

Daiunzan Ryōanji Sekitei - The Stone Garden of the Mountain Dragon's Resting Temple: Soteriology and the Bodhimāṇḍala

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Serene and still, the stone garden of Kyoto's Ryōanji Temple is considered by many to be the consummate Zen garden. The stark simplicity, the virtual barrenness of the enclosed dry landscape (*karesansui*) with its fifteen stones rising from a sea of raked gravel epitomizes a well-known Zen adage, "What is *not* said is more important than what is said." Constructed on the south side of the Hōjō or Abbot's quarters of the temple, the time of the garden's manufacture is disputed as is its authorship. Dates for the placing of the stones range from the late fifteenth century to as late as the eighteenth century. The deceptive simplicity of the garden's few components belie a master's touch. The ancient records conflict as to whom the artist/designer was: the painter Soami and the Zen priest Musō Soseki have been named, probably as a matter of prestige; also two craftsmen, Kotarō and Hikojiro, have been associated with the garden by inscription.¹

This article, however, is not concerned with when, by whom or even how Ryōanji's garden was constructed², but rather with the questions of why the garden was made and what was its function. Writers of this century claim that the garden is a setting ideal for meditation and make reference to its few components and empty space as reifying the Void, Buddhist *śūnyatā* or Zen *mu*. Until recently, no one questioned that silent reverberations of Zen teachings were inherent considerations in designing appropriate settings for Zen aspirants or, in fact, that the garden was even used for meditation at all. In his historical study of Japanese gardens, Wybe Kuitert challenged these notions; his scathing criticisms of D.T. Suzuki, Shinichi Hisamatsu and Loraine Kuck charge that their interpretations of the garden are deviant.³ While there is

some reason to commend Kuitert's historical documentation of various sites, his contention that those writers who attached Zen interpretations to gardens fell prey to nationalist movements of the 1930s that sought a Japanese identity, one that ultimately resulted in the Pacific War, is erroneous.⁴ If his claim that stone gardens merely enhanced the "cultural ambiance" of Zen temples has any merit, however, it is its glaring juxtaposition to scholarly interpretations of this century. His position also is ill informed on Buddhist/Zen art and praxis. Contrarily, Zen gardens are neither mere exotic, hybrid exercises in artistry nor scenes to set a mood. Rather, they exhibit the didactic and doctrinal authority of the sect.

Using Ryōanji as a model, it can be demonstrated that such gardens were regarded as a path, a mandala in fact, to the realm of Bodhimaṇḍala.⁶ The concept of Bodhimaṇḍala was an inherent part of Zen instruction; centuries before Zen came to Japan, the Chinese master Huang Po explained that Bodhimaṇḍala is the sanctuary where every Buddha achieves enlightenment.⁷ Ryōanji's garden also is a visible example of *upāya* (expedient or skillful means) for moving beyond the human condition to reach enlightenment. Before developing these themes, however, it is useful to consider certain aspects of the Ryōanji's history.

Of Rinzai affiliation, Ryōanji is a subtemple of Myōshinji, a temple known for its frugal and severe regime.⁸ Like Daitokuji, Myōshinji remained separate from the powerful Gozan line. Initially patronized by the imperial court and later by wealthy townsmen and lower-ranking provincial warriors,⁹ Myōshinji and Ryōanji attempted to stay aloof from the politics of mainstream Gozan temples. Despite the self-imposed political autonomy, Myōshinji, nonetheless, would have been aligned, at least doctrinally, with Rinzai circles. Early on the liberal character of Rinzai Zen was such that it subscribed to the syncretic doctrine of the Unity of the Three Creeds (Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism):¹⁰ Such liberalism throughout Rinzai history led to eclectic interpretations and practices; eclecticism and openness contributed to the Myōshinji's rapid growth during the sixteenth century. The expansion was achieved, however, only by "drastic dilution of Zen with popular beliefs, prayers for secular intentions, and funeral ceremonies."¹¹ Martin Collcutt notes that even discussions (*mondō*) between master and disciple degenerated into secret verbal transmissions.¹²

