The Calligraphy of Ch'an and Zen Monks

Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman

Although a dependence on words and letters was avoided in the concepts of their sect, the Ch'an and Zen monks produced a prodigious amount of written material, in book form and in handwritten documents. Believed to express the total personality of the writer, the art of calligraphy (*bokuseki*) acquired a kind of mystique. The highly personal calligraphy was not as strong an influence in China as in Japan, where it established the standard for excellence and was extensively emulated in secular society. Representative examples are shown and discussed.

It may well seem paradoxical that a sect which attached so much importance to the concept of a "special transmission outside the scriptures," with "no dependence upon words and letters," should have produced a monumental amount of written materials during the course of its development. Included among the prolific output of its Chinese and Japanese monk-writers and chroniclers are sermons, tracts, hymns, the "Recorded Sayings" of a large number of patriarchs and eminent ecclesiastics, compendious biographies, and *kōan* collections, as well as an impressive quantity of writings in seemingly secular forms of literature, such as diaries and poetry. It must be noted, however, that this history of literary accomplishment did not develop without occasional antiscriptural activities. Liang K'ai's painting of a patriarch tearing up a *sūtra* (Fig. 1) provides graphic evidence of this sentiment, which seems to have developed from time to time among certain monks who feared that the spiritual vitality of the sect would decline if the revered sermons, sayings, or apothegms of the masters were set down in written form. This type of concern probably accounts for the action of Ta-hui, who suppressed and burned the famous collection of *kōan* known as the *Green Cliff Record* (*Pi-yen-lu*), a composite work of Hsüeh-t'ou Chung-hsien (980–1052) and Ta-hui's highly respected teacher, Yüan-wu K'o-ch'in (1063–1135). Yüan-wu had lectured to his students on the one hundred

"cases" of Hsüeh-t'ou which are included in this work. He seems to have had no intention of compiling his lectures, but the monks wrote them down and they were later published as commentaries to the one hundred cases. Ta-hui may even have felt that he was actually carrying out the master's wishes in destroying the work. Good fortune prevailed, however, for the work existed in other copies, and it became one of the most frequently used *kōan* compilations in later times. The case of Tê-shan (780–865), famous for his rough treatment of students, provides another example of this antiscriptural tendency. He devoted himself diligently to the study of the *Diamond Sūtra*, but when he attained *Satori*, he burned all his patiently accumulated notes and commentaries on the *sūtra*, proclaiming that all philosophical speculation was meaningless.

Despite these destructive aberrations, however, which seem to be characteristic of the Chinese parent sect rather than the Japanese offspring, the amount of written material that has been preserved,

Figure 1. *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing up a Sūtra*. Liang K'ai (active first half of the 13th century). Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 73 × 31.7 cm. Collection of Mitsui Takanaru, Tokyo.

In brushwork of great dynamic force, the artist has conjured up a scene which recalls the early days of Ch'an Buddhism, when the "strange words and extraordinary behavior" of the founding fathers of the Ch'an branches still determined the course of the sect. The general significance of a patriarch ripping a *sūtra* into shreds is evident, and similar episodes occasionally are described in Ch'an texts. It is known, for example, that the T'ang priest Tê-shan Hsüan-chien (died 865) burned all his *sūtras* after he had attained Enlightenment.

This painting traditionally is identified as a representation of the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-nêng. However, none of the many biographies of this patriarch shed any light on the episode which is depicted here. Yet there is one good reason for connecting this representation with him. In the Ch'an biographies of Hui-nêng, the sect's ideal of independence from scriptural sources is emphasized by a proud and defiant display of the illiteracy of the patriarch. As he was incapable of reading, the stimulus for his initial resolve had to come verbally, and it only occurred when he overheard a monk reciting the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra*. Similarly, the poem which earned him the succession to the patriarchate had to be written on a wall for him by another monk. In the *Platform Sūtra* every opportunity is used to emphasize Hui-nêng's militant illiteracy. His disdain for the written word must have made him an outcast in a society which traditionally revered literary accomplishment. Even though specific references to the dramatic scene in this painting are lacking in Hui-nêng's biographies, it would seem to be in complete accord with the basic attitude and behavior of the Sixth Patriarch.

both in book form and in handwritten documents, is nothing short of prodigious. The corpus of printed editions of Ch'an religious literature that has been transmitted down to the present in both China and Japan is impressive in its variety and size, but actual specimens of the writings of Ch'an priests can only be seen today in Japan.

