

Sanshin Zen Community 2011 Annual Activity Report

By Shohaku Okumura-Roshi, Abbott

The purpose of this annual report is to communicate to the greater Sanshin community information about the practice and organization activities that have occurred at Sanshin-ji during the twelve months of 2011.

(1) Practice Events at Sanshin-ji

1. Sesshin:

Sesshin is the activity where we focus on zazen only. We sit fourteen 50-minute periods/day without any other activities except ten minutes of kinhin between each period and three meals followed by a short break. We keep complete silence during the sesshin. We hold five sesshin a year in January, March, June, September, and December. January sesshin is for three days. March, June, and September sesshin are for 5 days. December Rohatsu sesshin is for seven days from the evening of November 31st to midnight of December 7th. We usually have around ten people during sesshins. This sesshin style was originally started by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi at Antaiji and is the core practice of Sanshin Zen Community. The explanation about this sesshin is written in Uchiyama Roshi's book *Opening the Hand of Thought*.

2. Genzo-e Retreat:

We have two Genzo-e retreats a year at Sanshin-ji; one in May and one in November. Genzo-e is the most attended practice event at Sanshin-ji. I give two 90-minute lectures a day on a certain chapter of Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo*. We sit seven periods of zazen. Usually we have 15 to 20 participants. Twenty is the largest number we can accommodate comfortably because of the limitation of kitchen and zendo space. In May, 2011, we studied *Shobogenzo Kuge* (Flower of Emptiness), and in November we studied *Shobogenzo Komyo* (Radiant Light). My lectures on Daigo, Ikka no Myoju, Zenki & Shoji, Bendowa (1), (2) were recorded and edited. Sets of CDs were produced for sale. The work on producing CDs of Bendowa (3) lectures is in progress now. These CD sales are expected to be an important part of Sanshin's earned income.

Shoju Mahler made a set of DVDs on the three Genzo-e Retreats on Bendowa. Shoju Mahler had purchased a DVD duplicator to make ten sets of the DVD of Bendowa lectures. Each set has 15 DVDs. This set of DVDs is now available for sale through the Sanshinji web-site. The duplicator was donated to Sanshin ZC. Shoju continued to video my lectures during Genzo-e until 2009 so that, if we wish to continue producing DVDs of the lectures during Genzo-e, it is possible.

3. Community Retreat:

We hold two 3-day community retreats a year, one in April and one in October. In these retreats we have six periods of zazen, one 90-minute lecture per day followed by Q&A in the morning. There is also a work period from 1 – 4pm. This is a good opportunity to share zazen, listen to a lecture, and eat and work together to nurture a sense of community. In April and October 2011 we studied Uchiyama Roshi's *Opening the Hand of Thought*. We had a few participants from out of town; it was a nice retreat with a small number of sincere people. Community retreats offer an opportunity for Sanshin-ji to concentrate more effort to invite more practitioners from both in town and out of town to participate.

4. Precepts Retreat (Zenkai-e):

We have the five-day Precepts Retreat once a year in July at the end of the 3-month practice period. I give lectures on the Precepts and we have the Precepts ceremony (jukai-e) on the last day of the retreat. Each year we have several people who sew rakus and receive the Precepts. In 2011, six people received Precepts. We usually have 10-15 people attending this retreat.

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*Daily and weekly practice at Sanshinji:

Sunday

9:10-10:00	Zazen / zazen instruction (in the office)
10:00-11:00	Dharma talk
11:00-12:00	Tea
1:00-3:00	Community Work Period (in the summer)
3:00-5:00	Sewing class, with sewing teacher Yuko Okumura from February to June

When I am out of town, experienced practitioners take turns to give a Dharma talk.

Monday through Friday Mornings

5:10-6:00 am	Zazen
6:00-6:10	kinhin
6:10-7:00	Zazen
7:00-7:20	Service
7:20-7:40	Soji (temple cleaning)

Tuesday Evenings

6:00-6:40	Zazen
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Wednesday Evening

6:00-6:40	Zazen
7:00-8:30	Dharma Study Group

In 2011, we continued studying *Awakening the Faith in Mahayana* using the English translation by Yoshito Hakeda. This is one of the most important texts in the history of Chinese Buddhism to study *Tathagata garba* (Buddha-nature) theory which influenced Chinese Zen Buddhism. We usually have 7-10 people. When I am out of town, we don't have Dharma Study Group.

