

# Japanese Literary Arts and Buddhist Philosophy

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## *The Ways Buddhism Influenced Japanese Literary Art*<sup>2</sup>

THE discrimination of Buddhist thought as 'a foreign philosophy' from ways of thought indigenous to Japan chiefly originated from the movements of scholars of Japanese classical literature in the Tokugawa period (1600-1867).<sup>3</sup> However, the treatment here of Buddhist philosophy as a foreign philosophy does not obliterate the fact that Japanese spiritual life for more than ten centuries had been formed on the foundation of Buddhism. Indeed, while Buddhism without doubt came from abroad, the Japanese, in some historical periods, actually lived their whole lives within Buddhism; therefore, they did not have any 'foreign' relation with Buddhism. Moreover, Buddhism did not become fixed in the forms in which it had come from abroad; it developed and changed as it permeated the daily lives of the Japanese people. In this sense, it can be

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of Chapter III, pp. 161-214, of Watsuji Tetsurō's *Zoku nibon seishinshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935). The introductory section, "*Bungaku and Bungei*," has been omitted, because it only deals with the technical question of the Japanese concept of the term *bungaku* (literature). The translator is indebted to Professor David A. Dilworth of Manhattanville College for his valuable help and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> 'Literary arts' is a translation of the term *bungei* (文藝), which, according to the *Daimbon kokugo jiten* and the *Daikanwa jiten*, denotes the arts which represent aesthetic phenomena by idealizing them. It includes poems, essays, novels, dramas, Nō scripts and the theater, painting, sculpture, and so forth.

<sup>3</sup> Here the author inserts the following notes: "Confer the introduction to the chapter in this book called 'The Transplantation of Buddhist Thought in Japan' as regards the significance of the peculiar phenomenon in Japan of regarding Buddhism as a foreign philosophy, while in the West Christianity was not treated as a foreign philosophy."

said that Buddhism is not 'foreign' but 'Japanese Buddhism.' As it has been said since ancient times that Japan is a land suited for Mahayana Buddhism, among the lands where Buddhism has been transmitted, there never has been a country in which Mahayana Buddhism has taken such a deep root as in Japan.

What has been said already must be clearly understood when we investigate the relation between Buddhism and Japanese literary art. In other words, it is not that there had somewhere been a fixed entity called Buddhism and this influenced Japanese literary art 'from outside.' Buddhism was vigorously active in Japan. And as Buddhism, with its particular form in each period, permeated broadly and deeply into the life of the period, the literary arts immersed in Buddhism arose out of the foundation of this life. Therefore, during the times when Buddhism was functioning as a movement for creating great works of art, or for the understanding of its profound philosophy, or for intense religious faith, the literary arts were not necessarily Buddhistic. It was after these great movements had taken root in the hearts of the people who created or who appreciated the literary arts—when, therefore, the movements had somewhat lost their freshness as movements of Buddhism itself—that the literary arts became conspicuously tinged with Buddhism.

A study of Buddhist movements in Japan reveals two peaks. One is Nara Buddhism, before the time of Kōbō and Dengyō. The greatness of Buddhist statues and architecture and the fervent efforts made in this period to comprehend the various systems of Buddhist philosophy deserve our great admiration even today. But the poems in the *Manyōshū* anthology, whose high artistic value equally surprises us, have practically no Buddhist coloration. It was only in the following period after Buddhism had taken root in the hearts of the people generally as a magical faith, and after scholars of Nara and Kyoto lost their strong philosophical interest, that literary art colored with Buddhism in every way was produced. How widely penetrating this tendency was can be clearly demonstrated by such songs as the popular *imayō* (今様) that appear in the *Ryōjin-bishō*.<sup>4</sup>

The second peak was the new movement of faith, that is, the movement—

<sup>4</sup> 梁塵秘抄, a collection of popular songs, mostly *imayō* of the late Heian period, compiled by the ex-Emperor Goshirakawa in 1169.

Kamakura Buddhism—which arose against the powerlessness of Buddhism which had lost its fresh vitality as a religion, as mentioned above. The fervent movements of faith manifested by the Nembutsu-advocating sects, the Zen sect, the Hokke (Lotus) sect, and so forth, can generally be said to be movements that crushed the contemplative attitude of Buddhism which had been hitherto artistically or philosophically inclined, and changed it as a whole into earnest practice. Of course, these new forms of Buddhism arose one after another, but it is noteworthy that three types of religion clearly crystallized here. That is, we can understand the sects advocating the Nembutsu as the Christian type, the Hokke sect as the Mohammedan type, and the Zen sect as the essential Buddhist type which was philosophical-practical. It may be said to be indeed surprising that these three types were manifested in genuine forms quite rare in the history of religion. Now, these newly-risen forms of Buddhism, different from the case of Nara Buddhism, arose in an age in Japan when the literary arts were already permeated with Buddhist coloring. Therefore, it may seem that they had immediately manifested themselves within the literary arts. But the fact was not so. It was more than half a century before the golden age of literary art in the Heian period (794–1191) that a movement advocating the Nembutsu was first started by Kūya (903–972). Hōnen's (1133–1212) advocacy of the *senju*-nembutsu<sup>5</sup> began in the period when the Taira clan was at the height of prosperity. These movements influenced the newly-risen classes of people to such an extent that they even caused the intrepid Kanto<sup>6</sup> warriors to enter the priesthood. It was probably more than a half century after this that works of literary art immersed in the newer Buddhism, such as the *Heike Monogatari*, appeared. As for the Zen sect, its influence on the literary arts took place still later. Although it was approximately the same period as the formation of the *Heike Monogatari* when Zen Buddhism was firmly initiated by Dōgen (1200–1253), it was in the Ashikaga period (1338–1573) that Zen permeated the life of the warriors as a religion of the warrior class, and manifested itself (as their highest guiding principle) in such arts as the plastic arts, Nō plays,

<sup>5</sup> 専修念佛, a sole devotion to the recitation of Amida Buddha's name, that is, the Nembutsu.

<sup>6</sup> The rough warriors of the Kantō or eastern districts, as compared with the refined nobles of the capital.

tea ceremony, and so forth. And it can be said that Zen's influence on the literary arts attained its greatest flowering, rather, in the *haiku* poems of Bashō, after passing through such theories of literary art as 'the unity of poetry and Zen' (詩禪一致).

Viewed in this light, there must have been something natural in the nature of the literary arts that they came to manifest a conspicuous Buddhist coloring in a period when Buddhism in Japan had lost its fresh vitality, namely, in the Tokugawa period. After the last stages of the age of civil wars, Buddhism was first of all challenged by Christianity. Next, with the Tokugawa promotion of Confucianism, it was ousted from its position of leadership which it had occupied since the early middle ages. Furthermore, it can be said that the sudden rise of Japanese classical literature intensified an anti-Buddhist trend among the intellectual class. Yet for all that, Buddhism continued to preserve its traditional influence within the life of the masses. Therefore, it is quite natural that in the Tokugawa period the literary art of *jōruri*,<sup>7</sup> which had established its influence even among remote villages in the mountains, was at its basis remarkably Buddhistic. The phenomenon that not only the *jōruri* of the love-suicide type (心中物) reflected the popular faith of Buddhism, but also that such *jōruri* which chant the legend of Karukaya<sup>8</sup> received the strong support of the masses (hence the phenomenon that the temples which were objects of strong faith were each accompanied by some literary work which narrated the history and divine favor of the temple), shows how Buddhistic the foundation for the production of literary arts had become.

