

SENGAI



The Zen Master

PAINTINGS FROM THE IDEMITSU MUSEUM OF ARTS, TOKYO

'Sengai The Zen Master'
has been organized by
the Art Gallery of New South Wales

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Edmund Capon
Director
Art Gallery
of New South Wales

I must above all express my thanks to Mr. Shosuke Idemitsu, President of Idemitsu Kosan Co. Ltd. and Director of the Idemitsu Museum, for permitting these works by Sengai to travel to Australia. Sengai and Idemitsu are now inseparable names for the Idemitsu Museum has by far the largest holding of works by the Zen master. Mr. Sazo Idemitsu, founder of Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd. and the Idemitsu Museum, has recalled how, at the age of nineteen, whilst accompanying his father on a trip to Hakata he saw one of Sengai's drawings and, there and then, he persuaded his father to buy the picture. Since then the Idemitsu family and the Museum have collected over one thousand drawings and calligraphies by Sengai. Interestingly the picture that started this unique association, Idemitsu's first Sengai, 'Hotei', is included in this exhibition (cat. no. 9). I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. Eto, Curatorial Manager, and members of staff at the Idemitsu Museum.

To our sponsors, CSR Limited, Santos Ltd. and The Australia-Japan Foundation, we express our thanks for their support in making this exhibition possible.

Finally to the participating State Galleries our thanks for joining with us in this exhibition.

FOREWORDS

Shosuke Idemitsu

President:

Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.

Director:

Idemitsu Museum of Arts

It is a great pleasure for me that an exhibition of the work of the Zen Master Sengai will be held in Australia through the painstaking efforts of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the participating galleries, and the support of sponsors. It is propitious that the first venue of the exhibition is at Brisbane where a new performing arts centre has recently been completed.

The Idemitsu Museum now contains a collection of some 1,000 works of Sengai, quite an extraordinary number executed by one man. My father acquired his first Sengai drawing of "Hotei" (cat. no. 9) when he was 20 and in the course of his 75 years, he consistently collected Sengai's works. He used to say "Objet d'Art calls Objet d'Art forth". For instance, if there were a set of five plates that had in time become separated, and you had one of them and came to love it very much, the other four would, of themselves, find their way together again.

He founded the Idemitsu Kosan Company and conceived the pattern of selling oil direct to the consumer in the manner of a retail business. His motto was "making business (management) an art". He reasoned that in art the first thing you have to be is creative. You cannot imitate somebody else. And then what you do has to be beautiful. And finally you have to exert effort. For him the ultimate object of business was not for pecuniary gain, but for creating conditions in which mankind could work and profit in harmony. My father once told me that Sengai's teachings had of themselves entered into both his own private life and the operation of his company.

Having succeeded my father, I feel that I myself am under the influence of Sengai's works unwittingly, and I am grateful to Sengai, for the pleasure, stimulation and wisdom that his works have for me.

It is my dearest hope that this exhibition will help the people of Australia to understand something of the distinctive qualities of the Japanese people and thereby contribute to the further promotion of cultural exchange between Japan and Australia.

P H Sleight

Chairman:

The Australia-Japan
Foundation

In 1982 The Australia-Japan Foundation was pleased to assist the first major exhibition of Japanese art ever to visit Australia, "Masterpieces from the Idemitsu Collection".

The exhibition was well received by the public and was, I am sure, a source of both pleasure and knowledge.

Evidence of Japan's position in the world as a major economic power is constantly before our eyes but most Australians are less familiar with the more traditional aspects of Japanese culture.

It is therefore a pleasure for the Foundation to be able to support a second exhibition from the Idemitsu Museum "Sengai: the Zen Master".

We wish to express our gratitude to the Idemitsu Museum for generously allowing these great works to travel to Australia, and to the Art Galleries of New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania for bringing this exhibition to fruition. I hope it is enjoyed by all who go to see it.

INTRODUCTION

Edmund Capon

Looking at Sengai's exuberant brushwork, his incisive, humorous and oddly abbreviated images, it is easy to imagine that Sengai, the Zen Master, was playing with brush and ink, mocking our human frailties and our egos. But not at all, for as the Master said when asked a similar question: "*No I am not. Every stroke of my brush is the overflow of my inmost heart.*"

What we see in Sengai's work is a fleeting moment in an eternity — whether it be the autumnal moon or a humble spoon. Every drawing of his has the feeling of time past, time present and time future — the brushstrokes of infinity. The brushwork, the character, the images, all are defined, but at the same time without real and dogmatic definition. It is as though in every brushstroke Sengai absorbs infinity, an expression without the limitations of definition. Each brushstroke has a beginning and an end, and yet appears to emerge from somewhere and to disappear somewhere. In fact they have neither beginning nor end.

Probably more than any other artist Sengai has captured the spirit of Zen. I have no record to hand of Sengai ever having been asked the question: 'What is Zen Buddhism?' However, had he been, his answer might well have been to laugh and turn silently on his heels.

In his treatise entitled the *Wuxing Lun*, the first Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Bodhidharma, stated that Zen was: "*to point directly at the mind and to know its true nature is Buddhahood* . . ." Thus Bodhidharma, who arrived in China in the 6th century, conceived the notion of 'sudden enlightenment'. This ultimate and only aim of Zen is achieved through meditation, to dispel from one's mind all concepts of definition and emotion, to remove all those acquired encumbrances such as knowledge and wisdom and intellect which inevitably define and prejudice the purity of the spirit. It is only through concentration on pure *śūnyatā* (emptiness) that sudden enlightenment will come.

Bodhidharma's radical and unnerving ideas on life, humanity and Buddhism gained uncertain acceptance in hierarchical Confucian 6th century China, but the notion of gradual enlightenment through study and devotion, a more acceptable concept in China at the time, gained increasing numbers of adherents. However, this was still a laboured and contrived convention in comparison with pure Zen. Perhaps the critical moment occurred in the middle of the Tang dynasty when a monk in southern China named Shen Hui, a follower of Zen, openly attacked the gradual enlightenment theory. However, at the heart of Shen Hui's assault was a typically sectarian dispute as to who should succeed the Fifth Patriarch, Hong Ren, as the Sixth Patriarch. The northern 'gradual' school adopted Shen Xiu for that role but Shen Hui nominated a southern colleague, Hui Neng, a 'sudden enlightenment' Zen follower.

The story goes that Hui Neng, a native of Xin Zhou in southern China, was selling firewood one day when he overheard some people reciting the *Diamond Sutra*. So attracted by what he heard was Hui Neng that he travelled to Hubei province in order to study with the Fifth Patriarch, Hong Ren. The Patriarch attempted to dissuade Hui by saying that southerners did not possess the Buddha nature, to which Hui replied that so far as Buddha nature was concerned there was no difference between northerners and southerners. The Patriarch was so impressed by this retort that he immediately gave Hui a position as a rice-pounder. The critical time came when Hong Ren wanted to select his spiritual successor, that was, the Sixth Patriarch. He announced that anyone who could

demonstrate his understanding of the religion in the form of a poem would be handed the robe of faith. Shen Xiu was considered the most learned and naturally was the favoured candidate with the following verse:

*'The body is the tree of enlightenment, (Bodhi-tree)
And the mind is like a bright mirror,
Always cleanse them diligently, and not let dust fall on them.'*

A few days later another verse, as follows, was posted beside Shen's verse:

*'Enlightenment is not a tree to begin with,
Nor is the mind a mirror with stand,
Since originally there was nothing whereon would the dust fall?'*

The author of this poetic rebuff to the establishment was none other than Hui Neng, the rice pounder. Hui Neng was subsequently nominated as the Sixth Patriarch and thus the southern 'sudden enlightenment' school of Zen flourished. Indeed little more was heard of the 'gradual' northern school.

It was from this unique, marvellously beguiling and yet wholly unstructured strain of Buddhism that Japanese Zen developed. It was an ideology and philosophy that had during its gestation in China been strongly influenced by traditional beliefs, values and attitudes embodied in the ethical code of Confucianism and the mysticism of Taoism. Thus the form of Zen Buddhism that was transmitted to and flourished in Japan was a mature blend of Buddhist ideology and distinctive Chinese traditions. The Chinese references in Sengai's paintings and poems, such as quotations from the Confucian *Analects*, are due acknowledgment of Zen's rich and diverse sources.

Sengai, the humanist, Zen monk, teacher and eventually, painter, poet and calligrapher, was born in 1750 into a farming family in Mino province, central Japan. At the age of eleven he had his head shaved and adopted the robes of a monk thus indicating his chosen life. At the age of nineteen, with his teacher's consent, Sengai set out on his first religious pilgrimage, or *angya*, during which the pupil travels in search of a compatible master. Sengai settled first with the Zen master Gessen at the Tōki-an in Nagata near present-day Yokohama. Sengai stayed with Gessen for thirteen years until the master's death. It is said he then travelled to various monasteries in central and northern Japan over a period of years. Upon his next move, in 1789 at the age of 39, he entered the Shōfukuji temple of Bankoku at Hakata in Kyūshū, where he became the abbot. The Shōfukuji was known for being the first Zen institution to be established in Japan and, for Sengai, his installation as the one hundred and twenty-third abbot since its establishment must have been a fulfillment in his dedicated life.

It was only when Sengai retired, in 1811 at the age of sixty-one, as abbot of the Shōfukuji that he had time to devote to his painting. He spent the remaining 27 years of his life producing an astonishing number of pictures, rich in their diversity, eminently approachable and forever humorous.



CATALOGUE

1. BUDDHA WITH
HIS ATTENDANTS
Ink on silk
73.8 x 39 cm

In contrast to Sengai's more familiar expressive and seemingly spontaneous style this is a relatively conventional painting of the Buddha Śākyamuni, Shaka in Japanese, flanked by the Bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. Mañjuśrī, Monju in Japanese, who symbolises wisdom, is seated on a lion on the Buddha's left. Samantabhadra, Fugen in Japanese, who symbolises universal benevolence, is seated on an elephant on the Buddha's right. Below this trinity are sixteen arhats (*rakan*), enlightened saintly disciples of the Buddha. Each is designated certain distinguishing features and attributes, whilst in general their appearance is, in characteristic fashion, elderly and eccentric.



2. SHAKA COMING OUT OF
HIS MOUNTAIN RETREAT

Ink on paper

63 x 27.9 cm

雪の山に昔し佛の見し星の
光りハ今にかわらぬものを

1E

INSCRIPTION

'Over the snowy mountain

The star is still shining

As ever brilliantly as when Buddha saw it long ago.'

With the minimum of detail and the maximum of simple spontaneous expression, Sengai here captures in a few brushstrokes Śākyamuni Buddha emerging from his retreat where he sought enlightenment. Having renounced his home and worldly comforts, Śākyamuni spent six years in the Himalayas practising the life of an ascetic in his quest for ultimate truth. He searched in vain until he saw the morning star whose beams penetrated his whole being.

He had achieved enlightenment.

It is this concept of 'sudden enlightenment' which is so crucial to the philosophy of Zen. The quietude and inner contentment that is acquired through enlightenment is perfectly expressed in the placid, satisfied face of Śākyamuni.

3. KANNON:
GODDESS OF MERCY

Ink on silk

105.4 x 45.8 cm

菩薩清涼月 遊於畢竟空
衆生心水淨 菩提影現中
世の憂きを心淨くしに嘆けとて
我か衣てに涙掛の岸

文政丁亥十月

扶桑殿初禪雪 梵仙厓拜画

INSCRIPTION (middle)

'The clear refreshing moon of Bodhisattvahood

Shines sportively in the sky of absolute Emptiness;

When the mind-water of ordinary beings is pure,

Enlightenment reflects itself on it.'

INSCRIPTION (left)

'On the banks of Namikake,

With my sleeves soaked in tears,

I sit deeply absorbed in contemplation

On the sorrows of human life.'

The inscription lower right contains the date, 1827, and signature.

Kannon, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, was the most popular deity in Far Eastern Buddhism and, as the traditional Goddess of Mercy, symbolised compassion. Whilst Bodhisattvas have no gender, from 8th century China onwards, they have tended to adopt a female appearance, particularly Avalokiteśvara. Kannon is pictured here in one of the thirty-three manifestations of her virtue, as the 'Water-moon' Kannon (Suigetsu Kannon).

仁孝大德



城戶部一語

文化藝術復興意

百億毛頭王御子

是文殊羅文殊

資子今津

師于古佛者



4. MONJU ON A LION

Ink on paper
73.8 x 28.8 cm

師王古佛者非
費于今佛者足
是文殊非文殊
百億毛頭百億獅子
文化癸酉秋月屬于
城戶勘六請
梵蓮尾焚香拜画贊

INSCRIPTION

*'To be the teacher to the Buddhas of the past,
Is this not his properly assigned position?
To be helpful to the Buddhas of the present,
Is this his properly assigned position?
Whatever it may be, the Mañjuśrī here is
not an historical Mañjuśrī.
At the tip of each hair on millions of lions
Are seen (dancing) millions of lions.'*

*'In response to the request of Kido Kunroku,
this 9th month of the Year of the Cock of Bunka' (1813).*

*'With incense burning and respectfully
bowing, this picture is drawn and the
eulogy is inscribed by Bon Sengai.'*

The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Monju) is seated characteristically on a lion and holding a scroll. The reference in the inscriptions to the 'millions of lions' on the tip of each hair alludes to the Kego philosophy of infinity, in which each object holds within it an infinite number of other objects. Such, Kego asserts, is the infinity of the universe and of all objects within the universe.