The calligraphy of Ch'an and Zen monks is generally referred to in Japan as *bokuseki*, an elegant term which, translated literally, means "ink traces" or "ink vestiges". In China the term (pronounced mo-chi) seems to have been used as early as the Six Dynasties period, but it did not become a popular term until Sung times, when it seems to have been only one of several synonyms for "calligraphy." Japanese Zen monks who travelled to China during Sung times adopted the term and applied it in a more specific, restricted sense to the handwritten documents or calligraphy of Ch'an or Zen monks. The term is already used in this sense in the *Butsunichi-an Kubutsu Mokuroku*, the catalogue of calligraphy and paintings of the Butsunichi-an, a sub-temple of the Engakuji in Kamakura, compiled in 1365.

The unique master-student relationship in Ch'an-Zen is an outgrowth of the central preoccupation of the sect—the direct, personal transmission of certain intuitively comprehended truths from the teacher to his successor or follower. The tradition that Bodhidharma's bowl and robe were handed down in succession to the patriarchs who followed him represents the symbolic expression of this arcane, perhaps on occasion ineffable, transmission. When the sect had become considerably larger and more institutionalized in later times, the desire for some tangible evidence of this transmission resulted in the practice, described above, of the master's presenting a *chinsō* of himself (usually with an inscription by him above) to the zealous student in recognition of both his advanced stage of religious accomplishment and his acceptance in the master's line. Alternatively, the master might write out a document in his distinctive calligraphic style and give it to the disciple, accomplishing the same purpose. In either case, the essential requirement was that the object of certification, whether painted or written, was received directly and personally from the master's own hand.

While the greatest reverence was focused on the particular calligraphic documents which attested to the religious accomplish-

ments of the student and confirmed his position in the authentic line of the master, it is also clear that there was a deep sense of respect, if not awe, for all of the writings of eminent church figures, contemporary as well as past. This feeling of veneration was twofold, for it applied not only to the religious content of the writings, but also to the calligraphy itself, the direct product of the master's personality, with its individuality, strength, and profundity of expression. Believed to express the total personality of the writer, the art of calligraphy acquired a kind of mystique, inspired in part by religious circumstance, but more largely as a result of its high level of aesthetic accomplishment.

The oldest piece of calligraphy from the hand of a Ch'an monk preserved in Japan is a letter written by Tao-ch'ien, a man who was awarded a high ecclesiastical title by the Sung Emperor Chê-tsung (reigned 1086–1101), and who seems to have associated with many of the scholars and literati of the period, including Su Tung-p'o. He achieved fame for his talents in composing poetry, but it is also apparent that he was a superlative calligrapher. His style owes something to that of Wang Hsi-chih (Fig. 2) but he seems to have been influenced by Su Tung-p'o's manner in his later years.

However, the Ch'an calligraphy that has been most admired in Japan is not of the orthodox type represented by Tao-ch'ien's example, but belongs rather to more personal, unconventional types like the famous example by Yüan-wu (1063–1135) in the Tokyo National Museum. Yüan-wu belonged to the Yang-chi branch of the Lin-chi (Japanese: Rinzai) school of Ch'an, which became the dominant branch in Japan, and exercised the strongest influence on the evolution of calligraphy in later times. The works of Yüan-wu's pupils such as Sung-yüan and Ta-hui (who destroyed the *Pi-yen-lu*) are highly respected and continue the master's stylistic tradition.

In China, where the weight of established tradition in calligraphic expression was quite strong, the unconventional, highly personal calligraphy of Ch'an monks does not often seem to have been well received very far beyond their own religious circles, and it eventually declined. In Japan, however, where Zen exercised a dominating influence on the evolution of culture during much of the "medieval" period, the calligraphy of Zen monks established the standard for excellence, and was extensively emulated in secular society.

Figure 2. *Wang Hsi-chih Writing on a Fan.* Attributed to Josetsu (active early 15th century). Fan-shaped album leaf, mounted as a hanging scroll, ink and slight colors on paper with mica ground, 98.3 × 21. 8 cm. Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo. *Registered Important Cultural Property.*

Wang Hsi-chih Writing on a Fan, although painted by such famous Ch'an artists as Liang K'ai and Josetsu, is strictly speaking not a Zen theme. It illustrates an anecdote about the famous Chinese calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih (321–379). Once, when Wang saw a woman selling bamboo fans, he took them from her and wrote a five-character phrase on each one. The illiterate woman was angry because she thought that Wang had ruined her merchandise. Wang predicted that she would be able to sell all the fans for a good price because of the high market value of his calligraphy. When the woman promptly sold out her stock, she went to Wang and asked him to write phrases on more fans, but he merely laughed and did not respond to her request.