When we consider the above points, it is clear that the way of looking at the relation between Japanese literary art and Buddhism simply as the relation between Japanese literary art and 'a foreign philosophy' has been greatly prejudiced by the partisan spirit of the Japanese classical scholars. To be sure, Buddhism is something alien. But Japanese literary art was not influenced by *Buddhism as something alien*; they were born out of an experience of Buddhism as its own life.

<sup>7</sup> Originally a recitative with the accompaniment of a *bizō*. Later combining with the puppet theater and the *samisen*, it developed into the puppet *jōruri*.

<sup>8</sup> Karukaya is a popular character in the Nō drama and *kabuki*. Ishidōmaru, his son, climbs Mount Kōya in search of his father who has become a monk.

*Artistic Religious Exultation*

FROM various sources of evidence we can positively say that during the period of Buddhism in Nara, the Japanese people seemed to have derived religious pleasure from artistic impressions of Buddhism. It has been said that the decisive influence on the reception of Buddhism at the time of its introduction into Japan had already been the artistic impressions of 'Buddhist images.' The efforts made for the reception of Buddhism after that was, with the exception of the work of understanding Buddhist philosophy, chiefly the creation of the plastic arts. Unless we deny the social significance of art, it is impossible to say that such creation took place without its appreciator. The reception itself was none other than an artistic exultation.

The artistic measures used by Buddhism extended over all the spheres of arts, not only such plastic arts as architecture, sculpture, painting, but also music, dance, and literary art. The gatherings for Buddhist services (法会) at Buddhist temples caused all the arts to function *syntbetically*. The principle of this synthesis was precisely the 'Dharma' (法 Buddhist Truth). The Dharma, concretized in the arts, approached man through the windows of the senses. Therefore, it must have been quite natural that people experienced artistic religious raptures at the gatherings for Buddhist services.

We must focus our attention on the fact that it was the Buddhist sutras that occupied the leading position at such ceremonies. The sutra was, first of all, something to be read aloud. That is, it was a vocal music. Moreover, this vocal music recited aloud some literary work which possessed a highly visionary composition peculiar to India. For example, the *Lotus Sutra*, which people especially loved to recite in Japan, has a structure which could well fascinate people. Accumulating one magnificent phenomenon upon another and broadening its stage to encompass the whole universe, scenes are described so extraordinarily gigantic in scale that they overwhelm human ability of symbolization. Those who follow it faithfully cannot help being immersed in religious raptures. Such a visionary description, through the concerted effect of the music, the plastic arts, the priests' ceremonial movements, and so forth, excites sympathy in one's heart. This is the significance of religious gatherings and memorial services. If people were thus immersed in such artistic and religious experiences,

it cannot be said that their way of receiving Buddhism in this way was crude or superficial.

One way for Buddhism to show itself in the literary arts was precisely as an expression of artistic religious rapture as mentioned above. Its extremely primitive form can also be seen in books such as the *Nihon Ryōiki*.<sup>9</sup> Stories such as of realistic attachment to Buddhist images are told in a crude way in various forms. However, it is hardly necessary to mention such primitive forms, for works which are called masterpieces of literature in the Heian period are in fact filled with such expressions as mentioned above. In other words, expressions of the life of the nobility in the Heian period were precisely those of a life centering around aesthetic experiences such as these. In the *Eiga Monogatari*, which depicts the life of Michinaga, a representative figure of the Heian period, it seems that even the life of a statesman of this time centered around such artistic religious experiences. In the first month there was the Gosai-e ceremony (the Buddhist service held at Court for the good harvest and peace of the country); in the second month the Nehan-e (the anniversary of the Buddha's death) of the Kōfukuji temple; in the third month the Miroku-e (services for the Bodhisattva Maitreya) of Shiga; in the fourth month the Shari-e (the service for the Buddha's ashes) of Mount Hiei; in the sixth month the Dengyō-ki (the memorial for the founder of the Japanese Tendai school, Dengyō Daishi) of Mount Hiei; in the seventh month the Monju-e (the services for the Bodhisattva Manjusri) of Nara; in the eighth month the Nembutsu at Mount Hiei; in the ninth month the Kanjō (initiation ceremony) of Tōji temple; in the tenth month the Goma-e (the holy fire services) of the Kōfukuji temple; in the eleventh month the Nairongi (discussions on sutras) of Mount Hiei; in the twelfth month the public and private readings of sutras. In between these ceremonies, services such as the Hokke Hakkō (eight readings of the *Lotus Sutra*) took place. Thus, it was natural that life filled with Buddhist services should go on to strive for the construction of magnificent temples. For Michinaga, it was the construction of Hōjōji temple. According to the two chapters, "Music" and "Tama-no-dai," of the *Eiga Monogatari*, which depict the memorial services at Hōjōji temple in the second year of Chian (1022), the

<sup>9</sup> 日本書紀, a collection of Buddhist stories in three books, written by the priest Keikai in 822.

very construction of this great temple was an enormous manifestation of artistic ecstasy. If the life thus represented by Michinaga in a stereotyped way was typical of the life of the nobility at that time, it must have been natural that the literary arts, which are expressions of life, should represent artistic ecstasies caused by religious gatherings and memorial services.

I do not have to demonstrate here the fact that the *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) and the *Makura-no-sōshi*, in describing such services as Hokekyō Kuyō (the reading of the *Lotus Sutra* in memory of a person) and Hokke Hakkō, always represent the 'intoxication' which such ceremonies brought about. Furthermore, in the portrayal of sensuous beauty, places such as *gokuraku* (the Buddhist land of bliss), the Buddha's land, the Pure Land, and so forth, were taken as its ideal standard. In view of this, it is clear that the Buddha's land was seen through artistic ecstasy. When words of superlative praise were used beauty was represented as follows: "This seems like the land of the living Buddha," or "This reminds me of the Land of Bliss of the Buddha." But this practice cannot necessarily be criticized as a mere lack of piety for the Buddha, or as not understanding religion. For it was, not a transformation of religion into art, but on the contrary, the transformation of art into religion. In other words, we see that artistic intoxication led men into an absolute realm, and not, on the contrary, that the absolute realm has been transformed into a 'frivolous play.' Of course, such an aesthetic attitude of life is possible only in a life of ease and leisure as that of the nobility of the Heian period. Such a life, moreover, harbors contradictions that will bring collapse from within itself. The sorrow that is the reverse side of pleasure cannot but vividly appear sooner or later. However, the realization of something infinitely deep at the ground of beauty by keenly feeling beauty, and the discovery thereby of a connection to an absolute realm is, if only that, not necessarily a frivolous play. Man can also preach a 'religion of beauty.' And this 'religion of beauty' had been taught already in some sense by the esoteric school of Buddhism (密教). The life of the nobles of the Heian period was an extremely fertile ground for such a religion.