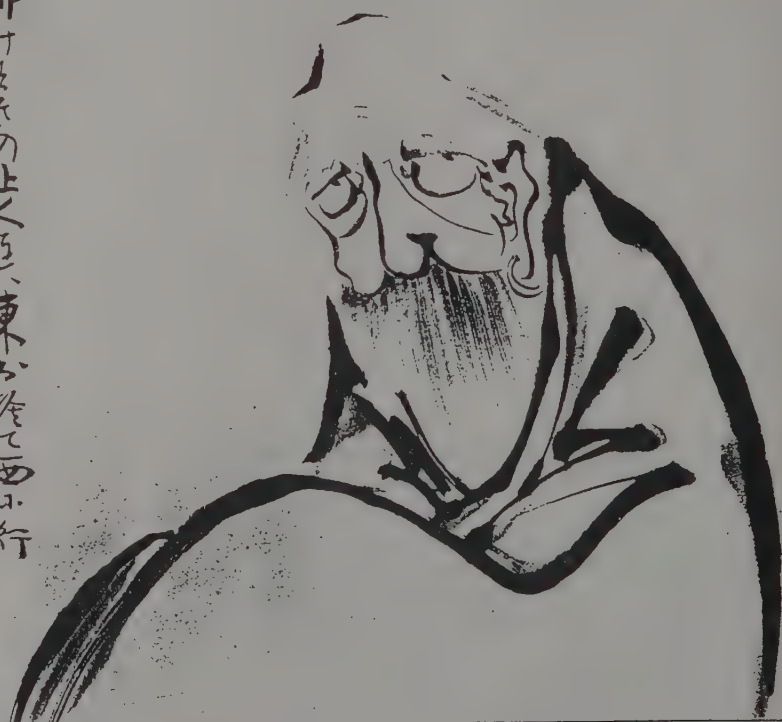
5. MONJU BOSATSU

Ink on paper
78.5 x 29 cm

文殊大士 尾

The brief inscription identifies the subject as the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Monju) with the artist's signature, abbreviated to 'gai'.

Mañjuśrī symbolises wisdom and is generally shown holding a scroll, symbolising learning and wisdom. He also holds a sword, which may be seen extending beyond the shoulder on the right towards the halo. The function of this sword was to slay anything that stood against that essential truth and wisdom inherent in the sub-conscious of us all, and to resuscitate the dead to a life hitherto unknown. Mañjuśrī is traditionally shown seated on a lion, symbolising energy and action, although here Sengai has portrayed a profoundly frivolous caricature of that noble creature.



佛けそとの上人より東へ捨て西へ行
 佛さういふのをこそ度々西へ去る東へ去る
 生合をいふはれめめをさるる思ふなりや
 とるるをいふ

扶桑書に云く
 扶桑書に云く

6. DARUMA

Ink on paper

51.6 x 69.4 cm

佛けすきの上人達へ東お捨て西に行
佛きらひの達磨殿へ西お去而東に来
出合處へ寐めの茶屋と思ふたりや
夢忘やつた

扶桑殿初禪窟 梵徳居禅面並賞

INSCRIPTION

*'These honourable Buddhist scholars who
love Buddha, leaving the East go
westwards (that is, to India); Mr. Daruma
who dislikes Buddha, leaving the West
came eastward. I thought they might
meet at the teahouse of awakening.
But, woe is me! it was all a dream.'*

Bodhidharma, in Japanese Daruma, was the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, where it was known as Chan Buddhism. He is thought to have arrived in China towards the end of the 5th century from southern India, hence the reference to his 'leaving the West, came eastward.'

In this profoundly satirical comment Sengai has portrayed Daruma as a quizzical, mischievous, almost irascible, old man thus characterising the idea that words are irrelevant and that those who cling to the words of the Buddha, thereby recognising Buddha as the sole authority, miss the essence and the meaning of those words. Sengai expresses in the inscription the hope that the one travelling westward (who clings to Buddha's words) and Daruma travelling eastward (interested in the meaning of the words) would meet in the 'teahouse of awakening' – enlightenment.

短
夜
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7. DARUMA

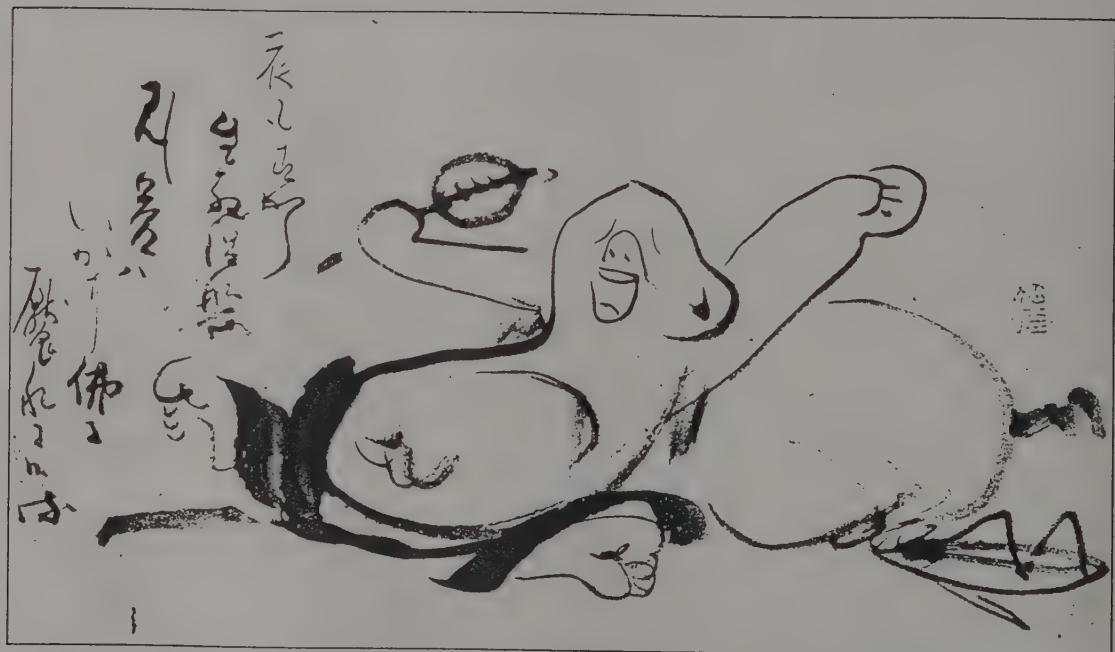
Ink on paper
86.7 x 27.6 cm

短か度を眠りころんで起き上り

INSCRIPTION

*'The night is short,
And I rise from lying flat on the floor
Like an okiagari doll.'*

This distinctive representation of Bodhidharma is known as the *okiagari-koboshi*, literally 'little sitting-up monk'. The face of Bodhidharma, or Daruma, is, like the previous example, characteristically cross and eccentric. One of the most popular manifestations of Daruma in Japan was a doll, made of papier-mâché, which was a tumbling but self-righting toy. Like Daruma, therefore, however much one tried to knock him over he would always regain an upright position. 'Seven times down, but up on the eighth' is a saying associated with the *okiagari-koboshi*, thus symbolising patience and steadiness to the point of obstinacy.



8. BUDDHA - POSSESSED

Ink on paper

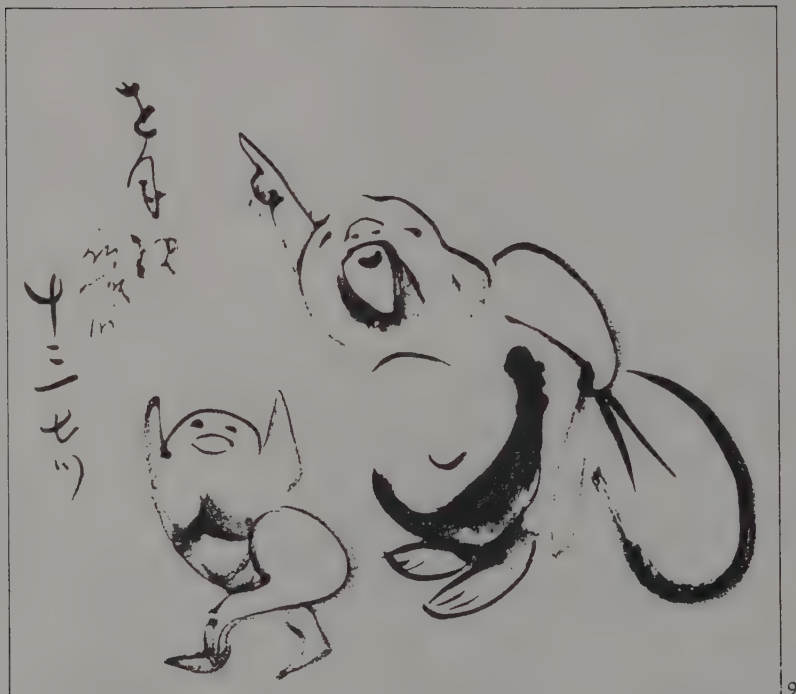
32.4 x 57.6 cm

度もすから生死涅槃を見し移ハ
いかに佛に娶れにけ施

INSCRIPTION

*'Throughout the night,
I have been annoyed by the thoughts
of nirvana and samsara:
Apparently I had been made captive of Buddha.'*

Sengai is here depicting himself as Hotei, the very symbol of spiritual freedom, awakening with an appropriate display of temperament from a long and exhausting nightmare. In that nightmare, Sengai evidently became obsessed with Buddha, contrary to Zen philosophy which considers any obsession to be undesirable. This is a view which again reflects Daruma's attitude, that by concentrating too much on the Buddha and his words one loses sight of essential meaning. Here Sengai is expressing the view that if you are obsessed with the concept of Buddha, with *nirvana* (the Buddhist Paradise) and with *samsara* (birth and death), you can never understand them.



9



10

9. HOTEI

Ink on paper

54.3 x 60.4 cm

を月様幾つ 十三セツ

INSCRIPTION

'How old are you, dear moon?

Thirteen-seven?' (ie, twenty).

Hotei, literally 'cloth-bag', is one of the most popular figures in Zen and recognised as an incarnation of Maitreya, the future Buddha. According to legend Hotei, in Chinese Budai, travelled endlessly carrying his bag which, because of his good and jovial nature, came to be regarded as a kind of cornucopia; a bottomless source of benevolence. He is a god of good fortune always ready to hand out treasures from his bag. Like an ancient pied-piper Hotei gathered children and in this picture he is shown singing heartily accompanied by an equally joyous child.

10. KANZAN AND JITTOKU

Ink on paper

29.3 x 53.4 cm

詩向會人吟 酒逢知己否

INSCRIPTION

'Poems are to be read to those who understand them,

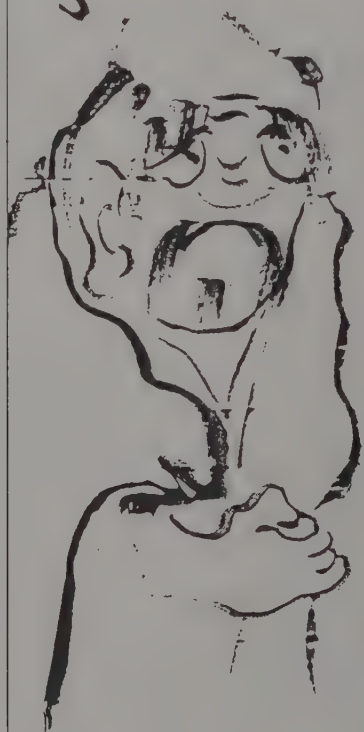
While saké is to be taken with one who knows you.'

Kanzan, in Chinese Han Shan, and Jittoku, in Chinese Shi De, are popular Zen figures. Kanzan was an eccentric hermit-poet living on Mount Tiantai (one of the sacred mountains) in Tang dynasty China who befriended Jittoku, a kitchen-helper at the Guoqing temple, also on Mount Tiantai. Jittoku would take Kanzan food left uneaten at the temple and Kanzan would read poems to his friend. The two became inseparable and became idealised as the 'eccentric hermits' so beloved in Zen. Kanzan holds a scroll with his verses and the broom belongs to Jittoku, an emblem of his humble duties.

唱三



水
拳



11. BASO AND RINZAI

Ink on paper

Each scroll

117.8 x 41.3 cm

打睡懶子

一喝三目

INSCRIPTION (right scroll)

'One 'Kwatz', three days.'

INSCRIPTION (left scroll)

'The fist that strikes the father.'

These two scrolls of Baso (right) and Rinzai (left) illustrate two classic incidents in the history of Zen (or Chan) in China.

The phrase 'One Kwatz (an exclamation), three days', refers to an event that took place between Baso (in Chinese Ma Zu 709-88) and his disciple Hyakujō (in Chinese Bai Zhang 720-814). Hyakujō was on his way for his second visit to his master when Baso, seeing him approach, took up the *hossu* (mosquito-swatter) from his chair and produced it before Hyakujō. The disciple said:

'This act itself? Or apart from this act?'

Baso said nothing and replaced the *hossu*. He remained seated for a while and then said:

'What would you do after this when someone accosts you and asks what Buddha-dharma is?'

Hyakujō then picked up the *hossu* and produced it in front of his master. Baso then asked:

'Apart from this act?'

Hyakujō replaced the *hossu*. Baso then uttered:

'Kwatz!'

The exclamation is said to have rendered Hyakujō deaf for three days.

The scroll depicting Rinzai (in Chinese Lin Ji died 866), with the inscription *'The fist that strikes the father'* relates to the incident when Rinzai returned to his master having achieved *satori* (enlightenment). For three years he stayed with his master, Ōbaku Kiun (Huangbo Xiyun; died 850) but nothing happened. Rinzai was advised to go to his master again and ask: 'What is the essential teaching of Buddhism?' However, when he did so instead of an answer Rinzai received a blow from a stick and was driven away. Three times this happened and Rinzai, impatient, left to go elsewhere. The school of Zen in Japan bearing Rinzai's name still thrives, stressing intuition, freedom of action, *kōan* (religious riddles) and meditative philosophic contemplation.

