

ZEN AND JAPANESE CULTURE

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IV Zen and the Samurai

IT MAY BE considered strange that Zen has in any way been affiliated with the spirit of the military classes of Japan. Whatever form Buddhism takes in the various countries where it flourishes, it is a religion of compassion, and in its varied history it has never been found engaged in warlike activities. How is it, then, that Zen has come to activate the fighting spirit of the Japanese warrior?

In Japan, Zen was intimately related from the beginning of its history to the life of the samurai. Although it has never actively incited them to carry on their violent profession, it has passively sustained them when they have for whatever reason once entered into it. Zen has sustained them in two ways, morally and philosophically. Morally, because Zen is a religion which teaches us not to look backward once the course is decided upon; philosophically, because it treats life and death indifferently. This not turning backward ultimately comes from the philosophical conviction; but, being a religion of the will, Zen appeals to the samurai spirit morally rather than philosophically. From the philosophical point of view, Zen upholds intuition against intellection, for intuition is the more direct way of reaching the Truth. Therefore, morally and philosophically, there is in Zen a great deal of attraction for the military classes. The military mind, being—and this is one of the essential qualities of the fighter—comparatively simple and not at all addicted to philosophizing finds a congenial spirit in Zen. This is probably

one of the main reasons for the close relationship between Zen and the samurai.

Secondly, Zen discipline is simple, direct, self-reliant, self-denying; its ascetic tendency goes well with the fighting spirit. The fighter is to be always single-minded with one object in view: to fight, looking neither backward nor sidewise. To go straight forward in order to crush the enemy is all that is necessary for him. He is therefore not to be encumbered in any possible way, be it physical, emotional, or intellectual. Intellectual doubts, if they are cherished at all in the mind of the fighter, are great obstructions to his onward movement, while emotionalities and physical possessions are the heaviest of encumbrances if he wants to conduct himself most efficiently in his vocation. A good fighter is generally an ascetic or stoic, which means he has an iron will. This, when needed, Zen can supply.

Thirdly, there is an historical connection between Zen and the military classes of Japan. The Buddhist priest Eisai¹ (1141-1215) is generally regarded as the first to introduce Zen into Japan. But his activities were more or less restricted to Kyoto, which was at the time the headquarters of the older schools of Buddhism. The inauguration of any new faith here was almost impossible owing to the strong opposition they offered. Eisai had to compromise to some extent by assuming a reconciliatory attitude towards the Tendai and the Shingon. Whereas in Kamakura, which was the seat of the Hōjō government, there were no such historical difficulties. Besides, the Hōjō regime was militaristic, as it succeeded the Minamoto family, who had risen against the Taira family and the court nobles. The latter had lost their efficacy as a governing power because of their over-refinement and effeminacy and consequent degeneration. The Hōjō regime is noted for its severe frugality and moral discipline and also for its powerful administrative and militaristic equipments. The directing heads of such a strong governing machine

¹ "Yōsai" is the proper pronunciation, I am told.

embraced Zen as their spiritual guide, ignoring tradition in the matter of religion: Zen thus could not help but exercise its varied influence in the general cultural life of the Japanese ever since the thirteenth century and throughout the Ashikaga and even in the Tokugawa period.

Zen has no special doctrine or philosophy, no set of concepts or intellectual formulas, except that it tries to release one from the bondage of birth and death, by means of certain intuitive modes of understanding peculiar to itself. It is, therefore, extremely flexible in adapting itself to almost any philosophy and moral doctrine as long as its intuitive teaching is not interfered with. It may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism, or any political or economic dogmatism. It is, however, generally animated with a certain revolutionary spirit, and when things come to a deadlock—as they do when we are overloaded with conventionalism, formalism, and other cognate isms—Zen asserts itself and proves to be a destructive force. The spirit of the Kamakura era was in this respect in harmony with the virile spirit of Zen.

We have the saying in Japan: "The Tendai is for the royal family, the Shingon for the nobility, the Zen for the warrior classes, and the Jōdō for the masses." This saying fitly characterizes each sect of Buddhism in Japan. The Tendai and the Shingon are rich in ritualism and their ceremonies are conducted in a most elaborate and pompous style appropriate to the taste of the refined classes. The Jōdō appeals naturally more to plebeian requirements because of the simpleness of its faith and teaching. Besides its direct method of reaching final faith, Zen is a religion of will-power, and will-power is what is urgently needed by the warriors, though it ought to be enlightened by intuition.