It is, of course, probable that people of other periods or people of other than aristocratic rank could not have enriched their lives by the same method of enjoying beauty as the nobles of the Heian period. Not everyone can have such experiences as feeling 'the living Pure Land' close to oneself by simply being

impressed with the fragrance of plum blossoms, or the dimly dawning sky of early morning, or the bright sky when flowers are in full bloom. But just because of that, those who cannot be so impressed cannot, from their standpoint, deny the experience to those people who were so keenly and seriously impressed by natural beauty. Similarly, even if those Buddhist gatherings and memorial services, or music of wind and string instruments and singing and dancing, which to us seem absurd, made the nobles of the Heian period feel 'the living land of the Buddha,' we cannot from our standpoint criticize them as frivolous play. As for the personal experiences of the people who were impressed by things of which we can no longer be impressed directly, there is nothing we can do except to re-experience their personal experiences. It is artistic—and consequently, the literary—expression that makes this possible. Therefore, we may say how profoundly Buddhist such religious ecstasies were only by re-experiencing their experiences of artistic ecstasies expressed in the literary arts.

I have described above the situation in which a person who feels artistic ecstasies in religious meetings and memorial services *passively* receives impressions from them as one among the audience of these services, and then represents them again in terms of the literary arts. But we can also look at the Buddhist ceremonies, such as religious gatherings and memorial services, as an art. There we see priests who recite Buddhist sutras or who do ceremonial performances. They play the precise role of actors in a play. What these actors are trying to represent can be, at the same time, artistic ecstasies brought about by visions imparted by the sutras. Thereupon, we can also focus upon the artistic expressions of religious ecstasies of the actors *actively* involved in these religious services. This is not only a matter of a large-scale representation in religious gatherings and memorial services of large temples, but also of the expressions of ecstasies in very small-scale sutra-chantings and Nembutsu recitations. People may intoxicate themselves by chanting sutras and reciting the Nembutsu. Thus, a person who has been one of the receptive audience of religious services, by *actively repeating* the art himself, can now actively represent the ecstasies he has experienced in a passive way. Because of the existence of a realm of such representations, things such as religious services functioned as sources for various music, plays, songs and ballads, and so forth, which developed in later history. It is widely known what great influence *sbōmyō* (声明 hymns



in praise of the Buddha) had on Japanese music. Furthermore, as an extreme example, we can give the case of a term called *rongi* (論議 discussion), originally a philosophical discussion, which, because of its being turned into a ceremony, finally came to denote the name of a certain melody in the Nō recitation.

Now, what has appeared as an influence on the literary arts from the above aspects was a current brought about by elements which have the nature of the literary arts used in the religious services. It seems that certain kinds of hymns and words of praise of the Buddha, as well as religious discourses, had already begun to exhibit distinctively Japanese forms by the middle of the Heian period. Especially in the case of hymns, the so-called *wasan* (和讃, hymns of praise in Japanese) were produced in great number from the mid-Heian period through the Kamakura period (1192–1337). They were originally produced by priests as hymns for religious gatherings; therefore, they simply used literary means as a way of praising the Buddha-Vehicle.<sup>1</sup> They became, at the same time, a most influential means for the masses to express their religious raptures as they sang the hymns themselves. Therefore, a close relationship with folk songs had already been brought about in the late Heian period. This can be seen in the *Ryōjin-bishō*.

The *Ryōjin-bishō* represents a peak in the history of Japanese folk songs, together with the *Manyōshū* and the *Matsu-no-ka*,<sup>10</sup> which were compiled respectively before and after the *Ryōjin-bishō*. If the life of the nobility of the Heian period was represented in the literary arts of the Court, we may say that the life of the common people of the time was represented in this book. The expression of the life of the masses was however not different in its basis from the expression of the life of the nobility. The culture of the ruling class colored the life of the ruled class with the same coloring as its own. For example, the following poem, though clearly different in its simple melody from the delicately elegant poems of the nobility, can be said to be of the Heian style in the feelings expressed:

Was I born to entertain?  
Was I born to flirt?  
When I hear the children playing,  
I feel myself wavering.

<sup>10</sup> A book of poems and popular songs in five books, compiled by Shūshōken in 1708.

Not only that; there is something in the fresh and keen senses of some of these songs about nature or human affairs which even makes us recall the *Makura-no-sōshi*.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is not a wonder that among these folk songs, which still exist today, songs which seem to have derived from *wasan* are in greatest number, and that, moreover, as in the literary art of the nobility class they generally express artistic raptures.

It is said that the songs in the *Ryōjin-bisbō* were sung by courtesans and puppet-players. Moreover, the ones called *bōmonka* (法文歌 a hymn on sutras and sastras in four lines of 7 and 5 syllables) are, in effect, none other than hymns for the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. It can be said that such things especially as the existence of several hymns for each of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* shows how universal the delight for this sutra had become. There is the following song about the beginning of the introductory chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*:

These I know—  
 Flowers shower from heaven,  
 And the earth shakes.  
 The Buddha's light illuminates the world;  
 Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Manjusri question and reply,  
 Expounding the flower of the Dharma.

When the audience sings this, both the singers and listeners are immersed in the visions described in the *Lotus Sutra* and are intoxicated with its magnificent world. Another song goes on:

The eight volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* are one;  
 The twenty-eight chapters, any one of them—  
 There is none listening to it but a second,  
 Who does not become a Buddha.

What is here expressed is religious ecstasy, not agony. People put themselves in the Pure Land in a visionary way. They even hear the chirping of insects in the Pure Land:

<sup>11</sup> The *Makura-no-sōshi* (Pillow Sketches) by the court lady Sei Shōnagon is a collection of brilliant sketches of the life and nature around her, written about 996 A.D. It is a masterpiece of Heian literature.

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At the east gate of the Pure Land of Supreme bliss,  
There are many weaving insects,  
Weaving robes of the Nembutsu in haste,  
In the torchlight  
Of the Pure Land of the west.

We do not say that, because of this, all *wasan* and *imayō* express nothing but artistic raptures. Even in the *Ryōjin-bisbō* there are poems such as the following at rare intervals:

I'm shunned  
By the ten thousand Buddhas,  
For having hunted and fished,  
To live this sentient life—  
What must I do for salvation?