這字活埋
行方寸在



這字活埋
行方寸在



12. TOKUSAN AND RINZAI

Ink on paper

Each scroll: 94.9 x 28.2 cm

道得不得 勘三十棒

諸方火擗 這裏活埋

INSCRIPTION (right scroll)

*'At all other places they cremate them;
Here we bury them alive.'*

INSCRIPTION (left scroll)

*'Whether you speak or do not speak,
Thirty blows of my stick,
Just the same!'*

The right scroll, depicting Rinzai, shows him holding a spade. One usual working day Rinzai was out with the other monks tilling the soil. When he saw his master Ōbaku approach, he stood up and lent on his spade. Seeing him Ōbaku asked:

'Is this fellow tired?'

To which Rinzai replied:

'The spade is not yet lifted up, how could he be tired?'

Whereupon Ōbaku struck Rinzai but the latter took his master's stick and pushed both it and Ōbaku into the ground. The overseeing monk, called by Ōbaku to assist, asked as he did so:

'Why do you allow this lunatic to treat you so rudely?'

Ōbaku's response was to strike the overseer. Thus, Rinzai remarked as he dug the earth:

*'At other places they cremate them;
Here we bury them alive.'*

The left scroll depicts Tōkusan (in Chinese De Shan 782-865), another famous Chinese Chan (Zen) master, who was renowned for swinging his stick rather liberally. He is here represented with his stick and accompanied by his favourite statement. The idea was to overcome contradiction, opposition and dualism through recognition of those contradictions. The stick was intended to awaken the truth-seeker to a state of spiritual awareness.

點那這心
 還此束奉
 以滅無焰
 今因為



主
 正
 方
 有
 心

3. RYŪTAN AND TOKUSAN

Ink on paper

119.4 x 57 cm

點那心 通現未來
吹滅紙燭 金剛爲灰
惟遺者抹面

INSCRIPTION

*'What mind do you punctuate?
The past, present, or future?
The candle is blown out,
And the Diamond turns to ashes.'*

Tokusan (De Shan) had always prided himself on his knowledge and understanding of the traditional Buddhist scriptures, including the *Diamond Sutra*. When he heard of Chan (Zen) and its unconventional interpretation of the scriptures he headed south determined to eradicate this unorthodox school. En route he stopped at a wayside teahouse for refreshments, or *tian-xin*, literally 'punctuating the mind'. The old woman-keeper asked Tokusan what he carried in his bag to which Tokusan replied:

'Seiryō's commentary on the Diamond Sutra.'

The old woman then said:

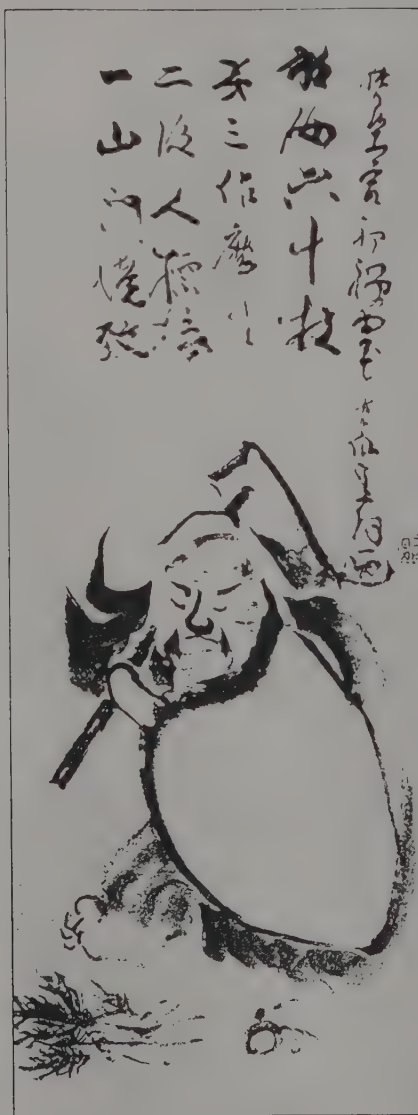
"I have a question to ask you. If you answer it satisfactorily, I will serve anything you ask, on the house. Otherwise I must ask you to leave and go elsewhere for your refreshment. According to the Sutra, neither the past mind nor the present mind nor the future mind is attainable. This being the case, pray tell me, which mind do you wish to 'punctuate'?"

Tokusan failed to answer and was thus sent on his way, unrefreshed.

When Tokusan reached Ryūtan (Long Tan), his destination, he studied hard at Zen under the guidance of the master, Sōshin (Chong Xin). One day while he was attending his master, the latter said: 'It is late, why not return to your quarters?' Tokusan went out and noticed that it was already dark. 'It is dark,' he said to his master, who passed a lighted candle to him. As Tokusan was about to receive the candle, the master suddenly blew it out.

This is said to have brought Tokusan's mind to a full awakening.

Sengai's inscription 'And the *Diamond* turns to ashes' refers to this event as it was the moment when Tokusan, devoted to conventional Buddhism, was suddenly 'enlightened' into Zen.



14. RINZAI AND
THE PINE TREES
Ink on paper
92.3 x 34.7 cm

一山門境致 二後人圖榜
第三作墨生 放收六上枝
扶桑最初禪窟 梵仙屋拜面

INSCRIPTION

*'The first is to beautify the monastery grounds,
The second is to leave a lesson for posterity,
What is the third?
(You have been saved) from sixty blows of my stick.'*

This refers to another incident between Rinzai and his master Ōbaku. On this occasion Rinzai was planting pine trees when Ōbaku asked:

'What is the use of planting pine trees in the remote mountain far away from the village?'

Rinzai replied:

'First, for beautifying the monastery grounds; secondly, to bequeath a lesson for the sake of posterity.'

As he replied Rinzai struck the ground three times with his spade. Ōbaku retorted:

'In spite of all this, you have already had thirty blows of my stick.'

Rinzai struck the ground three times again with his spade and drew a long breath. Ōbaku wisely said:

'Our school will enjoy much prosperity with you.'

15. KYŌGEN SWEEPING
THE GROUND
Ink on paper
66.4 x 23.8 cm

一擊忘知 作什麼音
直以瓦礫 轉為黃金
屋拜面贊

INSCRIPTION

*'One strike made him forget his learning.
What kind of sound was it?
A piece of brick immediately
Turned itself into gold.'*

The monk Kyōgen (Chinese name, Xiang Yan) was a disciple of Isan (Wei Shan). He was a devout pupil, devoted to his master's sayings and to the traditional Buddhist scriptures. However, he realised that all these were of no use to him in understanding Zen, and so he burnt all his notes. Disappointed at his seeming inability to achieve *satori* (enlightenment) he abandoned study, returned to a country temple and gave himself to caring for an old master's grave. One day while sweeping he swept a stone which struck a nearby bamboo. The sound of the stone hitting the bamboo 'awakened' him and he thus achieved enlightenment. This is the 'one strike' referred to in the inscription.

Sengai then asks:

'What kind of sound was it that made Kyōgen come to a realization?'

He answers the question in the final two lines.



16. THE THREE LAUGHING
SAGES AT KOKEI

Ink on paper

49.3 x 59.5 cm

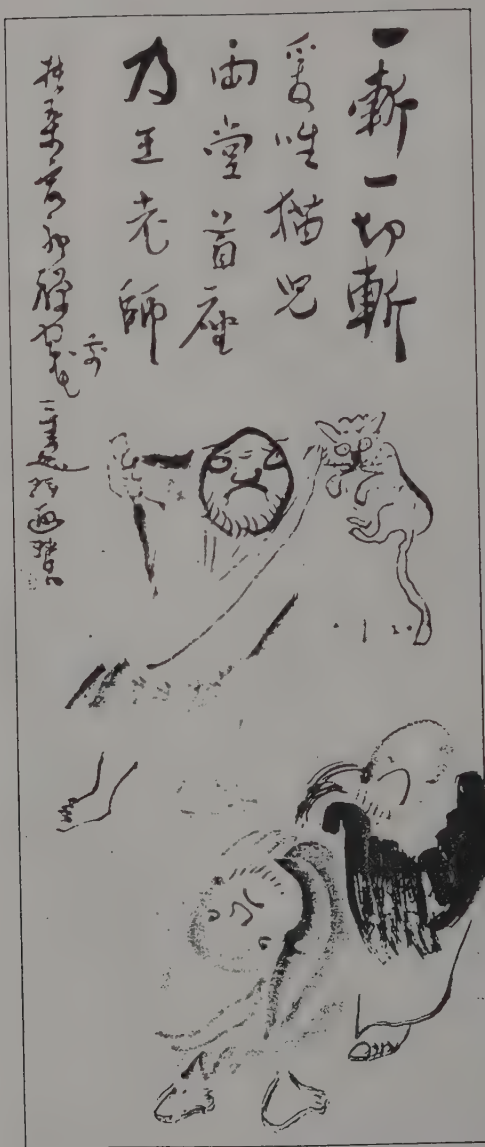
なに咲ふ契りわぬ雲和朝夕に
感ゆるもやすし谷の岩橋

INSCRIPTION

*'Why do they laugh?
The clouds that make no pledges
Pass over the mountain bridge,
Morning or evening,
With the utmost freedom!'*

The three jovial sages shown here are Eon (Chinese name Hui Yuan 332-417), founder of the Pure Land School of Buddhism in China, Tō Emmei (Dao Yuanming 362-427), a Confucian scholar and poet, and Riku Shūsei (Lu Xiujing 406-477), a Daoist.

According to legend, Eon was in the habit of seeing his guests, Tō Emmei the Confucian and Riku Shūsei the Daoist, off down the mountain path up to the bridge of Kokei (Hu Qi, the Tiger Creek). One day when his two guests were at his temple he became so engrossed in their company and the conversation that he forgot his rule, but, just in time a tiger roared, thus warning Eon. They all burst into hearty laughter.



17. THE MASTER
AND THE CAT

Ink on paper
125.6 x 52.5 cm

一斬一切斬 奚唯錯兒
兩葉首座 及王老師
前扶桑殿初禪寶 住持面贊

INSCRIPTION

*'Cut one, cut all,
The cat is not the only object.
Let them all be included,
The head-monks of the two dormitories,
And even Wo the Old Master.'*

Wo (Chinese name Wang) was the family name of Nansen Fugwan (Nanquan Puyuan 748-834), one of the great disciples of Baso (Ma Zu: see cat. no. 11).

The inscription refers to a dispute that occurred between the east and west dormitories of Nansen's monastery over who owned the cat. The Old Master was asked to settle the matter and held up the cat before the entire congregation and said:

'If there is any among you, O Brethren, who could say an appropriate word for this momentous occasion, speak out. Otherwise the cat might have to lose its life.'

Nobody could do so and it is believed that the Master thereupon cut the cat in two. Later that day a leading disciple, Jōshū (Zhao Zhou) returned and Wo told him of the incident and asked him what he would have done. Jōshū, who happened to be taking his sandals off at the time, placed one over his head and silently went out. The Old Master said:

'Too bad that you were not with us, for you could have saved the poor cat.'

The point of this story is that the Old Master wanted to see if the disputing monks could comprehend traditional dualistic thinking and exercise of the intellect. Sengai too understood this, and has, therefore, followed the Old Master in proposing that we should do away with logic and semantics.

18. THE SEVEN GODS
OF FORTUNE

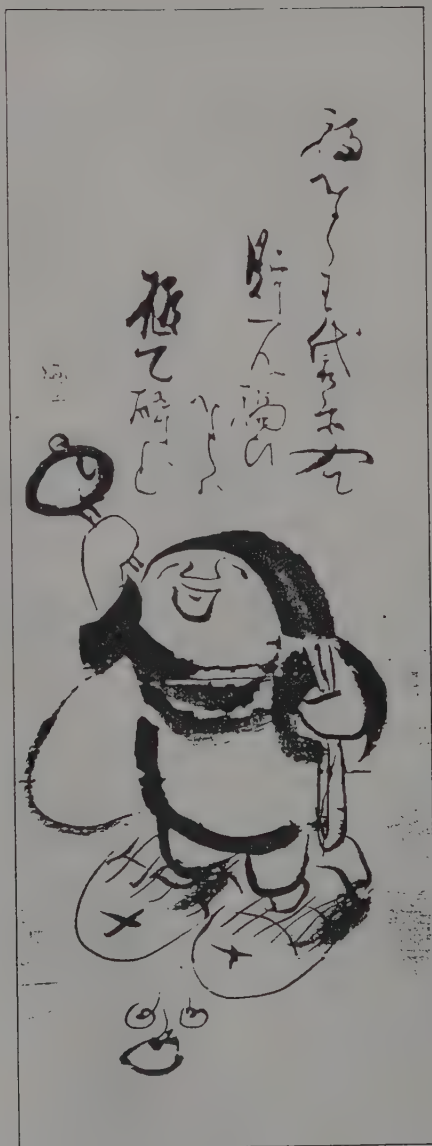
Ink on paper
125.8 x 52.2 cm

七福を一福にして大福茶

INSCRIPTION

*'Have all the Seven Happinesses bundled up,
And out of them make One Happiness,
And out of it One Great Blissful Tea.'*

The Seven Gods of Fortune, comprising six gods and one goddess, are arranged from the top as follows: God of Happiness, Wealth and Longevity (Fukūrokūjū); God of Longevity (Jurōjin); Warrior God (Bishamon); Goddess of the Arts (Benzaiten); God of Plenty (Daikokuten); God of Wealth (Ebisu); and Hotei, sprawled happily across the bottom of the picture.



19. EBISU AND DAIKOKUTEN

Ink on silk

74.8 x 27.9 cm each scroll

今歲から阿きなひ繁昌請合に

福ならは袋に入て貯へん
満ひならハ随て砕む

INSCRIPTION (right scroll)

*'Should good luck come your way,
I'll save it in my bag for you.
Should ill luck come your way,
I'll crush it with my mallet for you.'*

INSCRIPTION (left scroll)

*'Beginning with this year,
Prosperous business guaranteed.'*

Ebisu (God of Wealth) on the left and Daikokuten (God of Plenty) on the right, are two of the Seven Gods of Fortune.

