

# **The Religion of the Samurai**

by

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## Introduction

Buddhism is geographically divided into two schools[FN#1]--the Southern, the older and simpler, and the Northern, the later and more developed faith. The former, based mainly on the Pali texts[FN#2] is known as Hinayana[FN#3] (small vehicle), or the inferior doctrine; while the latter, based on the various Sanskrit texts,[4] is known as Mahayana (large vehicle), or superior doctrine. The chief tenets of the Southern School are so well known to occidental scholars that they almost always mean the Southern School by the word Buddhism. But with regard to the Northern School very little is known to the West, owing to the fact that most of its original texts were lost, and that the teachings based on these texts are written in Chinese, or Tibetan, or Japanese languages unfamiliar to non-Buddhist investigators.

[FN#1] The Southern School has its adherents in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Anan, etc.; while the Northern School is found in Nepal, China, Japan, Tibet, etc.

[FN#2] They chiefly consist of the Four Nikayas: (1) Digha Nikaya (Dirghagamas, translated into Chinese by Buddhaya?as, A.D. 412-413); (2) Majjhima Nikaya (Madhyamagamas, translated into Chinese by Gautama Sanghadeva, A.D. 397-398); (3) Sanyutta Nikaya (Samyukttagamas, translated into Chinese by Gunabhadra, of the earlier Sung dynasty, A.D. 420-479); (4) Anguttara Nikaya (Ekottaragamas, translated into Chinese by Dharmanandi, A.D. 384-385). Out of these Hinayana books, the English translation of twenty-three suttas by Rhys Davids exist in 'Sacred Books of Buddhist,' vols. ii.-iii., and of seven suttas by the same author in 'Sacred Books of the East,' vol. xi.

[FN#3] The Southern Buddhists never call their faith Hinayana, the name being an invention of later Buddhists, who call their doctrine Mahayana in contradistinction to the earlier form of Buddhism. We have to notice that the word Hinayana frequently occurs in Mahayana books, while it does not in Hinayana books.

[FN#4] A catalogue of the Buddhist Canon, K'-yuen-luh, gives the titles of 897 Mahayana sutras, yet the most important books often quoted by Northern Buddhist teachers amount to little more than twenty. There exist the English translation of Larger Sukhavati-vyuha-sutra, Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha-sutra, Vajracchedika-sutra, Larger Prajna-paramita-hradya-sutra, Smaller Prajna-paramita-hrdaya-sutra, by Max M?ller, and Amitayur-dhyana-sutra, by J. Takakusu, in 'Sacred Books of the East,' vol. xlix. An English translation of Saddharma-pundarika-sutra, by Kern, is given in 'Sacred Books of the East,' Vol. xxi. Compare these books with 'Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism,' by D. Suzuki.

It is hardly justifiable to cover the whole system of Buddhism with a single epithet[FN#5] 'pessimistic' or 'nihilistic,' because Buddhism, having been adopted by savage tribes as well as civilized nations, by quiet, enervated people as well as by warlike, sturdy hordes, during some twenty-five hundred years, has developed itself into beliefs widely divergent

and even diametrically opposed. Even in Japan alone it has differentiated itself into thirteen main sects and forty-four sub-sects[FN#6] and is still in full vigour, though in other countries it has already passed its prime. Thus Japan seems to be the best representative of the Buddhist countries where the majority of people abides by the guiding principle of the Northern School. To study her religion, therefore, is to penetrate into Mahayanism, which still lies an unexplored land for the Western minds. And to investigate her faith is not to dig out the remains of Buddhist faith that existed twenty centuries ago, but to touch the heart and soul of Mahayanism that enlivens its devotees at the present moment.

[FN#5] Hinayanism is, generally speaking, inclined to be pessimistic, but Mahayanism in the main holds the optimistic view of life. Nihilism is advocated in some Mahayana sutras, but others set forth idealism or realism.

