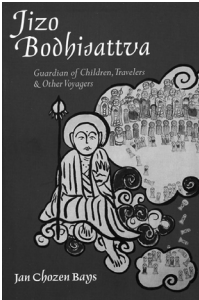


Books



*Jizo Bodhisattva
Guardian of Children,
Travelers and Other Voyagers*
by Jan Chozen Bays
Shambhala, 2003

reviewed by Zen Master Wu Kwang

Jan Chozen Bays is a Zen master in the White Plum lineage of the late master Taizan Maezumi Roshi. She is a Zen priest and teacher at the Jizo Mountain—Great Vow Zen Monastery in Clatskanie, Oregon. She is also a pediatrician who specializes in the evaluation of children for abuse and neglect.

Her work focus suggests why she may have chosen the subject for this book, *Jizo Bodhisattva, Guardian of Children, Travelers and Other Voyagers*.

Jizo Bodhisattva (in Korean, Ji Jang Bosal), whose name means Earth Store or Earth Treasury, is the bodhisattva of great vows—in Sino Korean, Dae Won Bosal.

The vows of Jizo are: “Only after all the Hells are empty will I become a Buddha. Only after all beings are taken across to Enlightenment will I, myself, realize Bodhi.” It is because of the saving power of these vows that Jizo’s name is often invoked during memorial services for the dead.

This book is both an informative overview of the cultural history and evolution of the worship and practices connected with Jizo in Japan up to the present, as well as a study of the iconography connected with this bodhisattva, and how the various iconographic images relate directly to the living practice of Zen, in formal meditation as well as daily life. The contour of the book could be said to be expressed by the author in a chapter entitled, “The Pilgrimage of Jizo Bodhisattva”:

For over fifteen hundred years, Jizo Bodhisattva has been a spiritual pilgrim, traveling from India to Northern Asia and now to America and Europe, fulfilling her original vow not to rest until all beings are saved from hell. As she travels, her body and dress transform, according to need. As she enters new countries, new forms of practice develop that make her more accessible and are most suited to the suffering particular to each time and place. Whatever her external appearance, male or female, monk or royalty, Asian or Western, she always can be recognized by the benefit that appears in her wake.

In the sections of this book that deal with the evolution of Jizo worship in Japan, there are many interesting folk tales and miracle stories related to a simple and clear faith in the power of the vows of the bodhisattva. A recent form of worship connected with Jizo is called the Mizuko ceremony. Mizuko literally means water baby. In actual use it refers to both the unborn who float in a watery world awaiting birth and the infants up to one or two years of age, whose hold on life in the human realm is still tenuous.

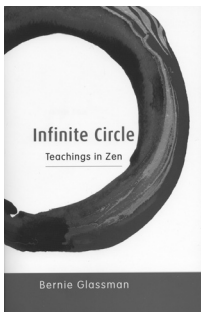
The Mizuko ceremony is a memorial service for infants who have died either before birth or within the first few years of life. The author explains that this ceremony is not an ancient rite, nor was it originally a Buddhist ceremony. “It arose in Japan in the 1960s, in response to a human need, to relieve the suffering emerging from the experience of the large number of women who had undergone abortions after World War II.” In the book, there is an explanation of the form of service as practiced in Japan, as well as how this ceremony has been recently offered to people in the United States. Included is a model of the ceremony, as well as suggestions about modifications for different groups and needs. Descriptions of the benefits that people have experienced from participating in this form of service also are offered. These include the releasing of grief and acceptance of loss, as well as the gaining of comfort and support.

Pictures and statues of Jizo most often represent her/him as a monk who holds a pilgrim’s staff, with six jingling metal rings atop it in one hand and a wish-fulfilling gem in the other. The author comments, “Jizo Bodhisattva has been a pilgrim for two thousand years. What can we learn from Jizo’s pilgrimage about our own spiritual journey?”

Using this theme of spiritual journey, the book elucidates the inner meaning of Jizo’s staff, the meaning of the six rings, and the jewel he holds, as elements of practice and as ways to view the workings of our mind and inner processes.

The book concludes with a chapter, “Practicing with Jizo Bodhisattva,” which enumerates and explains such practices as reciting the name of the Bodhisattva as a mantra and reciting the Jizo dharani. It also supports the efficacy of making and renewing vows to establish a sense of direction. Sections from *The Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* are included.

In all, this is a well-organized and comprehensive book, emphasizing practice rather than a theoretical or scholastic undertaking. ☸



Infinite Circle: Teaching in Zen

by Bernie Glassman
Shambhala, 2003
Reviewed by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Bernie Tetsugen Glassman is a dharma heir of Maezumi Roshi. Not your standard Zen master, he has led street retreats (serious practice under the conditions in which the homeless live), and founded a number of spiritual/social projects. The Greyston Mandala community includes Zen practice, community development, work among the homeless, and a highly successful bakery (which in turn employs the homeless and recently homeless.) The Peacemaker Order (including the Zen Peacemaker Order) is an ecumenical organization dedicated to peace and social activism within a spiritual framework. Most recently, he has been involved in constructing the House of One People, envisioned as an organizational and event center in rural Massachusetts.

In keeping with this focus, his previous books were *Instructions to the Cook: a Zen Master's Lessons in Living a Life that Matters* (with Rick Fields)—a book about cooking in only a metaphorical sense; and *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace*. Before striking out on his own, he also co-authored or edited more standard books about Zen practice with his teacher, Maezumi Roshi.

