

RELIGION, SOLITUDE, AND NATURE IN THE POETRY OF
THE ZEN MONK RYŌKAN

by

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ABSTRACT

The Zen monk Ryōkan (1758-1831), who referred to himself by the self-deprecating term taigu or Great Fool, is widely known in Japan through folktales which stress the eccentricities of his character. His extremely individualistic calligraphy, with its spidery unrestrained lines, is most highly valued, and new forgeries still appear frequently. He is less famous for his poetry of which there remain extant some 1,400 waka or Japanese poems and approximately 450 kanshi or Chinese poems. Although Ryōkan's name has become known in the West through the Zen boom of the past twenty-five years, very little concrete work has been produced in either translation or criticism.

It is my intent in this thesis to examine the concepts of religion, solitude, and nature, through a study of Ryōkan's Chinese poems. I feel that these three elements are central to an understanding of Ryōkan's life and poetry. As for religion, Ryōkan was a Sōtō monk who studied under the Zen Master Kokusen of Entsu-ji in Bitchū in what is today Okayama Prefecture. After gaining enlightenment and receiving inka, the formal recognition of his spiritual attainment, he wandered for five years before returning to his native province where he eventually settled in a hermitage on Mt. Kugami. Unlike the majority of monks of his day, he

continually maintained himself by means of takuhatsu or mendicancy. This aligns him with his poetic model Han-shan (Cold Mountain) and other illustrious Zen monks such as Shūhō Myōchō who lived under the Gōjō bridge for twenty years before founding Daitoku-ji. Ryōkan writes in one of his poems, "living in tranquility that is being a monk." The theme of solitude works in harmony with rather than in opposition to the idea of society in these poems. The religious seeker is trained by the sangha or community of monks, and supported by alms from the lay community, but the Zen Way relies most heavily on individual devotion, strength of discipline and self-power (jiriki). Nature is the unifying element of the poems for it represents to the poet, spontaneous existence, before contrivances and dualities: Mother Nature as a mirror for self-Nature.

In addition to the study of these major thematic elements, this thesis includes some forty-five poems, the majority of which have not previously been translated.

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Chapter I: A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

NOTES ON TRANSLATION

On the subject of the translations themselves, I have obviously endeavoured, in all ways, to remain as close as possible to the originals. Each line of translation represents a line of the original poem. The exception here is in certain poems with seven character lines. Where it has been necessary to break up a line for typing purposes, an indentation of the second half has been used to indicate the line length of the original.

With respect to syntax, I have also attempted to make the organization of phrases correspond to the original wherever possible. The restriction here, has been the limit not only of English grammatical possibility, but also of acceptable modern usage. I might note that the English translations which appear in this paper are far closer to the Chinese originals than the syntactical acrobatics necessary in Japanese kundoku^a transliteration.

In the case of punctuation, I have deferred to the Chinese convention of unpunctuated texts. Here it is a question of poetic style. There has yet to be devised a system of punctuation for reading poetry, analogous to musical notation. Just how long a pause is a period, comma, semi-colon, or question mark? I have preferred to use spaces of varying length to denote caesura. Thus a pause is regulated by the length of time the eye

takes to pass over a space. The inverse occurs in the ball-bouncing poem quoted in Chapter V, p.52, where the words of the final line have been run-on in imitation of countless childrens' playtime songs we have all heard. I have also chosen to omit the question mark, relying instead upon the reader's attention to grammatical structure to recognize the interrogative.

As for capitalization, the traditional rules apply in the case of personal names and the designation of geographical locations. However, since much of Chinese poetry is composed of parallel lines or parallel couplets, I have capitalized the initial letter of each line beginning a parallel couplet, each line preceded by an end-stopped line, and the initial letter of each first line. In the case of the term Zen,^b it is spelled with a lower case letter when it refers to dhyāna, or meditational practice, and with a capital letter when it refers to the school of Buddhism.

It is my belief that the language of poetry must be immediate and vibrant if the reader is to elicit its meaning. If the language of a poem does not capture our attention, if it is not alive to us, then the meaning within is not transmitted. For this reason, I have tried as much as possible to translate these poems in modern spoken language. Ryōkan's poems like those of Han-shan,^c whom he admired, alluded to and sometimes imitated, were simply written in often colloquial language. I have tried

to preserve that element. This approach however, is neither new nor unique. In the mid-1950's Gary Snyder translated one line of a Han-shan poem, "Go tell families with silverware and cars / What's the use of all that noise and money?"¹ And that interpretation transmits all the force of the original.

As for the choice of poems within this text, when I began working on Ryōkan's poems, my selection was based simply on what I was capable of reading. As my language skills improved and the topic became more clearly defined, I would read and translate poems which clearly contained elements important to the themes of religion, solitude, or nature. I have, in the case of this paper, been more concerned with what a particular poem might tell us about these major elements of Ryōkan's life than whether that poem stood well on its own as a poem either in Sino-Japanese or in translation. From the Man'yōshū^d on down, the Japanese have always been great compilers and editors of poetry. Most of the poems included in this work I am sure would fall into their category of zasshi^e or miscellaneous poems. Throughout this paper, the criteria for selection and arrangements of poems has been subjective, and many poems could be moved freely from one category to another, but that is due to the nature of the poems and the fact that the major elements of religion, solitude and nature are so closely connected. After each section of text, I have included a selection of poems on that particular

theme, as the impetus for this work has been as much the translation of Ryōkan's poetry as the completion of this thesis. Each poem in this paper is suffixed by a number in square brackets which refers to the number of the poem in Tōgō Toyoharu's work Ryōkan Zenshū (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1959).

If there is error in these translations it is the result of linguistic conservatism and my meagre skills as a translator.

Chapter II: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents the kanshi^f or Chinese style poems of the Japanese Zen monk Ryōkan, whose life spanned the years from 1758 to 1831. The literature of this age is commonly referred to as chūsei bungaku,^g or medieval literature, yet this nomenclature reveals nothing about the literature itself or the times in which Ryōkan lived. In 1853, a mere twenty-two years after Ryōkan's death, Commander Perry sailed into the harbour of Uraga, ending Japanese isolationism and ushering the modern age into Japan. Ryōkan's lifetime, from the middle to late Tokugawa era, was a time of great political, economic, and cultural change in Japan, yet these changes are not directly reflected in his writing. The fact is that Ryōkan's life and art stood still against the flow of these changes, preserving ancient traditions against modernity, and it is this archaism which is the most characteristic element of his poetic work.

But Ryōkan was not just a poet. To this day in Japan, he is most widely and commonly known as the wildly eccentric monk who passed his days playing ball bouncing or hide and seek with the village children, or who cut a hole in the roof of his hut to allow a young bamboo plant to grow and flourish. It is through the oral folk tradition that Ryōkan and the spirit which he represents have become an essential element of Japanese consciousness.

Ryōkan is also known as a highly individualistic calligrapher. The distinct yet spidery lines of Chinese characters or the alternately bold or fine flowing lines of his cursive script have long been fascinating models for aspiring calligraphers and counterfeiters alike. All his extant pieces are valued as national art treasures. Whatever the admitted shortcomings of Ryōkan's poetic style, whether it be the overuse of archaic epithets in his waka, or Japanese style verse, or the reliance on the T'ang dynasty poet Han-shan (j. Kanzan) in his kanshi, Ryōkan's calligraphy visually illustrates the spirit which is the major reason for his continued popularity as a folk figure and poet. It is this idealistic spirit of the man, as much as anything, which accounts for the upsurge in scholarly interest in Ryōkan in Japan, and which makes him the subject of this thesis.

Ryōkan's poetic output was quite high; in all some 1,400 waka and over 450 kanshi have been collected. It is from the latter that I have made my translations and on them based this study of major thematic elements. There are several reasons why it is not surprising that Ryōkan should have written poetry in Chinese. The first is the historical origin of the Japanese written language in the Chinese language, then the fact that the Japanese aristocracy, and the rising middle-class of the Tokugawa era were educated in the Chinese classics. Ryōkan was the son of a nanushi^h or village administrator and so received a good Confucian education. The third most important reason for Ryōkan's facility in Chinese is

the fact that he was a Buddhist monk. From the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the early 12th century, monks travelled back and forth between China and Japan, effecting religious change and carrying on trade. Because of the great difference in the spoken languages of the two countries, these monks relied to a great extent on the written word to give and receive their training. Poems were composed for social occasions such as meetings and farewells, as well as to signify the intuitive understanding of philosophical principles. During the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries in Japan, an extensive and important body of Buddhist poetry was produced under the name Gozan bungakuⁱ or "Literature of the Five Mountains."

Ryōkan chose not to ally himself with this or any other particular school of kanshi writing. Instead, he eschewed the use of artifice, neglected rhyme schemes and often wrote poems of uneven line length. The result was a style all his own. As a model, he favoured the poems of the T'ang Zen recluse Han-shan, who lived in about the 7th or 8th century in the T'ien-t'ai^j range in Chekiang^k province at a place called Cold Mountain. Han-shan took the same characters for his name, so that they have come to represent a state of mind as much as a geographical location. His poems, written in the colloquial language, were based on his daily activities, on the wild mountains around him and on his meditations. Ryōkan's similar interests made him a fitting heir to Han-shan.

Along with Burton Watson, I believe that Ryōkan stood apart from the historical literary developments of the Tokugawa era. His poetic preference was for T'ang poetry, while that of his contemporaries moved towards Sung works. Other poets aimed at perfecting technique and adapting kanshi to fit the Japanese experience, while Ryōkan ignored stylistics. Most important of all, Ryōkan lived alone in the country away from urban social and literary activities, centered historically in Kyoto and Kamakura, and later in Edo and Nagasaki. Although the development of Neo-Confucianism in early Tokugawa times can be said to have created the atmosphere where Ryōkan was introduced to Chinese learning in his childhood, his poetry clearly reflects his Buddhist monk's training. It is not for the technical proficiency of his poetry that Ryōkan is remembered but for the intensity of his unique and individual feeling.

Ryōkan is the religious name of Yamamoto Eizō,¹ born in 1758 in the village of Izumosaki^m in Echigoⁿ province (present-day Niigata-ken). As mentioned previously, Ryōkan's father was a village administrator, and as the eldest son, Ryōkan would have followed in his footsteps. For reasons which are not clear, however, Ryōkan, at the age of seventeen, shaved his head and entered a local monastery. One day the Zen Master Kokusen,^o on his way through Echigo, stopped at the monastery where Ryōkan was living. Ryōkan followed him to the Entsu-ji,^p his monastery in Bitchū^q in what is today Okayama prefecture, and underwent

training there for ten years. After finishing his training, and after Kokusen's death, Ryōkan wandered about for five years. He returned to his home province following the death of his father in 1795, and around 1804 settled on the slopes of Mt. Kugami,^r in a hut named gogō-an,^s the "Five Measures Retreat." The hut had been named by the former inhabitant, after his daily food allotment from the monastery on the mountain. Ryōkan lived at the Gogō-an for thirteen years, and during this period wrote some of his best kanshi. While at the Gogō-an, Ryōkan supported himself by alms-taking and gathering wild edible plants. When he became so old that he could no longer move freely on the mountainous terrain, Ryōkan moved to a shrine at the base of Mt. Kugami and ended his life in an old storehouse in the village of Shimazaki.^t During these final years he formed a friendship with a Buddhist nun named Teishin^u (1798-1872), who compiled a collected of Ryōkan's waka entitled Hachisu no tsuyu,^v "Lotus Dew" (1835).

