-Roshi was Claude Dahlenberg, a friend of Watts at Northwestern and in California at the Academy of Asian Studies. Dahlenberg has been an officer of Zen Center for years and now also serves as the General Librarian.

These personalities represent a different interest in Zen from that of the earlier, more intellectual-philosophical interest of the Senzaki-Suzuki-Sokei-an followers. This latter Rinzai approach stressed insights from koan study and lay fellowship, not monastic practice and hours of daily zazen. Today, the First Zen Institute of America, though still alive and functional, appears to be outstripped by the Soto-type zeal of the San Francisco and Rochester Centers and by New York's Zen Studies Society, which in 1969 converted a carriage house bought in 1967 into a zendo at a cost of \$100,000.00.¹⁶⁴ Clearly, the modestly elaborate organizational settings in part funded by Carlson in the late sixties, disciplined and rigorous sitting and eating practices, and community atmospheres have combined with the present, young American interests and needs to create an extensive and dedicated following for Zen in America. Richard Baker said in 1968, "There are more potential students of Zen here than in Japan. We are a bunch of Americans trying to find out what religion is--and that is real religion."¹⁶⁵ Mary Farkas, too, senses that Zen's institutional life appears brighter here than in Japan, but she is obviously suspicious of this present, "drug-related phase." She notes Suzuki-Roshi's hesitation to comment on California drug use and intimates that perhaps he was "unaware" of what was (or had been) going on among his followers. But, like Suzuki-Roshi, she sees in America a fertile infant mind, strong but empty, a "beginner's mind" said Suzuki-Roshi,* that is just starting on its Zen path. We recall that Sokei-an thought it would take three centuries for Zen to fully develop its institutional resources in this country. Beginners often stumble across new forms without much intervention of the will or reason. Similarly, beginners often need physical support that frees them from survival difficulties. In these two ways, psychedelics and Chester Carlson seem to have come together, oddly at the same time, to create and make possible an entirely new line of Zen interest in America.

* Suzuki-Roshi's selected lectures were collected by his disciples (notably the late Trudy Dixon) in a volume, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, and printed with an introduction by Richard Baker in 1970.

Though I feel that a "conclusion" is a bit premature at this point in my studies of Zen in America, a few general remarks about this preliminary narrative history should help in the formation of new problems to be researched and thought out. More reading, talking, visiting and sitting are needed even to approach a final interpretive discussion of this topic.

An attempt was made throughout the paper to relate Zen to the particular personalities who figured so prominently in the coming of Zen to the West. Nearly all of the important literary and institutional names of Zen Buddhism in America can be traced to the heritage of Imakita Kosen and Soyen Shaku. More research about these two men, plus a more thorough investigation of Japanese history in the late nineteenth century could yield some interesting results. The dual appearance of Swami Vivekananda and Soyen Shaku in Chicago in 1893 promises to be remembered as a pivotal date in the religious history of the world; consequently, American historians need to look more closely at that event. The work of Nyogen Senzaki was understated here--access to records in California should help fill that gap. A closer look at Senzaki's first group in Los Angeles and San Francisco and Sokei-an's in New York in the thirties would help us understand more about these men and about the early phases of Zen interest in America. It appears that their direct teachings, powerful as they are, were directly limited to rather small groups due, in part, to the esoteric nature of Zen interest in those years.

The various "phases" of Zen in America could all use more description and analysis, particularly the link between psychedelic experience and meditation, as well as the contrast between monastic asceticism and the nation's consumer opulence. An additional, though ironic, correlation might also be made between militarism, industrial expansion and imperialism in Japan and America and these nations' interests in Zen. These latter two points might serve to indicate how meditative practice could act as a safety valve for intense cultural pressures.

Despite the fact that the first Zen teachings in America came from Japan, we should remember that D.T. Suzuki, Sokei-an, Sokatsu, Senzaki, as well as Soyen, all came to the United States

in their early years and experienced important periods of moratoria here. The American landscape and culture helped serve their needs for solitary discovery as much as their message served our needs for metaphysical meaning. These young men came to America engaged in their first 'professional tasks' and oriented their future lives in different ways after their journeys here. They were very much aware of their Westward leaning and graciously serve as noble examples of the possibilities of one-world consciousness.

