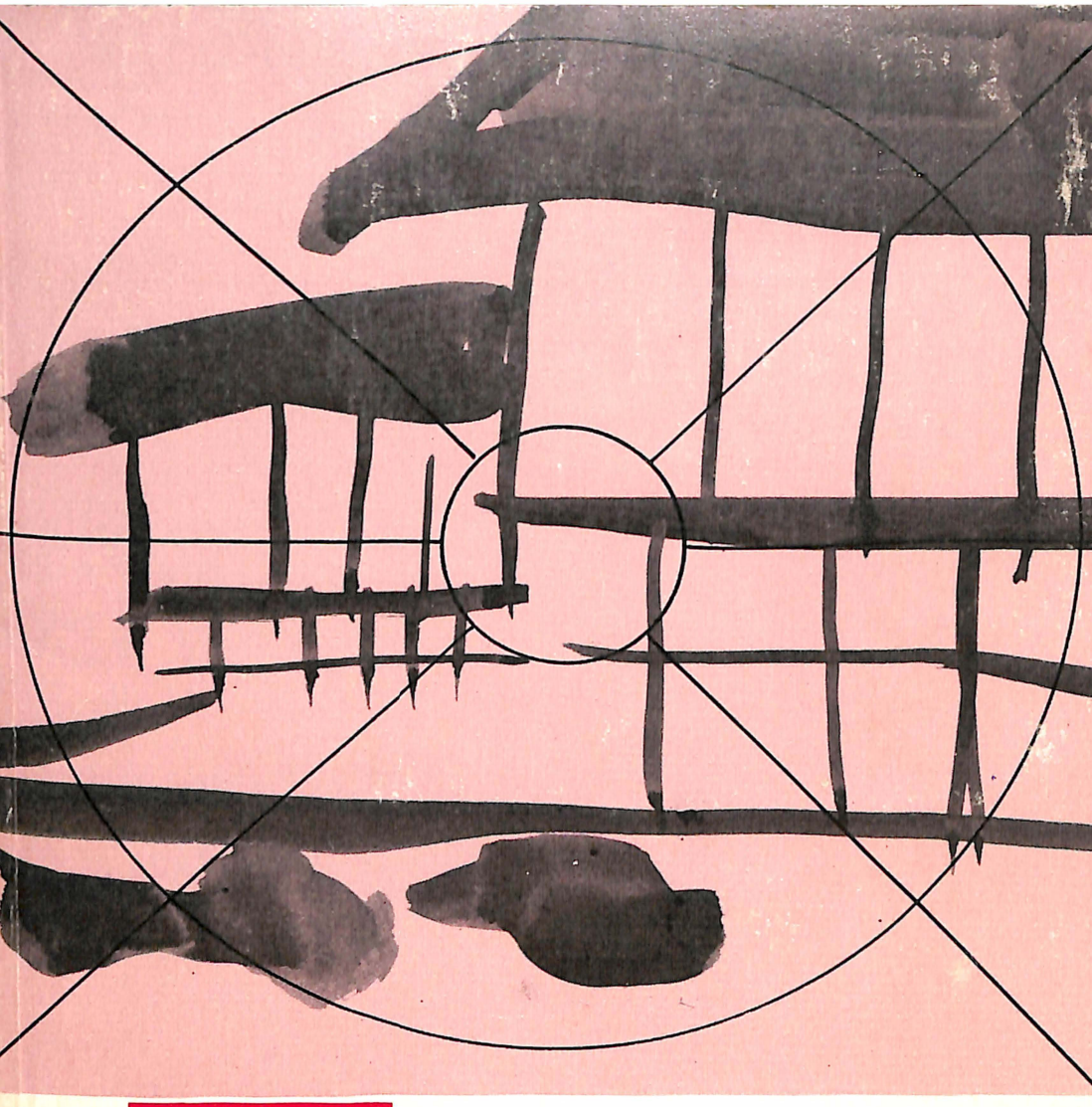

Buddhism and the Arts of JAPAN

Richard B. Pilgrim

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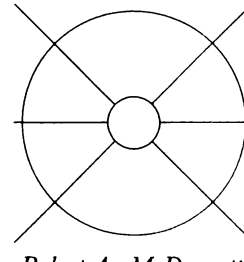

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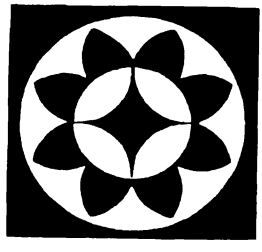
From the Oxherding Pictures



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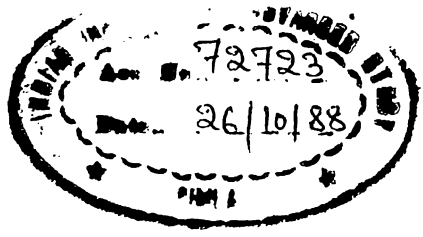


Pilgrim, Richard B.
Buddhism and the arts of Japan

Bibliography: p.
1. Buddhism and the arts—Japan. 2. Buddhism and the arts—Japan—Audio-visual aids—Catalogs. I. Title.
BQ678.P54 704'.2943 81-8063
ISBN 0-89012-026-9 (pbk.) AACR2

This volume is part of a series of guides for the audio-visual materials useful for the study of Hinduism and Buddhism. Preparation and publication were made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Council on International and Public Affairs, Inc. (Ward Morehouse, President), with Robert A. McDermott as Project Director. Through the Endowment's provision for matching funds, this project was supported by the Ada Howe Kent Foundation and Baruch College, CUNY.

Printed in USA.

ANIMA BOOKS is a subdivision of Conococheague Associates, Inc., 1053 Wilson Avenue, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania 17201.

Foreword

THIS GUIDE concerns the interplay of two subjects — Japanese Buddhism and Japanese arts — and two ways of penetrating these subjects — the verbal and the visual. Professor Pilgrim expertly shows the complex but revealing relationships between these two sets of polarities, and in the process enables us to develop a deeper sensitivity toward each.

The entire guide, including the essay, extensive notes, bibliography, guide to audio-visual resources and glossary are all concerned with Buddhism. As with the other authors of the guides in this series,* Professor Pilgrim brings to this task an appreciation of Asian religions — particularly Japanese Buddhism — which includes its sights and sounds as well as its textual, credal and historical dimensions. In treating the arts of Japan, Professor Pilgrim is also teaching Buddhism, not merely as a cultural extension of Buddhist practice, but as a distinctively religious phenomenon.

While it is not difficult to recognize the fact that Buddhism is significantly related to the arts of Japan, it is far more difficult to discern the exact relationship in such diverse arts as dance, drama, architecture, ceramics, tea, and the martial arts. It is the special contribution of this guide to enable the reader/viewer to understand and see the mutual influence and interdependence of Buddhist precept and practice on the one hand and Japanese arts on the other.

In order to show the distinctively Buddhist quality of these arts, Professor Pilgrim explains at length the nature of Buddhist enlightenment and the discipline which can lead to its attainment. Appropriately, this explanation utilizes the so-called "ox-herding pictures," the intriguing Ch'an or Zen Buddhist paradigm of the path to the awakened self (which is more accurately understood as non-self, or Emptiness/Suchness). With this necessary background established, the remaining sections offer a brief historical sketch followed by an extended interpretation of the mutual influence of Buddhism and the arts of Japan.

Japanese Buddhist arts are best understood when classified into temple arts and arts outside the temple. These same arts can also be divided into arts of form and symbol (e.g., sculptural forms of the Buddha) and so-called formless arts or arts with no explicitly Buddhist iconographical con-

*See Harry M. Buck, *Spiritual Discipline in Hinduism, Buddhism and the West*; Diana Eck, *Darśana: The Visual in the Hindu Religious Tradition*; Donald K. Swearer, *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia*. Additional volumes are projected.

tent (e.g., most examples of calligraphy, painting, poetry, Noh drama, tea ceremony, martial arts). Thus, the formless arts refer to the artistic expessions which are inspired by Buddhism but do not express specific Buddhist symbolism. In order to establish that even the formless arts are truly Buddhist, at least in influence or inspiration, Professor Pilgrim uncovers the unity of purpose of Buddhist spiritual discipline and the artistic process. The establishment of this underlying unity constitutes the second purpose, and perhaps the major contribution, of Professor Pilgrim's essay, for it enables the reader/viewer both to locate Buddhist spirituality in many examples of Japanese creativity, and to see such creativity as a proper means (not merely the result) of attaining Buddhist enlightenment.

While Professor Pilgrim's essay can stand on its own as an introduction to the Buddhism and arts of Japan, it can be used more profitably in relation to the audio-visual resources recommended for this topic.* The entire guide can best be read as an attempt to foster the complementarity of intellectual and visual foci. The essay will inform, and in turn will be enriched by, any of the 18 films, 6 slide sets and 5 recordings recommended in the "Guide to Audio-Visual Resources."

Robert A. McDermott
Series Editor

*For a comprehensive critical guide to audio-visual resources for the study of Buddhism, including lengthy reviews of 40 films, several slide sets and recordings, see Robert A. McDermott, editor, *Focus on Buddhism*, Chambersburg, PA: Anima Publications, 1981.

Contents

PROLOGUE

Your form being the form of no-form,
Your going and coming takes place
nowhere but where you are;
Your thought being the thought of no-thought,
Your singing and dancing is none other
than the voice of Dharma.
How boundless and free the sky of Samadhi!
How refreshingly bright, the moon of Enlightenment!
At this moment what is there that you lack!
Nirvana presents itself before you,
Where you stand is the Land of Purity.
Your person, the body of Buddha.

Hakuin Zenji
(1685-1768)

Preface

IN THIS essay-guide we will attempt to gain an understanding and sense of the Buddhist arts of Japan. The arts themselves can be understood with relative ease; the more difficult issue is their "sense."

The word *sense* has at least two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the knowledge, understanding, and meaning we may reach about something. On the other it refers to the realm of the senses; that is, our experience of something via any and all the sensory modes at our disposal. Both of these meanings are involved in this guide. While the essay that follows works primarily on meaning and understanding, it does so in the context of audio-visual materials that ideally provide stimulation (and understanding) through other sensory modes. While nothing can substitute adequately for "being there," I am convinced that we come closer to being there by seeing and hearing (perhaps even feeling) the objects of our concern. If Buddhism teaches us nothing else, it suggests that only in the depth and breadth of our own experience do we actually "touch" our reality and our world. In that spirit the wider audio-visual context at least opens possible new dimensions of understanding through a more direct experience of the objects of our concern.

The nature of understanding, and the attempt to gain a sense of things, are issues worthy of mention — especially in dealing with Buddhism. With rather consistent clarity, Buddhism presents itself as a path to be walked and an experience to be lived. To "be there" with the Buddhist arts, for example, would thus ultimately mean to *practice* those arts and not merely wonder about them or scratch around the surfaces. To *live* them would be the Buddhist way of getting a sense of them.

In the meantime, however, we are writing and reading about them in this essay. Most of us, in fact, will not live them in a way Buddhism could finally accept. From a Buddhist perspective we are dealing with the scenery of Buddhism and not its path. Consequently we must ask: How do we deal with the scenery and yet remain sensitive to the truly Buddhist meaning which is ultimately a path-meaning? How do we stand outside and *watch* when Buddhism says one must take up the discipline and *do* it? Whatever our answer might be the issue is clear, and this essay tries to find the middle ground on it.

Appreciations are in order as completion of this project draws near: to the National Endowment for the Humanities whose funds supported it; to our editor and project director, Robert A. McDermott, whose energy

sustained it; to project colleagues, particularly Donald K. Swearer, whose insight and knowledge informed it; and to Buddhism and the Japanese arts which constantly inspire it.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

AS REPORT would have it, two little boys were wandering through a museum when they chanced upon a statue of the Buddha. The first boy exclaimed: "Wow, is he ever weird looking!" The second boy simply gazed in rapt attention. Thus caught in the net of curiosity, the boys stood watching and listening as other visitors came by and dropped their comments into the quiet, slightly echoing, atmosphere. "He sure is beautiful," said one, "I wonder why his eyes are closed?" Another offered no response, but reading the explanatory label posted nearby said: "'Gautama Buddha, 2nd Century ACE, India.'" "Aha!" said still another, "that explains it! You can tell by the folds of his garments and the expression on his face that he represents an early Mahāyāṇa Buddhist statue showing the influences of Greek ideals." To this the second boy could no longer remain silent. "That's no statue," he cried, "that's the Buddha!"

There's a lesson and an invitation in this story. The lesson has to do with how we approach, perceive, and understand especially those things that stand outside our normal world of meaning. The invitation has to do with opening doors and joining the fun. The two are not, of course, unrelated. Some approaches may open doors but not invite us in for the fun. Other approaches may not even open doors but slam them shut with labels of "weird" and "foreign." The approach of this essay is to keep the invitation open and hopefully provide some fun.

But how to do that? We do that, insofar as possible, by joining the second little boy in exclaiming, "that's the Buddha!" We try to approach, perceive, and understand in a way that gets as close as possible to the meaning of these things in their own legitimate and proper context. That context is *not*, in this case, a catalogue of museum pieces with only faint and musty odors of a living Buddhist art. In its own proper context, Japanese Buddhist art lives with symbolic power in expressing Buddhist experience and Buddhist ideals, and with transforming power as a vehicle into the very experience and ideals it expresses.

In short, we shall speak religiously of a religious art and Buddhistically of a Buddhist art — all within the context of a *Japanese* art, but an art that has a universal appeal and meaning as well. Specifically, we shall see Japanese Buddhist art along three continua: one which moves from art as expression to art as process; another that moves from an art of

form, symbol, and icon to one which is "formless," direct, and non-symbolic; and a third that moves from the art of institutional Buddhism to a Buddhist-influenced art as a part of a more generalized Japanese cultural/artistic tradition.

The first continuum indicates that any art plays at least two roles: it expresses something, yet it is participated in. That is, on the one hand an art form expresses personal, cultural, and/or religious meaning and experience. A statue of Buddha, for example, minimally expresses something about ideal and idealized human existence — Buddhistically understood and expressed. A complex *maṇḍala* painting, for example, minimally expresses a Buddhist understanding of the nature of ultimate reality. Of course, these and countless other examples also reflect cultural/historical experience and factors as well — not to mention personal experience on the part of the artist.

However, to focus solely on art as symbolic of meaning, or as expressive of experience, misses at least half of its significance, for art is also a process immediately participated in. This participation not only means the artist as creator or performer of the art, but also the audience or practitioner who uses art in various ways. Not only, for example, has sculpting, painting, designing, or acting been seen in Buddhism as a sacred or religious task, but the statues, paintings, architecture, music, or drama have all been foci for meditation, "objects" of veneration, ritual instruments, or simply the objects of religious/aesthetic awe. In all events, the art functions as a part of some process — usually a process seeking religious transformation.

The second continuum is perhaps more uniquely the property of Buddhism and demands an insight into the nature of especially Mahāyāṇa Buddhism. This continuum is built on the distinction between a form art and a formless art, or perhaps better, a symbolic art and a non-symbolic art. Rather briefly put we might say that a form or symbolic art — by nature, function, content, and intention — points beyond itself to a meaning and reality that transcends it. This is particularly true of a highly complex, sophisticated, and universalized iconographic art such as is found in much of Buddhism. The iconography of traditional Buddhist art is a complex language of Buddhist meaning and reality. In both parts and whole it points beyond itself. A statue of Buddha, for example, not only points beyond itself to the figure of the historical Buddha, but also points beyond itself *and* the historical Buddha to ideal and idealized human existence. Detailed discussion of the meaning of these ideals could well take place via the artistic form and its iconographic symbolism. The hand positions (*mudrā*) of a Buddha statue, for example, precisely represent aspects of Buddha-existence: teaching, preaching, meditation, serving, and so on. The multiple heads and arms of an iconographic Buddha or Bodhisattva, for example, point to the meaning of enlightened existence: wisdom, compassion, helping others, and the like.

However, while most of traditional Buddhist art could be classified as a form or symbolic art, there are important exceptions which we shall call

the "formless arts." These exceptions emerge largely within Ch'an or Zen Buddhism in China and Japan, and from a point of view generally distrustful of symbol and icon — in fact, in many cases, an iconoclastic (anti-iconic) point of view. For Zen, ultimate reality and meaning is nowhere but right here, right now, in the living Emptiness/Suchness (*sūnyatā/tathatā*) of things. Icons, whether iconographic and symbolic art, or the words we use to name and describe reality, are likely to get in the way of waking up to and expressing the immediately lived character of reality non-dually experienced. Art in *this* context is thus the immediate expression of Reality (Emptiness/Suchness), and the immediate process of activating or manifesting that Reality. This art points nowhere beyond itself. It *is* Buddha! It *is* formless (markless, trackless, immediate Emptiness/Suchness) Reality itself!

While ideally such an art would not necessarily carry any particular stylistic markings, the formless arts of Ch'an and Zen have traditionally been the arts reflective of spontaneity — ink-brush painting and calligraphy, poetry, tea ceremony, and so on. These arts depend less on conscious intention than on artistic expression flowing immediately and formlessly from a mind in touch with Emptiness/Suchness. Thus they "intend" nothing, "point" nowhere but right here, and symbolize nothing beyond themselves. They immediately manifest living Reality. They are (ideally) Buddha.

The third continuum moves from institutionized art to cultural influence and could be said to be true of the religious arts of *any* tradition. Insofar as religion and its art have power and meaning in human existence, they cannot be confined to the institutional forms that shape and express them. Christian morality plays moved out of the church into the streets and theatres; Bach's obviously religious music has not been confined to Sunday services; Islamic art moved beyond the mosque to the graceful intricate design of other buildings that still dot the countryside of Islamic nations; and the Japanese tea ceremony moved out of Zen monasteries into tea huts far removed from temples and monkish robes. These moves did not necessarily diminish the religious meaning of the art, although in many cases that meaning was changed. A "religious" art cannot be so defined simply by existing within the institutional context of a religious tradition. Its religious meaning may well change, but it does not necessarily, thereby, cease to be religious.

This is all doubly true of Japanese Buddhism and art, as will be argued below. Suffice it to say at this point that while the institutional sectarian Buddhism of various cultures and periods provided the support, the tradition, the occasion, and the inspiration for most of Buddhist art, the spill-over into the rest of the culture and its art is significant and important. Traditional Japan is an excellent case study for seeing and understanding this process. Much of the traditional art of Japan cannot easily be separated from its Buddhist impact and meaning. The arts of temple and institution cannot confine or define a "Buddhist art."