With the prevalence of the sects which advocated the Nembutsu, people gradually came to realize earnest religious demands which could not possibly be met by such things as artistic raptures. But even though religious demands became so earnest, the fact that they tried to meet them by means of the 'Nembutsu' was itself already something regulated by artistic raptures. Witness the fact that in the Ji sect<sup>12</sup> where people devoted themselves to the Nembutsu, a great amount of musical elements were introduced, and that in the Jōdo sect hymns called *shōmyō* were very popular. Although a later composition, the chanting in unison of the *Kannon Sutra* by Ushiwaka-maru<sup>13</sup> and Benkei<sup>14</sup> at the Kannondō hall of the Kiyomizu temple, as described in the *Gikeiki*,<sup>15</sup> is truly surprising scene to those who view Yoshitsune and Benkei only as warriors. It can be said that these things could have been written only by the

<sup>12</sup> 時宗, one of the Japanese sects belonging to the Pure Land school of Buddhism, founded by Ippen (1239–1289).

<sup>13</sup> Ushiwaka-maru is Minamoto-no-Yoshitsune's (1159–89) infant name.

<sup>14</sup> Benkei was a monk of Mount Hiei, known for his great strength and valor. He always attended on Yoshitsune as his disciple. Both Yoshitsune and Benkei are popular characters in the *kabuki*.

<sup>15</sup> 義経記, a narrative of war about Minamoto-no-Yoshitsune, written during the early or mid-Ashikaga period (14th c.). Author unknown.

writers of a period in which artistic raptures based on Buddhism were recognized as natural and commonplace. Even in the Nichiren sect, which is especially, strong in practical orientation, we might say that its ceremony of worship in which the rhythm of drum takes the leading role, is based on Dionysian and artistic raptures. Therefore, the situation of recognizing the influence of Buddhism in artistic raptures continued to exist as an undercurrent even in the period following.

*The Six States of Transmigration*

THE belief in transmigration is not peculiar to Buddhism; this belief had generally existed in ancient India before Buddhism. Original Buddhism rather aimed at overcoming this belief. So long as an unenlightened man thinks that he exists, transmigration will become an inevitable fate which he has to bear. But this is not the true state of reality. When one stands in the position of viewing the 'Dharma,' which constitutes reality, just as it is, there is no 'ego,' and therefore, no transmigration. Thus, it is not that the true state of reality is transmigration; the fact that there is no transmigration is the true state of reality. Enlightenment is none other than seeing this reality as it is. But from the primitive period there was a conspicuous tendency in Buddhism to take over the beliefs in Brahmadeva,<sup>16</sup> Śakra-devānām Indra,<sup>16</sup> and other popular beliefs. Therefore, Buddhism transmitted philosophical speculation in a comparatively pure form on the one hand, but at the same time, strove to seize the hearts of the common people by using various methods of literary arts without regard to theoretical thoroughness, on the other. The strong belief in transmigration as a matter of common belief among the people also entered into Buddhism vigorously through the same way. Not only do the various stories of literary art transmitted in the *Agamas*<sup>17</sup> represent this, but also the visionary stories transmitted especially as the *Jataka Tales* (stories of the previous incarnations of the Buddha) are all based on the belief in transmigration.

<sup>16</sup> Both Brahmadeva (Bonten 梵天 in Japanese) and Śakra-devānām Indra (Taishakuten 帝釈天 in Japanese) are guardian deities of Buddhism, and are among the twelve devas or deities.

<sup>17</sup> A general name for the Hinayana scriptures taught by Śakyamuni Buddha during the early years of his ministry.

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When Buddhism was transmitted to China and Japan bearing such stories and legends, a phenomenon different from that of India occurred. In India the belief in the theory of transmigration was common. The writers of literary arts of the Buddhist order, based on this common belief, preached the stories of the *Jataka* only to advocate good deeds. But in China and Japan the theory of transmigration was not common sense but a new belief. It freed man's existence from this life and expanded it into the infinite past and infinite future. It also freed man from human life and made him communicate with the lives of all creatures. Therefore, the belief in transmigration convinced people of the immortality of the soul, and reformed their view of man as well. It can be said, indeed, that on this point the power of the literary arts in the form of the *Jataka Tales* functioned more effectively than the central concepts of Buddhism. The belief in transmigration, which was expected to be conquered, on the contrary, overcame, with its mystic charm, the view of reality of the Dharma.

The belief in the six states of transmigration had already influenced the hearts of the *Manyōshū* poets to a certain extent. When Takata-no-ōkimi composed the following poem, a belief in the next life seems already to have existed:

Rumors are annoying  
In this life—  
I'll meet you, love,  
In the next life,  
Though it's not now.<sup>18</sup>

Again, when Ōtomo-no-tabito wrote the following poem, his advocacy of enjoyment was directly pointed at the belief in transmigration:

If this life  
Could be happy,  
I would be an insect  
Or a bird,  
In the life to come.<sup>19</sup>

Although the poet was not attached to the belief, it already had limited the

<sup>18</sup> Poem No. 541 in the *Manyōshū* anthology.

<sup>19</sup> Poem No. 348 in the *Manyōshū* anthology.

poet's attitude of enjoyment to some extent. As a work of literary art which has represented the belief in transmigration of the period, we can also cite the *Nihon Ryoiki*. We do not know clearly whether it was an adoption from stories transmitted from India, or whether the life depicted in it had already begun in Japan, but in its unsophisticated expressions there is something that forces us to feel that it was rooted in the writer's personal experiences. It is extremely natural for a simple peasant who lives his life among his friendly domestic animals to discover a life similar to his in the eyes of a domestic cow. And when the belief in transmigration functions here, his sympathy with the animals will be suffused by active imagination, as may be exemplified as follows: This cow is a reincarnation of a certain person with whom he had lived together; and therefore, the then human relationship is now being continued with the cow. In the present circumstances of the cow, that cannot talk, his look is proof that he is trying to talk to me as a fellow creature. Or, the fisherman's feeling of a spiritual connection with live fish becomes stronger the farther it goes back to the animistic period of primitive beliefs. When the belief in transmigration functions, the killing of living things begins to be strongly realized by him as the killing of living things. Or supposing that the fisherman sees himself going to hell during a dream or in an illusion in time of fever. In an unsophisticated age when dreams had a powerful influence on actual life, this much was enough to make him believe in the actual existence of hell. That is to say, the spirit of the fisherman goes to a hell which actually exists. In such a description of a story, we feel that the priest himself who is describing the story is talking about his own experience. The belief in transmigration is already actively functioning and has been represented in literary art.

Of all the beliefs Buddhism brought, it seems that the belief in transmigration most easily entered people's hearts. Even in the life of the nobles of the Heian period who closely felt the 'living Pure Land' in artistic raptures, it can be considered that the belief in transmigration had already been practiced as common sense. The various fates of people in this life can all be understood as 'the *karma* of previous lives.' Stories such as the *Genji Monogatari* regard all fates from this point of view. Only, the aristocratic life of enjoyment in this world did not make people so afraid of the suffering of the six states of transmigration. The memorial services, which the sutras advocate as a way of accumulating merit, could be practiced as much as one liked, and in these

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memorial services one could feel the Pure Land close to himself. There was no fear for such people of going to hell or to the world of hungry ghosts in their future lives.