Like Han-shan, Ryōkan wrote poems in simple language on everyday subjects that concerned him directly. He describes his wanderings, daily meditation, seasonal changes with their pleasures and hardships, and the natural beauties which surrounded his retreat. The major thematic elements which I have chosen to discuss - religion, solitude, and nature, are all inextricably connected. Religion is the attitude of the poet, solitude the mode of maintaining and intensifying this attitude and nature is the example and the backdrop against which Ryōkan lived his life.

Chapter III: RELIGION

孰謂我詩詩
我詩是非詩
知我詩非詩
始可與言詩

[192]

tare ka iu wa ga shi o shi to
wa ga shi wa kore shi ni arazu
wa ga shi no shi ni arazu o shitte
hajimete tomo ni shi o iubeshi

Who called my poems poems
My poems aren't poems
When you understand that my poems aren't poems
Then we can begin to talk about poetry

This terse poem, presented in impeccable Zen style, is no doubt the most direct statement of Ryōkan's poetics. It is also a suitable starting point for a discussion of Ryōkan's religious practice as it is expressed in his poetic work.

"Who called my poems poems / My poems aren't poems." This first couplet negates the primary assumption of the discerning mind: that this grouping of words, formally structured, is poetry. Ryōkan's poems are best characterized by their intentional avoidance of the four tones and their indifference to the rules which governed rhyme scheme. It is recorded that Ryōkan most disliked "Talk that smacked of pedantry, elegance or enlightenment; writing poems on assigned topics; the poetry of poets, the writing of

writers, and chefs' cooking."¹ He sought and admired that which was spontaneous and natural in preference to that which was excessively refined or bound by social strictures.

"When you understand that my poems aren't poems / Then we can begin to talk about poetry." This second couplet resolves the tensions of positive and negative by leaping beyond these meaningless abstractions of the dualistic mind: the Zen view. What Ryōkan says is that he will be able to discuss poetry only with one who understands that his poems are not poetry in the commonly accepted meaning of the word. To really understand, is to transcend the distinction; "this is poetry" and "that is not poetry." In this attitude, Ryōkan is exhibiting "rightview", (Sammā Ditthi, the first step on the Eightfold Noble Path of Buddhism), because only that which surpasses form (the "form is emptiness" of prajñā-pāramitā literature) is true poetry.

Looking beyond form is a poetic ideal which sets Ryōkan apart from other kanshi poets who sought to write poems that were stylistically indistinguishable from T'ang and Sung dynasty models which they so admired. Ryōkan's ideal, however, is also a paradox because the method of learning to compose Chinese poetry has always been by recourse to the great poems of the past. If we understand Ryōkan's non-poetry as the rejection of form and poetical devices, then what can we consider to be the essence of his poetry?

可_レ 恰_レ 好_レ 丈_レ 夫
 閒_レ 居_レ 好_レ 題_レ 詩
 古_レ 風_レ 擬_レ 漢_レ 魏
 近_レ 体_レ 唐_レ 作_レ 師
 斐_レ 然_レ 其_レ 為_レ 章
 加_レ 之_レ 以_レ 新_レ 奇
 不_レ 寫_レ 心_レ 中_レ 物
 雖_レ 多_レ 復_レ 何_レ 為

[205]

awaremubeshi kōjōbu
 kankyo shite yoku shi o daisu
 kofū wa kan gi ni nazorai
 kintai wa tō o shi to nasu
 hizen to shite sore shō o nashi
 kore ni kuwauru ni shinki o motte su
 shinchū no mono o utsusazunba
 ōshi to iedomo mata nan o ka nasan

How admirable a fine gentleman
 at his leisure he likes to compose poetry
 Old style verse patterned on Han and Wei
 for modern style he makes T'ang his teacher
 With such elegance he creates his compositions
 improving them with novel flourishes
 But since he doesn't set down what's in his heart
 however many his thoughts may be what do they amount to

In the final couplet of this poem, Ryōkan suggests that this
 "fine gentleman['s] poetry fails because of his inability to
 overcome form and verbally transmit shinchū no mono, "things of
 the heart." Ryōkan felt that all Japanese poetry went downhill
 after the Kokinshū^W ("Collection of Ancient and Modern Times,"
 a.d. 905), and that the pinnacle of Japanese poetic accomplishment
 lay in the Man'yōshū ("Myriad Leaves Collection," early eighth
 century) because the quality of expression found therein

surpassed mere poetic structure. If we examine the latter text, we find that both Books XI and XII contain poems on the subject of tadashi shincho o noberu,^x "speaking as directly as possible about the emotions." It has been said of Ryōkan some ten centuries later: shi no kokoro no ugoki ga konpon da.^y "The movement of the heart of the poem is fundamental."²

It is because Ryōkan rescues poetry from mere formalism that we can consider his kanshi as a realistic and reliable source of information regarding the spiritual life that moved his heart. Edward Sapir once defined religion as "... Man's never-ceasing attempt to discover a road to spiritual serenity across the perplexities and dangers of daily life."³ This definition applies in particular to Ryōkan because it is precisely through living within the transient and finite that he aims to grasp the meaning of the enduring and absolute. His poems were written not for poetry meetings or other social gatherings, but rather to set down the joys of perceiving the wonders of nature, the bitterness of the cold winters, the hardships of obtaining enough food to stay alive, and the personal intuitive realization of Buddhist philosophical teachings.

In his works, Ryōkan gives an admirable account of himself as a man in general, and as a Zen monk in particular. Kera Masakazu,^z one of Ryōkan's disciples wrote: shi ga heizei no gyōjō shikachu ni guzai su,^{aa} "The everyday conduct of the

Master is superbly exhibited in his Chinese and Japanese poems."⁴
 The term "everyday conduct" brings to mind a statement attributed
 to the Chinese Zen Master Baso Dōitsu^{bb} (ch. Ma-tsu Tao-i, 707-
 786): "Everyday Mind -- that is the Way."⁵ Indeed the following
 poem by Ryōkan illustrates that the Buddha's Way is not to be
 found in the intellectual perception of philosophical principles.

縱讀恒沙書
 不如持一句
 有人若相問
 如實知自心

[338]

tatoi gōsha no sho o yomu to mo
 ikku o jisuru ni shikazu
 hito arite moshi aitowaba
 nyojitsu ni mizukara no kokoro o shire

Though you read as many books as the sands of the Ganges
 they're not equal to intuiting one true phrase
 If someone were to ask what it is
 I'd say Just know your own heart

"Know your own heart:" this is the core of Ryōkan's
 Buddhism, the goal of his spiritual life, just as the verbal
 transmission of what moves the heart is the essence of his poetry.

The character "shin," also read "kokoro," translated here as "heart" is generally interchangeable with the term mind. In the context of Zen Buddhism and particularly within the context of Ryōkan's poetry, it is best understood in the sense of Mind: shinbutsu^{cc} (the Mind is Buddha), busshin^{dd} (Buddha Mind; detached from good and evil), or bussho^{-ee} (Buddha Nature: the capacity for enlightenment inherent in all sentient beings). Zen is often referred to as shinshu^{-ff}, the Sect of Mind or the Intuitive Sect.

In sectarian terms, Ryōkan was a monk of the Sōtō^{-gg} (ch. Ts'ao-tung) line of Zen which was established in Japan by Dōgen Kigen^{hh} (1200-1253), but which originated in China where its founders were Tozan Ryōkaiⁱⁱ (ch. Tung-shan Liang-chieh, 807-869) and Sōzan Honjaku^{jj} (ch. Ts'ao-shan Pen-chi, 840-901). In the following poem Ryōkan traces his spiritual lineage even further back, to the very introduction of Zen into China:

慧 晚 一 直 適 游 是 吾
 命 接 坐 上 魏 梁 非 師
 從 曠 經 嵩 々 々 小 來
 茲 達 九 峰 々 々 々 東
 傳 土 年 頂 憐 遇 緣 土

[111]

wa go shi todo ni kitaru
 korē shōshō no en ni arazu
 ryō ni asobu mo ryō gu sezu
 gi ni yuku mo gi tare ka awareman
 tadachi ni suho no itadaki ni nobori
 ichiza kunen o hetari
 ban ni kōtatsu no shi ni sesshi
 emyo kore yori tsutau

Our Master's coming from the East
 wasn't motivated by a trivial cause
 First he travelled to Liang but
 Liang wouldn't accept him
 then he went to Wei but
 who would sympathize with him there
 Straight away he climbed to the summit of Mt. Sung
 and once seated he remained nine years
 In his old age he met a man of vast attainment
 through him the wisdom-life was passed on

The Master who came to the East is Bodhidharma (ch.
 P'u-t'i-ta-mo, j. Bodaidaruma)^{kk} and the man of "vast attain-
 ment" is Eka^{ll} (ch. Hui-k'o, 487-593), who cut off his arm
 while standing in the snow outside Bodhidharma's cave to prove
 his resolve to become the latter's disciple. Although on
 the surface this poem serves to trace the history of the
 transmission of Zen, it also contains three points of importance
 in defining Ryōkan's own religious practice.

The first: "And once seated remained nine years,"
 indicated the great determination with which Bodhidharma applied
 himself to the practice of dhyāna, or Zen meditation. He was
 called the "wall-gazing Brahmin," and his nine years of
 meditation on Mt. Sung is basis of one of the most enduring of
 Zen legends.

Next: as with Bodhidharma's wall-gazing, Eka's cutting off
 his arm while standing in the snow exemplifies the fierce desire
 to overcome the delusions of the world in search for Absolute
 Truth. Both these patriarchs of Zen are examples to be emulated

by other seekers of the Way, such as Ryōkan.

Finally and perhaps most important of all is the statement of the final line of the poem; "through him the wisdom-life was passed on." Although it is recorded that Bodhidharma passed on the Lankāvatāra-sūtra (j. Ryōga kyo)^{mm} to Eka, this fact is usually overlooked and it is the traditional Zen view that what Bodhidharma transmitted to Eka on Mt. Sung was the same thing which Buddha Śakyamuni passed on to Mahākāśyapa on Vulture Peak: the Dharma.