These three continua are, then, the primary structure, or doors and windows, by which the following essay proceeds. You are invited to both look and enter — perhaps even to "sense" something of Buddha and art.

CHAPTER 2

*Buddhism and Its Art**

BEFORE TURNING specifically to the Buddhist arts of Japan, it might be useful to look briefly at the nature of Buddhism and its arts. This will provide a more appropriate setting and general background for our discussion.

At the most fundamental level Buddhism has rather consistently understood itself as a discipline and technique for seeking awakening or enlightenment (*bodhi*). In one of the Buddha's parables the primary Buddhist disciplines of morality, meditation, and wisdom are seen as a ferry boat for helping us cross the river of ignorance and attachments to the other shore of Nirvāṇa or enlightened wisdom. For monk and layman alike this journey and attainment are the ultimate ideal and goal of human existence. However different the specific content of the disciplines or the teachings from sect to sect, culture to culture, or historical period to historical period, the underlying ideal remains.

What complicates the situation, however, and makes Buddhism difficult to understand and characterize, is the very nature of the enlightenment or awakening it seeks. Spoken of variously as extinguishing attachments, realizing the radical impermanence and mutual dependence of all things, or realizing Emptiness and Suchness, the central core of Buddhism is no sacred being, no belief system, and no institution, but rather a quality of experience and awareness that most of us do not knowingly share. This experience represents a transformation at the roots of consciousness and awareness, and an awakening to the immediacy of experienced reality prior to all description, naming, and reflection — prior, indeed, to subject/object consciousness. Such a core-reality is, by definition, beyond any objectification of it, and thus the status of any objective "form" is seriously called into question — whether it be the more subtle "forms" of thoughts and feelings or the more obvious forms of symbols, doctrines, art, scriptures, institutions, people, and so on. In this core-reality all things are indeed Empty and the mind is like a mirror which reflects but attaches nowhere and grasps at nothing. This is pure formless mind; a direct and immediate pointing to true reality which admits of no secondary pointing via names, descriptions, views, doctrines, symbols, images, icons, and the like.

*The one film that covers this same material, from a different perspective, is *Buddhist Art*. (See Appendix)

Curiously, yet significantly, this Emptiness can be characterized as a kind of fullness. Emptiness in and of itself is truly Empty, but as lived out or activated in the world of living human existence it is truly non-empty and en-lightens or illuminates all things. That is to say, the formless or awakened mind becomes a new or transformed basis for functioning in the world of forms, not a retreat center for withdrawal from that world. It functions in the world of form but, by being no longer based in subject/object consciousness, it is no longer "stained" by it. The pure mirror reflects directly, immediately, and without subjectivity that which it meets, and it meets the world of form *as it is*. This is what is meant by the Buddhist statement, "true Emptiness, wondrous being." It is also what Buddhism calls *Suchness*.

The above characterization of what may be called normative Mahāyāṇa Buddhism could be restated as follows: The unenlightened mind, by definition bound to forms, rides those forms across the river into the formless. Once awakened to the formless, however, not only do the forms no longer bind one, but they become vehicles, as it were, for riding back into the world — for activating, embodying, manifesting and confirming the formless. At least one Buddhist scripture says: "Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is form;" or, "this very world in all its multiplicity is Nirvāṇa, and Nirvāṇa is it." This process, as well as the nature of Emptiness/Suchness, is further explained below in the discussion of the Zen Buddhist "ox-herding" pictures.

Of course there are other types of Buddhism which less obviously conform to the characterization just given. Even within normative Buddhism there are different opinions about Nirvāṇa as transcending the world of forms or Nirvāṇa as involvement in forms. Other departures from the normative view are more popular or lay-oriented kinds of Buddhism for which crossing the river into formlessness is a distant or even unimaginable goal. Rather, in these cases, the focus of religious activity is shifted to either more immediate and practical goals, or to storing away merit for purposes of attaining a better rebirth in one's future lives. In these types of Buddhism there is greater dependence on forms such as Buddhas and gods, scripture and rituals, priests and temples, or symbols and images. In this context the issue is less to transcend the forms into the formless than to "use" them as invested with sacred power in order to move ahead positively in one's individual or collective life. Examples abound of this more popular and literal form of Buddhism. The following story, taken from an early Japanese tradition of popular Buddhist tales, not only suggests this more literal Buddhism, but suggests the place of Buddhist art in it. The story concerns a few members of a Japanese expeditionary force in the seventh century who were taken captive by the Chinese.

> In China the captive soldiers came to live on an island. They acquired an image of Bodhisattva Kannon and worshiped it with great devotion. They worked together cutting down a pine tree to

make a boat, enshrined the Kannon image in the boat and, meditating on the image, made their individual vows. Fortunately the boat drifted straight to Tsukushi with the help of the west wind and they made good their escape.

Hearing this remarkable news and seeing the work of Kannon in it, the emperor granted the leader an estate and built a temple on it to enshrine the Kannon image. After that, the leader and his descendents devoted themselves to Kannon and his worship.

This is nothing but the work of Kannon and the total maturation of faith. It is said that even wooden images of someone's mother are alive, and pictures of a loved one can respond in sympathy. How much more, then, can it be possible for a great Bodhisattva like Kannon to respond to our wishes, needs and prayers?[1]

In a more popular and literal context, as this story exemplifies, images and art point to real external powers which may benefit one. This and a host of other examples would be relevant here. In fact, much of the whole Pure Land sect of Buddhism in China and Japan could be counted here. While there are exceptions, much of Pure Land Buddhism literalizes a variety of cosmic/celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas upon whom one calls in faith for salvation after death into their paradisal and "pure" lands. Central to Pure Land Buddhism, of course, is the great Buddha Amitābha whose Western Pure Land is viewed as a place beyond this world where a life beyond this life can be lived in bliss and ease, and where one can more easily devote oneself to attaining Nirvāṇa. This type of Buddhism depends in greater degree on the forms of symbol, idea, naming, and reified beings. Formlessness, or enlightenment in the sense discussed above, is a distant goal indeed.

The art of Buddhism has functioned in various ways at all these levels and in all these different types of Buddhism. Without pursuing these types and levels at this point, however, it is fair to say that Buddhist art, perhaps like any true art, can be understood as both the expression *of* something and a process *for* something. One might say of religious art in general that it is the shaping of significant reality in an aesthetic mode and, as such, has power to express or manifest that reality, as well as power to carry one toward it. It thereby might be said to have both a symbolic or *expressive function* in pointing beyond itself to "significant reality," and a *transformative function* as vehicle, process, or technique in moving ahead religiously.

In its expressive function Buddhist art has covered the range of possibilities from highly complex iconographic symbolism pointing to a rich set of subtle meanings to a more direct and immediate reflection of formlessness itself. As examples of this range, it has moved from the complex iconography of images, *maṇḍala* paintings and architecture of Tibetan forms of Mahāyāṇa Buddhism to the more direct reflections of formlessness seen in some of the Zen arts of calligraphy and painting. Within this range lie all the various Buddhist arts as they either point beyond themselves to Buddhist meaning and experience, or directly express that experience in a less mediated manner.

Regardless of the variety of this range, and the variety of visual and performing arts that constitute it, one of the important and remarkable aspects of Buddhist art in its expressive or symbolic function is the underlying unity, consistency, and power it has had across all cultural, sectarian, and historical boundaries. This underlying unity, consistency, and power arises directly from the universal character and appeal of the core-reality of Buddhism, as well as from the establishment in earlier Indian Buddhism of artistic and iconographic models which, in general, functioned wherever Buddhist art appeared. As one important scholar of Buddhist art has suggested, "Buddhism succeeded in solving one of the major problems of Asian art: the problem of rendering the sacred in a human form of universal validity and appeal."[2] To the extent that Buddhist experience involves a transcendence of form, time, culture, history, and so on, its art also points beyond the merely conditioned moment of this time or that place. While individual cultures, sects, historical periods, and artists certainly made their unique influences felt, the very nature of Buddhist experience presses one beyond those as solely determinative of the art and what it expresses. The core-reality of Buddhism is a potential realization open to *all* human beings regardless of culture and history. As such, one can expect its art to have a universal dimension and appeal.

On the other hand, to the extent that Buddhist experience — especially in its Mahāyāṇa character as Emptiness/Suchness or formlessness — presses one back into form, the art that presses us beyond form gives way to an art of the immediately formless living moment, a formless art or artless form. Such an art, best represented perhaps by Ch'an Buddhism in China or Zen in Japan, still has a timeless or universal quality about it even though the iconographic models have been broken through and all but abandoned. What unites it with the rest of Buddhist art in its expressive function is again the fundamental unity of what Buddhism claims as core-reality.

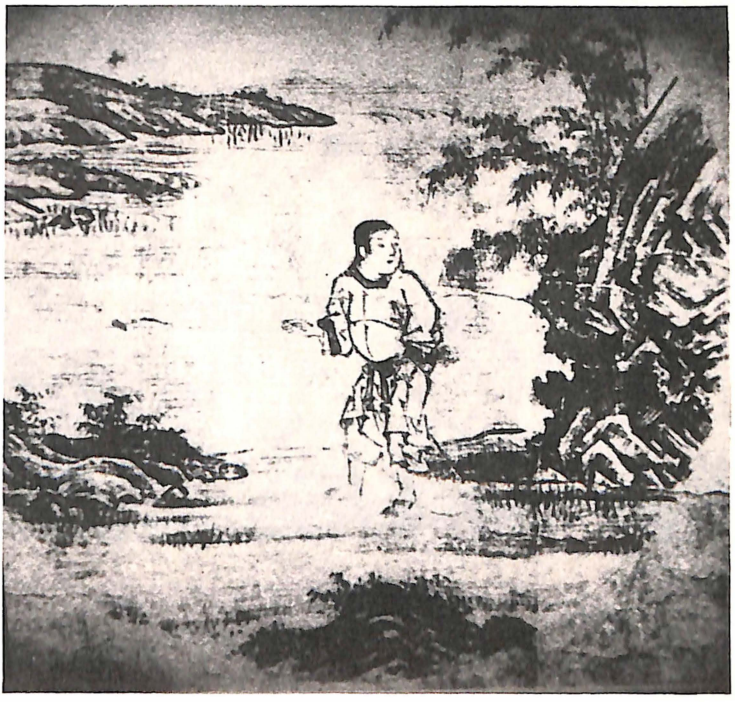
Of course there are Buddhist arts which have expressed less than or other than this core-reality, and they also have an important meaning and place within Buddhism. Certainly one major example of this is painting or sculpture that tends to illustrate historic or scriptural episodes, or art which serves a more didactic than directly expressive function. Two or three specific examples from the Japanese context might be useful here. Perhaps the most important of these are attempts to illustrate past or future events which have power and meaning within the Pure Land tradition. Such illustration moves all the way from pictures of Amitābha (Amida Buddha) descending from his Pure Land to save someone at the moment of death,* to illustrations of historic figures important to spreading the gospel of Amida's grace and mercy.†

*See slides reflective of Pure Land painting in the sets *The Arts of Japan* and *Japan: Ancient Buddhist Paintings*. Cf. the listing under Okazaki in the Bibliography.

†See especially Buddhist (and Pure Land)-inspired narrative scrolls represented in the slide set *The Arts of Japan*, and in the Bibliography under Okudaira.

Another specific example is the so-called "ox-herding pictures" of Ch'an and Zen Buddhism. While these are not so much illustrative of events as didactic instruments for teaching about the ideal path, they nonetheless fall within the category of an art less directly expressive of the core-reality discussed above yet important and significant as a Buddhist art.

In fact, the ox-herding pictures are useful to consider more closely at this point. They are precisely an art form that reflects the nature of normative Buddhism — as Mahāyāṇa (and Zen) understands it. They articulate the model Buddhist path and life, and reflect the Bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāṇa Buddhism. In a sense they are a Far Eastern and Zen equivalent to the Theravāda Buddhist focus on the story of the historical Buddha as a central paradigm. This paradigm or model is presented as analogous to herding an ox, or realizing and awakening to Emptiness/Suchness — our true Self-nature.[3]



1. Searching

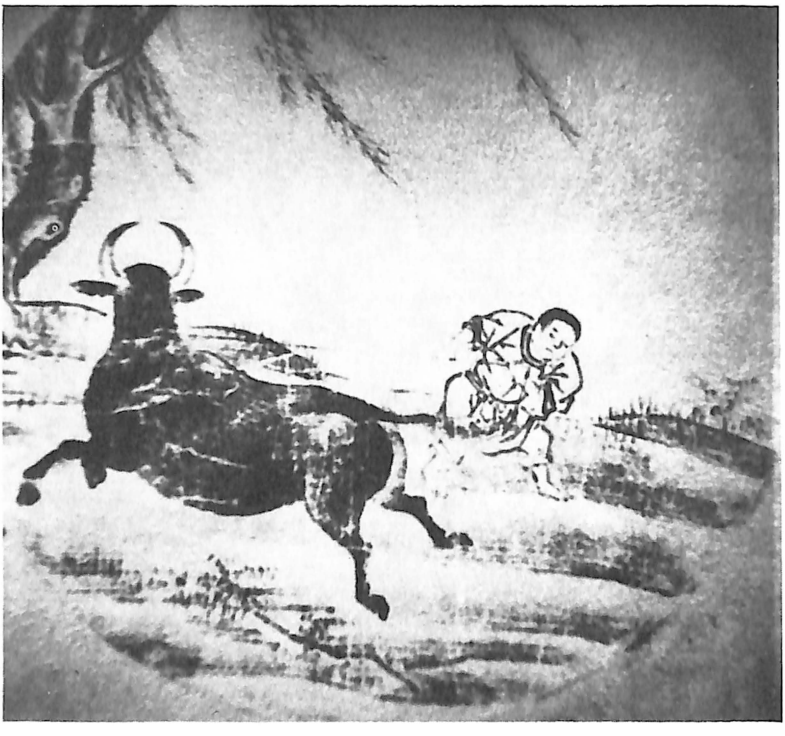
Following the Buddhist path implies motivation and aspiration. Life as normally lived is ultimately unsatisfactory and our attachments to it create our fundamental ignorance. The normative Buddhist path implies a questing and spiritual journey seeking fulfillment.

2. Seeing the Traces

While the path depends in great degree on one's own efforts, inspiration and help may well come from the teachings, models, and stories of others who have found the Way. These are the useful "traces" of enlightened existence which help guide one on his way.

3. Seeing the Ox

Primarily through the path as meditative experience one may momentarily glimpse true reality — the Emptiness/Suchness that is the core-reality of Buddhism. Such glimpses do not last, but one is on the right road to enlightenment — a road that is rocky and often steep, but one that Buddhism says is the surest possible way.



4. Catching the Ox

The discipline of the path is not easy and the ox (Emptiness/Suchness) not easy to control. One's long-standing mental/physical habits are hard to break, and doing it takes both faith and hard work. The "reward," however, is an ever greater awakening to Emptiness/Suchness; an ever greater awakening to one's true situation.

5. Leading the Ox

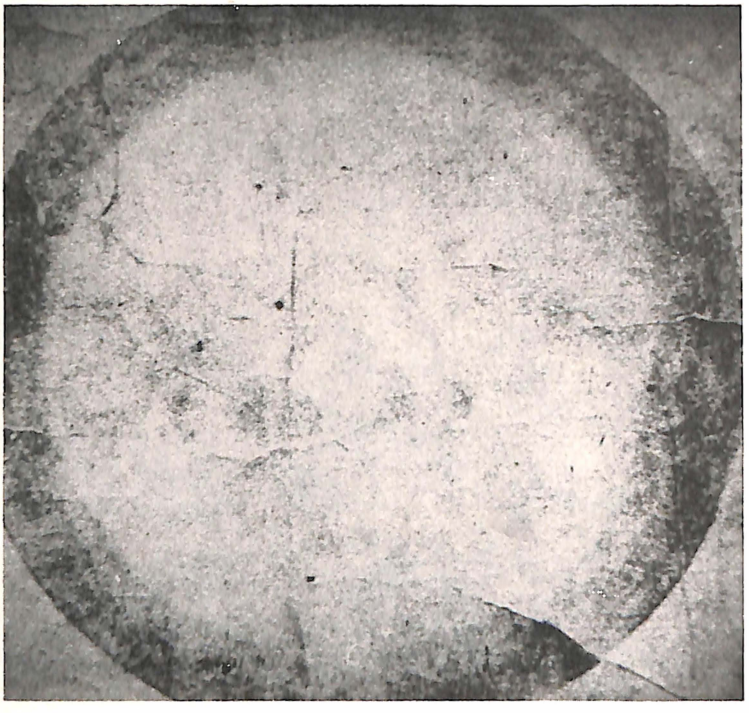
Mastery of body and mind in the disciplines of the path brings increasing ability to keep Emptiness/Suchness awareness in the center — both of meditative states, and of life activity and experience beyond meditation. What seemed so difficult has now become easy.

6. Riding the Ox Home

The fewer one's attachments to self and other, the more one becomes Emptiness/Suchness or enlightened. At this stage one is truly on his way *home*, with all the ease, bliss, and tranquility that that brings. As even one's attachment to a goal drops off, so wandering free and easy in the breeze marks one's passage.

7. Ox Forgotten, Self Alone

When Emptiness/Suchness ceases to be a separate thing or a separate idea, one attains full identity with it, and the moon of enlightenment shines brightly. However, beware of a subtle "self" remaining, and of mistaking pure tranquility for true break-through and enlightenment. The Buddhist ideal goes well beyond mere tranquility.



8. Both Ox and Self Forgotten

As Zen master Dōgen says, "To study Buddhism is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self." This is the breakthrough to pure Emptiness beyond all marks, qualities, and predications. This is the moment of true enlightenment in which the pure mirror of Mind reveals itself.

9. Return to Origins

As the Zen abbot Nanrei Kobori says, "Buddhistic experience does not stop at Emptiness, but opens to a world of orchids and flowers." Enlightenment blooms, as it were, in the Suchness world of everyday existence. This body, mind, and world is both the beginning and end ("origins") of one's journey. Existence *is*, and one returns to it while yet free within it.