But for the class of people who were not able to accumulate so much merit, circumstances were not the same. Their lives which could not accumulate merit were, at the same time, lives with few enjoyments, and therefore, even in the world of man, which was comparatively comfortable among the six worlds of transmigration, one had to experience severe sufferings. Because they could not accumulate merit (and consequently they could not enjoy), even more distressful lives awaited them in the future. Therefore, sighs such as cited above in the *Ryōjin-bishō* were uttered:

I'm shunned  
By the ten thousand Buddhas,  
For having hunted and fished,  
To live this sentient life—  
What must I do for salvation?

The fact that the six states of transmigration were believed to be the true condition of reality was, at the same time, accompanied by the inevitability of the belief in the Pure Land as 'the seventh world.' So long as the six worlds, called *naraka* (hell), *tiryana* (beasts), *preta* (hungry ghosts), *asura* (demons), *manusya* (man), *deva* (heaven), are not phantasies that can be dissipated like dreams when one views the Dharma just as it is, but have firm metaphysical reality the only way for those people who, as the above poem states, could only expect a life more distressful in the future to be delivered from this suffering, was to be embraced into the Pure Land of the Buddha or 'the seventh world,' which similarly possesses metaphysical reality. The belief in the Pure Land has flourished precisely on this foundation. In this sense it can be said that the belief in transmigration has formed the foundation of the belief in the Pure Land. The following poems in the *Ryōjin-bishō* illustrate most aptly the above circumstances:

How do our hearts incessantly  
Long for Amida's Pure Land!

Though heavy the burden of transmigration,  
 May the Buddha surely welcome us  
 In the end!

My body is heavy with evil deeds,  
 And I am destined for hell—  
 I shall go to hell.  
 May Jizo<sup>20</sup> of Mount Karada,  
 Come to see me at dawn every day!

Thus, the rise of the sects that advocated the Nembutsu was accompanied by an intensification of the belief in transmigration. In the Kamakura period together with the popularity of such pictorial representations of the six states of transmigration as the *Jigoku-zōshi*<sup>21</sup> and the *Gaki-zōshi*,<sup>22</sup> this belief had been popularly represented in the literary arts as well. The belief in transmigration was always at the basis of one's observation of human life as a view of life that had been thoroughly transformed into the common sense view. And people's lives were interpreted on this foundation as an expression of the principle of 'retribution in accordance with previous moral actions' (因果應報). It can be said that on this point the literary arts of the Japanese middle ages lay uncritically under the influence of the belief in transmigration. There seem to be no

<sup>20</sup> A Bodhisattva who is supposed to educate and deliver people in the six states of transmigration.

<sup>21</sup> There are three picture scrolls in color which are called *Jigoku-zōshi*, but they are different in content and style of painting, which is mostly done in delicate lines. They vividly depict the various *naraka* or hells in Buddhism where the dead undergo various sufferings according to the nature of the evils each has perpetrated in this world. The pictures are accompanied with explanations, from which we know that they are based on the *Saddharma-smṛity-upasthāna Sūtra*. They seem to have been painted by different persons in the late Heian or early Kamakura period.

<sup>22</sup> There are two picture scrolls known as *Gaki-zōshi* but they are different in content. One of them minutely depicts all kinds of suffering *preta* or hungry ghosts as described in the *Saddharma-smṛity-upasthāna Sūtra*. This one is without explanations. Some parts of the other scroll, which has explanations, are based on the *Ullambana Sūtra* where the Buddha's disciple Maudgalyayana delivers his mother from the *preta* world. Both scrolls must have been painted in the late Heian or early Kamakura period, but it is not known who painted them.



war chronicles or narratives, or religious discourses in the Kamakura period that do not express this belief to a marked degree. Especially, the war chronicle *Heike Monogatari*<sup>23</sup> describes in the finale of the tragedy 'the pilgrimages to the six states of transmigration by the Empress,' and makes Kenrei-mon'in, the central figure of this tragedy, who was Kiyomori's<sup>24</sup> daughter, Emperor Takakura's consort, and mother of Emperor Antoku, utter: "Enjoyments in heaven and in the world of men are all play in a dream, and griefs of hells and devils are sorrows before delusions." And also: "Without changing life, I myself wandered about and saw before my eyes the joys and sorrows of the six states of transmigration." The artistic skill of these expressions should be given attention as expressions of the belief in transmigration in the literary arts. Furthermore, when it comes to the Nō drama (能曲) of the Ashikaga period the composition of a ghost narrating his past career was especially favored, and at the back of it there was also the belief in transmigration. That various ways of human existence depicted in Nō drama are able to impress us with their extremely keen latent energy is probably because a deep-rooted firmness was given to the ways of existence through the belief in transmigration. This can be exemplified as an attachment to human affairs even after one's death because of deep-rooted attachments. In expressing such matters writers were often able to depict human sentiments with depths of darkness and dreadfulness.

As a result of such literary arts having become well-known, some expressions based on the belief in transmigration became highly popular. In expressing an extremely strong enthusiasm, one says that he will accomplish a goal 'even if it takes me seven lives.' Again, the intensity of affection is expressed by the number of lives into which one will be reborn. The relationship between parents and children is one life; that of husband and wife two lives; that of master and servant three lives. These expressions were grounded on a firm belief that human affairs will not be interrupted by death, and to that extent, the belief in transmigration, discarding its dark side, seems to have been chiefly accepted as a belief in the immortality of the soul. By the permeation of this belief into the

<sup>23</sup> A war chronicle in the form of a long epic poem, describing the rise and fall of the Taira clan. It is said to have been written around 1220. Author unknown.

<sup>24</sup> Taira-no-Kiyomori (1118-1181) was the founder of the Heike regime and father of Shigemori.

feelings of the people, the *jōruri* recitation which expresses the fulfillment of love in double suicide (*shinju*) became possible.

In Japanese literature a lovers' double suicide had already been treated in poems before the influence of Buddhism. Moreover, an idea such as 'love conquers death' was not an original Buddhist thought, but expressions such as 'the exchange of the vows of two lives' (that is, vows of eternal love), and 'to become husband and wife in the next life,' clearly originate in the belief in transmigration. Again, there are not a few cases of writers of *jōruri* consciously expressing such a belief themselves. To the people of the Tokugawa period beliefs such as 'being able to meet in the next life' was extremely natural. Also the idea that a deceased person is watching you 'in the shade of grasses' (that is, in the grave) was not a personal experience that needed a special attitude of mind. The belief in the next life was universal to such a degree. Therefore, it is natural that it richly appears in literary art.

Viewed from this point, it can be said that in the Tokugawa period, when the literary arts were most detached from religion, they were, on the contrary, most strongly permeated by Buddhism. As for the belief in transmigration also, it had permeated so deeply that people were not aware of its being a belief in transmigration.

