

Nichiren Shu News

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Oeshiki in Minobu

By Pamela Reaville, Member of Seattle Choeizan Enkyoji Nichiren Buddhist Temple



Oeshiki is held on October 13 every year. It is the memorial service for Nichiren Shonin who passed away in Ikegami, Tokyo, early in the morning of October 13, 1282. Nichiren Shu temples throughout the world hold special services for this important event.

On the evening of October 12, some temples in Japan hold *mando* parades. *Mando*, which means 10,000 lanterns, are floats containing colorful lanterns depicting the life of Nichiren Shonin. They are decorated with paper cherry blossoms which represent the cherry

trees that bloomed out of season when Nichiren Shonin died. Not one is the same in design or structure, emphasizing the importance of diversity just like the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. The largest of these *mando* parades is held at Ikegami Honmonji in Tokyo.

I was fortunate to have the chance to attend the *mando* parade at Minobusan Kuonji, the head temple of Nichiren Shu in Yamanashi Prefecture, while I was there participating in an international retreat that included Nichiren Shu

practitioners from many countries. The *mando* parade at Minobusan is smaller and not as well-known as the one at Ikegami, but it was still a truly awe-inspiring event. The spirit and the energy of the people participating in the parade were amazing.

We were especially excited, because we weren't just able to watch the parade. We were also given the opportunity to march in the procession. We were given *uchiwadaiko* (fan drums) and joined in the drumming and chanting the *Odaimoku* as the parade made its

way up the main street of the town toward the main gate of the temple. We also had the chance to try our hand at carrying and using the *matoi*, the firemen's standards from the Edo period. This proved more challenging than we thought it would be, but it was also a lot of fun.

The experience of participating in the *mando* parade at Minobusan is one that I will never forget. It brought a new level of enthusiasm to my practice and created lasting bonds with those who shared the experience with me.



GREAT FIGURES WHO HAD FAITH IN NICHIREN SHU (2)

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Hon'ami Koetsu (1558-1637) was born in Kyoto and established a reputation in various art fields such as calligraphy, pottery, lacquerware, painting, and tea bowls from the Azuchi-Momoyama period to the early Edo period.

For generations, the Hon'ami family had dedicated their faith to Nichiren Shu. His mother, Myoshu, was an especially devout follower. She was bright and intelligent, and though she was a wife in a wealthy family, she led a modest life, never showing off. She taught her children manners with deep affection and strictness. Koetsu was greatly affected by his mother on his view of life and faith. He hated to cater to the authorities. He did not want to act through mercenary motives when creating art. He sincerely kept his faith in the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shu.

In 1615, he was granted a site at Takagamine in the northern suburbs of Kyoto by Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The site was about 1200 feet from east to west and a half mile from north to south. He founded an art village based on faith in the Lotus Sutra. He didn't want a place where people would just pray for rebirth in the Pure Land of the next world. At Takagamine, he wanted to open the Land of Eternal Tranquil Light, as Nichiren Shonin insisted that the Land of Eternal



Self-portrait of Hon'ami Koetsu.

Tranquil Light is no other place than in the *Saha* world, the very land we live in.

Those who moved into the art village of Koetsu were all Nichiren Shu followers. 56 houses and four temples were built. People took turns reading the Lotus Sutra and chanting the Odaimoku all the time. He felt that the village was an ideal world based on a phrase in Chapter 5 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Simile of Herbs," "All the plants, though different in names and forms, were given water by the same rain from the same cloud and grew differently according to their species." As in the sutra, many artistic talents flourished in this art village of Koetsu.

In Koetsu's name, "Ko" means "light" in English. He took this from the Land of Eternal Tranquil Light. "Etsu" means "rejoicing," which was taken from a phrase in "The Simile of Herbs," in the Lotus Sutra that says, "Lightning flashed and thunder crashed in the distance, causing people to rejoice."

When requested, Koetsu wrote copies of *Rissho Ankoku-ron* (*Treatise on Spreading Peace throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*) and *Nyosetsu Shugyo-sho* (*The Way of Practicing the Teaching of the Buddha*). He did calligraphy and donated many tablets with temple's names on them. Some still exist today, such as the tablet hanging above the front gate of Ikegami Honmonji Temple and the honorific mountain prefix (San Go) at the Deva Gate of Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple.