There is some evidence, however, that the attitudes of Ch'an monks, and perhaps even something of their calligraphic style, exercised a degree of influence on certain of the literati who associated with Ch'an monks during the Northern Sung period. Thus Su Tung-p'o, who studied Ch'an under two noted masters, seems to express the individualized spirit of the Ch'an practitioners in his statement: "While it cannot be said that my calligraphy is very accomplished, I have produced my own new ideas, and the fact that I am not treading in the footsteps of men of the past is the most pleasant thing of all to me!" Again, the pronouncement of his close friend Huang T'ing-chien (who was a diligent devotee of Ch'an practices): "In my calligraphy there is no basic method!" reflects the original, eccentric quality of Ch'an.

There are many fine specimens of *bokuseki* in private and public collections in Japan, but the largest number of pieces are preserved in Zen temples, particularly in Kyoto, where the main headquarters of the Rinzai school are located. The Tōfukuji has a superlative group of early examples, particularly those from the hand of the great Ch'an prelate Wu-chun Shih-fan which were brought back personally from China by Ben'en Enni in 1241, or sent to him slightly later in honor of the founding of the Jōtenji in Hakata (Fig. 3). Wu-chun's style, although vigorous and dynamic, is rather more orthodox than that of most Sung monks, and shows a strong inclination to emulate the style of his somewhat younger contemporary Chang Chi-chih

This humorous incident, which illustrates the true gentleman's lack of concern for financial gain, has been painted by Josetsu in a sensitive and delicate manner. Very appropriately, he chose the fan format to illustrate this anecdote. Each detail of the figures is meticulously painted with a fine, pointed brush. Wang Hsi-chih is shown seated on a garden seat under a tree. The tree trunk is painted in the manner of the Ma-Hsia school of the Southern Sung dynasty, but the branches of the tree have been sketchily indicated by closely spaced dabs from a dry brush. Wang is assisted by two child attendants, one of whom holds the ink stone.

On the left, written on a separate piece of paper, which has been pasted onto the fan, is a four-line verse by the monk Daigaku Shūsū (1345–1423):

In the world a fan can easily be sold for a thousand cash,
But in Shan-yin [where Wang lived] even one character in his handwriting is difficult to obtain.
His elegant distinction is ineradicable.
It is even visible in this painting.

Figure 3. *Calligraphy Presented to the Jōtenji.*
Wu-chun Shih-fan (1177–1249).
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
196.7 × 44.0 cm.
Tōfukuji, Kyoto
Registered Important Cultural Property

Wu-chun was overjoyed when he heard of his disciple Enni's prodigious activity, and he took up his brush and wrote out a number of calligraphic plaques for the new temple. It is not clear just when or where the illustrated piece was displayed. It has no reference to any building, and may have been hung in whatever place was appropriate on felicitous occassions. It reads "Bestowed at Imperial Order, (the) Jōten Zen temple." Because of the term "Bestowed at Imperial Order," a conventional phrase often used to preface the name of a temple which had received sanction or support from the throne in China, it is possible that the "Jōten Zen temple" is the name of a temple or compound on Mount Ching which still existed during the thirteenth century. The practice of using Chinese temple names for those of the same religious lineage in Japan was certainly common enough to support this supposition. The present manner in which the characters are mounted, in vertical sequence, may not represent the original arrangement. Each character is written on a separate piece of paper, and although the paper is all of the same sort, it is not clear whether Wu-chun originally wrote them on independent sheets, or whether they might initially have been executed horizontally on a single sheet and separated at some later time. The fact that each has a seal imprint reading "Fumon-in" (the name of a sub-temple in the Tōfukuji), an imprint which appears on all the Wu-chun pieces, indicates that they were probably in separate sheets sometime early in their history. At the bottom left is Wu-chun's seal: "Fo-chien Ch'an-shih."

Wu-chun's calligraphic style is vital and direct in its impact, and depend on a strong, unembellished line, devoid of artistic eccentricities. His characters are written in a deliberate, preconceived manner, and are constructed tectonically so that each stroke has its own independent strength, but also interlocks organically with the total composition.