Daikokuten is shown with bales of rice under his feet, carrying a mallet and a huge bag. He became idealised as a god of luck and it is said that when he shakes his magic mallet there will be a shower of jewels. To the holder of the jewel every wish would be granted.

Ebisu, whose name means foreigner, is shown as a fisherman, an association with the sea which reinforces the view that he was originally a foreigner.

万子万人
 都一万年
 作是万般
 教迎万般
 天



20. THE STAR OF
THE SOUTH POLE

Ink on paper

134.1 x 55.6 cm

百歲百人 都一萬年
壽是有限 故迎南星於天
理應請

INSCRIPTION

*'A hundred men, each a hundred years old,
Together they make ten thousand years;
Still the number is a limited one.
So towards the Star in the Southern Sky they go.'*

The central figure here, the old man with the beard seated on the palanquin, is Jurōjin (God of Longevity), one of the Seven Gods of Fortune. As God of Longevity he is associated with the star in the southern heavens, corresponding to the North Star, that too symbolises longevity.

天下皆曰
無道之
人也
然則
無道之
人也



21. LAO ZI

Ink on paper
30.8 x 54.7 cm

道體玄周 考北胡
此 昔生能
文化丁壯更
扶桑最初開闢 郭陳八

INSCRIPTION

*'His Way (dao) failed to save Zhou from decline,
His Virtue (de) did not convert the barbarians — Pshaw!
The darkish ox knows not which way to turn now!'*
Dated 1817

Lao Zi lived in 5th century BC China and is accredited with having founded Daoism, the nature-mystic religion which forms one-third of the philosophical trinity, together with Buddhism and Confucianism, of China. Lao Zi's basic text, the *Dao De Jing*, is alluded to in Sengai's poem and a reference to Lao Zi's failure to save the Zhou dynasty from falling and his failure to, reputedly, convert the Hindus to Buddhism. Sengai's comment is however not so much a criticism of Lao Zi as a lament upon the worldly way of most of us.

22. SUGAWARA MICHIZANE

Ink on paper
89.2 x 28.3 cm

天下南花主 扶桑文字祖
總 鎮西太宰府

INSCRIPTION

*'God of the Plum Blossoms in the whole world,
Lord of Literature in the Land of the Rising Sun.
Alas!
Dazaifu, capital of the Western Frontier!'*

Sugawara Michizane (845-903) was, in the history of Japan, one of the great scholars of Chinese classical literature during the Heian period. The Emperor Daigo, wishing to crush the then politically all-powerful Fujiwara family, appointed Michizane to an important government position which was hereditarily filled by a member of the higher-ranking Fujiwara clan. However the Emperor failed to stem the social and political unrest and in the atmosphere of intrigue Michizane was falsely accused, deposed, and sent in exile to the Western capital of Dazaifu, in Kyūshū, far removed from the political, social and cultural capital of Kyoto. After three years of a desolate life, he died.

His famous poem composed while in exile at Dazaifu is full of pathos:

*'When the east wind blows
Send your sweet scent,
O my plum blossoms!
Though your master is gone,
Forget not that Spring is here again.'*

After his death Michizane was deified as the God of Literature and a famous shrine known as the Tenjin, Heavenly God, was dedicated to him in the northern section of Kyoto.

林風眠書



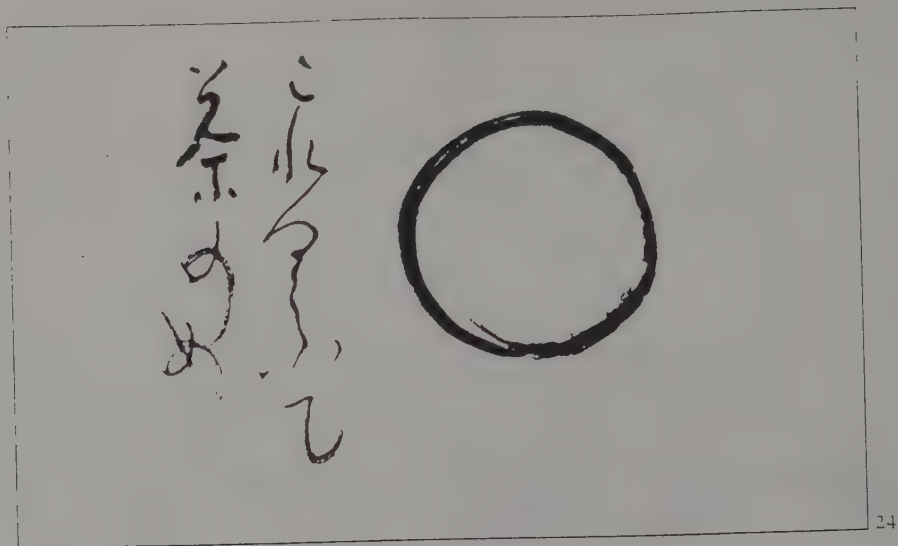
23. THE UNIVERSE

Ink on paper

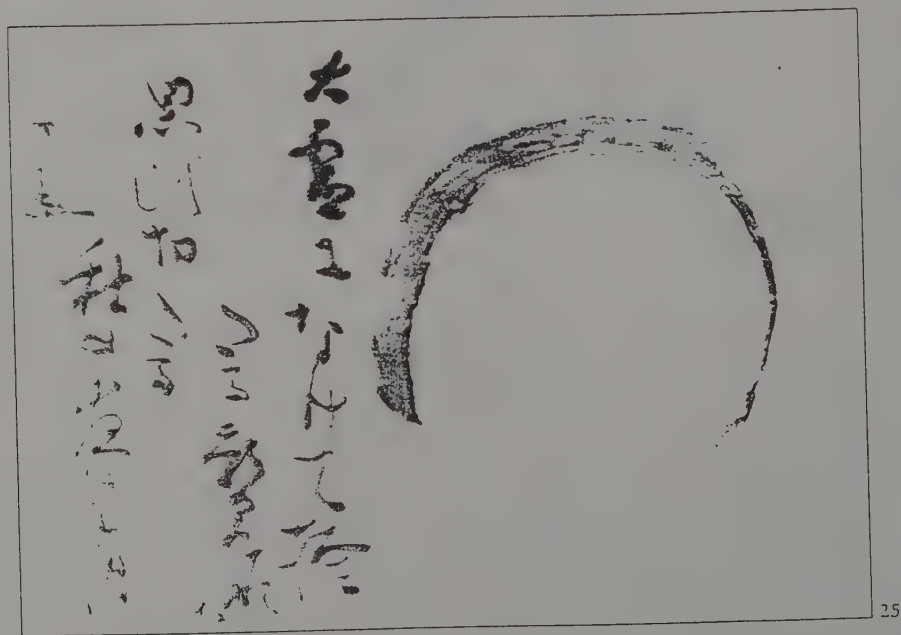
28.3 x 48.2 cm

扶桑成初彈寫

The circle-triangle-square is Sengai's picture of the universe. The circle represents the infinite, and the infinite is the basis of all things. But the infinite in itself is formless. We humans endowed with senses and intellect demand tangible forms. Hence the triangle. The triangle is the beginning of all forms. Out of it comes the square. A square is two triangles. This doubling process continues indefinitely and thus we have an infinite multitude of things. In Chinese philosophy this is called 'the ten thousand things', which is the universe.



24



25

24. CIRCLE

Ink on paper
26.1 x 42.1 cm

これくふで茶のみ

INSCRIPTION

'Eat this and have a cup of tea.'

25. THE MOON

Ink on paper
40.6 x 56.9 cm

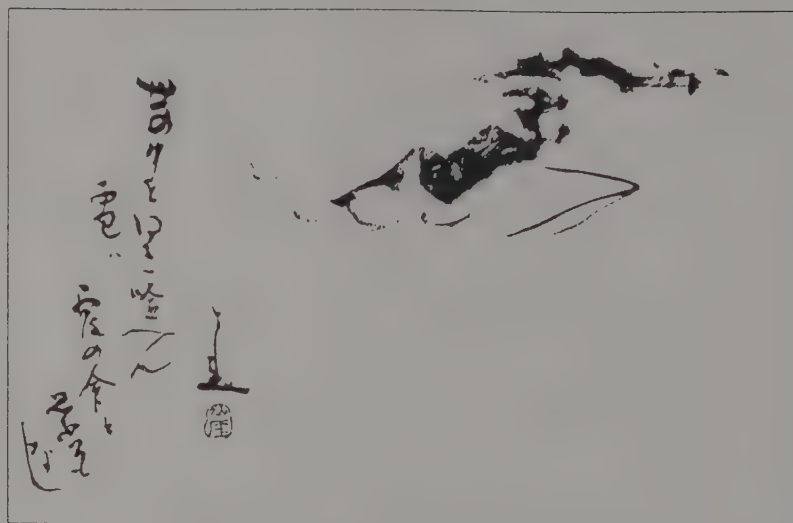
大虚になくて捨たる影見れハ
思ひ切たる秋の夜の月 匡

INSCRIPTION

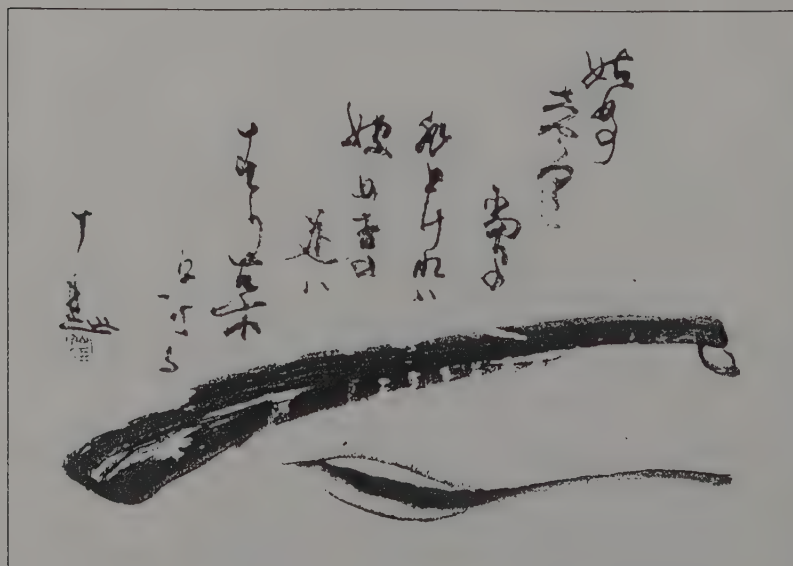
*'When I see (reality's) shadow
Thrown into the emptiness of space,
How boldly defined
The moon
Of the autumnal night!'*

When the ego is discussed, or more properly identified as nothing, complete emptiness (*sūnyatā*), how free, how unimpeded, one feels. The autumnal moon symbolises that state of supreme realization. It is the 'moon of suchness' that Buddhist poets speak of. Here Sengai abbreviates the moon, it is complete in itself yet incomplete in its definition.

The Japanese word for bold is *omoi kittaru*, which is graphic, vital and dynamic. *Omoi* means thought, thinking, deliberation; *kiru*, the root of *kittaru*, means to cut. *Omoi kittaru*, therefore, means to throw away totally all deliberation without fear of the consequences. It is to capture Zen in its purest form and symbolised here by Sengai in the clarity of the autumnal moon.



26



27

26. LIGHTNING

Ink on paper
39.3 x 59.8 cm

世の中を何に喩へん世の
露の命と思ふ間もなし 庄

INSCRIPTION

*'To what shall I compare this life of ours?
Even before I can say it is like a flash of lightning or a dew-drop, it is no more.'*

The *Diamond Sutra* likens life to six evanescent phenomena: a dream, a vision, a bubble, a shadow, a flash of lightning and a dew-drop. The concept of the transient is a feature of Buddhist thought: 'All things are impermanent; all is subject to constant becoming.' And yet, of course, the consistency of impermanency is permanent, thus the two opposites go hand in hand. Again, in the expression of lightning, Sengai comes back to the theme of enlightenment, realization through experience.

27. THE LADLE AND
THE PESTLE

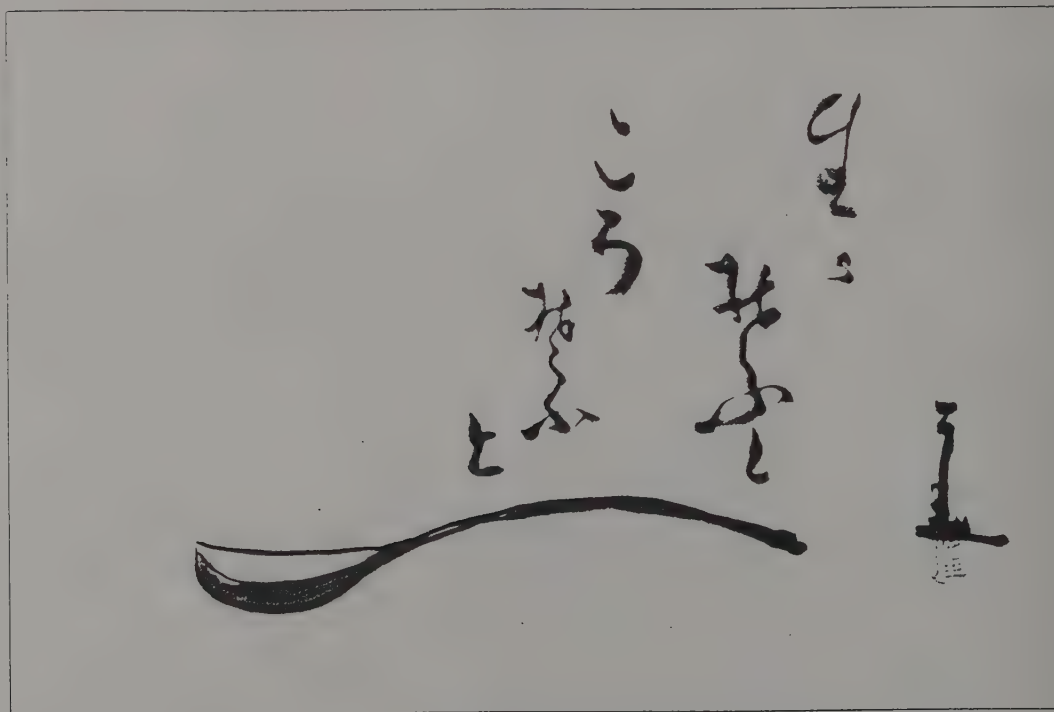
Ink on paper
40.7 x 57 cm

姑めの志やくし當りの飛とけれハ
嫁め子の足ハすり古木となる 庄

INSCRIPTION

*'When the mother-in-law's ladle is too severely in use,
The daughter-in-law's legs become stiff like pestles.'*

The mother-in-law is traditionally hard on her son's wife, newly adopted into the family. The latter is mercilessly ordered about by the matron of her new home and finally succumbs, her legs give out and turn into a stiff pair of sticks, like a pair of pestles. This is Sengai's warning to mothers-in-law not to be unreasonable and severe to the new daughter-in-law.



