



## “Zen without bells and whistles.”

### **Mud and Water—The Collected Teachings of Zen Master Bassui**

TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY  
ARTHUR BRAVERMAN

256 pages, ISBN 0-86171-320-6

Like the revered Master Dogen several generations before him, Master Bassui was dissatisfied with what passed for Zen training and taught a radically re-energized form of Zen founded on direct experience. This piece gives a taste of Bassui's cutting style of teaching.

#### **The Sole Practice of Zazen**

A questioner asked Bassui: "It is said that one who practices the Way will remove obstructing demons. If one

simply practices zazen and doesn't chant sacred words from sutras, by what grace will he remove these obstructions?"

Bassui responded: "A robber does not break into the home of a poor child. The cave of demons and heretics, on the other hand, is rich with human egos and analytical thoughts. Clearly seeing into one's nature is called practice, and the seat that puts an end to analytical thoughts is called zazen, When analytical thoughts are forgotten, views based on knowledge are also forgotten, leaving no trace of

ego. The path where heavenly beings fulfill their desire to offer flowers no longer exists. There is no gate through which demons and heretics can secretly enter. What special incantation can compare with this? It is said in a sutra: 'On perceiving that the five skandhas (form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness) are empty, one is saved from all kinds of pain and misfortune.' That is why the special incantations cannot be compared with diligent practice of zazen. If: while devoting yourself to practice, you have thoughts of gain and, thinking it will prevent the interference from demons, you recite invocations from sutras, this kind of reasoning will immediately create a demon inside you, attracting demons from the outside, and causing chaos within, like a stinking carcass attracts blowflies. You will quickly lose sight of the seeds of right karma, add to mistaken views, and in the end enter the world of demons and have to drink molten iron. Though you may say you clearly understand this reasoning, if you don't actually penetrate it to the core, forgetting yourself: there will be nothing you can do to prevent it from happening. The phoenix bird will stay away if you don't plant phoenix trees. Ten million incantations can't compare with once penetrating the Way of no-mind. Does anyone here realize this? Who is the one who realizes?"