

## CHAPTER I

# American Buddhism

### *A Brief History*

Just before the publication of my book *American Buddhism* in 1979, I was fortunate to have a sabbatical year at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Nestled at the base of the Berkeley hills, this wonderful little consortium of seminaries and theological schools found itself at that time in the midst of a Buddhist explosion in the Bay Area. It was quite literally surrounded by Buddhists. Just above it was the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center; a few blocks below it was the Jōdo Shinshū-sponsored Institute of Buddhist Studies; and the Berkeley Zen Center wasn't much farther away. Across the bay in San Francisco, the city was virtually teeming with American Buddhist groups of all kinds. For a researcher investigating the development of Buddhism as an American religious phenomenon, it was a nirvana of sorts.

About the same time, the British Broadcasting Company was releasing a film series on world religions entitled *The Long Search*. Unlike most previous efforts at portraying on celluloid the vast diversity of humanity's religious yearnings, this series was narrated by a nonspecialist named Ronald Eyre, who described himself as a Yorkshire-born, London-based displaced theater director. As one might expect, his choices about where to go, whom to visit, and what to ask were highly eclectic and often eccentric. With regard to many of the religious traditions he was clearly a novice, and it showed—sometimes painfully so for the viewer. Nonetheless, the films were often breathtaking and exciting. From Hindu festivals on the banks of the Ganges, to the “Zen restaurant” in Tokyo, to

the Baptist Temple of Indianapolis, the films debated and pondered critical questions surrounding our individual and collective search for fulfillment. As a result, many professors used these fine films in academic classes with great success, and some still do. When it was all over, the final film, called *Reflections on the Long Search*, allowed Eyre to share with his viewers what he had learned on his own long search as the project neared completion. He said that, irrespective of where he went and whom he interviewed, the questions he was asked most invariably began with the phrase “Just between you and me . . .” And this final segment concluded with our tired narrator making himself a cup of tea.

It might be fair to assume that in the early years of researching American Buddhism, inquiring scholars might have been asked questions phrased in this same manner. In my fieldwork, however, and in my academic classes as well, I got questions phrased quite differently, and I suspect I was asked them many more times than Ron Eyre’s “Just between you and me . . .” The catch phrase I heard was: “Say, did you hear about the new Buddhist group in . . . ?” Not a day went by when someone didn’t ask me whether I had information on the new Buddhist sitting group in some city or town, or a new ethnic Buddhist temple somewhere, or a new rinpoche or rōshi who had come to North America. In those early days of research on American Buddhism, it was even possible to keep track of all the groups, or at least almost all of them. However, charting the American Buddhist landscape was complicated by the fact that many of these groups were even more ephemeral than their early Indian Buddhist counterparts, some of which came and went leaving barely more than their names in some early Buddhist historian’s records. It was also not at all unusual to find, in checking the status of a new American Buddhist group, recently discovered, that the group’s telephone had been unceremoniously disconnected.

Within a decade, Don Morreale’s book *Buddhist America: Centers, Retreats, Practices* would organize, list, and describe more than five hundred American Buddhist groups. Although the astronomical growth rate for American Buddhist groups was slowing at that time, it was still necessary to telephone first to make sure that the groups still existed. More importantly, there were so many groups in existence by the close of the 1980s that nobody could any longer keep all the centers and sects and teachers inside his or her head. That all of the Buddhist cultures and traditions and sects were simultaneously present in North America was

no doubt the most important event in the history of Buddhism as a world religion, but a database was becoming necessary. Now, a decade later, that continually changing database is being created. Barry Kapke's "DharmaNet International" site on the World Wide Web not only lists American Buddhist communities, organized by sect and by state, but also offers a form for Buddhist groups to complete that is forwarded directly to Morreale, in order that he may include all groups in his recent and much-needed update, despite the fact that any print record will be out-dated before it actually appears.

