

1. talk – Introduction to myself

Welcome, and especially the Viennese Sangha – I'm Shinko and I will accompany you the next 3 months as Shuso, as headmonk

My main job will be – cleaning bathrooms –but I will also open the zendo, learn ceremonies and giving talks – so I will practice intensively and I will immerse myself in Sanshinji and weave myself into this network of relationships for the next 3 months.

Let's see what comes out. I have an idea about it, but you know how it is with your own ideas about anything.

Today is Buddha's birthday, what a great thing to give a talk! And

Today is also Easter Sunday, another a great thing, as former Christian, to give a talk on this day.

We will celebrate Buddha's birthday after my talk.

Maybe you know I come from Austria, a small country in the middle of Europe with a big history. In the 16th century the emperor of Austria said: "In my country the sun never goes down" because for example Mexico was a part of the Austrian empire. But with the first world war this all ends and now Austria is a small, still very beautiful country with around 9 million inhabitants. We have a lot of mountains, forests and snow, like Hoko has seen this January, but not only. I live in the capital Vienna, with a lot of historical buildings and a lot of art and music, especially classical music. And I'm very happy that there is a connection here with Classical Music in Bloomington and Yael Weiss will tell us more during the Platinum celebration in June.

My English – I think you will have a lot of fun with this – I don't have this classic academic carrier – I'm a high school dropout – later in a second education way I start to study architecture, but after a few years I recognized, that this is not my thing and I started a business and so my English education is not the best and for this I want to fill in a disclaimer here, I don't want to hurt anybody with my words, inclusion is an important thing for me, and you will see this in my talks, but excuse myself right now at the beginning for my mistakes.

Far too often, my ignorance knows no boundaries and my ego is bigger than my practice and if I also make mistakes in content and that is certainly the case, then I ask you to forgive them right away too.

So please be patient with me.

I want to thank deeply, a new translating software and Susanne, now Koryu, she studied American Studies and helped me the last years a lot to evolve my English and especially with this talks.

Today I start with introducing myself – funny word my-self in English. I will talk about my path and how I came in this sangha and what a challenge it was to come here and how complicated it is to leave the household for three months, there is my family, I'm grandfather since 9 months, my sangha and friends and especially my work - I'm self-employed and

together with my wife I have a small business as representative for Scandinavian Lifestyle brands for home accessories, fine living and gifts - and right now in this really difficult economic times it is hard to leave all of this behind.

But my wife got ordained too as nun a few weeks ago, so she is understanding what I'm doing. She got ordained together with Susanne and she will help her and my daughter too and the whole sangha, so we will see.

Another issue is I stay together with my wife Sabine for 32 years and with our common work we are 24 hours together and now I'm here for 3 months, without all this.

"leaving the household" what does this mean in 2023 – but I will talk later a bit more about this important matter.

To create all these talks was a big challenge, not only because of the language, also because normally my scripts and ideas arise in a process very close to the scheduled talks, together with my books and notes and I'm this old school guy, most of my books I read in paper and often I remember the passage where I read it. I remember the typeface and most of the time my fingers find the position in the book while flipping through it. But I cannot take all my books with me to Bloomington and not all are digitally available and also digitally the typeface is always changing. So I had to prepare everything before I came here and this was a tough time, with all my various projects, you will hear about them later a bit more.

My memory is functioning with pictures and how the things are related to each other. Antonio Damasio a very famous Neuroscientist discovered in brains that have been cut into very thin slices that we actually store memories as images as well, he found pictures in our brains.

I'm very interested how science explains how our consciousness arises or is created. I read a lot of books about it, but I'm not a scientist and so I will and cannot really talk about it, but sometimes I will make a short trip there in my talks. Because sometimes I feel like consciousness scientist too, as you maybe can imagine, not in a classical science way but sitting upright in zazen is exploring how our consciousness is working. Most of my talks are about this topic also.

But how do I fill all these talks, how can I talk for so many hours about something we can't talk about?

I told a friend from my challenge, he is not practicing, and he said no problem I should do it with ChatGPT, and I have seen this was already tried here too, but I have not – in one of my talks I will explain my relation to AI.