[FN#6] (1) The Ten Dai Sect, including three sub-sects; (2) The Shin Gon Sect, including eleven sub-sects; (3) The Ritsu Sect; (4) The Rin Zai Sect, including fourteen sub-sects; (5) The So To Sect; (6) The O Baku Sect; (7) The Jo Do Sect, including two sub-sects; (8) The Shin Sect, including ten sub-sects; (9) The Nichi Ren Sect, including nine sub-sects; (10) The Yu Zu Nen Butsu Sect; (11) The Hosso Sect; (12) The Ke Gon Sect; (13) The Ji Sect. Out of these thirteen Buddhist sects, Rin Zai, So To, and O Baku belong to Zen. For further information, see 'A Short History of the Twelve Japanese Buddhist Sects,' by Dr. B. Nanjo.

The object of this little book is to show how the Mahayanistic view of life and of the world differs markedly from that of Hinayanism, which is generally taken as Buddhism by occidentals, to explain how the religion of Buddha has adapted itself to its environment in the Far East, and also to throw light on the existing state of the spiritual life of modern Japan.

For this purpose we have singled out of thirteen Japanese sects the Zen Sect, [FN#7] not only because of the great influence it has exercised on the nation, but because of the unique position it holds among the established religious systems of the world. In the first place, it is as old as Buddhism itself, or even older, for its mode of practising Meditation has been handed down without much alteration from pre-Buddhistic recluses of India; and it may, on that account, provide the student of comparative religion with an interesting subject for his research.

[FN#7] The word Zen is the Sinico-Japanese abbreviation of the Sanskrit Dhyana, or Meditation. It implies the whole body of teachings and discipline peculiar to a Buddhist sect now popularly known as the Zen Sect.

In the second place, in spite of its historical antiquity, ideas entertained by its advocates are so new that they are in harmony with those of the New Buddhists;[FN#8] accordingly the statement of these ideas may serve as an explanation of the present movement conducted by young and able reformers of Japanese Buddhism.

[FN#8] There exists a society formed by men who have broken with the old creeds of Buddhism, and who call themselves the New Buddhists. It has for its organ 'The New Buddhism,' and is one of the influential religious societies in Japan. We mean by the New Buddhists, however, numerous educated young men who still adhere to Buddhist sects, and are carrying out a reformation.

Thirdly, Buddhist denominations, like non-Buddhist religions, lay stress on scriptural authority; but Zen denounces it on the ground that words or characters can never adequately express religious truth, which can only be realized by mind; consequently it claims that the religious truth attained by Shakyamuni in his Enlightenment has been handed down neither by word of mouth nor by the letters of scriptures, but from teacher's mind to disciple's through the line of transmission until the present day. It is an isolated instance in the whole history of the world's religions that holy scriptures are declared to be 'no more than waste[FN#9] paper by religionists, as done by Zen masters.

[FN#9] Lin Tsi Luh (Rin-zai-roku).

Fourthly, Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist religions regard, without exception, their founders as superhuman beings, but the practicers of Zen hold the Buddha as their predecessor, whose spiritual level they confidently aim to attain. Furthermore, they liken one who remains in the exalted position of Buddhahood to a man bound by a gold chain, and pity his state of bondage. Some of them went even so far as to declare Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to be their servants and slaves.[FN#10] Such an attitude of religionists can hardly be found in any other religion.

[FN#10] "Shakyamuni and Maitreya," says Go So, "are servants to the other person. Who is that other person?" (Zen-rin-rui-ju, Vol. i., p. 28).

Fifthly, although non-Buddhist people are used to call Buddhism idolatry, yet Zen can never be called so in the accepted sense of the term, because it, having a grand conception of Deity, is far from being a form of idol-worship; nay, it sometimes even took an iconoclastic attitude as is exemplified by Tan Hia, [FN#11] who warmed himself on a cold morning by making a fire of wooden statues. Therefore our exposition on this point will show the real state of existing Buddhism, and serve to remove religious prejudices entertained against it.

[FN#11] A Chinese Zen teacher, well known for his peculiarities, who died in A.D. 824. For the details of this anecdote, see Zen-rin-rui-ju, Vol. i., P. 39.

Sixthly, there is another characteristic of Zen, which cannot be found in any other religion—that is to say, its peculiar mode of expressing profound religious insight by such actions as the lifting up of a hair-brush, or by the tapping of the chair with a staff, or by a loud outcry, and so forth. This will give the student of religion a striking illustration of differentiated forms of religion in its scale of evolution.

