

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Land school started in India. Toward the end of the fifth century, the White Lotus Society was organized by Hui-yuan [not Heineng], or *Eon* in Japanese, and his friends in 403 A.D.” Why *Eon* should be italicized and the other name not can have no explanation other than editors’ carelessness, but on that score there is no consistency in either book, as the careful reader may have noticed in quotations cited in the present review.

But these are details. They did not mar the happiness I felt while reading the books. How much that happiness derived from their actual words and how much from the memory of the man who came to me again through them, I cannot assess. All I know is that I closed each slim volume with *gasshos* for their sincere, selfless (Daisetz=“great humility”), insightful, and altogether lovable author. As I turned to have a cup of tea, I was grateful for the times I had been privileged to share, beyond words, this ritual too with the man himself. “Himself” being what Daisetz Suzuki always was.*

HUSTON SMITH

ZEN AND FINE ARTS. By Shin’ichi Hisamatsu. Translated by Gishin Tokiwa. Kodansha International Ltd: Tokyo, 1971, 400 pp.

The appearance of this English publication was indeed long in waiting but is most welcomed. The original Japanese version came out in 1958 and received instant acclaim.

Now that the English version is out, it is destined to be a boon to the many followers of Zen and, more particularly, to those interested in Zen aesthetics. There are relatively few books in this area written in English (or even in Japanese for that matter) and especially by those recognized as authorities in the field of Zen. In Dr. Hisamatsu we find a man well grounded in Zen, whose whole life has been a series of dedication to the perfection of a Zen type of life. Being a tea master of no mean degree himself, he exudes with all the characteristics of the activities of the tea ceremony. He talks, writes and thinks in this vein constantly and, therefore, the book under review is an important contribution in the sense that it is a personal testimony to what can be accomplished and expressed. In

* I am indebted to Elsie Mitchell and Henry Rosement for helpful conversations in the course of writing this.

this respect, in the estimation of the reviewer, this is Hisamatsu's finest book. It is at once philosophical and religious . . . a supreme dedication to the dynamic, pure and spontaneous form of life. There is no indirection or abstraction in this work. Only the written language makes it appear so.

The book consists of two parts. The first is the written exposition of Zen and the fine arts, and the second a photo-plate collection of excellent objects of fine arts influenced by Zen. The latter collection was hand-picked by Hisamatsu himself and a few of the real objects surround his own personal life.

Hisamatsu starts off by getting to the marrow of the subject, the so-called Zen Activity (*Zen-ki*). This term is not easy to translate. It delineates on the vitality of being due to the capture of the content of a pure, unadulterated nature—a nature which is the goal of all Zennists. It is what subtly manifests the lifting of a finger, the swish of a Zen master's staff, the seemingly motionless stance of a No player, the crisp cutting stroke of an Ikebana master, and the dynamic Zen dialogue between master and disciple. In the manifestations, there is something artistic plus something "beyond" the artistic; there is something "prior to form," "where not a particle of dust is raised," "prior to separation of heaven and earth" (p. 12–13).

In all of the cultural accomplishments, be it in literature or the performing arts, Zen is present as a self-expressive, creative subject, i.e., that which is expressing itself and that which is expressed are vitally and dynamically identical (p. 16). Hisamatsu concludes that this is the Formless Self or the True Self in which the uniqueness of Zen cultural expression lies (p. 18). He says that Zen art is neither realistic nor impressionistic but rather expressionistic (p. 19), which is what *Zen-ki* or Zen Activity is all about. This expressionistic aspect was finally secularized by the Japanese where it gained wide currency in the Way of Tea (p. 25).

To indulge in the Way of Tea is actually to understand, to some measure at least, a unique experience referred to as *wabi*, translated as "poverty surpassing riches" (p. 26). It is the capture of the *Zen-ki* in lay terms and this, in turn, would further issue forth that peculiar form of artistic development called *konomu*, which means "to evaluate, to choose and to create according to the Zen standard of *wabi*" (ibid.). Thus in the end we have a circular accounting of all key terms because they are all rooted or founded in Zen experience.