Later, we will see that there is a large and growing literature on the development of American Buddhism. Although there are still too few comprehensive volumes that examine the whole of the tradition, there are many fine articles, chapters, and books that examine aspects of American Buddhism in depth, both historically and thematically. In other words, while the earliest volumes attempted to span the entire Buddhist road map throughout North America, it is no longer necessary, or even desirable, for one book to do that. In that regard this chapter intends to provide an overview of American Buddhist history, identifying the significant appearance of each tradition and sect, commenting on the on-going development of important traditions and teachers, highlighting the issues that informed then and continue to inform American Buddhism, and providing a new sense of where American Buddhism stands at the beginning of the millennium.

## American Buddhism in the Nineteenth Century

Many current researchers in the academic field of Buddhist Studies consider the French scholar Eugène Burnouf to be the father of "Buddhology." Such being the case, it is only fitting that Thomas Tweed, in his book *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912*, marks the beginning of the American encounter with Buddhism by two events: first, the appearance of Henry David Thoreau's 1844 rendering of Burnouf's French translation of the *Lotus-sūtra* into English for a transcendentalist magazine; and second, the publication of Edward Elbridge Salisbury's paper entitled "Memoir on the History of Buddhism," a Burnouf-influenced address read at the first meeting of the American Oriental Society on 28 May 1844.<sup>1</sup> According to Rick Fields, in less than a decade

thereafter there would be more than twenty thousand Chinese in California, and by 1860 roughly 10 percent of Californians would be Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the environment in which the new Buddhists in America found themselves was largely shaped by the individuals Tweed highlights, and by the Victorian mind-set they brought to their encounter with Buddhism. Nowhere is this expressed more explicitly than in Tweed's reference to an article published by Rev. Edward Hungerford (of Menden, Connecticut) in the *New Englander*. Tweed says:

Hungerford, who embraced the Victorian Protestant worldview, suggested that Buddhism "looks only at the dark side of existence" and contradicts not only optimism but other fundamental beliefs and values as well. Further, it fails to manifest the usual characteristics of religion: "There is no great glowing future to which faith can lift its eye, no eternal progress to inspire aspiration. No God, no soul, no Saviour from sin, no love, no heaven!"<sup>3</sup>

In view of the above, it is hardly shocking that the Chinese immigrants who came to work in California after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, and who began to lay track for the Central Pacific railroad in the 1860s, found themselves in a mostly hostile racial environment. Still, within a short time there were hundreds of Chinese temples up and down the California coastline. No doubt the religious practice in these temples was a highly eclectic blend of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, but there were at least a number of Buddhist priests in residence at these sites. Although an explicit and distinct Chinese Buddhism would not appear on the North American continent until later, by the time of the Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1882 America was the site of more than simply an edifying discussion about Buddhism as a religious tradition. Images of various Buddhist figures like Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, Vairocana, Mañjuśrī, and Maitreya were present in the purely Buddhist temples, and Pure Land and Ch'an practices began to appear in the small but growing American Buddhist community.

With the passage of the exclusion act, the way was paved for a new group of immigrants from Asia to bring Buddhism to American soil. Louise Hunter, the author of *Buddhism in Hawaii*, asserts that as early as 1839 Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism was beginning to find its way into Hawaii, largely as a result of Japanese shipwrecks in Hawaiian waters.<sup>4</sup> The official entry of Buddhism into Hawaii does not occur, however, until 12 March 1889, when a young priest named Sōryū Kagahi arrived in the islands to

investigate the welfare of his countrymen, who had by that time begun working in Hawaii but without any opportunity for spiritual guidance from the home church, Honpa Honganji.<sup>5</sup> This was, of course, a full decade prior to Hawaii's being granted status as an American possession in 1898. The first Japanese immigrants to settle on the mainland arrived in 1869. Settling near Sacramento, California, they served as a precursor for the arrival of Matsudaira Katamori, a Japanese feudal lord, who founded the short-lived Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony. The U.S. census listed less than one hundred Japanese in the United States in 1870, and by 1890 the number had grown to barely over two thousand.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the Japanese presence was much slower to develop than the Chinese. The early Japanese settlers, unlike their Chinese predecessors, did attempt to adopt the American lifestyle of the time. They wore Western clothing, often studied English, and to a large extent left their Buddhism in Japan.