(Fig. 4). Lan-ch'i Tao-lung, the founder of the Kenchōji in Kamakura (Fig. 5), and Fêng Tzŭ-chên (Fig. 6) also exhibit an indebtedness to Chang's influential style in their writing.

The *bokuseki* collection in the Daitokuji in Kyoto is one of the finest in existence. Not only is it extensive in numbers and high in quality, but it also includes a variety of pieces which span a considerable period of time, and a general idea of the main currents, styles, and developments of Ch'an-Zen calligraphy from early Southern Sung times up to the Edo period can be acquired through a study of this collection alone. The oldest example is from the hand of Mi-an Hsien-chieh (1107–1186), one of the most influential prelates of the first half of the Southern Sung dynasty, whose later line includes names such as Sung-yüan, Hsü-t'ang, Wü-chun, Tao-lung and I-shan. It is not surprising that the Daitokuji has the most important corpus of calligraphy by its founder, Daitō Kokushi (Shūho Myōchō, 1282–1337) or examples of works of his teacher Nampo Jōmyō (1235–1309), who studied in China under Hsü-t'ang Chih-yü (1185–1269) and returned to Japan with works by his master. Daitō's style represents the fusion of his own strength of expression with the calligraphic manner of Huang T'ing-chien, one of the most widely emulated master of the Northern Sung period. T'ing-chien's characters have an incisive though elegant quality which is reproduced in Daitō's works, but with the addition of a slightly eccentric flavor. Daitō reached the height of his career during his fifties, when he devoted himself to educating and advising his many disciples. He wrote a large number of *hōgo* (essays or tracts interpreting the teachings of the Buddha, often with advice on methods for attaining Enlightenment) during this period, which he presented to his students. The manner in which he expressed his opinions through sermons and explanatory discourses and tried to elucidate the methods and means for achieving *Satori* show a clear resemblance to certain practices followed by the Ch'an master Chung-fêng Ming-pên, who had a number of Japanese students. Daitō revered Chung-fêng and must have been familiar with his "Recorded Sayings," which were brought back to Japan.

Several of the abbots who succeeded Daitō at the Daitokuji, such as Tettō and Kasō, were also accomplished calligraphers, but the most dynamic hand in this line during the middle of the Muromachi period belonged to Ikkyū Sōjun (1394–1481, Fig. 7). The larger part

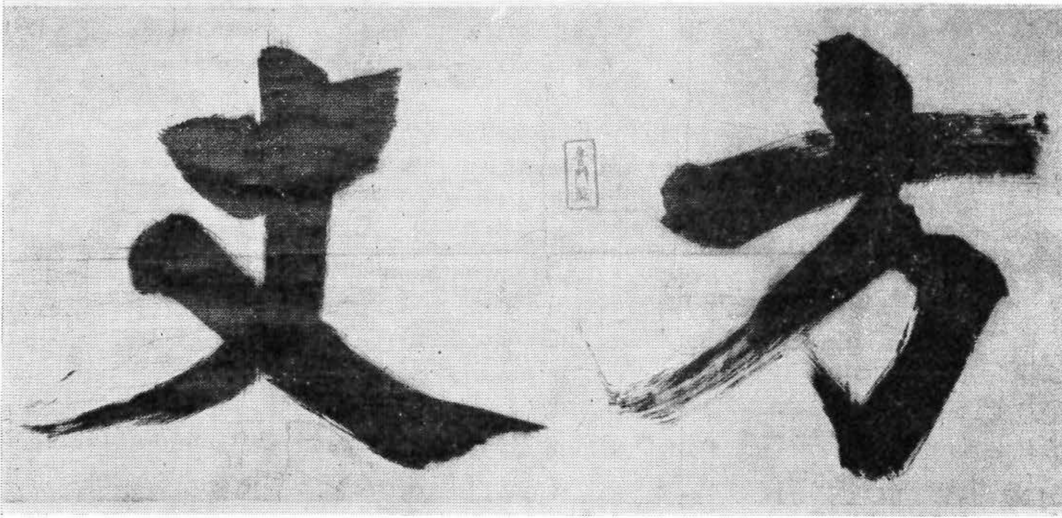

Figure 4. *Fang-chang* ("*The Abbot's Quarters*"). Chang Chi-chih (1186–1266). Framed and mounted as a panel, ink on paper, 45.2 × 126 cm. Tōfukuji, Kyoto. *Registered Important Cultural Property.*

Chang Chi-chih was an official of the Southern Sung dynasty. His career as a mandarin was not one of particular distinction. As a calligrapher, however, his fame spread far beyond the borders of his homeland. The Jurchen, who occupied the northern half of China, as well as the Japanese, who heard about him from travelling Zen monks, eagerly sought to acquire specimens of his handwriting.