### *The Impermanence of Life*

THE impermanence of life as the central concept of Buddhism had early appeared on the epitaph of the embroidered draperies called Tenjukoku-shucho,<sup>25</sup> one of the oldest writings extant in Japan. Poems were also sung on occasion in the *Manyōshū* anthology about the impermanence of life. The most representative of the kind is Yamanoue-no-okura's poem called "Lamentation for the Transiency of Life" which begins with: "Nothing can be done with the world—months and years are like running water . . ." The poem, however, has expressed the poet's intuition on the state of human life in which the young soon grow old; therefore, it cannot be said to have especially expressed Buddhist feelings. I believe that the literary expression of the impermanence of life as a Buddhist view of reality, which is something more than mere exclamations on

<sup>25</sup> Or, Tenjukoku Mandara: embroidered draperies depicting the Buddha's paradise, made by the wife of Prince Shōtoku right after his death (early 7th century) for the repose of his soul: now preserved at the Chūgūji Temple, Nara.

the vicissitudes of life, first began with the composition of *wasan* which accompanied the advocacy of the Nembutsu.

Of all the *wasan*, the Iroha-uta (the *biragana*<sup>26</sup> syllabary song) has been most popular. Since this song has become so generally used even today, attention to its nature as a work of literary art has, on the contrary, been neglected. But precisely because of this the song shows what a gigantic role *wasan* has played in the history of Japanese literary art. According to tradition, the Iroha-uta was the first *wasan* in seven-and-five syllable meter, and was a work of Kūkai.<sup>27</sup> This legend is no longer accepted in academic circles, but the very fact that such a legend was created reflects the pre-eminent position of the Iroha-uta. The Iroha-uta, on the other hand, is a table of forty-seven sounds of the *biragana* syllabary. The overlapping sounds of 'i,' 'u,' and 'e' having been omitted from the fifty sounds, the remaining forty-seven sounds were combined to form a song. Consequently, it is also considered to have been generally used as a table of *biragana* syllabary. However, in spite of the fact that a well-ordered table of *katakana*<sup>26</sup> syllabary had already existed, and that there was no difference in writing the sounds either in *katakana* or *biragana*, the circulation of the *biragana* syllabary by means of the Iroha-uta must have been due to the fascination of the Iroha-uta as a song. While the song is a free translation of the "Gatha on Impermanence" in the *Nirvana Sutra*, it has been circumscribed within the narrow bounds of not using the same character twice. Notwithstanding, this song has a beauty as if it had flowed out of itself. The song runs as follows:

*Iro wa nioedo chirinuru o  
wagayo tare zo tsune naran  
ui no okuyama kyō koete  
asaki yume miji ei mo sezu*

(Though flowers bloom, they soon fall;  
How can this life be permanent to anyone?)

<sup>26</sup> Both *biragana* and *katakana* are Japanese syllabaries, the former being cursive and the latter straight-lined.

<sup>27</sup> Kūkai (774-835) or Kōbō Daishi, was a great Buddhist priest and teacher, and founder of the Shingon sect of Japan. He was also known for his calligraphy.

Crossing the mountains of life's vicissitudes today,  
We shall not have light dreams or be infatuated again.)

This is certainly a beautiful hymn. It expresses the impermanence of life, a view of reality. It is a glorifying hymn that will forever follow the Japanese, so long as they do not abandon the *hiragana*.

But it was not until the period of the military government that the view of impermanence exhibits a large-scale expression in the literary arts. First of all, we can find some of its representative works in the *Hōjōki*<sup>28</sup> and the *Heike Monogatari*. The *Hōjōki* is not a genuine work of what is called *bungei*, but as an exclamatory expression of personal experiences, it should belong to literary art in a broad sense. I think it is noteworthy that it has especially grasped the impermanence of human life in the situation of a class of people on their way to a downfall, and has represented this in various concrete descriptions. This is a significant work peculiar to the age, in as far as the class of people who were in decline had quietly reflected upon the vivid creations of their past, and had devoted themselves to its scholarly adjustment and consideration. Therefore, the view of impermanence has entered even these theories in some form or other. However, in the field of genuine creative literature, there is only the lifeless imitation of the past, without any earnest expression of their own collapse. Such a phenomenon can rather be seen in a work like *Hōjōki*; and the fact that the leading motive of this work is the impermanence of life is exactly its vital point.

Why is it, then, that the *Heike Monogatari*, a representative work of the newly-risen class, likewise has the impermanence of life as its leading motive? Perhaps it can be answered that it was because the author belonged to the class of court-nobles or to the priesthood. Isn't the *Heike Monogatari*, then, a work of literary art of the military class? Was it not the class of warriors that were most strongly moved by listening to the recitations of the *Heike Monogatari* by biwa-playing minstrels? No one, perhaps, can answer in the negative. Even if the author was Yukinaga, or Tokinaga, or Tamenaga, who were of the class of court nobles, or a priest called Kenyō, or Genkyō, he was able to move the warriors because he had been able to express the exact feelings of the warriors

<sup>28</sup> A book of essays written by Kamo-no-Chōmei in 1212.

who had been wishing to express them though they had no ability to create works of literary art. If so, to make life's transiency their leading motive would not at all be inconsistent with the ideology of the warrior class. Individually, there may have been some warriors who resented Kumagai Naozane's<sup>29</sup> renunciation of warriorship and entrance into religious life. However, even supposing the author of the *Heike Monogatari* was a priest and thereby made a warrior who had entered religion a hero, Kumagai could not have been so depicted had not the military class as a whole approved of his conversion into Buddhist life.

This fact signifies that the military class was also under the guidance of Buddhism in their spiritual life. The powerful movement of Kamakura Buddhism may have had a stronger influence than the ideology which the warriors formed out of their actual lives. Therefore, works of literary art such as the *Heike Monogatari* moved the hearts of warriors on the one hand, and on the other hand moved the hearts of those who belonged to the class of court nobles, as well as the hearts of the masses in general who understood the recitations of the biwa players. This can be seen from the fact that this story did not, by any means, represent party interests—Shigemori<sup>30</sup> and Yoshitsune are both eulogistically described as heroes. Brilliant but short lives, noble or heroic actions—the same psychology which made Achilles of the *Iliad* an ideal hero—can be seen here. It is no exaggeration that the *Heike Monogatari* is said to be a national poem of exceptional excellence.

Now, the factor which has made the *Heike Monogatari* such an exceptionally fine national poem is its unity that derives from the leading idea of the impermanence of life. We do not know who the author of this work was. We can only say from various studies concerning the formation of this work that it must have been formed gradually, and that at one time a talented writer must have incorporated the many traditions which had already existed in parts. The most important point for us to notice is not the authors of the incorporated materials, but the author who gave this unity to the materials. With

<sup>29</sup> Kumagai Naozane (1141–1208) was a warrior during the time of the dispute between the Taira and the Minamoto clans. Later he entered the priesthood and became disciple of Hōnen. He is a well-known character in the Nō drama and the *jōruri*.

