

Shuso Hossen

This ceremony takes place at the end of a training term, and marks the end of the shuso's (chief junior's) term in office. It is a combination examination and graduation ceremony. The shuso selects a verse of teaching to present and those attending test the shuso's understanding of the verse. This is a public ceremony, with teachers and monks from other temples specifically invited.

All assemble in the Hall, seated.

Abbot's Procession

Precentor leads with inkin, followed by the shuso who is holding a fan, then the Teacher, jisha, and jikko. All proceed to their places.

Daimosho Offering

Three Bows

Chanting: *The Heart of Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra*

Usual incense offering.

Abbot is seated at a low table behind the haishiki (bowing mat).

Jisha takes sambo (offering tray) with shuso's selected verse from the table to the shuso.

Second incense offering - abbot offers at the table.

Teaching Verse

As soon as the chanting is over, shuso recites the verse, holding it up on the tray above eye level:

"The Response Body"

With the dice on the tray I trust my luck will prevail.

The wind blows and the grass bends, the crescent moon is in the clear sky.

Blocking the street, obstructing the alley is this ludicrous skin bag.

When could Maitreya ever not appear?

From *Cultivating the Empty Field* by Hongzhi

Returning the Verse

Shuso closes the book, then hands sambo to the shoki (a former shuso who has acted as adviser to the shuso), rises, takes back the sambo, then takes it to the abbot.

Shuso does three bows to the Teacher.

Shuso processes around the hall to bow to certain senior teachers and visiting priests.

Shuso returns to the Teacher, does three more bows, and receives the shippei (ceremonial staff).

Shuso returns to sitting place, hands shippei to the shoki, sits, retrieves shippei.

Mondo (ceremonial question and answer)

Shuso strikes the ground with the shippei and asks in a loud, clear voice, "What say you?"

The benji (the next person who will serve as shuso) begins the questioning, calling out "Honei, Here!", then asks a question that was prepared ahead of time.

The shuso gives an answer. The benji may accept that answer, or ask for clarification. Additional questions often begin with "unclear," or "explain," and should be very short. Typically, there should be no more than three exchanges.

When satisfied, the benji says "Thank you for your answer."

Shuso replies, "May your life go well."

Shuso then strikes the floor again with the staff. The striking of the floor is the call for the next question.

Questioning continues in the same manner with the shoki, the DRZC teachers (excluding the Teacher), and former shusos. Next, any visiting teachers are invited to ask questions, followed by all attending. Questions should challenge the shuso, but also allow them to demonstrate the teaching they have chosen to present.

Capping Verse

When all the questions have been asked, the shuso offers a capping verse on the teaching presented. This summarizes what the teaching means to the shuso personally.

Returning the Shippei

The shuso rises as before, and returns the shippei to the abbot. If the shuso has passed, the abbot pronounces, "You have done well."

Shuso does three more bows to the abbot.

Shuso goes to other teachers and priests as before, and once again bows.

Shuso returns to sitting place.

Congratulatory Verses

When shuso is seated, teachers and former shusos offer a statement in response to what has happened, going in the same order in which questioning began.

The Teacher ends with their own verse.

Dedication

Teacher goes to the altar and precentor recites,

"We offer the merit of this Shuso Hossen ceremony to all, so that they may be able to obtain the Truth."

Closing Invocation *(All recite together)*

- All Buddhas throughout space and time,
- All Honored Ones, Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas,
- Wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha Prajna Paramita.

Three Bows

Recession

Precentor, shuso, Teacher, jisha, and jikko leave the hall together.

Ceremony ends.

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Shuso's Mondo
(Testing Question and Answer)

Gary Honei Oshiro