It is apparent that Zen institutions did not live up to the purist ideals commonly associated with the sect. In an iconoclastic study, Bernard Faure has undertaken the task of debunking the modern mythology of the "Protestantism" of Zen. He urges moving away from such romantic views of Zen and paying "due attention to the 'sacramental'

tradition that developed side by side the spiritual or 'intellectual' understanding of Ch'an.¹³ The Ch'an/Zen avowal of sudden enlightenment was a theoretical argument attractive to an intellectual elite; in actuality, Zen teachers "repackaged their metaphysical teachings in the form of symbolic rites" (*upāya*).¹⁴ His astute assessment points out that the distinction between the theory and practice of meditation is theoretical and adds that "any theory of 'practice' is bound to fail, inasmuch as it remains theoretical, and is irrevocably removed from the practice it purports to describe."¹⁵

Critical to understanding the contemplative function of gardens, one must get to the core of Zen meditation praxis itself. Although many Zen texts survive, they are either vague or silent on the actual process of *dhyāna* meditation. While all expound on the importance of cultivating mindfulness and the necessity of obliterating the self or ego as well as all vain distinctions by emptying the mind, there is little written information as to *how* the seeker goes about the process of ridding the mind of discursive thought and vain distinctions to realize the Oneness of all things. The word *dhyāna* means more than the act of sitting or mere contemplation of nothing; Monier-Williams explains that *dhyāna* also means a mental representation of the personal attributes of a deity; in other words, *dhyāna* is a process involving the formation of mental pictures through concentration. The lack of textual specificity on the method of Zen meditation can only lead to the assumption that, at least some, guidance was given orally as part of the tradition of direct transmission of knowledge from master to pupil.

Textual ambiguity on the process of *dhyāna* meditation dates at least to the founding of the Rinzai School; Lin-chi's clearest written directions to followers are what have come to be called the Four Procedures, a series of steps in the process of Ch'an training for transcending distinctions of subject (person) and object (environment). "At times one takes away the person but does not take away the environment. At times one takes away the environment but does not take away the person. At times one takes away both the person and the environment. At times one takes away neither the person nor the environment." Thus, one proceeds from the world of distinctions to the plane where neither exists and, as a final step, a return to the ordinary world.¹⁶

Centuries before Ch'an/Zen took root in East Asia, however, Buddhaghosa in his classic text, *Visuddhimagga*, carefully plotted the two methods of meditation. The *jhāna* exercises are exemplified by the Earth Kasina. This practice entails making a circle of clay which is used for focusing concentration, mental absorption of the object and then a process of mind subtraction.¹⁷ Buddhaghosa's second type of exercises, *vipassanā*, were designed to develop insight, defined as "the intuitive

light flashing forth and exposing the truth of the impermanency, misery and impersonality of all corporeal and mental phenomena of existence."¹⁸ Although the goals of the two kinds of exercises are different, the two processes "as processes are quite similar."¹⁹ In other words, both entail a sequence of concentration, mental absorption and mind subtraction. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that *jhāna* is the Pali word for *dhyāna*. Jhanic meditative exercises required, at least initially, a subject for mind focus (an object, vehicle); the object was mentally absorbed and mentally dematerialized to reach the state of the Void. The Japanese word *zenjō* is the equivalent to *jhāna/dhyāna*; inherent to the meaning of *zenjō* is a process of spiritual advancement in stages. A full understanding of the term, therefore, includes the initial use of a visual vehicle in the meditation process.

The objects recommended for concentration varied according to different Buddhist authorities and sects. Certainly in Zen, aspirants attempted to emulate the practices of their patriarchal role models, the Buddha and Bodhidharma. Śākyamuni sat amidst nature, beneath a tree at Gayā, when he attained enlightenment. Thereafter, his followers lived in sacred groves and caves in emulation and in pious remembrance of his attainment. In fact, at least one traditional Buddhist meditation began the process of emptying the mind with elements of nature. The *Cūḷasunnata Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* gives a list of states in which more and more is experienced as empty (*suñña*). The sequence is as follows: 1) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of forest; 2) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of earth; 3) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of the Stage of Infinity of Space; 4) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of the Stage of Infinity of Perception; 5) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of the Stage of Nothingness; 6) He fixes his mind on the exclusive ideation of the State of Neither Ideation nor Non-Ideation; 7) He fixes his mind on the exclusive mental concentration beyond any ideation of characteristics or mental images²⁰