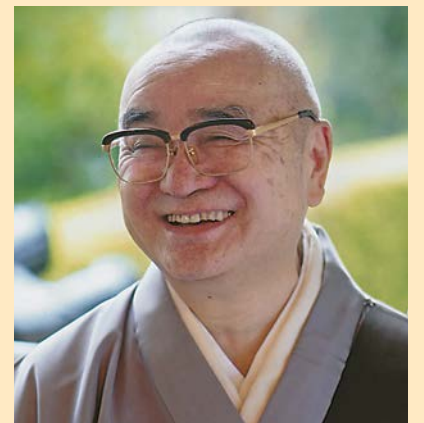
The name tablet at Ikegami Honmonji Temple (above) and over the Deva Gate at Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple (below) are just two examples of the distinctive work of Hon'ami Koetsu.



REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (53)

"When the country is put into disorder, the deities fall into chaos; because the deities fall into chaos, the entire nation is put into disorder."

—Sutra of the Benevolent King



"Disorder"

Nichiren Shonin referred to this phrase in the *Sutra of the Benevolent King* in his work, *Sainan Koki Yurai* (*The Cause of Misfortunes*), which he wrote in Kamakura in 1260.

"When the entire nation is put into disorder due to natural disasters in heaven and earth as well as the devastation of the sentiments of people, the guardian deities of the country are put into chaos, losing their powers.

"Under such circumstances, the energy of life of human beings diminishes, and our mental state becomes disrupted. This is because our ordinary life is kept under the protection of these deities, although we are not perceiving it."

The document, which is a genuine writing of our Founder, is preserved at Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple, Chiba Prefecture and is designated as an Important National Treasure of Japan.

In present-day Japan, war, disasters, epidemics, or famines, which were rampant in the days of our Founder, do not exist. Have disasters vanished? No! Warfare is erupting in many places of the world. It is becoming increasingly difficult to develop medicines fast enough to counteract newly emerging viruses. In Japan, we are free from famine, but it makes me shudder when I consider what would happen if the importation of food were disrupted.

We should face up to the problem, "the chaos of the country," and not become complacent but remain grounded in reality. I think this is what our Founder tells us.

**Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu,
Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo**

Buddhism Q&A (11)

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick

Is it "Nam" or "Namu"?

Many people outside Japan have been introduced to chanting of the Odaimoku in the form "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo." Subsequently, I am constantly being asked whether to chant "Nam" or "Namu." So let's look at what the word "Namu" is and how it should be written and pronounced.

The entry on "Namu Myohorengekyo" in the *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* states: "The first syllable of the phrase, 'namu,' is a transcription of the Sanskrit term 'namas,' meaning 'homage...'" Nichiren said in the *Jiri Kuyo Goshō*: "When we worship gods or buddhas, we begin with the phrase of 'Namu.' *Namu* is an Indian word that has come to mean 'offering of life to buddhas and gods' in China and Japan."

Namu is the Japanese way of pronouncing the two Chinese characters 南無 used to transliterate *namas*. 南 by itself can be pronounced as "nan" or (as in the case of the Odaimoku) "na." 無 by itself is pronounced "mu." Together, the proper pronunciation of these two characters is "Namu" (the corresponding hiragana are なむ). From the two Chinese characters and the hiragana phonetic characters, it is clear that the only proper transliteration into English is "Namu."

The *Shutei Nichiren Shu Hoyo Shiki*, Nichiren Shu's authorized liturgical manual, warns, "Namu and Ge must be pronounced as spelled. The pronunciations "Nanmyo" and "Gei" are



"Na" 南 and "mu" 無 are both essential parts of the seven syllables in the Odaimoku.

unacceptable." When people chant the Odaimoku at a fast tempo, the "u" sound sometimes seems to disappear. In Japanese, the "u" sound in a word many times becomes practically voiceless, but it is still there and should be written as such. Otherwise, you are leaving out the "mu" 無. Nichiren Shonin taught us that every character in the Lotus Sutra is like a golden buddha (in *Soya Nyudo-dono Gohenji* from the third month of 1275), so the "mu" part of "Namu" should never be neglected and always written out fully. Let us be sure to express our respect and mindfulness when writing and chanting *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*.

We welcome readers' questions about Buddhism and Nichiren Shonin. Please send us your questions by e-mail to editor-nichirensunews@nichiren.or.jp or contact us through your local temple.

Temples Associated with Nichiren Shonin in Kamakura: Joeiji Temple

By Rev. Kanshu Naito

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution, which took place in 1274 in Kamakura, is known well as one of Nichiren Shonin’s four major persecutions. Following is a brief history of how and why it happened.

Natural disasters, mighty famines, and plague struck Kamakura, the capital of Japan at that time, while Nichiren Shonin was there propagating the Lotus Sutra and his teachings. So he wrote the *Rissho Ankoku-ron (Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)*, in order to appeal to the Kamakura Shogunate to correct the way they were governing.