A special transmission outside the scriptures, not founded upon words and letters; by pointing directly to man's (own) mind, it lets him see into (his own true) nature and (thus) attain Buddhahood.⁷

As for the Dharma, it is to be transmitted from mind to mind.⁸

This of course is the essential definition of Zen which sets it apart from other schools of Buddhism. The Sect of Mind, Zen (ch. Ch'an, skrt. dhyāna) is based on meditation aiming at ultimate knowledge or Wisdom (skrt. prajñā) of Absolute Nature realized intuitively. Ultimate Truth (Dharma) is passed on from Master to disciple, "from mind to mind," when the disciple has attained intuitive knowledge of his own nature through meditation rather than through the study of scriptures. This is the school of Buddhism to which Ryōkan belonged. After ten years training at Entsu-ji in Bitchu in what is today Okayama Prefecture, Ryōkan gained enlightenment and received inka,ⁿⁿ the formal recognition

of his attainment, from his Master Kokusen. Thus Ryōkan carried on the line of direct transmission from Buddha to Kāśyapa, from Bodhidharma to Eka.

君 抛 經 卷 低 頭 睡
 我 倚 蒲 團 學 祖 翁
 蛙 聲 遠 近 聽 不 絕
 燈 火 明 滅 疎 簾 中

[366]

kimi wa kyōkan o nageuchi kōbe o tarete nemuri
 ware wa hoton ni yotte soō o manabu
 aseī enkin kiku ni taezu
 toka meimessu soren no uchi

You lay aside the sūtra book bow your head and sleep
 I sit on a cushion and imitate the Patriarch
 Frog voices near and far heard without end
 Lamplight flickering behind the rough screen

In this poem, Ryōkan contrasts his copying the Patriarch Bodhidharma, by sitting in meditation, with the intellectual approach of sūtra-study, or trying to learn the mind with the mind. This is a reiteration of Ryōkan's statement quoted earlier that reading as many books as the sands of the Ganges is not equal to a single phrase intuitively realized. Reading the sūtra's is intellectual, while the dhyāna of the Patriarch is intuitive. Ryōkan's poems abound with references to the practice

of dhyāna or zen meditation, as well as references to the act of simple sitting which must be interpreted in the light of the poet's Zen practice as well as Dōgen's shikantaza^{oo} or "just sitting."

Dhyāna, zazen, seated meditation, is the cornerstone of Ryōkan's Buddhist practice, for it is through zazen that he seeks to "know (his) own heart," that is: to realize "his own true nature." His reliance on zazen makes Ryōkan a traditionalist. In Japan, the followers of the Sōtō line of Zen are more numerous than those of the Rinzai^{pp} line, but it is not as well known in the West because its methods are conservative rather than outwardly curious. Rather than the shouts and beatings sometimes associated with kōan interviews, and rather than insist on enlightenment as a sudden intuitive flash, Sōtō Zen stresses a life of zazen and places emphasis on the practice of zazen as enlightenment in and of itself.

靜夜虛窓下
打坐擁衲衣
膺与鼻孔對
其當肩頭垂
窓自初月出
雨歇滴猶滋
可恰此時意
寥々只自知

[125]

seiya kyosō no moto
daza shite noi o yosu
hozo wa biko to taishi
mimi wa kentō ni atatte taruru
mado shirami tsuki hajimete idete
ame yande shitatari nao shigeshi
awaremubeshi kono toki no i
ryōryō tada mizukara shiru nomi

A still night beside the empty window
 sitting down I arrange my robe
 Navel in line with nostrils
 ears even with the tops of the shoulders
 Window whitened in the sudden moon
 the rain has stopped but the trickling goes on
 What a pity the feeling of this moment
 boundless and lonely is sensed only by me

Here Ryōkan's words echo Dōgen Kigen's text, Fukanzazengi,⁹⁹

"General teachings for the Promotion of Zazen."

In the sitting place, spread a thick square cushion and on top of it put a round cushion. Some meditate in paryanka (full cross-legged sitting) and others in half paryanka. Prepare by wearing your robe and belt loosely. Then rest your right hand on your left foot, your left hand in your right palm. Press your thumbs together. Sit upright. Do not lean to the left or right, forward or backward. Place your ears in the same plane as your shoulders, your nose in line with your navel. Keep your tongue against the palate and close your lips and teeth firmly. Keep your eyes open. Inhale quietly. Settle your body comfortably. Exhale sharply. Move your body to the left and right. Then sit cross-legged steadily. Think the unthinkable. How do you think the unthinkable? Think beyond thinking and unthinking. This is the important aspect of sitting.⁹

That Ryōkan alludes to Dōgen in this poem is significant because Dōgen's Zen is known as the zen of "just sitting". Dōgen is considered to be one of Japan's greater religious Minds, as the complexity and depth of his work Shōbōgenzō^{rr} ("Treasury of Knowledge Regarding the True Dharma") will indicate. He was uncompromising in his efforts to establish a pure Zen tradition in Japan, and rather than intermingle his Zen with other religious practices, Dōgen chose to spend most of his time in small

rural temples. However well known Dōgen may be as a metaphysical mind, the strength of Sōtō Zen in Japan is most certainly due to his emphatic advocacy of diligent religious practice. To Dōgen, the practice of zazen in which the posture expresses the unity of mind and body is paramount; there is no enlightenment apart from the practice of zazen.

The most important point in the study of the Way is zazen. Many people in China gained enlightenment solely through the strength of zazen. Some who were so ignorant that they could not answer a single question exceeded the learned who had studied many years solely through the efficacy of their single-minded devotion to zazen. Therefore, students must concentrate on zazen alone and not bother about other things. The Way of the Buddhas and Patriarchs is zazen alone. Follow nothing else.¹⁰

昼出城市行乞食
 夜歸岩下坐安禪
 轟然一衲與一鉢
 西天風流實可憐

[272]

hiru wa jōshi ni idete yuku yuku jiki, o koi
 yoru wa ganka ni kaerite zashite zen ni yasunzu
 shōzentari ichinō to ippatsu to
 seiten no furyu jitsu ni awaremubeshi

At midday I go begging food in the walled town
 At night I return beneath the cliffs
 and calmly sit in zen
 How simple one robe and one bowl
 Truly admirable the refinement of the Western sky

In this poem's illustration of Ryōkan's simple monastic existence, the ideas of mendicancy and eremitism, two other major elements of Ryōkan's Buddhism are introduced. Historically, Buddhism is an outgrowth of the tradition of the parivrajaka or wanderer who left society in order to find liberation. The Buddhist bhikṣu or monk (literally beggar) wandered for eight months of the year and stayed in monasteries established by kings or wealthy patrons during the rainy season.

Eventually monasteries became more or less permanent dwelling places for monks because they encouraged the practice of meditation and the study of scriptures. With the introduction of Buddhism into China came a new development in Indian monasticism: a form of monastic agriculture to support the communities of those who sought the Way. Without denying the support provided by the lay community in both China and Japan, the practice of alms-taking (takuhatsu^{ss}) became a ritual exchange in which the monk learned humility and the laymen acquired merit through self-denial. The shift to self-support did not mean that monks devoted less time to their religious practice, for the Zen monk finds lessons everywhere. As the Zen Master Hyakujo Ekai^{tt} (ch. Po-chang Huai-hai) once taught: "A day without work is a

day without food.¹¹ And the Master Nansen^{uu} (Ch. Nan-ch'uan) said: "Your everyday mind, that is the Way."¹²

The need to establish large monasteries as training centres inevitably led Buddhism into contact with the wealthy and powerful ruling classes in both China and Japan. In Japan of the Kamakura era, the success of Eisai^{vv} in establishing the power and legitimacy of the Zen school by influencing the ruling shogun Minamoto Yoritomo^{ww} is a prime example of the tendency. In the Muromachi period, when Zen was at its height, monks often wielded great political and economic power. To the present day, Zen monasteries house art treasures of immeasurable value.

Without denying the importance of the monastery as a training ground for those who sought religious salvation, it must be noted that Ryōkan held to the spirit rather than the letter of the Buddha's Law. After ten years of formal training, Ryōkan took to wandering like the monks of early Indian Buddhism. Rather than take up a position as the head of a monastery, he moved back to his home province, lived in an empty hermitage, and sustained himself by begging a little rice and foraging wild plants. He eschewed the monastic structure in order to live as simply as possible.

後進之龜鏡也。
 古聖之先蹤，
 友溪声山色，
 觀開花落葉，
 經行樹下，
 獨起草庵，
 凡離癡眷族，

oyoso chi no kenzoku o hanare, sōan ni dokusho
 shi, juka ni kinhin shi, kaika rakuyō o kanji,
 keisei sanshoku o tomo to suru wa, koshō no
 shenshō nari, koshin no kikan nari.

In general, leaving the doting family to live alone
 in a grass shack, doing walking meditation beneath the
 trees, contemplating the blooming flowers and falling
 leaves, becoming a friend of the stream's voice and the
 colours of the mountains, this is the precedent of the
 ancient sages and the model for the ages to come.¹³

This passage from Ryōkan's Kanjūjikimon^{xx} ("Comments on Re-
 ceiving Food") echoes his earlier phrase: "How simple one robe
 and one bowl." In making wandering and begging his way of life,
 Ryōkan holds fast to the tradition and spirit of the early shramanas,
 monks who relied on nothing more than a handful of rice, a tree
 overhead for a roof, and the ground beneath them for a seat, in
 their search for ultimate truth.

Many people today think that the making of statues and building of pagodas cause Buddhism to prosper. This, too, is not so. No one gained the Way by erecting lofty buildings that have gleaming jewels and gold ornaments. This merely is a good action that gives blessings by bringing lay treasures into the Buddha's world. Although small causes can have large effects, Buddhism does not prosper if monks engage in such activities. If you learn one phrase of the Buddha's teaching or practice zazen even for a moment in a thatched hut or even under a tree Buddhism will flourish.¹⁴

撥草參玄知幾歲
 忽思道人歸旧社
 到得歸來無別事
 雲在嶺頭水脚下

[328]

kusa o harai_gen ni sanji ikusai naru o shiru
 tachimachi dojin o omoite kyusha ni kaeru
 itariete kirai betsuji nashi
 kumo wa reito ni ari mizu wa kyakuka

Clearing weeds and treading the path to the arcane
 I realize how many years it has been
 Suddenly to think of my teacher takes me back
 to the old shrine
 I went and I returned it was nothing special
 Clouds resting on the mountain peaks
 water flowing underfoot

"I went and I returned it was nothing special," this line contains the essential meaning of the poem. For years, Ryōkan

has harboured thoughts of the old shrine. To go back is to rid himself of an attachment to memories and see the place as it is naturally.