The first Zen follower of the Hōjō family was Tokiyori (1227-63), who succeeded his father Yasutoki in the Hōjō regency. He invited to Kamakura the Japanese Zen masters in Kyoto and also some Chinese masters directly from the Southern

~~of Buddhism) he sought for enlightenment all this proves that his coming among us was solely for the sake of the Dharma. And then when he was about to depart, he managed to rise from his bed, put the Buddhist robe I gave him over his enfeebled body, and wrote his death-song in full possession of his spirit. Such a one as he must be said to be really an enlightened being, or a Bodhisattva incarnate. . . .~~

Tokimune was born great, no doubt, but his study of Zen must have helped him a great deal in his dealing with state affairs and also in his private life. His wife was also a devout Zen follower, and after his death she founded a nunnery in the hills just opposite the Engakuji.

When we say that Zen is for the warrior, this statement has a particular significance for the Kamakura period. Tokimune was not merely a fighting general, but a great statesman whose object was peace. His prayer offered to the Buddha at the time of a great religious ceremony performed at the Kenchōji under the leadership of the abbot, when an intimation of the first Mongolian invasion was received, runs as follows:

"The only prayer Tokimune, a Buddhist disciple, cherishes is: that the Imperial House continue in prosperity; that for a long time to come he [the Emperor] may be the guardian of the Buddha's doctrine; that the four seas remain unruffled without an arrow being shot; that all evil spirits be kept under subjection without a spearhead being unsheathed; that the masses be benefited by means of a benevolent administration so that they could enjoy a long life in happiness more than ever; that the darkness of the human mind be illumined by the torch of transcendental wisdom which should be raised high;

1568), who was one of the greatest scholar-barons of the feudal days. It is interesting to observe that Shimadzu Yoshihiro, one of Nisshinsai's grandsons, instituted for his ill-behaved subjects a novel form of punishment known as *tera-iri*, "entering into the Buddhist monastery." The offenders, while in the monastery, were made to study the Confucian texts under the personal supervision of the presiding monk. When they made decided progress in their understanding of the classics, they were restored to their original status.

that the needy be properly ministered to and those in danger be saved by the heart of compassion being widely open. May all the gods come and protect us, all the sages extending their quiet help, and every hour of the day may there be a great gathering of auspicious signs! . . ."

Tokimune was a great Buddhist spirit and a sincere follower of Zen, and it was due to his encouragement that Zen came to be firmly established in Kamakura and then in Kyoto and began to spread its moral and spiritual influence among the warrior classes. The constant stream of intercourse thus started between the Japanese and the Chinese Zen monks went even beyond the boundaries of their common cause. Books, paintings, porcelains, potteries, textiles, and many other objects of art were brought from China; even carpenters, masons, architects, and cooks came along with their masters. Thus the trading with China that later developed in the Ashikaga period had its initiation in the Kamakura.

Led by such strong characters as Tokiyori and Tokimune, Zen was auspiciously introduced into the Japanese life, especially into the life of the samurai. As Zen gained more and more influence in Kamakura it spread over to Kyoto, where it was strongly supported by Japanese Zen masters. The latter soon found strong followers among members of the Imperial family, headed by the emperors Godaigo, Hanazono, and others. Large monasteries were built in Kyoto, and masters noted for their virtue, wisdom, and learning were asked to be founders and successive abbots of such institutions. Shoguns of the Ashikaga regime were also great advocates of Zen Buddhism, and most generals under them naturally followed suit. In those days we can say that the Japanese genius went either to priesthood or to soldiery. The spiritual co-operation of the two professions could not help but contribute to the creation of what is now generally known as Bushido, "the way of the warrior."

At this juncture, let me touch upon one of the inner relationships that exist between the samurai mode of feeling and Zen.

What finally has come to constitute Bushido, as we generally understand it now, is the act of being an unflinching guardian-god of the dignity of the samurai, and this dignity consists in loyalty, filial piety, and benevolence. But to fulfill these duties successfully two things are needed: to train oneself in moral asceticism, not only in its practical aspect but in its philosophical preparation; and to be always ready to face death, that is, to sacrifice oneself unhesitatingly when occasion arises. To do this, much mental and spiritual training is needed.