Thursday Evening

7:00-7:40	Zazen
7:40-7:50	Kinjin
7:50-8:30	Question and Answer.

When I am in town, people ask me questions. When I am out of town, people have discussion.

Saturday: Day off

Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and January 1st - 3rd are days off each year.

* 3-month summer practice period

We have a three-month summer practice period each year from the beginning of April until the beginning of July. During this period, we usually have a shuso as the example and leader of the practice. This year, we did not have an individual to assume the role of shuso. When we have shuso, the person gives a Dharma talk on Sunday mornings during the practice period. In 2011, I asked Michael, Seigen, Ritoku and Jokei to give a Dharma talk.

During the practice period, we have the community retreat in April, Genzo-e in May, Sesshin in June and Precepts Retreat (Zenkai-e) in July. These practice events are designed to focus on Precepts, Meditation and Wisdom which are three basic studies in Buddhist traditions. This year, three priests including myself and a lay practitioner

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participated fully in the three-month practice periods. More people came for morning and evening zazen, during the five-day practice events and Sundays. In the early mornings, we usually have seven to ten people for zazen, service and soji.

Limited Practice Months:

February and August are months of limited practice. We only have morning zazen from Monday to Friday. On Sundays, we sit from 9-11 am. We don't have Sunday Dharma talk and Wednesday Dharma Study Group. In February, we have Nirvana Day sesshin. This sesshin is without providing meals. People can come to sit anytime and leave anytime. We make sure at least one doan person is sitting in the Zendo.

Annual Events:

We celebrate Buddha's Birthday, Enlightenment Day and Parinirvana Day on the nearest Sunday to April 8th, December 8th and February 15th. On these occasions, we have potluck lunch after the ceremony. We usually have 15-20 people.

(2) Okumura Roshi's Teaching Activities outside Bloomington in 2011

January 14-16: I visited Daishinji founded by Shotai de la Rosa, one of my disciples, in Hialeah, Florida to attend their Zendo opening ceremony.

February 11-17 I visited Chapel Hill Zen Center in Chapel Hill, NC to lead a five-day Genzo-e. We studied *Shobogenzo Hotsumujoshin* (Arousing Unsurpassable Mine). About 30 people participated. On Sunday morning Dharma talk, we had about 60 people.

March 9-21: I went to Japan to visit two monasteries and several friends. I visited Nokein temple, where Uchiyama Roshi's okusan lives on the occasion of the memorial day of Uchiyama Roshi. The Tohoku earthquake and tsunami occurred the day after I arrived in Japan.

March 24-28: I went to Chicago to visit Ancient Dragon Zen Center (Rev. Taigen Dan Leighton) to lead two day workshop on Genjokoan using my book *Realizing Genjokoan* as the text.

June 24-27: I visited Ryumonji Monastery in Iowa to attend their shuso ceremony as the Jokeshi (the witness of the ceremony). I gave a talk on the koan, "Joshu's Ultimate Way is without Difficulty", on which the *shuso* had discussion during the ceremony. They also had the opening ceremony of newly built Japanese-style *sodo* (monks' hall).

July 21-August 3: I visited Sweden to lead five-day Genzo-e. We studied *Shobogenzo Hotsubodaishin* (Arousing Bodhi-mind). About 25 people participated including Shoji from France, Gyoetsu and Doryu from Italy.

August 17-27: I stayed in North Carolina during this period.

On the 18th I had a book signing at Malaprops Bookstore. More than 50 people participated.

On the 20th, I gave a public talk at Asheville Zen Center on Ryokan's poems. The rest of the time, Yuko and I stayed at a cabin in NC's beautiful mountains.

September 7-10: I visited Los Angeles to attend a conference of the Association of Soto Zen Buddhists at Zenshuji Soto Mission. This is the association of Soto Zen priests qualified as teachers by the Japanese Sotoshu.