In keeping with the tradition established by the historical Buddha, Bodhidharma is said to have meditated in a cave, eyes open staring at rocks, for nine years after reaching the Shao-lin Monastery in China.²¹ Thereafter, Ch'an monasteries in China kept at least one stone composition, expressive of an austerity in keeping with monastic discipline; such gardens were reserved for the purposes of meditation and not found outside the precincts of the monasteries.²² Sadly, the Chinese stone compositions today no longer remain, at least in their original state.

The origin of dry or rock gardens may have been the border of the Western Desert of China where lack of water prevented monks from planting lush green gardens.²³ Whatever the source, a tradition was

established in China linking Ch'an monasticism, rocky scapes and meditative practices. Chinese masters encouraged development of the senses in order to extinguish them. "If you desire the fruit of Buddhahood, then...investigate your sense organs, penetrate their substance!"²⁴ On the subject of meditation, Master Shen-hsiu instructed: "If you wish to cultivate contemplation, you must proceed first from the contemplation of the external subjects...to gradual progression to internal concentration to nonsubstantiality of the object of concentration in order to transcend the subject/object dualism."²⁵ Ch'an and later Zen practitioners sought out objects suitable for fulfilling precisely that mandate. Suitable objects were those that had symbolic content and any other qualities that might expedite the process. It was the need for suitable objects for ritualized focus that ultimately gave birth to Ch'an/Zen art, particularly paintings and gardens. Ch'an/Zen arts are experiential in two ways, i.e. through "apprehending the work properly" and through making the art.²⁶

From its inception in Japan, Zen exhibited a concern for natural settings. At first, a flat stone under a moonlit tree was considered a fitting place for meditation; later, Japanese Zen monasteries cultivated "scenes" for contemplation and, eventually, the scenes were transformed into refined spaces.²⁷ Even before the advent of Zen, however, the landscape was deemed a suitable subject for meditation. It is Ienaga Saburo's view that nature played a "saving role in Japanese religious history" and, from the Heian period on, took on the "character of the Absolute."²⁸ The Buddhist monk/poet Saigyō laid the groundwork, so to speak, for the Zen sympathy toward nature as a metaphor for the Void, as an appropriate theme for meditation and as the very means by which one merged with the Void. Saigyō forged the "closest possible link between nature and Buddhist teaching."²⁹ Saigyō, it seems, was the first Japanese to regard the "natural world as the ultimate Buddhist absolute."³⁰ By extension, immersion in nature was viewed as a soteriological technique for realization. The pivotal significance of nature in the Zen world was heralded a few decades later in the words of the Sōtō Zen master Dōgen who declared:

Mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment. Because they have been the self since before form arose they are emancipation-realization.

The monk Musō Soseki (1275-1351), perhaps inspired by his own satori in the wilderness³¹ began converting the relatively natural set-

tings adjacent to Zen temples into specific garden compositions designed for meditation. From that time on, Zen gardens were no mere backdrop forming an appropriate contemplative ambiance; rather, they came to have specific didactic and doctrinal intent. That such was the case is verified in the once secret texts for designing gardens, the *Sakuteiki* and the *Illustrations for Designing Mountain, Water and Hillside Field Landscapes* in which rock compositions were given Buddhist and Taoist names.³²

Zen gardens eventually had myriad mythological and cosmological meanings attached to them. Stewart's detailed study of Ryōanji reveals the garden's polysemantic implications; the various explanations establish that the garden space is an ideal locus in which something momentous takes place. At some point, however, the seeker looks beyond the visual rhetoric of the symbolism to find in the garden the actual momentous experience. Richard Pilgrim correctly asserts in referring to Zen art, "While we can still discuss these arts as 'representative' of Buddhist meaning and/or 'presentational' of Buddhist sacrality, the transformational (or 'vehicular') role is less obvious."³³ Obvious or not, all three criteria still are present. In the case of Zen gardens, they have manifold symbolism (Buddhist meaning), they reify the Bodhimāṇḍala (Buddhist sacrality) in that they serve as the locus of the splintering awareness beyond time and space and they also are the focus, the means (*upāya*) by which to arrive at the enlightenment realm.