There is a document that was very much talked about in connection with the Japanese military operations in China in the 1930's. It is known as the *Hagakure*,⁴ which literally means "Hidden under the Leaves," for it is one of the virtues of the samurai not to display himself, not to blow his horn, but to keep himself away from the public eye and be doing good for his fellow beings. To the compilation of this book, which consists of various notes, anecdotes, moral sayings, etc., a Zen monk had his part to contribute. The work started in the middle part of the seventeenth century under Nabeshima Naoshige, the feudal lord of Saga in the island of Kyūshū. The book emphasizes very much the samurai's readiness to give his life away at any moment, for it states that no great work has ever been accomplished without going mad—that is, when expressed in modern terms, without breaking through the ordinary level of consciousness and letting loose the hidden powers lying further below. These powers may be devilish sometimes, but there is no doubt that they are superhuman and work wonders. When the unconscious is tapped, it rises above individual limitations. Death now loses its sting altogether, and this is where the samurai training joins hands with Zen.

The gist of Takuan's advice to Yagyū Tajima no kami can be summed up by quoting his reference to Bukkō Kokushi's encounter with the soldiers of the Yüan invading army, which Takuan mentions toward the end of his long epistle. The incident is told in the section following this. Takuan comments on the sword cleaving the spring breeze in a flash of lightning:

"The uplifted sword has no will of its own, it is all of emptiness. It is like a flash of lightning. The man who is about to be struck down is also of emptiness, and so is the one who wields the sword. None of them are possessed of a mind which has any substantiality. As each of them is of emptiness and has no 'mind' (*kokoro*), the striking man is not a man, the sword in his hands is not a sword, and the 'I' who is about to be struck down is like the splitting of the spring breeze in a flash of lightning. When the mind does not 'stop,' the sword swinging cannot be anything less than the blowing of the wind. The wind is not conscious of itself as blowing over the trees and working havoc among them. So with the sword. Hence Bukkō's stanza of four lines.

"This 'empty-minded-ness' applies to all activities we may perform, such as dancing, as it does to swordplay. The dancer takes up the fan and begins to stamp his feet. If he has any idea at all of displaying his art well, he ceases to be a good dancer, for his mind 'stops' with every movement he goes through. In all things, it is important to forget your 'mind' and become one with the work at hand.

"When we tie a cat, being afraid of its catching a bird, it keeps on struggling for freedom. But train the cat so that it would not mind the presence of a bird. The animal is now free and can go anywhere it likes. In a similar way, when the mind is tied up, it feels inhibited in every move it makes, and nothing will be accomplished with any sense of spontaneity. Not only that, the work itself will be of a poor quality, or it may not be finished at all.

"Therefore, do not get your mind 'stopped' with the sword you raise; forget what you are doing, and strike the enemy. Do not keep your mind on the person who stands before you. They are all of emptiness, but beware of your mind being caught up with emptiness itself."

*Holding forth this sword,
I cut vacuity in twain;
In the midst of the great fire,
A stream of refreshing breeze!*

When he finished writing, he committed suicide like the brave samurai that he was, and Shiro completed the deed by cutting off his father's head in accordance with the samurai code of honor. As to himself, using the same sword he pierced his own body with it up to the hilt and fell forward on the ground dead.

At the time of the Hōjō downfall, there was another Zen warrior called Nagasaki Jirō Takashige. He called on his Zen master, who also happened to be the teacher of Hōjō Takatoki, and asked, "How should a brave warrior behave at a moment like this?" The Zen teacher at once said, "Go straight forward wielding your sword!" The warrior at once perceived what it meant. He fought most gallantly until, exhausted, he fell before his master, Takatoki.

This was indeed the kind of spirit Zen cultivated among its warrior followers. Zen did not necessarily argue with them about immortality of the soul or righteousness or the divine way or ethical conduct, but it simply urged going ahead with whatever conclusion rational or irrational a man has arrived at. Philosophy may safely be left with intellectual minds; Zen wants to act, and the most effective act, once the mind is made up, is to go on without looking backward. In this respect, Zen is indeed the religion of the samurai warrior.