If the beginnings of America's encounter with Buddhism were marked by the two events indicated by Tweed, two further events must be cited as critical in the early formation of the Buddhist tradition in America: the development from the mid-1870s of the Theosophical Society and the so-called White Buddhists that patronized it; and the World Parliament of Religions, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair (or Columbian Exposition) in 1893. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in late 1875, as a collaboration between Helena Petrova Blavatsky, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, and others. By the 1880s the society's publicly stated mission was: "to form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color; to study the ancient and modern religions, philosophies, and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the physical powers latent in man."<sup>7</sup> Eventually, Olcott and Blavatsky left New York and traveled to India (arriving in February 1879) and Sri Lanka (arriving in May 1880). Blavatsky had considered herself a Buddhist since the mid-1870s, and Olcott apparently felt similarly. Nonetheless, on 25 May 1880 Olcott and Blavatsky made their Buddhist commitment formal by "taking refuge" and also taking the five vows of the laity. In his frequent visits to Sri Lanka, and in his travels throughout Asia, Olcott supported numerous Buddhist causes, not the least of which was the Bodh-Gaya Maha Bodhi Society, founded on 31 May 1891 with Olcott as its first director. In this

regard he became associated with Anagarika Dharmapala, who was appointed first secretary of the organization, editor of its publication (called the *Maha Bodhi Journal*), and, more importantly, representative of the Buddhists of Sri Lanka at the World Parliament of Religions, which took place in 1893.<sup>8</sup>

Few would disagree that the World Parliament of Religions changed the religious landscape for the development of Buddhism in America.<sup>9</sup> Although the vast majority of participants were Christian, ample representation came from Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists as well. Especially significant for Buddhism was the fact that Anagarika Dharmapala delivered the concluding address of the opening ceremonies. If the Parliament was planned, as Rick Fields suggests, “as the spiritual expression”<sup>10</sup> of the Chicago World’s Fair, Dharmapala placed it squarely in a Buddhist context by asserting that the Parliament “was simply the re-echo of a great consummation which the Indian Buddhists accomplished twenty four centuries ago.”<sup>11</sup> By the third day of the Parliament, nearly all of the Japanese delegation had been introduced, including members of the Jōdo Shinshū, Nichiren, Tendai, Shingon, and Zen traditions. Included in this latter group was Shaku Sōen, a disciple of Imakita Kōsen of Engaku Temple. Although Sōen was not one of the more popular figures of the Parliament, he would later return to America in 1905 to promote Rinzai Zen. Perhaps more important to the development of Zen in America than the appearance of Sōen himself was that of three of his students: D. T. Suzuki, Nyōgen Senzaki, and Shaku Sōkatsu.

During Sōen’s lectures at the Parliament, an extremely interested member of the audience was Paul Carus, editor of the *Monist* and owner of Open Court Publishing Company in LaSalle, Illinois.<sup>12</sup> Carus, like many of the Buddhist contingent to the Parliament, believed that Buddhism was better suited to healing society’s ills than Christianity, and although Carus made friends with Dharmapala, it was Sōen that he invited to his home. That visit produced a most unusual and important offer: that Sōen remain at Open Court to help edit the publishing firm’s new series of Asian books. Though Sōen declined, he did send D. T. Suzuki in his place. Suzuki remained at Open Court from 1897 until 1909, when he returned to Japan to pursue a career in Buddhist Studies. Suzuki’s presence was one of the most fortuitous events in the early development of Zen in the United States. A few days after the Parliament concluded, another first for American Buddhism took place. Following a Theosophical So-

ciety-sponsored lecture in Chicago, Dharmapala administered the refuge ceremony to Charles Strauss of New York City. Rick Fields describes the event: "So it was that Charles T. Strauss of 466 Broadway, a New York City businessman, born of Jewish parents, not yet thirty years old, long a student of comparative religion and philosophy, found himself—in the words of Dharmapala's biographer—'the first person to be admitted to the Buddhist fold on American soil.'"<sup>13</sup>