Chang was a deeply religious Buddhist and copied the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra* as an act of devotion several times during his lifetime, and he is also known for his copies of poems by the T'ang poet Tu Fu, written both in small and large characters.

This fine piece of calligraphy, consisting of the characters *Fang-chang* ("The Abbot's Quarters"), is one of a set of eight examples written with two characters referring to locations in a temple. An incised wooden plaque based on this piece of calligraphy is still in use at the Daitokuji, Kyoto. The words *fang-chang* are an abbreviation for "a room of ten square (*fang*) feet (*chang*)." This expression originally applied to the residence of Vimalakīrti but was used, from T'ang times on, for the abbot's quarters at a Ch'an temple.

The bold characters, which combine strength with elegance, are characteristic of Chang's robust style which continued the traditions of the Northern Sung schools of Huang T'ing-chien and Su Shih. In spite of the close resemblance to other works by Chang's hand, especially the fragment of a poem by Tu Fu in the Chisaku-in, Kyoto, this piece is thought by some to be the work of one of Chang's numerous followers rather than by the great artist himself.

Between the two characters is a seal which reads: "Fumon-in." This is the name of one of the sub-temples of the Tōfukuji. The eight-piece set is believed to have been brought back from China in 1241 by the monk Ben'en (1201–1208), who subsequently founded the Tōfukuji, the temple where these pieces are still preserved.

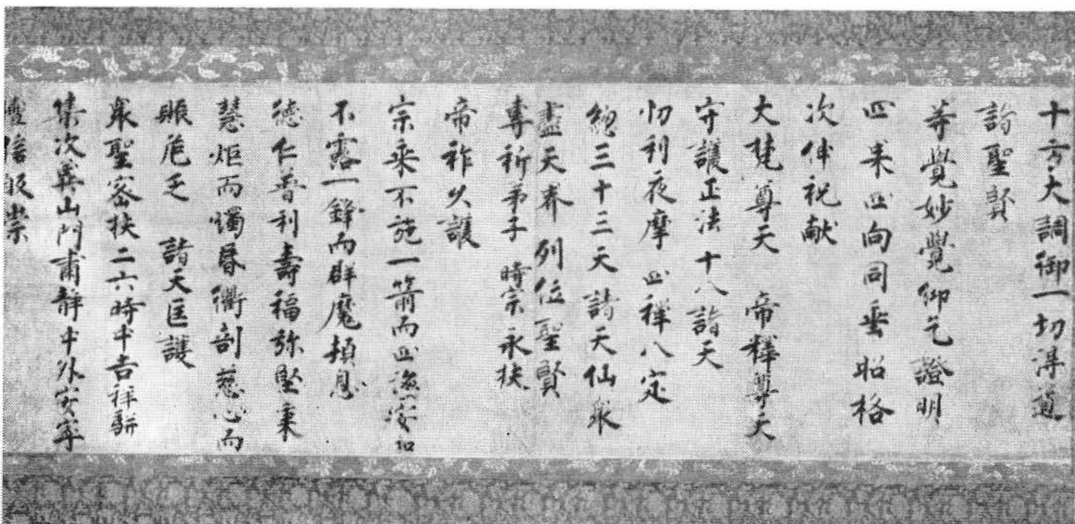

Figure 5. *Buddhist Hymn.* Lan-ch'i Tao-lung (1212–1278). Part of a handscroll, now mounted as a hanging scroll, ink on paper, 32.5 × 95.2 cm. Tokiwayama Bunko, Kamakura. *Registered Important Cultural Property.*

This piece of calligraphy from the master's hand contains the text of a Buddhist hymn which Lan-ch'i Tao-lung composed himself. Abbots of Zen monasteries often led their monks in chanting such hymns. The text may be translated as follows:

Great Buddhas of the Ten Directions, and all of you holy saints who have attained the Path, all who have attained Undifferentiating and Subtle Perception, we reverently raise our heads and beg you to bear witness.
May those who have attained the Four Fruitions, and those who have attained the Four Stages of Sanctity all favor us with their luminosity and extend to us their blessings. . . .
We especially pray that our disciple Tokimune may always support the Imperial Throne, and protect, for many years, the doctrine of our sect; that the land within the Four Seas may live in peace and harmony without even one arrow being shot; that the host of demons may bow their heads and desist without so much as a tip of a lance having to be bared. . . .