10. Entering the Village with Bliss-Bestowing Hands

Emptiness/Suchness awareness (Wisdom) cannot be separated from Compassion. Compassion is absolutely intrinsic to forgetting the self and is both the fulfillment of enlightenment experience, of Bodhisattva vows to save all beings, and of Mahāyāṇa ideals. A Buddha's treasures appear abundant, and are shared with no strings attached.

As mentioned above, the ox-herding pictures are less important as art expressive of core-reality itself than as didactic illustrations of the ideal path toward authentic existence. They have been given here not only as an example of such didactic/illustrative art, but as a convenient way of articulating and describing the Mahāyāṇa Buddhist ideal — one which has particular force in China and Japan. Having looked at expressive and illustrative art, however, we now turn to art as participation and performance; for, to understand Buddhist art merely in terms of what it expresses makes the art, and perhaps the understanding, rather static. In fact, both religiously and artistically understood, art in general and Buddhist art specifically involve and imply a process of artistic creation and/or of participation in the art. For Buddhists over the centuries it is probably fair to say that art has been primarily a means by which one furthered the religious life — indeed, transformed oneself and one's world. As such, one could argue that most Buddhist art is "performing" art. From art as object of worship or teaching technique, through art as part of the vehicle into the formless, to understanding the artist as a kind of priest, art is used and "performed" rather than merely appreciated or understood for its expressive value, and its "performance" is a means to religious transformation.

Here again, the range of possible types and functions is large and, as suggested above, the range moves from a relatively external relationship to the art as object to the relatively internal relationship of artist to his art as creative process. However, in the middle of that range is the use of art as a part of the discipline, technique, and support system for metaphorically crossing the river to the other shore. In this sense art must be understood as a part of the vehicle (*yāna*) for crossing over, and a part of the teaching techniques (*upāya*) of those who have crossed over and seek to help others do the same. While it is possible to attempt direct attacks on the other shore, unmediated by sensory artistic form, most of Buddhism has found the use of sensory artistic form as a useful vehicle upon which one might, in part, ride to the other shore — whether through artistic discipline itself or as a form of yoga or meditation discipline, or, more usually, through visualizing, sounding/hearing, or acting out the Truth or truths sought.

One scholar, speaking generally about the creation of a Buddhist pantheon in Mahāyāṇa but also about symbolic supports and the arts which reflect them, says:

> The basis of this endless proliferation of gods and goddesses with their own peculiar forms and attributes is the need felt during the process of meditation, the *sadhana*, to have a precise support upon which one can concentrate so that a mere notion or situation, through the mediation of certain symbols, might evoke a vivid representation. The aim to be attained is a living experience of the apotheosis that can give the meditating person the certainty of his elevation; visualization is the testimony that he has ascended to a superior *kṣetra* (Buddhafield), and that in this very life he is enjoy-

ing, be it only for a short time, the blessing of the result or fruit to which his path is leading — not the ultimate fruit beyond all form, but the fruit of cofruition (*sambhaga*) as a preliminary necessary stage to the supreme unqualified identities.[4]

It is important to recognize image and art as a visualization support system within meditation activity. Artistic representation is used as a means for attaining and transforming experience and as a means for seeing beyond the merely visual mode into the experiential "insight" mode. The visual art thus becomes a means for en-visioning or experiencing more directly the goals.

Aside from art in a devotional and/or meditative context, two other contexts are worth mentioning, namely, artistic creation as a religious act, and religious ritual as a performing art. The former is extensively treated below and need not occupy much time here. Essentially, however, the idea is that the *doing* of art — in whatever manner or style — might well be seen as religious. Artists and craftsmen, especially in Buddhist Japan, have often seen their vocation as religious in a Buddhist sense. Whether as the creation of a living symbol or as the immediate manifestation of formlessness, the artist acts religiously and "performs" his art.

The issue of ritual as performing art, however, might well be pursued a bit further here. Without being trapped in some thorny definitional issues, it is simplest to assert that religious ritual may often function as a performing art. Like the distinctions between art and religion, or religion and magic, or art and craft, the distinction between ritual and performing art would be difficult to draw with any precision and clarity. However, our concern is not primarily definitional clarity. The more important point is seeing the possible and important connections between ritual and performing art, and suggesting this as yet another context in which art functions processively and transformatively.

The basic point is that ritual itself, as orchestrated movement, is a kind of drama and dance. Certainly the elaborate ritual of liturgical Christianity or esoteric Buddhism would at least suggest this. However, a bit more obvious is the consistent place that music, drama, and dance as clearly distinctive forms have had in Buddhist ritual.* Painting and sculpture have performed similar roles in the rituals in Buddhism.

A rather stunning example of this appears in a film on Tibetan Buddhism called *Requiem for a Faith.*† In this film, both instrumental and vocal music play a central role in Buddhist ritual and meditative practice. The Truth is not only painted and sculpted, it is also experienced in and with sound and chanting — even to the point of a single person producing a triad of sounds!

*For examples of performing arts in Buddhist ritual see the films *Torches of Todaiji, Hiraizumi — Capital of the North,* as well as the records reflecting Buddhist chant.

†See *Focus on Buddhism* for review and details.

Another example appears in a film on Theravāda Buddhism called *Buddhism: Be Ye Lamps Unto Yourselves.** Here we see the centrality of the Buddha-story acted out by a novice and his fellow monks. Drama as ritual form is clearly present here. This and similar examples keep before us the importance of Buddhist performing arts and suggest yet another way in which all Buddhist art is performative and participatory in function. A religious art and a Buddhist art are not merely static expressions, but dynamic and transformative processes.

*See *Focus on Buddhism* for review and details.

CHAPTER 3

The Japanese Buddhist Arts in Historical Perspective

IN ORDER to understand the Buddhist arts of Japan, it is important to offer some comments on the general Japanese context into which these arts came and within which they flourished. While Buddhism and its art have in some degree transcended the cultural, religious context of Japan, that same context has been of considerable importance in shaping a specifically *Japanese* Buddhism and Buddhist art as well. In short, while much can be said about Buddhist art in Japan by reference to nonJapanese historic influences, and culture-transcending Buddhist ideals and experience, a uniquely Japanese experience and culture are also working here to give form to the formless, or to formulate an understanding of the very core of Buddhist reality.

Fundamental to the uniqueness of this context, at least religiously and aesthetically speaking, is an affirmation of the natural world as an aesthetic continuum replete with sacrality. Represented particularly by the pre-Buddhist but also continuing Shinto tradition, this way of apprehending, experiencing, or making sense of reality has been crucial to the acceptance and continued shaping of Buddhism and its arts in Japan. For traditional Shinto, the *kami* (sacred powers, or "gods") functioned in and through a natural world which was itself both awe-ful and beautiful.*

As correlate to this, however, the primary focus of Shinto has been the maintenance of life through ritual modes in which *kami* are invoked, celebrated, placated, honored, petitioned, and sent off. In this case, words such as undefiled purity, natural simplicity, correct order, appropriate celebration, appropriate context, and so on, have functioned to describe the bulk of Shinto activity and models for all behavior and created forms. While Shinto never developed an elaborate art, its aesthetic sensitivity has been deep and pervasive.

> (Shinto) shrine architecture, particularly that of Ise, is a distillation of the aesthetic ideals of the (ancient and prehistoric) Yayoi and Tumulus periods .... It is here that we find the essence of the Japanese sense of beauty .... In order to evoke the divine spirits, everything is reduced to its essence: every pillar, every board is refined to an immaculate beauty. And this pure geometry of wood, unlike that of

*An excellent visual example of this is the film *Shinto: Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan.* See Appendix.

stone, is the harmony of the divine forest — fresh, undefiled, unperishing, and self-renewing.[5]

An aesthetic ritualism, a correlation of aesthetic refinement with the places to which *kami* are called to come, and the relation between the beauty and sacrality of the natural world all suggest the integral relation of religious and aesthetic modes of apprehending and relating to sacred reality in traditional Shinto. Such an apprehension or relationship to sacred reality served importantly as a basic context into which Buddhism and its arts moved, was in part transformed, and eventually thrived.

Other historic factors were, of course, at work in the coming, transforming, and thriving of Buddhism and its art. Since this essay is not primarily a history, but rather a typology and interpretation of the Buddhist arts of Japan, it is perhaps sufficient to say that whatever the variety of factors at work, the Japanese were essentially receptive to Buddhism, and the fundamental basis for the easy wedding of religious and aesthetic modes was already there. For this and other reasons, Japan, with its own unique genius, gave distinctive shape to both Buddhism and the Buddhist arts and did not, for the most part, merely impart unchanged the Indian or Chinese formulations and understandings. But what particular shapes did this take throughout Japanese history? Perhaps the following survey can help tell us.

Once firmly a part of Japanese society and culture in the sixth century of our era, Buddhism and its arts moved increasingly from an imported "foreign" religion and art to one reflecting the distinctive genius mentioned above. In the early period, roughly the sixth to eight centuries, the focus of Buddhist art was the temple/monastery complex with its architectural forms and symbolism, its sculpted figures reflecting a complex Buddhist pantheon, and early mural painting of similar figures.* Most of the sculpted and painted images were based on models established by the Indian and Chinese mainstream of Mahāyāṇa Buddhism and represented the most important of the various celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as well as a miscellaneous collection of other India-inspired figures. Whether understood as symbolic expressions of Buddhist ideas or as the image embodiment of real beings working in the cosmos for humanity's benefit, these figures stand as mute but elegant and powerful witness to an appealing and impressive foreign religion seeking a Japanese home.

In the next major period, roughly the ninth through twelfth centuries, Buddhism and its arts expanded in a variety of directions, and increasingly a distinctive Japanese Buddhism was formulated. Prominent among the expansions was the development of two major sects, Tendai and Shingon. Especially under the stimulation of an esoteric form of Buddhism within Shingon, with its rich and various arts of sculpture and painting,

*For audio and visual examples of this art, see the films *Buddhist Art, Yakushiji Temple*, and relevant slides and records found in the Appendix below. See also Mizuno in the Bibliography.

the Buddhist arts reached new heights of complexity, importance, and power in both the expressive and transformative functions discussed above.*

Other kinds of expansions were taking place, however, that were greatly to affect the nature of a Japanese Buddhism and its arts. Fundamental among these were the development of more popular or lay forms of Buddhism as the Buddhist message filtered down from the great temple/monastery complexes and the aristocratic society that supported them. Artistically important within these developments were increased focus on Amida Buddha and his Pure Land through painting, sculpture, and ritual drama; and illustrative painting in narrative scrolls and scriptural illustration.†

Another expansion that is noteworthy of mention is the increasing influence of Buddhism — now less as an institutionalized sect than a general world-view and an experiential transformation — on literary forms. While famous works such as the *Tale of Genji* reflect Buddhist ideas prevalent in the lay mind of twelfth century Japan, more significant for these early literary developments are such court poets of the late twelfth century as Saigyo (1118-1170), Fujiwara Shunzei (1162-1241), Kamo no Chomei (1153-1216) or Jujiwara Teika (1162-1241). For these poets, Buddhist ideals and experience were central to the discipline of poetry, to poetic expression or character, and to poetic theory. This development was significant not only for its own intrinsic value, but because it exemplified both a Buddhist-influenced literary art form and an early expression of the merging of Buddhist ideals with Japanese aesthetic sensitivity and artistic interest outside the temple/monastery walls. Many of the subsequent medieval Zen arts were influenced by these twelfth century foundations.††

With the end of the twelfth century, and the end of the Heian period in Japanese political and cultural history, came a significant shift within Buddhism to other sects and other forms. On the one hand the shift moved from the dominant esoteric sects located at the center of power in the capital of Heian (Kyoto) and supported in large part by the ruling aristocratic class, to more popular forms whose appeal crossed all class barriers and found great support among the masses. Particularly important here are the Pure Land and Nichiren movements of the thirteenth century. On the other hand the shift moved from those same dominant esoteric sects to highly disciplined and strict forms of Zen supported in large part by the now dominant *bushi* or warrior class in the new capital of Kamakura.

*See relevant slide sets on early Buddhist art, as well as the recordings offering *shōmyō* chant, listed in the Appendix. See also books by Sawa and Rambach in the Bibliography.

†See slide sets *The Arts of Japan* and *Japan: Ancient Buddhist Paintings* in the Appendix. Also note the Bibliography listings under Okazaki and Okudaira.

††The films *Haiku* and *Ryōkan: The Poet Priest* exemplify a Buddhist-influenced poetic tradition (though beyond the Heian period), while *Gen: Mystery of Mysteries* reflects a primary aesthetic criterion of Heian poetry, *yūgen*. See also the Bibliography listing under Brower and LaFleur.

These shifts not only represented significant changes in the character of Japanese Buddhism, they also represented significant changes in the character of the Buddhist arts. Insofar as these shifts represented a Japanese Buddhism fully "come home," their reflection in art also "comes home." No longer, for example, do the Indian/Chinese iconographic models represented in the sculpted or painted figures of the earlier periods hold sway. New models, styles, and iconographic codes now come to the fore — ones that more immediately and directly reflect a Japanese appropriation of Buddhism and seek its communication to a wider audience. Of course, insofar as both Pure Land and Zen Buddhism developed in China, their arts in some degree reflect that background. However, this does not deny the Japanese appropriation and alteration for its own purposes or, perhaps more importantly, the degree to which these kinds of art have subsequently dominated Japanese Buddhism and widely influenced Japanese culture in general.

Prominent among these artistic forms, especially if one looks beyond the thirteenth century to the whole of the Medieval Period (thirteenth through sixteenth centuries), are the broad range of Pure Land arts, the arts related to Zen, and more eclectic arts representative of a cross section of traditional Japanese Buddhism. Particularly and respectively representative of these are the following: Pure Land inspired painting ranging from depictions of Amida and his paradise to narrative scrolls showing the activities of his devotees; Zen influenced calligraphy, poetry, landscape painting, gardens, architecture, tea ceremony, flower arranging, music and acting; and the Nō drama. While some of these may expand our notion of a Buddhist art, all of them — in varying degrees and in varying manifestations — owe considerable to historic or experiential Buddhist roots.*

While it has been claimed that the subsequent history of Japan from the seventeenth through twentieth centuries reveals little that is new or creative in either Buddhism or its arts, this could well be misleading. Not only does activity in many of the preceding forms of Buddhism and its art continue on through this period, but developments in such Buddhist-influenced arts as the martial arts (particularly swordsmanship and archery), *haiku* poetry, or even much of twentieth century Japanese literature suggest a continuing relation between Buddhism and the arts it spawned or influenced.†

While this brief historical survey has necessarily only skimmed the surface, it does at least place our discussion in a broad historic context and indicates some of the obvious elements of our topic. It also suggests the con-

*For Pure Land arts, see the relevant slide sets and Okazaki's listing in the Bibliography. The Buddhist or Zen-influenced arts (discussed further in the essay below) are represented in such films as: *Zen in Ryōkō-in, Haiku, The Path, Arts of Japan: Bridge of Beauty, Noh Drama, Japan: The Frozen Moment*, and in relevant slide and record sets. (See Appendix)

†For films suggestive of a more contemporary artistic expression of Buddhism see *Art and Spirit, Woodblock Mandala, The Spider's Thread*, and *Torches of Todaiji*. Films related to the martial arts and *haiku* include, *Kyudō: Japanese Ceremonial Archery* and *Haiku*.

tinuing importance Buddhism and its arts have had in Japanese religion and culture generally. Though some of these arts clearly belong within the temple walls and are thus by institutional connection (if for no other reason) Buddhist arts, others are located further outside institutional Buddhism and belong to Japanese culture more generally conceived. Nonetheless, the latter may also be understood as Buddhist arts insofar as their themes and inspiration are primarily Buddhist in character, and their underlying intention and meaning is religious. The religious dimension of human existence cannot be bound by temple walls or limited to card-carrying practitioners. Similarly, the artistic/aesthetic dimension of human existence may often overlap with the religious dimension — how much more would this be true in a culture where Buddhist ideals give crucial shape to artistic expression and aesthetic ideals?

In short, the sweep of Japanese cultural history has evidenced a great variety of artistic forms which, in varying degrees, reflect Buddhist meaning and function. While it is possible to overstate the impact of Buddhism on the Japanese artistic tradition, it is appropriate to say that the Buddhist arts — both as institutionalized econographic forms and as a broader art influenced by Buddhist experience, ideals and themes — are a major factor in the whole of Japanese culture and artistic endeavor.

With these historic factors in mind, we may now move to a closer consideration of the nature of these Buddhist arts. As we do so, we might well keep in mind the distinctions drawn above between art as expression and art as process, between an art of form/symbol and a formless art, and between the institutionalized, iconographic arts and the arts more broadly influenced by Buddhism.

CHAPTER 4

The Buddhist Arts of Japan: An Interpretation

OUR CONGRATULATIONS to the little boy who said, "That's not a statue, that's the Buddha!" and in what follows it is more the "Buddha of statues" than "statues of Buddha" that forms the focus of attention. In this perspective, or this interpretation, we move quickly beyond the description of art forms to their basis in Buddhist experience, intention, and meaning. In the spirit of the following comment by A. K. Coomaraswamy, our primary concern is the ontological and existential basis, the content and significance, of this art:

> An understanding of the ontology (of the art) is essential for the student of "art" who must realize that a work of art cannot be "understood," or rightly "valued" and "criticized," apart from the form (idea) which is its *raison d'être*. Content is not *post factum*, but *causa faciendi*; the significance of things well and truly made is never an end in itself, but always a means of communication, it can only be called "good" or "bad" in so far as it actually expresses and conveys a given "idea"; rational judgment of a given work can only be based on a comparison of the substance with its determining form.[6]

To discover this substance and basis in ontology requires that we find a middle ground between the merely descriptive task and simply becoming Buddhists ourselves. This middle ground is not easy to find. It involves a sensitivity to Buddhism and its art while standing fundamentally outside of Buddhism, as well as a sensitivity to the demands of Buddhism from the inside. The best we can do is try to be true to the Buddhist meaning, intention, and function of the art, and with this we proceed.

A. The Temple Arts

First, it would be useful to distinguish those arts that lie within from those arts which go beyond institutional Buddhism. With this in mind, the following interpretation is divided into temple arts and the Buddhist arts beyond the temple precincts. By *temple arts* we simply mean those

arts that directly and rather exclusively reflect an explicit Buddhist content, meaning, and function within sectarian institutionalized Buddhism. Arts beyond the temple, therefore, indicate any other arts that reflect Buddhist content, meaning, and function but stand outside the institutionalized Buddhist sects in Japan. These we may well think of as "Buddhist-influenced arts."