"To die *isagi-yoku*" is one of the thoughts very dear to the Japanese heart. In some deaths, if this characteristic is present, crimes committed by the offenders are judged even charitably. *Isagi-yoku* means "leaving no regrets," "with a clear conscience," "like a brave man," "with no reluctance," "in full possession of mind," and so on. The Japanese hate to see death met irresolutely and lingeringly; they desire to be blown away like the cherries before the wind, and no doubt this Japanese attitude toward

death must have gone very well with the teaching of Zen. The Japanese may not have any specific philosophy of life, but they have decidedly one of death, which may sometimes appear to be that of recklessness. The spirit of the samurai deeply breathing Zen into itself propagated its philosophy even among the masses. The latter, even when they are not particularly trained in the way of the warrior, have imbibed his spirit and are ready to sacrifice their lives for any cause they think worthy. This has repeatedly been proved in the wars Japan has so far had to go through. A foreign writer¹² on Japanese Buddhism aptly remarks that Zen is the Japanese character.

¹² This is either from Sir George Sansom's book on Japan or from the late Sir Charles Eliot's book on Buddhism. It is possible, however, that I got it from one of the conversations I had with Dr. Eliot while he was still alive, when he frequently visited Kyoto. (Cf. below, pp. 345 f.)

✓ Zen and Swordsmanship

"THE SWORD is the soul of the samurai": therefore, when the samurai is the subject, the sword inevitably comes with him. The samurai who wishes to be faithful to his vocation will have first of all to ask himself the question: How shall I transcend birth and death so that I can be ready at any moment to give up my life if necessary for my Lord? This means exposing himself before the enemy's swordstroke or directing his own sword toward himself. The sword thus becomes most intimately connected with the life of the samurai, and it has become the symbol of loyalty and self-sacrifice. The reverence universally paid to it in various ways proves this.

The sword has thus a double office to perform: to destroy anything that opposes the will of its owner and to sacrifice all the impulses that arise from the instinct of self-preservation. The one relates itself to the spirit of patriotism or sometimes militarism, while the other has a religious connotation of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In the case of the former, very frequently the sword may mean destruction pure and simple, and then it is the symbol of force, sometimes devilish force. It must, therefore, be controlled and consecrated by the second function. Its conscientious owner is always mindful of this truth. For then destruction is turned against the evil spirit. The sword comes to be identified with the annihilation of things that lie in the way of peace, justice, progress, and humanity. It stands for all that is desirable for the spiritual welfare of the world at large. It is now the embodiment of life and not of death.

¹³² ZEN AND JAPANESE CULTURE
 But there is at least one other school that emphasizes the spiritual side of the art though not necessarily neglecting the technique. Its chief exponent, Hori Kintayū (1688-1755), desired to utilize swordsmanship as the means to help one in his spiritual attainment and character building. His reasoning deserves consideration in more ways than one, as it sheds light not only on swordsmanship but on samuraiship generally. There has been much misunderstanding in the West as regards the spirit, function, and discipline of the samurai, who were the ruling class of Japan during her feudal days, especially in the Tokugawa regime. Kimura's point of view, as developed in the *Kenjutsu Fushiki Hen*³² in regard to Hori the swordsman's discourse, may be summed up as follows:

The perfect swordsman avoids quarreling or fighting. Fighting means killing. How can one human being bring himself to kill a fellow being? We are all meant to love one another and not to kill. It is abhorrent that one should be thinking all the time of fighting and coming out victorious. We are moral beings, we are not to lower ourselves to the status of animality. What is the use of becoming a fine swordsman if he loses his human dignity? The best thing is to be a victor without fighting.

The sword is an inauspicious instrument to kill in some unavoidable circumstances. When it is to be used, therefore, it ought to be the sword that gives life and not the sword that kills. But when a man is born into the samurai family, he is not to shun learning the art of swordplay, for it is his profession to be trained in it. The point is, however, to utilize the art as a means to advance in the study of the Way (*tao*). When it is properly handled, it helps us in an efficient way to contribute to the cultivation of the mind and spirit.

~~One great advantage the sword has over mere book reading is that once you make a false move you are sure to give the game away.~~

³² The *Kenjutsu Fushiki Hen* ("The Unknown in the Art of Swordsmanship") is a short treatise on swordplay compiled by Kimura Kyūho in 1768. Kimura was a disciple of Hori, and he records in this book his master's dialogue with a visitor. The manuscript was printed in 1925.

