

Rohatsu:

The word Rohatsu is Japanese and literally means "8th Day of the 12th Month" which commemorates the day which the historical Buddha reached enlightenment under a Bodhi tree.

Rohatsu brings us an opportunity to practice the truth embedded in this story. Traditionally, in various Zen traditions the first eight days of December are marked as a special period for celebrating or in intensive practice. Buddha sat for seven days and seven nights of increasing realizations and with Mara tempting and harassing him. On the morning of the eighth day, he looked up at the brightest morning star (Venus) and, recognizing the interconnected nature of all beings, achieved enlightenment.

Antaiji-style Sesshin:

This intensive style of practice was inspired by Kodo Sawaki's devotion to zazen. Sawaki, abbot of Antaiji, shaped Antaiji to be a place where Zen is practiced without any additions or modifications. He wanted zazen to be practiced solely for the purpose of zazen; without any gaining idea (shikintaza).

Upon Sawaki-Roshi's death in December 1965, Kosho Uchimaya, his disciple, declared 49 days of intensive sesshin instead of the traditional ritual and services. This was in honor of Kodo Sawaki Roshi and his zazen tradition, now known as Antaiji-style sesshin.

For more information about Antaiji-style and Kodo Sawaki:

1. The Zen Teachings of Homeless Kodo: Sayings by Kodo Sawaki with commentaries by Kosho Uchimaya, Soto Zen Headquarters, Tokyo.
2. "Opening the Hand of Thought" by Kosho Uchimaya, specifically Chapter 4, 'The World of Intensive Practice,' Wisdom Publications.
3. Living & Dying In Zazen: Five Zen Masters of Modern Japan by Arthur Braverman, Weatherhill Publications.
4. <http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/index.shtml>
<http://antaiji.dogen-zen.de/eng/hk0.shtml>