And so, with these preparations the ango started very earlier for me.

I want to talk the next weeks about how I found this place, our better how the dharma brought me here on this place right now, how the dharma brought me to different teachers, with all these different emphasizes of the teachings, this may sound sometimes a bit strange or unusual, but I want to invite you to follow me and hear how my path has developed. And I think especially in our sangha nobody has this straight way, and this feels good.

Anyway, I got ordained by Hoko in 2019 here in this zendo – this guy from in Austria, and I

hope that after all talks you got a little glimpse into my universe of understanding the development of dharma and how it presents itself to me.

Now the program of my talks:

I want to talk the next weeks about the 4 embracing actions as a main topic, "Bodaisatta Shishobo" -the four embracing actions and they are: offering, loving words, beneficial action and identity action.

But it will hover over all my talks more like a cloud, I will not really talk about "Shishobo", the whole time, but in a way I will do.

Since the beginning of my practice the important question for me was, how do I integrate the practice into my everyday life, into my daily life with all the needs, my fears and worries, wishes and so on.

And what does it mean to try as bodhisattva to be in this world in our everyday life, and most part of my talks will be in a way about the question: "How to live the bodhisattva vows in daily life and how can we reach this."

How does our being come into being, how are the ingredients for what we call our being mixed together and how can we practice to recognize and transform them so that we realize the formula of Hojo-san: $1 = 0 = \infty$ in our everyday life.

I will talk a lot about my own practice and especially how much my pastoral work, mainly in prisons, helps me.

Kodo Sawaki said, "Separated from daily life, Buddhism is a dead thing. All aspects of your life must be the Buddha Way.

I want to recommend Hojo-san's translation of the Shishobo and his commentaries and it, if you don't have it, please talk to me or Sawyer after the talk, we can send it to you. And please listen to all the other talks given here the last two months about Shishobo.

My talks will start today with an introduction of myself

The second talk will be an introduction to Shishobo

Then in my third talk I will talk about transformation and how we get there, this includes: zazen, repentance, Breathing, inner Alchemie or Neidan and Turning the light.

Then I will talk in my fourth, fifth and sixth talk about perception and how our consciousness arises and evolves and this will include: Yogacara, Datus, Vijnana, Skandhas, Emptiness, interconnectedness and sure a few other things

Then my seventh talk will be about engaged Buddhism and my chaplaincy work as prison chaplain.

"How we can bring the merit or the fruits of our practice, to society". To give them a framework we founded our association 1000 Hands, it is like the second side of our practice coin. I don't want to mix our zen practice with our social work for the community, we have our sangha on the one side and our community work with 1000 Hands on the other side, like

the two truths, they are interdependent but we don't mix it, because like Hojo-san quotes:
"They never meet"

And for sure in all talks a lot of other things will be included, I will ask questions about the development of society and so on and how our view out of our zen practice can help.

What does this mean to be in the midst of the marketplace and to look behind the scene how the myriad things are working together, but in this way like in Koan 25 of the Blue Cliff records the hermit says:

"As for me, I put the staff over my shoulder, pay no attention to other people and set off for the myriad of peaks"

To understand this kind of thinking in connection with interconnectedness is an important practice. Dongshan Liangji, the founder of the Caodong lineage, the precursor of the Sotozen says in the beginning of his enlightenment poem: "Now I'm alone"

I want to explain my view on interconnectedness and how we can experience it more in our daily life, because my life is more a lay life, I'm more a priest than a monk. I must care for my family, my younger daughter is studying psychology and my older one made me a grandfather 9 months ago. In my profession I'm a salesman, a businessman and this is not normal in Buddhism, but maybe helpful and Buddha likes salesmen's and Buddhism and economics is an important topic.