Besides these characteristics, Zen is noted for its physical and mental training. That the daily practice of Zazen[FN#12] and the breathing exercise remarkably improves one's physical condition is an established fact. And history proves that most Zen masters enjoyed a long life in spite of their extremely simple mode of living. Its mental discipline, however, is by far more fruitful, and keeps one's mind in equipoise, making one neither passionate nor dispassionate, neither sentimental nor unintelligent, neither nervous nor senseless. It is well known as a cure to all sorts of mental disease, occasioned by nervous disturbance, as a nourishment to the fatigued brain, and also as a stimulus to torpor and sloth. It is self-control, as it is the subduing of such pernicious passions as anger, jealousy, hatred, and the like, and the awakening of noble emotions such as sympathy, mercy, generosity, and what not. It is a mode of Enlightenment, as it is the dispelling of illusion and of doubt, and at the same time it is the overcoming of egoism, the destroying of mean desires, the uplifting of the moral ideal, and the disclosing of inborn wisdom.

[FN#12] The sitting-in-meditation, for the full explanation of which see Chapter VIII.

The historical importance of Zen can hardly be exaggerated. After its introduction into China in the sixth century, A.D., it grew ascendant through the Sui (598-617) and the Tang dynasty (618-906), and enjoyed greater popularity than any other sect of Buddhism during the whole period of the Sung (976-1126) and the Southern Sung dynasty (1127-1367). In these times its commanding influence became so irresistible that Confucianism, assimilating the Buddhist teachings, especially those of Zen, into itself and changing its entire aspect, brought forth the so-called Speculative philosophy.[FN#13] And in the Ming dynasty (1368-1659) the principal doctrines of Zen were adopted by a celebrated Confucian scholar, Wang Yang Ming,[FN#14] who thereby founded a school, through which Zen exercised profound influence on Chinese and Japanese men of letters, statesmen, and soldiers.

As regards Japan, it was first introduced into the island as the faith first for the Samurai or the military class, and moulded the characters of many distinguished soldiers whose lives adorn the pages of her history. Afterwards it gradually found its way to palaces as well as to cottages through literature and art, and at last permeated through every fibre of the national life. It is Zen that modern Japan, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, has acknowledged as an ideal doctrine for her rising generation.

[FN#13] See 'A History of Chinese Philosophy,' by Ryukichi Endo, and A History of Chinese Philosophy,' by Giichi Nakauchi.

[FN#14] For the life of this distinguished scholar and soldier (1472-1529), see 'A Detailed Life of O Yo Mei' by Takejiro Takase, and also 'O-yo-mei-shutsu-shin-sei-ran-roku.'

# 1. History Of Zen In China

## 1. Origin of Zen in India.

To-day Zen as a living faith can be found in its pure form only among the Japanese Buddhists. You cannot find it in the so-called Gospel of Buddha anymore than you can find Unitarianism in the Pentateuch, nor can you find it in China and India any more than you can find life in fossils of bygone ages. It is beyond all doubt that it can be traced back to Shakyamuni himself, nay, even to pre-Buddhistic times, because Brahmanic teachers practised Dhyana, or Meditation,[FN#15] from earliest times.

[FN#15] "If a wise man hold his body with its three parts (chest, neck, and head) erect, and turn his senses with the mind towards the heart, he will then in the boat of Brahman cross all the torrents which cause fear.

"Compressing his breathings let him, who has subdued all motions, breathe forth through the nose with the gentle breath. Let the wise man without fail restrain his mind, that chariot yoked with vicious horses.

"Let him perform his exercises in a place level, pure, free from pebbles, fire, and dust, delightful by its sounds, its water, and bowers; not painful to the eye, and full of shelters and eaves.

"When Yoga, is being performed, the forms which come first, producing apparitions in Brahman, are those of misty smoke, sun, fire, wind, fire-flies, lightnings, and a crystal moon.

"When, as earth, water, light, heat, and ether arises, the fivefold quality of Yoga takes place, then there is no longer illness, old age, or pain for him who has obtained a body produced by the fire of Yoga.

The first results of Yoga they call lightness, healthiness, steadiness, a good complexion, an easy pronunciation, a sweet odour, and slight excretions "(Cvet. Upanisad, ii. 8-13).