October 13-17: Stillpoint Retreat in Pittsburgh, PA. I talked on the 4th and 5th section of Dogen Zenji's *Gakudo Yojinshu* (Points to Watch in Studying the Way). About 20 people participated.

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November 11-13: I went to Florida to attend Dogen Zenji Conference at Florida International University. I was one of five speakers. About 200 people attended.

My teaching schedule at other centers is organized by the Sanshin's program committee.

(3) Temple officers

Michael Shoaf continues to be the work leader. I generally perform the Ino's job except during sesshin/retreats. We don't have a regular tenzo so we need to think how to handle cooking during sesshin/retreats on each occasion. We stopped having meals in the zendo. During sesshin/retreat we eat in the Dorm building buffet style. When we have many people such as in Genzo-e we divide the people into two groups and eat at the Dorm and at the Zendo. I ask Seigen, Jokei, or other priests who attend the sesshin/retreat to do Ino's job. Since we don't have priests who can serve as temple officers throughout the year, this is how we have to handle the sesshin/retreats.

(4) Sanshin Priests

In 2011, Jokei Molly Whitehead received shukke-tokudo (priest ordination) in February. Gyoetsu Epifania and Doryu Cappeli, living in Italy, changed their teacher and became my disciples in May. Muso Jim Biggs also changed his teacher and became my disciple in August. I have now 18 disciples.

1. Daiki Steve Kelly:

Daiki received shukke-tokudo on 4/13/1997. Currently I don't have contact with him.

2. Chiko Corona:

Chiko originally received shukke-tokudo on 9/23/1990 by the late Rev. Kenko Yamashita. Because her original teacher passed away, she became my disciple on 8/31/2004. She received Dharma transmission from me on 9/15/2004. She participated in 1-month training at Zuioji monastery, Japan and qualified as Dendo-kyoshi. She did zuike in the same year. In 2009, she was qualified as nito-kyoshi (2nd rank teacher) from Sotoshu. Chiko lived in Bloomington for 2 years. Because of her health she returned to California.

3. Shotai de la Rosa:

Shotai started to practice in her country, Colombia, then practiced at Zen centers in Spain, Italy, and also at Tassajara and SFZC City Center for all together more than 20 years. She received shukke-tokudo in Italy. She was shuso at Tassajara and tenzo at the City center. She received shukke-tokudo again from me on 7/5/2004. She practiced as shuso again at Sanshinji and did a shuso ceremony in 2005, and received Dharma transmission on 12/31/2005. Since March 2006, she did practice at Aichi Senmon Nisodo (the women's monastery in Nagoya, Japan) for one year. She did zuike in January 2007. She received the title of nito-kyoshi from Sotoshu. She moved to Florida in July 2009 and found her own temple Daishinji in Hialeah. She had the dedication ceremony in January 2011. She has been working on making Spanish translation of Zen texts.

4. Shodo Cedar Spring:

Shodo practiced at MZMC with Katagiri Roshi and me for many years. She also practiced at Green Gulch and Tassajara with Rev. Tenshin Reb Anderson. She received shukke-tokudo from me on 4/30/2005. She lived in Bloomington until July 2010. After that, she served as the resident priest at Anchorage Zen Center, Anchorage, Alaska for several months. In February 2011, she moved back to Twin Cities, Minnesota and purchased a property where she plans to practice. She has been editing my lectures on *Shobogenzo Sansuikyo* (Mountains and Waters Sutra). Since September 2011, she has been practicing at Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery.

5. Koshin Cherin:

Koshin had been practicing for about 15 years at several Zen Centers and received shukke-tokudo from me on 4/30/2005. From March to December 2006, she practiced at Hosshinji monastery, Japan with Harada Sekkei Roshi. She married in 2008 and currently lives in Kyoto, Japan. She plans to stay at Sanshinji for three months during summer practice period in 2012 and do shuso practice.

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6. Hoko Jan Karnegis:

She practiced at MZMC and Hokyoji, and a few places in Japan, for many years. She received shukke-tokudo from me on 4/30/2005. She did shuso ceremony at Kogetsu-an in Shiga, Japan in 2005. She completed the master course program in Buddhist Study. Hoko went to Japan in October 2010 to practice at Toshoji monastery in Okayama until May 2011. She also practiced at Shogoji in Kumamoto during their International Ango. Currently she serves as the resident priest at Milwaukee Zen Center.

