



THE BEAT GOES ON

The Taiko concert and workshops by master drummer and shakuhachi player Marco Lienhard on Saturday, October 16 were a great success—and the timing couldn't have been better. As you may have heard already, we have recently been trying to cheer up our sutra chanting during services by adding a greater variety of rhythms played on several new drums along with melodic lines played on violin, guitar, and even an accordion. Marco's musical talent and expertise was a great inspiration for us as we continue exploring this new approach.

Marco with his friend and assistant Mark Tucker, brought their own drums and also used the big Zen River drums, and their performance was really awesome. You can find the recording on our website. For the workshop, we had made some 15 drums out of PVC sewage pipes (30 by 65cm) and a skin of



layered plastic tape. Drumsticks were handmade as well. Altogether, they did the job very well and we concluded that everyone could learn the basics of Taiko drumming! The event also made for an interesting first day of sesshin, giving us an extra boost for fully engaging in practice.

NIRVANA PUDDING

260 g (1¼ cups) sushi or pudding rice
1 litre (4 cups) water
600 ml (2½ cups) dairy or almond milk

2 tablespoons sugar, or to taste
2 x 5 cm cinnamon sticks
½ teaspoon lemon zest
Brown sugar and cinnamon, for sprinkling

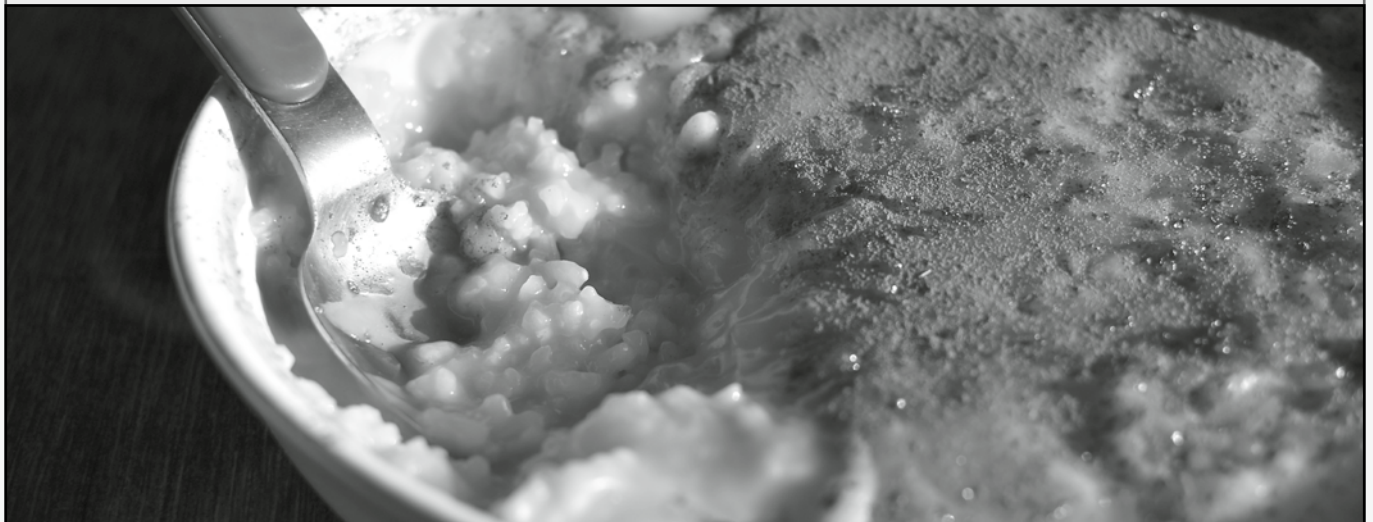
not to let it boil over. Stir in the rice, return to a boil and stir again, then turn the flame low.

* Cover loosely and simmer until the rice is tender and the gruel starts to thicken, about 15-20 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

* Add the lemon zest.

* Meanwhile, grease the sides of an oven-proof dish. Pour in the rice gruel, level it out and sprinkle with brown sugar and cinnamon. Bake in the oven until it begins to caramelize on top, about 20-25 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 5 minutes before serving.

- * Preheat the oven to 180 °C (350 °F).
- * Rinse the rice in fresh water and drain.
- * Put the water, milk, sugar, and cinnamon sticks into a pot and bring to a boil over a medium flame while being careful



THE HEALING QUALITY OF CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

BY TENKEI ROSHI

In the best of monasteries the pursuit of beauty and spiritual practice go hand in hand. Music, architecture, decoration, language, gardens, and libraries flourish. Community life is the object of central concern. Learning, study, reading, and the preservation of books are all integral to spiritual practice. (...) Monastic buildings show us how an intense interior life may generate an outward form of art, craft, and the care of things. Out of a simple life has come an extraordinary heritage of books, illuminated pages, sculpture, architecture, and music. The cultivation of the inner life overflows in outward displays of beauty and richness.