Nichiren argued that the causes of the disasters were mainly the Nembutsu School of Honen (the founder of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism), because they were spreading a false Buddhist teaching. Nichiren Shonin asked the Shogunate to put their faith in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and he suggested that they had to rebuild a correct government by following the Lotus Sutra, the only correct teaching. If not, there would be foreign invasions and great political and social unrest with many civil wars. Actually, the Mongols were intending to invade Japan, and the people were experiencing tremendous unrest and anxiety.

The Shogunate ignored his appeals and didn’t change their policy. Nichiren Shonin tried hard to lead them to accept the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, but it was in vain. So he issued a challenge to Ryokan, the head priest of Gokurakuji Temple, on a matter of faith to attract the attention of the Shogunate. Ryokan was unable to meet this challenge and asked the Shogunate for help. The Shogunate then decided to execute Nichiren Shonin, because he had “caused a social disturbance.”

Around 4:00 p.m. on September 12, 1274, Hei-no-Saemon-no-jo Yoritsuna, along with hundreds of armed soldiers, suddenly attacked Nichiren Shonin at his cottage at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura. Nichiren Shonin was caught and taken like a criminal along Komachi-oji Street to the meeting place of the Council of



This painting (enshrined at Joeiji Temple) depicts the kind gift of *botamochi* given to Nichiren Shonin as he was being taken by armed guards to be unlawfully beheaded at the Tatsunokuchi execution grounds.

State. Around 6:00 p.m., he was quickly condemned to be exiled to Sado Island without sufficient deliberations. He was immediately transferred to the Kamakura residence of Nobutoki Osaragi, the Lord of Sado Island.

But in the middle of the night, he was placed on horseback and taken from the residence of Nobutoki surrounded by many armed soldiers carefully watching him. They advanced with torches in their hands on Komachi-oji Street, went across Ebisu Hall Bridge, through the area where Joeiji Temple is now, and turned right at the corner towards Tatsunokuchi along the empty streets of Kamakura.

As Nichiren Shonin says, “On the twelfth of the ninth month of the eighth year of the Bun’ei Era (1274), two days after I was summoned by the Council of State, I was arrested. The way I was arrested seemed unusual and unlawful.” (taken from *Shuju Onfurumai Goshō*) This arrest was officially for exile, but he knew it was really meant for his execution. If it was just a matter of exile to a distant island, they would not need to start at midnight, so he understood that death awaited him.

Around the present location of Joeiji Temple, there lived an old woman who became known as the Nun of Outlook Platform (Sajiki no Ama). She was a devout believer of Nichiren Shonin

and never slackened in chanting the Odaimoku mornings and evenings. She heard from others that Nichiren Shonin was coming toward her home after being paraded around the streets of Kamakura as he was going to be beheaded at the place of execution, Tatsunokuchi.

She was shocked and didn’t know why he was arrested, but she wanted to offer him something. She had some azuki beans and wanted to offer peony flower-shaped rice cake dumplings covered with sweet azuki bean paste (*botamochi*). When people’s voices began to be clearly heard and the lights of torches were seen approaching from the distance, she was boiling rice and beginning to boil the azuki beans. However, she knew it was impossible to boil the beans in time. So



Divine Intervention: Joeiji Temple reminds us of the time our Founder was almost beheaded.

she quickly covered the rice dumplings with roasted sesame seeds mixed with salt and placed them on the lid of a pot since there was no time to get plates.

The old woman waddled out to the road and, in tears, offered the rice dumplings to Nichiren Shonin on horseback. He received these unexpected offerings with deep thanks and continued to be led to the execution site.

At the execution site, just as Nichiren was about to be beheaded, a luminous object shot across the sky, lighting up the surroundings. The soldiers were terrified and called off the execution.

According to the history of the temple, Minamoto no Yoritomo made an outlook platform on top of the mountain to watch the release of a thousand cranes on Yuigahama Beach, in Kamakura. Years later, a woman who lived at the foot of this mountain was referred to as the Nun of Outlook Platform (Sajiki no Ama). She was the wife of Intou Jirozaemon-no-jo Hironobu, a trusted vassal of Lord Munetaka, the sixth shogun of the Kamakura Shogunate. Both of them believed in the teachings of Nichiren Shonin. He was called Domyo-nyudo, and she was called Rien-ni. Because she had such a strong belief in the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Shonin gave her the Buddhist name of Myojo Nichiei.