1. The Temple Arts of Form and Symbol

In speaking of the temple arts, perhaps there is no better place to start than a statement by the great Buddhist master, Kūkai (774-835), of the Shingon sect.

> The Dharma (Truth) is beyond speech, but without speech it cannot be revealed. Suchness transcends forms, but without depending on forms it cannot be realized. Though one may at times err by taking the finger pointing at the moon to be the moon itself, the Buddha's teachings which guide people are limitless.[7]

At one stroke this statement gives the Buddhist case for the necessity of form (even though ultimate reality, or Dharma, is formless), and yet suggests the risk of "form-ulation." While indicating that Truth is beyond words and forms it suggests the nature and importance of a Buddhist "form art," i.e., an art that does not hesitate to form-ulate and symbolize. While the "moon" of enlightenment is Empty, formless, markless reality *as such*, it not only embodies itself in forms, but, for the unenlightened, is also a necessary vehicle for crossing the stream to enlightenment. Therefore, whether forms (in this case art) are understood as pointing expressively *from* the moon or transformatively *to* the moon, they are seen as necessary for both revealing and realizing Dharma.

The risk, of course, is that the forms (or the fingers) might be taken for the moon, or that the forms will get in the way of correct understanding in the attainment of formlessness. This is a problem Mahāyāṇa Buddhism has consistently faced. However necessary are scriptures, doctrines, concepts, icons, art, or at host of other forms for embodying or helping to attain enlightenment, the very nature of enlightenment demands an ultimate non-dependence on mediators of Reality. The following anecdote from the Zen tradition of China suggests this:

> At dawn the Fifth Patriarch called the painter Lu to draw illustrations from the Lankavatara Sutra on the south corridor wall. The fifth Patriarch saw a verse (written on the wall) and, having read it, said to the painter Lu: "I will give you thirty thousand cash. You have come a long distance to do this arduous work, but I have decided not to have the pictures painted after all. It is said in the Diamond Sutra: All forms everywhere are unreal and false."[8]

To depict or illustrate, to create objective, explicit, and visual forms, is

to risk mistaking those objects for Reality itself, or to imply a reality that is less than ultimate. For example, often times temple complexes in Japan, the gardens surrounding them, and the art work within them have been understood to symbolize Buddha "paradises" into which one might seek rebirth. By certain orthodox interpretations a Buddha paradise is no particular place outside our world, but rather a poetic or metaphoric way of expressing enlightenment itself. To the extent that this is the case, this symbolizing takes the risk of literalizing that paradise as a place and time beyond the realm of normal human existence. Indeed, precisely such literalizing has happened — both within orthodox sectarian Buddhism, and in less sophisticated popular beliefs.

Similarly, while on the one hand the various complex sculpted images in early Japanese Buddhism could be understood as "merely" visual symbols of the aspects and powers of enlightenment itself, on the other hand they have no doubt been understood as depicting or manifesting distinct and real powers working in the cosmos for the benefit of all beings. The difference here can be clearly indicated in the following comment by the great Zen master Dōgen:

> The images of Avalokitesvara (Kannon Bodhisattva) with their many arms and many heads and eyes are the result of a brilliant attempt by artists to portray in clear iconographical style the essence of enlightenment, which is the dynamic activity guided by understanding and insight (i.e., "seeing into"). The object was to symbolize compassionate activity, and the many arms and hands might have been countless, had this been artistically possible. The point is that Avalokitesvara personifies absolute, unqualified, compassionate activity and what better way to portray this than by giving him so many arms and hands? The activity is so complete that we cannot even speak of Avalokitesvara and his activity, as if there were two realities. Avalokitesvara *is* compassionate activity, he is *just* hands and eyes.[9]

This statement clearly indicates the image as "merely" the personification of an aspect of enlightenment itself, and points to no realm or being apart from enlightenment. For others, however, Avalokiteśvara (Kannon) is a being who appears in multiple forms and situations to help suffering and conditioned beings. This is the image and being around which cults form and to which worship and petition are offered.

From still another point of view, however, this art, especially the sculpted images in their temple settings, may also be seen as pointing to a mysterious realm of hidden Reality somehow behind or beyond this one. The following commentary suggests this mode of understanding:

> Throughout their long existence, Buddhist arts were motivated by an awareness of the inconceivable and invisible sources of all being in Buddhist metaphysics, a fact we should never ignore. This awareness is present in the atmosphere of mystery and inchoate darkness

> in the interior of temples; and it is present in the sense of an even grander and more inexpressible mystery that lies beyond the most splendid altar groups, the most exquisitely wrought mandalas . . . It is, in a sense, the root of aesthetic inspiration of all Buddhist art.[10]

Such an understanding, whether coming from Japanese Buddhists or from interpreters of Buddhist art, implies that Buddhist Reality remains beyond this impermanent and illusory world, and that the art both expresses and takes us to this realm beyond. From a Buddhist point of view, this interpretation is suspect. However invisible, mysterious, beyond or hidden the formless reality of Emptiness/Suchness may be, it only remains so for those without eyes to see or for those who see "through a glass darkly and not face to face." But this again is the risk of form. For the uninitiated, images and forms may obscure the Truth rather than reveal it. No doubt this happened in Japan, and it is no coincidence that a primary term in early Buddhist-influenced aesthetics was *yūgen* — a sublime, mysterious, veiled and profound beauty that points beyond itself.* Buddhist reality, however, is right here and right now, and as the Japanese began to understand this in later times, there were significant changes in both art and understanding.

Perhaps a more appropriate way of understanding the "form art" of a Buddhist temple art is to suggest a kind of Buddhist "theology" of art in which image, symbol, and icon become on the one hand the envisioning, embodying, or formulation of Emptiness/Suchness and, on the other, the device, means, or vehicle by which one may approach or attain enlightenment. In this "theology" of Buddhist art, the image form expressively manifests and symbolically points to true reality, and functionally draws us to it. It links the apparently separate realms of pure Emptiness and pure form by expressing Emptiness and by taking us to Emptiness. It is both the embodiment of true reality, or the absolute formless as it takes on form and becomes available to the senses, and the compassion/skill-in-means aspect of enlightenment as it points the way for others and provides a vehicle.

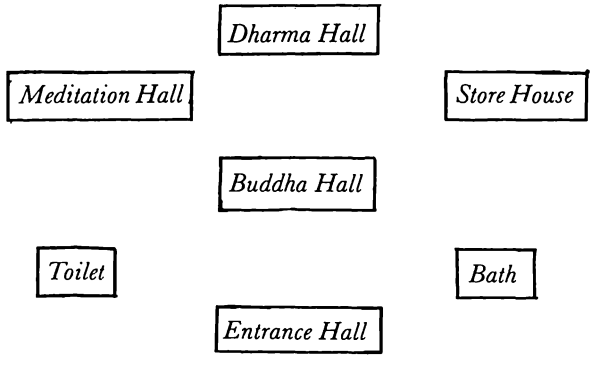
With these expressive and transformative functions in mind, the following descriptive analysis suggests how image, art, and icon might be considered the envisioned, manifested glory, as well as the bridging between the formless and the mere forms of everyday existence: A famous passage in the *Lotus Sutra*, often depicted in art, describes the cosmic Buddha enthroned on a lotus blossom. In analyzing this, one could say that the lotus plant denotes rootedness in this existence of forms, yet detachment as well. The throne as a "lion-throne" represents immovable and absolute Emptiness — the royal seat or basis of enlightenment. The Buddha himself represents infinite negation, stillness and Emptiness, yet shines in golden resplendence — unconfined to form yet appearing in and to it

*The film *Gen: Mystery of Mysteries* would seem to be a precise expression of this slightly dark, suggestive, profound beauty. (See Appendix)

much as Suchness itself. As crowned "King of the World" he utters to angelic ears as much as can be spoken of the Silence that is the Reality of our existence. As teacher with specific name, he plays a part and proclaims a Way in whatever form necessary, and through whatever skill he may have.[11] As Buddha he is both formless and form, both Wisdom and Compassion. As image (and, by extension, art) he reveals all this and preaches Dharma (Truth) for all to hear.

This, and similar image and iconic forms, abound within the form arts of Buddhism — especially in earlier Japanese statuary and painting.* Such iconic art can be understood as speaking (expressing) the Silence of Emptiness, as giving form to the formless, as making available to the senses that which remains beyond them. As such, this art is the glorified or "bliss body" of Buddha, the "golden body" shining forth for all to see, the Suchness of Reality *as it is* but expressed in iconic form.

The highly symbolic character of these iconic and form arts is not limited to the visual arts of sculpture and painting. It exists even in the architecture and design of temple buildings and temple complexes. A particularly clear example of the latter is the symbolism or symbolic meaning of the seven buildings in the standard early Buddhist monastery/temple complex, which were laid out according to the following plan:

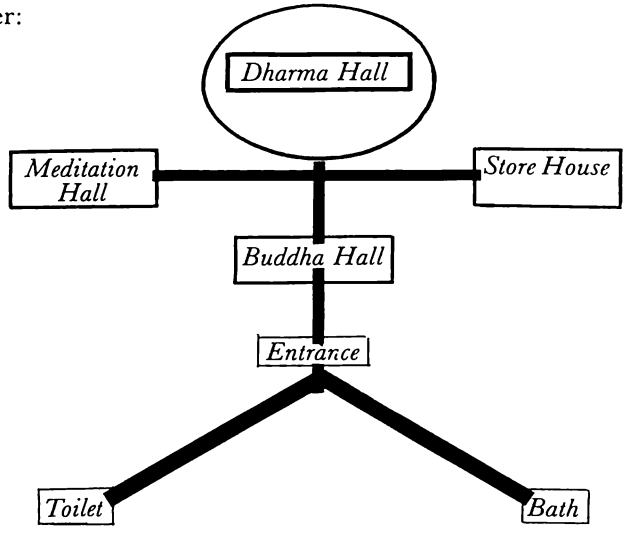


The most obvious symbolic meaning of this plan follows the nature of entering and walking the Buddhist path or discipline itself. Moving from profane into sacred space through the entrance, one purges oneself of the more obvious desires, attachments, and activities which obscure progress. Moving directly ahead, one approaches the center — that is Buddhahood itself. In order to do so, however, further disciplines in the purification of

*See especially the film *Yakushiji Temple: The Cream of Buddhist Art, Buddhist Art*, and relevant slide collections on early Buddhist art in Japan.

mind and body are necessary; these are symbolized by the toilet and bath. Beyond Buddahood or enlightenment lies teaching or preaching — extending enlightenment for the purpose of helping others. This is symbolized by the Dharma (or teaching) Hall. The whole process is supported necessarily by the physical necessities of life (e.g., food and sleep) as well as the spiritual necessities (e.g., meditation). Altogether we find an architectural art form symbolizing or expressing the Buddhist path itself.

A distinct but related symbolic meaning of this plan can be seen in the analogy of the plan to the human body, as in the following slightly amended manner:



The point of this symbolism is to suggest that Buddhism is ultimately talking about the transformation of human consciousness (waking up!) through the means of monastic practices (the path). With feet firmly planted (like the lotus stem) in the dirt and dust of human existence, and supported by the appropriate physical and spiritual nourishment, the practitioner ideally moves into the very center of existence symbolically related to the *hara*, or locus of spiritual energy in the area of the belly. As Wisdom and Compassion, however, this Center manifests itself in the world of living beings for the sake of living beings by means of teaching the Dharma. As such, the monastery/temple complex becomes an iconographic form expressing and symbolizing the core-reality of Buddhism itself — a kind of architectural sermon on the Buddhist ideal.

Similarly, the individual buildings of the complex become symbols too. The Buddha Hall, for example, may often be seen as a *maṇḍala* within which a Buddha or Bodhisattva is enshrined as the Center, with the macro and microcosm of Buddhist reality surrounding it. The *pagoda** is likewise

*See especially the film *Yakushiji Temple: The Cream of Buddhistic Art* for a close look at the architectural features of the classic *pagoda* style.

an intricate symbol indicating either the levels of cosmological reality from hells to Buddhahood, or the stages in spiritual progression.

Whether in sculpture, painting, gardens, architecture, drama, music, or elsewhere, the form arts of Japanese Buddhism are a symbolic window through which Buddhist meaning is expressed. However, these same form arts do not simply function to express Buddhist meaning. They are also participatory and performative; they are intended to be used as vehicles for transformation. As such, they are a dynamic link between the realm of ignorance and the realm of awakened/enlightened existence. Again, the Shingon master Kūkai may be quoted as capturing in words this essential function of Buddhist art:

> Since the Esoteric Buddhist teachings are so profound as to defy expression in writing, they are revealed through the medium of painting to those who are yet to be enlightened. The various postures and mudras (depicted in the art) are products of the great compassion of the Buddha; *the sight of them may well enable one to attain Buddhahood.* The secrets of the sutras and commentaries are for the most part depicted in the paintings, and all the essentials of the Esoteric doctrines are, in reality, set forth therein. Neither masters or students can dispense with them. They are indeed (the experience of) the root and source of the oceanlike assembly (of the enlightened ones; that is, the realm of enlightenment).[12]

The key, here, is that while form art expresses, it also arises out of the Compassion of Buddha-mind which seeks to help others attain enlightenment. The seeing, or using, of such art can, in turn, become a vehicle and link for the practitioner. The specific mode of the art, of course, will change the specific character of the linkage, and the specific religious practice or context within which the art operates will do likewise. (Art will function for attainment somewhat differently, for example, in a ritual/devotional context than in a meditative context.) Some examples of this function of Buddhist art would be useful here.

The first example, while set in a Chinese context, is typical of devotional/meditative participation in an art form. Similar stories abound in the Japanese context. This one is unusual by virtue of involving a contemporary Western Buddhist, John Blofeld. His story is striking and worthy of repetition in this context:

> Back at the monastery, while waiting for the sleepy porter to admit me, I became aware of a delicious fragrance which I supposed to have a supernatural origin until, looking up, I saw that the gateway was overhung by the boughs of a tree called in Chinese *yeh-lai-hsiang* (night fragrance) which pours out its perfume during darkness, the monks being still away celebrating the festival or else retired to their cells to sleep or meditate until summoned for the morning rite an hour before dawn. Noticing that lamps still glimmered in the deserted shrine-hall, I felt a sudden impulse to enter and make my way

round behind the Buddha statues to where it was customary in Chinese monasteries to house a statue of Kuan Yin (Kannon). There she was, standing upon a shelf at about the level of my chest. It was an image of fine bronze some three feet high, with the right hand raised in benediction, the elongated eyes half closed in contemplative bliss. The stumps of votive candles still guttered at her feet, whereas the incense sticks lit in her honour had burnt down to the stubs leaving behind a sour staleness .... Lighting fresh incense, I stood before her in silence until, suddenly carried away by exaltation, I whispered: "Compassionate One, be pleased to speak and convince me of your reality!"

How foolish this must sound and how ashamed I should be to write of it, were it not for the sequel. Even with the words upon my lips I reflected that a sane man should know better than to attempt holding converse with a statue! Yet perhaps I had some excuse; for, apart from being then in a special state of mind, I had recently spent much time in the company of certain Chinese Buddhists who, despite being men of obvious good sense and erudition, would have found nothing surprising in such conduct. As it turned out, no justification was needed, for the plain truth is that the statue answered me at once, saying: "Look not for my reality in the realm of appearances or in the Void. Seek it in your own mind. There only it resides."

I wish I could make the story even more extraordinary by affirming that the bronze lips moved, that the beautifully moulded throat gave forth melodious sounds. It was not so. No sound or movement stirred the silence. The enigmatic words entered my consciousness as thought-forms, but so palpably that not even sound itself could have made the effect more electrifying or their sequence more precise. It is hard to believe that, at a time when my knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism was so slight, I could have summoned such a pronouncement from within myself. I did not really know then what the first sentence meant. I felt sure I had received an intimation that Kuan Yin exists — to the extent that "exists" is a fitting description of her subtle nature. Using the word thus is perhaps to overstate the case, just as to say that she does not exist would be to understate it. My experience was not imaginary. Such intuitive perceptions are too direct, too penetrating to be mistaken for ordinary imaginings. Yet for years I hesitated to speak of it, except to my Chinese friends, who understood its nature; but now I have come to recognize that no good purpose is served by concealing them. In truth, such a marvel is not magical to those who recognize mind's sovereign power over phenomena of every kind whatsoever.[13]

I have quoted this at some length not only because of its intrinsic interest, but because it is a particularly clear and concrete example of participation in Buddhist art. For the devotee the art form lives, or, as in this case, Kannon lives through it. Without making judgments on this particular story, it is clear from the Japanese tradition, and the Buddhist tradition as well, that both similar and related kinds of participation seeking

transformation take place. In the same text, Blofeld gives a variety of other Kannon practices, including various visualization and reciting-the-name techniques as specific practices for invoking Kannon and/or identifying with the compassion Kannon represents.[14] In such contexts, the Kannon figures of sculpture, painting or words become living vehicles for spiritual insight and attainment rather than mere art objects. This is truly a functional art capable of transforming the devotee. As one of Blofeld's teachers summarizes this function for us:

> Pure Land teacher say fix mind on sacred name, or speak sacred mantra, (or focus on sacred image) many, many times, then your mind become still, yes? All obscurations disappear. That way, you know, plenty people get objectless awareness which is first step to Enlightenment. That is very good, no? So why you care *how* they get it? ... You want to study Buddha Dharma, you must study mind. Only mind is real, but now you try to put front door and back door on it! Self? Other? Inside? Outside? How can be? Some people look for Enlightenment in mind. Some people look for (it in) Bodhisattva. You find them different? Never can be! Why? Because whole universe live inside your bony skull![15]

This thoroughly Buddhist comment nicely summarizes what has been said above. It suggests that Buddhist art from a Buddhist perspective is less "art" than religious vehicle, and that from a very practice-oriented teaching a variety of intellectualized distinctions fall away. Further, the distinctions being pressed here — expression vs.transformation, and form vs. formless art — must also fall away! From this perspective, surely most Buddhist art is truly "the Buddha"!