With Musō Soseki, undoubtedly in response to evolving Zen demands in the fourteenth century, there began a refining process in Japanese garden art in which specific aesthetic properties were more and more distilled. While the term aesthetic implies cultivation of the beautiful, the beauty and charm of Zen gardens are incidental to their use. The carefully prepared garden spaces were calculated for maximum effect in sending the meditator on a spiritual journey. Most of all, Ryōanji's dry garden suggests readiness and movement; the long verandah is the point of departure. By cultivating mindfulness, following the way of proper meditation, *zenjō*, one attains the right mind of *mushin* (no-mind).

Zen gardens, and Ryōanji Sekitei in particular, have been designed to invoke the peaceful state of mind needed for mental progression. Sensory stimuli are kept to a minimum. Such scapes are inculcated with the quality of *yūgen* (subtlety, depth, profundity). The aesthetic quality of *yūgen* invites notice, invites participation; it involves the "human gaze focused upon the phenomenal world."³⁴ *Yūgen* is meant to be experienced in a state of "an *ekstasis*, a playful 'stepping out'" on the part of the experiencer.³⁵ Eliot Deustch states that, in order for this to occur, one must be equal to the work; initiated, "one must become as the art-

work itself is—in truth of being.⁸⁶ Norris Johnson specifies that Zen gardens dialectically mediated between “the thesis/antithesis polar opposition of human being and environment.”⁸⁷ He cuts to the very core of the problematic question of the use of Zen gardens when he writes, “The sacred is invariably spatial, and the sacred is often embodied in the ritual interrelationship of human beings and the natural environment.”⁸⁸

Thus far, no Japanese, or for that matter Chinese, texts or temple records have revealed a precise method of meditating in a landscape or garden. Perhaps such practices were so commonly understood that they did not warrant textual specificity. There is one description, however, of a Tibetan meditation exercise that explains, as Johnson calls it, the environment’s role in the ritual process of mediation. The Tibetan explorer, Alexandra David-Neel, left a compelling narrative that is worth citing in its entirety:

One variety of exercises in concentration consists in choosing some kind of a landscape, a garden for instance, as a subject of meditation. First, the student examines the garden, observing every detail. The flowers, their different species, the way in which they are grouped, the trees, their respective height, the shape of their branches, their different leaves and so on, noting all particulars that he can detect. When he has formed a subjective image of the garden, that is to say when he sees it as distinctly when shutting his eyes as when looking at it, the disciple begins to eliminate one by one the various details which together constitute the garden. Gradually, the flowers lose their colours and their forms, they crumble into tiny pieces which fall to dust and finally vanish. The trees, also, lose their leaves, their branches shorten, and seem to be withdrawn into the trunk. The latter grows thin, becomes a mere line, more and more flimsy till it ceases to be visible. Now, the bare ground alone remains and from it the novice must subtract the stone and the earth. The ground in its turn vanishes...

It is said that by the means of such exercises one succeeds in expelling from the mind all idea of form and matter and thus gradually reaches the various states of consciousness such as that of the ‘pure, boundless space,’ and that of the ‘boundless consciousness.’ Finally one attains to the sphere of ‘void,’ and then to the sphere where ‘neither consciousness nor unconsciousness’ is present.⁸⁹

David-Neel further elaborates, “One attains, by means of these strange drills, psychic states entirely different from those habitual to us. They cause us to pass beyond the fictitious limits which we assign to

the *self*. The result being that we grow to realize that the *self* is compound, impermanent; and that the self, *as self*, does not exist.⁴⁰

Eugen Herrigel describes a similar meditative practice common to Zen monastic life:

Once the pupil has reached a certain point, the real instruction — which may with reservation be called 'spiritual' — begins. The specifically spiritual training starts with *purification of the power of vision*. First one is required to perceive everything that is present, in all its sensuous fullness, including everything that is displeasing or repellent, and to hold it permanently in the mind. Again and again you have to immerse yourself in the contents of perception, until you know them by heart and can, at will, call them to mind in such a way that they present themselves without loss of clarity.