Zen was not the only Japanese Buddhist tradition that made its appearance in America prior to 1900. In July 1898 two informal missionaries from Honpa Honganji in Japan arrived in San Francisco on a fact-finding tour. On the basis of their report, and because of the resistance of the Japanese immigrants to be converted to Christianity despite persistent conversion attempts, two priests were dispatched to the United States, arriving on 1 September 1899 and shortly thereafter establishing the Buddhist Mission of North America to support the roughly ten thousand Japanese then present in America. These two "official" missionaries, Revs. Shuei Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishimjima, became the first Buddhist clergy to enter America as permanent residents.

## American Buddhism in the Twentieth Century

In his epilogue to *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, Kenneth Tanaka echoes Thomas Tweed in noting that

Buddhism failed to become a more abiding presence in America following its initial entrance during the Victorian period, largely due to the absence in Buddhism of two qualities: optimism and activism. While other features of Buddhism appealed to certain elements of the Victorian ethos, such as its amenability to scientific worldview and the spirit of individualism, the pessimistic and passive Buddhist image dampened further growth.<sup>14</sup>

Although the growth of the American Buddhist movement was indeed slow in the initial decades of the twentieth century, by 1950 Buddhism had begun a period of much more aggressive expansion, and by the 1960s its increases had become explosive. Abetted by a more tolerant and pluralistic American society, an increasing ecumenicism in the aftermath of Vatican II, immigration reform in 1965, and the development of an openly assertive sense of optimism and activism in American Buddhist

communities, the growth spurts of the 1960s and 1970s were consolidated in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus American Buddhism faces the turn of the millennium with a forward-looking vision.

There are at least two approaches that might be utilized in presenting an overview of American Buddhism throughout the current century. The first involves simply offering a developmental, historical timeline, noting the chronological details and offering a brief commentary on the significance of the various events. The second entails presenting a comprehensive traditional and sectarian record, tracing the ongoing development of the various American Buddhist communities according to their country of origin and sectarian affiliation. Each approach is somewhat problematic. With the former, there is a strong tendency to get lost in the sheer volume of information, thus losing the overall continuity of the historical progression. With the latter, in keeping Zen separate from Theravāda, for example, the records of each begin to look far more separate than they really are. Nonetheless, because of the rich diversity and depth in American Buddhist communities, I have opted for the second approach. I am hopeful that as the remaining chapters of the book unfold, the overall threads of the American Buddhist tradition, including those that make up its historical timeline, will become properly woven together.

## American Buddhist Communities of Japanese Origin

### Zen

A dozen years after his appearance at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Shaku Sōen was visited at Engaku Temple in Japan by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Russell of San Francisco. Of all the Zen masters in Japan at the time, Sōen seemed to be the only one engaged in teaching foreigners, and when the Russells invited him for an extended visit with them in the summer of 1905, he gladly accepted. During the slightly less than a year that the rōshi stayed with the Russells, he not only provided meditation instruction to their large family and engaged Mrs. Russell in *kōan* study, but also lectured in various cities, eventually becoming convinced that America was ready for Zen. In March 1906 Sōen was joined by D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), who had by that time been at Open Court Publishing Company for almost a decade, and they set out across America



