

STUDY ON THE PHILOSOPHY AND ARCHITECTURE OF ZEN BUDDHISM IN JAPAN

On syncretism religion and monastery arrangement plan

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ABSTRACT

Zen Buddhism was introduced to China in the sixth century. After going through a long process in China, finally Zen came to Japan in the thirteenth century brought by Japanese monks. A unique spiritual genius one of the greatest epoch-making events in the history of mankind, which in the course of time has come to enrich the human mind over many centuries.

During the process of spreading of Zen Buddhism there were influences experienced by two Chinese great religions, Tao and Confucian. This study will discuss the philosophy and architectural aspects of the Zen monastery arrangement plan.

Zen Buddhism is syncretism from Taoism and Confucianism. The layout plan of the Zen monastery temple principally was placed on a single axis and facing south. The typical layout plan was borrowed from the architecture of the Chinese monastery.

Keywords : Zen Buddhism, syncretism, monastery, arrangement plan.

INTRODUCTION

In the sixth century, when the Indian born Bodhidharma¹ brought a new sect to the mainland of China, it being the so-called *dhyana* (Zen), it can be said that the history of Zen Buddhism had begun. The movement of Zen was already long and deep. Furthermore after going through a long process in China, finally Zen came to Japan in the thirteenth century by the Japanese monks who had studied Zen in China.

The Zen Buddhism, which was introduced into Japan through the two main channels of the Rinzai sect and the Sôtô sect, quickly found a place there in the Kamakura period (1182-1333). During the Myôan Eisai (1141-1215) the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China. Soon after that, Eihei Dogen (1200-1253) brought the Sôtô sect to Japan. In the Edo period (1596-1868), a third branch of Zen was introduced, it's called the Obaku sect. The Chinese master Yin Yuang (Jpn., Ingen: 1368-

1644) brought this form of Zen, which was stepped in Sutra study in Japan.

Zen philosophy, has influenced all phases of Japanese life more profoundly than any of the other sects have. Zen philosophy was closely associated not only with the arts, social institutions, and government, but also with architecture and landscaping (Engel, 1964). As what Gropius et al. (1962) said, we can understand the architecture of nations and period only as we win inside knowledge of their way of thinking and their philosophy.

This study began through collection of references the work of several studies based on the historical records is such as: Anesaki (1985), Suzuki (1983), Dumoulin (1988), Okakura (1964; 1985), William, 1988), Legget (1989), Gropius et. al. (1962), Engel (1964), etc.

From the references, this study will discuss on the aspects of Zen philosophy and architecture, and even to understand of the Zen monastery arrangement plans.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF ZEN

Zen is the name of a Mahayana Buddhist school of meditation originating in China and characterized by the practice of meditation in the lotus position (Jpn., *zazen*; Chn., *tso-ch'an*) and

¹ According to the *keitoku-dentoroku*, Bodhidharma was born in the northern part of India as the third son of a King. He became a disciple of Hanniyadara and received dharma-transmission from him. He came to China in 527 AD. First, he met the Emperor Bu (Wu) of the Ryo (Lian) dynasty. Since the emperor could not understand the meaning behind Bodhidharma's words, Bodhidharma left the country and went to Shorinji (Shaolinsi) in the country of Gi (Wei) dynasty. For nine years, Bodhidharma sat there facing the wall.

the use of *koan*² (Chn., *kung-an*). As well as by the enlightenment experience of *satori* (Dumoulin, 1988). In stressing the independent development of Zen, (Suzuki, 1988) has to admit that “undoubtedly the main ideas of Zen are derived from Buddhism, and we cannot consider it a legitimate development of the latter”. The reality the word of Zen has already spread to become a certain meaning for explain spiritual transcendence outside all distinction, and also constitute enter to an unspecified substance from outside that is the world, which only in the illusion. In fact philosophy and Zen possession by a spirit entered in architecture, garden, art painting, etc. Clearly can enter to the human daily life and certainly in meditation.

According to Leggett (1989), it is said that Zen-written as they think it is by combining the character for “garment” and “single” just that. They believe that Zen monks of India in the mountains practiced special austerities, and even in winter were only one cotton robe, and that the name of the sect a rose from this (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The left-hand side constitute old character is what is called the radical and give the general class to which it belongs; this radical is associated with religion and with happiness. The right hand-side is called character as to say that Zen means wearing a single garment which uses up to now.

However, it is not so mysterious or abstruse but even practical. Zen, which restores humanity taken away by the marvelously developed mechanical civilization of the modern society, attracts us for its own self-centered essential quality. Finally, Zen is not a religion, but a human ideal of self-education by Spartan means (Gropius et. al., 1962).

