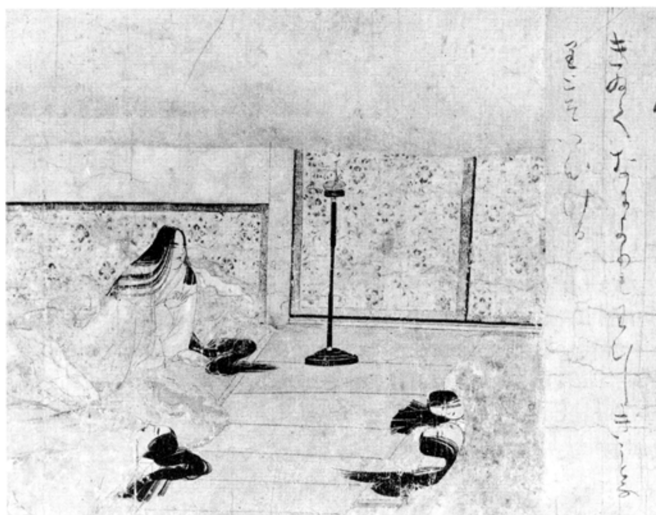

244 Illustration from *Yamai no sōshi* (*Notebook of Illnesses*), scroll 2, showing a woman suffering from insomnia. Late 12th century. Hand scroll, color on paper; height 10 ⅛ in. (25.8 cm). Private collection.

motif echoes the position of the woman's torso, reinforcing the impression that she, alone in the house, is awake in the dead of night.

The *Jigoku zōshi* (*Hell Scrolls*), depicting the eight sections of hell to which human beings can be consigned, convey a powerful impression of suffering. The hell for those who cheat their customers by short-weighting is overseen by a frightening three-eyed, white-haired old crone who looks on as two women and a man pick metal boxes filled with hot coals from a fire and attempt to judge their weight (Fig. 245). The atmosphere in this hell is dark and smoky, the only real light being provided by the fire in the center. The supervisor is a looming presence, her sagging body described with broad calligraphic brushstrokes. The sufferers are pale, naked figures, totally consumed by the pain of their torture.

Zen Buddhism

Equally important to the religious life of the Kamakura period was the establishment of Chan (JAP. Zen) Buddhism in Japan at the end of the twelfth century. Although elements of Chan Buddhism featured in Saichō's formulation of Tendai doctrine in the ninth century, it did not flourish as an independent sect within the worldly Heian period. In the more sober times following the Genpei Civil War, this sect's emphasis on the stern self-discipline needed to be able to perceive the true nature of things found a welcome reception amongst the period's scholars and warrior elite. It continues to have a significant influence on Japanese intellectual thought and behavior even in the twenty-first century.

The school's origins are connected with one Bodhidharma (JAP. Daruma), who arrived in China during the sixth century. In the earliest texts he was a Persian monk who arrived via the Silk Roads in the Wei capital of Luoyang, while another, later, history claims he was an Indian prince who sailed on a reed, arriving in southern China. For Daruma, the key to Enlightenment was intense meditation, and "meditation" is the name of the school he established—Zen in Japanese (CH. Chan; SKT. Dhyana). Daruma is famed for having

245 Illustration from *Jigoku zōshi* (*Hell Scrolls*). Late 12th century. Section of a hand scroll, color on paper; height 10 ½ in. (26.7 cm). Nara National Museum.

meditated in a cave facing its back wall for so long that his image was impressed in the rock wall, and his legs atrophied and fell off.

During the Tang dynasty, Chan Buddhism had accrued a greater and greater following. Adherents were distinguished from other Chinese schools of Buddhism by their unworldliness and comparative poverty. Subsequently, in the great proscription of Buddhism of 842, which broke the back of other schools of Chinese Buddhism, the Chan sect escaped relatively unscathed, and after the proscription was lifted became one of the most important schools in China. It was particularly important during the Song period (960–1279), when it had attracted the serious attention and admiration of the Chinese intelligentsia, who often held Buddhism to be otherwise a mess of foreign superstition. Visiting Japanese monks were also drawn to the Chan sect, which relied not on scripture, dogma, or conventional ritual, but on the practitioners' direct intuitive perception of reality. Such a belief left room for an uncomplicated code of ethics, just as it demanded a stern self-discipline. Both qualities found a receptive audience among both Japan's cultural and military elite.

