

(Western) Zen, Bodhidharma & Hui-neng

Excerpted & Adapted by Paul Quek

Excerpts from:



1. www.darkzen.com/Articles/sambo.html website
(url : <http://www.darkzen.com/Articles/sambo.html>)

2. Norman Fischer, in *"Nothing Holy: A Zen Primer"*
(url: <http://purifymind.com/NothingHoly.htm>)



3. buddhism.about.com/cs/zen/a/Zen.htm website
(url : <http://buddhism.about.com/cs/zen/a/Zen.htm>)

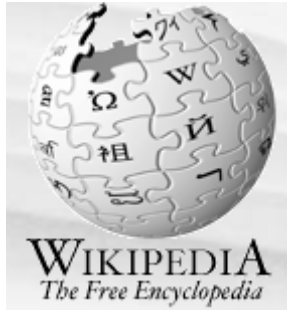
4. http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/Abe_Zen_and_Buddhism.htm

5. <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/xuyun/xuyun1.html>
and <http://dharmafire.net/MasterHsuYun'sDharmaWords.htm>



6. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huineng website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huineng>)

7. <http://sped2work.tripod.com/bdharma.html>



8. website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tathagatagarbha>)



9. website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>)

Zen's most popular form in America [is] "**Sanbo Kyodan Zen**" (hereafter, **SKZ**). ...

...

Key to understanding the influence of **SKZ** in America and Europe is **Philip Kapleau**'s book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, first published in 1965. Not really a book about Japanese **Sôtô Zen** or **Rinzai Zen** per se, rather it provides a glimpse into the inner workings of **SKZ**'s principles through which **SKZ** emerged to become the dominate **Zen** of the West. It contains popular themes about **Zen** which have become the staple of present day **Zennists**. Yet, it would be wrong to blindly accept the material contained in *The Three Pillars of Zen* as being the heart of **Zen** — classical **Chinese Zen**, that is.

There is much presented in **Kapleau**'s book which is more indicative of **SKZ** revisionism than **Zen**. For one thing, **SKZ** does not handle **koans** in the traditional Chinese manner or the traditional manner used in **Rinzai Zen** today. In *The Three*

Pillars of Zen there is virtually no mention of the **hua-t'ou** exercise of **Zen master Ta-hui** except an offhand reference to **wato/hua-t'ou** on page 336 which is left undefined. (**Hua-t'ou** means "antecedent-to-word" and stands for **Unborn Mind** before the word is spoken.)

Contrasting this with **Zen master Hsu Yun's** treatment of the **kung-an/koan exercise** in **Charles Luk's** book *Ch'an And Zen Teaching (First Series)*, one quickly gets the impression that there is a huge gap between the two methods.

Ignored, too, in **SKZ's** treatment of **Zen**, is **Buddhism**, itself, more specifically, **Mahayana Buddhism**.

In *The Three Pillars of Zen* **Kapleau** glosses that since "**Zen** is a special transmission outside the scriptures" **Sûtras** merely act "as a spur to full enlightenment" (p. 345)! Given the fact that **Bodhidharma**, the **First Chinese Patriarch**, sealed his student's **kensho** with the **Lankâvatâra Sutra**, it seems rather ironic for **SKZ** to regard **Sûtras** as a mere "spur". Without the **Sûtras**, as **Zen master Tsung-mi** points out, there is no criterion by which to check to see if one's **enlightenment** chimes with the **Buddha's**.

While it is propagandized into the public mind of contemporary **Zen** to automatically disrate the **Sûtras**, there can be no question that **Sutra** study is necessary towards achieving a full understanding of **Zen**. Nevertheless, this anti-**sutric** attitude prevails today — and still serves to attract non-Buddhists to **SKZ**-related teachings who ignore the **Buddha's** discourses. In fact, under the tenure of **Yamada-Roshi** who became **Yasutani's** successor, a number of Catholic priests and nuns joined **SKZ [the orgnaisation]** and became recognized. **Yamada** felt that **kensho** transcended religiosity — and to a certain extent it does. But there is far more to **Buddhism** than **kensho** which its **Sûtras** set out to explain and which other religions cannot explain.

Most tellingly, **SKZ** has made a huge impact on the American and European psyche. Propagated by an active retinue of teachers they insure that **Zen's** hue is **Sanbo Kyodan** style **Zen**. ... the list of **SKZ**-related teachers ... reads like a *Who's Who of American Zen Buddhism*. Under the leadership of **Yasutani**, we recognize such names as **Philip Kapleau**, **Robert Aitken**, **Maezumi**, **Joko Beck**, **Bernard Glassman**, **Peter Matthiessen**, **John Looi**, **Dennis Merzel**, **Ross Bolleter**, and **John Tarrant**. This partial list does not even include their successors!