I did a lot of things in my life, when I was in this age getting a teenager, I got interested in Chemistry, fascinated in this how things can change. – When I was around 10-12 a friend of mine got as a Christmas present a Chemistry set and part of this Chemistry set was an experiment that was really fascinating to us: We mixed Potassium permanganate a very important chemical, for example in former times used for photo processing, it has a wonderful deep purple color, so we mixed it with Hydrochloric acid and then it gets totally clear, loses the color and green steam evaporates what a transformation and this was my first contact with Alchemy and somebody told us about this mystic chemistry and showed us old books with drawings from magicians in front of big kettles – I was so fascinated how somebody can make out of lead gold and to find the philosopher's stone. I also was fascinated from high explosives, I can tell a lot of crazy stories about this time, but not here. However, I had to leave after lower secondary school, because I had not the best behavior I changed to Secondary College for operational chemistry – there I learned that there is the atomic core and around it are in orbits, the electrons, I still have the image in my mind this clear drawing – core and electrons. But today physics knows that this is not really so clear and not so important and since the 50th of last century it is getting clear that this empty space between electrons and atom core is more important.

To get closer to this space in between is very important in my practice, brings up a lot of questions and you will see this in my talks the next weeks. "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form" we chant this every day in the Heart Sutra, but what does this mean and how can we experience it?

There is this space in between, the negative space it is called in science and in Japan it is

called “Ma” literally meaning is *gap, space, or pause*. Its interpreted as the concept of negative space. The kanji for Ma (間) combines the characters for “gate” and “sun” and can be literally translated to “sun gate”. It evokes the images of light traveling through the cracks of a doorway.

The images of light traveling through the cracks of a doorway. My first teacher of our lineage Kaikyo Roby was often talking about “Cracking the wall” – and then the light will shine through, and the meaning of light is an important matter in our practice.

This concept of “Ma” runs through the entire Japanese culture, especially design, architecture and art.

A long time in my life until now exploring this space was and is part of my work, because my business area is in the design and interior field and when I was young I studied architecture and also worked a few years in architectural offices. This relations in space, the conditions how things are arranged have an effect on us and most time we don’t realize it.

The concept of “ma” is also responsible for the fact that Japanese architects have become very famous and created buildings all over the world, and also in the Japanese flower arrangement art “Ikebana” the concept is realized. My wife, now called Kogyo practices this to my happiness, our house and our altars are always adorned.

How we can experience this space in between and what is the connection from this to emptiness and then to interconnectedness, again like the formula Hojo san always brings up $1 \text{ equals} = 0 \text{ equals} = \infty$

Two years ago we had an event with our 1000 Hands association. It is like I told the second side of our practice coin, to weave the merit or the fruits out of practice into society. And a part of what we want to do with our association, is initiate public discussions in combination of spirituality and science. But with the pandemic it was not so easy, but we had one event we called “Interconnectedness and Microbiome” together with a famous biology scientist from Austria Prof. Gabriele Berg, she is a star in Microbiome science, she said: “When we sit still without talking one hour together then our microbiome exchange one million of information’s and it is like a language, with grammar” and she can more and more read this, WOW, right? We will repeat this event in autumn.

Next theme of this public discussions should be “interconnectedness and quantum physics”, maybe you know last years nobel prize winner in physics was an Austrian, Prof. Zeilinger he discovered how teletransportation works in real! He already had a talk ten years ago with the Dalai Lama, he is interested in this connectedness to spirituality too, so maybe we can invite him .

This are attempts in physical science or in biology for an explanation of interconnectedness and of this space in between, this field, and in a public context Science is important. Buddhism has here clear answers, our concept out of Abhidharma and Yogacara gives a clear

answer how consciousness arises and interconnectedness happens. Science still cannot give this answer.

Normally we feel connected through social concepts in society, like family, social activities with friends, neighbors or in soccer clubs or in our community like volunteer in fire departments and so on, with this activities we feel connected, our five skandhas are filled and we identify ourself and this identification with it gives us support, we feel grounded, we have an anchor.

What happens when all this falls apart, and our identification disappears, when all these feelings they are behind this identification get lost, because you get disappointed or something else happen and so on – what happens afterwards? What is the ground we land on?

The Poet Antonio Machado said:

“Mankind owns four things
That are no good at sea:
Rudder (Ruder), anchor, oars,
And the fear of going down.”

What happens when the bucket loses the bottom, this old metaphor, what gives us stability?