"Nothing special" is indeed the most accurate definition of Ryōkan's lifestyle: not striving for possession of material things, nor blindly grasping at religious salvation. One robe, one bowl, an old stick, and a thatched roof overhead: these are very minimal means with which to carry out the business of living. For Ryōkan living itself was simple and straightforward. Ikkyū Sōjun^{yy} put it this way:

We eat, excrete, sleep, and get up;
 This is our world.
 All we have to do after that -
 Is to die.¹⁵

Chapter IV: POEMS ON RELIGION

出 家 離 國 尋 知 識
 一 衲 一 鉢 凡 幾 春
 今 日 還 鄉 問 旧 友
 多 是 名 殘 苔 下 塵

還鄉

[256]

kyō ni kaeru
 ie o ide kuni o hanarete chishiki o tazune
 ichinō ippatsu oyoso ikushun zo
 knon hi kyō ni kaette kyūyū o toeba
 ōku wa kore na o taika ni nokosu no chiri

Returning to My Birthplace

I left my house and province in search of a teacher
 One robe one bowl how many springs has it been
 Today I returned to my birthplace to seek my old friends
 Most of them are no more than names in dust beneath the moss

家有猫与鼠
 総は一蒙皮
 猫飽白昼眠
 鼠飢玄夜之
 猫見有何能
 覘生屢中機
 鼠子有何失
 穿器也太非
 器穿而可補
 逝者不復歸
 若問罪輕重
 秤可傾猫見

[107]

ie ni neko to nezumi to ari
 subete kore ichimohi
 neko wa aite hakuchū ni nemuri
 nezumi wa uete genya ni yuku
 byōji ni nan no nō ka aru
 sei o ukagai shibshiba ki ni ataru
 soshi nana no shitsu ka aru
 utsuwa o ugachi mata hanahada hi nari
 utsuwa wa ugataruru mo oginaubeshi
 yuku mono wa mata kaerazu
 moshi tsumi o keichō o towaba
 hakari wa byōji ni katamukubeshi

In my house there is a cat and a mouse
 both are fur bearing animals
 Overfed the cat naps in the white daylight
 starving the mouse scampers in the black night
 What skill does the kitten possess
 when spying a life her aim is often true
 What fault does the mouse bear
 he gnawed through a jar and does a bad job at that
 The hole in the jar can be repaired
 life taken away cannot be restored
 If you ask about relative guilt
 The scales tip towards the cat

晨朝持杖錫
 乞食入市廛
 市廛非曩昔
 池台半變遷
 面松霜後風
 囊重老夫肩
 行過旧遊地
 松柏鎖寒烟

[210]

shinchō jōshaku o ji shi
 kojiki shite shiten ni iru
 shiten chuseki ni arazu
 chitai nakaba hensen su
 men wa harawaru sōgo no kaze ni
 fukuro wa omoshi rofu no kata
 yukite kyūyū no chi o sugureba
 shohaku ni kanen tozasu

Early morning I take my staff and
 come into town beggin food
 Town's not the same as the old days
 the pavilion and hills half changed
 My face swept by the wind after a frost
 begging bag heavy on this old shoulder
 I pass by my old hangouts
 pines and oak locked in a chain of cold mist

佛是·自·心·作
 道·亦·非·有·為
 報·爾·能·信·受
 勿·傍·外·頭·之
 北·轉·而·向·越
 早·晚·到·着·時

[119]

hotoke wa kore jishin no sa
 michi mo mata ui ni arazu
 nanji ni hozo yoku shinju shite
 geto ni sote yuku koto nakare
 nagae o kita ni shite etsu ni mukau mo
 itsu ka tochaku no toki aran ya

The Buddha's a creation of your own mind
 the Way has no reality either
 I tell you you'd better believe this
 don't go siding with other opinions.
 The carriage shafts point north
 you're headed for Chekiang in the south
 when do you think you'll get there

寒夜空齋裡
香烟時已遷
戶外竹百竿
床上書幾篇
月出半窓白
蟲鳴四隣禪
箇中何限意
相對也無言

[202]

kanya kūsai no uchi
koen toki sude ni utsuru
kogai ni take hyakukan
shojo ni sho ikuhen
tsuki idete hansō shirami
mushi naite shirin shizuka nari
kochu kagen no i zo
aitaisuru mo mata kotoba nashi

A cold night in the empty room
in the incense smoke time is already moving on
Outside the door a hundred stalks of bamboo
on my bed just a few books
The moon comes out half the window white
insects chirping the surroundings sunk in dhyāna
in the midst of this what limit can there be to my thoughts
in the face of it again I am without words

我昔學靜慮
 微々調氣息
 如是經星霜
 殆至忘寢食
 縱得安閑處
 蓋緣修行力
 爭如達蘇作
 一得即永得

[120]

ware mukashi jōryo o manabi
 bibi to shite kisoku o totono
 kaku no gotoku shite seiso o he
 hotondo shinshoku o wazururu ni itaru
 yoshi ankan no tokoro o uru mo
 kedashi shukyo no chikara ni yoru
 ikade ka shikan musa ni tasshi
 ittoku sunawachi eitoku naran ni wa

Formerly I learned silent meditation
 faintly regulating the breath
 In this way I passed the stars and frost
 almost forgetting about sleep and food
 If there is tranquility which can be attained
 it lies in the strength of discipline
 How can this match the attainment of nonbeing
 in which anything once attained is eternal

方外君莫羨
 知足心自平
 誰知青山裏
 不有虎与狼

[337]

hōgai kimi urayamu koto nakare
 taru o shireba kokoro onozukara taira nari
 tare ka shiran seizan no uchi
 tora to okami to no arazaru o

Don't envy me for abandoning the world
 when your understanding is sufficient
 Mind is tranquil of itself
 Who knows that beyond the blue mountains
 there aren't tigers or wolves

問古々已過
 思今々亦然
 展轉躑躅跡
 誰愚又誰賢
 隨緣消時月
 保己待終焉
 飄我來此地
 回首二十年

[183]

inishie o toweba inishie sude ni sugu
 ima o omoeba ima mo mata shikari
 tenten shite shōseki nashi
 tare ka gu mata tare ka ken naru
 en ni shitagatte jigetsu o keshi
 onore o tamotte shuen o matsu
 hyō to shite ware kono chi ni kitari
 kōbe o meguraseba nijūnen

When you ask about the past it's already gone
 when you think of the present it's gone too
 Whirling about without leaving a trace
 who is foolish and who is wise
 In accordance with causality killing time
 sustaining one's self only to await the end
 Blown in on the wind I came to this place
 before I turn my head twenty years have gone by

昨日異今日
 今晨非來晨
 心隨前緣移
 緣與物共新
 知過則速改
 執則是非真
 誰能守枯株
 直待霜為鬢

[204]

sakuhi wa kono hi to kotonari
 konshin wa raishin ni arazu
 kokoro wa zenen ni shitagatte utsuri
 en wa mono to tomo ni arata nari
 ayamachi o shireba sunawachi sumiyaka ni aratame yo
 shitsu wa sunawachi ze mo shin ni arazu
 tare ka yoku koshu o mamotte
 tadachi ni shimo bin to naru o matan ya

Yesterday is different than today
 this morning is not tomorrow morning
 Mind moves in keeping with former causes
 causality renews itself together with matter
 When one realizes error mend it promptly
 if you have attachments even the right isn't real
 Who would hold on to a withered stump*
 just waiting for the frost to cover their sideburns

* old customs, old ways

我 是 西 天 老 僧 伽
 時 跡 國 上 不 記 春
 幾 領 布 衫 朽 烟 霞
 一 枝 烏 藤 永 隨 身
 行 遠 碧 澗 吟 歌 曲
 坐 見 白 雲 出 嶺 烟
 悲 底 浮 世 名 利 客
 生 涯 區 々 走 風 塵

[293]

ware wa kore seiten no rōsōgya
 ato o kugami ni kuramashite haru o shiru sazu
 ikuryō no fusan enka no gotoku kuchi
 isshi no utō nagaku mi ni shitagau
 yuku yuku hekigan ni tozakarite kakyoku o ginji
 zashite miru hakuun no rinjun ni izuru o
 kanashii kana fusei myōri no kyaku
 shogai kuku to shite fujin ni hashiru

An old monk of the western sky*
 I can't reckon the springs since my tracks
 vanished on Mt. Kugami
 How many robes have faded like the smoke and haze
 I always carry the same black stick
 I walk along chanting a song that fades in the distance
 with the green river
 I sit watching the white clouds rise up
 in the towering mountains
 How pitiful to be a visitor in this floating world of
 fame and profit
 an empty lifetime spent running about in the windblown dust

* refers to India, where Buddhism originated

迷悟相依成
 理事是一般
 竟日舞字經
 終夜不修禪
 鶯囀垂楊岸
 犬吠夜月心
 更舞法當情
 那有心可傳

[142]

meigo wa ai yorite naru
 riji wa kore ippan
 kyojitsu muji no kyo
 shuya fushu no zen
 uguisu wa saezuru suiyō no kishi
 inu wa hoyu yagetsu no mura
 sara ni hō no jō ni ataru nashi
 nan zo kokoro no tsutōbeki aran

Delusion and enlightenment come into being interdependently
 the universal and the particular are identical
 All day the wordless sūtra
 all night unpractised zen
 The nightingale calls on the weeping willow bank
 the dog howls in the village under the night moon
 Since there is no dharma which corresponds to the emotions
 what thoughts could I have to transmit

Chapter V: SOLITUDE

靜住是出家

[288]

sei ni j̄usuru wa kore shukke

Abiding in tranquility that is being a monk...

Solitude was a necessary condition of Ryōkan's life. The solitude expressed in his poems stands as a philosophical principle, as the practical manifestation of religious doctrine, and as an aesthetic tenet in line with the Japanese cult of wabi.

The broad meaning of the term shukke (leaving the family to become a monk), carries the implication of leaving society with its class structure, laws, custom, profits and losses, pleasures and distractions. While ideally the sangha may be a superior community to the lay community, it is nonetheless a social organization, and for the monk to simply choose the former in favour of the latter would be merely dualistic substitution. If Buddhism is to be experienced in the life of the individual, then the path towards realization of absolute wisdom (prajñā) is necessarily solitary. To abide in solitude, however, does not lessen the monk's sense of compassion for society. His position is not that of the "śrāvaka, disciplined in Tao, enlightened, but on the wrong path,"¹ but rather that of the Bodhisattva who vows not to enter Nirvana until such time as all sentient beings have been saved. This is Ryōkan's stance. As a Zen monk, through his solitary, self-disciplined practice, he sought illuminated wisdom not to save himself, but human society, and indeed, all living things.

Unlike many Taoist sages and Tibetan lamas, Ryōkan did not live in total physical seclusion. From Gogō-an, the hermitage where he lived for some thirteen years, Ryōkan could see the monks' quarters at Honkaku-in^{zz} and Hōshu-in^{aaa}. During this period of his life, Ryōkan supported himself by begging in the local town which was within an easy day's journey to and from Gogō-an.

This is not to say that he did not live in solitude. Mt. Kugami, on Japan's western coast was far from the dense population and busy social scene in the capital. The open woods of Kugami were not the wilds of the T'ien-t'ai range in backcountry China, yet they were a peaceful enough location for Ryōkan's hermitage. Besides, as Chiao-jan,^{bbb} a poet-monk of the T'ang era in China said, the purpose was to "Seclude the mind, not the movements."²

Han-shan, the poet-recluse whom Ryōkan most admired, abandoned the world entirely, choosing to write his poems here and there among the cliffs. Chiao-jan, on the other hand, constantly struggled to resolve the dichotomy of art and aestheticism, to the extent that he gave up poetry. But for Ryōkan, the tension between the human and the ascetic was neither to be overcome nor stoically endured; it was no more than a fact and facet of his life as a monk. This tension acts as a positive force in Ryōkan's poems, His compassion for humanity sustains the intensity of his soli-

tude and keeps it from the level of mere selfish quietism.