~~art of swordsmanship belongs in this category. Unless the swordsman reaches this stage of freedom where he has no ego rigidity he cannot expect to wield the sword that gives life instead of taking it.~~

The sword is generally associated with killing, and most of us wonder how it can come into connection with Zen, which is a school of Buddhism teaching the gospel of love and mercy. The fact is that the art of swordsmanship distinguishes between the sword that kills and the sword that gives life. The one that is used by a technician cannot go any further than killing, for he never appeals to the sword unless he intends to kill. The case is altogether different with the one who is compelled to lift the sword. For it is really not he but the sword itself that does the killing. He has no desire to do harm to anybody, but the enemy appears and makes himself a victim. It is as though the sword performs automatically its function of justice, which is the function of mercy. This is the kind of sword that Christ is said to have brought among us. It is not meant just for bringing the peace mawkishly cherished by sentimentalists; it is the sword used by Rikyū⁵ the teaman for self-immolation; it is the sword of Vajrarāja recommended by Rinzai (Lin-chi⁶) for the use of Zen-men; it is the sword Banzan Hōjaku (P'an-shan)⁷ would swing regardless of its lack of utilitarianism. When the sword is expected to play this sort of role in human life, it is no more a weapon of self-defense or an instrument of killing, and the swordsman turns into an artist of the first grade, engaged in producing a work of genuine originality.

⁵ Rikyū, or Sen no Rikyū, was a great teaman. See "Zen and the Art of Tea" and "Rikyū and Other Teamen."

⁶ Rinzai Gigen (Lin-chi I-hsuan, d. 867) distinguishes four kinds of "Katsu" (ho in Chinese), and one of them is likened to the sacred sword of Vajrarāja, which cuts and puts to death anything dualistic appearing before it. See above, p. 66, n. 2.

⁷ Banzan (8th century), in one of his sermons, compares Zen's purposeless activity to the swinging of the sword in the air. *Dentōroku* ("Transmission of the Lamp"), fasc. 7.

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SOME may ask: How can the sword which implements the will to kill work out its function by itself without the willer's directive behind it? What originality, what creative work, can an inanimate mechanical tool be made to carry out all by itself? When a tool performs whatever function it is made to perform, can we say it has achieved something original?

The point is: When the sword is in the hands of a technician-swordsman skilled in its use, it is no more than an instrument with no mind of its own. What it does is done mechanically, and there is no *myōyū* discernible in it. But when the sword is held by the swordsman whose spiritual attainment is such that he holds it as though not holding it, it is identified with the man himself, it acquires a soul, it moves with all the subtleties which have been imbedded in him as a swordsman. The man emptied of all thoughts, all emotions originating from fear, all sense of insecurity, all desire to win, is not conscious of using the sword; both man and sword turn into instruments in the hands, as it were, of the unconscious, and it is this unconscious that achieves wonders of creativity. It is here that swordplay becomes an art.

As the sword is not separated from the man, it is an extension of his arms and accordingly a part of his body. Furthermore, the body and the mind are not separated, as they are in the case of intellectualization. The mind and the body move in perfect unison, with no interference from intellect or emotion. Even the distinction of subject and object is annihilated. The opponent's movements are not perceived as such and therefore the subject, so called, acts instinctually in response to what is presented to him. There is no deliberation on his part as to how to react. His unconscious automatically takes care of the whole situation.

The swordsman calls this unconscious "the mind that is no-mind" (*musshin no shin*), or "the mind that knows no stopping" (*tomaranu kokoro*), or "the mind abandoned and yet not abandoned" (*sotete siteru kokoro*), or "the everyday mind" (*heiō-shin*).

or another. However this may be, it is up to the swordsman to preserve this state of spiritual freedom and nonattachment as soon as he stands up holding the sword in his hands. He may not be able to extend this experience in swordsmanship to any other branches of art, but within the limits of this special field he must be master of himself. Those who can apply experience attained in one field to another with perfect readiness are called men of "all-around fluidity." Such are rare; most of us are specialized. In all events, what is most important is to grasp the original mind of truth and integrity that knows no falsehood, and the rest will follow by itself.