SYNCRETISM RELIGIONS IN ZEN BUDDHISM

In the process of spreading of Zen there was an experience of influences by two Chinese great religions, Tao and Confucian. It can be said syncretism religions between Zen from India with Tao and Confucian from China, which is influenced into Zen Buddhism included philosophy, architecture religion whether human daily life. Okakura (1964) has explained: The Sung allegory of the Three Vinegar Tasters explains admirably the trend of the three doctrines. Sakyamuni, Confucius³, and Lao Tzu⁴ once stood a jar of vinegar, -the emblem of life, - and each dipped in his finger to taste the brew. As a matter of fact, Confucius found it sour, the Buddha called it bitter, and Lao Tzu pronounced it sweet. As which Gropius et al. (1962), has said the Japanese architects have been deeply influenced by the Zen sect, which started in China as a Buddhist sect and was influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, creeds which overlap in Asiatic countries without creating much antagonism to each other. It seems that Lao Tzu given illustrates by his favorite metaphor of the vacuum. He claimed that only in vacuum the truly essential. The reality of a room, for instance, was to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and wall themselves (Okakura, 1964). Basically, the Zen architecture in Japan as tea room and meditation hall has a basis like that.

In another part, it mentions that the introduction of Zen Buddhism into China did not replace the two earlier Chinese religions (Taoism and Confucianism). But, rather provided an alternative spiritual frame work where in the Chinese, structured, Confucianism bent of mind could be merged with their Taoist yearning for mystical philosophy to produce a native religion at once formal and introspective. It could be said that, they adopted the philosophy of Lao Tzu and ritual of the Buddhist, with the idea of increasing the significance and sanction of the popular

² These statements are use as subjects for meditation by novices in Zen monasteries. *Koan* are also used as a test of whether the disciple has really attained enlightenment. Helped by the *koan* study, students of Zen may open their minds to the truth.

³ A native of Ch'ueh-li, a hamlet of Ch'ang-p'ing in Shantung. He lived 551-479 BC. His style was Chung-ni and he is known as Confucius-the Latinised from of Kung Fu Tzu, the philosopher K'ung.

⁴ The reputed founder of Taoism was born in Hoan in 604 BC. The legend is that he was carried eighty years before birth, and was therefore born with white hair; hence the name Lao Tzu or 'old boy'. Latinised Laocius.

notions. On its philosophical side Buddhism was received with open arms by the Laoist, who found it an advance on their own philosophy (Okakura, 1964).

Confucianism also emphasizes existence elements of the nature world. As heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars, river-indeed. Attuning to heaven came from harmony with nature, obedience to elders brought harmony of the family, therefore, it could be said that the most important of Confucius's teaching, which also influenced architecture was harmony (Liu, 1989). This harmony is also influenced into Zen architecture in Japan, it can be said that harmony with nature. Confucius also have relation in every aspect and human activity to the words "rite" or "reason" (in Chinese, pronounced "Li") which already presented the moral ideas arrange category from daily life, regulating court ritual and directing art, literature and architecture. On the contrary, in China Confucianism was already influenced to several aspect, as temples which are integrated into the garden. It was during the next dynasty, the Song (960-1279 AD), that Buddhism, Taoism and even Confucianism gradually merged in ideology. As the Buddhist sects absorbed the Taoist 'fairly land' concept, they began to choose mountains sites, integrating temples with landscape and even developing more formally planned, attached gardens (Liu, 1989). In other part, between the Taoism and Confucianism have different emphasizes with relation to the nature and architecture. The other aspect of Chinese religion and philosophy, Taoism, is instead responsible for the ecological sensibility by which Chinese architecture is related to nature and the surroundings wall follows the contours of hills. Actually, Confucian pragmatism is directly responsible for the rigid standard of axially and symmetry that made it possible to arrive is a graduated hierarchical order in the city. As which Anesaki (1983), explains: Yet we must remember that the temple and palace buildings, symmetrical as they are, are always to be looked at with their natural background and foreground. Even this noble group, an expression of the harmony between national unity and the religion ideal, is so placed and distributed that the background of hills and the interference of trees break up the regularity of the architecture. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. The famous painting entitled "Tofuku-ji garanzu" it was painted by Sesshu, early sixteenth century. Such forms harmonize well with the hills and trees, and such buildings become a part of the landscape instead of appearing like gigantic and labourius construction built in defiance of nature. (*Zusetsu nihon no bukkyo: Kamakura bukkyo*, 1988)