The form arts of icon and symbol, whether viewed as expression or process, make up the vast majority of Buddhist art. However, there are other temple arts which can be called the "formless arts." These are the arts which by intention and execution are directly expressive of formlessness itself; which point directly to the moon and immediately manifest true reality. Perhaps the clearest way of distinguishing these arts from the form arts above is to say they are *not* symbolic, imagistic, or iconic. In fact, they distinctly break with Buddhist symbolism and iconography, and move toward the iconoclastic. Of course they have some minimal form and medium: calligraphy needs brush, ink, and words; painting needs brush, ink, and pictures; poetry needs words and structures; archery needs bow, arrow, and shooting form; gardens need space and materials; and so on. However, even here, the move is to break through form in immediately expressing the formless.

Perhaps the following anecdote will help suggest the nature of a formless art: an American Buddhist scholar was recently traveling with the Korean Buddhist painter, Jung-kwang. Impressed with both the person and the painting of Jung-kwang, the American said, "You must be the Picasso of Korea." But Jung-kwang snapped back, "I'm better. His

paintings are filled with thought, mine are not!" A form art is executed intentionally and on the field of subject/object consciousness. A formless art arises directly on the field of Emptiness and thus, by definition, does not arise from conscious intention, thought-full or feeling-full experience, or subject/object consciousness of any sort. A formless art is, as it were, an ink-splash on eternity, a wordless word, a non-acted action.

Formless reality (Emptiness/Suchness) is immediate experience prior to objectification in any form. It is descriptive of reality emptied of the last vestiges of subject/object consciousness and attachments. To be awake to this reality and yet to live in the world of form is to attain enlightenment and Buddhahood. Formless reality thus operates in form and distinctions which are then seen as the "practice" or activity of Emptiness/Suchness. While a formless art is represented outside of Zen by such a poet/priest as Saigyō (1118-1190), the arts of Zen Buddhism are the clearest example of the formless arts in a "temple" context, and it is to these arts that we now turn.

2. The Formless Temple Arts

Though at some level any art done with enlightened mind is "Zen art," more typically the formless arts associated with institutional Zen have been predominantly calligraphy, painting, and poetry; and to a lesser extent tea ceremony, gardens, architecture, and certain of the so-called martial arts. The uniqueness of these arts, especially as distinct from the form arts discussed above, is their non-symbolic, non-doctrinal, non-explicitly Buddhist character, and their intention directly to express Emptiness/Suchness experience. To appreciate these important features, one could do no better than see the film *Zen in Ryōkō-in* which, among other things, shows Zen art and its meaning in the institutional context. It is with this film in mind that the following comments are made.

One might say that there is a natural affinity between Zen and art. This affinity is not merely through historical accident, or through the strong connection between artists and sectarian Zen in China and Japan. Rather, at base, it arises from the affinity of Emptiness/Suchness experience with aesthetic experience, and is nurtured by the fact that spontaneous artistic expression in poem or painting seems a more natural expression of such experience. Examples of these issues abound in the film, so we turn our attention to it and probe the places where Zen and art meet.

Nanrei Kobori, the Abbot of this small Kyoto temple called Ryōkō-in, is an important guide to our concerns here. Perhaps the clearest example of the affinity of Emptiness/Suchness experience with aesthetic experience appears when, having meditated for awhile, Abbot Kobori opens his eyes, smiles, and says: "Fresh, very fresh." If we can grant, as I think we should, that an experience designated "fresh" is aesthetic experience, we have a precise and explicit example of what I mean.

In another sequence in the film, however, Kobori is shown painting an orchid. As he does so he explains that out of deep Emptiness an orchid is

born as a direct expression, in the living instant, of eternity (i.e., Emptiness *per se*; meditative experience). This, as well as other comments in the film such as "flower is Buddha," or "poetry and Zen are one," suggest the very close relation not only of Emptiness/Suchness experience with aesthetic experience, but of artistic expression with Zen experience.

As a matter of fact, Kobori calls the whole temple, exquisitely beautiful itself and surrounding with beauty as well, an "observatory of inner space." In saying this he is not only implying that beauty and art are natural expressions of "inner space" (Emptiness/Suchness experience), but that this particular kind of beauty and art help lead one into this inner space. Similarly, near the opening of the film, he explains the meaning of "Ryōkō-in" as temple (*in*) of the dragon's (*ryō*) light (*kō*). He then rephrases this statement, saying: "Temple *is* the light of dragon." The dragon's light is nothing short of the "resplendent body of Buddha" mentioned above. It is the actualization of enlightenment experience (Emptiness/Suchness) in everyday existence (forms, thoughts, experiences, activities). As such, the temple, in all its beauty and refined artistic sensitivity, is a primary mode of that light.

Art for Zen is thus a very important mode of direct expression of Emptiness/Suchness. The specific types of this art are also present in the film — calligraphy, painting, poetry, flower arranging, architecture and gardens — though it is clear that certain form arts such as a more traditional sculpture and painting are also present. What is important to note about this art is its formlessness and its non-symbolic character. Like the form arts it can be understood as both expressive and transformative, yet it does not point to meaning beyond itself and is not designed to be representational. (Indeed, it is not "designed" at all, and that is a part of its formlessness.) Unlike form art, where we find fingers pointing to the moon, the underlying intention of a formless art is the moon laid out directly before us.

Perhaps the most notable example of this art in the film is the painting "Six Persimmons" by Mu-ch'i (d. *ca* 1270). The narrator says of this famous Ch'an (Zen) painting that "when Mu-ch'i opened himself to the universe he had six persimmons for his mind." The implication is similar to Kobori's orchid: in/with Emptiness/ Suchness experience ("opening one's self to the universe") comes the particularity and forms of the world in all their freshness and immediacy. Particularly for Zen, this immediately manifested fresh reality is poetically and artistically expressed. In/with Zen experience, even six persimmons are this fresh and ultimate reality for they immediately manifest, and are that moment's activity of, Emptiness/Suchness experience. In/with Zen experience even "flower is Buddha."

This raises yet another major distinction between the formless arts of Zen and the form arts of Buddhism. By their very nature the formless arts adhere to no iconographic rules or codes, and — in general — carry no explicit Buddhist content. They are not, as it were, a visual or literary

theology. If, indeed, flower is Buddha, then all bets are off on the specific content of a Buddhist art. Not only flowers and persimmons, but any and all things (from this perspective) are Buddha, and the art's theme or content is wide open. The following Zen poems exemplify this:

Thirsty, I've filled myself with sake;
lying beneath the cherry blossoms —
Splendid dream.
*Ryōkan** (d. 1831)[16]

Silently a flower blooms
In silence it falls away;
Yet here now, at this moment, at this place,
the whole of the flower, the whole of
the world is blooming.
This is the talk of the flower, the truth
of the blossoms;
The glory of eternal life is fully shining here.
Zenkei Shibayama Roshi (d. 1975)[17]

This moment, whatever its specific content, is arising on the field of Emptiness/Suchness. To be awake to that and live it *as such* is enlightenment. The artistic expression of this awakened moment is — strictly speaking — Buddhist art in a formless mode. The content of this art is theoretically limited only by the limits there may be on such living moments. Clearly we are beyond pictures or statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as the subject matter of art. The "subject matter" is whatever form the mind takes at a living moment of Emptiness/Suchness artistically expressed, whether six persimmons, splendid dreams, blooming flowers, or blooming worlds.

The logic of this Zen perspective moves in two seemingly diverse directions: The break with iconographic rules and *any* apparent dependence on fingers pointing to the moon leads Zen into iconoclasm. Yet, since the number of living moments (for enlightened beings) is theoretically limitless, any moment — whatever its artistic character — is a formless moment and a formless art. Historically, Zen has evidenced both these directions. The iconoclasm of early Ch'an in China is legendary: "When you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha"; "Use the statues of Buddha for firewood"; "Tear up the scriptures for toilet paper." These are just some of the more dramatic and famous iconoclastic expressions in early Zen which sought to rectify a situation in which so many fingers (symbols, art, words, concepts, and the like) were being mistaken for the moon.

The affirmation of *any* moment has been clearly announced by the famous Zen master Dōgen Zenji (d. 1252). Dōgen's radical Zen is iconoclastic in its own way, but it does not sacrifice the form arts and scriptures in order to point directly to the moon. While a full exposition of his radical

*Note the film *Ryōkan: The Poet Priest* in Appendix.

position is difficult and would take us far afield, perhaps the following will suggest his view as related to art.

Dōgen criticizes what he sees as a wrong-headed artistic iconoclasm. In summarizing his view, he says: "The false view that making Buddha images and erecting stupas (i.e., form art) is not the same as arousing the thought of enlightenment (i.e., being enlightened) should be abandoned at once."[18] True Buddhism transcends the very thing-ness of all things and thereby affirms *all* things as they arise on the field of Emptiness/Suchness. Dōgen expresses it this way:

> The One Mind (Emptiness/Suchness) is all things, all things are the One Mind, they are the total Body (of Buddha). If such things as making stupas is a conditioned (unenlightened) effort, then bodhi (enlightenment) ... must be conditioned also. However, because (enlightenment) is not conditioned, neither is making Buddha images or erecting a stupa a conditioned act ....
>
> You should understand that gathering together wood and stone, piling up mud and clay, and collecting gold, silver, and the seven precious stones and making a Buddha image or stupa is the same as making images and stupas by collecting together the One Mind. It is gathering together emptiness upon emptiness and making a Buddha .... When one thing becomes a Buddha, all things become Buddhas. When Sakyamuni attained enlightenment, he said, "When the morning star appeared, I and the great earth with all its being simultaneously became Buddhas." Therefore, arousing the thought of enlightenment, practice, bodhi, and nivana are all simultaneous with the enlightenment, practice, bodhi and nirvana of Sakyamuni. What we call the body and mind in the Buddha Way is grass, trees, and wall rubble; it is wind, rain, water and fire. When you reflect on these things and cause the development of the Buddha Way, it is arousing the thought of enlightenment. Using space to make an image of the Buddha or to erect a stupa is arousing the thought of enlightenment.[19]

While at one level Dōgen is speaking metaphorically about building Buddha images, the larger context of his speaking (and our concerns) suggests this can also be understood literally. That is, from Dōgen's point of view we need not avoid the traditional form arts and/or scriptures as merely fingers pointing to the moon. True Zen transmutes *all* fingers into moons, *all* weeds into nourishment, *all* things into Buddhas, *all* time into Now. In this transmutation *all* things become the formless body of Buddha — even form and form arts. If every moment is a Buddha moment and every activity a Buddha activity, then, indeed, our making and doing of *anything* is "piling emptiness upon emptiness" to make a Buddha — why not the traditional art forms too?

Dōgen's radical view is important to keep in mind, not necessarily for understanding the art of institutional Zen, but more so for understanding what might ultimately constitute a Zen or formless art. Dōgen sets the

standard for understanding what a true formless art might be, and it has little to do in any *necessary* way with specific styles, types, content, or institutions and historic traditions. It also makes clear that an iconoclasm for the wrong reasons is no iconoclasm properly speaking. True iconoclasm is breaking through all self-full being, and transmuting this given world into Buddha. This "given world" may well include all modes of art as they arise on the field of Emptiness/Suchness.

In the meantime, however, and Dōgen notwithstanding, institutional Zen has nurtured, fostered, patronized and produced a variety of formless arts of rather specific type and style. As the previous discussion based on the film *Zen in Ryōkō-in* suggested, and as is obvious from other sources,* these arts are distinct in crucial ways from the form arts of institutional Buddhism in Japan. That they are Buddhist arts nonetheless cannot be denied; they are simply different in underlying intention and explicit content. Perhaps even more properly speaking than a Buddha statue, "they *are* the Buddha!"; they are Buddha-mind in artistic form — an artless form and a formless art.

B. From Temples to Tea: The Buddhist-Influenced Arts

Just as the religious character of human existence cannot be confined or defined merely by its institutional forms, so also definitions of "Buddhist art" cannot be confined to the "temples" of institutional Buddhism. While the institutionalized and historic tradition of Buddhism is obviously the central location and inspiration for the Buddhist arts, Buddhist experience and its expression in artistic modes easily influences other areas of personal and cultural life. This is particularly true of Buddhism in Japan where a strong aesthetic sensitivity has traditionally been tied closely to religious sensitivity. Where the aesthetic is tied to the religious, and where the content of that religious experience is tied so closely and clearly with Buddhism, one will quickly find a larger world of Buddhist art than the temple can encompass — a world of what we might simply call the Buddhist-influenced arts.†

Examples of this phenomenon abound in Japan. Several films on Japanese art suggest the strong connection between Buddhist ritual and the performing arts, and show the performing arts as containing both explicit

*In addition to *Zen in Ryōkō-in*, one may see the slide sets and records relating to the Zen-influenced arts of gardening, calligraphy, painting and music. See the Bibliography listing under Hisamatsu and Suzuki.

†Several films treat the Buddhist-influenced arts that extend beyond institutionalized Buddhism. Among them are: *Torches of Tōdaiji, Haiku, The Path, Arts of Japan: Bridge of Beauty, Japanese Calligraphy, Noh Drama, Spider's Thread, Japan: The Frozen Moment, Woodblock Mandala, Kyūdō: Japanese Ceremonial Archery, Gen: Mystery of Mysteries* and *Hiraizumi — Capital of the North*. See also the slide sets for relevant material on pottery, tea ceremony, landscape painting, gardens and No Drama.

Buddhist themes and important ritual functions.* Especially interesting in this light is *Torches of Tōdaiji* wherein the great contemporary actor in the Kabuki theatre, Onoe Shoroku, is inspired to create a new drama based on movement and themes found in the *shunie* spring ritual done annually at Tōdaiji temple in Nara. This ritual of purification and renewal, filled with dramatic movement, music, and symbols, becomes transformed into the form of a Kabuki dance/drama. The film suggests the important connection between ritual and drama not only by what the actor says but by juxtaposing scenes of the ceremony with scenes of the dance/drama being created and performed.

The whole tradition and repertoire of the Nō drama, a sophisticated and religiously-charged drama form of traditional Japan, carries Buddhist themes in its plots, and in the ideas and ideals which stand behind its structure and style. Almost every Nō play reflects this Buddhist world. In the excerpted plays presented in the film *Noh Drama*, for example, one finds Buddhist themes on death and the hereafter, priests on pilgrimage, demon exorcism, and temple rituals. This and other thematic content, together with the ritualistic quality of its performance, gives the Nō drama a religious and Buddhist character that cannot be denied. Even today, not to mention in traditional Japan, Nō plays are still performed at Buddhist temples† and Shinto shrines on important festival occasions, and still maintain the religious connections even while remaining independent performing artforms.

However, the presence of explicitly Buddhist themes in an art, or the historic connections to Buddhism, do not necessarily make an art religious or Buddhist. While there has been an important Buddhist-influenced art, there are other Japanese artforms with Buddhist themes that are more secular in their meaning and intention. These would be difficult to label as either Buddhist art or Buddhist-influenced art in any real sense. The key to including an art in this larger notion of a Buddhist-influenced art seems to lie less in its content and themes than in its practice — whether as ritual in some more obvious sense, or as simply artistic creativity as a religious activity. For this we have to turn to a distinct way of discussing art, one that has important connections to the notion of art and artistic training as religious discipline and vehicle.

The artistic process itself, when understood as having spiritual or religious implications, necessarily produces a religious art. When one relates this closely to the influences of Buddhism, and suggests an analogous relationship between Buddhist discipline and artistic discipline, the result is a Buddhist-influenced art — albeit not necessarily done within the temple precincts. What this means in the Japanese context, especially in traditional Japan, is that the arts have been understood as spiritual disciplines

*See especially *Hiraizumi — Capital of the North, Torches of Tōdaiji, Noh Drama* and *Spider's Thread.*

†See the film *Hiraizumi — Capital of the North* for Nō plays in relation to Buddhist ritual and festival.

related to, but distinct from, institutional religion. These arts have considered themselves Ways (*tao, dō*) of spiritual significance, and have been related historically and structurally to various religions of the Far East; namely Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, and Buddhism. In Japan the Buddhist influence on these arts has dominated and the ideals of discipline and attainment in the arts have been expressed in Buddhist categories. The arts that have most clearly reflected this are poetry, painting, calligraphy, tea, acting, and several of the martial arts. Ideally, most of these arts seek to attain and express the spiritual depths. As Toyo Izutsu says:

> The *dō* (Way) in the field of art is a way of leading to spiritual enlightenment through art; the *dō* consists here in making an art a means by which to achieve enlightenment as its ultimate goal. In the artistic *dō* . . . particular emphasis is laid on the process, the way, by which one goes toward the goal. To every stage of the way a certain spiritual state corresponds, and at every stage the artist tries to get into communion with the quintessence of art through the corresponding spiritual state, and make himself bloom in the art.[20]

The religious character and significance of art as a religious Way or path is perhaps best established by first showing (rather broadly) how artistic discipline and fulfillment might be considered spiritual discipline and fulfillment, and second by looking at some particularly Buddhist ways of expressing such an ideal.

The religious intention of the artistic ways in Japan is expressed in any number of places, but the following statement by the contemporary tea master Soetsu Yanagi summarizes that intention:

> The Way of Tea is a way of salvation through beauty. Hence the chajin (tea master) must make a paragon of himself so as to preach laws like a religious man. He must have a profound love of beauty, high discernment of truth, and deep experience in practice. So far as cha-no-yu is a Way, spiritual discipline should come first.*[21]

Such a Way is characterized both by a specific discipline and by some understanding of "salvation" or spiritual fulfillment. Considering the former first, we might see the religious intention of the discipline both in the sense of following a tradition and sacred models, and in understanding the discipline as a *yana* (vehicle) or yogic technique.

The "Way" indicates a tradition of masters, techniques, and principles. This tradition may take on a sacred or religious character insofar as it becomes the locus of sacred models (for example, the ancient masters and their art) and saced or secret principles and techniques which one must faithfully follow.