Understandably, one can conclude from what has been presented thus far that **Western Zen** is not balanced, as it is predominately **SKZ**. And that can lead to certain drawbacks. One in particular is that the slant of **Zen** publications may be affected by editors who are unknowingly sympathetic to **SKZ**-related teachers and their **SKZ** teachings. Not a sinister plot, however, intended to control the direction of **Zen**, nevertheless, there needs to be some public recognition that **Zen** is not exclusively **SKZ**. Nor does **American Zen** require quasi-legal **Zen** Buddhist associations created by **SKZ** teachers which serve to determine who is certified and who is not. **Zen** is quite free to stand on its own two feet as everyone is free to judge for themselves the **Zen** they deem valuable. Indeed, this is what **Yasutani Hakuun** would have wanted.



- From the <http://www.darkzen.com/Articles/sanbo.html> website

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Unlike **Christianity**, in which early wild schisms led eventually to centralized control, **Buddhism** has always been open-ended and various. While a few key concepts (like the **four noble truths**, with their simultaneously gloomy and hopeful view of human nature) have always held firm, methods, philosophies and interpretations have differed widely. India was the first Buddhist country. Through the centuries, it gradually spawned hundreds of sects and sub-sects, and thousands of scriptures, and tens of thousands of commentaries on those scriptures. When **Buddhism** spread over Central Asian trade routes to China, all this material came at once. The Chinese were blasted with a cacophony of religious insight that was exotic, extravagant and, most importantly, foreign. The Chinese had long cherished their own twin traditions of **Confucianism** and **Taoism** and were resistant to ideologies introduced by barbarians from beyond the borders of the "Middle Kingdom." There was also a severe linguistic challenge for the Chinese in digesting the Buddhist message from abroad. The Sanskrit language was so different from Chinese in sensibility and syntax that translation was almost impossible.

Gradually, Indian and Central Asian Buddhism began to be reshaped by its encounter with Chinese culture. This reshaping eventually led to the creation of **Zen**, an entirely new school of

Buddhism. (The word "**Zen**" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese "**Ch'an**", which means "**meditation**". Here we use "**Zen**" because it is the word generally used in the West. **Ch'an**, though, did not come to Japan and become "**Zen**" until around the eighth century.)

Bodhidharma is the legendary founder of **Zen** in China. He is said to have arrived in China about 520. (**Buddhism** had by then been known in China for about 400 years.) He was soon summoned to the emperor, who had questions for him.

"According to the teachings, how do I understand the merit I have accrued in building temples and making donations to monks?" the emperor asked.

Bodhidharma, usually depicted as a scowling, hooded, bearded figure, shot back, "There is no merit."

"What then is the meaning of the Buddha's Holy Truths?" the emperor asked.

"Empty, nothing holy," **Bodhidharma** replied.

Shocked, the emperor imperiously asked, "Who addresses me thus?"

"I don't know," **Bodhidharma** replied, turned on his heel and left the court, to which he never returned.

He repaired to a distant monastery, where, it is said, he sat facing a wall for nine years, in constant meditation. A single disciple [**Hui-ke**] sought him out, and to test the disciple's sincerity, **Bodhidharma** refused to see him. The disciple stood outside in the snow all night long. In the morning he presented **Bodhidharma** with his severed arm as a token of his seriousness. The monk became **Bodhidharma**'s heir, and thus began the **Zen** transmission in China. So, at least, the story goes.

This legend illustrates **Zen**'s style and values. **Zen** is a pithy, stripped-down, determined, uncompromising, cut-to-the-chase, meditation-based **Buddhism** that takes no interest in doctrinal refinements. Not relying on scripture, doctrine or ritual, **Zen** is verified by personal experience and is passed on from master to disciple, hand to hand, ineffably, through hard, intimate training.

Though **Zen** recognizes-at least loosely-the validity of normative Buddhist scriptures, it has created its own texts over the generations. Liberally flavored with doses of **Taoism** and **Confucianism** and Chinese poetry, and written in informal language studded with Chinese folk sayings and street slang, **Zen** literature is built on legendary anecdotes of the great masters. **Buddha** is barely mentioned, and when he is he is often playfully reviled. "Old man **Shakyamuni**," the saying goes, "is only halfway there." Like most **Zen** masters, **Bodhidharma** left little written material. But here are four **Zen** dicta ascribed to him, which are always quoted to illustrate the essential **Zen** spirit:

**A special transmission outside the scriptures.
No dependency on words and letters.
Pointing directly to the human mind.
Seeing into one's nature and attaining Buddhahood.**

This shoot-from-the-hip **Zen** spirit appeals to the American mind, which is as **iconoclastic** and **anti-authoritarian** as it is religious. In any case, it appealed to me and to the many others like me who were and are looking for a direct route to awakening. It has also appealed, over many generations, to millions of Buddhist practitioners in the Far East, who, conditioned by the **Taoism** and **Confucianism** that had been imported everywhere from China, could easily relate to the **Zen** message and style. Although the **Zen** school created controversy at first in all the countries it spread to, it eventually became by far the most successful school of **Buddhism** in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam. By the mid-1980's, the **Zen** traditions of all these countries had been transmitted to America.

