

MEMORIAL SERVICE LECTURE, December 23, 1972

by Zentatsu Baker-roshi

Suzuki-roshi died just over a year ago and today we will have the one-year Memorial Service for him. It is an old old Buddhist custom to offer food to your teacher on the anniversary of his death. To treat your teacher as if he were still alive. Do you know the story of Tozan and Nansen at Baso's Memorial Service? Tozan Ryokai (807-869) is the founder of the Soto line in China. Our lineage. During Tozan's time the five lineages stemming from Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, were all interconnected, everyone visiting and learning from each other. Nansen Fugan (748-838) is the great teacher famous for the koan about killing a cat. He was one of the five main disciples of Baso Doitsu (709-799). For Suzuki-roshi, Baso was one of the greatest Zen Masters of all time.

Tozan was quite young when he asked his first teacher, probably a local village priest, why the sutra said "no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind," when he had eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Amazed at the clarity and matter of factness of the question, the teacher said, "I am not good enough for you, please go to Master Reimoku." Tozan did so and had his head shaved under Reimoku (747-818) who was one of the many heirs of Baso Doitsu. When he was about twenty-one he began journeying about visiting various teachers. The first teacher he visited was Nansen. When Tozan arrived the monastery was preparing for the annual Memorial Service for Nansen's teacher, Baso. Nansen said to everyone, to all his disciples, "Tomorrow we will serve food to Master Baso. Do you think he will come?"

I may ask you the same question. This afternoon we will perform the first annual Memorial Service for our teacher, Master Suzuki-roshi. We will offer him food and drink. Will Suzuki-roshi come and eat the food we serve him today?

When Nansen asked this question there was the silence of no one answering, and then from the back of the assembly young Tozan stepped forward and said, "Master Baso will wait for a companion." And then Nansen said, "Oh here is a fellow, although he is quite young, he is worthy to study Buddhism." Tozan answered, "Please do not slight me in that way!"

Let us run through it again. Nansen asked, "Is there a student in the house? Is there anyone here who knows that Baso neither comes nor goes, that he is always present?" After no one of Nansen's disciples replied, Tozan said, "He will wait for a companion. He will wait for someone to come forward who knows the true relationship between disciple and teacher." And then Nansen, cautioning him, said, "Are you pointing yourself out as a student, as a companion?" And Tozan replied, "Please do not insult me. I am pointing out Master Baso. I am pointing out how a teacher actually exists."

How does a teacher really exist? You must make an effort to be a disciple. You must come forward to be a teacher's companion in your common realization. You must make an effort, a great effort to realize Suzuki-roshi's teaching, to realize your own nature, to be his companion forever. It means actually eating with Master Baso and Suzuki-roshi, walking with them, knowing how they actually exist and existed. It means to think with him, hear with him, see with him. This is a story about how each one of us actually exists.

Later on in Tozan's life, he was in his fifties, there is a story about when he was preparing for a Memorial Service for his own teacher, Ungan Donjo. You know about Ungan (Yun Yen in many stories) from our morning chanting of the lineage. Beginning from the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng or in Japanese Daikan Eno— . . . Daikan Eno Daiocho (great teacher), Seigen Gyoshi Daiocho, Sekito Kisen Daiocho (the author of the Sandokai), Yakusan Igen Daiocho, Ungan Donjo Daiocho, Tozan Ryokai Daiocho . . . and so forth. For twenty years Ungan was also a disciple of Hyakujo who was an heir of Baso Doitsu too.

During the preparation of the vegetarian food for the offering to Ungan, a monk asked Tozan, "What teaching did you receive from Master Ungan?" Tozan answered, "Although I was in his community for many years, he gave me no instruction." This monk seeking instruction persists, "If he did not instruct you, why are you offering a Memorial Service to him now?" Tozan said, "How could I contradict him." The monk then said, "You visited Nansen first and became known at that time, why do you offer food now in Ungan's memory?" Tozan said, "I am not making this offering because of Master Ungan's virtue or Buddha Dharma, but because he refused to reveal the teaching to me. This is why I respect him."

Another monk asked at the same time, "Master Tozan, you are about to conduct a Memorial Service in honor of your teacher, Master Ungan, do you agree with his teaching completely?" Tozan replied, "I half agree, and half disagree." (And yet he could not contradict him!) The monk, who wants something to be in agreement with, asks, "Why do you not agree with him completely?" "To do so would be to do him an injustice," replied Tozan.