Loosing this identification is my interpretation of “leaving the house” – the phrase associated with becoming a monk, shukke tokudo.

And loosing identification is also a part of Shishobo in identity action, the fourth embracing action in Shishobo.

But what comes up when the bucket loses the bottom? It is fear in a pure way and about fear I will talk a lot of times too, Fearlessness is part of the first embracing Bodhisattva action giving.

Most time I will talk about beneficial action the third of the four embracing actions and about what is the background to achieve all the four embracing actions. The experience of interconnectedness is the most important background for all four actions.

interesting is that Interconnectedness is not one of the 24 key terms in Sotoshu, but maybe because all of the key terms flow into interconnectedness, how our being is arising, or how it is created and how is all interwoven to the manifestation we call our life. – A important key phrase in my practice is out of the Genjokoan – “Study the Buddha Way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self.”

To find out about the relationship how is all connected – how all the ingrediencies of a moment, for example this moment here, manifest to this what we call “my life”

Anyway, interconnectedness is the essential key term in my life – in all our lives, but most time we are not aware and the question for me is how can we experience this interconnectedness and how we can get in connection every moment.

Dizang asked Fayan, “Where are you going?”

Fayan said, "Around on pilgrimage."
Dizang said, "What is the purpose of pilgrimage?"
Fayan said, "I don't know."
Dizang said, "Not knowing is nearest."

This is out of Case 20 out of "The Book of Serenity", and this is my koan for this ango and it is another key phrases in my practice - "Not knowing is nearest" -

Hongzhi in Japanese "Wanshi Shogaku" the Chinese Zen master who collected the Koan collection "The book of serenity" talks a lot about this space, this field of not knowing, this field of in between, in his practice instructions "Cultivating the empty field – the silent illumination".

When somebody new is coming in our sangha, first thing I tell him is: forget everything what you think you know about zenmonks or zenpriest, I'm in a way nothing of this and I think nobody here is like this.

When people start with practice they are so full of ideas and they don't expect something like me.

But I'm in a way really different – I have a big modern car, because I have a job where I need this, I have to travel a few times a year 1250 miles a week - I'm a sales man – not a typical one – because I sell beautiful things – modern living accessoires from Scandinavia.

Normally practitioners are psychotherapists, coaches or teachers, or work in a University and so on, but not businessmen. Businessmen are tough guys they don't need this meditation thing and if yet they use meditation then to clear the mind for better business, maybe somebody has seen the series "Billions" its about a Hedge fund manager and as the title says a billionaire and he has is meditation room close by his office and for important decisions he goes there. –

I'm not this kind, but people may think this is true. I'm a salesman in a classical way, I cannot sell things that I cannot touch, I need this feeling from all my senses and I need this feeling of a person in front of me, in a way to feel this space in between, this interconnectedness. So this field was important for me before I start to practice. And you will see I started to practice very late in my life.

And it is not an option for me, to leave the house, means my whole life behind and forget about all of my responsibilities.

The more I practiced the more I learned to take responsibility for my loved ones and for everyone around me.

So this big thing, to become a monk, to take the vows, leave the house and deepen my practice, was always accompanied with doubts, this doubts about having a job, earning money and so on.

A few month ago I wrote to my dharma friend Rev. Hojun, he is working for the Sotozen international center in Tokyo and he is leading the international also broadcasted Zen Class every month, and I told him about all the projects I have in the moment in my everyday life and in my practice and he answered: "You are like a typical Japanese monk, busy all the time"

It was very happy about this answer. Since Dogen's time up to now it is very usual for Japanese monks to go out to function as a temple priest ministering to the laity.

For me means "leaving the house" leaving my normal way of being in this world, my normal way of experiencing the world, particularly (im speziellen), to concentrate on this space between everything.

In Shobogenzo "Virtue of home leaving" Nagarjuna is quoted: "Leaving the household is similar to going out into an empty field where there are no people. They can keep their minds unified and free from thinking. As their thoughts inside retreat, their affairs outside also disappear."