Of the two Zen sects introduced into Japan in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries—**Rinzai** and **Sōtō**—Rinzai was particularly well received by the daimyo and shogunate with its belief in the possibility of sudden Enlightenment, the efficacy of the *kōan* as a teaching tool (see below), and the ritual drinking of tea. Sōtō, in advocating a balance of meditation and physical activity as a route to moments of understanding and a more gradual Enlightenment, had especially strong appeal amongst the peasantry and the samurai of the provinces. It is this less glamorous branch of the school which truly integrated Zen into the very fabric of social function, especially in its devising of funeral and memorial services. The Rinzai, with its high-ranking samurai patrons and temples located near Kyoto and other power centers, produced many of the great artists and poets of the medieval period.

The goal of Zen is a deep awareness of truth, often framed as the truth of life and death, to be reached through two main practices: first, ***zazen***, meditation while sitting straight-backed with legs crossed, and, second, the study of ***kōan***, questions or exchanges with a master that cannot be understood or answered with rational thought. The aim of *zazen* is to be completely present in the here and now, with the mind focused yet free of images or concepts—object-less thought. The purpose of the *kōan* is to break through rational patterns of thought to the clarity of intuitive Enlightenment. The student must constantly hold the thought problem in mind until the tension between the rational and the irrational produces a breakthrough in understanding. The goal of Zen practice is, of course, Enlightenment, but it is characterized as ***satori***, an ineffable experience some have described as the feeling of becoming one with the universe.

As in Shingon, Zen masters put a great emphasis on person-to-person teaching: their purpose to avoid dependence on written scriptures, and thus to transmit Zen principles directly to students through the generations. During the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, they were also influential in matters of state, advising on internal and foreign policy and on trade with other nations. Zen monks, although required to live austerely within the temple complex, were allowed the freedom to engage in cultural activities of a primarily secular nature, such as poetry, painting, calligraphy, a distinctively Zen ink-and-brushwork tradition, and garden design. Over the centuries, Zen thought and practice, placing a high value on simplicity, economy of means, and the perception of beauty in the natural world, have had a profound effect on Japanese culture. Perhaps Zen's greatest contribution was its blurring of the boundaries between the secular and sacred in both art and poetry.

The Aesthetics of *Wabi*

Developing out of the intellectual climate associated with Zen is *wabi*, an aesthetic concept that greatly values pleasure taken in austerity and solitude, beauty perceived in simplicity, and an appreciation of objects weathered by time. One of the greatest Zen masters and scholars of this period was the lay master Yoshida Kenkō (1283–1350). Born into a family that had traditionally supplied Shinto diviners for the imperial family, Kenkō in his early adulthood served as a steward to a family related indirectly to Emperor Go Nijo (r. 1302–8). However, at some time before 1313 he withdrew from court circles and established himself as a Buddhist monk, although without a temple affiliation. His *Tsurezuregusa* (*Essays in Idleness*), written some twenty years later, provides a perceptive and beautifully expressed statement of the aesthetic ideals that had been formulated by the early fourteenth century and that continued to dominate the arts in Japan until the end of the sixteenth century. The most famous passage of his work sets forth a concept that is a logical extension of the value he placed on impermanence, and also a statement of a fundamentally Japanese aesthetic ideal recognizable even today.

> Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? . . . Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration, . . . People commonly regret that the cherry blossoms scatter or that the moon sinks in the sky, and this is natural; but only an exceptionally insensitive man would say, "This branch and that branch have lost their blossoms. There is nothing worth seeing now." In all things, it is the beginnings and ends that are interesting.
>
> Donald Keene, trans., *Essays in Idleness*, New York,1967, 115.

