



GYOJI WEEKS

Nowadays, when so much of our communication travels on virtual highways, it may be nice to receive an old-fashioned and somewhat rustic paper newsletter in your mailbox. So here it is, and some indulgence in nostalgia will be forgiven.

The main article in this newsletter also addresses the physical aspect of practice. However much we may be served by the blessings of our modern online world – especially in these challenging Covid-19 times – there may be only so much Skyping, Facebooking, Zooming, and such like that one can engage in.

Because of current regulations, Zen River can only welcome a limited number of members. Yet, if we focus not

only on attending sesshins but also on joining the regular daily programme, everybody will have ample opportunity to participate physically in the temple programme. You are especially welcome during the so-called “Gyoji weeks”.

Gyoji refers to the title of two chapters of Dogen Zenji’s Shobogenzo, and means “continuous practice”. The Gyoji weeks feature an extensive daily schedule that also includes classes which are not part of sesshin, such as the sutra-reading class and the right-



speech class. Those weeks allow more time for individual practice as well and accentuate that Zen training is a continuous process. It is a thread that can become a lifeline.

MINI PIZZA



- 80 G (½ CUP) FINE WHITE FLOUR
- 3 TABLESPOONS LUKEWARM WATER
- ½ TEASPOON SUGAR
- ½ TEASPOON DRIED ACTIVE YEAST
- 1 TEASPOON OLIVE OIL
- TOPPING
- 2 TABLESPOONS TOMATO PASTE
- 1 SMALL CLOVE GARLIC
- 6 SLICES EACH OF RED ONION, BELL PEPPER AND COURGETTE (ZUCCHINI)
- 2 TEASPOONS OREGANO, DIVIDED
- 6-8 BLACK OLIVES, PITTED
- CASHEW TOPPING
- 30 G (3 TABLESPOONS) ROASTED, SALTED CASHEW NUTS
- 1 TABLESPOON WATER
- 1 TEASPOON NUTRITIONAL YEAST
- 1 TEASPOON OLIVE OIL

* IN A SMALL PRE-HEATED BOWL, DISSOLVE THE YEAST AND SUGAR IN THE WARM WATER. MIX IN HALF THE FLOUR, THEN STIR IN THE OIL AND THE REMAINING FLOUR BIT BY BIT UNTIL IT BECOMES A SMALL BALL. IF IT IS STILL STICKY, ADD TEASPOONS OF FLOUR ONE AT A TIME. COVER, AND LEAVE TO RISE FOR 90 MINUTES IN A WARM PLACE OR

OVERNIGHT IN A COOL PLACE.

* PEEL AND MINCE THE GARLIC. THINLY SLICE THE RED ONION, BELL PEPPER, COURGETTE, AND OLIVES.

* FOR THE CASHEW TOPPING, WHIZZ ALL THE INGREDIENTS IN A FOOD PROCESSOR UNTIL SMOOTH.

* PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 245°C / 475°F. TRANSFER THE DOUGH ONTO A FLOURED SURFACE, KNEAD UNTIL IT FEELS ELASTIC, THEN FORM INTO A SMALL BALL. ROLL OUT THE DOUGH INTO AN 18 CM / 8” ROUND.

* OIL A BAKING TRAY, SPRINKLE WITH CORNMEAL AND PLACE THE PIZZA ROUND ON THE TRAY. BRUSH WITH OLIVE OIL AND BAKE IN THE OVEN ON THE LOWEST RACK FOR 5 MINUTES. REMOVE.

* MIX THE TOMATO PASTE WITH A TABLESPOON OF WATER, THE GARLIC, AND HALF THE OREGANO, AND SPREAD EVENLY ACROSS THE BAKED CRUST, STOPPING AT 1 CM / ½” FROM THE EDGE.

* SCATTER THE VEGETABLES AND OLIVES EVENLY ACROSS THE PIZZA BASE. DOT WITH THE CASHEW TOPPING, AND SPRINKLE WITH THE REMAINING OREGANO.

* BAKE FOR ABOUT 15 MINUTES. SERVE GARNISHED WITH FRESH RUCOLA.

TEMPLE AFFAIRS

Why do we need temples? What is their function? How is Zen practice served by the location, design, and atmosphere of temples? How do they influence the energy of our practice, and how does our practice influence the energy of their presence?