When you can do this, you must learn to rise above it, to apprehend what you are looking at as if from the inside, to look through it and grasp its essence...when that has been mastered, an intensification can be aimed at holding the landscape, the fields, with trees, flowers, cattle and people, so intently in your gaze that in spite of the woods you still see the trees, and then thinning out the reality of the detail until you can grasp the unchanging character of the whole and retain it in its most concentrated form. Finally, even this vision of pure essence must be transcended: you must be able to picture the world itself, the cosmos, and — ultimately — infinite space, thereby expanding the power of vision still further. It is possible that everything will drift off into vagueness at this point...Only when this stage has been reached does the real work of meditation begin.⁴¹

Such meditations have their origin in *jhāna/dhyāna* meditations such as those described by Buddhaghosa. It is important to realize that the attention is not the final point or destination of the meditation; rather, attention leads to absorption, absorption leads to disillusionment and then the Void. The process is identical to the one employed in using a mandala, a sacred diagram of the universe. Mandalas are concentrated upon, entered mentally; once entry has been effected, mental subtraction from the image progresses until nothing exists, neither the components of the mandala nor the self. The relationship between the mandala and a natural setting is that both are perceived as three dimensional. About mandalas, Giuseppe Tucci explains, "As may be seen, the universe is imagined as a mandala, unfolding...extending and irradiating, with its partitions, over all the chief and intermediate points of space."⁴²

This was the universal Buddhist process by which the seeker experienced spiritual transformation. LaFleur has commented on Saigyō's poetry as having the qualities of "a mandala in nature or, more precisely, nature as a mandala."⁴³ The progression of Saigyō's visualization and concentration moves spirally and toward the center of the scene. Saigyō's pivotal role in relating the mandala to nature was a critical step toward the formation of Zen meditation gardens. In truth, Ch'an/Zen was familiar with using mandalas; they had been part of the didactic paraphernalia for many centuries, if not from the time of Ch'an's inception. Whalen Lai has determined that, from at least as early as the ninth century, mandalic diagrams were part of the Ch'an tradition. While the designs of the Ch'an mandalas, normally consisting of five circles, were based on refashioned hexagrams of the *I Ching*, Lai sees the practice of distilling esoteric messages into simple diagrams ultimately as the result of influence from the Indian Tantric tradition.⁴⁴ The Ch'an mandalas were used to lead the way through the process of interiorization and liberation and were part of a secret teaching transmitted from mind to mind through the Ch'an patriarchs.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Lai argues convincingly that these mandalas had as their inspiration Lin-chi's Four Procedures.⁴⁶

Understanding of the process of meditation as an exegesis, a process of concentration, construction and de-construction helps to clarify the reason why a focal device was necessary. Ch'an/Zen had rejected some of the rituals and trappings of other Buddhist sects; some they transformed. In Japan, the two dimensionally rendered, tightly organized and rigidly symmetrical mandalas filled with the deities of the Shingon and Tendai sects had little meaning for the iconoclastic Zen monks. The colorful ostentation and association with supernatural forces caused Zen seekers to turn away from that sort of traditional representation; however, the need for mind focus in Zen training found ideological, although not isomorphic, parallel in landscapes. In other words, nature itself was converted into a mandala. The particular Japanese sensitivity to nature and perhaps the neutrality of nature (i.e., lacking sectarian bias) were obvious reasons for substituting scenes of nature as the preferred focal subjects of meditation. An equally important reason may have been that nature is three dimensional; it is spatial.

