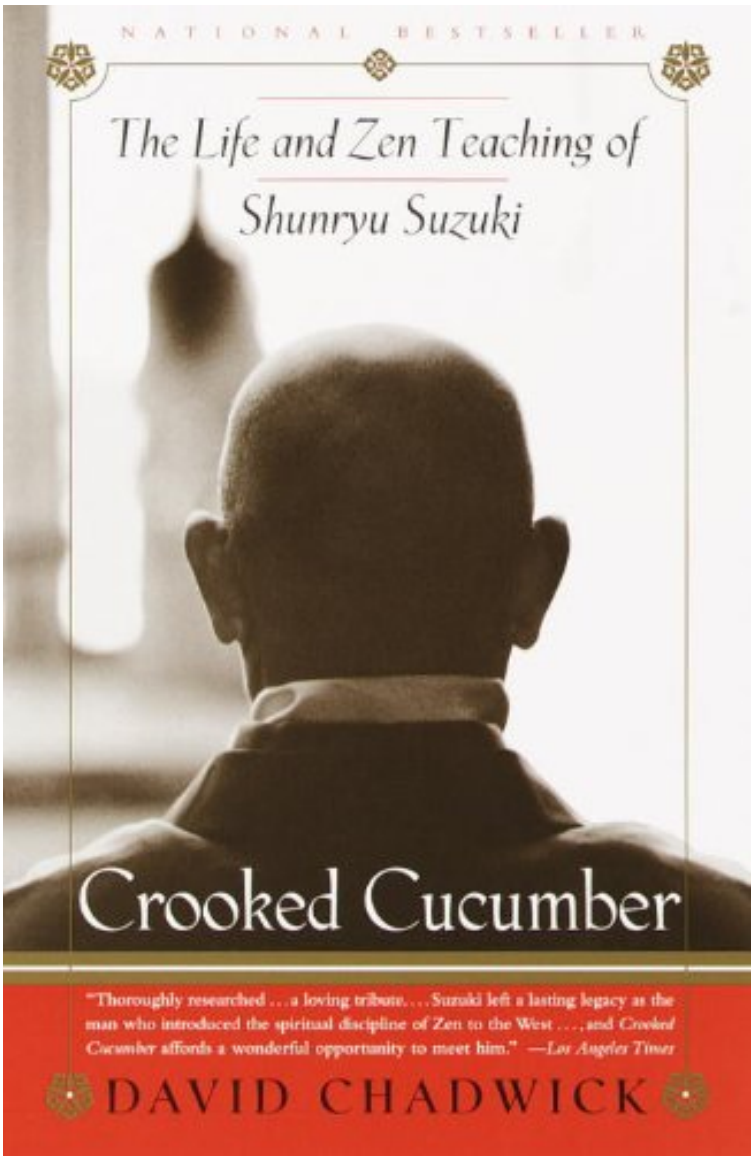
# Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki






*Par David Chadwick*
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Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #104645 dans eBooksPubli le: 2011-01-05Sorti le: 2011-01-05Format: Ebook Kindle

(Download free ebook) Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki

**Par David Chadwick : Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki:

**Description :** Description du produitSince the publication of the landmark Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind 25 years ago, the influence of Shunryu Suzuki has grown extensively. His followers have long hungered for a full portrait of the man whose wisdom touched so many, but until now no book has been published by or about this extraordinary individual. David Chadwick, who studied with Suzuki at the San Francisco Zen Center from 1966 until Suzuki's death in 1971, has interviewed his mentor's family, friends, and disciples and was granted full access to Japanese and American archives. Crooked Cucumber begins with Suzuki's earliest days in Japan, where his teacher nicknamed him "Crooked Cucumber," claiming Suzuki was too absent-minded and dim-witted to ever become a successful priest. Chadwick follows Suzuki through his new

life in San Francisco amid the cultural upheaval of the '60s, creating a context for his refreshing and profound teaching. Brief, illuminating chapters, with previously unpublished lecture quotes, convey the down-to-earth message of a man who continues to transform countless lives.