Lan-ch'i Tao-lung has written these characters in a bold, vigorous style that is reminiscent of that of the great calligrapher Chang Chi-chih (Fig. 4). "That the host of demons may bow their heads" supposedly refers to the Mongols, who first threatened to invade Japan in 1274. At that time, the Imperial Court was holding continuous services to pray for the safety of the country, and Lan-ch'i Tao-lung may well have led his priests in chanting invocations such as this hymn.

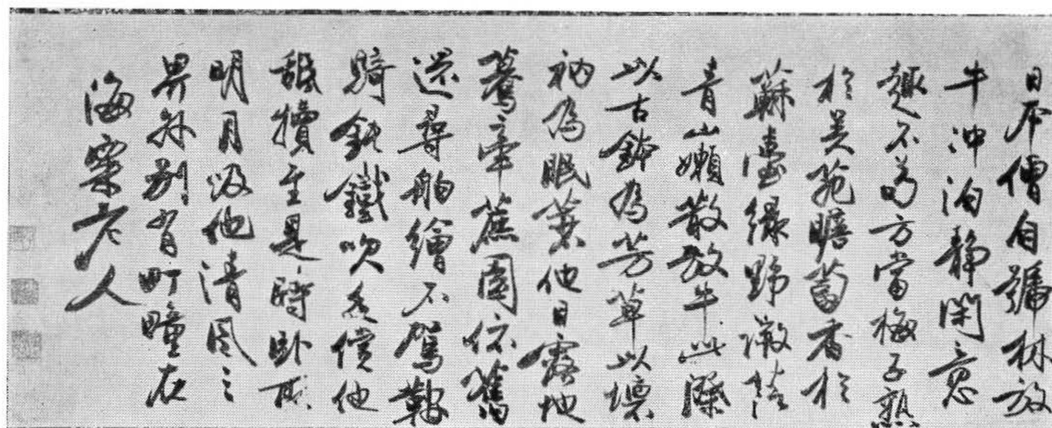

Figure 6. *Encomium for Hōgyū Kōrin.* Fêng Tzŭ-chên (1257–post-1327). Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 33.4 × 88.7 cm. Collection of Ueno Yasuyuki, Tokyo.

Fêng Tzú-chên, a native of Yu-hsien (Hunan province), served as a minor official in the Mongol administration. He was a man of literary talent, but his greatest distinction was not in the field of literature, but in calligraphy. He shared this distinction with the Northern Sung calligrapher and art connoisseur Mi Fu (1052–1107) on whose work he is said to have modeled his style. It still retains much of the typical Sung flavor and somewhat resembles the work of Chang Chi-chih (1186–1263), the favorite calligrapher of the Japanese during the previous generation. Although Fêng's calligraphy did not go unnoticed in China and was appreciated by such eminent arbiters of the arts as Chao Mêng-fu, it was among the Japanese that his work was admired most, and several Zen monks studying in China are known to have asked him for specimens of his calligraphy.

Hōgyū Kōrin, the Zen monk to whom this calligraphy is dedicated, was a pupil of Shōgun Sentai, the abbot of the Hōkanji in Kyoto. In 1318 he left for China where he stayed for seven years. It was during Hōgyū's residence in China that Fêng Tzŭ-chên's calligraphy was written. It reads in part:

The Japanese monk who calls himself Lin Fang-niu [Japanese: Hōgyū] is a man of agreeable, relaxed disposition, whose thoughts, and intentions are never ill-considered. The plums are now ripening in the Garden of Wu, and the gardenias spread their fragrance at the [Ku] Su Terrace; the verdant fields disappear in the far distance, while the green mountains lie scattered in the panorama before us. Now, Fang-niu has taken the old alms bowl to gather fragrant herbs, and he has made his ragged cassock into a sleeping cloak [i.e., he is leading a life of exemplary frugality]. . . .