(From: Meditations: On the Monk Who Dwells in Daily Life, by Thomas Moore)

The last time I saw Maezumi Roshi was in Salt Lake City, not long before he suddenly passed away during a visit to Japan. He had come to our Kanzeon Zen Center to inaugurate the newly created upstairs Zendo and to witness the first Shuso Hossenshiki to be held there. It was an unforgettable week. We were in sesshin, and he delivered a series of highly engaging and inspiring teishos. The one that most stuck in my mind addressed the value of ceremonial activity, and an edited version of this talk was later published in *Teaching of the Great Mountain*. Ceremony was clearly a theme that was often on his mind in those days because around the same time he gave a similar presentation at ZCLA, which can be found in his book *Appreciate Your Life*.

Maezumi Roshi was fond of language and often did extensive research on the etymology of certain words. He was very excited to share his discovery that the word 'ceremony' is derived from the Latin 'caerimonia' which has the implication of healing or being healed and is related to wholeness, or orderly form. Ceremonies are thus meant to have a healing quality. They give us a chance to take care of things in a certain orderly manner and to reconnect with what had seemed to have gone missing.

One of my fondest memories of Maezumi Roshi is that of watching him pace frantically through our new Zendo as Genpo Roshi and I were visualizing the placing of zabutons and chairs for Hossenshiki. It took us a while before we understood what Maezumi Roshi was up to. He was trying to figure out if—in this new Zendo—we could perhaps give up improvising and follow the standard Japanese Soto Zen choreography for this ceremony, with the Shuso on the front left side of the altar and the teacher on a chair opposite and at some distance from the altar. He kept walking back and forth, and finally came to the conclusion that it wouldn't work. The ceremony went well, in our very own way. But I could sense his strong commitment to doing things properly, in an orderly manner, so that the format of the ceremony would have the desired effect—in other words, that it would have a healing quality.

When Maezumi Roshi had to leave Salt Lake City again, Tammy and I were asked to take him to the airport. He had to wait a few hours for his flight, and it was there and then that we had our last conversation. Most of it was about ceremony, and somehow our being together at that airport had something of an unexpected ceremonial character. It was clear that he spoke from his own heart, yet his choice of words, gestures, and the expressions on his face made me feel as though we were part of something much greater than ourselves. It had the effect of an ancient ritual and, looking back, there was a healing energy right there, something intimate that I have learned to treasure more and more over time.

In a way, his interest in ceremonies really surprised me. I knew that, as a Japanese priest, he was well-versed in the elaborate ritual performances of the Soto School. But, in general, he seemed to emphasize the transformative practice of zazen and koan practice much more. Perhaps something had changed as he grew older. Or maybe we were the ones who had to grow older and learn to appreciate Zen practice on levels that are hard to fathom at first?

That is certainly true for me. I have always enjoyed helping to create ritual spaces: in all the various rented accommodations we used for sesshins and especially in the desert of Southern Utah, where we organized outdoor retreats in the late nineties. But it was mostly after living and training with Hojo-san in Japan that I started to become more aware of the healing quality of ceremonial activities. And since we built a new Zendo at Zen River that enabled us to transform the old Zendo into a proper Hatto (a room designated and set up specifically for ceremonies) that awareness has grown far beyond my expectations.

It is a bit of a generalization, but one could say that in the Zendo we focus primarily on emptiness and in the Hatto primarily on form. There are similarities here to the distinction between the apophatic and kataphatic approaches cultivated in many wisdom traditions. According to Mahayana Buddhism these two approaches are complementary and cannot be separated. For example, while the Prajnaparamita Sutras champion the 'via negativa', the Tathagatagarbha Sutras are essentially confirmative and rich in elaborate analogies. In other words, in the Zendo we have a chance to open and transform our mind, whereas in the Hatto we learn to manifest that mental shift also physically.

It also works the other way round. The ceremonial space of the Hatto with its colourful decorations, the sounds of bells and other instruments that accompany the chanting of sutras, the precise choreography of walking, bowing, and sitting, and the smell of the incense that is offered – all this makes it easier to physically connect with all Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout space and time. And that, in turn, gives us more confidence to dive into the unknown when we go to the Zendo.