– Norman Fischer, in *"Nothing Holy: A Zen Primer"*
(url: <http://purifymind.com/NothingHoly.htm>)

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In 520 CE an Indian monk and scholar named **Bodhidharma** arrived in China. He brought with him a new interpretation of the **Buddha's** teachings that was both fresh and original. His teachings are encapsulated in the following oft-repeated verse:

*A special transmission outside the scriptures;
Depending not on words and letters;
Pointing directly to the human mind;
Seeing into one's nature, one becomes a Buddha.*

About

– From the **About** website
(url : <http://buddhism.about.com/cs/zen/a/Zen.htm>)

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People often ask, "Is **Zen** a form of **Buddhism**?"

The answer to this question is both yes and no.

The answer should be "Yes" because, historically speaking, **Zen** is a form of **Buddhism** which was founded by **Bodhidharma** in China in the sixth century. It developed in China and Japan, later taking the form of the '**Zen** sect', with its own particular temples, rituals, priesthoods, and religious orders. In this sense, **Zen** should be called a form of **Buddhism** which stands side by side with other forms of **Buddhism**, such as the T'ien-t'ai sect, the Hua-yen sect, the Chen-yen sect, and the Ching-t'u sect, i.e., Pure Land **Buddhism**. Further, not only in terms of temples, rituals, priesthood, and religious orders, but also in terms of teaching, thought, and practice, **Zen**, in the course of its long history, has come to have its own particular forms comparable to the other schools of **Buddhism**. This may be called the 'traditional **Zen** sect'.

At the same time, however, the answer to the question, "Is **Zen** a form of **Buddhism**?" should be "No", because **Zen** is not merely one form of **Buddhism**, but rather, in its fundamental nature, is the basic source of all forms of **Buddhism**. This idea has been expressed by **Zen** in the statement: "**Zen** is the integrating storehouse of the **Buddha-dharma**." **Zen**, in this sense, is no less than what may be called "**Zen** itself". That **Zen** is the root of all forms of **Buddhism** can be seen in the following basic expressions:

Not relying on words or letters.

An independent transmission outside the teaching of the scriptures.

Directly pointing to man's Mind.

Awakening of one's (Original-) Nature, thereby actualizing one's own Buddhahood.

– From http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/Abe_Zen_and_Buddhism.htm

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The **Ch'an** [Chinese "**Zen**"] sect from its introduction by **Bodhidharma** after his arrival in the East until after the passing of the **Sixth Patriarch** [**Hui-neng**], spread widely all over the country and enjoyed great prosperity, unknown before and after that period. However, the most important thing taught by **Bodhidharma** and the **Sixth Patriarch** [**Hui-neng**] was only this:

"Expel all concurrent causes; do not give rise to a single thought."

To expel all concurrent causes is to lay them down (in **Ch'an** terminology, "to lay down causes or thoughts" is to lay down the heavy load of causes or thoughts [in order] to free the mind from defilement). ... Therefore, these two sentences:

"Expel all concurrent causes; do not give rise to a single thought."

are the prerequisites of **Ch'an** training. If these two sentences are not put into actual practice, not only will the training be ineffective, but also it will be impossible to start it, for in the midst of causes which rise and fall, thought after thought, how can you talk about **Ch'an** training?

-- From <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/xuyun/xuyun1.html>
and <http://dharmafire.net/MasterHsuYun'sDharmaWords.htm>

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Huineng (慧能 or 惠能; Pinyin: **Huìnéng**, 638–713) was a Chinese **Chan** (Chinese **Zen**) monastic who is one of the most important figures in the entire tradition. **Huineng** is the **Sixth Patriarch** of Chinese **Chan** Buddhism, as well as the last official patriarch. Since then, there are unofficial "patriarchs" of different lineages derived from **Chan**. In Japanese he is known as **Daikan Enō**.