Joeiji Temple, also known as the Botamochi Temple, was established in the eleventh year of the Keicho Era (1606) and has attracted many people. It was named after Myojo Nichiei, the Buddhist name for Sajiki no Ama. Since Nichiren Shonin narrowly escaped the unlawful beheading by a miracle under the protection of the buddhas and gods and the *botamochi* at the Tatsunokuchi Persecution site, the *botamochi* covered with sesame seeds was afterwards called ‘the *botamochi* which did not sever the head.’ The priest and believers of this temple to this day still offer *botamochi* in a dignified manner to the statue of our Founder in Ryukoji Temple, located in Katase, Kamakura, while fervently chanting the Odaimoku each year on the twelfth of September.

PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett

The vision of the Parliament of the World’s Religions is of a just, peaceful and sustainable world in which:

Religious and spiritual communities live in harmony and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion.

Religious and cultural fears and hatreds are replaced with understanding and respect.

People everywhere come to know and care for their neighbors.

The richness of human and religious diversity is woven into the fabric of communal, civil, societal and global life.

The world’s most powerful and influential institutions move beyond narrow self-interest to realize common good.

The Earth and all life are cherished, protected, healed and restored.

All people commit to living out their highest values and aspirations.



When I first learned about the vision of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, I was quite intrigued. It seemed a bit unreal, yet the vision was in accord with ours. Imagine a world where all religions exist in a harmony, where the sounds of various prayer and worship services fill the air, where dialogue is respectful and curious,



and every exploration is a journey into new knowledge.

This was the atmosphere of the Parliament of the World’s Religions that we encountered when I gathered with Yvonne Smeltzer and Revs. Eisei Ikenaga, Ryuoh Faulconer, Shoda Kanai, and Kanjin Cederman in Salt Lake City in 2015 to

share Nichiren Shu’s *shodaigyo* practice.

Over 10,000 people attended from all over the world, representing various mainstream and indigenous religious faiths, and there were many that we had never encountered before. Many scholars, academics, and religious leaders were also present. The religious offerings were extensive, ranging from drumming, Hakka, Tibetan sand painting and throat singing, and whirling dervishes. Lunch for the entire gathering was provided by the Sikh community at no cost. There were so many exhibits and presentations that our entire days were spent simply trying to absorb everything. It’s hard to find words to describe the experience.

This year, the Parliament of the World’s Religions will be held in Toronto from November 1-7, 2018. Some of us will be in attendance, and it would be truly wonderful to have many more members participate in this incredible experience of religious harmony.

TEMPLE
EVENTS



Nichiren Mission of Hawaii
Sandra Taga, Bon Dance Chair

Hurricane Lane
Canceled Our Bon Dance

Our 10th Annual Bon Dance scheduled for August 25th was canceled with the approach of Hurricane Lane. Although the storm did not hit Oahu as hard as it did the Big Island and Maui, this one was coming straight for us. We could not take any chances. Let us be thankful that Oahu was spared.

At first, we thought we could wait until later in the week to make a decision, but Hurricane Lane took a turn for the worse on Tuesday morning. Bishop Hirai called an emergency meeting, and we all agreed that the event had to be canceled.

I'm glad we made the decision early. I was able to contact everyone and get help to dismantle everything the next day. If we hadn't done this, the scaffolding and tent frames could have become dangerous projectiles in hurricane-force winds.

People responded to my call for help! On Wednesday, Terry Teruya, Midori Chiya, Ned and Sharon Kurogi, Garrett Kurogi, Ron Matsuoka, and Toshihiro Matsuno all helped Bishop Hirai take everything down and store it all away. Thanks for helping in our time of need! Gassho!

Renkoji Temple
Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

Summer Retreat
in the Italian Alps

Seven years ago, a monk visited our temple. He noticed we did not have an *Itto Ryoson Shishi* (an Odaimoku Tower, the two Buddhas of Shakyamuni and Taho and the Four Bodhisattvas of the Earth) set of statues. A year later, he suddenly appeared again with an offering of these statues plus a hand-carved wooden image of Nichiren Shonin. This monk was Rev. Gyomyo Nakamura of Ladakh and New Delhi, India. This year, he returned once again to Renkoji to hold a two-week retreat together from July 30–August 11 in the nearby Italian Alps, under the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa near the Swiss border and Mont Blanc in the Valle D'Aosta region near the French border.



Rev. Gyomyo Nakamura and Rev. Shoryo Tarabini.



The retreat in the Italian Alps provided a perfect backdrop to try out "walking meditation."

Each day began with the recitation of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku, combined with sitting and walking meditation. The crisp mountain air, the Italian, French, and Walser (ancient Germanic) alpine architecture, the natural beauty and sound of nearby streams and waterfalls was simply awe-inspiring. We held numerous discussions about meditation, the Dharma, and propagation between India, Japan, and Europe. We also talked about Nichiren Shonin's writings and traditions.