In the midst of solitude, Ryōkan maintains an awareness of society and in the midst of the human world, his inner tranquility endures.

夢 破 五 夜 鐘
 欲 答 兩 不 道
 老 此 紅 塵 中
 我 問 子 胡 為
 任 彼 白 雲 峰
 問 我 師 胡 為
 路 逢 有 識 翁
 乞 食 到 市 朝
 夢 中 問 答

[82]

mūchū mondo

jiki o kōte shichō ni itari
 michi ni yushiki no okina ni au
 ware ni tou shi nan sure zo
 kano hakuun no mine ni sumu ya to
 ware wa tou shi nan sure zo
 kono kojīn no naka ni oyuru ya to
 kotaen to hosshite futari nagara iwazu
 yume wa yaburaru goya no kane

Dream Mondo

Begging food I headed into town
 along the way I met an old man
 He asked Master what are you doing
 living among these white-clouded peaks
 I asked Old man what are you doing
 growing older in this red dust
 I wanted to answer neither spoke
 the dream was shattered by the fifth watch bell

As a solitary ascetic, Ryōkan's position is somewhat unique.

Like his poetry, his existence is natural; free from externally imposed constraints and unregulated by empty formalities. From

this stance, Ryōkan criticizes everyone openly: laymen, monks,
and even himself.

我見多求人
不異蚕自纏
渾為愛錢財
心身不暫閒

[399]

ware ōku o motomuru hito o miru ni
kaito no mizukara matou ni kotonarazu
subete senzai o oshimu go tame ni
shinshin shibaraku mo hima narazu

When I see grasping men
no different than the silkworm bound up in itself
All for the love of money and property
not a moment's rest for mind nor body...

我見出家見
晝夜浪喚呼
祇為口腹故
一生外邊驚

[2]

ware shukke no ji o miru ni
chuya midari ni kanko su
tada kōfuku no tame mo yue ni
isshō gaihen ni hasu

When I see monks these days
noon and night reciting mindlessly
Just for their mouths and bellies
a lifetime spent chasing externalities...

雙脚等閒伸
 夜雨草庵裡
 何知名利塵
 誰問迷悟跡
 火邊一束薪
 囊中三升米
 騰々任天真
 生涯懶立身

[185]

shōgai mi o tateru ni monōko
 toto tenshin ni makasu
 nōchū sanjō no kome
 rohen issoku no takigi
 tare ka towan meigo no ato
 nan zo shiran myori no jin
 yau soan no uchi
 sokyaku tokan ni nobu

All my life too lazy to amount to much
 I entrust my fortunes to the truth of Heaven
 In my bag three sho of rice
 by the fire a bundle of kindling
 Why ask for signs of delusion or enlightenment
 what do I know of the dust of fame and profit
 Rainy nights in my thatched-roof hut
 I stretch out my legs anyway I like

Ryōkan's self-criticism is at once both real and ironic.

From the layman's perspective, what has Ryōkan accomplished?

His nature ("too lazy to amount to much") has apparently brought
 him little in his old age save a hut that is no more than four
 walls, and a dearth of material comforts. Yet in fact, in
 Ryōkan's case, the attribute of being "Too lazy to amount to
 much" is a positive one. If one follows the monk's path with
 the mind of an avaricious layman, the result is a monk of simi-
 lar character. This is the inference of the second reference:

that the monks of Ryōkan's time placed too high a value on the trappings of religious life. The true follower of the Way is as unconcerned with delusion and enlightenment as he is with fame and gain.

The last couplet of the final poem brings the lesson home. While meditating through the long rainy nights, Ryōkan stretches out his legs when they get stiff. Just as polishing a tile won't make a mirror, merely sitting in lotus posture or emptily mouthing sūtras won't make a Buddha.

In one poem, Ryōkan defines himself as neither layman nor monk. Living thus outside these social orders, where does Ryōkan come by his freedom? The second line of the third poem provides us with an answer: "I entrust my fortunes to the truth of Heaven." The character 任 maka(su), to entrust, appears quite frequently in Ryōkan's poems, as does another character, anti-thetical in meanings: 捨 sute(ru), to abandon. Philosophically, these concepts, central to the poet's ascetic existence, are the converse of the layman's grasping and scheming to control his own life. To abandon is not only to cast off, but also to be freed from, and so in Ryōkan's poetry, this concept is synonymous with simplicity and purity.

雨晴雲晴氣復晴
 心清遍界物皆清
 棄世棄身為閑者
 初月与花送余生

[309]

ame hare kumo hare ki mata haru
 kokoro kiyoku henkai mono mina kiyoshi
 yo o sute mi o sute kanja to nari
 shogetsu to hana to ni sei o okuru

The rain clears clouds clear the air clears too
 My thought is pure the whole world's beings cleansed
 Cast off this world abandon the self I become
 a free man
 The new moon and flowers accompany the rest of my life

Leaving the personal family and the society of men, shaving
 one's head, giving up one's possessions; all these can be clas-
 sified in the category of abandoning. "Cast off the world
 abandon[ing] the self" are equivalent at a level of philosophical
 detachment.

That humans are endowed with the necessities of a life is
 a statement often attributed to the Zen Master Dōgen. This re-
 alization on the part of both Dōgen and Ryōkan indicates their
 understanding of the concept of "entrusting." This notion con-
 tains no element of separateness of self and other. To entrust
 does not mean to yield one's responsibility to some abstract

power. As it appears in Ryōkan's poetry, it contains on the contrary, no differentiation (bumbetsu),^{ccc} but rather relies on the strength of co-existent naturalness.

不 人 吾 蝶 花 蝶 花
 知 亦 亦 來 開 舞 舞
 從 不 不 時 時 心 心
 常 知 知 花 蝶 尋 招
 則 吾 人 開 來 花 蝶

[340]

hana wa chō o maneku ni kokoro naku
 chō wa hana o tazunēru ni kokoro nashi
 hana hiraku toki chō kitari
 chō kitaru toki hana hiraku
 ware mo mata hito o shirazu
 hito mo mata ware o shirazu
 shirazu to mo teisoku ni shitagau

The flower has no mind to invite the butterfly
 the butterfly doesn't intend to visit the flower
 When the flower blooms the butterfly comes
 when the butterfly arrives the flower opens
 Me I don't understand people
 people don't know me
 Although unknowing acting in accord with the laws of Heaven

While Ryōkan did live outside of the mainstream of social activity, he was not in any sense anti-social. His ultimate religious goal of salvation for all sentient beings is a philosophical indication of this aim. But what was the reality of his interaction with humanity? The answer to this question is

clearly revealed through Japanese oral folk tradition.

While few Japanese today are familiar with Ryōkan's calligraphic art, and even fewer still with his waka and kanshi poetry, people never fail to identify Ryōkan as the monk who played with children. Shūhō Myōchō^{ddd} lived under the Gojō^{eee} bridge and associated with beggars. Ikkyū Sōjun preferred to frequent brothels and keep the company of prostitutes. Ryōkan on the other hand, played games with the village children. The philosophical concepts of abandoning and entrusting are but theory. Playing games with the children was part of Ryōkan's real life and Buddhist practice.

While beggars, through choice or circumstance, ignore the social attachments to wealth and status, and prostitutes disregard the traditional moral values, both remain aspects of the dichotomy of rich/poor, moral/immoral. Children are unconcerned. Like the butterfly and the flower of the previous poem, they are in a state of mushin^{fff} (ch. wu-hsin) or naturalness. They behave in a manner which is without differentiation. They react with little consideration for convention because they have not yet succumbed to the process of socialization. It is for this reason that Ryōkan rejoices in their company. Unlike the monks and laymen of Ryōkan's poems, children live with an unbridled sense of optimism and unfettered spontaneity in an eternal present ruled only by the setting sun.

袖裏繡毬直千金
 謂言好手毬等匹
 竹園中竟自君相問
 一 二 三 四 五 六 七

[43]

shūri no shū kyū atai senkin
 omou ware kōshu tohitsu nashi to
 kochū no ishi moshi ai towaba
 hii fu mii yō mu na

In the sleeve of my robe there's a ball
 worth a thousand in gold
 Say my skill at ball-bouncing can't be beat
 If you ask the inner meaning in this
 Onetwothreefourfivesixseven

青陽二月初
 物色稍新鮮
 此時持鉢盂
 得々遊市廛
 兒童忽見我
 欣然相將來
 要我寺門前
 携我步遲々
 放盂白石上
 掛囊綠樹枝
 于此鬪百草
 于此打毬見
 我打渠且歌
 我歌渠打之
 打去又打來
 不知時節移

[108]

行人願我笑
 因何其如斯
 低頭不忘伊
 道得也何似
 要知箇中意
 元來只這是

seiyo nigatsu no hajime
 busshoku yaya shinsen nari
 kono toki hotsu o jishi
 tokutoku to shite shiten ni asobu
 jidō tachimachi ware o mi
 kinzen to shite ai hikiite kitaru
 ware o yōsu jimon no mae
 ware o tazusae ho chichitari
 hachi o hakuseki no ue ni hanachi
 fukuro o ryokuju no eda ni kaku
 koko ni hyakysō o tatakawase
 koko ni kyūji o utsu
 ware uteba kare shibaraku utai
 ware utaebakare kore utsu
 uchisari mata uchikitatte
 jisetsu no utsuru o shirazu
 kōjin ware o kaerimite warau
 nani ni yotte ka sore kaku no gotoki to
 teitō shite kore ni kotaezu
 iiuru to mo mata ika ni nisen
 kochū no i o shiran to yōseba
 ganrai tada kore kore

Blue sun start of the second month
 colour of things a bit more new and fresh
 That's when I pick up my begging bowl
 and high-spirited head for town
 The children suddenly spying me
 noisily band together and
 Catch me by the monastery gate
 crowding 'round slowing my steps
 I set my bowl on the white stones
 hang my bag on a green tree branch
 Here we play tug-of-war
 here we play ball-bouncing
 When I hit the ball they sing along
 when I sing out they hit the ball

Ryōkan's heart was one of very few to match the strength and resolve to find a way to that which Han-shan called Cold Mountain. It is widely accepted today that indeed Cold Mountain describes a poet, a mental state, and a geographical location. So it is that Ryōkan's solitary quest for ultimate wisdom leaves the world of man and enters the world of Nature.