Published just recently, *Infinite Circle* actually belongs to an intermediate period, when Glassman was teaching solo in New York, but before he had begun his distinctive projects. While a chapter is added to bring in his later concerns, fundamentally the book has its roots in a series of lectures he gave, before the Greyston community appeared, on three basic texts: the Heart Sutra, Shih T'ou's eighth century poem *The Identity of the Relative and the Absolute* (a.k.a. *Sandokai*, traditionally chanted in Soto services), and Soto Zen's sixteen bodhisattva precepts (the triple refuge, the standard ten precepts, and the three admonitions to cease from evil, to do good, and to do good for others.)

The book has an outwardly conventional form but is deeply idiosyncratic in its content. In the very beginning, three pages into the discussion of the Heart Sutra, on page 7, we are introduced to Glassman's key concept of One Body, which permeates the book. This is introduced through the Sanskrit word *maha*, conventionally translated as "great." To Glassman this actually means "One Body." We get there by the image of a circle which becomes bigger and bigger, so that it finally encompasses everything (this is where the title comes from), hence great = One Body. This notion of One Body is returned to frequently throughout the text, and provides the background for Glassman's intensely social vision of practice.

The language is largely abstract and philosophical, in which statement and definition transmute into each other. For example, consider the following (in the section on the Heart Sutra):

We are nothing but prajna wisdom itself, which is the functioning of emptiness, of this as it is. Emptiness is the state of One Body, the state in which there are no concepts or notions of what is, just the one thing.

There is also a focus on terminology and meaning of the sort usually found in philosophy texts, e.g. (also in the Heart Sutra section):

Appropriateness is not a matter of right or wrong. If the hand of a demented person catches on fire, he might cut it off. Is that right or wrong? According to our conceptual ideas of what should be, it's wrong... That might be valid in the realm of separation and knowing, but I'm talking about appropriateness that is the functioning of no-separation.

The general form of this section of the book is a close reading in which focus on individual words expands into stories, images, and other forms of teaching.

Since we do not chant the *Sandokai* on a regular basis, it's worth talking about it a little before discussing Glassman's discussion of it. Shih T'ou was a contemporary of Ma Tsu (our Ma Jo); they were the most prominent Zen masters of their time. The questions this poem is concerned with are: how do things come to be, and what are they really? Theistic religions have no problem with these questions—God made everything, and everything is what God made it—but for Buddhism, especially Mahayana, with its emphasis on sunyata (usually translated as "emptiness") these are more difficult questions. Shih T'ou's poem, in the translation Glassman uses, has only 47 lines, but those lines cover a lot of territory. The first two lines are: "The Mind of the Great Sage of India/ Is intimately conveyed west to east," and from there we quickly move into the basic concerns of the poem. The language in some places is quite abstract:

*Each thing has its own being
Which is not different from its place and function*

In other places it is concrete:

*Fire is hot, water is wet,
Wind moves and the earth is dense.*

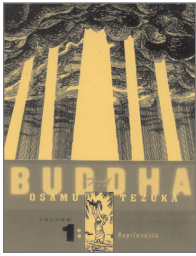
In other places the two meld almost magically:

*The four elements return to their true nature
As a child to its mother.*

The last ten lines are directions on practice ("Hearing this, simply perceive the Source...") and admonitions to practice hard—the last line is "Do not waste your time by night or day!"

Glassman situates the *Sandokai* squarely in the philosophical notion of the Five Positions: the relative alone, the absolute alone, the relative in the absolute, the absolute in the relative, and what he calls no-position. But while he expands on these notions as they appear in the text, he does not limit himself to them, and his discussion ranges quite far. He talks about a number of kong-ans, and his interpretations are quite different from ours. For example, in his discussion of Gye Chung's cart, the cart becomes a metaphor: one wheel is the relative, the other the absolute, and the axle is one-ness. Again, the notion of One Body infuses this section.

The section on the precepts is relatively brief, and of the ten precepts, he only discusses the first one, don't kill. In the final chapter, written more recently than the rest of the book, he uses the kong-an, "Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?" as a springboard, along with the notion of One Body, for his emphasis on bearing witness and commitment to action. ☸



Buddha, Volume One: Kapilavastu

Osamu Tezuka

Vertical, 2003

Reviewed by Judy Roitman, JDPSN

Osamu Tezuka was a master of manga, the Japanese art form incarnated both in graphic literature (a.k.a. comics) and animation (the latter known as animé). Writing his first manga story as a young child, he went on to become one of the most influential manga artists of the twentieth century, introducing cinematic techniques onto the page and, inevitably, moving into animé, where he was equally influential. His most famous creation is *Astro Boy*, but his work is extraordinarily rich and varied.

As a teenager he founded an animal-lover's club, so it is not surprising that he created an eight-volume life of the Buddha. The first volume appeared in Tokyo in 1987, two years before Tezuka's death at the age of 61. Vertical, Inc., a publishing house specializing in translating Japanese books into English, has published the first six volumes, with the next two scheduled for the fall and winter.

The art is extraordinary, and the narrative is bold and unconventional. Few of the first volume's pages have anything to do with Buddha (this changes in later volumes.) Instead,

they focus on a young slave boy Chapra, his mother (never named), and a street urchin and bandit, the seven-year old Tatta, who off-handedly exhibits both mystical powers and astounding compassion. These three make their ways through a cruel society in which caste means everything and violence is everywhere. Only gradually do we meet the Buddha's future parents and their peaceful kingdom of Kapilavastu, which seems immune to the calamities—from locusts to drought to ravaging armies—of the kingdoms around it.

The other volumes continue this blend of Tezuka's imagination and more conventional aspects of the Buddha's life, including an episode in which young Siddhartha, before marriage, falls in love with a woman bandit. This stuff is not in your standard versions of the Buddha's life, but so what? I'll take this version over Herman Hesse's any day. Tezuka is a master of his art with a deep respect for his subject, which is not really Buddha, but the question that drives human beings to practice, the question of how to live in this world. ☸

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