I have talked about these stories many times and there is still another story about Tozan I would like to tell you about again. After Tozan left Nansen he went to see Isan Reiyu and asked him about a famous statement of Nan'yo Echu. Isan (771-853) was an heir of Hyakujo and co-founder of the Igyo lineage, and Nan'yo (d. 776) was an heir of the Sixth Patriarch and is often known by his title of Chu Kokushi, or State Master, and by his request for an untiered or seamless burial mound. (See Suzuki-roshi's commentary on p. 7 in this Wind Bell.)

Tozan told Isan that he did not understand the deep meaning of Nan'yo's statement that inanimate objects expound the Dharma. Isan asked Tozan to repeat the story: A monk asked Nan'yo, "What is an ancient Buddha's mind?" Nan'yo replied, "A wall and broken tiles." "But are they not inanimate objects?" the monk said. "They are," replied Nan'yo. "Can inanimate objects expound the Dharma?" asked the monk. Nan'yo said, "Inanimate objects vigorously and unceasingly expound the Dharma." The monk asked, "Well, why do I not hear it?" Then Nan'yo replied, "Although you do not hear it,

do not hinder that which hears it!" The story goes on, but this is the statement I want you to hear: "Although you do not hear it, do not hinder that which hears it."

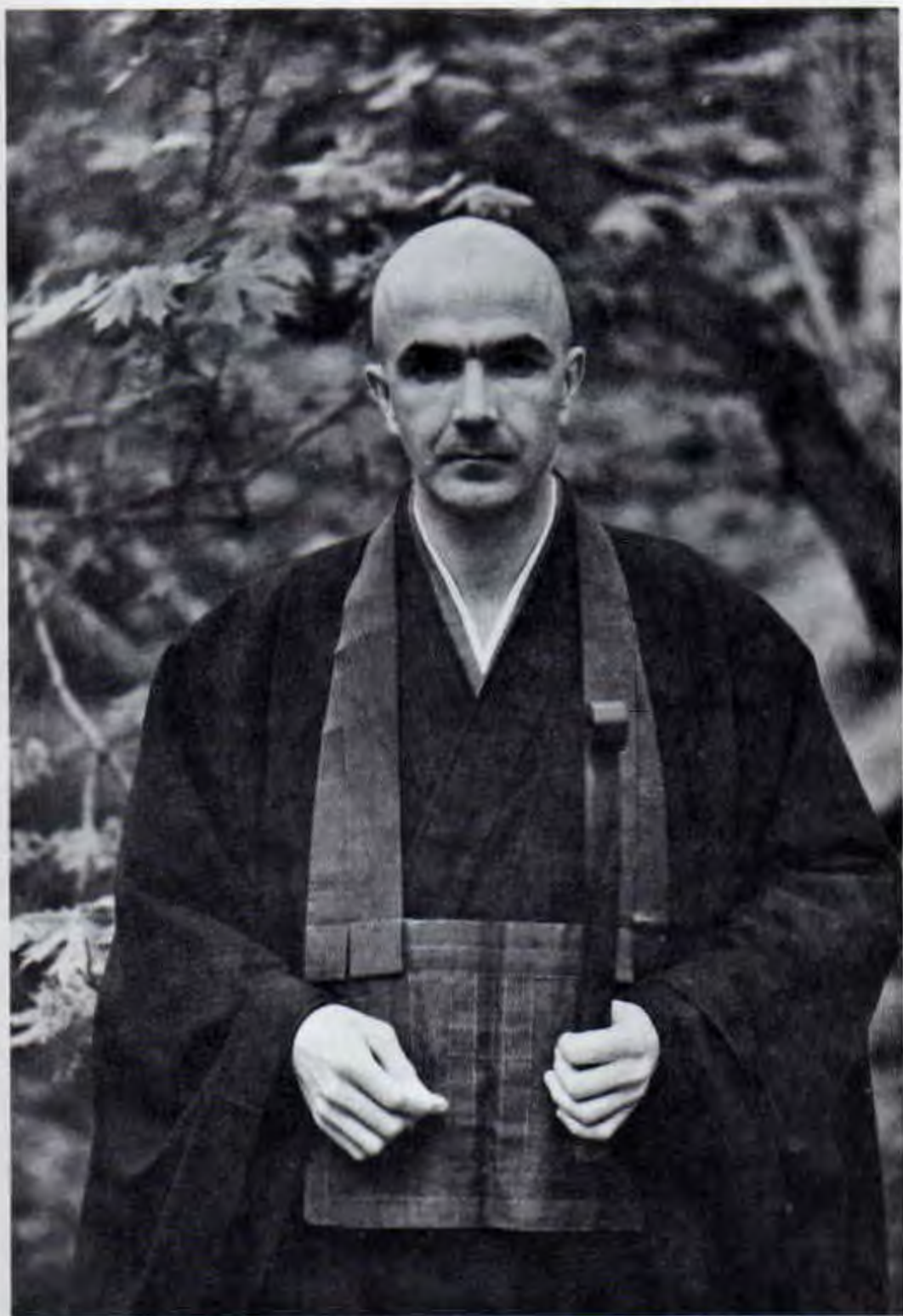
At the end of the whole story, Isan says, "I have something to say about this too, but I have not yet found a man to whom I can speak." Tozan said, "Will you please teach me, I do not understand." Isan raised his whisk and said, "Do you understand?" Tozan said, "No! Will you explain it to me?" Isan said, "This mouth from my parents will never explain it to you." After that Isan sent Tozan to the mountain cave where Ungan lived. Tozan right away asked, "When the inanimate expounds the Dharma, who can hear it?" Ungan said, "The inanimate hear it!" Tozan said, "Venerable Ungan, do you hear it?" Ungan said, "If I heard it, you could not hear my expounding of the Dharma." Then Tozan asked, "Why do I not hear it?" Ungan raised his whisk and said, "Do you hear it?" Tozan again said, "No!" And Ungan replied, "If you cannot hear my teaching, how can you ever hear the teaching of the inanimate?" Tozan said, "What sutra says, 'Inanimate objects expound the Dharma?'" Ungan said, "Do you not know that the Amitabha Buddha Sutra says, 'Streams, birds, trees, groves, all chant Buddha Dharma?'" Finally Tozan realized that all things expound the Dharma, and he said:

 "Wonderful, wonderful!
 The Dharma of the inanimate cannot be conceived.
 Listening with the ears is hearing nothing,
 Hearing with the eyes, at last you know."

Suzuki-roshi was much like this, he would not say much about the teaching. He just lived here with us. And in the first years he was here in America, it was very hard to recognize him more than that he was a very nice and remarkable man. It was not until he had visible relationships with several disciples that we began to be able to see him through these relationships, and to find our own relationships to him. Coming forward in ourselves and treating him as a teacher. By the end of his life many people could see him directly through his reflections in his many disciples. While in the first years most of the people who came to sit zazen for a while, after a while went away not knowing who Suzuki-roshi was. But by the end of his life everyone wanted to stay with him and there was so much space around him to stay.

Our relationship with him continues, our experience of our relationship with him is not gone, if we continue to come forward, continue to renew it, continue to hear with our eyes, and see with our ears. We should treat Suzuki-roshi as if he were alive and so sometimes we offer food to him and call it a Memorial Service. This relationship has some wisdom in it, we do not know what we learned—"I was with him many years, but I did not receive any teaching"—but when it is necessary suddenly it comes out, what is necessary, something we did not even know we knew, Buddhism itself. Do you know how to come forward to make the body of Buddha visible, to join Suzuki-roshi today in this Memorial Service?

Which came first: Suzuki-roshi, Buddha, or you? It is the same as Buddha, is the same as you. This possibility to come forward, this actuality exists right now and is you. The teacher is always waiting, Suzuki-roshi is still waiting for



you. Don't worry! Everything exists just as you exist just now! It is something incomprehensible, something unthinkable. "Although we do not hear it, do not hinder that which hears it!" Engo said, "Ten thousand Holy Ones have not handed down a single phrase of the pre-voice." I say the pre-voice of the ten thousand things is heard everywhere. Do you hear it? Can you practice in this realm of the incomprehensible? This actual being, this actual practice is beyond being and non-being, and so we offer food to Suzuki-roshi. Please come forward and make the body of Buddha visible for all beings, animate and inanimate, to continue this teaching.



THE MEMORIAL SERVICE

In the afternoon everyone gathered in the Buddha Dharma Hall to begin the Memorial Service. Baker-roshi entered and standing before the special altar set up for Suzuki-roshi called out:

At Baso's Memorial Service,
Tozan said, "He will wait for a companion."
At Ungan Donjo's Memorial Service,
Tozan said, "I spent many years with him,
but he refused to reveal the truth to me!"
Oh Suzuki-roshi, What do you say?
Will you refuse to reveal the teaching to us?
We come forward as one person,
hearing the ten thousand things bless you.