28. THE SPOON

Ink on paper

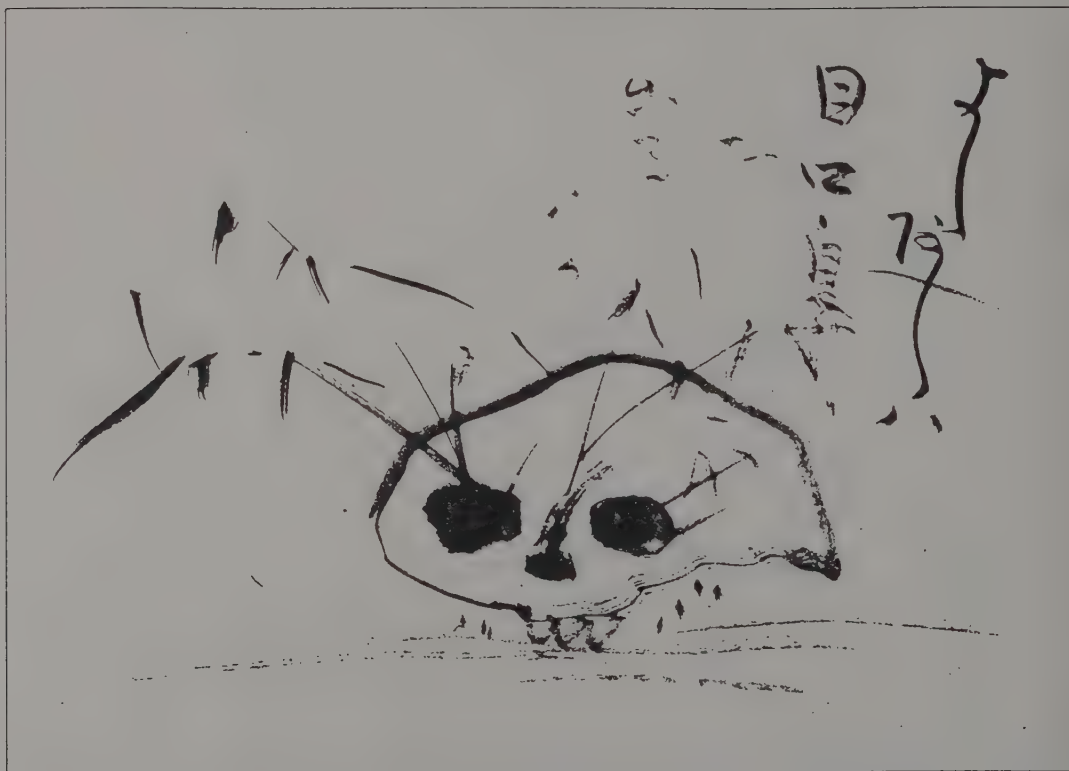
35.7 x 53 cm

生かそふと ころそふと 疔

INSCRIPTION

'Whether for life, whether for death.'

(Depends upon this doctor's spoonful.)



29. THE SKULL

Ink on paper

39.4 x 55 cm

よし阿しハ目口鼻から出るものか

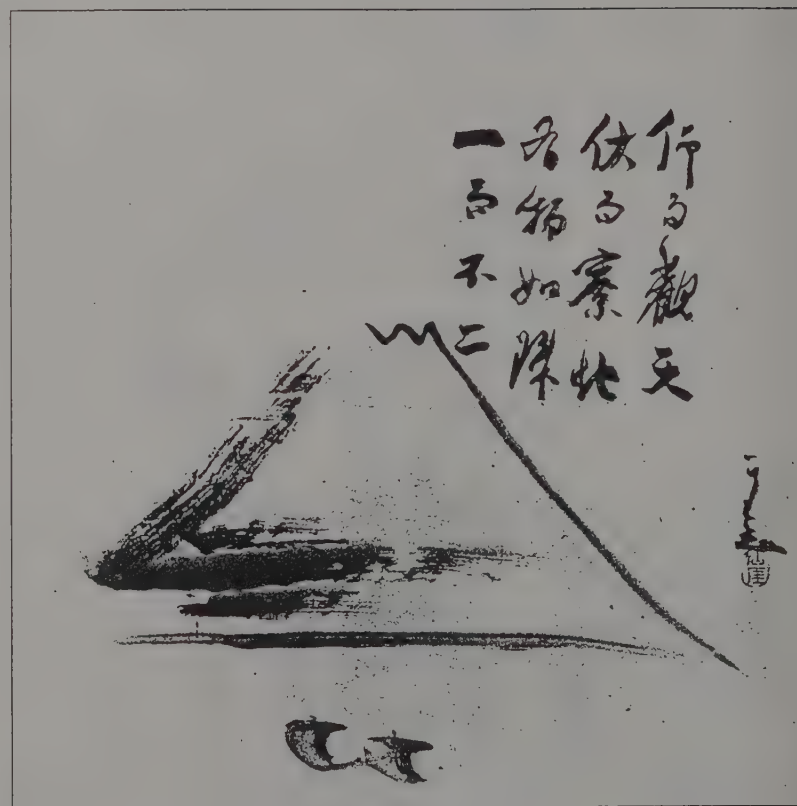
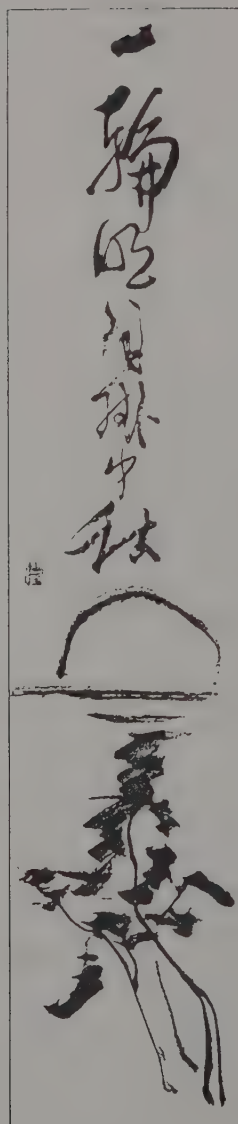
INSCRIPTION

'Good and bad

Do they come out?'

Of the eyes, mouth and nose?'

This is Sengai commenting again on the strictures of the intellect. Whilst modern Buddhist thinkers would say that intellect, thought, should be added to the five traditional senses, perhaps we should recognise six, or seven, or eight senses, thus increasing the notion of recognisable experience. But the intellect just discriminates, it does not experience, and therefore does not recognise the real value and truth in life. The intellect is the prodigal son who forgot his original home. He is to be told of it and to return. Where is the original home? Sengai represents it as a skull.



30. AUTUMN MOON

Ink on paper

129.3 x 26.7 cm

一輪明月照中秋

INSCRIPTION

*'One bright moon of mid-Autumn
illuminates the whole world.'*

In both Japan and China the moon shines brightest on the night of the fifteenth day of the ninth month, according to the lunar calendar. Then the mid-autumn sky is supremely clear. It is then that a full moon and the moon goddess are celebrated with offerings of rice dumplings, wild autumnal flowers and a jar of saké.

31. MOUNT FUJI

Ink on paper

62 x 62cm

仰而觀天 伏而察地
有物如珠 一而不一
煙

INSCRIPTION

*'Looking up, the heavens are seen extending;
Looking down, the earth is seen stretched,
Both to the farthest ends of the horizon!
Beyond, there shines a white pearl,
The only one, and no second.'*

西都府懷古圖并詩

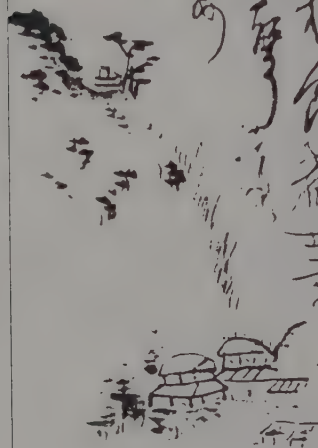
新秋田露風之秋基古

多事——幸而梅

郊外村館藏書

暮春錄序

多事王の



32. THE WESTERN CAPITAL

Ink on paper

116.5 x 53.4cm

西都府懷古四并詩

收稻田露濕衣秋 城古千年紫府樓

郊外猶餘觀世寺 洛陽登洛帝王州

王維八

INSCRIPTION

*'Rice fields are all over
Where once stood the imposing edifices
of the Western Capital.
It's autumn now and the farmers are
busy with harvesting.
My sleeves are wet with dew (tears).
What is left of the olden days of a
thousand years ago?
Is the lone temple dedicated to
Avalokiteśvara, God of Mercy?
The evening bell sends out its
resonance all over the sites once of
the Imperial residence.'*



33. THE BAY OF FUTAMI

Ink on paper

41 x 57.5cm

二見湖一目に見れば不二の峰

INSCRIPTION

'The Bay of Futami

With one eye seen,

Snow on Mount Fuji.'

Futami-ga-ura, literally 'Two-sight Bay', is in the province of Ise near the famous Ise Shinto shrine. The bay is named after the two huge rocks which rise off-shore, one larger than the other. They symbolise conjugal love and the sacred rope ties them together. Sengai's poem accompanying the picture was probably composed one fine New Year's day when the snow-capped Mount Fuji could be seen in the crisp clear sky. Mount Fuji, which symbolises immaculate beauty, when seen in conjunction with the rocks of Futami Bay, is the most auspicious beginning for the New Year. With 'one eye' means that these two symbols of good fortune are seen in a single glance.

淨慈印師來將善字意更無其偽磨

孤山又見

通書上秀

字石山如老

春興

吾友子組
此中各有
人字



I. THE VIEW OF TÔKI-AN

Ink on paper

130.1 x 52.7cm

孤筇山又水 興盡止奔馳
字石莓苔占 倦眠落日遲
癸未之春

吾戲世間 非尊非卑
踏落人情 爲面爲面

淨妙禪師東隱庵寫意圖
並其一偈應禿木正受請

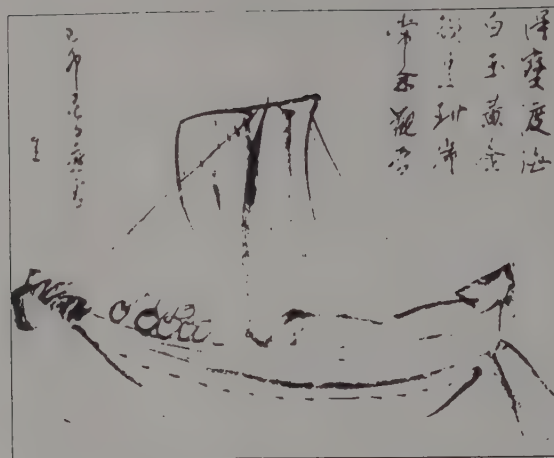
洪佳祥

INSCRIPTION

*'A solitary pilgrim (travelling) over
hills and streams,
Wearily rests against his stick;
The steep crags are covered with aged moss;
The spring day is long and slumberous.
Spring in the Year of the Sheep.'*

*'This play of mine with brush and ink
Is neither (to be taken as) calligraphy nor drawing.
Yet in the hands of the common-minded people,
It becomes (mere) calligraphy and (mere) painting,
Humbly, Kō-gai (Sengai).'*

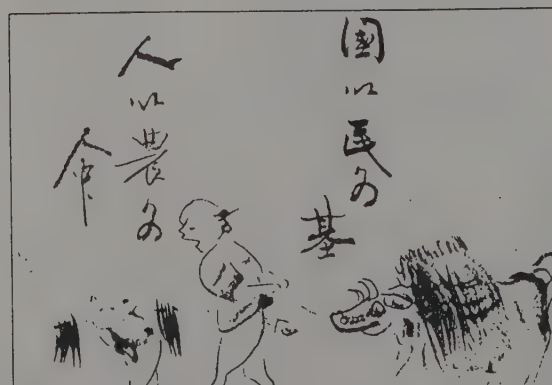
Dated 1823



35



36



35. THE TREASURE SHIP

Ink on paper
37.5 x 45.8cm

舟寶渡海 白王黄金
成運到岸 常念観音
己卯春日應需 匡

INSCRIPTION

*'The ship with treasures is crossing the sea,
With white pearls and yellow gold.
If they wish a speedy and safe arrival,
Have them pray to the Kannon all the way.'*

Dated 1819

The arrival of a treasure-laden ship is considered a symbol of good luck and celebrated particularly in association with the coming of the New Year. It is indeed an auspicious combination. In order to carry out successfully the mission of bringing the ship safely to port the sailors are urged to devote themselves to Kannon who, in one of her many manifestations, is the Goddess guardian of those at sea.