From these lengthy paraphrastic statements of Yagyū's philosophy of the sword, we can see how much of Zen metaphysics has entered into the body of swordsmanship. People of the West, particularly, may wonder how Zen came to be so intimately related to the art of killing. Inasmuch as Zen is a form of Buddhism and Buddhism is professedly a religion of compassion, how can Zen endorse the profession of the swordsman? This is the criticism we frequently hear from the Western readers of my books. But I hope they have now come to understand what lies underneath swordsmanship and how this is related to the training of Zen. For, as most students of Oriental culture may understand by this time, whatever field of art the Japanese may study they always emphasize the importance of the "subjective" side of it, giving to its technique a secondary, almost a negligible, consideration. While art is art and has its own significance, the Japanese make use of it by turning it into an opportunity for their spiritual enhancement. And this consists in advancing toward the realization of Tao, or Heavenly Reason of the universe, or Heavenly Nature in man, or the emptiness or suchness of things. Thus the sword is no longer the weapon to kill indiscriminately, but it is one of the avenues through which life opens up its secrets to us. Hence Yagyū Tajima no kami and other masters of the profession are in fact great teachers of life.

Here is ¹⁷⁰ ~~An 18th century manuscript by~~ Odagiri Ichium, disciple of Hariya Sekiun, who is claimed to have been the founder of the school called "The Sword of Non-abiding Mind" (*Mujūshin-ken*). The manuscript starts with an account of the school, quoting the master and Ichium's relation to him. It is of much significance in the history of swordplay for demonstrating the all-importance of what might be called spiritual training instead of merely learning the art as art, and for showing the position of a perfect personality on technical mastery and its crafty handling. Swordsmanship is, after all, not the art of killing; it consists in disciplining oneself as a moral and spiritual and philosophical being.

'THE SWORD OF NO-ABIDING MIND'
FOUNDED BY HARIYA SEKIUN

MY TEACHER, Sekiun, began his study of swordsmanship when he was about thirteen years of age, and later became a disciple of Ogasawara Genshin. Genshin was one of the four most prominent disciples of Kami-idzumi Ise no kami Hidetsuna (d. 1577), who was the founder of a new school known as Shinkage-ryū. Japanese swordsmanship may be said to have made a new development under Kami-idzumi. He was a great creative genius in the Japanese history of the sword. Ogasawara Genshin, after mastering Shinkage-ryū, went to China. While teaching the Chinese people the art, he happened to meet an expert in the use of a certain Chinese weapon known as the *hoko*. By studying under him, he improved his own technique to an extraordinary degree. On his return to Japan, he tried the new method out on his old friends and found that none of them could stand his offensive. Believing in the absolute superiority of his discovery, he taught it to a large number of pupils. After hard study, Sekiun finally succeeded in mastering all the secrets of the new school.

My teacher, however, did not feel fully satisfied with his accomplishment. He began to study Zen under a retired abbot of Tōfukuji, one of the chief monasteries in Kyoto. Under Kohaku, which was his name, my teacher made great advance in the understanding of Zen Buddhism. He ultimately came to this conclusion: none of the great professors of swordsmanship so far as he knew, including his own teacher Genshin and Genshin's teacher Kami-idzumi, could be called real masters of the art. For they utterly failed in understanding the fundamental principle of life; without it, however advanced their mastery of the technique, they were all slaves of delusive thoughts, worth absolutely nothing. They could not go beyond these three alternatives: (1) to defeat the inferior enemy; (2) to be defeated by the superior one; and (3) with an equal, to end in mutual striking-down or killing (*ai-uchi*).

Sekiun now employed himself in learning how to perfect the art of swordsmanship along the line of Heavenly Reason or Primary Nature in the state of as-it-is-ness. He was convinced that such a principle was applicable to the art. One day he had a great awakening. He discovered that there was no need in swordplay to resort to the so-called technicality. When a man is enthroned in the seat of Heavenly Reason, he feels as if he were absolutely free and independent, and from this position he can cope most readily with all sorts of professional trickery. When Sekiun, my teacher, tried his discovery with his teacher Ogasawara Genshin, Sekiun easily defeated Genshin even though Genshin exhausted all his secret arts. It was like burning bamboos in the flames of an angry fire.

Sekiun was then already past sixty when I, Ichiun, twenty-eight years old, came to him as pupil. During the five years of tutorship under Sekiun, I applied myself most earnestly and assiduously to the art of swordsmanship, which was now taught by the old master in the form newly synthesized with the principle and practice of Zen. When I thought I was finally ready to try my attainment with the master, I challenged him, and at each

of the three contests we were engaged in, the outcome was what was called "*ai-nuke*."