The search for natural and neutral foci in Zen circles of the fourteenth century found expression in Musō Soseki's garden complex at Zuisen-ji in Kamakura which included as part of the schema a cave-like meditation cell carved in the base of a mountain as well as an arbor for meditation and shelter on top of the mountain.⁴⁷ That Musō's space was used for meditation is decidedly clear; the assumption that the nature meditations performed therein were formulated on the mandalic pro-

cess, although not textually verified, seems logical given our data. The genius Musō, however, lived long before the construction of Ryōanji's dry garden. Let us move forward to apply the arguments for meditation gardens as well as the performance of the mandalic meditations to Kyoto's Rinzaï temples of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The unconventional Ikkyū, famous fifteenth-century Abbot of Daitokuji, was instrumental in encouraging "worldly varieties of Zen practice."⁴⁸ Ikkyū, particularly in his later years, instituted the use of *hōben* (*upāya*) or skillful means in meditation and introduced several *hōben* to his disciples.⁴⁹ He was equally important in fostering the aesthetic values that are so distinctively Zen: "Above all, Ikkyū cultivated a life of sparseness and poverty that resulted in the highly valued Japanese *wabi* ideal of stark simplicity, which characterizes that country's aesthetic even today."⁵⁰ Best known for his evocative, sometimes, sensuous poetry, Ikkyū also was instrumental in formulating garden aesthetics: "the idea arose of designing a garden to fit in with the poverty aesthetics, a garden of 'frozen music' made with granules of decomposed granite. This garden would be on its surface 'No-Thing or Void,' without flowers trees, or a bubbling stream."⁵¹ It was Ikkyū's student Murata Shukō who designed a garden at Shuon-an under his master's direction that first embodied the poverty aesthetics and reified "Nothing." Shukō later supervised two more gardens for Ikkyū's memorial temple at Daitokuji around 1490.⁵² Shukō's Spartan garden formulations stood at the midpoint between Saigyō's mandalic apprehensions of nature along with Musō's meditation gardens and Ryōanji.

Ikkyū and Shukō were pioneers in creating a "religio-aesthetic" space by incorporating *ma* and *kū* as crucial components of the garden. *Ma* suggests intervals or gaps in time and space, the in-between, the empty spaces. Pilgrim states, "...*ma* suggests a mode of apprehending the world that places primary value on immediately experiencing...a 'spiritual' rather than a material presence that appears in between all space/time distinctions and transforms by fleetingly filling that in-between with sacred power."⁵³ The critical role of *ma* is that it creates expectation in the perceiver, an expectation of Bodhimaṇḍala. The austerity of Zen gardens not only symbolized but also visibly embodied the Buddhist notion of *kū* (emptiness); in other words, the garden *was* the *mu* or the *śūnyatā*. Arid gardens in particular were an emptiness-realization "closely associated with a religio-aesthetic apprehension of the world in which both aesthetic experience as unitive, immediate, intuitive experience, and aesthetic experience as sensitivity to the beauty and wonder of things, was a primary means for being in touch with the deeper dimensions of Reality."⁵⁴ The minimalist treatment of space and the monochromatic color scheme worked together to help subdue the senses which was the beginning of the exegesis.

Recall that Daitokuji and Myōshinji along with its subtemple Ryōanji stood apart from the Gozan. Not only did these temples and their clergy maintain a separatist identity, they shared doctrinal allegiances. Also the temples were located in physical proximity, within walking distance, in the northwest sector of Kyoto. The preference of Shukō and Ikkyū for meditation in an appropriate religio-aesthetic space that embodied the Void was so culturally potent that it had direct and immediate influence on its neighbors. Unfortunately the gardens fashioned by Shukō no longer exist in their original form, but some of the rugged, rustic sparseness is evident still. The cultural impact of their gardens reverberated immediately and on through subsequent centuries and one of the first temples to be influenced was Ryōanji.

The Daiunzan Ryōanji Sekitei is, in every way, a rarefied distillation of the Absolute; it is symbolic of the Bodhimāṇḍala. The garden also combines harmoniously blended, pristine examples of Japanese aesthetic values — simplicity, smallness, humility, rusticity, asymmetry, astringency, roughness, subtlety, *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibui* and *yūgen*. Working together these aesthetic properties give form (and non-form) to the Bodhimāṇḍala and accelerate the cognitive process of deobjectifying and merging.