Chapter VI: POEMS ON SOLITUDE

風物凄々屬秋關
 游子關心行路難
 永夜幾驚枕上夢
 江聲錯作雨聲看
 玉川驛旅宿

[251]

Tamagawa eki no ryojuku
 fubutsu seiseitari shuran ni zoku su
 yushi kokoro ni kakawaru koro no nan
 eiya iku taki ka odoroku ochinjō no yume
 kōsei ayamatte usei no kan o nasu

Stopping by Tamagawa Station

Caught in the thick of dreary autumn wind and rain
 a wanderer my heart troubled by hardships on the road
 Endless nights how many times so frightened by some dream
 as to mistake the falling rain for the sound of the river

坐時聞落葉
 靜住是出家
 從來斷思量
 不覺淚沾巾

[288]

zashite toki ni rakuyo o kiku
 sei ni jūsuru wa kore shukke
 jūrai shiryō o tachi
 oboezu nanda kin o uruosu

Sitting I hear the falling leaves
 abiding in tranquility that is being a monk
 Until now I had cut off discursive thought
 without realizing it tears moisten my collar

廬雖在孤峯
身如浮雲然
江村風月夕
孤錫靜叩門
人間淡心事
牀頭濃茶烟
遮莫秋夜長
剪燭南窓前

[186]

ro wa kohō ni ari to iedomo
mi wa fuun no gotoku shikari
kōson fugetsu no yube
koshaku shizuka ni mon o tataku
ningen shinji awaku
shotō saen komayaka nari
samoaraba arē shuya no nagaki
shoku o kiru nanso no mae

Though my hut is on the towering mountain
my body is like the floating clouds
The river village on a windy moonlit night
My stick tapping softly past gates
All human thoughts and things so fleeting
as smoke rising thickly from the floor
Through the autumn night however long
trimming the wick on the candle by the south window.

閃電光裏六十年
 世上榮枯雲住還
 巖根欲穿深夜雨
 燈火明滅古窓前

[324]

senden kōri rokujū nen
 sejō no eiko wa kumo no ōkan
 gankon ugatan to hōssu shinya no ame
 tōka meimessu su kosō no mae

A flash of lightening - sixty years
 life's ups and downs like clouds coming and going
 The late night rain trying to pierce the base of the cliffs
 lamp flickering by the lone window

結宇碧巖下
 薄言養殘生
 花落幽禽舍
 林靜春日長
 更無人事促
 時見樵采行
 蕭灑抱膝坐
 遠山暮鐘聲

[271]

u o musubu hekigan no moto
 isasaka koko ni zanshō o yashinau
 hana ochite yuki fukumi
 hayashi shizuka ni shite shunjitsu nagashi
 sara ni jinji no unagasu naku
 toki ni shosai no yuku o miru
 shosai hiza o daite zaseba
 enzan boshō no koe

I bound my eaves beneath the blue cliffs
 somehow I'll live out my life here
 Mountain birds peck at the fallen petals
 forest silent on long spring days
 Not the slightest pressure of human affairs
 at times I see the loggers passing by
 In a flood of silence I sit hugging my knees
 distant mountain evening bell voice

草堂深掩竹籟東
 千峰萬壑絕人蹤
 遙夜地爐燒楮
 只聞風雪打寒窓

寒夜

[303]

kan ya

sōdō fukaku ōu chikukei no higashi
 senpō bangaku jinshō o tatsu
 yōya jiro ni kottotsu o taki
 tada kiku fusetsu no kansō o utsu o

Cold Night

My thatched shack is well sheltered
 by the bamboo valley to the east
 a thousand peaks ten thousand valleys
 man's' footprints fade away
 Far into the night a stump burns in the hearth
 I only hear the driven snow
 beating on the cold window

一 路 萬 木 裡
 千 山 杳 靄 間
 先 秋 葉 正 落
 不 雨 岩 常 暗
 持 籃 采 木 耳
 携 瓶 汲 石 泉
 自 非 迷 路 子
 誰 能 到 此 間

[169]

ichiro banboku no uchi
 senzan yoai no aida
 aki ni sakinjite ha masa ni ochi
 ame furazushite iwa tsune ni kurashi
 kago o jishite mokuji o tori
 kame o tazusaete sekisen o kumu
 meiro no ko ni arazaru yori wa
 yoku kono kan ni itaru naken

A single road amid ten thousand trees
 a thousand mountains in the hazy mist
 Not autumn yet leaves already fall
 no rain yet the cliffs are always dark
 Carrying a basket I pick clouds' ears*
 bearing a jug I draw water from the rocky spring
 Apart from those who have lost their way
 nobody makes it to this place

* the english name for the mushroom mokuji is
 "judas' ear" however, because of the inappropriateness
 of this term, I have substituted the name of
 another edible mushroom which is similar in
 appearance.

終日乞食罷
 歸來掩蓬扉
 爐燒帶葉柴
 靜讀寒山詩
 西風吹夜雨
 颯々灑茅茨
 時伸双脚臥
 何思又何疑

[170]

shūjitsu kojiki shi yami
 kaeri kitatte hōhi o ōu
 ro ni taiyō no shiba o taki
 shizuka ni kanzanshi o yomu
 seifū yau o fuki
 satsusatsu ni shite hōshi ni sosogu
 toki ni sōkyaku o nobashite fusu
 nani o ka omoi mata nani o ka utagawan

At day's end finished begging
 I come home and shut the brushwood door
 In the fire burning branches wreathed with leaves
 I quietly read Han-Shan's poems
 The west wind gusting the night rain
 rustles as it soaks the thatch
 Sometimes I stretch out both legs & lie back
 what should I think about & what should I doubt

寒 炉 深 撥 灰
 孤 燈 更 不 明
 寂 寞 過 半 夜
 只 聞 遠 溪 聲

[221]

kanro fukaku hai o harau
 koto sara ni akiraka narazu
 jakumaku to shite hanya o sugi
 tada kiku enkei no koe

Stirring deep ashes in the cold hearth
 not a single coal glimmers
 Lonely past midnight
 all I hear is the voice of the far valley stream

遠山飛鳥絶
閑庭落葉頻
寂莫秋風裡
獨立緇衣人

[151]

enzan hichōtāe
kantei rakuyō shikiri nari
jakumakutari shūfū no uchi
dokuritsu su shie no hito

Flying birds fade into the far mountains
in the quiet garden leaves fall and fall
In the desolate autumn wind
standing alone a man in a black robe

荒村乞食了
 歸來綠岩辺
 夕日隱西峰
 淡月照前川
 洗足上石上
 焚香此安禪
 我亦僧伽子
 豈空流年渡

[270]

kōson o kojiki shi owari
 kaeri kuru ryokugan no hotori
 yūhi saiho ni kakure
 tangetsu zensen o terasu
 ashi o arau sekijō ni nobori
 kō o taite koko ni zen ni anzu
 ware mo mata sogya no shi
 ani munashiku ryunen o wataran ya

After begging food in the rundown town
 I head back to the region of the blue cliffs
 The evening sun hides among the western peaks
 the pale moon lights the river before me
 I wash my feet and climb up on a boulder
 light some incense and sit tranquilly in zen
 After all I am a monk
 how could I vacantly ford the stream of time

疎雨蕭々苦竹林
 終宵孤坐幽窓下
 賊打草堂誰敢禁
 禪片蒲团把將去
 逢賊

[305]

zoku ni au

zenpan hoton torite mochisaru
 zoku sōdō o dasu tare ka aete todomen
 shusho koza su yūsō no moto
 sou shōshotari kuchiku no hayashi [305]

Carrying off my zen stick* and cushion
 the thief robbed my thatched hut
 Who dared stop him
 All night sitting alone by the dim window
 drizzling rain lonely forest of bamboo

* Watson translates zenpan as "zazen cushion" however, it was described to me by a Japanese monk as a chin rest. It was used to keep monks from dropping off to sleep during extended periods of meditation.

鳥語情不堪
 其時臥草庵
 桜桃紅爛々
 楊柳正毵々
 旭日脚青嶂
 晴雲沈綠潭
 誰知出塵俗
 馭上寒山南

[279]

chōgo jō taezu
 sono tōki sōan ni fusu
 ōto wa kurenai ranran
 yōryū wa masa ni sansan
 kyokujitsu seishō ni fukumare
 seiun ryokutan ni shizumu
 tare ka shiran jinzoku o idete
 gyoshite kanzan no minami ni nobori shi o

Birds chattering unbearably
 I lie back in my thatched hut
 Cherry trees a blaze of flowers
 Willows trailing feathery leaves
 The sun slips from the mouth of the blue mountains
 bright clouds sink into the green waters
 Who'd know I've left the dusty world behind
 climbing the South Face of Cold Mountain *

* This poem is virtually a copy of a Han-Shan poem. See Iriya Yoshitaka, Kanzan (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1973) p. 38.

吾家寒山詩
 勝於談經卷
 書放屏風上
 時々読一篇

[316]

wa_ga ya no kanzanshi
 kyogan o danzuru ni masaru
 shoshite byōbu no ue ni hanachi
 tokidoki yomu koto ippen su

In my house I've got Han-Shan's poems
 they're better than discussing sutras
 I scrawl them on the walls
 from time to time I read one or two

Chapter VII: NATURE

Mountains and rivers, the whole earth,
all manifest forth the essence of being.¹

Of the many varied elements of Ryōkan's poetic work, Nature occupies a central position. It is at once a theme relying upon detailed specifics and a broader, more general, poetic concern. In these poems, Nature is the backdrop against which human activities take place, so that its laws are placed in contradistinction to those of society. Because of his choice to live outside of human society, and in close proximity to the natural world, an empathy develops between Ryōkan and the realm of Nature. It is while dwelling within the world of Nature that this poet-recluse seeks to discover his true self-being. The literary aesthetic of Ryōkan's poems, characterized by simplicity and frankness, is a direct reflection of his ascetic existence.

As stated previously, the alternative of living in Nature, rather than within human society, is made without the distinction that one way is superior or inferior to the other. It is simply more conducive to a life dedicated to meditation, to avoid the desires and distractions that abound in the human universe.

As one recent American poet succinctly phrased it,

Class-structured civilized society is a kind of mass ego.
To transcend ego is to go beyond society as well. "Beyond"
there lies, inwardly, the unconscious. Outwardly, the
equivalent of the unconscious is the wilderness.²

Ryōkan's life in the objective world of Nature can perhaps best be characterized by a simplicity which endures to the present as an intrinsic element of such Japanese cultural arts as Nō drama, flower arranging, and tea ceremony. The poet who defined his religious existence in such phrases as: "One robe one bowl,"³ and "Abiding in tranquility [that is being a monk]."⁴ realized that simplicity was essential to spiritual attainment and that material poverty led to spiritual richness. In the Buddhist quest for the direct experience of absolute wisdom, the evanescence of all material phenomena is a basic philosophic tenet.

Both Ryōkan's poetic art and his life point toward the need to cut through secular wealth and power, as well as spiritual materialism, in order to reach the goal. Leaving home and the family of man, giving up personal possessions, abandoning the self - these are prerequisite to that state where as Dōgen said: "Both Mind and body are dropped."⁵

In Ryōkan's poetry, we see a directness of purpose in spiritual matters and a simplicity of manner in day-do-day activities. The following poem by P'ang Yun^{hhh} clearly illustrates this spirit:

Daily activity is nothing other than harmony within
 When each thing I do is without taking or rejecting,
 There is no contradiction anywhere.
 For whom is the majesty of red and purple robes?
 The summit of the inner being has never been defiled by
 the dust of the world.
 Supernatural power and wonderful functioning are found
 In the carrying of water and the chopping of wood.⁶

This simplicity of means leads to an expansion of the senses,
 and allows the world of Nature to enter these poems in a detailed and
 specific way, rather than in vague generalizations. It is not
 Nature on a grand scale which symbolizes the philosophy and
 meditation in these poems, but rather the raindrops falling
 from the eaves, or the wind through the bamboo grove to the east,
 which serve to underline and emphasize, or contrast with, the
 human elements of this literature.