THE ARRANGEMENT PLAN OF MONASTERY

The layout plan of Zen monastery temple is principally placed on a single axis and facing south. This typical temple layout plan was borrowed from the architecture of the Chinese monastery. During the T'ang period (618-907) in China, a Buddhist temple architecture had developed the layout plan that served as the basic design for Zen temple and their grounds during the Sung period (960-1279), especially for monasteries of the Five Temples. The layout plan of T'en-t'ung and Pei are of special numerous Zen temples of Japan (Dumoulin, 1988). Generally speaking, the imposing of the Zen culture is seen most clearly in the layout and architecture of its temple. The ground plan of Kencho-ji and Tofuku-ji was modeled after imposing Chinese temple structure of T'ien-t'ung-shan (Dumoulin, 1988). (Figure 3)

According to the Chinese version about the layout plan of Zen monastery, it can be said that the first rule in monastic life and architecture for the Zen monastery was designed by Pai-chang (720-814). Pai-chang was the first layout a clearly formulated rule for Zen monks, there by securing Zen's independence from other Buddhist schools. Prior to Pai-chang, Zen monks lived for the most part in monasteries of the Vinaya school (Jpn., *Risshu*) of Chinese Mahayana (Paine and Soper, 1955).

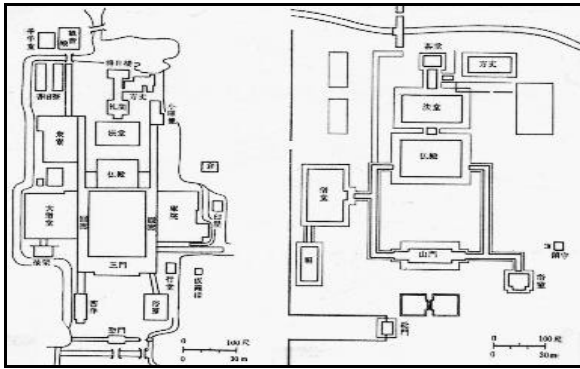


Figure 3. The ground plan of Kencho-ji and Tôfuku-ji monasteries temple. (*Sekai kenchiku zenshu 2, Nihon II chusei, 1960*)

Actually the layout plan of the monasteries has already emerged since Confucian in China, and can be found in every city at that time. It is possible that Zen style layout plan which existences placed in the Zen monasteries is constitute of descendant imitation from Confucius layout temple. The plan is always the same, three courts in south to north direction, except that the third court in some cases may be placed east of the second. The main building, the temple proper, is on the north side of the second court (Dumoulin, 1988).

Since a cardinal feature of Ch'an or Zen is its return to a stricter monasticism, the hall of worship is designed to accommodate a clerical congregation only. Its plan can thus preserve the traditional Chinese symmetrical simplicity. The large hall formula was used without many variations for both of the two majors, axial buildings, the Buddha hall (*bustuden*) and Dharma hall (*hattô*). Absolute symmetry is prevented only by one sign of human use. The focus of religious practice, an altar platform with images in the Buddha hall and high lecture platform with stairs and abbot's throne in the Dharma hall, stand on axis at the back of the chancel, with a partition behind it (Williams, 1988).

In the case of layout plan of Kyoto *gozan* and *rinka* monasteries not the entire Zen monastery temple, which constitutes encouragement to modified this new arrangement that different to the Chinese layout plan. In other monasteries like Kennin-ji, Tôfuku-ji, Daitoku-ji, Shôkoku-ji and Myôshin-ji have the arrangement whose axis of layout plan is north-south direction.

The arrangement plan of Zen monasteries are prototype of *shichidô garan* (seven hall's monastery). (Figures 4 and 5) It can be found in the Sung period like the monastery of Tendosan in China (Figure 6). The arrangement plan of the Chinese *shichidô garan* is more complex comparison with the Zen monasteries that developed in Japan. The sub temples surrounded the main building are typical sub temple placed inside monasteries that developed in the Muromachi period (1394-1596). It had given spirit to the monastic daily life. Basically, the arrangement plan directly is a part of the religious ceremonial, which proceeds following one behind the other along the north-south axis.