The text, written in running script of perfect balance and great elegance, is a polished example of expedient prose, written at the request of the recipient. What it lacks in inspiration is largely compensated for by the refinement of the literary style. Its somewhat perfunctory character has been expertly hidden behind a façade of bookish allusions. Evidently, Fêng was frequently approached for such pieces of calligraphy, and he acquitted himself of his task with polite promptness.

of Ikkyū's life was devoted to combating the religious shortcomings of Zen during this period—a growing spiritual debilitation, complacency, and worldly ostentation. His great strength of character and sense of conviction stand out in his calligraphy, which is renowned for its uniqueness and vitality.

The Daitokuji produced few calligraphers of note during the last century of the Muromachi period, a time marked by wars and instability. During the Momoyama period, however, there was a renewed interest in calligraphy. This development took place in large part as a result of the rapid growth of interest in the Tea Ceremony, in which hanging scrolls with appropriate phrases played an essential part. The Daitokuji was the chief monastic center for the Tea Ceremony during Momoyama times, and Sen no Rikyū, who established the main canons for the ceremony which are still followed, was closely associated with the temple and is buried there. Thus there was considerable demand for the calligraphy of Daitokuji monks such as Shun'oku Sōen and Kokei Sōchin, who produced small works with the characters written in a precise, spare manner.

During the second quarter of the seventeenth century, Daitokuji masters such as Kōgetsu Sōkan (Fig. 8) and Takuan Sōhō (Fig. 9) returned to a larger, more dynamic mode of calligraphic expression in an attempt to realize more fully the aesthetic potentialities of the hanging scroll format. Both men favored short, direct phrases which could be rendered in a single line, often consisting of only two or three characters, and usually containing some reference to Zen. Kōgetsu's association with the Tea Ceremony was of a very intimate nature, for his father had been a Tea Master, and Kōgetsu studied with Kobori Enshū, the famous garden designer and arbiter of taste, who was also a fellow student at the Daitokuji. The Daitokuji continued to provide support and inspiration for the Tea Ceremony and related calligraphic forms of expression during the following centuries, and it remains a center for these activities at the present day.

This article has been excerpted from *Zen Painting & Calligraphy* by Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman, the catalogue for an exhibition of works of art lent by temples, private collectors, and public and private museums in Japan, organized in collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Japanese Government.
Published and © 1970 by The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn.

Figure 7. *Calligraphy Dedicated to a Dead Sparrow: "Sonrin."*
Ikkyū Sōjun (1394–1481), dated 1453.
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
78.8 × 24.5 cm.
Hatakeyama Collection, Tokyo.

Ikkyū emerges as a strong individualist, full of inner conviction and self-confidence, quick to speak his mind. At the same time, however, there is abundant evidence of Ikkyū's concern for the spiritual welfare of his fellow man (as in his diligent efforts to propagate Zen teachings to those of limited education through the use of simplified, popular language) as well as his deep compassion for all life—a fundamental Zen ideal. This compassion is movingly revealed in the content of this piece of calligraphy, written when Ikkyū was sixty-one. He has composed a kind of requiem dedicated to a dead sparrow.

I once raised a young sparrow that I loved dearly.
One day it died suddenly, and I felt an intense sense of grief.
So I buried it with all the ceremonies proper for a man.
At first I had called it Jaku-jisha ("Attendant Sparrow"),
But I later changed this to Shaku-jisha ("Sākyamuni's Attendant").
Finally, I gave it the Buddhist sobriquet Sonrin ("Honored Forest"),
And I attest to this in this *gāthā:*
His bright gold body, sixteen feet long [lying between]
The twin sāl trees on the morning of his final nirvāna,
Liberated, free of the heretical cycle of samsāra,
Spring of a thousand mountains, ten thousand trees, and a hundred flowers.

1453, eighth month, nineteenth day,
Kyōunshi Sōjun

Ikkyū's calligraphic style is unique. Although certain features of the styles of his lineal predecessors Kidō and Daitō may be discerned in his calligraphy, these are more

likely to have been the result of his keen familiarity with and respect for documents from their hands than of a desire to emulate them. Ikkyū's large characters, like the *Sonrin* here, are written in a straightforward, bold manner and show a preoccupation with the compositional possibilities of the character forms. His ingenuity is apparent in the first two strokes in the upper character, which are intended to suggest two seated sparrows. The smaller characters below, written with greater speed, reveal a fine sense of interrelated continuity and rhythm.

Figure 8. *Calligraphy: "Tea and Rice."*
Kōgetsu Sōkan (1574–1643).
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
125.4 × 25.9 cm.
Collection of Nemoto Kenzō, Tokyo.