BY TENKEI ROSHI

The Buddha himself sat under a Bodhi tree, there have been masters who primarily practised in the wilderness or in hermitages, and nowadays many people meditate by themselves in their own home. Nevertheless, throughout the ages, temples have been the most common places for Buddhist practice. This holds true for the Zen school, and I cannot imagine any historical overview of our tradition that would not mention the temples founded by the great masters. Their geographical location is seen as highly relevant and the name of Buddhist temples usually includes the name of the mountain where it is located, and this often also became part of the name of the master who resided there.

Temples were the topic of a recent right-speech class*, in connection with a short chapter of the *Guanxin Xuan-shu* (Profound Pivot of the Contemplation of Mind) by the Chinese master Yongming Yanshou (904-976) that we had dealt with the week before. Every chapter of that book starts with the characters 若不觀心 which was translated as: "If one does not contemplate the mind." This made me think of the word contemplate and its various connotations. While contemplation often carries the meaning of profound thinking, Yongming Yanshou clearly refers in his "Profound Pivot" to the practice of meditation. The character 觀 he uses to this end is pronounced kan in Japanese, the same as the one used in Kannon, or Kanzeon, the bodhisattva who can "observe widely" the needs of the world.

Checking various sources, I found that "contemplate" comes from the Latin *contemplatus*, past participle of *contemplari* "to gaze attentively, observe". It consists of the prefix *com-* "together" and *templum* "temple". The original meaning of *contemplari* was to mark out a space for observing auguries or omens**, and the temple was a consecrated place reserved for this purpose, a broad open space that allowed an augur*** to see all around him.

In ancient Rome, the purpose of this was not so much to predict the future but rather to find out if the gods would approve or disapprove of certain important decisions and therefore grant either success or failure. The Latin word *templum* is probably related to the Greek word *temenos*, which means reserved or sacred enclosure. The implication is that certain places are more suitable for contemplation than others, and this has been considered to be true for Buddhist temples as well.

Just like the structures of most other religions, Buddhist temples are often built on carefully chosen locations and designed in a way that has proven to be inspirational for the practice they accommodate. We all know that certain

sites happen to have a special quality. I even once heard somebody claim that the earth has acupuncture points – just like our own body. This would for sure be in tune with the principle of non-separation and mutual integration of ourselves and the world around us which is a quintessential part of Zen teaching.

Personally, I have always felt drawn to what is left of the Greek and Roman temple complexes around the Mediterranean. I have also toured the medieval cathedrals of France and Spain and sat for days in Turkish mosques. In the US my focus was more on places of extraordinary natural beauty and also on magical spots like the Hopi village of Oraibi in Arizona. Further explorations include the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu in Peru and Tiger's Nest, a Buddhist temple complex on the side of a steep mountain in Bhutan. Most of my inspiration, however, I found in Japan, China, and other South-East Asian countries. I feel very fortunate to have been able to experience the energy that the location and design of the old religious structures radiate. Even new temples can resonate with something in us. Kirigaya-ji, Hojo-san's temple, is tucked away in downtown Tokyo and was recently rebuilt in a modern style, yet it holds a pivotal position in the area and attracts a great number of temple members.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, as soon as I got seriously involved in Zen training, looking for the most conducive and inspiring places for retreats soon became part of my mission. At first it was for the sesshins that Genpo Roshi conducted in The Netherlands. The Tiltenburg in Vogelenzang – a spiritual centre founded by the international Catholic women's movement De Graal – was a happy find. Located amid endless fields of flowers, it provided a great setting for week-long Kanzeon Sangha sesshins for some twenty years. The centre featured a beautiful chapel with an altar where our Buddha statue felt perfectly at home under a grand holy cross.

Later we discovered the magic of Ameland, a small island in the Waddensea, where Genpo Roshi held his legendary month-long winter retreats. At first, there was some apprehension about whether our international community would want to travel so far north and take a ferry to a place that most foreigners had never heard of. I remember being nervous when signing the first contract with the owner of the premises we would rent. But it turned out to be a real hit: almost one hundred people from all over the world came over and participated in the retreat, a number that would triple over the years. There was just something irresistible about this international gathering. Genpo Roshi

FUNDRAISER APPEAL 2020

FOCUS ON THE EYES OF KANZEON



These are strange times, and the River of Zen has been going through many highs and lows. Good luck and bad luck seem to alternate in quick succession. But usually the conclusion is a good one. Last year's sudden sewage drama first looked like being totally unmanageable financially. Nevertheless, it took only a few weeks for the fundraiser to soar. Thanks to your generosity, the whole affair could be dealt with much more quickly than anybody could have foreseen. And the toilets – and those who use them – have never been happier.