I'm 59 years old and I live with my wife in Vienna, we rent a house a little bit outside but still in Vienna, we have a lot of space, because our children moved out. The older daughter lives 20 minutes from us, what is now with our grandson a good thing and our younger one is studying more than 600 miles away psychology in Germany. So we have a lot of space and most time Koryu Susanne is living with us.

Before the Pandemic we practiced in a rented room from the Austrian Buddhism Union in the midst of the city, but with Covid and the restrictions we decide to move it in our house. We had enough space, because our showroom was not needed for years anymore – business has changed – and so we build there our zendo. So our zendo is in a normal house, like here – all is integrated in our normal way of living.

Four times a week we open it for public practice and every few weeks we organize a practice day on Sunday and two times a year we do the Genzoe together and also two times a year we sit Sesshin.

Two times a year we need our zendo room for our business and so we move it in our house in a smaller room. This is always a big event, to pack everything in, the statues and furniture's, we have done it before I came here.

So, everything is included – nothing is special – it is the whole life

But how comes this all together? How I came on my way?

My wife's sister got married in a Zen monastery of the sangha of Baker Roshi in the Black Forest in Germany. I had no idea what Zen and Buddhism actually was until then. I only knew that my brother-in-law goes there several times a year and then sits in silence in front of a white wall for a week. I thought that was so incredibly absurd that I didn't even give it a thought to find it silly or funny.

About a year before this wedding, at the age of 42, I had to admit to myself that I had a big problem, that I was a heavy alcoholic. Thanks to my wife, who gave me a choice, either her or the alcohol, I had managed to stay sober for more than a year by the time of this wedding. Of course, I also took advantage of professional help and went to rehab. Until I entered the outpatient rehab center, I didn't realize what a big social problem alcohol really is in our country. The dramas that took place behind the door of this institution, in the lobby alone, opened my eyes and showed the true extent of alcohol addiction in my country.

After the first few months of freedom from addiction, the desire to give back and get involved arose and through a friend I came to Homeless Help. We cooked food and used it to feed hungry people in several places in Vienna. This was my first experience of how happy it can make you to help other people, to give without getting anything obvious in return. The non-obvious was shown in the joy that united all of us when we went home late in the evening after distributing the food. We were elated (beschwingte) and cheerful, despite (trotz) feeling cold and tired from the hard work.

During this time came the invitation to the wedding in the Black Forest. So I, who had no idea about Zen and Buddhism, opened a door in this monastery into a room where only people sat who had spent a week together in silence. From today's point of view I am quite sure that this opening of the door opened a gate in me. A gateway back into a sense of connectedness that I knew from my childhood days.

I often accompanied my grandmother to church and she prayed the rosary there every week with some other old women. There I experienced this feeling of connectedness, a deeply felt faith in the world and everything around me.

However, this faith was then broken by the institution and the people working for the Catholic Church and asleep until this door opened. It had been lost for decades. I tried instead to relieve my deep-seated suffering with worldly ways, such as alcohol and other drugs, or through excessive consumption in general and of luxurious things in particular. But of course these worldly methods only helped in the short term, and the old suffering always wanted to come back, demanding more and more distraction and covering, until nothing could no longer be sustained.

All these impressions I took away from the monastery were very confusing. But after a few weeks I asked my brother-in-law to show me how to meditate and he gave me some instructions. Among them was a lying meditation and after the first few minutes I jumped up and I was in a way really horrified at what I was observing in my mind. Yes I had started psychotherapy in the meantime, but that was more about feeling better and questioning certain behaviors, but I had never observed my awareness like I did in this meditation. It took me a few months to get into it again and this time I started to sit down.

In the meantime, my brother-in-law had told me about the local Viennese Sangha and it wasn't long before I was sitting with them regularly in the morning, several times a week. Soon after, I went to my first sesshin at the monastery in the Black Forest, and my second a few months later.

Those first years of practice were like sweeping my mind level by level, floor by floor. Memories, ideas, conceptions everything that wanted to emerge I allowed. It was mainly my old wounds (wuns) from my early childhood days that were hidden deep inside me. I tore down my walls and gave space for them inwardly in my zazen, again and again. This brought so many tears that I cried in silence that I could have filled whole lakes with them.