by train. The rōshi lectured and Suzuki translated. Within a short time two of the Zen master's other students from Japan also joined him in America. The first of these was Nyōgen Senzaki (1876–1958). As a tubercular young monk, Senzaki appeared at Engaku Temple and was cared for as he recovered. Following a five-year stay, he moved on and founded a school known as Mentorgarten. When he arrived in America, he worked for the Russell family and, presumably, imagined himself raising money to support his school. Senzaki saw Mrs. Russell particularly as a great friend to Zen, and called her “the gate opener of Zen in America.”<sup>15</sup> He was also instructed by his master not to “utter the ‘B’ of Buddhism”<sup>16</sup> for seventeen years—a promise he clearly kept. The second student to arrive, in 1906, was Shaku Sōkatsu (1869–1954). Prior to studying with Sōen, he too had been a student of Imakita Kōsen. Following a decade of rigorous practice, and a lengthy pilgrimage of sorts that took him to Burma, Sri Lanka, and India, he returned to Japan and began a small temple outside of Tokyo. When summoned to America by his master, Sōkatsu took six of his own students with him. He lived in America between 1906 and 1908, and again from 1909 to 1910, but it was his student Sokei-an (1882–1945) who made the greater impact.

As noted above, D. T. Suzuki worked at Open Court from 1897 to 1909. Two years after returning to Japan he married Beatrice Lane, eventually moving to Kyoto to teach at Otani University. Suzuki had a prolific writing career, and also founded the well-known journal the *Eastern Buddhist* in 1927, which he edited with his wife. He returned to the United States in 1936, remaining until the beginning of World War II. His final stay on the North American continent was from 1950 to 1958, during which time he lectured at a number of universities, most notably Columbia. In addition, he became president of the Cambridge Buddhist Association, and the Zen Studies Society of New York was organized in 1956 in part to support his work. Suzuki retired from Columbia University in 1957 and died in 1966. Suzuki's contribution is especially significant in that he was not a Zen priest and never became a Zen master.

Nyōgen Senzaki worked at a variety of jobs in San Francisco, primarily in the hotel business. In 1916 he bought a hotel, but it failed and he sought other employment. Three years after Sōen died in 1919 and seventeen years after his arrival in America, Senzaki began to teach Buddhism, hiring halls from time to time and running what he called a “floating *zendō*.” Near the end of the 1920s he established *zendō*s in San

Francisco and Los Angeles, remaining at the latter one until his death in 1958. He called the Los Angeles *zendō* the Mentorgarten Meditation Hall, and used it as a place for innovation—no Buddha statue in the *zendō*, *zazen* seated on chairs—and for the study of Japanese culture. During the World War II years Senzaki was interred at the Heart Mountain Camp in Wyoming along with about ten thousand other Japanese Americans. In 1945 he returned to Los Angeles, taking up residence in Little Tokyo and reestablishing his *zendō*. In 1949 he met Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi, with whom he had corresponded for many years, beginning what would be a fruitful relationship. In the 1950s he gained many disciples, most notably Robert Aitken, who would found the Diamond Sangha in Honolulu in 1959. In a stirring reflection on Senzaki, Louis Nordstrom says:

Nyogen Senzaki had come to this country partly because he felt that Zen in Japan had begun to drift in the direction of decadence, and like Soyen Shaku before him, he hoped America would indeed prove to be the “happy field” of his teacher’s dreams. He encouraged his students to be critical of all things Eastern and Oriental, thereby discouraging an unreflecting assimilation of dogma and mindless guru worship. What he hoped to bring about was a thoroughly international Buddhism, with an American base; a Buddhism that would transcend not only church and sect affiliation, but language affiliation as well.<sup>17</sup>

When Shaku Sōkatsu returned to Japan for the final time, he took five of his original six students with him, leaving behind only a lay disciple known as Shigetsu Sasaki. Sasaki had been primarily an artist (trained as a dragon carver) and writer. Unlike his predecessors, Sasaki moved to the East Coast, settling in New York. In 1919 he returned to Japan and completed his Zen training, and in 1928 was declared a rōshi. He returned to New York, and in 1930 launched the Buddhist Society of America (which was incorporated the following year, and renamed the First Zen Institute of America in 1945). Eventually he was ordained and took the name Sokei-an. Like other Zen teachers, Sokei-an was interned during the war, and his camp experience exacerbated problems with his already failing health. Following his release, in 1944 he married Ruth Fuller, an American widow who had supported his work since 1938. Nonetheless, his health had been irreparably damaged, and he died in May 1945. In 1935, Sokei-an had remarked, “It is an unhappy death for a Zen master when he does not leave an heir,”<sup>18</sup> and it was to be a foreshadowing of his own circumstance.