He is said to have advocated an immediate and direct approach to Buddhist practice and enlightenment, and in this regard, is considered the founder of the "**Sudden Enlightenment**" (頓教) Southern **Chan** school of **Buddhism**. While these are the legendary accounts handed down by the tradition, it is widely understood that the actual history of the situation may have been quite different, to the extent that most believe that the primary work attributed to **Huineng**, the **Platform Sutra** of the **Sixth Patriarch** (六祖壇經), which ended up becoming one of the most influential texts in the East Asian meditative tradition, has no true association with him.



-- From the website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huineng>)

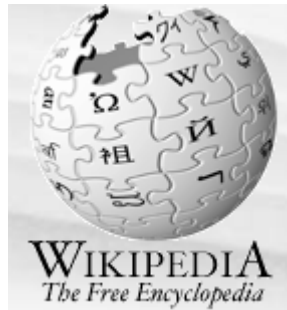
Bodhidharma is credited with bringing **Zen Buddhism** to China and he is the **First Patriarch of Chinese Zen** Lineage. He was born on Oct. 5th. (Chinese Lunar Calendar) in Southern India, and was the third son of an Indian King; the royal family belonged to the Bhramin caste. **Bodhidharma's** Buddhist Master, **Prajnatara**, was the 27th Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, taught **Bodhidharma** for many years, gave him **Mind Transmission**, made him the **28th Patriarch**, and gave him the name **Bodhidharma**. Following the instruction of his Master to transmit **Dharma** to China, **Bodhidharma** traveled east to Southern China in 526 A.D. When he arrived in Kwang Chou, he was ceremoniously welcomed and greatly honored by the local military official named Shao Yang. The same year, he was invited to the Capitol, Nanjing, to meet Emperor Wu Di of the Liang dynasty. Because the communication between the Emperor and **Bodhidharma** was mutually unsatisfactory, **Bodhidharma** left the palace, crossed the Yangtzu River, and continued north until he arrived at the **Shao Lin Temple** in Ho Nan Province. It was here that **Bodhidharma** became famous for meditating 9 years facing a wall.

After he gave his disciple, **Hui K'o**, the Robe, Begging Bowl, **Lankavatara Sutra**, and **Mind Transmission**, **Bodhidharma** went to Chen Sung (One Thousand Saints) Temple to propagate the **Dharma**. He passed into **Nirvana** in 536 A.D., was buried in Shon Er Shan (Bear Ear Mountain) in Ho Nan, and a stupa was built for him in Pao Lin Temple. Later, the Tang dynasty Emperor, Dai Dzong, bestowed on **Bodhidharma** the name Yuen Che Grand Zen Master, and renamed his stupa as Kong Kwan (Empty Visualization).

-- From <http://sped2work.tripod.com/bdharma.html>

In **modern-Western** manifestations of the **Zen** Buddhist tradition, it is considered insufficient simply to understand **Buddha-nature** intellectually. Rather it must be experienced and felt directly, in one's entire **bodymind**. **Enlightenment** in a certain sense consists of a direct experience of one's **authentic identity**, which is traditionally described as **śūnyata (emptiness)**, the ultimate reality of **Buddha-nature**.

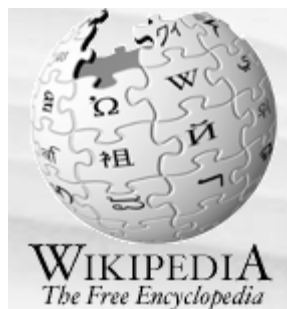
The **Zen** tradition often uses koan to try to explain the **Buddha-nature**: according to one story, a monk once approached the **Zen** master **Chao-chou** (Japanese: **Jōshū**) and asked him, "Does a dog possess **Buddha-nature** or not?" Chao-chou replied with the one-word answer "**Wú**" (pronounced "**mu**" in Japanese). His response, which among other things constitutes a negative term and the sound of a dog barking, indicated that the question could not be answered with a straightforward assertion or negation. Rather, through the contemplation of the question, or the absurdity of it, one may perhaps gain an experience of **Buddha-nature** directly.



- From the website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tathagatagarbha>)

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Zen, pronounced [zeN] in Japanese, is the Sino-Japanese reading of the character "禪", which is pronounced [tʂʰán] (Pinyin: *chán*) in modern Standard Mandarin Chinese, but was likely pronounced [dzʰen] in Middle Chinese.... The term "**zen**" is in fact a contraction of the seldom-used long form *zenna* (禪那; Mandarin: *chánna*), a derivation from the Sanskrit term *dhyāna* (Pāli: *jhāna*), which refers to a specific type or aspect of **meditation**. While "**Zen**" is the name most commonly known worldwide, it is also known as *Chan* in China, *Thien* in Vietnam, and *Seon* in Korea.



- From the website
(url : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>)

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