A number of features point to the space as being used primarily for meditation. That such was the case is evinced by the conspicuous presence of the verandah. The garden was not meant to be walked through; viewing or apprehension of the space is restricted to the long verandah. One-sided viewing of the garden space was so important, in fact, that the verandah was brought from the neighboring Seigen-in temple and installed on the south side of the building in the late fifteenth century.⁵⁵ The meditation platform suggests, among other things, receptivity; it was the point of departure to the True Reality; the balcony was the brink of the beyond. The barren field (*ma*) created the expectation of moving through and beyond by means of meditation.

Both the formal arrangement of the stones and gravel and the symbolic content of the garden work toward the advancement of the novice "by calling into question the operation of his mind."⁵⁶ Ryōanji Sekitei is the ultimate *upāya* or *hōben*. It embraces distinct visual dualities — stillness and motion, macrocosm and microcosm, fullness and voidness, thematic and non-thematic — that play with the mind. The dualities are resolved in the landscape-mindscapes paradigm that had been an established part of Buddhism, particularly Japanese Buddhism for centuries. Proper apprehension of the garden did not mean that the viewer had "to fill in much of the landscape."⁵⁷ Rather, proper refers to the utilization of the mandalic process of subduing or subtracting that leads to the Seer and the Seen becoming an indistinct entity.

The verandah's orientation requiring viewers to face the southern direction may have more significance than traditional East Asian geomancy (*feng shui*) in which the south is considered the auspicious direction; the orientation necessitates meditators to face the sunlight directly. The eyes during Zen meditation, although downcast, remain open. Light may aid the meditator by subduing or dissolving visual forms.

The garden has undergone some mutations or renovations through the centuries; for example, off to the side in the northwest corner of the garden are the remains of a cherry tree (called Hideyoshi's Cherry Tree);⁵⁸ perhaps the tree once served as a reminder of the Buddha's enlightenment. Did the tree die or did the astringent tastes of practitioners of a later time regard the tree as showy and call for its removal? Alas, there is no record.

The garden, like Zen, is a mystery, but not an indecipherable one. The garden gives mute testament to centuries of use for meditation. The venerable Matsukura, Abbot of Ryōanji, supplied an enigmatic clue about the use of the garden as a meditative device when he said, "the garden might better be called 'The Garden of Nothingness' (Mu-tei) or the 'Garden of Emptiness' (Ku-tei) than the 'The Garden of Stones' (Seki-tei)."⁵⁹ The Garden of Nothingness was meant to be not just symbolic of the Bodhimandala, it was the Bodhimandala, the empty realm of realization.

NOTES

¹ Harold Stewart, *By the Old Walls of Kyoto* (New York: Weatherhill, 1981), p. 160.

² There are several excellent sources on Ryōanji: Thomas Hoover, *Zen Culture* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 103-111; David A. Slawson, *Japanese Gardens: Design Principles, Aesthetic Values* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1987), pp.90-101; Loraine Kuck, *The World of the Japanese Garden: From Chinese to Modern Landscape Art* (New York: Weatherhill, 1989r), pp. 163-171. By far the most poetic and comprehensive study was by Harold Stewart (cited above). Stewart's excellent study includes physical, existential, ethical (Confucian), cosmological (Taoist and Buddhist), mythological and metaphysical interpretations.

³ Wybe Kuitert, *Themes, Scenes, and Taste In The History Of Japanese Garden Art* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, Publisher, 1988) p.150.

⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

⁶ Bodhimandala is a circle, holy site or place of enlightenment. It is the place where the Buddha or a master attains *bodhi*, a place for realiz-

ing the Buddha truth, a place for teaching or learning the Dharma, a place where Bodhisattvas appear and where devotees have glimpses of them. A monastery where a monk awakens to the Dharma is also a Bodhimāṇḍala. For further elaboration see: Charles Luk, trans. and ed., *The Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), pp. 140-141.

⁷ John Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po on the Transmission of the Mind* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958), p. 128.

⁸ Tom Wright and Mizuno Katsuhiko, *Zen Gardens: Kyoto's Nature Enclosed* (Kyoto: Mitsumura Suiko Shoin Co., Ltd., 1990), p. 63.

⁹ Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institutions in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 30.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 129.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 286.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁶ Burton Watson, trans., *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), pp. 21-22.