Present-day American Zen interest clearly centers on the actual practice of zazen. It is as though the seed were planted, and the tree were now growing new leaves and branches of its own. It is on this discipline of sitting that Zen's history in America now rests. Arguments about methods all reflect the varied possibilities of meditation available to the myriad of understandings--people must approach questions of spiritual growth according to their own particular comprehension. Compulsive adherence to the customs of the "Japanese seed" or to any one method should not obscure the individuality inherent in meditative exploration. Similarly, the lure of "satori" offers the notion of a designated path and of an expected goal that could well confuse the earnest seeker--regardless of the glories promised by this state of consciousness. Truly the unexpecting, desireless attentiveness of the "beginner's mind"--in all states of doing and being--is fertile ground for the tree of consciousness. Consequently, the most important story of Zen in America goes on in the quiet of individual lives and practice, guided sometimes by institutions, but essentially a personalized venture of the self, the non-self and the whole self--mind discovering itself.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Cat's Yawn, p. 16. (For the sources of these periodicals, see the bibliography.)

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 12.

⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Wind Bell, Fall, 1969, p. 1. (Until otherwise noted, all Wind Bell references are to this edition.)

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸John Henry Barrows (ed.), The World's Parliament of Religions, (Chicago, 1893), pp. 829, 1285.

⁹The New Yorker, "Profile" of Suzuki by Winthrop Sargeant, Aug. 31, 1957.

¹⁰Cat's Yawn, p. 12.

¹¹Wind Bell, p. 8.

¹²Soyen Shaku, Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot, (trans. D.T. Suzuki) (New York, 1971). (First published 1906). p.v.

¹³Wind Bell, p. 8.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁵Cat's Yawn, p. 12.

¹⁶Wind Bell, p. 9.

¹⁷Cat's Yawn, p. 16.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Wind Bell, p. 12.

- ²⁴Zen Notes, 1957.
- ²⁵Wind Bell, p. 35.
- ²⁶Zen Notes, 1957.
- ²⁷Wind Bell, p. 36.
- ²⁸Ibid.
- ²⁹Zen Notes, 1957.
- ³⁰Ibid.
- ³¹Cat's Yawn, p. 23.
- ³²Wind Bell, p. 13.
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴Cat's Yawn, p. 23.
- ³⁵Wind Bell, p. 13.
- ³⁶Ibid.
- ³⁷Ibid.
- ³⁸Cat's Yawn, p. 23.
- ³⁹Wind Bell, p. 15.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 14.
- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²Zen Notes, 1958.
- ⁴³Wind Bell, p. 14.
- ⁴⁴Taped interview with Mary Farkas, January, 1973.
- ⁴⁵Zen Notes, 1958.
- ⁴⁶Wind Bell, p. 15.
- ⁴⁷Zen Notes, 1967.
- ⁴⁸Cat's Yawn, foreword.
- ⁴⁹Wind Bell, p. 18.
- ⁵⁰Ibid.
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- 74 Ibid.
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- 76 Zen Notes, 1967.
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- 78 Zen Notes, 1969.
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- ⁸⁰Zen Notes, 1967.
- ⁸¹Wind Bell, p. 37.
- ⁸²Watts, p. 146.
- ⁸³Ibid., p. 157.
- ⁸⁴Ibid., p. 155.
- ⁸⁵Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁸⁶Zen Notes, 1962.
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- ⁸⁸Zen Notes, 1967.
- ⁸⁹Ibid.
- ⁹⁰Ibid.
- ⁹¹Zen Notes, 1967 and 1968.
- ⁹²Taped interview with Mary Farkas,
- ⁹³Wind Bell, p. 27.
- ⁹⁴Zen Notes, 1954, (obituary of Edna Kenton).
- ⁹⁵Zen Notes, 1955.
- ⁹⁶Wind Bell, p. 26.
- ⁹⁷Zen Notes, 1955.
- ⁹⁸Zen Notes, 1959.
- ⁹⁹Wind Bell, p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁰Wind Bell, p. 43.
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- ¹⁰²Zen Notes, 1966.
- ¹⁰³New Yorker, August 31, 1957.
- ¹⁰⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵Erich Fromm and D.T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (New York, 1960), p. 78.
- ¹⁰⁶Watts, p. 120.
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