More importantly, however, discipline in the particular forms and

*See also the films *The Path* and *Art and Spirit*.

techniques of the art may well be understood as the basis for a spiritual discipline in which artistic processes function as vehicles or means for self-transformation. In the Way arts perfection in technique is never an end in itself but rather a means for going beyond technique to spiritual/artistic fulfillment. These techniques are a discipline of body and mind/spirit which seeks true creativity — a creativity which is at the same time spiritually and aesthetically based. This is rather clearly seen in the ranking systems of many of the arts. In Zeami (1363-1443) and the Nō theatre, for example, the lower ranks in the actor's training consist of initiation into, and practice of, the primary forms and techniques of the art — in this case both chant and dance — and the roles to be portrayed. In the higher ranks, however, perfect technique is assumed, and one is free to develop the deeper levels of artistic and spiritual creativity. Analogously, Zeami's various writings themselves show this development. His earliest writing, "Kadenshō" (1400), reflects a concern for *monomane* (imitation) and technique, while his later writings (1420s) show a concern for the development of the underlying spiritual strength (*shinriki*) of the artist.

Another example of the merging of artistic with spiritual discipline is in the poetic tradition of the later Heian Period (twelfth century) where the Way of poetry was thought to be both a poetic discipline and a meditative discipline not unlike that form of meditation in Tendai Buddhism known as *shikan* — calm leading to insight. Poetic creativity was thought to entail "a kind of mystical fusion of the poet and his materials achieved by intense concentration" in which the poet sought an immediate intuitive aesthetic/religious grasp of the essence (*hon'i*) and depth of the subject at hand.[22]

Thus, in this early formative period of the artistic Way ideal, the connection between artistic creativity and spiritual processes is securely made. As Brower and Miner say of twelfth century poetics: "The adaptation of a religious ideal to poetic practice may seem remarkable, yet it is hardly surprising in this strongly religious age, when the art of poetry was regarded as a way of life and just as surely a means to ultimate truth as the sermons of the Buddha."[23] Similarly, for the thirteenth century, this religious understanding of artistic poetic process continues, as is suggested by the following characterization of the poetic Way as "a means to religious realization ... and ... (as having) the virtue of serenity and peace, of putting a stop to the distractions and undisciplined movements of the mind .... Should it embody the spirit of the Buddha's Law, there can be no doubt that it will be a *dharani* (Buddhist sacred word formula)."[24]

The artistic Way as spiritual discipline finds another key example in the *haiku* master Bashō (1644-1694).* For Bashō, who emulates the poet Saigyō (1118-1190) before him, the poetic Way finds its controlling metaphor in the pilgrimage journey. Like the pilgrim, though not quite so literally, Bashō sees the poetic Way as a journey into the spirit — a process of coming ever closer to what it means to be truly real and authentic as a human being, and to strive toward spiritual awakening. Perhaps this is

*See *Haiku* in the Appendix.

what Bashō is pointing to when he says, "Each day is a journey and the journey itself home." Or, "what a pilgrimage to far places calls for: willingness to let the world go, its momentariness, to die on the road, human destiny, which lifted the spirit a little, finding foot again here and there, crossing the Okido Barrier in Date."[25] In this journey, which is finally a spiritual journey, poetry is the particular discipline and form within which and through which the pilgrim matures. Although at the end of his life he considered his attachment to poetry to be preventing his final spiritual enlightenment, Bashō seems to attain a kind of spiritual fulfillment. Izutsu describes Bashō's "unremitting pursuit of poetic truthfulness" as "man's effort to come ever closer to the true reality of human existence in the face of Nature and to the true reality of all phenomenal things standing against the background of Emptiness. *Haiku* is a peculiar type of poetry which aims at realizing and expressing the truth of things thus comprehended."[26]

More generally the artistic Way as spiritual discipline has been understood in Japan as *shugyō* or ascetic discipline. In the martial arts, for example, *shugyō* is that level of training at which the Way is fulfilled. *Shugyō* is a "seeking a way out of a dilemma," an absolutely dedicated and concentrated discipline of body and mind through some particular practice, with the purpose of breaking through to spiritual fulfillment.

Just as the process of artistic discipline is religious, so also is true attainment and mastery described in religious and Buddhist terms. In the discussion that follows, the attempt is made to single out some of the important categories in the arts which suggest special spiritual insight on the part of the artist. As such, the categories below refer to particular states of mind and awareness on the part of the truly creative artist which can only be described as Buddhist.

One way of understanding this is to consider that art which seeks to discover and express the "essence" (*hon'i*) of its subject matter. This tendency in the tradition speaks of artistic fulfillment in terms of the ability to grasp or express the underlying principle, reality, or mystery of things. Especially important to the Heian poets, but also true of later artists such as Zeami in the Nō tradition, the concern for essence suggests an attempt to probe to the very depths of reality and experience in order to express the spiritual dimension of life. For the twelfth century poets, this essence is grasped in mystical identification. According to Zeami, *hon'i* is a true unity of the actor with the essential spirit and reality of the character being portrayed. In summarizing this aspect for the whole of the Way art tradition, Izutsu says:

> It is characteristic of every art of *dō* that a description of an object is in itself a self-expression of the subject, while a self-expression of the subject in the presence of and in accordance with an object discloses the object itself as he has seen it with his inner eye. By dint of this characteristic, the gap between the subject and object, between "I" and the external world, appears to be bridged.[27]

The Buddhist categories of Nothingness (*mu*) or Emptiness (*kū*) have also been used to denote that essence which one seeks to express via the aesthetic mode. This is hinted at in Zeami's concern to give visible form to the "Empty essence" (*kūtai*) of all things, or in the ideal found especially in the tea ceremony that art reflects an aesthetic sensuous expression of the awareness of Emptiness. These and similar ideas capture one part of what the Way arts in Japan have sought to attain and express; that is, a Buddhist-influenced sense of the core of all Reality, or the spiritual dimension of reality, which stands in but is somehow unseen and behind all phenomenal existence.

One indication of the deepening Buddhist and Zen influence on these ideals after the Heian Period is that the understanding of the deepest spiritual attainment of the artist shifts from the discovery of essences in things more directly to the quality of mind/spirit of the artist himself. A good example is Zeami's notion that the underlying spiritual power of the true master's *kokoro* (mind/spirit/heart) includes, but is not defined by, the Buddhist experience of no-mind (*mushin*). Although *kokoro* has various meanings in Zeami, it is clearly related to an inner spiritual power which is the basis for true creativity. For Zeami, and the Nō tradition, this basis is the "spiritual power" (*shinriki*) of true artistry, the "bone" (*kotsu*) and "essence" (*tai*) of performing, or the "inner spirit" (*naishin*) which links all one's artistic powers.[28] This *kokoro* thus seems to be spiritual/mental/emotional wholeness which arises out of and expresses the very depths of the truly creative self, and is importantly related to the Buddhist idea of Emptiness/Suchness.

Among these notions there is one which is found in several artistic traditions. This is the Buddhist state of mind *mushin* (no-mind, or *mu*-mind). Whatever this term's meaning within all orthodox Buddhist context, in the arts the word represents the unintending, unconscious, non-attached, spontaneous mind. D. T. Suzuki describes *mushin* this way:

> Mere technical knowledge of an art is not enough to make a man really its master, he ought to have delved deeply into the inner spirit of it. This spirit is grasped only when his mind is in complete harmony with the principle of life itself, that is, when he attains to a certain state of mind known as *mushin*, "no-mind." In Buddhist phraseology, it means going beyond the dualism of all forms of life and death, good and evil, being and non-being. This is where all arts merge into Zen.[29]

Mushin appears in many of the Way arts, especially those coming under the influence of Zen in the Muromachi Period and later (fourteenth through sixteenth centuries). To multiply examples would serve little purpose here. However, it is important to suggest that *mushin* in the arts is closely related to the tranquil, detached but aware mind described by the great tea master Rikyū (1522-1591) as follows:

> The essential intention of *wabi* (an aesthetic/spiritual atmosphere or experience in tea) is to manifest the Buddhaland of purity free from defilements. In this garden path and in this thatched hut, every speck of dust is cleared out. When master and visitor together commune direct from the heart, no ordinary measures of proportion or ceremonial rules are followed. A fire is made, water is boiled, and tea is drunk — that is all! For here we experience the disclosure of Buddha-mind.*[30]

Mushin in the arts can also be related to the concept of *fūga* (or *fūryū*) developed by *haiku* master Bashō. For Bashō, *fūga* (lit. "wind elegance") represents the truly sensitive refined person whose mental state combines a tranquil detachment from self and world, and a sense of absolute unity with nature and cosmos. Like *mushin* or *shinriki*, *fūga* is the creative basis or the spiritual ground from which all poetry arises.

It is important to realize that *fūga* is not an aesthetic criterion in the style or form of *haiku*, but refers to a particular human quality of mind. As defined by one commentator, it is "a special spiritual attitude taken by man toward the true reality of the universe so that he might come ever closer to its depths."[31] In this light, Izutsu's already-quoted comment is particularly appropriate: "The unremitting pursuit of poetic truthfulness (*fūga*), then, means precisely man's effort to come ever closer to the true reality of human existence in the face of Nature and to the true reality of all phenomenal things standing against the background of Nothingness." As Bashō himself seems to indicate, it is nothing less than that spirit which transcends any particular art form and is the common ground of creativity for all the arts. As he says:

> After all this, he (the poet; himself) is now an ignoramus with no accomplishments whatever except that he holds steadily to the pursuit of one line only, which is in truth the line uniformly followed by Saigyō in his *waka*, by Sōgi in his *renga*, by Sesshū in his paintings, and by Rikyū in his art of tea. One spirit activates all their works. It is the spirit of *fūga*; he who cherishes it accepts Nature and becomes a friend of the four seasons. Whatever objects he sees are referred to the flowers; whatever thoughts he conceives are related to the moon.[32]

By relating this spirit to Saigyō and others, he suggests one important and continuous theme in the Way arts — an aesthetic sensitivity to nature which has spiritual depth and Buddhist meaning, and is the true basis of creativity in the arts. Similarly, Bashō is also suggesting a whole religio-aesthetic tradition in which the "tranquil-mind-in-nature" takes on both Buddhist and aesthetic value. Perhaps Zeami summarizes it for us when he says:

> The universe is a vessel producing the various things, each in its

*See also *The Path*

> own season: the flowers and leaves, the snow and the moon, the mountains and seas, the seedlings and trees, the animate and the inanimate. By making these things the essence of your artistic vision, by becoming one with the universal vessel, and securing your vessel in the great *mu* style of the Way of Emptiness (*kūdō*), you will attain the ineffible flowers (*myōka*) of this art.[33]

While Zeami's particular understanding and expression is uniquely his, in this comment he suggests an ideal of artistic discipline and fulfillment viewed through Buddhist categories and experience. While Zeami and his art are independent of sectarian or institutional Buddhism, nonetheless Nō remains an important form of Buddhist-influenced art, and an important reminder that a "Buddhist art" might better be defined by the intention or meaning of its creative process rather than by its theological content. After all, as far as artists like Rikyū and Bashō are concerned, Buddha (Dharma, Truth) is manifested in their art. As Rikyū says, "Here we experience the disclosure of Buddha-mind."

The parallel between the above and the formless arts discussed earlier should be relatively clear and, indeed, the influence of Zen and its art is crucial. While there are some differences between a truly Zen sense of Emptiness/Suchness, and the *mushin* attained in and through artistic disciplines, the stylistic results have a great deal in common.

The film *The Path* nicely exemplifies a more clearly Zen-influenced art. With few words, but a pregnant Silence, the film suggests Emptiness/Suchness experience can be attained in and through the practice of the tea ceremony. The path or Way (*tao, dō*) is both made to walk and to experience in the living moment of Emptiness/Suchness. It is both art as vehicle and art as immediate manifestation of living Reality. In this living moment is *Just This*: water, tea, you and me. Everyday life (on the field of Emptiness/Suchness) is Reality, and tea brings that clearly to presence. When we get beyond words and phrases, thoughts and self-concerns, we open to the Emptiness/Suchness of things *as they are* and not as we hide them in the veil of words, thoughts, and self-full feelings. "In this true purposeless being, why ask what it means?" questions the narrator. Subject and objects, host and guest, action and non-action — all are in the One Mind of this living moment, the Emptiness/Suchness Mind. Living in this moment means actions flow effortlessly, purposelessly, spontaneously. This, again as Rikyū says, is the manifestation or disclosure of Buddha-mind. "This is Buddha!"

A final and particularly clear example of the Zen and Buddhist influences on many of the arts in traditional Japan can be seen in the theories of performance found in the work of Komparu Zenchiku (d. *ca* 1470), the son-in-law of Zeami and a master of Nō. In a work titled *Rokurin Ichiro* ("Six Circles and One Sword") Zenchiku makes the Buddhist connections clear by formulating a theory of performance securely tied to Zen Buddhist categories and punctuating that theory with diagrams reminiscent of

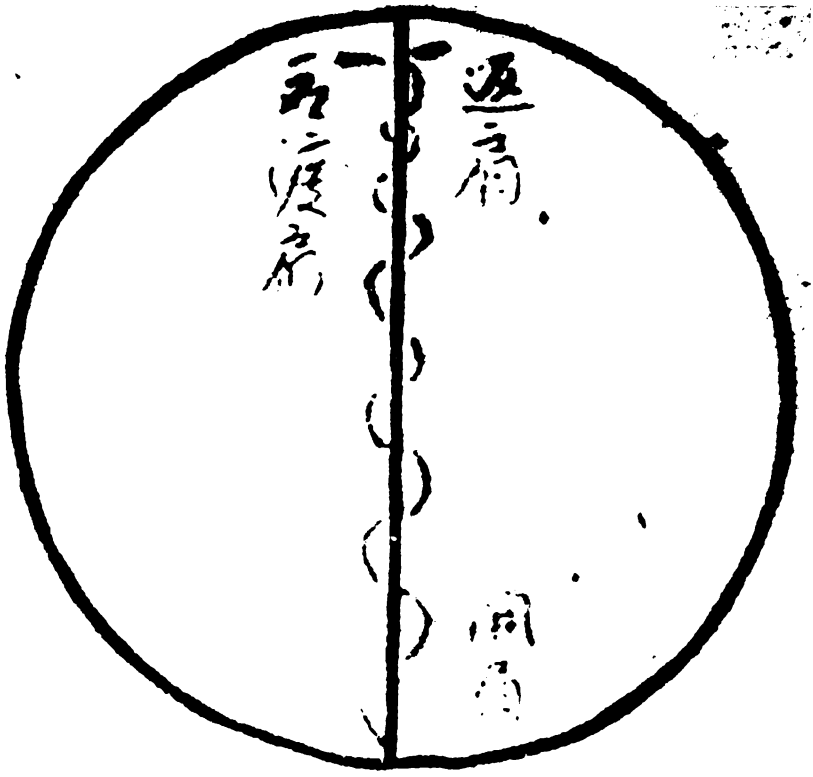
he ox-herding series discussed above. In this theory we can see clearly ınd explicitly the connection between Buddhist ideals and artistic creativ-ty.

Steeped in the sophisticated, refined, and largely Buddhist-influenced ulture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Zenchiku focuses on mptiness consciousness as the creative ground of art and life, and closely elates that to *yūgen* (sublimity, profound beauty) as the distinctive sign or tyle of an Emptiness or formless art. Inspired by what he refers to as a gift luring meditation from the Bodhisattva Kannon, Zenchiku introduces ıis theory by saying: "The way of the art of Nō consists in moving the body n the most beautiful possible form, and in modulating the voice in pat-erns. Therefore you must learn the dance movement of the hands and the hythm of the feet. Will all this not appear in the mystery of nothingness Emptiness)?"[34] Zenchiku goes on, then, to describe the six circles and one word in the following manner.

1. Jurin (The circle of life)

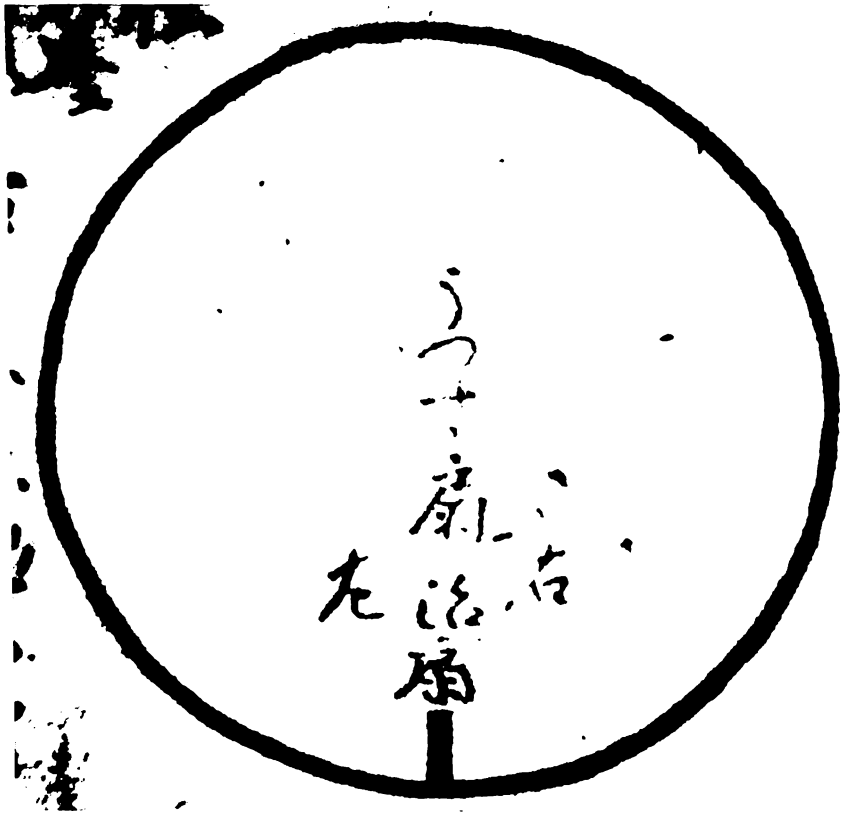
Zenchiku describes *jurin* as the womb or foundation out of which the life f all things arises and back to which all things return. It is the basis for

yūgen. It is "like a mirror" and is the "vessel that produces all things." I Buddhist language it is Emptiness *per se*; the field of Emptiness upon whic all arises and to which all returns. It is ultimate and fundament Reality.(The writing within the circle has no relation to the circle as a di gram.)