7. Densho Quintero:

Densho started to practice in Colombia more than 20 years ago. He practiced in France and Spain. He received shukke-tokudo from the former abbot of Antaiji, Rev. Shinyu Miyaura, in 2001. Because of Rev. Miyaura's death, he became my disciple on 9/2/2005. Densho had shuso ceremony at Busshinji temple in Sao Paulo, Brazil in December 2007. He participated the three-month Sotoshu Ango in France from September to December 2008. He received Dharma transmission from me in March 2009. He visited Eihei-ji and Sojiji to do zuse in October 2009. He participated the 3-month Sotoshu Ango again at Yokoji, CA in 2010. Densho has been working to establish a Soto Zen temple in Bogota, Colombia for many years. He translated Uchiyama Roshi's *Opening the Hand of Thought* into Spanish. The book was published from a publisher in Spain. Currently he is working on Spanish translation of *Realizing Genjokoan*.

8. Shoji Mahler:

She practiced with Rev. Daien Bennage and received shukke-tokudo from her in 1999. She became my disciple on 12/14/2005. She practiced at Aichi Senmon Nisodo (women's monastery in Nagoya, Japan) from October 2001 to March 2002. She lives in France and visited Bloomington twice a year, once for the three-month practice period and again from the November Genzo-e to the Rohatsu sesshin for five years. In 2008, she practiced as the shuso, and received Dharma transmission from me in the fall 2009. She founded her own temple, Zendo L'Eau Vive in Alés, France. She did zuse in September 2011.

9. Shoryu Bradley:

Shoryu started to practice at Austin Zen Center. He practiced at Tassajara for a few years and received shukke-tokudo from the teacher at Austin ZC, Rev. Seirin Barbara Kohn. He moved to Bloomington in 2004 and practiced at Sanshin-ji for five years. He changed his teacher and became my disciple on 1/15/2006. Shoryu did shuso practice during practice period in 2006. Having fulfilled 5-year practice at Sanshinji, he moved to Virginia in January 2009. He participated the three-month Sotoshu Ango at Yokoji in CA in 2009 and another one at Shogoji, Kumamoto, Japan from December 2010 until February 2011. He did zuse in September 2011. Recently he purchased a property to found a practice center Gyobutsuji in Arkansas.

10. Eido Reinhart:

Eido has been practicing at MZMC for many years. She received shukke-tokudo from the teacher of MZMC, Rev. Tim Burkett. She became my disciple on 1/15/2006. She is going to do shuso practice at Ryumonji in Iowa in February 2012.

11. Ritoku Robinson:

Ritoku practiced at ZCLA as a resident practitioner with Maezumi Roshi. He started to come to Sanshin-ji right after I moved to Bloomington in 2003. He received shukke-tokudo on 12/17/2006. He is a professor of philosophy at Indiana University, Indianapolis. When I am out of town and we need a speaker for the Sunday morning Dharma talk, he often volunteers and gives talk. He occasionally invite me to his class to talk on Dogen Zenji and Soto Zen.

12. Kando Dorsey

Kando started to practice at Stillpoint Sangha in Pittsburgh and moved to Bloomington in 2005. He received shukke-tokudo on 12/17/2006. Kando completed shuso practice in 2009. He stopped practicing at Sanshinji in the winter 2010.

13. Koun Levy

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Koun has been practicing more than ten years with me at various places. She served as a board member of Sanshin ZC as treasurer for several years. She received shukke-tokudo September 21, 2008. She regularly come to Bloomington during summer practice period, and November Genzo-e or Rohatsu sesshin. She lives in Florida and sometimes practice with Shotai and Kaikyo.

14. Kaikyo Robby

Kaikyo has been practicing more than 20 years. She received shukke-tokudo in Deshimaru's lineage in France. She received shukke-tokudo from me on September, 21, 2008. She completed shuso practice in 2010 summer practice period. She lives in Florida near Koun.