36. THE CHERRY-BLOSSOMS
AT YOSHINO

Ink on paper
43.5 x 62.9cm

吉野でも花の下より鼻の下 匡

INSCRIPTION

*'A company of women (and wine)
is better than the blooming cherries,
Even at Yoshino.'*

In spring Yoshino is full of cherry-blossoms and crowded with party-goers, geishas and entertainers. Sengai in his colophon hints that, even at Yoshino, the pleasures of the flesh might be more attractive than 'even' the Yoshino cherry-blossoms. It is a play on the words 'flower' and 'nose' which are both pronounced *hana* in Japanese. Thus *hana no shita* may mean 'below the flowers' or 'below the nose'; the latter being an abbreviation for *hana no shita ga nagai* meaning that the distance between the nose and the upper lip is long. This is thought to suggest an erotic nature.

37. THE FARMERS

Ink on paper
43.4 x 59cm

國以民為基 人以農為命

INSCRIPTION

*'The state is founded on its people;
And the life of the people depends
on agriculture.'*



38. THE ŌHARA MAIDS

Ink on paper

54.7 x 55cm

大原女の柴に荷そふ花の香も
都の俵にかわらぬものを

INSCRIPTION

'The flowers decorate the kindling wood

The Ōhara maids carry;

The sweet odour of Spring

Is auspiciously spread over the
miyako (capital).'

Ōhara village is situated close to Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. The women of Ōhara have a distinctive way of carrying (on their heads) the bundles of firewood which they sell to the city dwellers. The 'sweet odour of Spring' which Sengai mentions comes from the freshly picked flowers with which the women would decorate their bundles of fuel.

七つとてふかきまゝにいふ腰曲
 けりかていふいれらるゝは
 大に移るまゝうりてまゝ移る
 移るまゝこゝに目付るまゝに
 けりまゝにいふ様意杖目陰
 入へるまゝにいふ三ついん陰ま
 けりかていふいれらるゝは
 けりまゝにいふいれらるゝは
 けりまゝにいふいれらるゝは
 けりまゝにいふいれらるゝは

左人の詞



39. INFIRMITIES OF OLD AGE

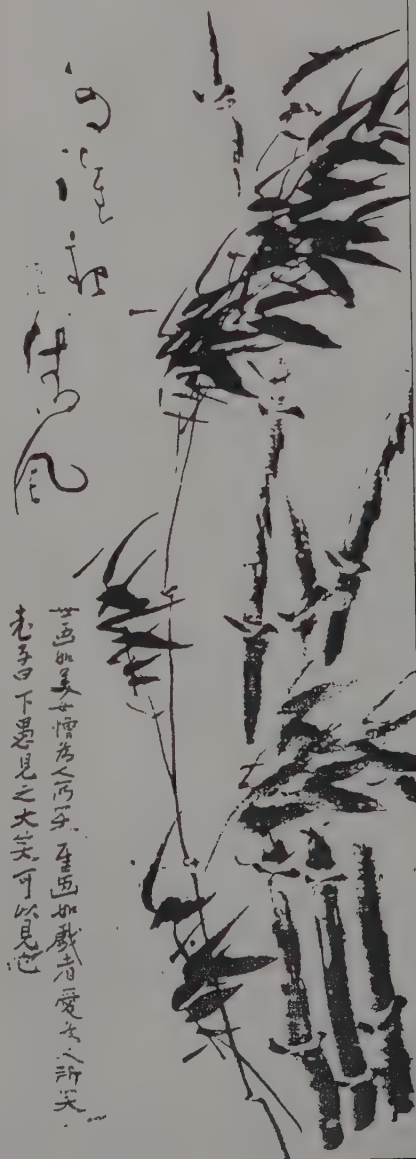
Ink on paper
49.8 x 56.1cm

忘わかよ旅ほ黒か出ける縷曲る
頭まかはけるひけ白くな旅
手は暇ふ足はよろつく歯は抜る
耳はきこへず目はうとくなる
身に添は頭巾襟巻杖目鏡
たんぽおん志やく志ゆひん係手
聞たかる死とむなかる淋しかる
心は曲る欲深ふなる
くとなる気短になる愚ちになる
出志やはりたか旅世話やきたかる
又しても同じ咄しに子を語る
遠昔日まんに入はいやかる
占人の哥 川井

INSCRIPTION

*'Wrinkles on the face, dark spots grove
on the skin, and the back bent;
Bald-headed and grey-bearded,
The hands tremble, the legs totter,
and gone are the teeth,
Hard of hearing and eyesight bedimmed.
Indispensable are a hood on the head, wrappers,
a stick, and spectacles;
Then a hot-water bottle, a heating stone,
a chamber pot, and a back-scratcher.
Meddlesome he is, afraid of dying, and lonesome;
Suspicious of others, the desire for possession
grows stronger.
Repetitive, short-tempered, and querulous;
Obtrusive and officious.
The same stories over again and again in which
his own children are invariably praised.
Boastful of his health, he makes others feel
tired beyond endurance.*

Old Sayings'



竹
風

世如美之憎為之所至
在如戲者愛之所謂天
老子曰下愚見之大矣可以見也

丁巳年

40. BAMBOOS

Ink on silk

100.5 x 35.5 cm

為誰起清風

世面如美女憎為人所笑

窪面如載者愛為人所笑

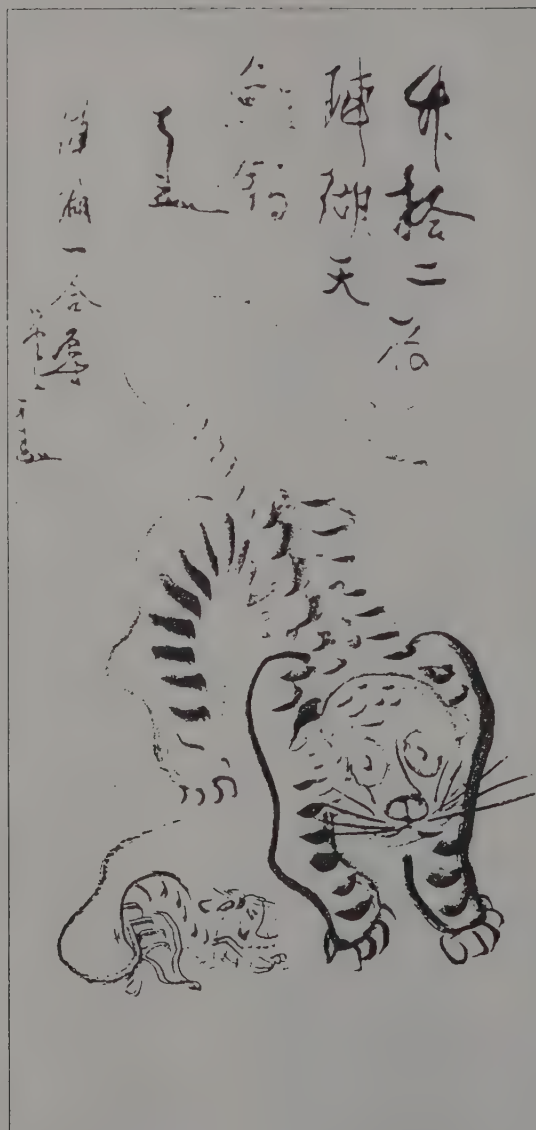
老子曰下愚見之大笑可以見已

INSCRIPTION

*'For whom,
this cool, refreshing breeze?*

*The worldly pictures are like a
pretty woman who hates being
laughed at by others;*

*But my drawings are like a
comedian who loves being laughed at.
Says Lao Zi: 'When ordinary mortals
look at me, they ridicule.'
This is proof.'*



41. TIGER AND CAT

Ink on paper

126.8 x 60 cm

竹拾二枚師端天麟釣 正
本圖一合尋御坐候 屋

INSCRIPTION

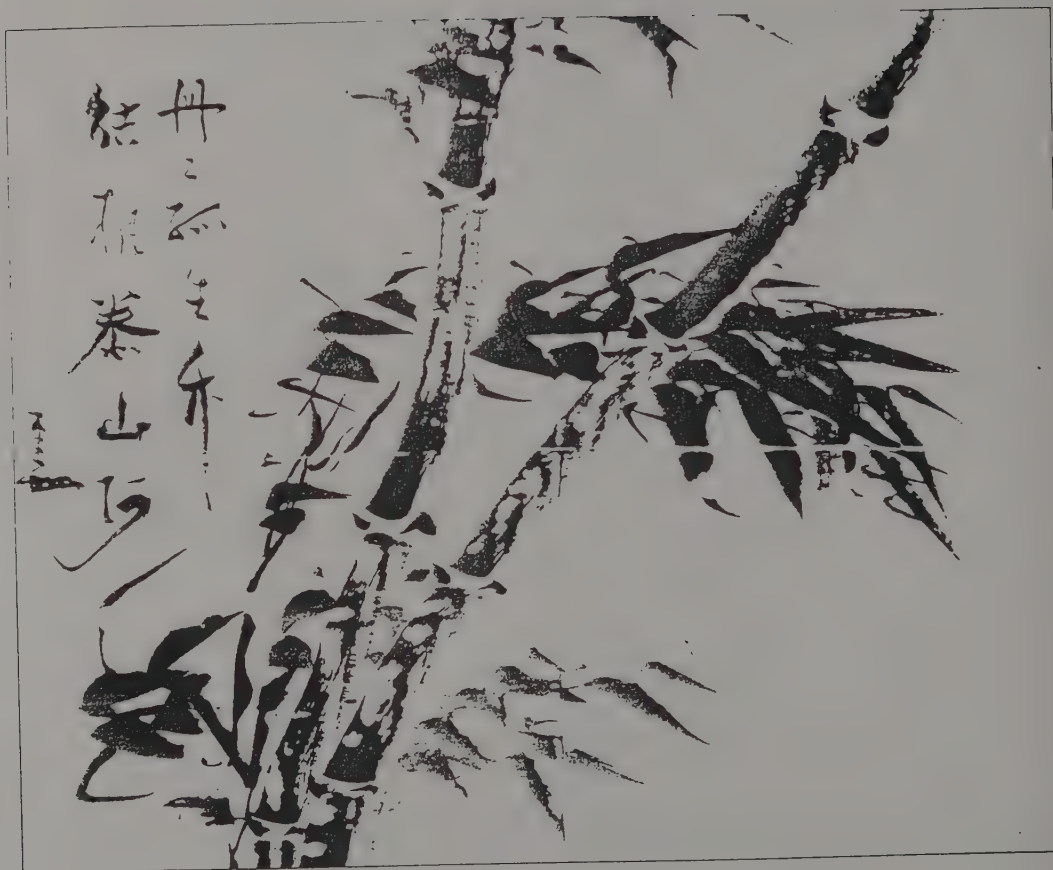
'Twelve sheets of bamboo

This is fishing sea bream with a water flea.'

'Thank you for your pint of rice-flour.'

It is said that there once was an old woman who greatly admired Sengai's painting but being poor she was unable to afford such a painting. One day she visited Sengai and begged him to give her twelve paintings of bamboo and in return she brought the master one *gō* (approximately half a pint) of rice-flour known as *jinko*. As Sengai comments in the inscription this is a little like catching a sea bream, the most valued fish in Japan, with the most common bait, the water-flea.

The proud tiger, being frightened and chased by a cat, is Sengai's characteristically wry comment on this.



42. BAMBOOS

Ink on silk

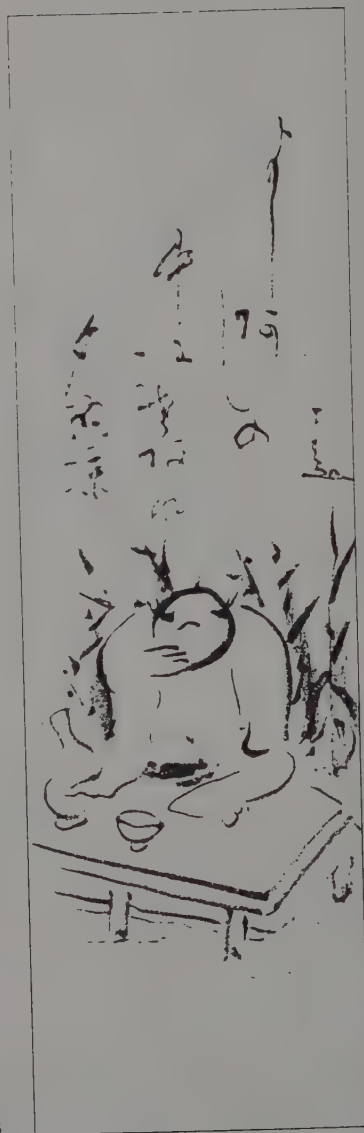
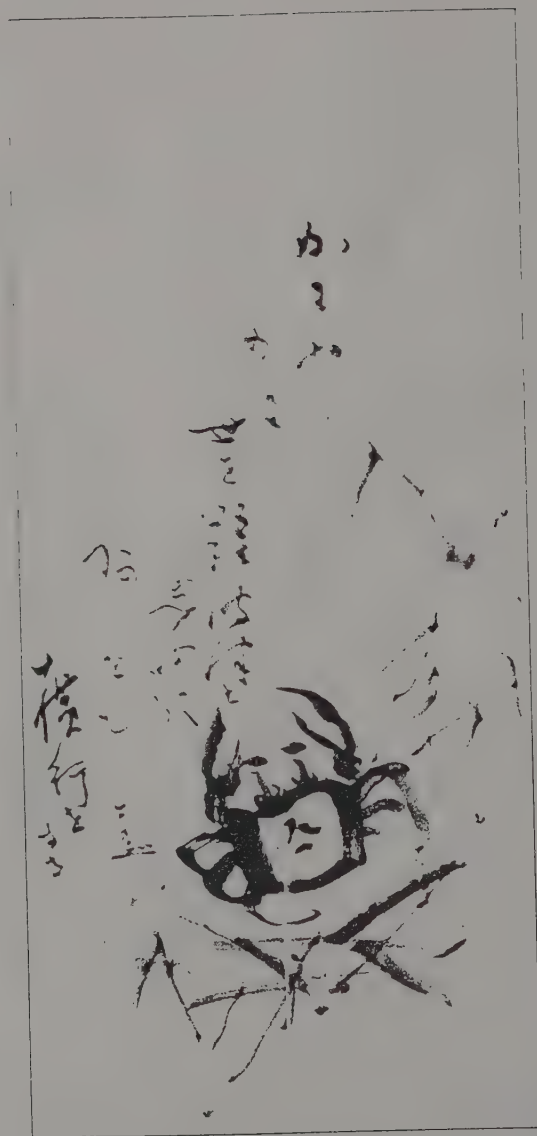
46.9 x 55.5 cm

冊々箇生竹 結根桑山河 正

INSCRIPTION

*'Thickly growing bamboos,
each stand singly;*

*Put all their roots together,
and all is well in the mountains and rivers.'*



43. THE CRAB

Ink on paper

129.7 x 59.5 cm

かにやかに世を雅波律と思ふ哉
よしも阿しをも横行する 厩

INSCRIPTION

'Oh crab, oh crab!