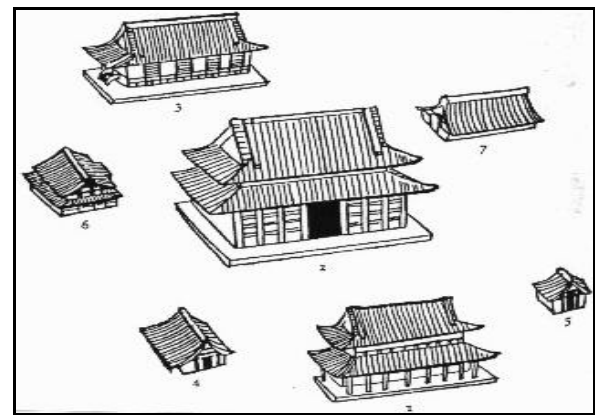


Figure 4. The "seven hall" monastery layout plan related with human body. Key: 1 Mountain/Tower gate (*sanmon*); 2 Buddha hall (*bustuden*); 3 Dharma hall (*hattô*); 4 Latrine (*tosu*); 5 bath (*yokushitsu*); 6 Monk's hall (*sodô*); 7 Kitchen (*kuri*). (*Zen Buddhism: A history, Japan, 1988*)

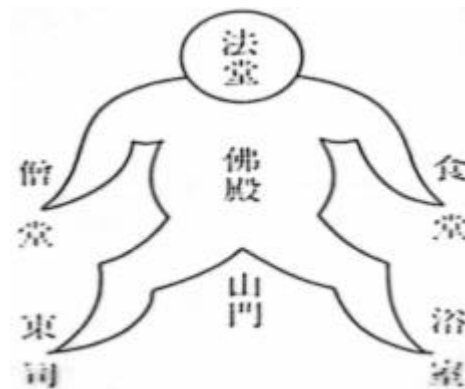


Figure 5. The seven hall in analogy to the human body. (*Zen no kenchiku, 1967*)

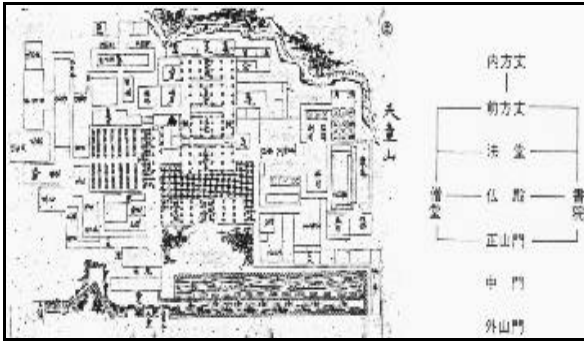


Figure 6. The arrangement plan and diagram of Tendosan Zen Buddhist monastery in the Sung period. (*Zen no kenchiku*, 1967)

In fact, the arrangement plan is related to the monastic daily life, the worshipers and the last certainly how to entering in to *nirvana*⁵. First, from the Tower gate (*sanmon*), *sanmon* does not means “three gates”, but is for *sangedatsumon* “gates of the three liberation” (*vimokchas*) by which one enters nirvana. The Buddha hall where the worshipers pray face to the Tower gate and enshrined with the image of Buddha, which is place in its center, and the last, place the Dharma hall. The arrangement of the three buildings had given the real characteristic that is the way to move to and experience another world. In the Buddha hall of the Zen temples the primary cultic objects is an image of the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, at the moment of his enlightenment; other figures, also objects of devotion, usually accompany the image of Buddha. One enters the temple area through “Tower Gate”, symbolizing the purging of desire and conceptual thinking as one enter the realm emptiness, and then mounts directly toward the Buddha hall (Dumoulin, 1988). To a devout worshiper, a visit to a Zen monastery temple must have indeed feel like a trip into another world.

THE RITUAL PROCESSION OF SPACE

It is necessary to know that the Buddha hall constitutes one object which posses the space in the middle that is placed in one straight line

⁵ Etymologically, *nirvana* has a negative meaning. Derived from the sanskrit verb *va* (to blow, like the wind) with the negative prefix *nir*, it denotes a motionless rest where no wind blows, where the fire is quenched, the light has been extinguished, the stars gone out, and the saint has deed.

between the Tower gate and the Dharma hall (Figure 7). It means as the place for the worshipers before entering to the Dharma hall. The simple interior space comes to life when animated by man in the rite of circulation, while entering into the ritual space to practice of the translation of the path in the space of our world into a religious experience.

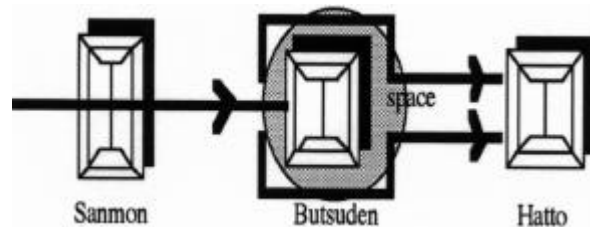


Figure 7. This is the space for worshipers in the Buddha hall (*bustuden*), and the line constitutes ritual procession of the worshipers.