15. Jokei Whitehead

Jokei practiced at Tassajara and SFZC City Center for many years. She moved to Bloomington to practice at Sanshinji in 2009. She received shukke-tokudo in February 2011. She has been working on translation and editing *The Zen Teaching of Homeless Kodo* since September 2011. She also worked on reviewing the draft of *Realizing Genjokoan, Living by Vow, and Sansuikyo*.

16. Gyoetsu Epifania

17. Doryu Cappeli

Gyoetsu and Doryu have been practicing for many years. They received shukke-tokudo from (the same?) French Zen teacher. They became my disciple in May 2011. They live in Rome, Italy. They visit Bloomington three times a year.

18. Muso Biggs

Muso has been practicing many years at various places including SFZC, ZCLA, Zen Mountain Center Yokoji etc. He was ordained by Rev. Tenshin Fletcher at Zen Mountain Center in CA. He became my disciple in August 2011. Currently, he lives in Bay Area and practices at Berkeley Zen Center.

Priests' Practice Progress

Chiko, and Shotai have completed shuso practice, received Dharma transmission, and received teacher qualification from Japanese Sotoshu.

Densho completed shuso practice and received Dharma transmission. Although he participated in two three-month angos in 2008 and 2009, since he has not yet fulfilled Sotoshu requirement of monastic practice at an official monastery, he has not yet received teacher qualification from Sotoshu.

Shoju and Shoryu completed shuso practice and received Dharma transmission. They did zaise at Eiheiji and Sojiji in 2011. They are in the process of application for qualification as nito kyoshi (second rank teacher) from Sotoshu.

Hoko finished shuso ceremony in Japan and practiced at Toshoji monastery in Okayama for six months. She is ready to receive Dharma transmission.

Shodo has completed shuso practice. She is currently practicing at Tassajara monastery for winter Ango. After this Ango, she is ready to receive Dharma transmission.

Kando completed shuso practice during the practice period in 2009.

In summary, Chiko, Shotai, Shoju, Shoryu, Koshin, Hoko had monastic training in Japan which fulfills the requirements to receive formal teacher certification from Sotoshu.

These 18 disciples are all sincere and capable people. My hope is that they continue to practice and contribute in their unique way to the development of Soto Zen Buddhism in the West.

Currently three people wish to receive shukke-tokudo at Sanshin-ji: Michael Shoaf, Keith Buckley and Brian Roesler. Michael and Keith have been living in Bloomington for many years. I am glad that we will have priests from the local community. Their presence must be very valuable for Sanshinji to take a root in Bloomington. Brian lives in St. Paul, Minnesota. He practiced with me for three years and did many sesshin/retreats while I taught at MZMC. In 2011, he visited Sanshinji three times and expressed his wish to receive shukke-tokudo.

(5) Dogen Institute Activities

The purpose of the Dogen Institute is to make available Okumura-Roshi's life work of translations, commentaries, and lectures, through books, audio and video recordings, and web-based materials.

Realizing Genjokoan was published by Wisdom Publications in June 2010. I heard that many Zen Centers and groups use the book as a study resource. After reading the book quite a few people became interested in Sanshin-ji practice.

My translation of Uchiyama Roshi's Genjokoan commentary was published in December 2011. The title is *Dogen's Genjokoan: Three Commentaries* (Counterpoint, Berkeley). Rev. Michael Wenger and Rev. Mel Waitsman worked on this book project for many years to put Nishiari Zenji's commentary and Suzuki Roshi's teisho on Genjokoan together with Uchiyama Roshi's. I recommend this book to all people who are aspired to study and practice Dogen Zenji's teachings. My *Realizing Genjokoan* can be an introduction to this book.

My next book, *Living by Vow* will be published in May 2012. This is a collection of my lectures at MZMC from 1993-1996. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dave Ellison who worked so many years on editing this book material.

Jokei and I have started the work on a new translation of *The Zen Teaching of "Homeless" Kodo*. We made the book proposal to Wisdom Publications September, 2011. Recently they accepted and the contract documents were sent. I hope this book can be published before 2015 because that year will be the 50th anniversary of Sawaki Roshi's death.