As most of you know, not long ago there were once again some serious earthquakes in the north of Groningen caused by drilling for gas. And, once again, our temple was not spared. That is the bad news. The good news is that we managed to make a convincing photo inventory of the damage, and our claims in the resulting report were quickly accepted by the governmental institute that handles these claims. This means that we received compensation, with which all earthquake damage can be repaired professionally.

This good news also means that we can turn our eyes to the renovation of the windows again. As I see it, if the temple is the body of the Buddha, then the windows are the eyes of Kanzeon. Zen River is blessed with many windows that allow a generous view over the endless Groningen fields. Over the years, many of them have been repaired already and/or replaced by double-glazed windows. But there are still several left that desperately beg for attention, particularly the ones of the library and the south-facing old-wing rooms.

We hope to be able to replace four or five old and worn-out windows this time, which is half the number that still needs doing. Our personal contractor Klaas de Boer is happy to take on the project and estimated that it would probably add up to around €9,000.

As you may understand already, any contribution great or small to this timely renovation is more than welcome. Many thanks in advance.

Tenkei

IBAN: NL33INGB0009233632; BIC/SWIFT: INGBNL2A; Account name: 'Zen River'

Alternatively you can donate via the Zen River Temple Facebook page

Paypal: office@zenrivertemple.org

was, of course, the main attraction, but the location was also an important reason for so many like-minded people to come together. It was like a family returning to an unexpected home.

While living at the Zen Center in Salt Lake City, Tammy and I found striking places in the mountains close by and in the desert of Southern Utah, where we organized week-long outdoor sesshins. We would sleep in tents and cooking was done under canopies, but for the rest of the time the sky was our only roof. Hatch Point, a high plateau overlooking the Colorado Canyon, was our absolute favourite. It had such strong vibes that we almost decided to make organizing outdoor sesshins into a lifestyle, and just travel from one national park to another. There was something so basic and healthy about the whole campsite set-up. Especially night-time sitting in unspoiled wilderness under a bright full moon was an experience that will always stay with me.



When we ended up settling in The Netherlands, we immediately started searching for a suitable property to set up a residential training centre. And, although it might seem hard to believe, after looking far and wide, it was on April 8 – Buddha’s birthday – that we received a response to a little ad we had put in newspapers. The message told us to come and have a look at a property in Uithuizen. We right away drove up north with a small team from our budding community, and it was love at first sight – we all felt as if the place chose us instead of our having to make the choice. There was clearly some serious renovation work waiting for us, but we managed to hold our first sesshin only a few weeks after we moved in.

Over the following years, the various rooms started to find their proper function, and it often seemed as if the place itself was showing us what needed to be done next. In particular, the planning of the new Zendo went through interesting stages. We came up with a design that is a cross between a Japanese temple and a Groningen barn, and we allowed some time to decide on the exact location. I staked out the ground plan with ropes and pegs and moved it around until it all fell into place. We did a special ceremony to ask permission from the earth for our project and blessed the soil with slow circumambulations. Once the zendo was built, the inauguration by Chinese dignitaries and the eye-opening ceremony of the Manjushri statue donated by Hojo-san added greatly to its powerful presence. The zendo ended up just sitting there so comfortably, in deep meditation itself, and inviting us all to come in and do the same.

The Hatto went through a similar process. It required some drastic remodelling but the effect was quite stunning. After so many years, the Buddha statue finally found its true home and position, and could face us whenever we pass through the hallway. I suppose that, as I mentioned before, some locations just happen to have a special kind of energy;

yet we can also give that energy to a certain spot by offering it our love and attention over and over again.

The most startling example of this is the roundabout in front of the main building. As soon as we began doing daily services there – because of coronavirus regulations – reciting sutras while standing in a circle around it, the atmosphere of that whole area shifted and it became sacred ground. One day, I even had a rather odd, yet inspiring, fantasy come up when looking at the slight elevation in the middle. This little hill with the rows of hedges suddenly gave me the impression of the top of a curly Buddha head pushing itself up through the surface of the earth. I could barely resist going over and stroking it.

Following Dogen Zenji’s advice, in zazen we are supposed to “drop off body and mind”. Zazen provides an unmatched opportunity for realizing that both body and mind are ultimately empty of any everlasting substance. When this happens, our life seems to change. Pain is still pain and problems are still problems, but our relationship to them is completely different. Seeing the unfixed nature of everything and everyone makes it easier to process and digest whatever burdens us. Rather than seeing ourselves as victims, we dare to face all the ups and downs of our life and try out creative ways to allow them to dissolve in an ever-new self.