Besides this the sub-temple inside the monasteries also support the purpose of persistence for ritual procession. In this ritual washing and purging of bodily impurities are necessary, for which purpose two buildings, on the right and left are located between the Tower gate and the Buddha hall. Then at the focal point of arrangement plan was placed the Dharma hall, in which an enlightenment monk lectures on the Holy Scriptures. This building is situated on the central ascending axis, and constitutes the focal point of the entire complex. It can be seen in this arrangement plan on the distribution of the three level of space in a row line (Figure 8).

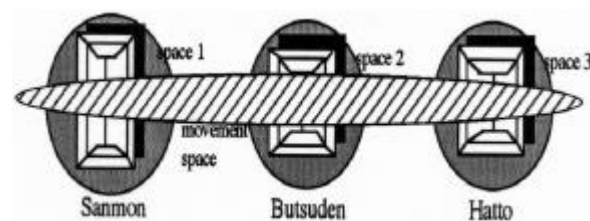


Figure 8. The distribution of space in the three-importance sphere’s, where the third part of that space interrelated into the ritual procession.

The idea of Zen monasteries arrangement plan also derived from the “one corner” style of Bayen (Ma Yuan, 1175-1225) a Chinese painter, one of the greatest Southern Sung artist. The principle structure, such as Tower gate, the

Buddha hall, the Dharma hall, and others, may be laid along one straight line, but structure of secondary or supplementary importance, sometimes even those of major importance, are not arranged symmetrically as wings along either side of the main line (Suzuki, 1988). The “corner style” means is a tradition of retaining the lost possible number of lines or strokes which go to the represents forms, in Japanese painting is called “thrifty brush”. Both are very much in accord with the spirit of Zen. It can be seen that the strokes of Zen paintings always pointed at the end, it means to give expression to the paintings. This stroke line is the characteristic that derived from Zen philosophy of emptiness. What may be said to be an infinite line reverberating from a single thing that finishes at any point? It’s relationship between one straight line of Zen monastery temple and the “corner style” of Ma Yuan paintings. There is a line that begins from the Tower gate and then enters into the Buddha hall and gives the end of the point of the line at the Dharma hall (Figure 9). The illumination of Zen paintings has expressed in deep meaning, and given some special solitary movement among the masses, emptiness and space that stretched on one straight line to the Zen monastery arrangement plan. If we can grasp the meaning as mentioned above, that is the way for Zen followers on how to attain enlightenment.

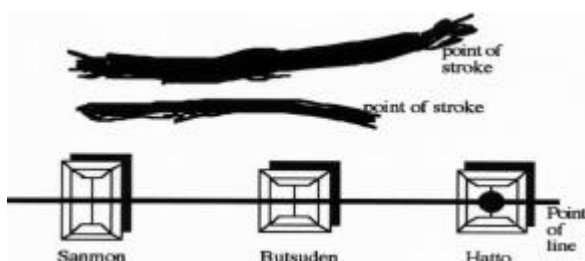


Figure 9. There is an analysis of stroke line that derived from the “one corner” style painting, enters into the arrangement plan of Zen monastery.

CONCLUSION

If a question is asked concerning Zen Buddhism, which entered and developed in Japan, it can be said that Zen is combination or syncretism from Taoism and Confucianism. If we asked what Zen is, they may answer in the words of Confucius or Lao Tzu, or else in terms of the doctrine of the various sects and

domination, and also by using popular proverbs. This expression above has given one meaning very deeply about Zen. Which inside this be contained the doctrine from Tao and Confucius, which in their developing more Tao and Confucius, which in their developing more characteristic of philosophies than religious develops.

The layout plan of the Zen monastery temple principally was placed on a single axis and facing south. The typical layout plan was borrowed from the architecture of the Chinese monastery. The large hall formula was used without many variation of the three majors, axial buildings, the *sanmon* (Tower gate), the *butsuden* (Buddha hall), and *hattô* (Dharma hall). The illumination of Zen paintings has expressed in deep meaning, and given some special solitary movements among the masses, emptiness and space that scratched on one straight line to the Zen monastery arrangement plan. The simple interior space comes to life when animated by man in the rite of circulation, while entering the ritual space to practice of translating a path in the space of our world into a religious experience.

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