Three other Rinzai Zen *rōshis* should be mentioned before considering the other forms of Zen that began to appear in the United States after the mid-1950s: Eidō Tai Shimano Rōshi (b. 1932), Maurine Stuart Rōshi (1922–1990), and Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Rōshi (b. 1907). Now head of the Zen Studies Society in New York and of Dai Bosatsu Zendo in the Catskills, Eidō Tai Shimano Rōshi had been a young monk at Ryutakuji Monastery in Japan. In 1957 he was encouraged to go to America by Nyōgen Senzaki. He spent time in Hawaii studying English and serving as resident monk at the Koko-an Zendo, eventually deciding to go to New York, where he arrived on New Year's Eve 1964. While in New York, he met regularly with a group of interested *zazen* practitioners at the American Buddhist Academy and slowly built the group into a growing *sangha*. With the help of friends, he resurrected the Zen Studies Society, which had been dormant since D. T. Suzuki had returned to Japan in 1956. He eventually received Dharma transmission from Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi.

Canadian-born Maurine Stuart Rōshi also received Dharma transmission from Sōen Rōshi, but in an odd and informal manner. Sōen Rōshi had previously given formal Dharma transmission to five individuals, all male. In Stuart's case, he gave her the title of *rōshi* in an informal, private ceremony in 1982—one involving only himself and Stuart. Helen Tworok reports that during the ceremony he said to Stuart, “Please tell everyone that Soen has made you a roshi.”<sup>19</sup> Tworok goes on to say:

Stuart's transmission contradicted established ethics, but not the variegated dimensions of Soen's Zen, making its status all the more difficult to categorize. She accepted the title as an indication of genuine transmission but has never called herself Soen Rōshi's dharma heir nor a holder of his lineage. Rather, her dharma transmission specifies for her a horizontal understanding between teacher and student independent of the vertical concerns of Zen genealogies. By Stuart's assessment, Soen intended this title to sanction her authority to teach Zen, which had not been legitimized by her training as a Zen student or her ordination in 1977 as a Rinzai Zen priest.<sup>20</sup>

Stuart Rōshi was the spiritual leader and president of the Cambridge Buddhist Association.

Prior to coming to Los Angeles in 1962, Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Rōshi had been resident monk at Shoju-an Rinzai temple in Japan, having attained his status as abbot in 1947. Upon arriving in the United States, he settled in Gardena, a Los Angeles suburb, utilizing the garage of his small

house as a *zendō*. As his reputation and number of students grew, he expanded to found the Cimarron Zen Center in Los Angeles in 1966, and in 1971, the Mt. Baldy Zen Center. Now he also has major centers in Albuquerque and in Vancouver, British Columbia, as well as throughout the United States; for more than twenty years he has sponsored a summer seminar on Buddhism for scholars and practitioners—a program that for the last decade has been held at the Bodhi Manda Zen Center in Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Although trained in the Rinzai tradition, Sasaki Rōshi has concluded that the traditional *kōans* are not applicable in the Western environment, and has replaced them with more American counterparts.

One of the first books on American Buddhism noted:

By the mid-1950s, Buddhism in America was on the brink of several new developments. First, new forms of Buddhism were appearing on the American scene, particularly Sōtō Zen, Zen that combined Rinzai and Sōtō techniques, and the beginnings of Tibetan Buddhism. Second, and by far the most important development in Buddhism since its entry to America, was the emergence of “Beat Zen.”<sup>21</sup>