[*Ai-nuke* is a new term in swordplay. When the contestants are of equal caliber and proficiency the game as it is generally played finishes with an *ai-uchi*, which, when it is carried on with real steel, means killing each other. An *ai-nuke*, however, does not at all involve any kind of killing or hurting each other, as *nuke* means, not "striking down" as *uchi* does, but "passing by," or "going through" unhurt. When, therefore, Ichiun had his tests with Sekiun, his teacher, neither of them was at all hurt though they were of equal attainment. There was no "striking down" on either side. Each "escaped" without being defeated in any sense of the word. Ichiun writes: "This was the feature most characteristic of our school, which was designated by Sekiun's Zen teacher, Kohaku, as the 'Sword of No-abiding Mind.'"²⁵ Ichiun continues:]

Soon after this my teacher passed away, and I was left to myself. For the six following years I was in retirement, quietly contemplating Heavenly Reason, and I had no idea of propagating my newly acquired art. Instead, I devoted myself to a life of introspection so that I forgot even to feel hunger and cold.

One significant fact I have to mention in connection with my contests with the master is that, after the third test, the master gave me a scroll containing words of testimony in which he fully recognized his disciple's realization of the principle of swordsmanship. The master then took out a rosary from his

²⁵ "No-abode" or "no-abiding" is a Buddhist term, *apratiṣṭhā* in Sanskrit. It equates with "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*) and sometimes with "non-attachment" (*anabhinivesa*). It literally means "not to have any home where one may settle down"; its real meaning is "to settle down where there is no settling down." This is a kind of paradox as far as our ordinary sense of logic is concerned. But the Buddhists would tell us that life is more than logic and that logic ought to conform to life in order to be logical and not life to logic just for the sake of logic. When this—which the philosopher would designate as "absurdity"—is actually comprehended as we live our daily life, we are said to have realized the "abiding where there is no abiding." The swordsman is also asked to attain this in his art.

chest pocket, and, burning incense, turned toward me and bowed in the way the Buddhists generally do toward their object of reverence.

I really did not know what the master meant by this religious act. There is no doubt, however, that the master thereby paid to his young pupil the highest compliment one mortal could ever give to another.

Though I had no thought of advertising myself as teacher of the new school, some of my old friends found me out and urged me to initiate them into the new experiences. My name and school thus gradually came to be known among wider circles. Judging from the way they now follow the teaching and discipline of the school, it is likely that the school will go on prospering for some generations to come, and my late teacher's wonderful attainments in his late years will not be lost to the world. But it is advisable to put these things down in writing lest men of posterity understand the teaching each in his own way. They must be protected against any possible misinterpretation. . . .

²⁶ After thus introducing himself and his teacher, Ichinu mentions the thing of first importance for the swordsman's personality. He is to give up all desire for name and gain, all egotism and self-glorification, he is to be in accord with Heavenly Reason and observe the Law of Nature as it is reflected in every one of us. In Ichinu's words: "My teacher despised people of the worldly type, saying that they are defiled with the beastlike spirit, because like the lower animals they are always bent on finding something to eat—that is, always looking for the material welfare of their own selves. They do not know what is meant by human dignity and laws of morality which regulate our human life."

As to swordsmanship, Ichinu declares that the first principle of the art is not to rely on tricks of technique. Most swordsmen

²⁶ What follows is the author's interpretation of Ichinu's ideas, interpolated frequently with Ichinu's own words.

An idea which is all probability
originated with the "Sword of No-abode": the idea of *ai-nuke*. This is something no other schools of swordsmanship have ever taught. When the game is well matched, it generally ends in an *ai-uchi*, "mutual striking-down," while in the "Sword of No-abode" there is no such tragic culmination because the ending is an *ai-nuke* and not an *ai-uchi*. As I stated before, *nuke* literally means "not hitting," and therefore when this takes place neither hits the other and both escape unhurt. When either of the combatants is not a perfect master of the "Sword of No-abode," he invites, as it were, the real master's sword to fall on him, and he thereby commits a kind of suicide. As far as the master himself is concerned, he harbors no murderous intent in his mind. The inevitability of the situation has compelled him to face the enemy. It is the enemy who is filled with the evil spirit of killing, his mind is not at all free from the egoism of destruction. Therefore, when he comes before the master of the "Sword of No-abode," the evil spirit possesses him and he is killed by this evil spirit while the master is not even aware of having struck the opponent down. We can say that here Heavenly Reason punishes those who go against it, and that the master's "infantism" remains utterly innocent of all that has been going on about him.