Forgive the unceremonious wording, but I would say that zazen “sucks up” suffering and that, once we have come to terms with ourselves, we can start sucking up the suffering of others. There turns out to be plenty of space. In zazen we are like a vacuum cleaner that attracts whatever comes across as thick and opaque and makes it completely transparent and digestible. Now, of course, when we do that with a lot of people together, the effect is going to be greater – not only on ourselves but also on the place where we practice together. The temple itself can start to radiate samadhi, and that in turn is what attracts people to it perhaps without their even knowing why. Those who come to a sacred place feel that they can unload their burden there, and see it being sucked up and transformed into something manageable. One of our members who works as an expert on pain relief in a nearby hospital, once mentioned that he feels like the temple is the most effective healing place he knows.

In my opinion, our busy and overcrowded world really needs temples – places that confirm the deepest mysteries of life, mysteries that cannot be recognized by any of the senses yet can be experienced by anyone who opens up to them. Focused on emptiness, temples can give us solace and new courage. Now, certain locations and certain structures do seem to convey those qualities better than others. Just as good fine art does not copy the visible but makes the invisible visible, so too the site and design of temples can make it easier for us to access the core essence and the active, creative, side of emptiness in our own heart.

Traditionally, the temple is seen as the body of the Buddha. The ground plans of Chinese and Japanese temple buildings even follow the outline of a sitting Buddha. So, at some point you cannot help but identify your own body with the body of the temple, and you start to take care of

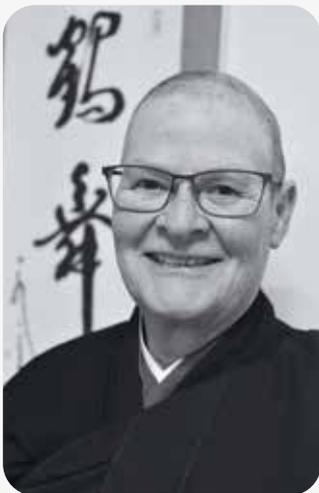
the temple just as you take care of your own body. This has, in fact, become an important part of my own practice. As I have come to see it, maintaining the Buddhadharma is not only a mental affair but also a very physical one, and a consecrated place offers the easiest way to start. Looking at the floor, the altar, windows, trees, and people around us becomes more and more like looking at your own body. The temple is not only a handy accommodation, it is also a physical expression of our practice, and – perhaps most importantly – one that we can share with others. What seems to happen over time is that we extend the body of the temple to our surroundings – to nearby villages and towns, potato fields, highways, rivers, and oceans. The body of the Buddha literally includes everything and everyone. We may have to start small in a specific physical place but as our practice matures, we can come to see that the whole world is our very own body, the whole world is our temple.

**The Right Speech class is held on Wednesday night with the resident community and on the following Saturday afternoon the same class is held online for members who cannot come over so easily now because of the coronavirus pandemic. For more info, contact the office.*

***Augury is the practice of ancient Roman religion of interpreting omens from the observed behaviour of birds. When the augur interpreted these signs, it was referred to as “taking the auspices” (“Auspices”, from the Latin *auspicium* and *auspex*, literally means “one who looks at birds”). Though the word “omen” is usually devoid of reference to the nature of the change – hence being possibly either “good” or “bad” – the term is more often used in a foreboding sense, as in the word “ominous”. The origin of the word is unknown, although it may be connected to the Latin word *audire*, meaning “to hear.”*

****Augurs were official diviners whose function was not to foretell the future but rather to divine whether the gods approved of a proposed undertaking, such as a military move or a trade agreement. Augur comes from Latin and is related to the verb *augere*, meaning “to increase”. ♦*

SHUSŌ MIEKE



We are happy to announce that Mieke Jyokun Eijkmans has been appointed Shuso (head monk) for the upcoming Winter Ango. This Ango will start with the Shuso entering ceremony at the beginning of the Rohatsu sesshin (see calendar).

Jyokun was born and raised in Den Haag. After studying philosophy, she worked for many years as a Dutch language teacher, especially for non-native speakers, while living in Amsterdam. She is the mother of two, and grandmother of three. Jyokun’s first contact with Buddhism was through a Tibetan meditation group. She joined the Zen River program in 2004 whilst also attending classes at the Kanzeon Zen Center in Amsterdam. She received Jukai from Tenkei Roshi in 2014 and became a full-time Zen River resident in 2017. Two years later she received Shukke Tokudo.