Walking meditation is called *kinhin* and is observed by many Buddhist traditions. Rev. Nakamura noted that walking meditation surpasses mere dogma or doctrine and is one way to implement religion into our society, noting that even Nichiren Shonin walked in meditation as he climbed atop Mt. Minobu every day. Our modern world has become a sedentary society where we sit to do everything, always moving less and less. Walking meditation is therefore a healthy answer to some of today's modern ailments and helps us to maintain health, improve mental outlook, lose weight, and keep fit. Furthermore, chanting the Odaimoku outside as we walk about is a dynamic and enjoyable way to propagate Buddhism to all those around us.

Nichigatsuzan Horinji Temple
(Sarnath, India)
Rev. Myojitsu Nagakubo

Memorial Service for
Flood Victims in Japan

In early July 2018, with the summoning of Uttar Pradesh State Representative, Mr. Sarabh Srivastar, ten other government officials gathered together at Assighat, along the banks of the Upper Ganges River to hold a memorial service for the victims of the flood disaster in Western Japan. The members wanted to pray for the victims who lost their lives after heavy rains caused floods and mudslides that devastated areas in Hiroshima, Okayama, Gifu, Nara, Kyoto and other parts of western Japan. Benares, India in Uttar Pradesh state has strong ties with western Japan.



Rev. Myojitsu Nagakubo of Horinji Temple in Sarnath was asked to hold a Nichiren Shu prayer service there. The attendees all put their palms together and prayed for the victims.

"I was very moved to find so many Indian people wanting to join in prayer for the victims of a disaster in Japan," said Rev. Nagakubo.

PRAYING FOR THE 58 VICTIMS OF MASS SHOOTING AT OUTDOOR CONCERT IN LAS VEGAS

By Rev. Shoda Kanai

Kannon Temple of Nevada held their *Obon* and *Segaki* Memorial Service on July 15 in part to pay our respects to the victims in their first *Obon* Service. On October 1, 2017 at 10:08 p.m., a man broke windows out in his 32nd-floor guest room in the Mandalay Bay Hotel (from which he had views over Las Vegas Boulevard and the Route 91 Harvest festival, where over 20,000 people were enjoying an outdoor concert). With rifles, he fired indiscriminately into the crowd, killing 58 people and injuring over 700 more.

A special *toba* was dedicated for 49 days during morning services and special prayers were read. Usually on Fridays, a follower joined in the morning service. At the first Friday morning service after the

shooting, I did not mention to the follower the meaning of the Japanese prayer dedication for the deceased. However, this follower was able to sense the victims' spirits during sutra chanting, tears welled in her eyes, and she could not keep with the rhythm of the *Odaimoku* and *taiko* drumming. After the service, she said, "A lot of confused spirits have gathered here!" So, I explained the meaning behind the *toba* memorial service and chanting for the victims. I thought she might say, "Stop doing this!" But week after week, we continued to chant the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku*, and she noticed, "The number of spirits decreases week after week, with some appreciating the Lotus Sutra while others have happy faces."

On September 30, we held the First Year Memorial Service and chanted the Lotus

Sutra and the *Odaimoku* praying for the 58 victims and all of the people who were injured and affected. In the aftermath of this tragedy of the worst mass shooting in history, which is still making news



more than seven months later, our entire community still needs healing

I could not fathom what the victims thought and felt as events turned from the elation of the country music festival to suddenly fearing for their lives. All we can do is chant the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku* for the victims to find happiness in the next world.

The campaign slogan for the 800th Anniversary commemorating Nichiren Shonin's birth is to make a connection to others with the *Odaimoku*. Though the victims may have had no relationship to Buddhism while living, the 58 victims now have a relationship with the *Odaimoku*. I believe this and offer special prayers, so that in the next world they can be reborn into a world where they can encounter the *Odaimoku*.

Calendar for October 2018 – November 2018

OCT 1	Ceremony of Changing the Robes on the Statue of Nichiren Shonin, Minobusan	OCT 13	737th Memorial Service for Nichiren Shonin
OCT 10	Ceremony in Memory of the Founder's Exile to Sado Island	NOV 11	Commemoration Day for the Komatsubara Persecution
OCT 12	Minobusan and Ikegami Mando Parades	NOV 13	Memorial for Nichizo Shonin
OCT 13	Oeshiki	NOV 23	19th Anniversary Grand Ceremony at Dragon Palace Temple in Nagpur, India