The starting point for this consideration of the link be-
 tween recluse and Nature must be the concept of time that per-
 meates these poems. The tone of the poems is set by means of
 images from the natural environment. It is understood to be
 spring because the colour of things is a bit greener, or autumn
 because the birds are flying south, or winter because the snow
 is driving in through the walls. These times of year, the kisetsu,ⁱⁱⁱ
 so important to Japanese culture even today, evoke specific
 responses in the reader.

Season follows season, and many poems comment that the poet
 has lost track of the years since he has visited a certain place,

or lost count of the springs since arriving at his mountain retreat. The changing seasons and their repetitive cyclical pattern serve to reinforce man's knowledge that, although a part of Nature remains constant, time, human time in particular, flows as sand through the neck of an hourglass which cannot be reset. This delimits Man from Nature, and for the poet, aware of his mortality and the limitations of time, intensifies the pressure never to falter in his endeavour to achieve the goal of enlightenment, and, thus, of liberation.

While the aspect of seasonal change provides an underlying sense of time, alerting the reader to the vitality of Nature on a large scale, there are other, more detailed, patterns in Nature which serve an important function in this poetry. "The chatter of a favorite bird like a tapestry,"⁷ Ryōkan sings. It is this manner of descriptive lyricism that weaves the threads defining space, with its multiple levels of meaning, and spatial relationships and associations. "Who can entertain a doubt about the flowing or non-flowing of mountains?"

You should practice inside the meditation hall, go to Zen Masters, or take yourself to high mountains and deep valleys. Green waters and blue mountains--these are good places to wander. Remember that all things are unstable.⁸

Given the Buddhist view of the phenomenal realm as a world of illusion, it is philosophically significant that these poems

should present Nature as "flowing" in a state of constant flux.

There is no representation in Ryōkan's poems of Nature as stasis, and this fact re-affirms the position that his eremitism is not just ego-centred quietism. The pervading religio-poetic tone is "transparency" on the part of the poet, which D.T. Suzuki in his essay, "Love of Nature," defines as

The balancing of unity and multiplicity or, better, the merging of self with others as in the philosophy of the Avatamsaka (Kegon)... absolutely necessary to the aesthetic understanding of Nature.⁹

The poetic process of which Ryōkan is a part consists not simply of the projecting of human thoughts and emotions on to the natural environment. By his humble residence in the natural world without covetousness or attachments, images and sensations of Nature penetrate to the deepest levels of Ryōkan's consciousness. Han-shan wrote:

In my first thirty years of life
I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles
Walked by rivers through deep green grass
Entered cities of boiling red dust
Tried drugs but couldn't make Immortal
Read books and wrote poems on history
Today I'm back at Cold Mountain
I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.¹⁰

Echoing this poem, Ryōkan wrote, "If you want to hear about the Way you must wash your ears."^{jjj} This concern for purity and the acute sensitivity to natural landscape associated with it contribute to Ryōkan's credibility as a poet. These are assurances

of the careful accuracy of his descriptions not only of the outer world of Nature, but, more importantly, of inner psychological, spiritual processes. As a Zen Master, Ryōkan had realized that there was no dichotomy between the two.

因指見其月
 因月非其指
 此月与此指
 非同復非異
 將欲誘初機
 反說箇辟言子
 如實識得了
 舞月復舞指

[139]

yubi ni yotte sono tsuki o mi
 tsuki ni yotte sono yubi o benzu
 kono tsuki to kono yubi to
 onaji ni arazu mata kotonaru ni arazu
 masa ni shoki o izanawan to hosshite
 kari ni kono hishi o toku
 nyojitsu ni shikitoku owaraba
 tsuki mo naku mata yubi mo naken

By pointing your finger you see that moon
 by means of the moon you discern that finger
 This moon and this finger
 are not the same yet are not different
 Now if you want to guide the novice
 ask the Master of this parable for now
 When at last you're capable of understanding
 There is no moon and there is no finger

If the mountains and rivers, by synecdoche for Nature, are the body of the Buddha, then it can almost certainly be said that the mountains are Ryōkan's Mind.

Standing as a demarcation line between heaven and earth, mountains have traditionally occupied an honoured position in the religions of the East. While the Alps were thought to house devils, the mountains of India, China, and Japan have been considered the abode of gods and sages, thus ideal places to erect monasteries and build hermitages. Mt. Kailas/Sumeru and Vulture Peak come to mind immediately, as to T'ien-t'ai shan in China, Fuji-san and Hiei-zan^{kkk} in Japan. After years of homeless wandering, a hut on Mt. Kugami became Ryōkan's abode.

Within the body of Japanese Buddhist literature, there is one particular text with which Ryōkan was almost certainly familiar. That text is the twenty-ninth book of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye). the Sansuikyō,^{lll} or "Mountains and Rivers Sūtra," which deals with mountains and rivers as the Dharmakāya, or "body of essence" of the Buddha.

From time immemorial the mountains have been the dwelling place of the great sages; wise men and sages have all made the mountains their own chambers, their own body and mind. And through these wise men and sages the mountains have been actualized...Although we say that mountains belong to the country, actually they belong to those who love them. When the mountains love their master, the wise and virtuous inevitably enter the mountains. And when sages and wise men live in the mountains, because the mountains belong to them, trees and rocks flourish and abound, and the birds and beasts take on supernatural excellence. This is because the sages and wise men have covered them with virtue. We should realize that the mountains actually take delight in wise men and sages.^{ll}

The concept of mountains as mind is an image central to the theme of Nature and Self-Nature at the heart of Ryōkan's poetry and is based at least in part on Ryōkan's Buddhism. Zen Buddhism deals with the direct experience of non-verbal states and, has traditionally maintained a healthy mistrust for language and written texts. Setsuji ichimotsu soku fuchū,^{mmm} "The instant you speak about a thing you miss the mark."¹² The emphasis has always been on silent meditation, direct realization, and these methods have been tempered by face-to-face contact and confrontation between Master and disciple. The records of this sect abound with references to shouts and blows during these encounters. Despite the admonitions against the spoken and written word, the Zen school has amassed a considerable body of religious texts, as well as associated commentaries, historical records, and artistic literature. Even in modern Japan, the Zen school uses that acquired literature to describe and define, however circuitously, the immediacy of contemporary religious experience. Zenrinkushū⁻ⁿⁿⁿ (Phrase Anthology of the Forest of Zen), Mumonkan^{ooo} (The Gateless Gate), Rinzairoku^{ppp} (The Recorded Sayings of Rinzai), Hekiganroku^{qqq} (The Blue Cliff Records), as well as the works of many T'ang poets are the most commonly used Zen texts.

The blue hills are blue hills
The white clouds are white clouds

Planting flowers to which the butterflies come
Daruma says I know not¹³

The previous lines, excerpted from the Zenrinkushū, both appear in slightly altered form in Ryōkan's poems. The significance of this type of poetic style is twofold. First, these lines describe the phenomenal world, and at the same time, by analogy and parallel poetic structure, they refer to a spiritual process, the ultimate realization of which is a non-differentiated view, merging or casting off both self and other. "Wise men and sages have all made the mountains their own...body and mind." Secondly, the mode of descriptive lyricism, with its weight on the objective (if illusory) world, keeps the poet from lapsing into highly abstract, convoluted philosophical discourse.

Ryōkan's world, like Han-shan's Cold Mountain, is both a geographical location, Mt. Kugami in Niigata-ken, and state of mind. And though, at first glance, these poems might be characterized, using Western critical methodology, as reflecting an air of stillness and tranquility, the opposite is in fact true. It is through dynamic patterns of Nature, predominant in these poems, that any notion of lassitude is dispelled. Generally the poems show movement on the part of the poet, whether it be going out begging, or returning to his hut, carrying firewood, or merely walking out in Nature. A fairly large number

of poems, though, show Ryōkan in meditation, and in these verses it is either the eye of the poet that moves, or the poet's ear that describes the acuteness of his sensory perceptions. It must be remembered that in Zen Buddhist meditation, zazen, the eyes remain slightly open, and that thoughts, sounds and sensations are allowed to come and go without any attempt to cut them off or to take hold of them.

覺言不能寐
 曳杖出柴扉
 陰虫啼古砌
 落葉辭寒枝
 溪邃水聲遠
 山高月色遲
 沈吟時已久
 白露沾我衣
 秋夜偶作

[231]

shūya gūsaku
 samete kōko ni inuru atawazu
 tsue o hiite saihi o izu
 inchū kosei ni naki
 rakuyō kanshi o jisu
 tani fukōshite suisei tōku
 yama takōshite gesshoku ososhi
 chingin toki sude ni hisashiku
 hakuro waga koromo o uruosu

Autumn Night Improvisation

I awaken unable to sleep
 I take my stick and go out the
 brushwood door
 Insects chirp from out the old stones
 falling leaves part the cold branch
 From afar deep valley water voices
 mountains high in late moon light
 Musing time is suddenly gone and
 my robe is drenched with white dew

This poem illustrates all of the major concerns which I have tried to discuss on the theme of Nature in Ryōkan's works: time, space, non-differentiation of self and other, dynamism, and simplicity. The reader cannot but notice the linear element of time, which has been passing though not overtly mentioned. The element of space is multi-dimensional in this poem. The description moves from the minute and close at hand ("Insects chirp from out the old stones / falling leaves part the cold branch") to the vast and distant ("From afar deep valley water voices / mountains high in late moon light"). Distance in this poem is clearly a quality, not of the landscape but of the poet-monk's Mind, which moves out near and far, to the vast and to the minute, with the same facility. The same is true of the tranquility expressed here. It is not the surroundings which are still but the Mind of the poet which, unruffled and transparent, reflects like the pond that mirrors the image of the moon. It is this distance and this tranquility that are an expression of non-differentiated view.

In this paper, I have discussed what I feel to be the central themes of Ryōkan's Chinese poems: religion, solitude and nature. These themes, like the images from the natural world in the previous poems, do not stand alone, each separately, but are interrelated. Religion can be seen as man's

quest for true meaning; solitude, as a Way towards this goal; and nature as both the universe where this quest takes place and a complex means of describing the former. "Where is wilderness but a blank place on the map?"¹⁴ Ryōkan's poems offer new possibilities.