In order to explore further into the Zen basis of cultural life, Hisamatsu enters

into the discussion of the seven characteristics of Zen aesthetics, a discussion which is at once unique and original. These are asymmetry, simplicity, austere sublimity or lofty dryness, naturalness, subtle profundity or deep reserve, freedom from attachment, and tranquillity. These are not separate but integral characteristics. Some manifest clearly and some do not; however, they are all potentially present or delineatable whenever there is Zen experience.

Hisamatsu now comes to grips with the source of the seven characteristics. The question is, What is it that is able to create and to give expression to the manifestation of these characteristics in the fine arts? Or, what is the so-called "fundamental subject of expression?" (p. 38) To answer the question, Hisamatsu goes straight into Zen itself. He says that "Zen is the Self-Awareness of the Formless Self" (p. 45). He attempts to convey the fact that Zen is a non-differentiable experience where there is neither body nor mind; indeed, body and mind have "fallen away" (p. 47). It is the Self of No Form, the self-awareness of formlessness or simply the nature of the Buddha, the awakened state in the sense of non-objectification; it is *satori*. He goes on to say, "In the attainment of *satori*, the attainer and the attained are not two but one, this 'one' being what is Original" (p. 49). He finally concludes: "I have expressed this Self as the Fundamental Subject that is Absolutely Nothing. Here the word, 'Nothing' should be understood in the sense of Formless" (p. 50). This is another way of expressing the capture of the Buddhist Sanskrit term *śūnya*, the void, emptiness, or the formless self. This Self which is Absolutely Nothing is also the Fundamental Subject that is Actively Nothing (p. 51). It is, dynamically, the True Void or the Wondrous Being realized. He summarizes thus:

The 'religion' of Zen is rather the *life* in which man, by returning to his root source—that is, the Fundamental Subject that is Actively Nothing—breaks through everything differentiated or with form, and becomes himself the Formless—Absolutely One—Fundamental Subject that is totally free. Now, as the True Subject, he, in reverse, manifests his Self in every form of distinction. It is in explicating the ultimate nature of man in such a life that we have a philosophy unique to the Orient; it is the artistic expression of this Fundamental Subject that is Absolutely and Actively Nothing that we have the creation of a uniquely Oriental art. From this nature of Zen, of necessity, the Seven Characteristics already mentioned arise. (p. 53)

BOOK REVIEWS

The last section on the Appreciation of Selected Plates is a running commentary of the famous paintings, calligraphy, architecture, Ikebana, Zen gardens, crafts, and No play, based on the manifestations of the seven characteristics. It is a summation of the foregoing discussion with the aid of this magnificent selection of art objects. The man, Hisamatsu, is seen clearly through in the lucid and refreshing analysis he gives to each of the famous works of past masters. Here, for example, one will be escorted through Liang K'ai's *Śākyamuni Descending the Mountain* or Mu-chi's *Pa-pa Bird on an Old Pine* or Ryōan-ji's famous stone garden. One will easily be led into deeper and utter silence or nothingness just as the ancient lines sang out: "A bird cries. The mountain quiet deepens" (p. 88).

There are relatively few misprints. The print, incidentally, is fine and large, and the pages are appreciably big to include, in many cases, life-size colorful photo-plates of the 276 subjects. The book ends with a section of Notes to the Plates and another of Biographical Notes.

We are greatly indebted to Professor Tokiwa Gishin for rendering the book into English. He has grappled with many unique and difficult terms in Zen aesthetics and has come up with a creditable interpretation and translation. The style is necessarily sluggish at times due to the Japanese but, more importantly, he has been very faithful and meticulous in following Hisamatsu's thoughts and spirit.

This is a monumental work in Zen aesthetics. The reviewer likes to think of it as a companion volume to D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*, for, in many ways, although unique in themselves, both complement each other and render Zen and its type of culture more relevant to our understanding and daily pursuits. It will definitely find its place at the forefront of books devoted to Oriental aesthetics.

KENNETH K. INADA

A PRIMER OF SOTO ZEN—A Translation of Dōgen's *Sbōbōgenzō Zuimonki*.
By Masunaga Reihō. East-West Center Press: Honolulu, 1971, 119 pp.

Sbōbōgenzō Zuimonki is a collection of various discourses and comments by the Zen master Dōgen Kigen (1200–1253), carefully recorded by his disciple Ejō (1198–1280) during the years 1235–1237. It contains Dōgen's answers to Ejō's