¹⁷ Bhikkhu Nyanamoli, *The Path of Purification: Bhaddantacariya Buddhaghosa*, 2 vols. (Boulder: Shambhala, 1976r), pp. 122-199.

¹⁸ Winston L. King, *Theravāda Meditation: the Buddhist Transformation of Yoga* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), p. 90.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁰ Johannes Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993), p. 82.

²¹ Hoover, p. 42.

²² Pierre and Susanne Rambach, *Gardens of Longevity In China and Japan: the Art of the Stone Raisers* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1987), p. 178.

²³ Stewart, p. 157.

²⁴ John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 194.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 217.

²⁶ Much has been written on the topic of the doing or practicing of arts as a form of meditation, i.e. a way of leading to spiritual enlightenment (*do* or *michi*). The practice and perfection of the martial arts, tea ceremony, flower arranging, calligraphy and painting are viewed

as pathways in which one eventually traverses beyond the techniques of the discipline to a deep state of creativity to find oneness. See: Richard B. Pilgrim, "Foundations for a Religio-Aesthetic Tradition in Japan," *Art, Creativity and the Sacred*, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 151-52; and Richard B. Pilgrim, *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1993r), pp. 55-70. It is important to understand that there also can be a *dō* or *michi* of apprehending Zen art, particularly paintings and gardens. Their didactic intent was as praxeological as it was symbolic; praxis can refer to a ritual doing and a ritual apprehending in proper meditative fashion. Paintings had more significance than the mere practice of the art; the worth of gardens involved more than a calming, mood-setting ambiance. Inherent to these art forms are their aesthetically suggestive presentations that serve as focal points for meditation; the suggestiveness increases an awareness of insubstantiality.

²⁷ Colclutt, p. 183.

²⁸ As cited in William R. LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature, Part II," *History of Religions*, 13, 3 (February, 1974), pp.228-29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³¹ Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1978), 10:29.

³² Slawson, pp. 51, 125-131.

³³ Richard B. Pilgrim, *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1993), p. 40.

³⁴ Toshihiko and Toyo Izutsu, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), p. 27.

³⁵ Eliot Deutsch, *Studies in Comparative Aesthetics*. Monograph no. 2 of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p. 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁷ Norris Brock Johnson, "Geomancy, Sacred Geometry, and the Idea of a Garden: Tenryū-ji Temple, Kyoto Japan," *Journal of Garden History*, 9, 1 (January/March, 1989), p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁹ Alexandra David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971r), pp. 274-75.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁴¹ Eugen Herrigel, *The Method of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 35-36.

- ⁴² Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scroll* (Rome: La Libreria Tucci Dello Stato, 1949), p. 217.
- ⁴³ LaFleur, p. 238.
- ⁴⁴ Whalen W. Lai, "Sinitic Mandalas: The Wu-Wei-t'u of Ts'ao-shan," *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), p. 229-30.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 232.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 251.
- ⁴⁷ Noris Brock Johnson, "The Garden in Zuisen Temple, Kamakura Japan: Design, Form and Phylogenetic Meaning," *Journal of Garden History*, 10, 4 (October/December 1990), p. 215.
- ⁴⁸ Perle Besserman and Manfred Steger, *Crazy Clouds: Zen Radicals, Rebels and Reformers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991), p. 72.
- ⁴⁹ Jon Carter Covell, *Unraveling Zen's Red Thread: Ikkyū's Controversial Way* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 1980), p. 194.
- ⁵⁰ Besserman and Steger, p. 73.
- ⁵¹ Covell, p. 200.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 144.
- ⁵³ Pilgrim, *Foundations*, p. 140.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 144.
- ⁵⁵ Hoover, p. 107.
- ⁵⁶ Ramback, p. 181.
- ⁵⁷ Marc Treib and Ron Herman, *A Guide to the Gardens of Kyoto* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo Company, Ltd., 1983r), p. 94.
- ⁵⁸ Masao Hayakawa, *The Garden Art of Japan* (New York: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1984r), p. 91.
- ⁵⁹ Mark Holborn, *The Ocean in the Sand* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), p. 61.