Jyokun is one of the key players in the residential team at Zen River. Besides her responsibilities as house-master, she is also very active in the sewing atelier, making the many zafus and zabutons that fly around the world. In any case, we already look forward to hearing Jyokun’s lion’s roar during the Hosenshiki ceremony. Be prepared for a feisty affair!

COMING SOON



TIMELESS CALLING, TIMELY RESPONSE

A GUIDE FOR ZEN BUDDHIST PRACTICE
ANTON TENKEI COPPENS

In this book Tenkei Roshi provides guidelines for Zen Buddhist practice based on the “Four Modes of Meditation” that he developed over recent years at Zen River. He also addresses how these modes can be extended to koan training, ritual, study, work, and social interaction. Timeless Calling, Timely Response aims to serve as an inspiration for anyone interested in hearing their life’s calling and finding their own way to respond to it.

WHY DO WE NEED TEMPLES?



Why do we need temples? This question was posed at a recent Right Speech Class, both at Zen River and on-line. During these classes we practice speaking up about the Dharma in an inspiring and non-divisive way.

In the 19th century, this question was answered beautifully by the Indian Swami Vivekanda. A visitor asked him: "Why do we go to temples, when God is everywhere?"

Swami said he would answer the question in the evening. The visitor arrived late that evening: he had a flat tyre and did not have an air pump to refill it. Swami said that he could have opened the tyre valve to fill the tyre, since the air was all around him. The visitor looked at him questioningly and said he couldn't do that since the air had to be pumped into the car tyre.

Swami then said: "This must have answered your question. Despite having limitless air around you, you need a pump to concentrate the air and push it into the tyre. Similarly, temples are centres of concentrated energy, and the atmosphere within the temple influences the atmosphere within the person towards positivity and faith as well. Air is everywhere but you do need a fan to feel it."*

Would you like to join the Right Speech Class or know more about the Right Speech guidelines that we use? Please contact office@zenrivertemple.org.

**Slightly adapted from a blog entry: "If God is Everywhere, Why do we need Temples? If Values are everywhere, Why do you need a Values Lab?"*

Source: templetrust.com

ZOOM-ZAZEN COMING SOON

The online O-membership will soon include Zoom-Zazen so we can see each other sitting together.

ZEN RIVER TEMPLE

WINTER ANGO NOVEMBER 21-FEBRUARY 20

#November 21 – December 23.....Part 1

#December 27 – January 21.....Part 2

#January 23 – February 20.....Part 3

November 21–28.....Rohatsu Sesshin
December 12–17.....Gyōji Week
December 19–21.....Gyōji Long-Weekend
December 27–Jan. 1, 2021.....New Year's Sesshin
January 15–17.....Bodhidharma Weekend Sesshin
January 23–24.....Intro Weekend
January 23–28.....Gyōji Week
January 29–31.....Weekend Sesshin
February 13–20.....Ango Closing Sesshin

SPRING INTERIM

March 13–18.....Gyōji Week
March 26–28.....Weekend Sesshin
April 10–15.....Gyōji Week
April 24–29.....Sakura Spring Sesshin
May 9–13.....Gyōji Week
May 22–27.....Falling Flowers Sesshin

SUMMER ANGO, JUNE 6 – AUGUST 21

June 6–10.....Gyōji Week
June 18–20.....Weekend Sesshin
July 3–7.....Young Minds Seminar
July 24- Aug 21.....Summer Month Long

ZEN BOAT

Dec 5, Jan 9, Feb 6, March 6, April 3, May 1 & 29:
Zazenkais with Senseis Senko & Jifu.

Thursday, January 7, 14, 21 and 28

Thursday, March 4, 11, 18 and 25; Intro Courses.

AT OTHER LOCATIONS (TENTATIVE)

Wageningen.....Dec. 6, Zen Zondag w/ Senko Sensei

Drenthe.....Jan 13-17 Sesshin w/ Kanzeon Zen

Centrum Rotterdam, led by Jifu Sensei

O-MEMBERSHIP

The online O-membership is steadily growing. It has already proven to be a great way to stay connected, get the latest updates, and meet with other members regularly. Here is what is in the online package:

Live-stream zazen and services

Right Speech Class via Zoom, Sat. 16:30 CET

Study Class on YouTube, Sundays 11:30

River of Zen Class on YouTube, Mondays 20:10

Dokusan via messenger or Skype, weekly

Online participation in Weekend Sesshins