三界冗々事如麻
 非適今兮自古然
 渾為一句不了却
 百年舞端疲倦還
 經數名相不永返
 禪執寂靜竟難遷
 因憶洞山好言語
 出門即是草漫々

[46]

sangai jōjō to shite koto asa no gotoshi
 tamatama ima nomi ni arazu inishie yori shikari
 subete ikku o ryōkyaku sezarū ga tame ni
 hyakunen hashi naku okan ni tsukaru
 kyō wa myōsō o kazoueba nagaku kaerazu
 zen wa jakujō o toreba tsui ni utsurigatashi
 yotte omou tozan ga kogongo
 mon o izureba sunawachi kore kusa manman to

Three worlds tangled like hemp
 Not just now but since long past
 All for not perceiving a single phrase
 A hundred years exhausted in empty coming & going
 In the sūtras counting names & appearances
 gives no eternal return
 When you attain the silent stillness of Zen
 it's hard to transmit
 I like to think of Tōzan's favorite words
 When you step out through the gate
 the grass is vast boundless

Chapter VIII: POEMS ON NATURE

空階花狼藉
 好禽語如織
 遲々窓日麗
 細々炉烟直

[196]

kūkai hana rōzeki
 kokin go oru ga gotoshi
 chichi to shite sōjitsu uraraka ni
 saisai to shite roen choku nari

On the empty stairway a confusion of petals
 the chatter of a favorite bird like a tapestry
 The sun in the window shines gloriously on and on
 the hearth smoke rises tall & slender

冥目千嶂夕
 人間萬慮空
 寂々倚蒲団
 寥々对虚窓
 香消玄夜永
 衣單白露濃
 定起庭際赤
 月上最高峰

[168]

meimoku su senshō no yūbe
 ningen banryo munashi
 jakujaku hoton ni yori
 ryōryō kyosō ni taisu
 ko wa genya no nagaki ni kie
 koromo wa hakuro no komayaka naru ni tan nari
 jō yori tatte teisai o ayumeba
 tsuki saikōhō ni noboru

Closing the eyes a thousand evening summits
 ten thousand human concerns all vanish
 Desolate from this straw mat
 lonely through this empty window
 Incense dies out in the long black night
 my robe thick with white dew
 I rise from zazen & walk the edge of the garden
 while the moon climbs the very highest peak

蕭条三間屋
 權殘朽老身
 況方去冬節
 辛苦具難陳
 啜粥消寒夜
 數日遲陽春
 不乞斗升米
 何以凌此辰
 靜思雜活計
 書詩寄故人

乞米

[273]

kome o kou

shōjōtari_sangen no oku
 saizan kyuro_no mi
 iwan ya gento no setsu ni atari
 shinku tsubusa ni nobegatashi
 kayu o susutte_kanya o keshi
 hi o_kazoete yoshun o matsu
 tosho no kome o howazareba
 nani o motte ka kono toki o shinogan
 seishi suru mo kakkei nashi
 shi o shoshite kojīn ni yosu

Begging Rice

This lonely six mat room
 this broken down decrepit old body
 On top of all this a winter season
 so harsh and bitter I can scarcely say
 I sip gruel and get through the cold nights
 counting the days waiting for spring
 If I don't beg a little rice
 how will I make it through these times
 Quietly contemplating no means of livelihood
 I write this poem and send it to you old friend

家住深林裏
 年々長碧蘿
 更舞人事促
 時聽采樵歌
 當陽補衲衣
 對月讀伽陀
 為報當途子
 得竟不在多

[123]

ie wa jūsu shinrin no uchi
 nennen hekira chozu
 sara ni jinji no unagasu naku
 toki ni saishō no uta o kiku
 hi o atatte wa noi o tsukuroi
 tsuki ni taishite wa kada o yomu
 tame ni hōzu to ni ataru no shi
 i o uru wa oki ni arazu to

I live back in the deep woods
 year after year the green ivy grows longer
 Without the slightest pressure of human affairs
 sometimes I hear the woodcutter's songs
 I bask in the sun and mend my robes
 facing the moon I read gathas
 I say to those who tread the path
 the attainment of satisfaction
 does not lie in quantity

妙門長不閉
 閒庭人跡稀
 楮葉梅雨後
 舞數点緑苔

[275]

sōan nagaku tozasazu
 kantei jinseki mare nari
 shoyō baiu no nochi
 musu ryokutai ni tenzu

The grass gate has long been unlocked
 in the garden scarcely a trace of anyone
 Oak leaves after the rainy season
 countless falling on the green moss

真如亭上倚檻于
 一鉢乘春來此地
 真如即事
 蘆葉纔生水湛藍
 桜如雪兮柳如烟

[294]

shinnyotei sokuji

ippatsu haru ni jōjite kono chi ni kitari
 shinnyoteijo rankan ni yoru
 royō wazuka ni shōji mizu ai o tatau
 sakura wa yuki no gotoku yanagi wa keburī no gotoshi

Improvisation at Shinnyotei

In spring I take my bowl and come to this place
 I climb up to the cottage of ultimate reality &
 lean on the balustrade
 The reeds just sprouting the water sparkles indigo blue
 the cherry trees like snow and the willows like smoke

山林露々雨中天
 霏登雲霞何処遷
 邊々江上見鳥鵲
 不行丘谷冥冥定禪

[296]

sanrin aiaitari uchū no ten
 kiri agarite unka izuku ni ka utsureru
 manmantaru kōjō ujaku o miru
 ware kyūkoku ni yukite jōzen o tasuku

Hazy mountains & forests the rain-filled sky
 mist rising clouds & haze where do they go
 Magpies reflected on the river's vast surface
 I go to the hills & valleys to work on my samādhi

相
逢
又
相
別
 來
去
白
雲
心
 惟
留
霜
雪
迹
 人
間
不
可
尋

[382]

aiōte mata aiwakaru
 raikyo hakuun no kokoro
 tada sōgō no ato o todomuru nomi
 ningen tazunebekarazu

Growing together and drifting apart,
 coming and going are the white clouds' heart
 Leaving only faint trails
 that humans cannot trace

正月十六日夜
 春夜二三更
 等閒出柴門
 微雪覆松杉
 孤月上層巒
 思人山河遠
 含翰思萬端

[79]

shōgatsu jūroku nichī no yo

shunya ni san kō
 tokan ni saimon o izu
 bisetsu shōsan o ōi
 kogetsu soran ni noboru
 hito o omoeba sankā tōshi
 fude o fukunde omoi bantan

First Month Evening of the Sixteenth Day

A spring night second or third watch
 aimlessly I leave my hermitage
 Light snow mantles the pine and cedar
 a lone moon climbs above the ranging hills
 Thinking of a friend distanced by mountains and rivers
 I hold my pen in my mouth thinking ten thousand thoughts

洞山和尚偈
 青山白雲父
 白雲青山兒
 白雲終日傍
 青山終日不知

[339]

Tōzan oshō no ge

seizan wa hakuun no chichi
 hakuun wa seizan to ji
 hakuun shujitsu yorisō mo
 seizan subete shirazu

Tōzan's Gatha

Blue mountains are the white clouds! father
 white clouds are the blue mountains' children
 All day the white clouds nestle down the mountains
 while the blue mountains pay no mind

JAPANESE AND CHINESE-CHARACTER GLOSSARY

- a. 訓読
- b. 不單
- c. 寒山
- d. 萬葉集
- e. 雜詩
- f. 漢詩
- g. 中世文学
- h. 名主
- i 五山文学
- .
- j. 天台
- k. 浙江
- l. 山本榮藏
- m. 出雲山崎
- n. 越後
- o. 国仙
- p. 円通寺
- q. 備中
- r. 国上山
- s. 五合庵
- t. 島山崎

- u. 真心
- v. 蓮の露
- w. 古今集
- x. 正述心緒
- y. 詩の心の動きが根本だ
- z. 解良榮重
- aa. 師が平生之行状詩歌中に具在す
- bb. 馬祖道一
- cc. 心佛
- dd. 佛心
- ee. 佛心
- ff. 心宗
- gg. 曹洞
- hh. 道元希玄
- ii. 洞山良价
- jj. 曹山本寂
- kk. 菩提達磨
- ll. 慧可
- mm. 楞伽經
- nn. 印可
- oo. 祇管打坐
- pp. 臨濟
- qq. 普賢力坐禪儀
- rr. 正法眼藏

- ss. 托鉢
 tt. 百丈懷海
 uu. 南泉
 vv. 采西
 ww. 源賴家
 xx. 勸受食文
 yy. 一休宗純
 zz. 本覺院
 aaa. 宝珠院
 bbb. 皎然
 ccc. 分別
 ddd. 宗峰妙超
 eee. 五条
 fff. 雜心
 ggg. 本來面目
 hhh. 龐蘊
 iii. 季節
 jjj. 聞道須洗耳
 kkk. 比叡山
 lll. 山永經
 mmm. 說似一物即不中
 nnn. 禪林句集
 ooo. 雜門闋
 ppp. 臨濟金錄
 qq. 碧巖金錄

NOTES

1. A Note on Translation

1. Gary Snyder, Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems (San Francisco: Four Seasons, 1969), p. 38.

11. Religion

1. Karaki Junzō, Ryōkan (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1974), p. 140-141.
2. Watanabe Hideyoshi, Ryōkan Shishū (Tokyo: Mokujisha, 1974), p. 2.
3. Edward Sapir, Culture, Language and Personality: Selected Essays (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 122.
4. Watanabe, *ibid.*
5. See the Zen text Mumonkan, case XIX.
6. Legend has it that enraged by his eyelids closing while he was meditating, Bodhidharma cut them off and threw them to the ground. Tea bushes sprouted up from where they had landed, and since that time, monks have drunk tea in order to stay alert while meditating.
7. Miura Isshū and R.F. Sasaki, Zen Dust (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 228.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
9. Masunaga Reihō, The Sōtō Approach to Zen (Tokyo: Layman Buddhist Society Press, 1958), p. 102-103.
10. Masunaga Reihō, A Primer of Sōtō Zen (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971), p. 96-97.

11. Alan W. Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 98-99.
12. See Note 5. Nansen was Baso's disciple.
13. Tōgō Toyoharu, Ryōkan Zenshū (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1959), p. 501.
14. Masunaga, Primer of Sotō Zen, p. 32.
15. Watts, *ibid.*, p. 162.

V. Solitude

1. Gary Snyder, Earth House Hold (New York: New Directions, 1969) p. 8.
2. Thomas Nelson, The T'ang Poet-Monk Chiao-jan (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1972), p. 47.
3. Snyder, Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems, p. 42.

VII. Nature

1. R.H. Blyth, Haiku: Eastern Culture (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1949) p. 14.
2. Snyder, Earth House Hold, p. 122.
3. See Chapter IV, p. 31.
4. See Chapter VI, p. 58.
5. William Theodore De Bary, The Buddhist Tradition: In India, China, and Japan (New York: Modern Library, 1969), p. 358.
6. Chang Chung-yuan. Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 174-175.
7. See Chapter VIII, p. 85.
8. Masunaga Reihō, The Soto Approach to Zen, p. 115.

9. D.T. Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture (New York: Bollingen, 1959), p. 354.
10. Snyder, Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems, p. 48.
11. Michael Tobias ed., The Mountain Spirit (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1979), p. 47.
12. Muira and Sasaki, *ibid.*, p. 104.
13. Blyth, *ibid.*, p. 18.
14. Heard in conversation with Chuck Janda, Chief Ranger, Glacier Bay National Monument, Alaska.

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