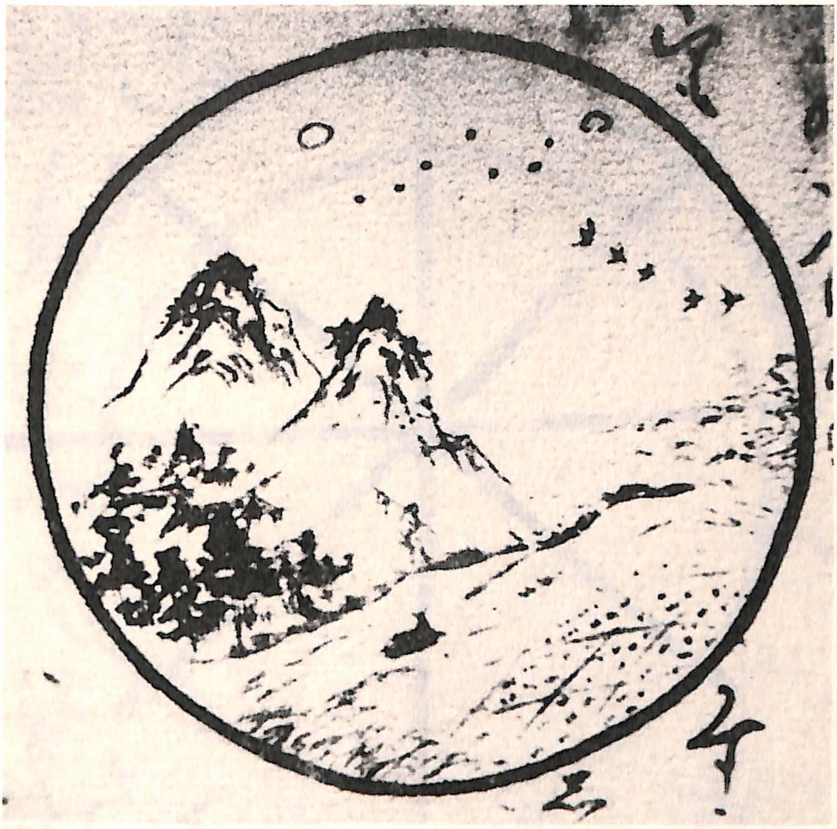
2. *Ryūrin* (The circle of separation)

Just as Emptiness is lived out or activated in the world of form and di tinction, so sound and movement come to embody this Emptiness in pe formance. Such sound and movement, grounded in Emptiness, is pu and serene, and is the creator of *yūgen*. As waves are the distinctive form of the formless water, so sound and movement are the specific forms



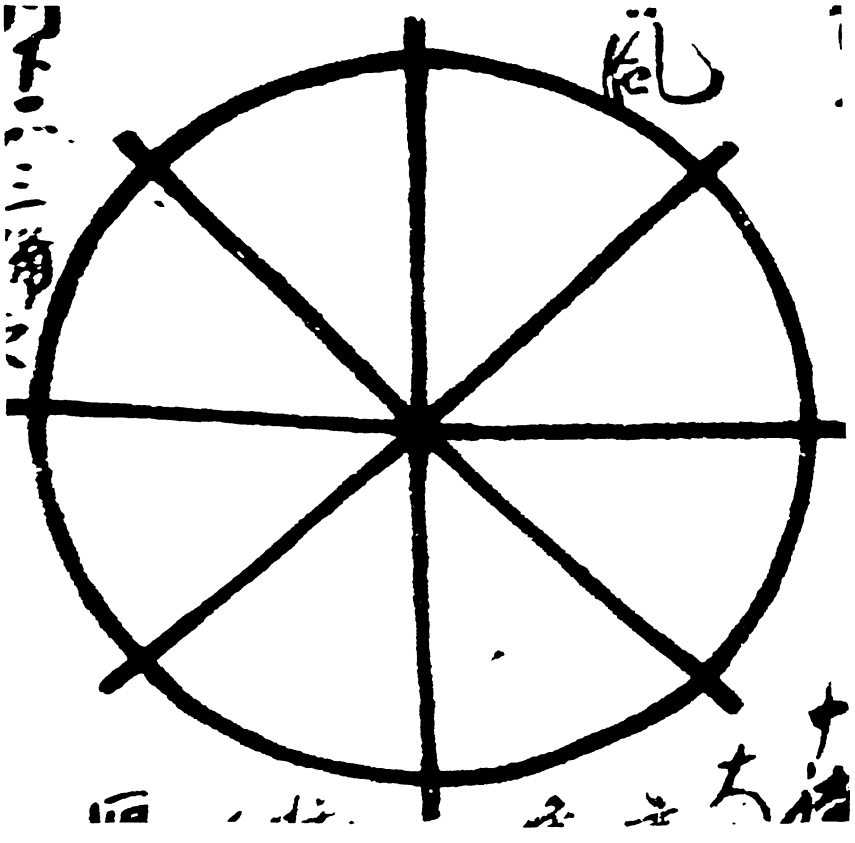
3. Jūrin (The circle of dwelling)

Zenchiku characterizes this circle as follows: "Decaying flowers, falling leaves before our eyes are themselves true reality. If you do not discern this dwelling place, you do not know of the fundamental seed of *yūgen* and your flowers are on a broken branch." When all forms and all styles in acting and life are grounded or settled in Emptiness/Suchness, then every act, every style, every "flower" of the art is itself true reality and grounded in an unbroken branch. *Yūgen* is the aesthetic manifestation of this settledness.



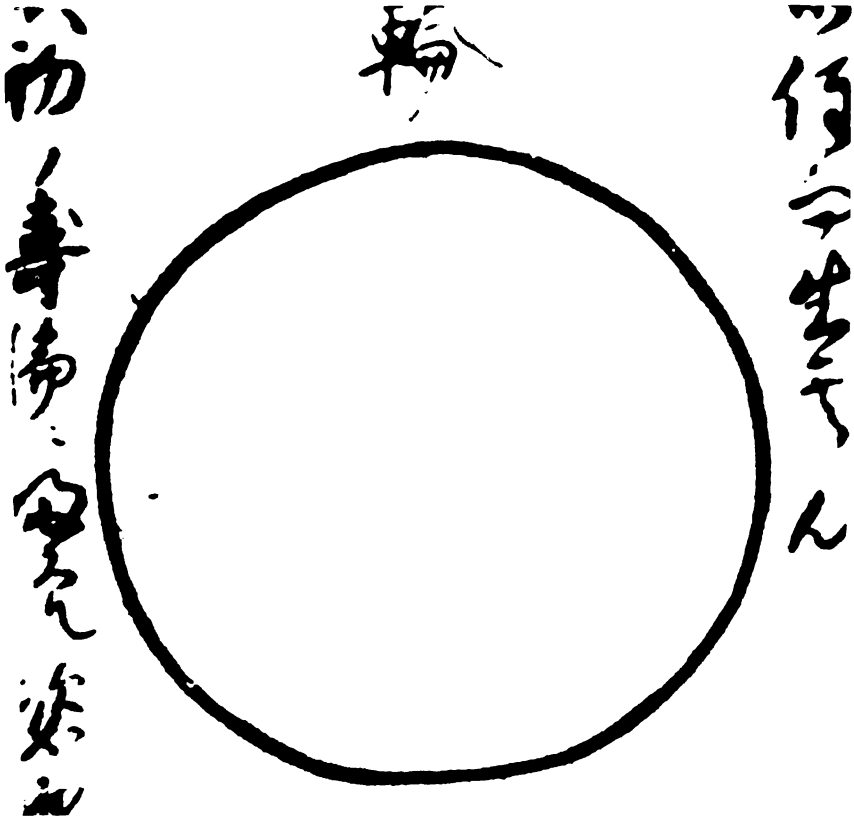
4. Zōrin (The circle of phenomena)

Based on the upper three circles, Nō performance in all its variety (indeed, the world in all its variety) appears within the circle of Emptiness/Suchness; within the circle of *yūgen*. Zenchiku says: "Each tune and each style of dancing is independent and has its own feature expressing the thing itself, yet each is connected with the higher level and is not separate from the above three wheels."



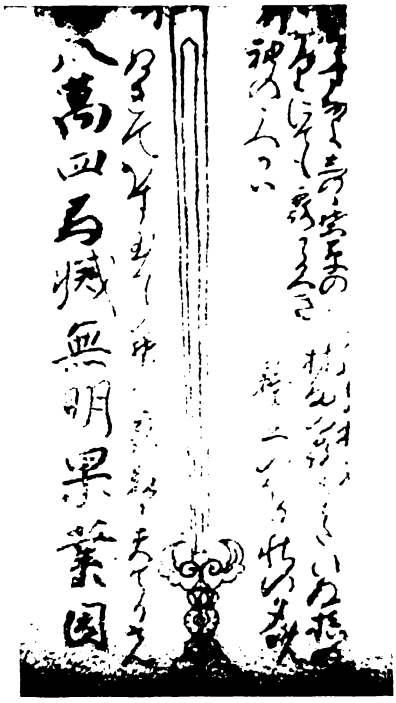
5. Harin (The circle of breaking)

Even novelty, originality, unusual styles and "breaking the rules" are not outside the circle of Emptiness and *yūgen*. Even the non-ordinary, which seems to break with the usual styles and go beyond what normally would be considered *yūgen*, is grounded in the circle and manifests *yūgen*.



6. Kūrin (The circle of Emptiness)

Zenchiku explains that "extreme enlightenment looks just like non-enlightenment. In the end the Nō art returns to its original starting point." The cycle is complete: form moves back into the formless, and pure potentiality becomes pure arrival. Perfection in life and in art is fulfilled.



Ichiro (The one sword)

The sword of Wisdom (*prājña*) cuts through all distinctions and descriptions and joins together the six circles. Immediate living reality, beyond all distinctions and naming, is ultimate and true reality. "This circle is not one-sided either with form nor with emptiness. It is absolutely free and cuts off every obstacle (subject/object attachment). Hence it takes the form of a sword, representing the ultimate Nothingness (Emptiness)." This is unspoken, unspeakable Reality. This is the Buddha of art.

In closing his analysis Zenchiku says that, "Nō extends itself vertically into the three Buddhist worlds, and horizontally in every direction." By implication the discipline and performance of Nō is Buddhist discipline and performance; it disciplines and "performs" Emptiness in and with the aesthetic mode (*yūgen*). It proceeds from this world of form and technique into the formless world and back again. It proceeds "vertically" into transcendence and "horizontally" into all styles and kinds of performing. Indeed, it penetrates one's entire life.

The Buddhist-influenced arts, especially the Way arts as discussed above, are a major form of Buddhist practice in Japan insofar as they seek to realize the ideals of such artists as Saigyō, Zeami, Zenchiku, the painter Sesshū, Rikyū, and Bashō. These Buddhist-influenced arts, in their ideal formulation, can be understood as fully Buddhist arts informed by, but not primarily located in, the temple. In moving from temple to tea, or from the institutional forms of Buddhist arts to the Buddhist-influenced arts, we have not necessarily moved any further away from Buddhist ideals, Buddhist experience, or Buddhist practice. We have simply changed the primary location and characteristics of what is otherwise a truly Buddhist art.

CHAPTER 5

Concluding Remarks

IN THE ABOVE interpretation we have seen Buddhist art along three continua: one that moves from the temple arts to the Buddhist-influenced arts, one that moves from an emphasis on form and symbol to an emphasis on formlessness, and one that moves from art as expression to art as process. Now we might add a fourth continuum that is implicit throughout: a move from Buddha as a being or beings, to Buddha as Emptiness/Suchness experience activated in/with phenomenal reality — especially as aesthetically apprehended and expressed. This is a rather large move, especially for those more familiar with Western religious ideas in which historic and suprahistoric beings seem crucial to the nature of ultimate reality. In Buddhism, however, especially in its Japanese context, the continuum is not so difficult to see. In much of Buddhism, "Buddha is as Buddha does," or "Buddha is nowhere but right here." Insofar as this is true for Buddhism generally, particularly Mahāyāṇa, it is entirely understandable that Buddhist art wuld reflect and make this move itself. Not unlike other major religions, Buddhism reflects the tremendous variety of human experience and understanding of the world. No wonder its teachings, practices, and arts reflect so many continua! Perhaps when all the description, analysis, and interpretation is done, the best we can do is admire a profound and beautiful art that reveals Buddha, and exclaim: "That's the Buddha!"

Notes

1. Adapted from K. M. Nakamura (trans.), *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 128.

2. Dietrich Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 21.

3. The ox-herding pictures appear in several versions. This set of ten is painted by the fifteenth century Japanese artist Shūbun, and is taken from Jan Fontein and Money Hickman, *Zen Painting and Calligraphy* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970), pp. 114f.

4. Giuseppi Tucci, "Nomina Numina" in *Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade*, ed. by J. M. Kitagawa and C. Long (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 6f.

5. Itsuji Yoshikawa, *Major Themes in Japanese Art* (New York/Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1976), p. 26.

6. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1935 [1972]), p. 51.

7. Yoshito Hakeda (trans.) *Kūkai: Major Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 145.

8. Philip Yampolsky (trans.) *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 130.

9. Francis Cook (trans.) *How To Raise An Ox* (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1979), p. 78.

10. John Rosenfield and Shūjirō Shimada, *Traditions of Japanese Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 11.

11. Freely adapted from A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

12. Hakeda, *op. cit.*, p. 145f. Emphasis added.

13. John Blofeld, *Bodhisattva of Compassion* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), pp. 28-30.

14. *Ibid.* For example, see pp. 90, 94, 108f, and Chapter 7.

15. *Ibid,* p. 85.

16. John Stevens (trans.) *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryōkan* (New York: Weatherhill, Inc., 1977), p. 62.

17. Zenkei Shibayama, *A Flower Does Not Talk* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1970), p. 205.

18. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 119f.

20. Toyo Izutsu, "Far Eastern Existentialism: Haiku and the Man of Wabi," *Philosophical Forum* (IV/2, 1973), pp. 53f.

21. Rand Castile, *The Way of Tea* (New York: Weatherill, Inc., 1971), pp. 82f.

22. Robert Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 257.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Mujū Ichien (1226-1312) as quoted in Robert Morrel, "Mujū Ichien's Shinto—Buddhist Syncretism," *Shasekishu* Book I, *Monumenta Nipponica* (28/4, 1973), p. 453.

25. Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu, *Back Roads to Far Towns* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968), pp. 16, 61. Cf. the film *Haiku*.

26. Izutsu, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 598.

27. Izutsu, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

28. See, e.g., William Theodore deBary, ed. *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), Vol. I, pp. 285-86, 290-97.

29. Daisetz Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), p. 157.

30. In Theodore Ludwig, "The Way of Tea: A Religio-Aesthetic Mode of Life," *History of Religions* (14/1, 1974), p. 48.

31. Izutsu, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

32. In Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

33. From Zeami's "Yūgaku shūdō kempusho" in Nose Asaji, ed., *Zeami Juroku-bushu*, Vol. I (Tokyo: Iwannami Shoten, 1949), p. 575f.

34. Benito Ortolani, "Zenchiku's Aesthetics of the Nō Theatre," *Riverdale Studies* (No. 3) 1976, p. 8. All quotations from Zenchiku are based on Ortolani's translations, but their explication is my own.

APPENDIX I

Audio-Visual Resources

1. Relevant Films

(See *Focus on Buddhism* for further filmographic information and reviews on each of the following films.)

Art and Spirit (28 min., color)

This film is a survey of one of the several "new religions" of Japan, the Ōmoto ("great origin") religion. While this religion is more Shinto than Buddhist, it significantly incorporates the artistic Ways discussed in this essay. As for Japan generally, Ōmoto tends to merge the religious with the aesthetic/artistic, and the Buddhist with the Shinto.

In this film the arts of music, Nō, tea, calligraphy and pottery are related to ritual and to spiritual disciplines, both as Ways to "God," and as Ways to that "Absolute tranquility" represented in Buddhism — to the "Silence which is the Pure Land on earth."

Arts of Japan, Bridge of Beauty (29 min., black and white)

This is an older but sensitive film in which a Western artist returns to Japan after World War II seeking "bridges" to Japan through its artistic beauty. While little is said in the film that suggests Buddhist influences on these arts, the film implies the connections (e.g., "The quality of Emptiness in Nō," or tea as "etiquette and meditation leading to tranquility") and shows practitioners involved in such arts as Nō, architecture and gardens, tea ceremony, painting, and pottery.

Buddhist Arts (25 min., color)

This film is a rather unsystematic attempt to suggest historic development and artistic parallels in Buddhist art generally. Focusing primarily on temple architecture and statuary, and using the sixth and seventh century temple Hōryūji as its Japanese example, it discusses the historic development of Buddhism and its art from India to China, and subsequently to Japan. In the process it draws parallels between early Mahāyāṇa sculpture in India, iconographic figures in China, and the art and architecture of Hōryūji.

Though unsophisticated in its interpretation of this art, the film is the only one of its kind and offers useful generalizations concerning historic development, and useful visuals of major Buddhist iconocgraphic motifs — including Indian

pagodas, Ajanta cave art, esoteric Buddhist *maṇḍalas*, Hōryūji's Asuka Buddha and Amida triad, Chinese cave figures, Tōdaiji's Bodhisattva Kannon, and Daitokuji's Daibutsu (Great Buddha).

Gen: Mystery of Mysteries (23 min., black and white)

This imaginative film seeks to express the feeling of *gen*, a term in Japanese (and Chinese) thought suggesting that which lies beyond and/or hidden in the form of things — the dark mystery, sublime silence, or formless form of things. (Cf. Japanese/Buddhist aesthetic term *yūgen*.) With no narration, but an interesting musical sound track, the film succeeds in suggesting the dark, mysterious, ineffable character of a Reality that is both in and yet somehow beyond the transitory world of everyday form and experience. A collage of visual forms is offered from grey natural scenes juxtaposed with human movement and calligraphy, to recurring images of the moon and meditation.

While some might not consider *gen* as Buddhist — or, indeed, religious — the film makes the unspoken connection to Buddhism in its final sequences when Zen meditation appears and the Zen calligraphic circle symbolizing Emptiness is drawn. In this light the film seems to be suggesting that *gen* finally points to the Emptiness of all form as well as the form that Emptiness takes.

Haiku (18 min., color)

This is perhaps the best of several films on *haiku* as Buddhist art. While it does not discuss Buddhism, it focuses attention on the great masters of Buddhist-influenced poetic genius: Bashō (d. 1694), Buson (d. 1783) and Issa (d. 1827). Beyond this, however, the Buddhist meaning of the poetry is only implied in statements such as: "neither birth nor death in this present moment," "absolute tranquility in this present moment," "poetic discipline and the merging of poet with nature," "Zen influences in the development of *haiku*." Poems representative of these poets are read, and relevant visuals and comments given, that suggest the meaning and context of the poems.