<sup>30</sup> Taira-no-Shigemori (1138–1170), son of Kiyomori, was a statesman and general. He often restrained his father's arbitrary acts.

the opening passage, "The sound of the bell of the Gion monastery echoes the impermanence of all phenomena . . ." the author describes the glory and the downfall of the Taira clan; and lastly in a passage on the Imperial visit to Ohara, he describes a scene in which Kenrei-mon'in, who symbolizes this glory and downfall all in herself, reconciles in a quiet state of mind with the retired monk-emperor, her opponent in the feud. The author's view of impermanence, that the various forms of conflict in the transitory world are nothing but ripples raised on the surface of an absolute sphere, penetrates the whole volume and permeates its parts, thus giving dynamic unity to this long story. When we focus our attention on the author's work, we must naturally recognize the fact that the *Heike Monogatari* is expression in literary form of the impermanence of life as a view of reality on the largest scale.

It seems that since the success of the *Heike Monogatari*, works of literary art which express the view of impermanence became rather weak, chiefly expressing a sentimental feeling of sadness. Originally the view of impermanence was a philosophical view of reality, and was not a feeling of sadness. But stories such as those 'of renouncing the world by feeling the impermanence of life,' typified, for example, by the legend of "Karukaya," are merely presented to stimulate the feeling of sadness; so with the "Karukaya" of the Nō song and also of *wasan* hymns. Such a tendency may have been the result of an educational movement for the people on the part of the sects which advocated the Nembutsu, in which they tried to draw people toward the Nembutsu chiefly by inciting people's feeling of sadness. Unless we make such a supposition of their motives, we cannot understand such facts as Karukaya's renouncing the world being narrated in connection with his child who was searching for him, and similarly, Saigyō's<sup>31</sup> renouncing the world narrated in connection with his wife and child. But such a tendency was a vulgarization of the view of impermanence, and therefore, was incapable of producing great works of literary art. Those who could not bear the odour of such a feeling of sadness turned to the Zen sect, which impressed them with a more wholesome virtue. From this came the art that represented the age.

<sup>31</sup> Saigyō (1118-1190) was a monk-poet of the late Heian period. Formerly a warrior in service of the ex-Emperor Toba, he became a monk, realizing the impermanence of life. He wandered about the country composing poems, which were later collected into a book called *Sankashū*.

*The Practice of Śūnyatā*

WE can single out Dōgen as the greatest representative of the Zen sect. His *Sbōbōgenzō* (正法眼藏), which was written in Japanese, ranks first in Japan even as a philosophical writing. The conciseness and toughness of its style can compare quite well with the style of any work of literary art of the same period. Indeed, in the history of Japanese literary art, which is conspicuously lacking in the qualities of conciseness and toughness, it may be said that the prose writings of Bashō are the only ones comparable with Dōgen's style.

This concise and tough style, at the same time, represents the strong and magnanimous spirit of the newly-risen Zen sect. Therefore, Dōgen was not the only person able to employ such writing. Ejō, Dōgen's disciple, also exhibited a power of expression in his *Sbōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (正法眼藏隨聞記) not inferior to that of his teacher. This spirit of the Zen sect was gradually welcomed by the warrior class, and finally became a guiding spirit of the Ashikaga period.

The Zen sect aims at the practical realization of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) or absolute negation. It does not rely on and worship the absolute as an object; it persistently tries to grasp it as subject. Therefore, differing from the sects which advocated the Nembutsu, or from the Hokke sect, it valued philosophical speculation to the last, and furthermore, was practical through and through. Its philosophical speculation was practised not contemplatively, but as practical discipline, which was such that every moment it pressed acutely on toward philosophical comprehension. Expressions in literary art functioned here exactly as a leading thread to connect the two extremes. For this purpose, the sayings and philosophical poems of Chinese Ch'an monks were generally used; literary expression in Japanese was hardly noticed. Therefore, not until the period of Gozan-bungaku (五山文学),<sup>32</sup> when the Zen sect itself had already weakened, did direct representation in literary art, as can be seen in the sects advocating the Nembutsu, ultimately appear.

The influence of the Zen sect lay rather in permeating the life of the age with

<sup>32</sup> Literally, the literature of the five Zen monasteries. They were Chinese poems, sayings, diaries, etc., chiefly written by the monks of the five Zen monasteries of Kamakura and Kyoto during the Kamakura and Ashikaga periods.

its Zen spirit, and from here it indirectly influenced the forms of art. As arts under its influence, we can cite the Nō drama, gardening, tea ceremony, *sumie* painting, and so forth. Every one of these arts has a common point that the moment of negation lies at its core. The action of the Nō drama has the foundation of its distinctive form on the point that it snatches away every human peculiarity from the movement of 'man,' that is the actor. Hence, as its opposite form, it was possible to bring about, later, the puppet theatre (人形芝居), in which all the peculiarities of man were exaggerated and instilled into the movements of the 'puppets,' which were the actors. Similarly, the form of *sumie* (black ink painting) has for its essence the negation of all colors which nature possesses. This also produced its opposite form in the Momoyama period (1574-1602). As for gardening, its acme lies in the complete erasement of artificiality. And the tea ceremony attempts to make man's life ego-less. Thus, it was none other than the Zen sect that taught artists the enormous power which negation possessed. Now, how was it in the case of the literary arts?

I think we can come in contact with literary art possessing the same form as the *sumie* and the tea ceremony in the *renga* (連歌, linked verse)<sup>33</sup> of the Ashikaga period. *Renga* originally possessed a long history. Fixed forms such as the linked 'one hundred verses' (百韻) and the linked 'fifty verses' (五十韻) already existed by the time the Zen sect was introduced into Japan. But it was about the time of Nijō Yoshimoto at the beginning of the Ashikaga period that *renga* culminated into a special art. After that it was perfected in the mid-Ashikaga period by such masters as Imagawa Ryōshun, Bontō, Chiun,<sup>34</sup> Sōzei, Shinkei, and so forth, and reached its zenith during the time of Sōgi at the end of the Ashikaga period. There is no doubt that the predominant spiritual influence on these writers was Zen. Chiun, Ninagawa Shinzaemon, practiced Zen meditation under the monk Ikkyū.<sup>35</sup> Both Bontō and Sōzei were also warriors who had entered the priesthood. Shinkei is said to have been a monk

<sup>33</sup> *Renga* is a kind of *waka* poem in which its first verse (5-7-5 syllables) and second verse (7-7 syllables) are composed alternately by different persons. This can go on continuously, and sometimes the verses amount to fifty, one hundred, and even a thousand.

<sup>34</sup> A warrior-poet who took service under the Ashikaga Shogunate. He was one of the seven great *renga* poets.