Elsewhere Kenkō elaborates on the *wabi* aesthetic of understatement and transience:

> A screen or sliding door decorated with a painting or inscription in clumsy brushwork gives an impression less of its own ugliness than of the bad taste of the owner. It

is all too apt to happen that a man's possessions betray his inferiority.... Possessions should look old, not overly elaborate; they need not cost much, but their quality should be good.

Somebody once remarked that thin silk was not satisfactory as a scroll wrapping because it was so easily torn. [X] replied "It is only after the silk wrapper has frayed at top and bottom, and the mother-of-pearl has fallen from the roller that a scroll looks beautiful." This opinion demonstrated the excellent taste of the man.

Ibid, 70.

The concept of *wabi* initially referred to the quality of the life led by an ascetic, but over time it developed into an aesthetic ideal to be sought after in one's daily life. The element of ***sabi***, often paired with *wabi*, adds the notions of detachment and tranquillity, such as one achieves at the end of life. These two aesthetic concepts became fundamental to the performance of the tea ceremony, which developed in the fifteenth century out of the Zen practice of drinking strong tea in order to stay awake while meditating, and are clearly apparent in the literature and painting of the period.

The Zen Temple

The composition of the Buddhist temple changed fundamentally under Zen. Most importantly, there developed a central complex for public ceremonies and alongside it a series of private subtemples, or ***tatchū***, built to accommodate religious leaders, often retired abbots, and their monastic and lay adherents. Today, Zen temples rarely have more than twenty-five subtemples, but it is known that toward the end of the sixteenth century they routinely had many more, several temples counting more than a hundred. These smaller complexes normally had space, either rooms or separate buildings, for the essential elements of daily life: a reception room, quarters for the monks, rooms for Zen study, meditation, and the chanting of sutras, a space devoted to the memory of the temple founder, and often a garden for contemplation.

Within the public sector of the Zen temple, many changes were effected in the traditional names, types, styles, and layout of the buildings in the temple compound. A new type of gate was introduced, the ***sanmon***, or mountain gate, a two-storied structure with three entrance doors and a functional second story—accessed by covered stairways outside the basic building and which usually contained sculptures of the sixteen *rakan*, who as great practitioners who had achieved Enlightenment were particularly revered in Zen. The main hall, the *kondō* or *hondō* in traditional Buddhist temples, was renamed simply the ***butsuden*** (Buddha hall) and used for public ceremonies, while the lecture hall, or *kōdō*, was renamed the ***hattō*** (Hall of the Law) and was used for regular assemblies of all the monks belonging to the parent temple. These two buildings were placed along a central axis extending from the *sanmon* to the residence of the abbot, the *hōjō*, which served as the headquarters and chief reception building of the temple. Although the term "*hōjō*" refers to the small hut of a recluse monk, in Japanese Zen temples it is usually a large and well-appointed building. Finally, the public complex may be provided with a ***shariden***, or relic hall, in which to honor Shaka Buddha and revered Zen masters, and a ***kaisandō***, or founder's hall, dedicated to the temple's or precinct's founder.

Tōfukuji, one of the first Zen temples to be built in Kyoto, preserves something of the appearance of an early Zen monastic complex on the site of the long disappeared Hosshōji of Emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129). It was founded in 1236 with the support of the Kamakura regent Kujō Michiie (1193–1252). Although the first construction campaign was not completed until 1255, in 1243 the noted Zen master Enni Benen (1202–80), a central figure in the development of Rinzai Zen in Japan and known posthumously as Shōichi Kokushi, took up residence at the temple. Throughout the following centuries Tōfukuji prospered, and when the complex

246 Ink painting of Tōfukuji, by Sesshū Tōyō. 15th century. Horizontal hanging scroll, ink and color on paper; 32 ⅝ x 59 in. (83 x 150 cm). Tōfukuji, Kyoto.