FUNDRAISER APPEAL 2021

GOING SOLAR!



In our Zen tradition, the temple is seen as the body of the Buddha, and we try to take good care of it. The full-time residents maintain the building and grounds on a daily basis to the best of their ability, and all other temple members who attend the training programme join their efforts by offering a surprising variety of expertise in many different areas. It feels like we often turn out to have exactly the right people at the right time for all the jobs that need doing.

But some maintenance and renovation projects require special attention and need to be executed by highly-skilled professionals. And these projects usually have financial consequences that our regular budget is unable to cover. That is why we organize an annual fundraiser, usually in November. Last year's fundraiser was to help keep our window-renovation project going, and it was a great success. Two big and two small windows that were old and decrepit were replaced by double-glazed windows last month.

This year, we have the ambitious plan to install solar panels on the roof of the old wing. This is a project we have been contemplating for several years, and now seems to be the time. Clearly, the greener the energy source the better for all of us and for the planet, and solar panels are as green as we can go right now. It is also a wise investment as we will save about €3,000 on our annual electricity bill.

The latest investigation showed that the south-facing roof of the old wing is the best place for solar panels and that there is room for forty-four of them. Altogether, these will provide almost all the electricity we need. The price tag is quite substantial, a total of €23,000. But—as well as funds already received from the NAM (the Dutch gas company) and the Dutch government to restore the earthquake damage caused by gas extraction in the area—we can expect an additional small government subsidy meant as a general compensation for the nuisance created by those earthquakes. We plan to use that extra subsidy to kick-start our solar-panel project. We hope that this year's fundraiser will take care of the rest. All contributions, great and small, are highly appreciated.

Many thanks in advance,

Tenkei

Bank: IBAN NL72 TRIO 0212 4970 30 // BIC-SWIFT: TRIONL2U

Account name: 'Zen River' // Bank address: Triodos Bank N.V.

Nieuweroordweg 1 // 3704 EC Zeist // The Netherlands

or **PayPal:** office@zenrivertemple.org (tick 'to a friend')

So, surfing the waves of sensory impressions in ritual and going upstream to find the invisible source of those impressions in zazen may be seen as going in opposite directions. And in a way this is the case. But the two activities mutually correspond to each other. It is like our breathing in and breathing out: together they make for healthy breathing. Or we can think of it as the way we use our two legs. We need both in order to move forward and make progress. If we rely more on one leg than on the other, we easily get out of balance – and this can make our walking wobbly.

Most Buddhist traditions promote the training of body, mind, and speech, which means that mind-training alone is not considered to be enough. We need to learn new ways of interacting with the world around us using all our faculties. Alongside speech, body language plays such an important role in communication. Ritual observances can help us to learn how to cut through habitual physical patterns and to pick up unexpected hints from our environment from just a quick glance. It is amazing how much of our character can show simply by the way we strike bells, offer incense, or make bows. Especially in the Soto Zen approach, ceremonial activities are all about teamwork and demand a lot of subtleties in terms of cooperation and timing. Self-involvement gets easily noticed, often to one's embarrassment. We thus have a chance to learn quickly and to see how we can possibly make a positive contribution to the whole event—something that can be used later in any life situation we encounter. We just find more direct and creative ways to respond.

Ceremonial activities, when done well, can give us a rare sense of fulfilment. There is something deeply satisfying about doing the right thing at the right time, in the right position and to the right amount—and doing it together with others in the right way. Soto ceremonies are musicals—they tell a story in words, music, movement, and a beautiful stage set. It gives us the opportunity to enter the real world of continuous practice and realization throughout space and time. We leave our narrow perspective on self and others, and freely take on our proper position among Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In principle, this can all be accomplished in zazen, but the appreciation and gratitude that we can experience in the Zendo just begs for an expression in the Hatto. It's like dressing up and buying beautiful flowers for someone you love. And the attention we give to our environment starts to shine back at us.

Over the years Zen River Temple has really changed. Since we started to live here, the building and the garden have been imbued with the samadhi we have developed together. It is as if when we breathe, all the walls, floors, and furniture—as well as trees, bushes, and all creatures great and small—breathe with us. Everything comes alive. Over the ages, many Buddhist temples have been built on a ground plan that resembles a sitting Buddha. That means that the temple itself is none other than the body of Shakyamuni. When we vacuum the carpet, dust the cabinets, or mop the floor, we give our great ancestral master a good scrub (I sometimes joke that washing the windows is washing his glasses.) The Buddha needs to be kept clean

and healthy, alive and kicking, and, somehow, this loving function happens to result in beautiful forms—the lay-out and design of the temple and the gardens, the statues, the artworks, the musical instruments, and the other paraphernalia. And everyone who enters the temple finds their Dharma drive recharged and gains more confidence to engage in selfless bodhisattva activity.