*You seem to think the world is like
the marshland of Naniwa.*

You walk freely over the reeds.'

Reeds are called *yoshi* in some parts of Japan and *ashi* in others. *Yoshi* means good, and *ashi* bad. Sengai is here drawing a comparison between the world, where good and evil intermingle, with the marshlands where good (*yoshi*) and bad (*ashi*) too intermingle. The crab is likened to an enlightened sage who can transcend the pitfalls of distinguishing between good and evil in a vision of absolute good.

Naniwa refers to the ancient site of the city of Osaka but is used here as a play on words by Sengai for the characters may also be read 'this world of vicissitudes.'

44. AMIDST REEDS

Ink on paper

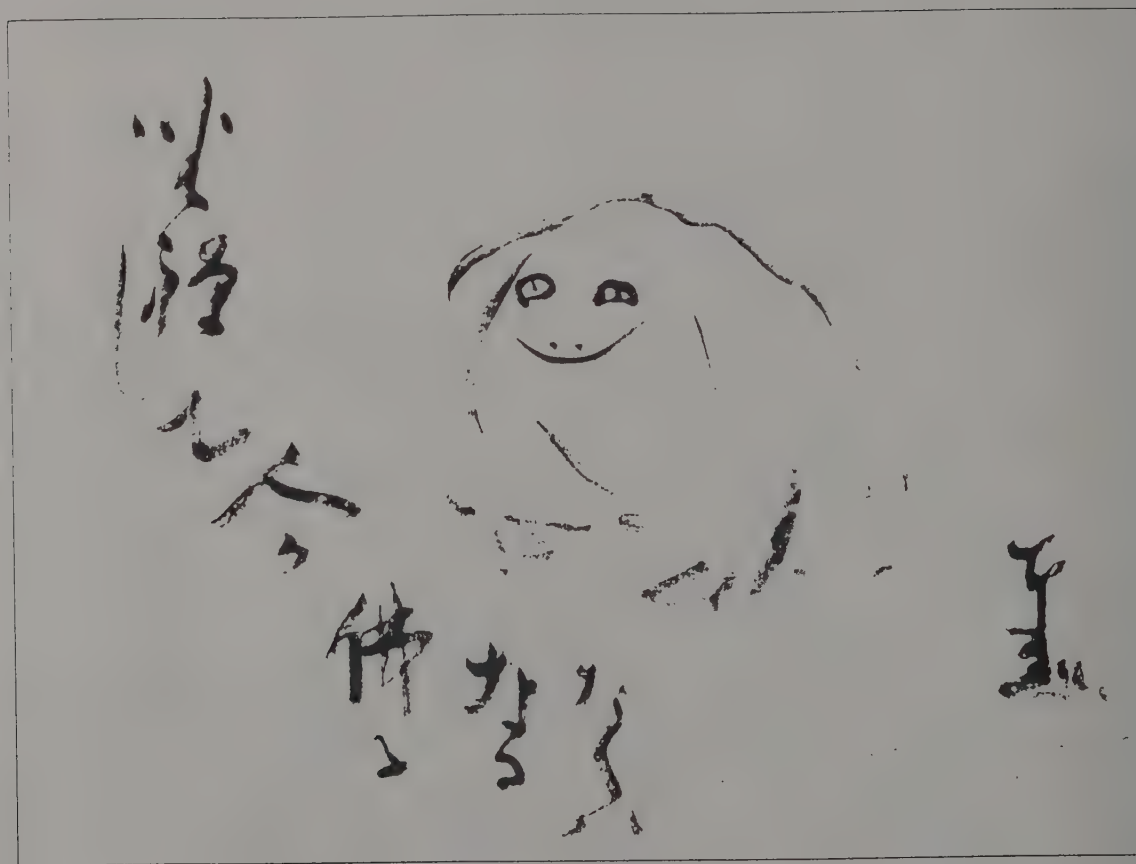
97.1 x 29 cm

よし阿しの中にこそ阿れ
夕納涼 厩

INSCRIPTION

*'Just because of our being in the midst
of good and evil,
This cool evening breeze is enjoyed.'*

The 'good and evil' mentioned in the inscription by Sengai is another reference to the terms *yoshi* (good) and *ashi* (evil), both of which mean reeds.



45. THE MEDITATING FROG

Ink on paper

40.5 x 53.8 cm

坐禅して人が佛になるならハ 庄

INSCRIPTION

'If a man becomes a Buddha by practising zazen...'

Zazen means 'sitting in meditation'. It is a position usually adopted by a frog and, thus, if the meditating position is the sole recourse to Buddhahood then the frog will surely attain such a state. However, Zen is not merely sitting and meditating. It is to achieve enlightenment, or *satori*. This may be seen as Sengai commenting again on the need for essential meaning and understanding as opposed to acknowledging and adopting merely the appearance.



46. BASHŌ AND THE FROG

Ink on paper

92.5 x 27.8 cm (right)

128 x 28 cm (centre)

118 x 28.5 cm (left)

池阿らは
飛て池底に
聞かせたい 厩

古池や
何やらほんと
飛ひこんだ 厩

古池や
芭蕉飛こむ
水の音 厩

INSCRIPTION (right scroll)

*'If there were a pond around here
I would jump in
And let him hear the splash!'*

INSCRIPTION (centre scroll)

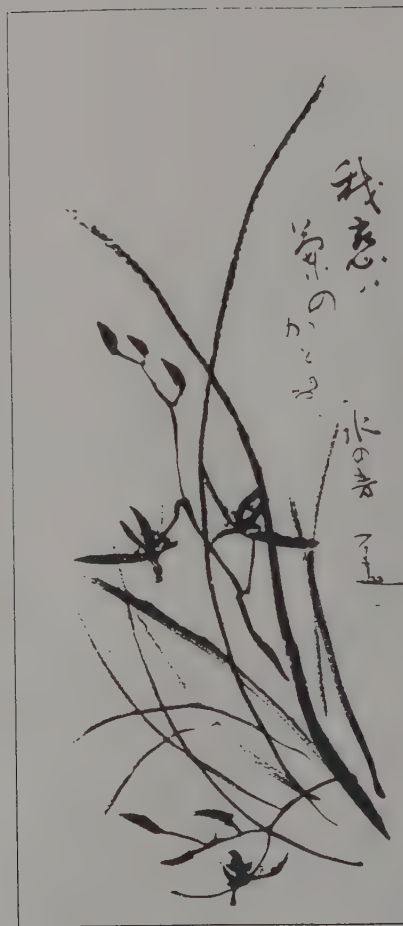
*'An old pond:
Something has jumped in,
Plop!'*

INSCRIPTION (left scroll)

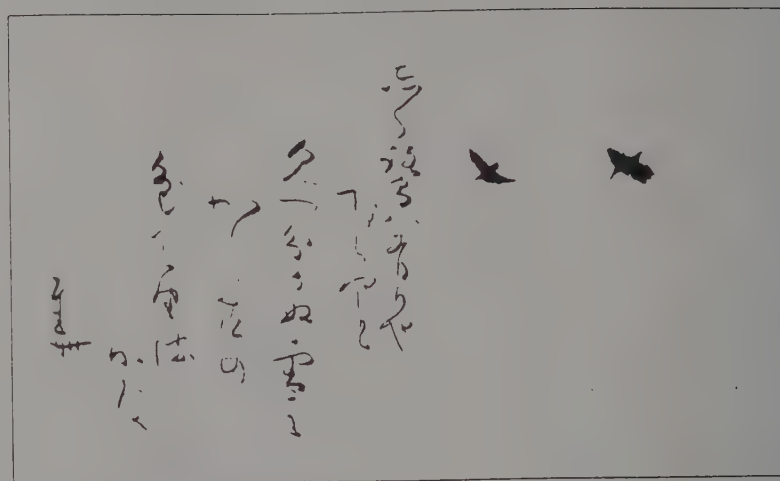
*'An old pond:
Bashō jumps in,
The sound of water.'*

Bashō (1644-1694) is credited with having introduced that unique Japanese contribution to the art of poetry, *haiku*. The *haiku* poem, particularly associated with Zen, is a seventeen-syllable three-line poem characterised, not only by its brevity, but also by its mysterious eccentricity. Sengai loved Bashō's *haiku*.

Whilst the sound of a frog leaping into a pond may seem familiar to the point of prosaic, to Sengai that brief isolated sound may be likened to *satori*. It is the poet who transforms the everyday life of ordinary people into something unique. It is the poet who sees poetry in what, to the ordinary senses, is without poetry.



47



48



49

47. THE ORCHIDS

Ink on paper
111.0 x 48.4 cm

我恋ふ蘭のかをりや水の音 月

INSCRIPTION

*'My love is
The fragrance of an orchid
And the sound of water.'*

The fragrance of the orchid recalls the encounter between a Confucian poet and a Zen master. The Confucian came to the Zen master one day and asked: 'What is Dao (Way)?' The Zen master said: 'Your teacher has a fine saying in his *Analects* (the principal Confucian text). Dao is given in it.' 'To what do you refer?' asked the Confucian. The Zen master replied: 'It goes, I have nothing to hide from you. Dao is everywhere. If you have eyes you can see it.' The Confucian poet failed to understand. However, later the two were walking in the mountains when they encountered the wild laurel in full bloom. The Zen master, pointing at the laurels, asked: 'Do you smell the fragrant laurel?' 'Yes, I do,' replied the Confucian. 'There,' said the Zen master, 'I have nothing to hide from you. Herein you enter.'

The reference to the sound of water in Sengai's inscription probably refers to Bashō's *luiku* and the splash of the frog entering the water — the moment of enlightenment.

48. RAVENS

Ink on paper
30.6 x 49.9 cm

志ら鶺鴒有りやなしやと見へ分かぬ
雪にからすの色は律疏かな 月

INSCRIPTION

*'A white heron on snow is hard to distinguish;
But the ravens,
How they stand out.'*

In our quest for understanding we tend to categorise. Here Sengai is symbolising the doctrine of identity and difference and emphasising identity through differences.

49. THE BULLFINCH (*USO*)

Ink on paper
28.5 x 56.5 cm

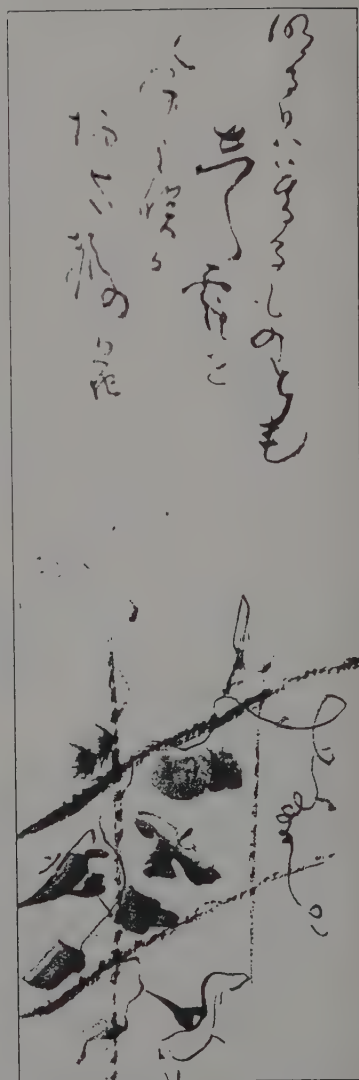
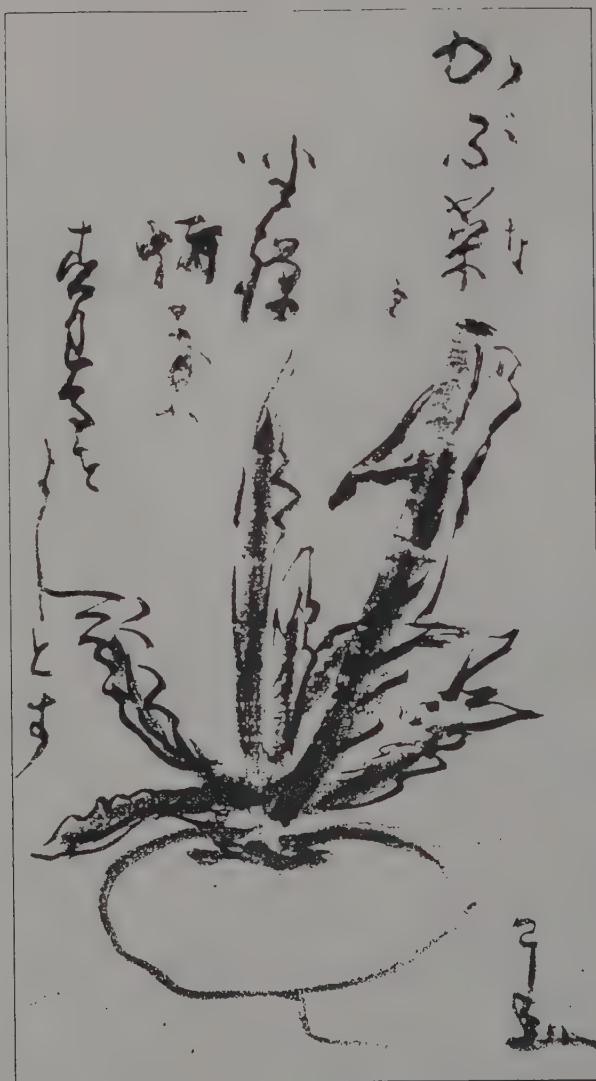
世の卯そと己のか誠おかへてやれ
祈らすとても神や守らむ

INSCRIPTION

*'Let the world's uso (lie) be exchanged
for your makoto (truth); then,
whether you pray or not to the God, he
will look after you.'*

Each year at midnight on the seventh day of the first month, a festival known as the *Uso-gae* or the Bullfinch-exchange takes place at Temman-gū Shintō Shrine in the city of Fukuoka. On this occasion, the shrine-keepers issue small wooden figures of the bird of passage to worshippers who bring their old models from the preceding year in exchange. Each year one of the newly issued figures is gold-coloured and the recipient of that figure is assured good fortune for the coming year. This shrine is dedicated to the spirit of Sugawara Michizane (see cat. no. 22).