Hiraizumi — Capital of the North (30 min., color)

This film is excellent for suggesting institutional Buddhism as the patron and preserver of arts — in this case the form arts of temple architecture, painting, sculpture; and Nō as festival ritual. Focusing on the beautiful temple of Chusonji (See *Restoration of the Golden Shrine* in *Focus on Buddhism*), the film shows a living/working temple and the place the arts play in that context. For purposes of this essay, however, the most important feature is the centrality of Nō. Though Nō as a general art form exists beyond temple walls and has become an independent art, we see here its continued importance in a Buddhist ritual setting.

Japan: The Frozen Moment (56 min. in 2 reels, black and white)

This film presents a collage of Japanese dramatic forms in the following order: the crane and war dances from the ancient music/dance Bugaku/Gagaku, an

extended excerpt from the Nō play "Matsukaze," a dramatic poetry reading, excerpts from the puppet theatre (Bunraku), and selections from a Kabuki play.

The title "frozen moment" seeks to name an underlying theme of the film, and presumably of all these drama forms; that is, as stated in the film, "calmness midst activity," "stillness within movement." Such a theme, whether present in all these drama forms or not, certainly indicates what has been discussed in this essay concerning Buddhist influences on performance ideals — especially for Nō. In fact, the relevance of the title and theme seems to be particularly related to Nō. Indeed, the sequences of Nō are the most extended of the film, and the related theme of a "timeless beauty" (*yūgen*?) is most appropriate at that point.

Japanese Calligraphy (15 min., black and white)

While this is a dated and somewhat romanticized French film emphasizing existential avant garde art, it is the only film which focuses on *shōdō*, or the "Way of the brush." While not explicitly aware of the religious or Buddhist influences on calligraphy, the film suggests the importance of technique and training leading to spontaneity and freedom in art, of the connection between writing and art or painting, of grasping what cannot be grasped, of working with mind/heart rather than hand or arm, and of meditation as a prelude to creation. All such comments are indicative of the ideals of a Way art and, while calligraphy certainly has Chinese Taoist connections, in Japan it has carried a significant Buddhist meaning.

Kyūdō: Japanese Ceremonial Archery (10 min., color)

This film might best be seen in conjunction with reading Herrigel's book *Zen in the Art of Archery*, or other commentaries on martial arts as adjunct disciplines in Zen (e.g., the sword and *karate*). This film itself says nothing of these matters, but alludes to them when suggesting that there are more important things than hitting the target, and indicating the centrality of discipline, concentration, proper breathing, and calming the mind. As in other Way arts, *mushin* or momentary Emptiness is expressed by the phrase, "When the man, the bow, and the arrow are one, the arrow is loosed"; or, when doing archery from horseback (*yabusame*), "body and mind are one."

Noh Drama (30 min., color)

As is clear from the essay above, the Nō drama is a central example of a Buddhist art beyond the temple walls. Both by the plot content, and by the ideals of performance, the Nō expresses and becomes a vehicle for Buddhist themes and Buddhist experience. While there are no films which address this religious and Buddhist character of Nō, in this film one can at least see and hear Nō performed. Plays excerpted for brief performance are: "Fujito," "Shojo," "Takasago," "Tsuchigumo," "Dōjōji," and "Matsukaze."(Translations of at least three of these appear in Keene's book *Twenty Plays of the Nō Theatre* [see Bibliography], and in the book *The Noh Drama* published for the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai by Charles E. Tuttle Co. (Rutland, VT, 1955). While Buddhist themes and characters abound in these plays, the film does not single them out. It would be best to see the film

having already read translations of the plays. There is, however, a mention of the term *yūgen* that has been mentioned in the essay above as connected to an aesthetic apprehension and expression of Buddhist experience.

The Path (33 min., color)

This film takes place largely in narrative silence as it shows a tea ceremony taking place, but is punctuated occasionally by sayings indicative of tea ceremony ideals, and by the sounds of water and other forms of nature. In this sense the film tries to present the living experience of tea and invites the viewer to participate. The few comments given in the narration suggest but do not explain the religious underpinnings of the ceremony, for example: "Tea is walking the path of everyday life — a path both ancient yet of the mindless (*mushin*) Void as well"; "Art disciplines and mirrors the self"; "Distinctions are here, but all is in One Mind — in the harmony of the moment." The film leaves the impression that being absolutely present to this tranquil Silence and harmonious moment is the aesthetic appropriation of Emptiness/Suchness.

This film is not explicit in making the Buddhist connections. Relevant reading (e.g., Ludwig, listed in Bibliography) would be useful. (See further discussion of this film in the body of the essay above.)

Ryōkan: The Poet Priest (27 min., color)

This film surveys Ryōkan's life and celebrates his work. While it does not focus on the Buddhist (Zen) connections, or on the religious character of his poetry, it does suggest a paradigm and model of traditional Japan — the saintly, detached, Buddhist "hermit" living his life simply and in tune with nature, and pursuing the arts of calligraphy, poetry, and painting. (Other examples of this ideal appear in the figures of Kenko, a 14th century poet-priest, and Saigyō, a 12th century poet-priest.)

John Stevens, in his book on Ryōkan (see the Bibliography), explains: "Ryōkan represents something very special in the Japanese character and all who wish truly to understand Japan should study the life and poetry of this 18th century hermit monk. From a religious standpoint also, Ryōkan is exceptional, exemplifying as he does the Zen Buddhist idea of attaining enlightenment and then returning to the world with a serene face and gentle words. In his life he was indeed Daigu, the Great Fool (the literary name he gave himself), one who had gone beyond the limitations of all artificial, manmade restraints" (p. 9).

Shinto: Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan (48 min., color)
(Inquire Japan Society, New York City)

This film, while not reviewed or listed in *Focus on Buddhism*, and while not concerned with the Buddhist arts, is important here for suggesting non-Buddhist foundations in Japan for the close relation of aesthetic and religious sensitivity, and the close relation of art, ritual, and religion. While Buddhism incorporated and transformed these relationships, they are never far behind a truly Japanese art and aesthetic. Primarily, the issue is a religious affirmation of beauty, stillness and tranquility, nature, cleanliness and purity, simplicity and naturalness. These same themes, under Buddhist influence, are central to many of the Buddhist arts and their Shinto background is important to identify.

Spider's Thread (30 min., black and white)

This film represents the dramatization of a story of the same title by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (1882-1927), the author of *Rashomon*. With neither narration nor dialogue the dramatization mimes in modern dress this story about the evil Kandata who was sent to hell at death, but received a chance for salvation from hell by a compassionate Buddha (or Bodhisattva) who knew that Kandata once saved a spider's life. This Bodhisattva (Kannon?), looking down from some Buddha paradise, lowers a spider's thread into hell by which Kandata can climb out. In selfish haste Kandata grabs the thread to get out first before the hoards of others can get there. The thread breaks and Kandata falls back into hell, never (one assumes) to rise again.

Whether understood literally or symbolically, this film represents dramatic arts beyond the temple taking up popular Buddhist themes and presenting them to a wider audience. More literally understood, this would be good material to present popular Buddhist notions of paradises and hells, Buddha's grace or intervention in the affairs of humanity, and karma and fate. More symbolically understood, true selflessness is salvation and Buddha is the mind of selflessness. Self-full thoughts plunge us right back into the hell of our own suffering and attachments.

Torches of Tōdaiji (40 min., color)

This colorful and entertaining film juxtaposes Tōdaiji temple's spring ritual (*shunie*) with a Kabuki dance/drama based on it and follows the process by which the Kabuki actor, Onoe Shoroku, is inspired by the ritual and creates the dance. The film is a classic example of the shift from temples to tea, or from the institutional forms of religion and art to the wider and independent cultural arts.

The ritual, or festival, is about 1200 years old and has inspired other drama forms as well. And no wonder: it is full of dramatic action and colorful events as it ritually cleanses the world for the new life to come. The Kabuki sequence is more restrained and abstract, but follows closely some of the symbolic actions used in the ceremony.

Woodblock Maṇḍala: The World of Shiko Munakata (30 min., color)

This film explores the art and person of Munakata, one of Japan's most famous living artists and a master of woodblock printing. The idea of art as *maṇḍala* appears momentarily in the following phrase in the film and then disappears for the rest of the film: "I work my print as if I were gouging out the universe, a *maṇḍala* of the universe." In Buddhist terms, this means that art appears in and with the "universe" of Emptiness/Suchness. Art is an enacting and/or picture of this Reality, and hence a *maṇḍala*. If this is what he means, then the fact that his art reflects a variety of Buddhist and non-Buddhist subjects does not particularly matter. Again, as discussed in the essay above, it is the Buddhist intention and experience behind the artistic act which makes it Buddhist art.

Yakushiji Temple: The Cream of Buddhistic Arts (30 min., color)

This is the best film available showing early Buddhist architecture and sculpture — in this case the art and architecture of the 7th century temple Yakushiji. Lavish

visual attention is given to the following Buddhist figures and forms: the *pagoda*, the Yakushi Buddha and his accompanying Bodhisattvas, the Sho Kannon, and a variety of lesser known treasures such as a Manjusri, Kichijoten, Hachiman, eleven-headed Kannon, and ground plans of the temple. Unfortunately, the film's narration helps little with the Buddhist meaning of this art and simply describes the art in an art-history context.

Particularly interesting, though appearing very briefly, is a sequence near the end of the film showing the ancient Buddhist ritual-drama form of Gigaku — an ancient ritual in Buddhism reflecting the Chinese influences on Japanese Buddhism.

Zen in Ryōkō-in (72 min. in 2 reels, color)

This is by far the best film indicating the relation of Zen to art. While the film's stated intention is to show the daily life in a small Zen temple (reel No. 1), and special ceremonies accompanying the rebuilding of the main temple (reel No. 2), the close relation of Zen to aesthetic/artistic modes of expression is a dominant theme — both implicitly and explicitly. For a fuller discussion of Zen and art in this film, see Chapter 4, A. 2 above.

2. Selected Non-Film Resources

(See *Focus on Buddhism* for complete information and listing, with the reviews, of this material).

Slide Sets

The Arts of Japan (300 slides in 15 sets)

These slide sets are arranged to cover Japanese history from pre-history to the 20th century. A sizable portion of the slides, however, focus on temple arts. For excellent examples of this art see sets II-VII.

Japan: Ancient Buddhist Paintings (30 slides)

This material is representative of Buddhist paintings in the 7th to 12th centuries.

Japanese Gardens (105 slides)

This slide set focuses on the garden as religious symbol and decorative landscape, and includes gardens closely associated with temples and shrines as well as with Pure Land and Zen ideals. (Cf.: slide set *Philosophy of Zen*)

Nara and Kyoto (40 slides in 2 sets)

These two slide sets focus on the traditional arts of Nara and Kyoto respectively. The Nara set primarily shows early Buddhist architecture, sculpture, and painting while the Kyoto set emphasizes the Zen arts.

Philosophy of Zen (100 slides)

This slide set uses gardens, in varying relationships to Zen, as visual examples of the seven characteristics of Zen art which one finds discussed in Hisamatsu's book *Zen and the Fine Arts* (see Bibliography).

Zen (25 slides)

While much of this set is a survey of Zen, and of Soto Zen monastic practice, the last ten slides focus on the influence of Zen in artistic/aesthetic areas such as the tea ceremony, flower arranging, painting, and gardens.

Recordings

A Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky (Nonesuch No. H72025)

This recording features the bamboo flute, or *shakuhachi*. Used both within and as reflective of Zen, the *shakuhachi* is probably the single best candidate for a Zen musical instrument and style.

Buddhist Chant (Lyrichord No. LLST-7118)

This two-record set features chant from a variety of sects in Japanese Buddhism: Zen sutra chanting, Tendai *shōmyō* chanting, Nichiren *nembutsu* repetition, Shuken Shi morning ritual, and a pilgrimage group's *goeika*.

Music of Japan IV: Buddhist Music (UNESCO)

This recording presents chanting and musical expression in the Soto Zen of Eiheiji temple, but also includes examples of Tendai *shōmyō*.

Shōmyō-Buddhist Ritual from Japan (UNESCO)

This record presents chanting and ritual sounds of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism.

The Way of Eiheiji (Folkways No. 8980)

This two-record set is a relatively complete example of chant and ritual sounds of the Soto Zen temple/monastery Eiheiji.

APPENDIX II

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APPENDIX III

Glossary

Amida — One of the great "celestial" Buddhas of Mahāyāṇa Buddhism; a symbol and/or force of infinite Wisdom and Compassion. More literally and descriptively understood, He reigns in His Pure Land in the Western sector of the cosmos beyond our own world system. By virtue of His Bodhisattva vows all beings are in fact already saved. His followers need only call on His name in absolute faith and rebirth in His Pure Land is assured. Once there, Nirvāṇa is not far away. Amida is the central figure in the various Pure Land Buddhist sects of China and Japan.

Amitābha — See Amida

Avalokiteśvara — See Kannon

Bodhi — The state of being awakened, enlightened, in Nirvaṇa. See also Wisdom, Emptiness, Suchness, Dharma, Tao.

Bodhisattva — Literally this means "enlightenment being," but more generally refers either to a being on the way to enlightenment, or to a being whose enlightenment entails Compassion as a central ingredient and whose vows include the vow to save all beings. In Mahāyāṇa Buddhism the Bodhisattva represents the central ideal. (The original name for Mahāyāṇa was Bodhisattva-yana.)

Buddha — This word is a title indicating one who has been "awakened" or enlightened. Beyond this, however, the word refers either to the historical Buddha (Gautama, Sākyamuni), to any awakened being, or simply to enlightenment itself. The latter two meanings are more appropriate to Mahāyāṇa Buddhism.

Compassion — This is a translation of the Sanskrit word *karuṇā* and indicates a central feature of the Mahāyāṇa ideal of human existence. Mahāyāṇa emphasizes that Compassion, or reaching out to help others toward enlightenment, is absolutely central to becoming a Bodhisattva. Wisdom and Compassion automatically go together. Emptiness/Suchness experience is also Compassion experience.

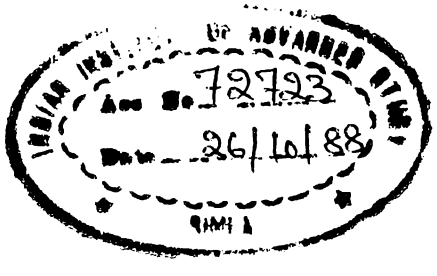
Dharma — Though originally indicating Buddhist teachings, in Mahāyāṇa this term tends to be synonymous with Truth itself; that is, with Bodhi, enlightenment, Nirvāṇa, Wisdom/Compassion, Emptiness/Suchness

Dō — See Tao

Gautama — The historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, who was active in India *ca* 550 BCE.

Hon'i	The essential reality of anything. The ultimate reality or underlying essence of things. A term used especially in early Japanese poetics to suggest poetry that grasps and expresses the depth and essence of any particular object.
Emptiness	This translates the Sanskrit term *śūnyatā*. For most of Mahāyāṇa Buddhism it represents the ultimate basis for all reality. It is the Absolute *per se* and points to an awareness or consciousness emptied of subject/object separation, or of the "thingness" of things. It is pure awareness unattached to mental images. Its best analogy, and indeed the entre into it, is *samadhi* or calming forms of meditation. In the essay above it is best represented by the eighth picture in the ox-herding series (p. 18) and the first and sixth pictures in Zenchiku's series (p. 50 and p. 55). It is also synonymous with "formlessness" and with Suchness. (See also Compassion.)
Mudrā	Hand positions found in traditional Buddhist inconography which are symbolic of a variety of Buddha-attitudes or functions including teaching, meditation, granting favors, stilling the mind, and so on.
Nirvāṇa	This word points to at least two distinct attainments: it is synonymous with enlightenment, Wisdom, Emptiness/Suchness, and the like, and it can often refer to liberation from the "wheel of birth and death." Traditionally, Buddhism has understood the latter to be an effect of the former.
Nō (*Noh*)	A Japanese drama form originating in the 14th century and continuing today. Highly sophisticated in form and content, this dramatic art has important connections to Buddhism both in plot content and performance ideals.
Pagoda	The Chinese/Japanese development of the Indian stūpa. An architectural symbol and monument housing relics of the Buddha. A sacred building.
Prajñā	See Wisdom.
Pure Land	See Amida.
Śākyamuni	One of the names or titles for the historical Buddha specifically referring to him as a holy man of the Śākya clan or tribe in ancient India. See also Gautama and Buddha.
Shugyō	A term used especially in the Japanese martial arts to indicate strenuous discipline seeking spiritual breakthrough.
Stūpa	See *Pagoda*.
Suchness	A positive way of expressing Emptiness experience — especially as it operates in the realm of forms. To experience the world as Emptiness is to perceive the world and things *as such, as they are*, without the mediation of subject/object consciousness. See also the ninth ox-herding picture on page 19 above.
Śūnyatā	See Emptiness.
Tathatā	See Suchness.

Tao	Tao (Jap. *dō* or *michi*) represents in Buddhism either the Truth itself (see Dharma and all its equivalent terms), or the Way that Truth is attained or lived out (see *yana*). Of course, the term has other meanings in other contexts but its primary Buddhist meaning is relevant here.
Upāya	Usually translated skill-in-means, or expedient means, this points to the ability and techniques the Bodhisattvas or Buddhas use in order to help other beings attain enlightenment.
Wisdom	The term is the usual translation of the Sanskrit term *prajñā* or *prajñāpāramitā*. In Mahāyāṇa it is synonymous with awakened or enlightened consciusness/insight. In a sense, it is a way of naming Emptiness/Suchness experience in its "intellectual" dimension of insight, realization, illumination, or enlightenment. As *pāramitā* it is "other shore" or nirvanic Wisdom. To use Western religious language, it is viewing things from "God's" point of view.
Yāna	As the vehicle for crossing over from Saṁsāra to Nirvāṇa, or from ignorance to enlightenment, this term basically points to the idea of path in Buddhism, of walking a particular path of discipline and practice.
Yūgen	A multivalent term in Japanese aesthetics meaning anything from refined elegance to profound mystery, and including sublime beauty, symbolic beauty, ethereal feeling, etc.



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ISBN 0-89012-026-9.