247 *Sanmon* (entrance gate), Tōfukuji, Kyoto. 1384–1425.

was severely damaged by fires in 1319 and again in 1334, rebuilding was undertaken quickly, with the support of *bakufu* leaders. Although the fortunes of Tōfukuji declined after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, at one time it had more than fifty subtemples. Some idea of the earlier complex can be gleaned from a fifteenth-century ink painting by Sesshū Tōyō (1420–1506) seen in Figure 246. Located in the foothills of Kyoto's Eastern Hills, or Higashiyama, its buildings are sited over uneven terrain, and a fair-sized stream, the Sengyokukan, is included within its boundaries. The view of the foliage from the roofed bridge over the stream, the Tsutenkyō, is one of the most famous in Kyoto in the fall.

The *sanmon* of Tōfukuji, the earliest extant example of the new type of gate, was built over a period of roughly forty years, from 1384, when materials were pledged by the *bakufu*, to 1405, when the roof tiles were put in place, to 1425, when the outer staircases were added (Fig. 247). The building is two bays wide by five bays long and is capped by a two-tiered, hipped-gable roof. Although the exterior of the gate preserves the more restrained and sober aesthetic of the Chinese Southern Song period (1126–1279) building, the interior of the second floor turns to the bright ornamentation typical of Chinese decoration in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with designs painted in green, red, brown, black, and gold (Fig. 248). Enshrined in the single room are sculptures typical of a *sanmon*—images of Shaka and the sixteen *rakan*.

The architectural style adopted for Zen temple construction is known in Japan as ***karayō***, or Chinese style, in contrast to the traditional manner that over time had come to be regarded as a purely Japanese, or ***wayō***, style. *Karayō* buildings use such decorative details as bell-shaped windows with a rippling top line, transom windows with delicate wooden grilles, and an extraordinarily complicated pattern of bracket supports and fanned rafters. Columns in this style usually narrow in diameter toward the top and rest on stone bases set directly on the stone tiles of the floor.

The earliest extant example of a building in the *karayō* style is the *shariden* of Engakuji in Kamakura (Fig. 249). The hall was built in 1285 as the *butsuden* of a local nunnery, Taiheiji, and was moved to the founder's *tatchū* of Engakuji, the Shōzokuin, in 1563. The core of the building is three by three bays square, with a *mokoshi* (double-roof system) added around the perimeter. The roof is a two-tiered, hipped gable; it is thought that the original roof was made of tile in the traditional Chinese style rather than the thatch that now covers it. The rafters, visible from the inside, appear to radiate out from

a central point hidden above a flat ceiling panel. The *shariden* of Engakuji has a delicate, almost jewel-like interior in comparison with the large halls found in most Zen temples, and the decorative detailing of the *karayō* style seems to add just the right amount of architectural embellishment.

One of the most innovative concepts given expression in the Zen temple is the landscape garden as an aid to meditation. By the Middle Heian period, gardens were incorporated into temple compounds that were laid out in imitation of the residences of the nobility. However, the gardens associated with Zen subtemples are very different. They are constructed in a limited amount of space, and this very limitation is used as an asset in their design, which is kept extremely simple. Furthermore, as aids to Zen practice, the objects they contain seem to invite metaphysical interpretation. Finally, most of them are constructed largely from small pebbles and rocks, with live plantings limited to moss and simple shrubbery, and are called ***karesansui***, or dry landscapes, although some Zen gardens also incorporate water features such as ponds.

By far the most famous *karesansui* is that of Ryōanji (Fig. 250), and it has come to be considered the epitome of Zen tranquillity and reflection. The temple was founded on the western outskirts of Kyoto in 1450, ironically enough by one of the principal instigators of the Ōnin War—Hosokawa

248 (above) Second floor of *sanmon*, Tōfukuji.

249 (below) *Shariden* (relic hall), Engakuji, Kamakura. 1293–8.