Prsentation de l'diteurShunryu Suzuki is known to countless readers as the author of the modern spiritual classic Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.This most influential teacher comes vividly to life in Crooked Cucumber, the first full biography of any Zen master to be published in the West.To make up his intimate and engrossing narrative, David Chadwick draws on Suzuki's own words and the memories of his students, friends, and family.Interspersed with previously unpublished passages from Suzuki's talks, Crooked Cucumber evokes a down-to-earth life of the spirit.Along with Suzuki we can find a way to "practice with mountains, trees, and stones and to find ourselves in this big world."From the Trade Paperback edition..com"He's big Suzuki, I'm little Suzuki." In the literary world, Shunryu Suzuki has always played second fiddle to D.T. Suzuki. With David Chadwick's biography of this extraordinary man, Shunryu Suzuki will take his rightful place as one of the progenitors of American Buddhism. Chadwick, a long-time student of Suzuki's, takes us back to Suzuki's childhood, his entry into monastic life at age 13, subsequent trials with his ornery master and in the notoriously strict Eiheiji Monastery, as well as life as a houseboy with a British tutor to the Chinese emperor, marital tragedies, and the political minefield of World War II while he served as abbot of his own temple. The overarching theme of Suzuki's teaching is practice--in a community setting--and when he takes over a temple of aging Japanese Americans in San Francisco, his practice begins to attract younger Americans. The second half of Crooked Cucumber relates the phenomenal growth of the San Francisco Zen Center and becomes a biography of the growing community and its members, inasmuch as the center was Suzuki's life. A monk who was thought to be as useless as a crooked cucumber, under the pen of Chadwick turns out to be a brilliant, witty, tireless patriarch of American Zen. --Brian BruyaExtraitChildhood1904-1916Our mind should be free from traces of the past, just like the flowers of spring.High winds blew across the green hillside, driving rain into the storm doors of Shoganji, an obscure Japanese country temple, when on May 18, 1904, Yone Suzuki gave birth to a baby boy. Her husband, Sogaku, the priest of the temple, gave his first-born son the name Shunryu, using the written characters for Excellent and Emerging, a rather formal Buddhist name full of high expectations.It was the year of the dragon, the thirty-seventh year of the reign of Emperor Meiji. Fierce battles were being fought on the plains of Manchuria between Imperial Japan and Czarist Russia, and Sogaku was preparing the main hall of Shoganji for yet another young soldier's funeral, as Shunryu had his first taste of life in a small tatami room.Cherry trees interspersed with shrub bamboo lined the steep road up to Shoganji, a small four-hundred-year-old temple on a hill above the village of Tsuchisawa, on the edge of the city of Hiratsuka in Kanagawa Prefecture. From the temple ohaka--a peaceful sanctuary where the ashes of local families and prior abbots were interred below weather-worn stone markers--there was a commanding view of Sagami Bay, which opens into the Pacific with Tokyo Bay to the northeast. Kamakura, the ancient political and Buddhist center, lay at the edge of the green and blue vista. Shoganji's handsome grass thatch roof could be seen from afar, surrounded by forested mountainsides, just beyond the smoke of Yokohama's burgeoning industries.As a child, Shunryu Suzuki was called Toshitaka--Toshi for short. Toshitaka is the old Japanese way of pronouncing the characters that make up Shunryu, with a softer and more casual feeling. Toshi grew up playing around the temple with his older half brother from his mother's first marriage, Yoshinami Shima. When he was three his sister Tori was born, and at six he acquired another sister, Aiko. Toshi was small yet strong, eager to learn, impatient to do things before he was old enough, sensitive, and kind but prone to quick bursts of anger. And he couldn't keep track of anything. Schoolwork and books, caps and coins--whatever it was, he'd leave it at home or at school, wherever he wasn't.Toshi began his six years of compulsory education in April 1910, when he was almost six. It was at school that he became aware that his family was uncommonly poor. Most people wore zori, straw sandals with a dividing cord between the first two toes. When the cord broke on one, children would throw away both. Toshi would take the good ones home and make new pairs. Unwilling to spend money on a set of hair clippers, his father would shave Toshi's head like his own. All the boys at school had short-clipped hair, but not shaved heads.Lean and proper, approaching fifty, Butsumon Sogaku Suzuki was old to be having his first son. Priests of the Soto school of Zen had only begun taking wives a few decades earlier, encouraged strongly by a government bent on diminishing the power of the Buddhist clergy. The practice was easing in, though it was not yet permitted by the Soto school. At first families had to live outside the temples apart from the priests, but by 1904 it was

beginning to be acceptable for families to live in. There were no family quarters at Shoganji; they slept in the buddha hall, the room used for daily services, and shared their home every day with neighbors and temple members.Shoganji didn't have a large or a wealthy danka, the community of supporting members, nor did it have extensive temple lands that would bring in a sizable rice tax. Sogaku and Yone had to augment the temple income with outside work and practice meticulous thrift.Yone was short and plain, with the tough look of a hard worker, and a softness that had withstood the rigors of a difficult life. She taught teenage girls at a vocational high school how to make clothing. She knew a good deal about sewing and would study till late at night from books to make herself a better teacher. As her reputation grew, she began sewing classes at the temple, eventually acquiring many students. Yone was the stricter of the parents. Her children were taught to be proper and respectful and to do well at school so as to make a good impression on temple guests and not to bring shame to the family.People came to Shoganji for seasonal Buddhist holidays, for funerals, advice, or neighborly greetings. If Sogaku had guests, Yone would serve them tea and rice cakes. If he was out, she'd sit with them herself. This was in addition to tending to the children, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and other labor-intensive, pre-electric tasks.Sogaku made candles for the temple from an iron mold. He would pour extras, and when he had a good load he would walk five miles to Ohisa City to sell them. On the way back he would pick up discarded vegetables from the roadside, storing them in a bag he carried. It wasn't just because he was poor that Sogaku did this. It was his way. His son would talk about it half a century later.There was a creek in front of my father's temple, and many rotten old vegetables would float down from higher up the mountain. Farmers and other people would throw them away. They were vegetable-like things, not exactly vegetables! [laughing] They might have been good for compost, not for eating. But as soon as he'd find them he'd cook them up and say, "Everything has buddha nature. You should not throw anything away!" Wherever he went, he talked about how valuable food is and how you shouldn't throw it away.Sogaku also raised pigs to supplement the family income, a rather shocking thing for a priest to do, but Japanese Buddhism in general and Soto Zen in particular have not been known for strict vegetarianism. In a 1971 talk, Shunryu Suzuki remembered the pigs.Buddha is always helping you. But usually we refuse Buddha's offer. For instance, sometimes you ask for something special. This means that you are refusing to accept the treasures you already have. You are like a pig. When I was young, as my father was very poor, he raised many pigs. I noticed that when I gave the pigs a bucket of food, they would eat it after I went away. As long as I was there, they wouldn't eat it, expecting me to give them more food. I had to be very careful. If I moved too quickly they would kick the bucket over. I think that is what you are doing. Just to cause yourself more problems, you seek for something. But there is no need for you to seek for anything. You have plenty, and you have just enough problems. This is a mysterious thing, you know, the mystery of life. We have just enough problems, not too many or too few.