<sup>35</sup> Ikkyū (1394-1481) was a monk of the Rinzai sect, known for his poems, paintings, writings, and eccentricities.



of the Miidera temple. According to his writings, he valued Zen. He rejected *shinku* (親句), verse linked to the one before by the mere relation of words, and instead, advocated *soku* (疎句), in which each verse is linked to the one before in taste and feeling. Here lies a vital point in *renga* as an art. In explaining this vital point he compared the former to 'scriptural teaching' and the latter to 'Zen.'<sup>36</sup> He explained that in such a standpoint the acme of *renga* coincided with the essence of Buddhism. This point of view continued down to Shinkei, passing through Nijō Yoshimoto and Imagawa Ryōshun. For Shinkei, the acme of perfection in the art of *waka* was 'self-enlightenment without a teacher,' and 'self knowledge of cold and warmth.' He said: "The real art of *waka* is like the great Void (大虚); each individual must first reach his own perfection—enlightenment cannot be attained by relying on others." This conviction did not change with Sōgi. Such attitudes must be regarded as extremely natural phenomena in an age when the congruity between poetry and Zen was being advocated among Zen monks.

But what we should take up as our problem is not the theory of *renga* but its creation. The point is how greatly *renga* as a form of literary art has been influenced by Zen. We must first of all recall that *renga* as a form of literary art is something extremely rare. That is, *renga* is not the creation of a single individual, but of a group.

The greatest problem for *renga* to become a perfect art lies in the control of this group creation. It is for this reason that the linking of each verse to the one before is considered crucial. This linking should not be merely the combination of one associated idea with another. In such a situation nothing but a two-dimensional consciousness abstracted from concrete personality will be represented. Contrary to this, a group creation will be possible only when the linking of one verse to another becomes, at the same time, a bond between one person and another. In this sense, the creation of a *renga* should, at the same time, be a realization of the communal state of man. However, the communion between man and man does not mean their becoming merely one. It is only

<sup>36</sup> Zen called all other forms of Buddhism "scriptural teaching," because they were based on scriptures, i.e., verbal expressions of the Buddhist truth, and distinguished itself from them by emphasizing "No reliance on words and letters; independent transmission apart from scriptural teaching."

through the fact that men are unique individuals that a cooperation between 'man and man' can be realized. That is, *renga* is possible only 'after each individual has perfected himself.' Therefore, each verse (the 5-7-5 syllable verse or the 7-7 syllable verse) of the *renga*, while being an independent verse having an independent poetic sphere, at the same time, communely constitutes the poetic sphere of the entire poem. A *renga* can be created organically only through the practical realization of dialectic unity of the individual and the whole by the composers. The saying, 'the whole company has become one entity' (一塵が<sup>2</sup>揃ふ), signifies such a dialectic unity. Therefore, if there are self-centered persons in the company, a certain 'distortion' will be felt and group spirit itself will not be produced. When there are people, who, lacking individuality, are influenced only by others' suggestions, a certain 'lack of power' will be felt, and a creative enthusiasm will not appear. It is by means of attaining to Nothingness while each remains individual to the last, or in other words, by means of movements based on the great Void by persons each of whom has attained his own fulfillment, that the company will be complete and interest for creativity will be roused. Viewed in this light, the composition of *renga* itself is extremely similar to the practice of Zen. It may be that if it had not been based on Zen, such group composition as the *renga* could not have become an art form.

In close connection with the creative attitude mentioned above, it must also be noticed that *renga* was not merely an art that demanded "appreciation" from the standpoint of objective observation. This can also be said about the tea ceremony. The guests at the tea ceremony will not experience the art of tea if they merely appreciated the decorations of the tea room or the host's activities in the tea ceremony. Unless the guests live together in the tea-room, the creation itself of the tea ceremony will not be accomplished. The charm of the tea ceremony can be realized by the participation of the guests as well in its creation. Therefore, there must be sympathetic consideration on the part of the host to make the guests forget all worldly affairs, and at the same time there must be the readiness on the part of the guests to be immersed in the heart of the host. That is, a sympathetic frame of mind must exist. Similarly, in *renga* its composers are at the same time its audience. The one who composes a verse must thoroughly appreciate the previous verse. When he immerses himself in this experience of appreciation, forgetting about himself,

a verse will suddenly strike him which he can link to the previous one. Therefore, creation is appreciation, and appreciation is creation. In this way an inexpressible joy is produced among the company by virtue of the harmony of temperament between the person who composes the second verse and the person who has composed the first verse. It is an aesthetic joy and also the joy of the idea that 'self and others are one,' and is, therefore, a religious ecstasy of being in the great Void. Again, in reading the *renga* verses which have already been composed and appreciating them only from one's own standpoint, one cannot have thorough appreciation unless he re-experiences the above kind of creative appreciation. The course which *renga* takes is not guided by a pre-existing idea such as in an individual composition, but is a completely inevitable course, so to speak, the outcome of which even the composers themselves cannot foresee. It can be guided only by the flow of temperament between man and man; no appreciation is possible unless one follows this temperament.

But it is not that, because of this, *renga* is guided solely by accident. What makes the cooperation of composers possible is the existence of the principle of 'the great Void' at their basis. It will not fail to rid each individual of his subjective feeling, especially self-centered sensation and emotion which cut a person off from the necessary communal feeling. On this point, *renga* is not necessarily subjective and lyrical, but is objective and descriptive. Man tends to make his feelings common with others by thoroughly embodying the essence of nature and human affairs. This attitude in *renga* intensifies the tendency, especially that of immersing oneself in nature. It may be because of such a tendency that the Japanese people's observation of nature became minute and the joy of living in nature came to be strongly realized. Here again at its basis we find the attitude of Zen. Man can live in the great life of nature by becoming 'selfless.' The perfection of the *renga* company will be realized in an extremely beautiful state when the members possess such a mental attitude. The perfection of the company is none other than that power which controls and unifies the *renga's* internal development.

The various regulations concerning the compositions of *renga* can be regarded as having derived from the above-described essence of *renga*. Therefore, though seemingly extremely complicated, many of them have originated because of the internal logic of *renga* composition. It can be said that the fact that *renga*, though bound by such complicated regulations, became very popular, and that

it reached its zenith especially in the turbulent times after the Ōnin<sup>37</sup> wars, show what an influential literary form it had become.

The *baikai*<sup>38</sup> of Bashō may be regarded as a self-conscious perfection of *renga* into a form of literary art. The position taken by some *renga* poets that *waka* and *renga* are identical was proof they had not yet reached this self-realization. Bashō established a sphere of *baikai* which was remarkably different from that of *waka*. But the essence of *baikai* is not different from the essence of *renga* mentioned above. He simply realized and perfected its essence. Hence, it can be said that Zen feeling was also remarkably purified in Bashō's literary art. This is the reason we said before that the *baikai* of Bashō was the most excellent flowering of the influence of Zen.

<sup>37</sup> The great civil war caused by a dispute over the succession to the Ashikaga Shogunate. It took place around the capital of Kyoto, lasting for eleven years (1467-1477), destroying the Imperial Palace, temples, shrines, and practically devastating the whole city of Kyoto.

<sup>38</sup> Or *baiku*, a seventeen-syllable verse, divided into 5-7-5 syllables. It was originally the first verse of a *renga*. This verse was later made into an independent poem and called *bakku* or *baku*.