

For Seikisan

A few hours after the sun went down behind the branches of the naked winter trees, on December 29, at 7:15 pm, Seiki daishi (in civil Dina Kandrovica from Latvia) passed away at Gokokusan Sogenji monastery at the age of 52. The Japanese professional caregiver lady had been short before with her to do her usual body cleaning routine. Seishinsan and Horisan, who were at care shift with her, had intuitively cleaned up her things and put a candle on her desk. Horisan told us later that her last moment was peaceful and the whole situation beautiful.

After kaichin of that day, Roshi and the whole sangha went directly to her death bed. Somebody had lit an incense and offered it at the tokonoma of the room and we recited all together the Hannya Shingyo and the Hakuin Zenji Zazen Wasan in Japanese and English and then the Shiguseigan.

Seikisan was laying on her bed with her feet looking out of the blanket and Roshi took off his white tabi and put them on Seikisan's feet. He had also brought two sweet crackers and put them on both sides of her pillow. After the chanting was finished he touched her face and said "thank you" to her. When we left her room that night, the professional person who would take care of her remaining body before laying it into the coffin, had already arrived.

uring the time Seiki daishi was at Sogenji her devotion and assiduous, unwavering dedication to the practice was an example, and in her condition, an impulse for the Sangha, so most people felt thankful to her at this moment. Some of the older members of the Sangha might also have reflected thankfully for the grace of being given a longer time than her's to fulfill the same quest.

Roshi had given Seiki daishi sanzen every day, going to her room from the time on she had began to be limited in her movements. He had given her the reciting of the Tedai Denpo as a mantra for her difficult mind moments; "they are all going with you" he said to her; and she used to recite it with dedication during her time towards the end. Also he would remind her of the huge unlimited expanding vastness of the universe which she also was. Besides, for

some of us it was impressive to see during all this time the total dedication and commitment of the Roshi with a fading member of his Sangha.

During the last months the Sangha members would take shift to take care of Sekisan during day and night, at the Roshi's request. Also they would go individually to see her, bring her flowers or some gift, talk with her, touch and caress her or kiss her face. Just about ten days ago her face looked incredibly beautiful and fresh, like that of a young girl, with colored cheeks and a clear childish look in her eyes. She felt good when she heard that; "and my voice?" she asked, "it is not so very strong but it is clear", "but now my body is finished", "well yes but not your spirit, that cannot die, and you have quiet reached something on that, my respects!" The conversation shifted towards the care giving person: "Junsei, can you hear me?" "Oh yes yes!" And then she asked for the strong palliative medicine for her body which the advanced cancer was progressively destroying. During the last few days, when her fading consciousness was not able to interact any more, we just talked to her or recited the Teidai Denpo or the mantram Namu Kanseon Bosatsu at her bedside.

The doctor had expected her end already more than a month before, but her strong determination and the spirit of Roshi together with the Sangha still heightened by Rohatsu osesshin and reworking osesshin of this month, which we all went through together with Seikisan, kept her going till she reached to a certain degree that quiet and peaceful state of mind.

Seiki daishi's funeral ceremony was set for the next day (12/ 30) at three o'clock with the whole sangha present. Sogen Osho and the densu people had taken care of the arranging of the altar and the coffin in front of the tokonoma of the kohajo which had a big image of Bodhidharma painted by Mumon Roshi hanging there. Masakosan made all the flower arrangements. Besides the usual offerings of flowers, incense, candles, tea and water, sweets and fruits, there was also a small Ryogusen setting, as it is used in Japanese home altars for individual persons. Also a foto of Seikisan and a shikishi with her civil and her ordination names was there, each on one side of the altar. On Roshi's desk the incense burner was prepared and on one side the little inkin, on the other the chrysanthemum flower on her long stem, for making the sing of the circle and then being thrown on the coffin.

Roshi gave Seiki daishi a posthumous name: “Ten Shin Sei Ki”. The kanji ideogram for ten meaning heaven and shin meaning truth, with also, among others, a wider meaning of : the way of nature. Roshi wrote the kanjis in the center of a bigger format shikishi, so that everybody of the Sangha could write something on it. Later it was put on the center of the altar.

The ceremony started with Roshi declaring that he would give Seiki full ordination, so that she could continue her spiritual path as disciple of the Buddha.

Roshi read the Teihatsu sutra alone, followed by the Sangemon, the repentance sutra which is read three times together with the Sangha; same with the following Sankikai – giving honor to the Three Treasures, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. After an eko we recited together the Shin Jin sutra – offering food and receiving the wisdom of the Buddha. Next we recited Namu Kara Tan No followed by another eko. Then Roshi gave his poem:

In the Gokoku mountains the clear moon shines brightly

Entering directly into the great ocean, now the time of Nirvana

Without birth without death

The ultimate Prajna shining brightly here in front of us

This Bodhisattva’s Compassion

and finally we chanted Kannon Gyo while the incense offering hand burner was passed through; followed by a final eko and Roshi’s speech.

Afterwards we had a quiet tea with homemade cookies and whoever wanted could pass by the altar, look into the open coffin and give Ten Shin Seiki Daishi a good by or a little gift that would accompany her. Somebody had put a baguette which she always liked to eat dipping it in olive oil.

On this day’s kaichin, Roshisan announced that on the next day (12/31) at 9:30 am we would all together chant a last sutra for Seikisan, while putting the flowers from the altar into her coffin and giving her a last good bye. Then the coffin would be closed and carried to the car to take it to the crematory. Roshi, Sogen Osho and Daichi Osho would accompany while the other members of

the sangha would be busy with daily activities. Since Seikisan's body was so thin, said Roshisan, it would be burned soon and he would be probably back from the crematory after an hour. He also gave indications for where to keep Seikisan's ashes in the hondo.

As soon as kaichin finished and while the sangha dissolved towards its respective quarters Roshisan went to the kohojo and offered another kaichin chanting sitting by his own in front of Seikisan's altar and coffin. Next morning another offering of food for Seikisan, same as we eat, was requested by him.