When we enter our temple through the main door and pass through the hallway of the Hatto, we cannot miss seeing the beautiful Buddha statue that Hojo-san gave us when we just started. It is, right away, a reminder of our practice and it hard to pass by without bowing. No words are needed. There is some strange recognition that defies all explanation. Today, there are small altars and statues everywhere in the building. In the early morning, I offer incense and make bows before every one of them. It changes something in me, to be sure, but it also changes something in the places where I perform this simple ritual.

A few years ago, a group of twenty Chinese monks and lay-people came over to join our programme for a few days. I will never forget the morning service when they were all lined up sitting in seiza and trying to recite the sutras in Japanese. While I was offering incense tears suddenly dropped onto the charcoal. There was such a sense of communion. And, in this case, with people that seemed to have come from another planet—it felt as if we were in a spaceship roaming between different planets and had landed in a totally unexpected place.

Strangely enough, this memory often hits me when standing in line at one of the check-outs of our Jumbo supermarket in Uithuizen. The cashier's smile takes on a completely new dimension and, as I smile back, I wonder who we really are. In his talk on ceremonial activity, Maezumi Roshi mentioned how our lives are full of ritual—from getting up in the morning, washing our face and brushing our teeth, setting the table, and making coffee to driving to work and parking the car. Throughout the day, we follow certain routines. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all those activities became real bodhisattva activity?

Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. If we don't address emptiness—and the Zendo is the ideal place to do this—the forms in the Hatto, and everywhere else in our life, can easily petrify and become formalities or empty rituals. They can become bodies without a heart. But we should not forget that hearts cannot function by themselves—they need bodies. In the same vein, ceremonial forms are not just 'cultural trappings' that can easily be dispensed with. The beauty of the mind wants—and needs—to be expressed in the beauty of the body, which means in the endless variety of phenomena around us. And although we may start with the temple, the plan is to learn how to extend that temple to the whole world.

As I see it, the more we realize that there is absolutely nothing that has any everlasting substance, the more we start to appreciate whatever is given to us in this very moment. Training in emptiness helps us to make sure that the forms we use stay alive and flexible. That is the main reason I have been looking for ways to give our ceremonial activities fresh updates. Some time ago, we noticed how the

SANGHA NETWORK



The Buddhist sangha is a local, regional, national, and global network. And we are happy to see our connections extend in the ten directions. Over the years our active membership of organizations like BUN (Buddhist Union Netherlands), the European department of the Japanese Soto School, and the international White Plum Asanga has been a great asset in this respect. It has helped us to connect with members of other Zen temples, centres, and groups all over the world.

Ultimately, however, our Dharma connections are based on relationships between people who happen to have a strong karmic link, a kinship that can grow on us or suddenly become apparent. Quite often totally new people enter our programme—even for an extended period of time—and fit right in. This fall, three of them came out of the blue, meaning that they had never been at Zen River before and came by plane from abroad. We are happy to introduce them to you.

Herbert van Schelven, a Dutchman who lives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is a complete newcomer but right away signed up for two months. He has seen many Buddhist temples in South-East Asia but feels very lucky to have found a spiritual home in Uithuizen (!) So, he is planning to return someday soon. His wife came to visit him a few weeks ago and is thinking of joining him.

Pedro Daiko Krauss is a Brazilian who studied with Coen Roshi in Sao Paulo, completed one year of temple training in Japan, and did Hossenshiki with Hojo-san in Kirigayaji. He also practised in Paris with Roshis Genno Pagès and Genko Dubois and at Ryumonji in Strasbourg, so he is familiar with many of our connections. His intention is to stay for at least six months.

Izzy Esho des Etoiles is from the US. She has lived in Salt Lake City and studied with Genpo Roshi. Tenkei and Tammy know her well from their time there but hadn't seen her for many years. Now she is happy to be at Zen River and plans to stay long-term. As a professionally trained violinist and enthusiastic Taiko drummer, she is a great asset to our new approach to services. She actually studied with Marco Lienhard (see front page article) in New York, and connected us with him. She played the big new Zen River drum during the first part of the performance.

Sangha is a real treasure, a network that keeps expanding around the world and simultaneously contracting regularly to a steady home base!