What followed Allen Ginsberg’s first reading of his poem “Howl” at the Six Gallery in San Francisco has been more than amply documented elsewhere, as have the various excursions into Buddhism by Jack Kerouac, Philip Whalen, Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder, and others. What is also documented but generally not often discussed is that for some of the Beats, Buddhism was more than just an expression of “lunatic Zen.” Gary Snyder, for example, left graduate school at Indiana University and enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley to study Oriental languages. It was there that he and a few other like-minded friends began meeting in a study group at the Berkeley Buddhist Church, a Jōdo Shinshū-affiliated community with Rev. Enryo Imamura as its resident minister. Lest anyone question the seriousness of the endeavor, one of the participants in the group was Alex Wayman, then a young graduate student in Tibetan who would go on to pursue one of the most distinguished careers in Buddhist Studies in the twentieth century. Yet for Snyder, this intellectual pursuit of the intricacies of Buddhist philosophy was insufficient; he wanted the direct experience of Buddhism. To get it, he sailed to Japan in May 1956. Introduced to Isshu Miura Rōshi by Sokei-an’s widow (Ruth Fuller Sasaki), Snyder served the rōshi for a year and then

continued with Sessō Oda Rōshi when Miura Rōshi left for New York with Mrs. Sasaki. He continued in these studies for a decade, ending them only with his teacher's death in 1966.

Snyder was the exception. Most of the Beats, despite their identification with the spontaneity and antinomianism of Zen, understood less than one might have imagined. Although they attempted to replace what they rejected of American culture with Zen culture, the Beats' accuracy remains questionable. According to Theodore Roszak: "It is indisputable . . . that the San Francisco beats, and much of our younger generation since their time, *thought* they had found something in Zen they needed, and promptly proceeded to use what they understood of this exotic tradition as a justification for fulfilling the need."<sup>22</sup> Over against the Beats was the so-called Square Zen of Alan Watts. Born in England in 1915, and possessed of a huge appetite for reading of all kinds, Watts never attended university. He frequented the Buddhist Lodge in London, married into the Buddhist community, and moved to New York near the end of the 1930s. Nearly two decades later his essay "Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen" appeared in an issue of the *Chicago Review* devoted to Zen. Although neither his zeal for Zen nor his passion to make it seem like something Americans could do can be questioned, his misunderstandings may have been quite as severe as those of the Beats. Nonetheless, one well-known author referred to Watts as "the Norman Vincent Peale of Zen."

Certainly what emerged in the years following 1960 was a Zen explosion. Rick Fields aptly remarks: "As Eido Tai Shimano and others have observed, 1960 marked the point when American Zen turned from the intellectual to the practical. By the mid-sixties more than a score of Zen groups had appeared in the soil watered by Soyen Shaku, Sokei-an, Senzaki, D. T. Suzuki, and all the others, like mushrooms after a spring rain."<sup>23</sup> Apart from Zen's becoming practical, two more Zen traditions appeared. The first of these was one of the other traditional Zen schools of Japan: Sōtō.

Sōtō Zen began to appear on the American scene around 1950. In 1949, Soyu Matsuoka Rōshi founded the Chicago Buddhist Temple (now called the Zen Buddhist Temple of Chicago). Eventually, he left the organization in the hands of his disciple Richard Langlois, one of the very first American rōshis, and moved on to serve other emerging Sōtō communities, especially in California. Matsuoka Rōshi was followed

shortly by Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi (1904–1971), who was to become perhaps the most well known Sōtō Zen master in North America. Suzuki Rōshi arrived in San Francisco on 23 May 1959 to become chief priest for the Japanese–American community at Sokoji Temple (also called the Sōtō Zen Mission) on Bush Street. The temple had been in existence since 1934, having been founded by Hosen Isobe, a Sōtō missionary who also founded temples in Hawaii and Los Angeles. Although he initially practiced *zazen* alone, within a short time a number of American students began to join him for early-morning periods of meditation, and in less than a year they had worked up a regular program, with Suzuki Rōshi offering lectures in English. The San Francisco Zen Center (SFZC) opened in 1961, and was incorporated the next year. Throughout, Suzuki Rōshi emphasized the primary Sōtō practice of *shikantaza*, “just sitting.”