Because I gave space many things disappeared and did not come back. During this time, my first encounter with Hojo-san was when I read "Realizing Genjokoan" and I heard about repentance for the first time in the Zen context; Baker Roshi did not emphasize the concept of repentance. And this distinction between absolute and relative repentance touched me deeply, opened something in me.

The inherent possibility of transformation of all suffering, connected with repentance in zazen and my intensive practice of Neidan, I will talk in my third talk about, made it possible that my original dramas began to disappear more and more.

In the meantime, my social engagement had also evolved and I joined a small group and started going to prisons, taking care of inmates and meditating with them. But soon I realized that there was more to it than that.

Going to prison for the first time was very exciting, my intention was to perceive everything with great attention and my teacher advised me to stay with my breath. It was a special institution for mentally abnormal lawbreakers, a dramatic legal term that is still used in Austria. It is used for inmates with bad mental problems.

It was a small institution in the center of Vienna, in a very normal residential area, in a very normal house. I was very surprised by this, because I had actually once lived right around the corner and didn't know anything about this institution.

I went in with a mentor and after a simple security check, we were patted down, we had to lock up all items. Then we were taken by elevator to a large room by a very friendly security guard who had fun conversations with my mentor the whole time. It was a therapy room empty, except a few chairs. We placed these against the wall and laid out several, thick, old and rather worn blankets that were provided for us. When the inmates were brought in, there were five of them, I was again very surprised, because they were wearing normal street clothes and everyone looked well-groomed and quite normal. After a brief introduction from me, we all sat down on the blankets in a circle and my mentor began a guided meditation.

After about 20 minutes, he concluded it and we began a conversation. I was asked what I do, if I was married, had children. It was a normal conversational situation, as if we were meeting at a seminar or some other occasion. After another 20 minutes, a security guard came and declared our lesson over. We were escorted back to the door and before I knew it we were out of the door, in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the city. I was so amazed at how easy it all went and especially how normal everything was.

The next few days, however, it was very strange during morning zazen at home. I had to cry all the time again, although there was no obvious reason for it. No old memories or images came up that could have moved me to do so, there was just an incredibly sad, indescribable feeling. This state lasted for days and at some point I realized it had to do with my visit to the prison. I took something away from our meditation session that manifested in my tears. Something I could not grasp that was working inside me and moving me. After a few days, the feeling left me again, but it kept coming up after my prison visits and intensified over time, linking to my story in zazen.

Something began to work in me, to take effect, something that I absorbed without words, that I took out with me into my life. I was able to perceive how things are interconnected without having to use words. Of course I have always functioned like this for my whole life, but it was not clear to me until then how direct this connection was. Something in me drove

me to want to know more about it, to get to the bottom of it, and so began my career as a pastor.

The chaplaincy work also offered me a great opportunity to establish my practice in everyday life. The practices I learned in the monastery were very difficult for me to implement in my daily life, in my work as a salesman traveling through the Austrian countryside, but also as a father and husband. But in this special field that I could enter through my social engagement, there was also time to notice this space in between. I realized that we don't always have to make decisions right away, but that we can stay in the moment and go deeper.

I will tell more about my chaplaincy work in my talks, it will always be part of them and the chaplaincy work is my expression of the beneficial action.

Out of my story my personal vows arise and the first is to support people who were not as lucky in their lives as I was, because my social environment saved me from a final crash. Another vow is that I want to bring spirituality, religion, or whatever we call it, back into our society.

And so – my bad deeds will be maybe transformed and become the fertilizer for my practice.

At the end of Oryoki the doan chants: like the lotus out of the muddy water

And in the Diamond Sutra T'ai-neng says, "Delusion is the root of enlightenment. If someone uses this for their practice, it can become the means for transcending the world. The lotus doesn't grow in high places. It only blooms in muddy water. Delusion doesn't injure the enlightened mind. So, too, smoke and clouds obscure the sun and moon without injuring them. If a jewel is dropped into the mud, neither is the jewel injured. Don't concern yourself with the clouds of delusion. Concentrate on the enlightened mind."

Thank you and enough from my side today,