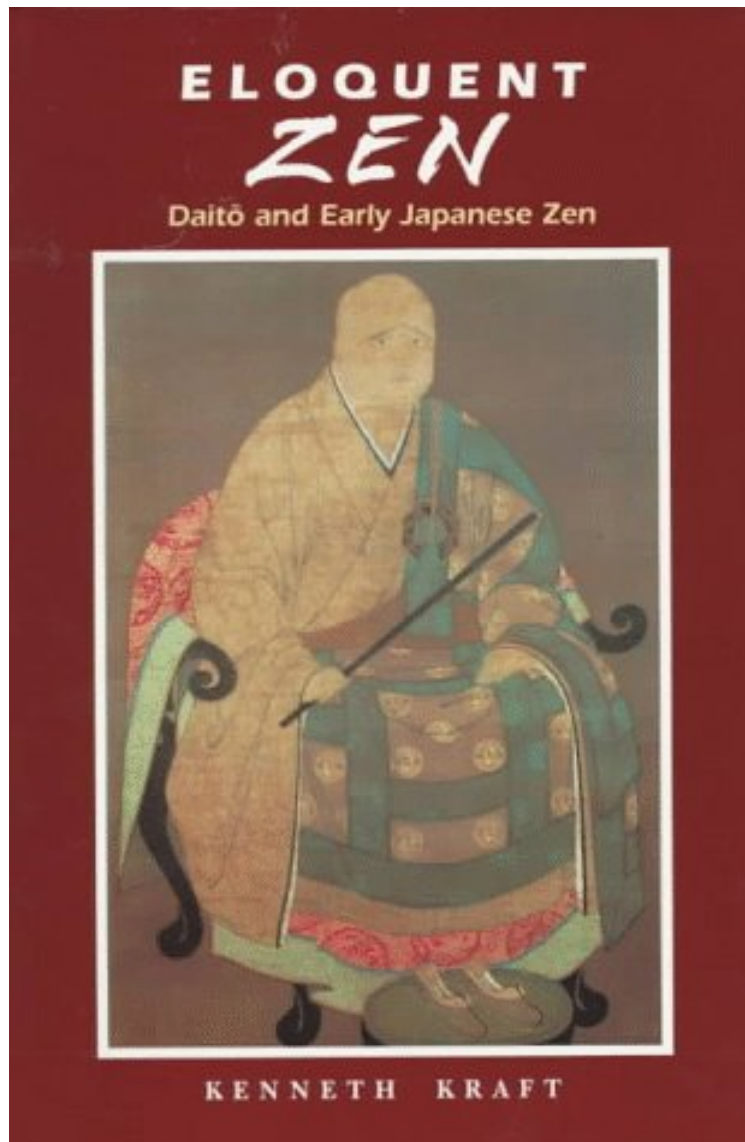


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## Eloquent Zen: Daito and Early Japanese Zen

*Kenneth Kraft*

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**Kenneth Kraft : Eloquent Zen: Daito and Early Japanese Zen** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eloquent Zen: Daito and Early Japanese Zen:

Zen master Daito (1282-1337) played a leading role in the transmission of Zen (Ch'an) from China to Japan. He founded Daitokuji, a major monastery that has been influential for centuries, and he provided interpretations of

Chinese texts. Daito's traditional biography is full of vivid episodes, including his years among the beggars of Kyoto and ending with his dramatic death in the meditation posture. Despite his importance, however, Daito has remained virtually unknown in the West. With the publication of *Eloquent Zen* Kenneth Kraft offers the first comprehensive account of the life and teachings of one of the greatest of Japan's Zen masters. Dr. Kraft begins with the foundations of medieval Japanese Zen. He shows that Daito's predecessors were concerned with clarifying the essentials of Zen as it began to take root in Japan. During this formative phase, the Zen pioneers embraced varied conceptions of enlightenment and divergent notions of authenticity. Kraft places Daito's contributions within this context, offering new insights about early Japanese Zen and about Zen itself. Throughout this study, Kraft looks closely at the complex role of language in Zen--a tradition supposedly distrustful of words. Daito wrote haiku-like poetry, participated in brilliant dialogues, and delivered powerful sermons. His virtuosity in articulating the way of Zen, "beyond words, beyond silence, " is nowhere more apparent than in his use of the capping phrase, an interpretive and commentarial device unique to Zen. Analyzing Daito's use of this device, Kraft elucidates the significance of the literary and aesthetic dimensions of the Zen tradition. *Eloquent Zen* includes valuable translations of Daito's poetry and other writings. Illustrations include three classic portraits of Daito and rare examples of his calligraphy. This lucid and engaging study will interest scholars and nonspecialists interested in Zen, Japanese culture, and Asian philosophy, poetry, and related fields.