In 1967 the San Francisco Zen Center opened a country meditation center at Tassajara Hot Springs—also called Zen Mountain Center, Zen-shinji Monastery—in the mountains near Carmel, California. By 1969, SFZC had outgrown its modest accommodation at Sokoji Temple on Bush Street and purchased its current headquarters at 300 Page Street. Within a short time the center had opened a series of satellite *zendōs*, and in 1972 it began Green Gulch Farm on land purchased in Marin County. Early on, Suzuki Rōshi was assisted by Dainin Katagiri Rōshi (1928–1990), who came to the United States from Japan in 1964. He assisted greatly in the years after 1969, and although he wanted to begin his own group, he was always persuaded to stay at SFZC. He eventually moved to Monterey and established a *zendō* in his home. A year after Suzuki Rōshi’s death in 1971, Katagiri Rōshi moved to Minneapolis and began his own center (which is now well established). Beginning in 1967, Kobun Chino Sensei also assisted the head of SFZC while heading the Los Altos Zendo. Almost from the beginning Richard Baker Rōshi (b. 1936) was Suzuki Rōshi’s closest student. He was ordained on the night before Tassajara’s opening, and on 21 November 1971, in the Mountain Seat Ceremony, was installed as his teacher’s successor. Within two weeks Suzuki Rōshi, who had been suffering from liver cancer for some time, was dead.

Helen Tworkov notes that in the 1960s nobody knew about Dharma transmission or asked for it; and she pointed out that Suzuki Rōshi never spoke of it.<sup>24</sup> In fact, when she first conceived the idea for her book *Zen in America*, there were only *seven* Americans whose qualifications to trans-

mit Zen had been authorized by their Japanese teachers. Richard Baker was one of them. By 1983, SFZC operated, in addition to the three facilities mentioned above, the Green Gulch Grocery, Tassajara Bakery, Alaya Stitchery, and a vegetarian restaurant. It also had a scandal, reported extensively elsewhere, following which Richard Baker was forced to resign his position as abbot after more than a decade of service. About his experience at SFZC, he says:

Suzuki Roshi created the teaching and I created Zen Center. I don't care what other people think, it is correct to say that I may have created the illusion that Suzuki Roshi created Zen Center but basically, I did. Nothing like Zen Center would have existed if I hadn't been there to "translate," to make him accessible. And I overdid it. I created too much structure so that anything the students heard they thought was a teaching. But for me a good part of the teaching was creating the arms, the structure that allows a person to hear the teachings. When I came back from Japan, I knew why those people were there and how they got there. I orchestrated it. I was Suzuki Roshi's agent in a sense as well as his disciple. And I did all that because I felt that Zen Buddhism was going to be an enormously powerful, formative influence in the United States in the next decade.<sup>25</sup>

Zentatsu Richard Baker left SFZC, moving first to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1984 and then to Crestone, Colorado, in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, where he now runs a new Buddhist organization known as the Dharma Sangha. In July 1987 Baker Rōshi transmitted the Dharma to Philip Whalen, one of the original Beat poets.

Another Sōtō organization begun in the 1960s is Shasta Abbey, initially referred to as "The Reformed Sōtō Zen Church." It was begun as a outgrowth of the Zen Mission Society in Japan as part of its Foreign Guest Department. More importantly, its founder and teacher was Jiyu Kennett Rōshi (1924–1996), one of the earliest Western women to be declared a rōshi. Born Peggy Theresa Nancy Kennett, she initially became involved in the Theravāda *sangha* in her native England. D. T. Suzuki's visits to England advanced her study of Zen. In 1960 she met Chisan Kōhō Zenji, abbot of Sōjiji Temple, and accepted his offer to study with him in Japan. She was ordained as a priest on 14 April 1962, and immediately encountered all the problems one would expect for a female British Zen priest in Japan. Nevertheless, in little more than a year she received Dharma transmission, and, shortly after the death of her teacher, acceded to his wish to establish a center in the West. She arrived in San