"When the five instruments of knowledge stand still together with the mind, and when the intellect does not move, that is called the highest state.

"This, the firm holding back of the senses, is what is called Yoga. He must be free from thoughtlessness then, for Yoga comes and goes" (Katha Upanisad, ii. 10, 11).

"This is the rule for achieving it (viz., concentration of the mind on the object of meditation): restraint of the breath, restraint of the senses, meditation, fixed attention, investigation, absorption-these are called the sixfold Yoga. When beholding by this Yoga, he beholds the gold-coloured maker, the lord, the person, Brahman, the cause; then the sage, leaving behind good and evil, makes everything (breath, organs of sense, body,

etc.) to be one in the Highest Indestructible (in the pratyagatman or Brahman) " (Maitr. Upanisad, vi. 18).

"And thus it has been elsewhere: There is the superior fixed attention (dharana) for him--viz., if he presses the tip of the tongue down the palate, and restrain the voice, mind, and breath, he sees Brahman by discrimination (taraka). And when, after the cessation of mind, he sees his own Self, smaller than small, and shining as the Highest Self, then, having seen his Self as the Self, he becomes Self-less, and because he is Self-less, he is without limit, without cause, absorbed in thought. This is the highest mystery--viz., final liberation " (Maitr. Upanisad, vi. 20).

Amrtab. Upanisad, 18, describes three modes of sitting--namely, the Lotus-seat (Padmasana), the sitting with legs bent underneath; the mystic diagram seat (Svastika); and the auspicious-seat (Bhadrasana);--while Yogacikha directs the choice of the Lotus-posture, with attention concentrated on the tip of the nose, hands and feet closely joined.

But Brahmanic Zen was carefully distinguished even by early Buddhists[FN#16] as the heterodox Zen from that taught by the Buddha. Our Zen originated in the Enlightenment of Shakya Muni, which took place in his thirtieth year, when he was sitting absorbed in profound meditation under the Bodhi Tree.

[FN#16] The anonymous author of Lankavatara-sutra distinguishes the heterodox Zen from the Hinayana Zen, the Hinayana Zen from the Mahayana Zen, and calls the last by the name of the Buddha's Holy Zen. The sutra is believed by many Buddhists, not without reason, to be the exposition of that Mahayana doctrine which Acvaghosa restated in his Craddhotpada-castra. The sutra was translated, first, into Chinese by Gunabbadra, in A.D. 443; secondly, by Bodhiruci in A.D. 513; and, thirdly, by Ciksana in A.D. 700-704. The book is famous for its prophecy about Nagdrajuna, which (according to Dr. Nanjo's translation) is as follows:

"After the Nirvana of the Tathagata,  
There will be a man in the future,  
Listen to me carefully, O Mahatma,  
A man who will hold my law.  
In the great country of South,  
There will be a venerable Bhiksu  
The Bodhisattva Nagarjuna by name,  
Who will destroy the views of Astikas and Nastikas,  
Who will preach unto men my Yana,  
The highest Law of the Mahayana,  
And will attain to the Pramudita-bhumi."

It is said that then he awoke to the perfect truth and declared: "All animated and inanimate beings are Enlightened at the same time." According to the tradition[FN#17] of this sect Shakya Muni transmitted his mysterious doctrine from mind to mind to his oldest disciple Mahakacyapa at the assembly hold on the Mount of Holy Vulture, and the



latter was acknowledged as the first patriarch, who, in turn, transmitted the doctrine to Ananda, the second patriarch, and so till Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth[FN#18] patriarch. We have little to say about the historical value of this tradition, but it is worth while to note that the list of the names of these twenty-eight patriarchs contains many eminent scholars of Mahayanism, or the later developed school of Buddhism, such as Acvaghosa,[FN#19] Nagarjuna,[FN#20] Kanadeva,[FN#21] and Vasubhandhu.[FN#22]