Shodo and Jokei are working on *Sansuikyo* (Mountains and Waters Sutra) material. Our hope is to complete the manuscript ready to send to the publisher within 2012.

Few other book projects are also in progress. David Thompson has been working on editing the material of *Zazenshin* (Acupuncture Needle of Zazen). Jean Serkik, sewing teacher of Berkeley ZC, has been working on *Kesakudoku* (The Virtue of Kesa). Andrea Thach is interested in editing work; I am thinking of asking her to edit *Bendowa* material. My lectures on the Precepts were edited by Hoko Karnegis but I have not had time to review it yet. I also want to translate a few more books written by Uchiyama Roshi.

These book projects will be my major work during my 60s and I intend to travel less extensively.

(6) Sanshin Board

We have a board retreat in Bloomington twice a year. The Board also holds telephone conferences several times during the rest of the months a month. I deeply appreciate their commitment to the development of the administrative aspect of Sanshin ZC.

During 2011 the following individuals served as board members:

Shohaku Okumura, abbot, ex officio

Keith Buckley, Norma Fogelberg, Mark Howell, Sabine Karner, Bob Meadows, Don Orr, Mark Pfaff, Michael Shoaf, Andrea Thach

Bob and Norma withdrew from the board after completing their many years of valuable service. Keith and Andrea withdrew late in December for personal reasons. In January 2012 David Thompson and Muso Jim Biggs accepted invitations to be on the Board.

Office Manager: Since fall of 2008, Debra Artino has been employed in this office.

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There are currently 4 committees approved by the Board and headed by a board member:

Development Committee; making connections with the larger community and work on fundraising

Technology Committee; recording, storing, producing CD & DVD

Practice Committee; taking care of practice events at Sanhinji

Program Committee; creating and managing the schedule for abbot's teaching at other centers

(7) Conclusion: New Phase of Sanshin Practice

Since 2009, we don't have priests who can hold the position of Ino and Tenzo throughout the year. Currently, we have Michael Shoaf as the Work Leader. I took over the day-to-day Ino's job and asked someone to be Ino during sesshin/retreats. The Practice committee discusses how to handle cooking for each sesshin/retreat.

We have now two priests in town, Seigen and Jokei. Because of their work situation, it is not possible for them to serve as temple officers. However, I don't think this is a negative condition. I think we are in the new phase of Sanshin practice. We need to continue to make efforts to grow and strengthen the local sangha in Bloomington area.

We have been renting the apartment next door as the dormitory since the summer 2009. The Dorm provides more comfortable accommodation for the participants of the sesshin/retreats. Now we have a steady caretaker for the Dorm building, Ramon Garcia Tamaran, who is a long time practitioner. He comes to sit with us one period at 5 a.m. five days a week. Then he goes to South High School to teach.

At the Board retreat in October 2011, we discussed the question of teacher succession. Since then I have been thinking of my plan for the future. Now I am 63 years old. Hopefully I will be creative until 75 years old. I have 12 more years. That is not a long time at all. We need to begin to think of a long-range plan including the time after my retirement or death. Sanshin-ji is the gift from the Buddhas and ancestors, and the many Japanese and American donors to all practitioners who aspire to study Dogen Zenji's teaching and to practice in Sawaki Roshi's and Uchiyama Roshi's style. I hope Sanshin-ji will continue as a Soto Zen practice center after my retirement or death. My goal for the next 12 years is to create the situation that Sanshin-ji can continue to serve as a practice center in Indiana. When I am gone, I don't think many people from out of town will choose to come to Bloomington to practice. We need more people who consider Sanshin-ji as their spiritual home. It is very important to develop and strengthen the local sangha.

Because of my aging, I need to gradually reduce my practice and teaching activities and put more focus on Dogen Institute activities, that is writing and publishing books etc. I think I am able to continue my current activities two more years until I become 65 years old. After that I don't think I can lead ten sesshin/retreats at Sanshin-ji and two Genzo-e at other centers every year. In future board retreats and in the practice committee, we started to discuss what should be done to make this transition smooth and gradual.

Gassho,

Prepared and presented by;
Shohaku Okumura
Abbot
Sanshin Zen Community