Japanese language has a rhythm that is very different from English and that while most sutras sound quite energetic in Japanese, they easily lose their spunk when we recite them in English. So, following the performance of a Japanese monk we found online, we have been experimenting with a greater variety of rhythms and melodic themes with violin, guitar, and accordion—in our case borrowed from my favourite Arab music—that accompany the single-tone

recitation of the sutras. And the result is very promising. Sharing the same emptiness with all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, we work on finding our own form. I am so grateful that we can freely experiment in expressing ourselves in ways that are alive and meaningful to us, and which may also give direction to the next generation on how to play a part in the continuous healing function of our practice of ceremony. ♦



SHUSO FOR WINTER ANGO



We are happy to announce that Pascal Tetsuko van der Knokke will be Shuso for the Winter Ango. Most of our members know him well – if not personally, then for sure from all the work he has done at Zen

River. He has been a very active member, especially during the first ten years after the temple was established. Often working together with Gakudo Sensei, he proved to be a major asset in renovating the property and making it into what it is today. Just think of the ceiling in the Zendo, the Buddha altar in the Hatto, the dokusan hut, and the Zen River sign above the front door, to give only a few examples.

Born in The Hague, Tetsuko studied and worked in various fields until he became a professional construction worker specializing in renovating homes. He started his Zen practice at the Kanzeon Zen Center of Kees van de Bunt and attended sesshins with Genpo Roshi, from whom he received Jukai in 2000. Not long after, he and his wife Emke Gyoen became members of Zen River and she received Jukai from Tenkei Roshi in 2002. They contemplated buying a house near Uithuizen but—following a strong intuition—decided to move to the Spanish Pyrenees. After some years of living there they settled down in Camprodon with Gakudo Sensei and Koren Sensei to establish Keiryuji, a residential Zen mountain temple.

Both Tetsuko and Gyoen are now students of Gakudo Sensei. During the official opening of Keiryuji—officiated by Hojo-san and witnessed by Tenkei Roshi, Myoho Roshi, and Shugetsu Sensei—Tetsuko and Gyoen received Shuke Tokudo from Gakudo Sensei. Tetsuko will now join the full three-month Winter Ango and perform the Hossenshiki ceremony at Zen River so that he can be certified by the Japanese Soto school. Minegishi Roshi, the Sokan (director) of the European department of the Soto school, will serve as Jokeshi (official witness). Since he could only come over at the beginning of this Winter Ango, Hossenshiki is scheduled on Sunday November 21, the first full day of Rohatsu. This approach is not uncommon in Japan but it is definitely a first for Zen River! Of course, all dragons and elephants are very welcome to join us for this very special Dharma-combat ceremony!

ZEN RIVER TEMPLE

FALL INTERIM

October 30–November 4.....Gyōji Week
November 13–18.....Gyōji Week

WINTER ANGO NOV 20 – FEBRUARY 26

November 20–27.....Rohatsu Sesshin
November 21, 11:30.....Shuso Hossenshiki
December 11–16.....Gyōji Week
December 15, 20:15.....Tutti Cantano Concert
December 27–January 1, 2022.....New Year's Sesshin
January 14–15.....Intro Weekend
January 14–19.....Gyōji Week
January 28–30.....Bodhidharma Weekend Sesshin
February 5–6.....Young Minds Weekend
February 19–26.....Ango Closing Sesshin

SPRING INTERIM

March 19–20.....Rakusu Sewing Weekend
March 25–27.....Weekend Sesshin
April 9–14Gyōji Week
April 23–28Sakura Spring Sesshin
May 7–12Gyōji Week
May 21–26.....Falling Flowers Sesshin
June 4–9.....Gyōji Week

ZEN BOAT GRONINGEN

January 8.....Zazenkaï, led by Senko Sensei
February 5.....Zazenkaï, led by Senko Sensei
March 5.....Zazenkaï, led by Senko Sensei
Intro Courses, see website.

AT OTHER LOCATIONS

Jan. 12–16 Sesshin Kanzeon Zen Centrum
Rotterdam, led by Jifu Sensei. Havelte (Drenthe)
Jan 20–23 Sesshin Zentrum Utrecht, led by Senko
Sensei. Holterberg (Overijssel)

ONLINE PROGRAMME

O-membership brings our common practice closer to you at home. Here is what is included in the online package:

Sunday & Tuesday: Zazen and Services via Zoom
Right Speech Class via Zoom, Sat. 16:30 hrs
Study Class on YouTube, Sundays 11:30
River of Zen Class on YouTube, Mon. 20:10
Dokusan via messenger or Skype, weekly
Access to Dharma talks during sesshins 11:30