[FN#17] The incident is related as follows: When the Buddha was at the assembly on the Mount of Holy Vulture, there came a Brahmaraja who offered the Teacher a golden flower, and asked him to preach the Dharma. The Buddha took the flower and held it aloft in his hand, gazing at it in perfect silence. None in the assembly could understand what he meant, except the venerable Mahakacyapa, who smiled at the Teacher. Then the Buddha said: "I have the Eye and Treasury of Good Dharma, Nirvana, the Wonderful Spirit, which I now hand over to Mahakacyapa." The book in which this incident is described is entitled 'Sutra on the Great Brahman King's Questioning Buddha to Dispel a Doubt,' but there exists no original text nor any Chinese translation in the Tripitaka. It is highly probable that some early Chinese Zen scholar of the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960-1126) fabricated the tradition, because Wang Ngan Shih (O-an-seki), a powerful Minister under the Emperor Shan Tsung (Shin-so, A.D. 1068-1085), is said to have seen the book in the Imperial Library. There is, however, no evidence, as far as we know, pointing to the existence of the Sutra in China. In Japan there exists, in a form of manuscript, two different translations of that book, kept in secret veneration by some Zen masters, which have been proved to be fictitious by the present writer after his close examination of the contents. See the Appendix to his Zen-gaku-hi-han-ron.

[FN#18] The following is the list of the names of the twenty-eight patriarchs:

1. Mahakacyapa.
2. Ananda.
3. Canvasu.
4. Upagupta.
5. Dhrtaka.
6. Micchaka.
7. Vasumitra.
8. Buddhanandi.
9. Buddhamitra.
10. Pareva.
11. Punyayacas.
12. Acvaghosa.
13. Kapimala.
14. Nagarjuna.
15. Kanadeva.
16. Rahulata.
17. Samghanandi.
18. Samghayacas.
19. Kumarata.

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|-----|---------------|
| 20. | Jayata.       |
| 21. | Vasubandhu.   |
| 22. | Manura.       |
| 23. | Haklanayacas. |
| 24. | Simha.        |
| 25. | Vacasuta.     |
| 26. | Punyamitra.   |
| 27. | Prajnyatara.  |
| 28. | Bodhidharma.  |

The first twenty-three patriarchs are exactly the same as those given in 'The Sutra on the Nidana of transmitting Dharmapitaka,' translated in A.D. 472. King Teh Chwen Tang Iuh (Kei-toku-den-to-roku), a famous Zen history of China, gives two elaborate narratives about the transmission of Right Dharma from teacher to disciple through these twenty-eight patriarchs, to be trusted without hesitation. It would not be difficult for any scholar of sense to find these statements were made from the same motive as that of the anonymous author who gives a short life, in Dirghagama-sutra, of each of the six Buddhas, the predecessors of Shakya Muni, if he carefully compare the list given above with the lists of the patriarchs of the Sarvastivada school given by San Yin (So-yu died A.D. 518) in his Chuh San Tsung Ki (Shutsu-san zo-ki).

[FN#19] One of the founders of Mahayana Buddhism, who flourished in the first century A.D. There exists a life of his translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva in A.D. 401-409. The most important of his works are: Mahayanacradhotpada-castra, Mahalankara-sutra-castra, Buddha-caritakavya.

[FN#20] The founder of the Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism, who lived in the second century A.D. A life of his was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva in A.D. 401-409. Twenty-four books are ascribed to him, of which Mahaprajñāparamita-castra, Madhyamika-castra, Prajnyadipa-castra, Dvadacanikaya-castra, Astadacakaca-castra, are well known.

[FN#21] Sometimes called Aryadeva, a successor of Nagarjuna. A life of his was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva in A.D. 401-409. The following are his important works: Cata-castra, 'Castra by the Bodhisattva Deva on the refutation of four heretical Hinayana schools mentioned in the Lankavatara-sutra'; 'Castra by the Bodhisattva Deva on the explanation of the Nirvana by twenty Hinayana teachers mentioned in the Lankavatara-sutra.'

[FN#22] A younger brother of Asamga, a famous Mahayanist of the fifth century A.D. There are thirty-six works ascribed to Vasubandhu, of which Dacabhumika-castra, Aparimitayus-sutra-castra, Mahapari-nirvana-sutra-castra, Mahayana-catadharmavidyadvara-castra, Vidya-matrasiddhi-tridaca-castra, Bodhicittopadana-castra, Buddha-gotra-castra, Vidyamatrasiddhivincatigatha-castra, Madhyantavibhaga-castra, Abhidharma-koca-castra, Tarka-castra, etc., are well known.

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