The word *uso* in Japanese also means lie. Sengai is here advising the Shintō worshippers to trade the lies (*uso*) of the world with *makoto* (truth) in their hearts. It is thought that if truth is thus exchanged for lies, then good will surely prevail.



50. THE TURNIP

Ink on paper
46.5 x 25.5 cm

かぶ菜と坐禪坊主ハ
すわるをよしとす 川

INSCRIPTION

*'Turnips and Zen monks,
Are best when they sit well.'*

This is a classic example of Sengai making the most unlikely of comparisons. Turnips taste best when they are plump and somewhat flat at the seat. Zen monks are best qualified for further training when they are able to sit well, cross-legged in meditation: thus the comparison.

51. THE MORNING-GLORY

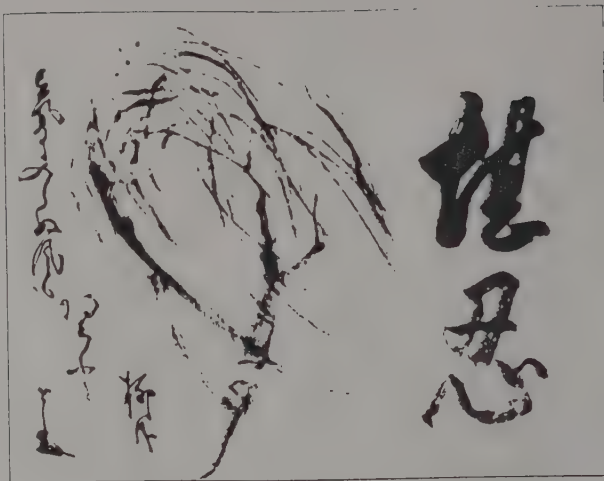
Ink on paper
83.2 x 27.2 cm

明る日ハ暮るものとも志ら露を
命に咲か 阿さ顔の花

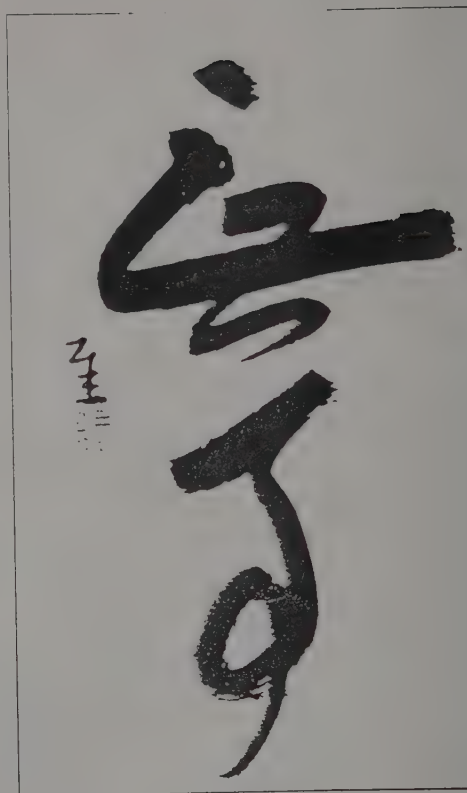
INSCRIPTION

*'The dawning day dies
Like the know-nothing crystal dew.
Does it bloom with real life,
The morning-glory?'*

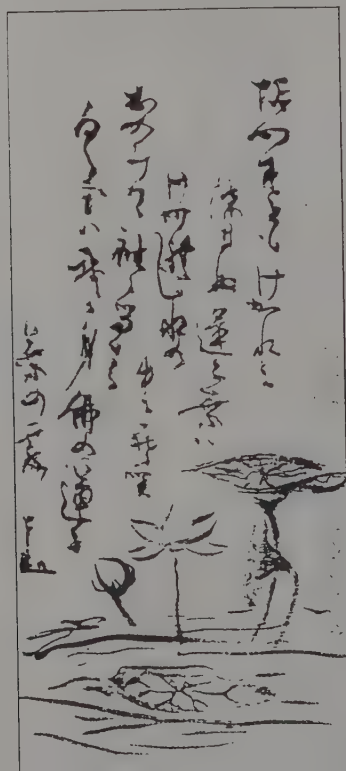
A flowering morning-glory entwines a bamboo fence. Sengai's poem celebrates the morning-glory, which blossoms beautifully in the morning but withers helplessly in the evening.



52



54



52. THE WILLOW TREE

Ink on paper
46.8 x 59.9 cm

堪 忍
氣に入らぬ風も阿るふに御説 尾

INSCRIPTION

*'Patience —
Winds there may be
That do not please,
But the willow!'*

The fluent, pliable willow tree that bends to the east when the wind blows from the west, and bends to the west when the wind blows from the east, symbolises the impotence of forces that oppose nature. Sengai is suggesting that all artificial policies and strategies must be avoided and that the supreme art of living is to trust oneself — that is, nature.

53. LOTUS

Ink on silk
71.7 x 30.8 cm

垢かすともけかれに染まぬ蓮子葉ハ
けか禮し水の中にこそ咲
おかみつ、袖に留まる白玉ハ
我が身佛の蓮子葉の露 尾

INSCRIPTION

*'However muddy the water is, the lotus
retains its purity; indeed it blooms
beautifully just because it grows out of mud.'*

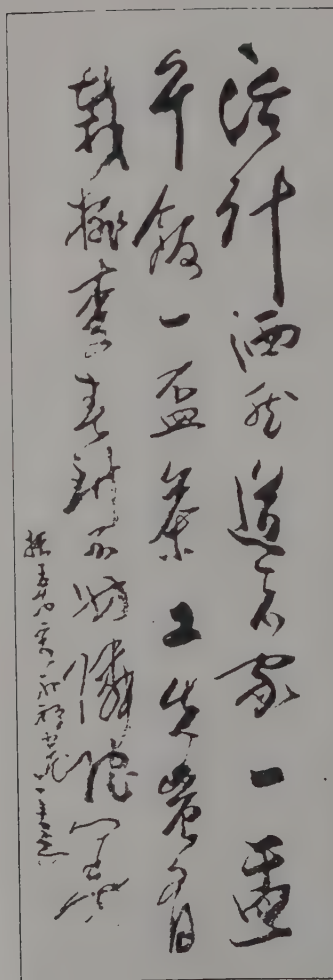
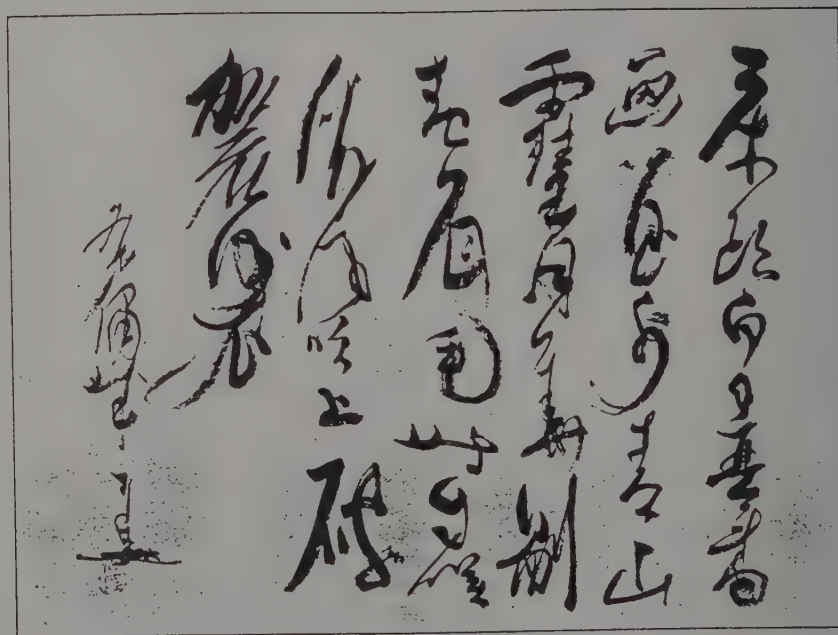
*'The clear drops shed on my sleeves
Are the dew drops on the
Lotus leaves of the Buddha-body.'*

54. BUJI

Ink on paper
36.2 x 21.3 cm

無 事 尾

These two strongly and spontaneously written characters read *buji*, which literally translated means 'no work' or 'no event'. In the Zen sense *buji* means free from fear or free from anxiety, that is clearing the mind. The Zen master Rinzai said: 'The true aristocrat is the one who is *buji*': aristocrat here meaning the spiritual aristocrat and thus not having any social connotations.



55. A SOLITARY LIFE

Ink on paper

85.7 x 29.5 cm

話計酒然道者家 一盞牛飯一盞茶
工夫豈石栽桃李 存到不妨隣院草
扶桑殿初輝窗 厓

INSCRIPTION

'A simple life in a humble hut
is that of an unworldly one,
A bowl of rice, a cup of tea.
So absorbed in meditation,
How is he to find time for planting
peaches and apricots?
(No matter,) the flowers in the
neighbour's yard
Will blossom just the same.'

56. MY TATTERED SURPLICE

Ink on paper

47.7 x 64 cm

床頭白日琴書滿 屋外青山雪月華
剔起眉毛時自咲 清風吹上破袈裟
右偶成 厓

INSCRIPTION

'In the sun on my porch, I look at pictures and writings;
Outside, the green mountains, the snow, the moon,
and cherry flowers.
I lift my head, and smile to myself;
The pure wind blows my tattered surplice.'

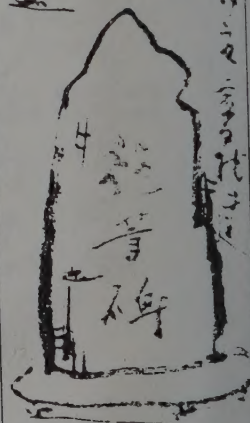
聖天子

一更係之原

著

香兒

燒



卷之五

59

佛舎人乞種
山僧
石牛

58

應無所住而生其心

3

子思子伯氏名

57

57. CALLIGRAPHY

Ink on paper
111.5 x 25 cm

一年三百六十日使得人間十二時

INSCRIPTION

'There are 360 days in a year and I am master of them: I use the twelve hours of the day which is a human institution!'

What Sengai is saying here is that he is not a slave of time, since time is a human means of organisation and identity. In Zen the instant is an eternity.

58. CALLIGRAPHY

Ink on paper
99 x 27.5 cm

應無所住而生其心 庄

INSCRIPTION

'Cherish a thought which does not attach itself to anything.'

This is a quote from the *Diamond Sutra*. It implies the absolute purity of a pure thought, that is, one uncontaminated by associations. A thought that has no associations, no abode, is one that is awakened in the depths of that subjectivity which is Emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

59. SENGAI'S POEM

ON HIMSELF
Ink on paper
118.3 x 28.6 cm

佛曾入天網八萬 孔門子弟亦三千
山僧獨坐藤蘿石 時見浮雲過眼前
偶成

INSCRIPTION

*'The Buddha's congregation is said to have numbered eighty thousand;
Confucius, too, had disciples, as many as three thousand.
I sit alone on the vine-entwined rock
Occasionally looking at the clouds that pass by.'*

Both Buddha and Confucius were great teachers of mankind with huge numbers of followers and disciples. Sengai notes how very busy these great thinkers and leaders must have been and, in doing so, reflects upon his own position. Happily unencumbered by such responsibilities he sits on a rock watching the clouds go by.

It is, however, a subjective picture of his own life for in reality, as the retired abbot of a most important temple, he received endless streams of callers and visitors from all walks of life. Often these visitors would ask for calligraphy and drawings and on one occasion, so irritated was he by their constant requests, that he stuck his head out of the window and announced his own absence.

60. FAREWELL MONUMENT
TO THE BRUSH

Ink on paper
121.8 x 27.5 cm

墨染の袖の襟に筆棄て
岸にし愧をさらす白波
天保壬寅初夏鹿白院建
絶筆碑 庄

INSCRIPTION

*'This black-robed one abandons his brush
Into Sode-no-Minato (Harbour of Sleeves)
For the wind and waves to wash away
The shame of all his writings.'*

*'Erected at Kyohaku-in
Year of the Dragon of Tempō' (1832).*

Sengai had a stone monument with this inscription erected outside his hut. He describes himself as this 'black-robed' one and declares his intention to abandon unworthy writings. However, he was not to succeed in this quest, happily, for no one would take him seriously!

SENGAI

The Zen Master

KQ-091-252