Kōgetsu Sōkan was the son of a noted tea master, Tsuda Sōkyū (died 1591), who served Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the most powerful military figures of the period.

Calligraphic skills had been highly regarded at the Daitokuji since its founding by Daitō Kokushi. The greatest artist that this tradition produced was Ikkyū Sōjun (Fig. 7), and Takuan Sōhō and Kōgetsu Sōkan were the central figures in the renaissance of this tradition. In contrast to the refined and supple style of Takuan, the work of Kōgetsu is rough and has a strong impact.

The calligraphy reads "When I happen upon tea, I drink tea; when I encounter rice, I eat rice." The motto is an expression of the relaxed and carefree attitude of the enlightened tea devotee who takes life as it comes. It is written in the bold, impulsive manner which is the hall-mark of this artist. He allows his thick brush to dry, so that the last characters written with it have a thinner scratchy appearance, and their basic structure is clearly revealed. They contrast with the solid, pitch-black forms of the characters that were done first, just after the brush had been dipped into the ink.

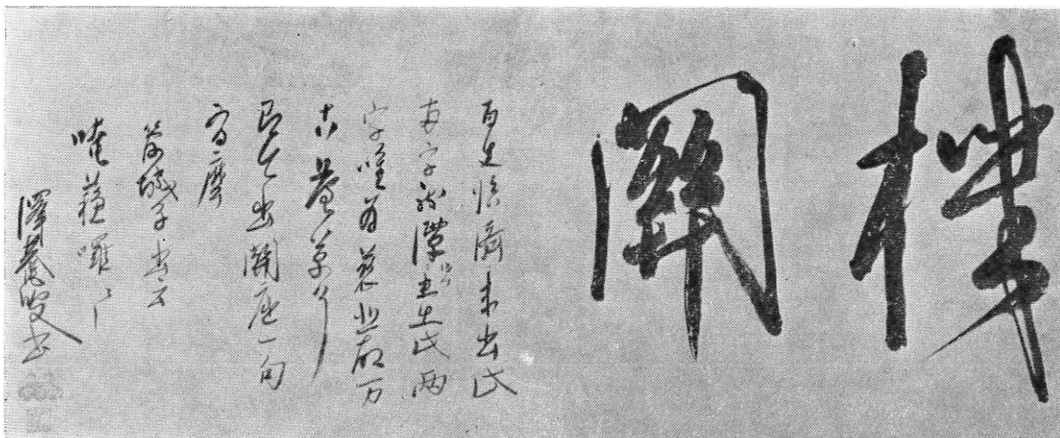

Figure 9. *Calligraphy: "Kikan."* Takuan Sōhō (1573–1645).
Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 32.8 × 83.5 cm.
Collection of Hosokawa Moritatsu, Tokyo.

Takuan Sōhō, the son of a *samurai* from Tajima (present-day Hyōgo Prefecture), studied 1en at the Daitokuji under Shun'oku Shuon (1529–1611), who was also the teacher of Kōgetsu (see Fig. 8) and the tea masters Kobori Enshū and Furuta Oribe. Like many other Zen priests of his time, Takuan occasionally painted. His great fame, however, rests upon his calligraphy. He especially liked the horizontal format, writing one or two characters in bold script on the right and adding an explanation or verse in smaller script on the left. The most famous of his works of this type is the calligraphic piece *Dream*, in which the word is followed by a poem. It is Takuan's last work, written as he lay dying, a brush in his hand.

The example shown here with the Zen term *kikan* conforms to the general layout and style of Takuan's *Dream*. The large characters are written in a dynamic running script, whereas the explanation is written in *sōsho* ("cursive" script). The stylistic resemblance of *Kikan* to Takuan's last work, suggests that this piece of calligraphy was executed in the monk's later years.

Kikan (literally, "mechanism") is a technical term used specifically to denote the so-called "interlocking of differentiation." Once the Zen adept has achieved *kensho*, that is, insight into his own real nature, he has passed the first stage of Enlightenment. From there, he has to proceed to a phase in which he must grasp the idea of differentiation. This is done, step by step, through the study of *kōan* that deal especially with the aspect of the Zen truth. Such *kōan* are therefore called *kikan-kōan*. In his explanation Takuan traces the idea of *kikan* to the Chinese Ch'an masters Lung-t'an Ch'ung-hsin and his pupil Tê-shan Hsüan-chien (ca. 781–865).