After reading Ichinu, my impression is that the author is not just a professional swordsman but essentially a Zen master who happens to use swordplay. His sword is like the Zen-man's staff, which strikes the monk who would approach him with any undigested idea of Zen. Sekiun's sword inherited by Ichinu is really the sword of nonaction, that is, the sword of no-abode, which constitutes the essence of the philosophy of *Prajñāpāramitā* (*hannya-haramita*, in Japanese).

Toward the end of his treatise on swordsmanship, Ichinu sums up the significance of his sword in the following way:

There are at present many schools of swordsmanship—more

205 What may be called Mr. Takano's "super-psychology" of self-identity fitly describes the perfect swordsman's mind when he actually confronts the opponent. As long as he is *conscious* of holding the sword and standing opposed to an object and is *trying to make use* of all the technique of swordplay he has *learned*, he is not the perfect player. He must forget that he has an individual body known as "Takano" and that a part of it holds the sword, which he is to employ against another individuated body. He now has no sword, no body. But this does not mean that all has vanished into a state of nothingness, for there is most decidedly a something that is moving, acting, and thinking. This is what Mr. Takano and other swordsmen, the Taoist and Buddhist philosophers, designate as "the original mind" (*honshin*), or "the mind of an infant" (*akago no kokoro*), or "the true man" (*shinjin*; *chén-jēn* in Chinese), or "the perfect man" (*shijin*; *chih-jēn*), or "the original face" (*honrai no memmoku*; *pén-lai mien-mu*).

This mysterious "non-existent" quiddity "thinks and acts" without thinking and acting, for according to Mr. Takano "he" perceives every thought that is going on in the mind of "one who stands opposed," as if it were his own, and "he" acts accordingly.

"He" is evidently not he, nor is "he" not-he, as we have in a world of opposites. When this not-he falls, he does not know that it is "he" or not-he. When all is over, "the original mind" comes back to itself, that is, to its own consciousness, and this is the awakening of "one thought" (*ichinen*), the separation of light from darkness, of subject from object, the rising of a dichotomous world. This is what Asvaghosa, the author⁴³ of *The Awakening of Faith*, calls "the sudden awakening of thought" (in Chinese, *hu-jan nien ch'i*; in Japanese, *kotsunen nenki*). This is the situation in which Mr. Takano or Yagyū Tajima no kami, Odagiri Ichiu, or Miyamoto Musashi, finds himself—standing with the sword before the fallen "enemy" so called.

One thing we have to notice in these accounts of swordsmanship given by the various writers on the subject is that the Japanese swordsman never thinks of defending himself but always of attacking, and thus that he is from the first advised not to think of coming out of the combat alive. Especially in the case of Odagiri Ichiu, he tells his disciples to meet the opponent with the idea of an *ai-uchi*, that is, with no thought of surviving the fight. This tactic of always being on the offensive and not the defensive may be a Japanese characteristic, and may account for their holding the sword in both hands, leaving nothing for defense. I do not know how early in the history of the Japanese weapons this usage dates. In any case, it is a significant fact that the Japanese sword has a long hilt, so that the warrior can seize it with both hands and strike the enemy with the full force of his being.

To be always on the offensive in a single-handed engagement means that one's mind is bent in any circumstances on striking the enemy regardless of one's own safety, absolutely free from the thought or fear of death. If there is anything in the mind that even remotely approaches this, one can never assume a positive attitude, for there would always be a residue of negativistic restraint arising from the instinct of self-preservation. The problem of death is from the very start to be discarded. Especially with Yagyū Tajima no kami, this is the reason the swordsman is most emphatically advised to be fearless or even reckless as regards his coming out of the combat alive. Once he stands against an opponent, he is positively to identify himself with the sword in his hands and to let the sword function as it will.

Psychologically stated, the sword now symbolizes the Unconscious in the person of the swordsman. He then moves as a kind of automaton. He is no more himself. He has given himself up to an influence outside his everyday consciousness, which is no other than his own deeply buried Unconscious, whose presence he was never hitherto aware of. But we must remember that it is no easy task to realize this state of mind, for a man has to go through a great deal of discipline, not only moral but highly spiritual. As Ichian says, a first class swordsmen must also be