

Nichiren Shu News

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A Biography of Nikko Shonin (3) Nikko 'Monryu,' Temples, and Treasures

By Rev. Shincho Mochizuki, Ph. D.
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Formation of Nikko Faction: The group of Buddhist temples that originated from Nikko Shonin (1246-1333) is called Nikko Monryu (faction) after its founder. It is also called Fujikata or Fuji Monzeki because its missionary bases are the Kitayama Hommonji Temple, the Taisekiji Temple and so on at the foot of Mt. Fuji, and came to be called Fuji Monryu in later reconciled years. Nikko, one of the Six Senior Disciples of Nichiren Shonin, intended to reconcile Nichiren's disciples after Nichiren's death, with priority given to the service in rotation on Mt. Minobu. However, as we discussed earlier, he left Minobu because of his discord with Niko Shonin and Nambu Sanenaga. He went to Suruga Province and busily engaged himself in missionary work in the provinces of Kai, Sagami, Musashi, and Izu. He brought up the Six Prime Disciples (Nichimoku, Nikke, Nisshu, Nichizen, Nissen, and Nichijo). The Six New Disciples (Nichidai, Nitcho, Nichido, Nichimyo, Nichigo, and Nichijo) appeared in the year of Nikko's death. It was chiefly these six prime and six new disciples who developed Nikko Monryu.

The Fuji Monryu in the Edo period formed the Shoretsu-ha insisting that the Essential and Theoretical sections of the Lotus Sutra were not equal, in opposition to the Itchi-ha, which maintained the equality of the two sections. The Happon-ha (present Hokke-shu Hommonryu temples such as Honjoji in Echigo-Sanjo, Kochoji in Suruga-Okanomiya, Jusenji in Kazusa-Washizu, Honryuji, Honzenji, Myorenji, and Honnoji in Kyoto, and Honkoji in Settsu-Amagasaki), Jimmonryu and Shimmonryu were also Shoretsu-ha.

Today they work together under the name of Koto-boen with the Kitayama Hommonji Temple as the head temple keeping the tradition beginning with Nikko.

Temples in connection with Nikko: There are five head temples of the Nikko Monryu: the Ueno Taisekiji Temple (founder: Nikko), the Shimojo Myorenji Temple (Nikke), the Kitayama Hommonji Temple (Nikko), the Koizumi Kuonji Temple (Nichigo), and the Nishiyama Hommonji Temple (Nichidai). These temples are called Fuji Gozan because they are located in the district of Fuji. These five temples along with the Izu Jitsujoji Temple (Nichizon), the Hoda Myohonji Temple (Nichigo), and the Kyoto Yoboji Temple (Nichizon) are named Komon-ha Hakkahonzan (the eight head temples of Nikko Monryu) as the bases of

missionary work of the Fuji Monryu. There are quite a number of temples



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founded by Nikko in the provinces of Suruga, Kai, and Izu. Some temples founded by his disciples are claimed to have been founded by Nikko to show respect to their master.

Nikko went to Ueno in response to Nanjo Tokimitsu's request and built himself a hermitage at Oishigahara in the tenth month of 1290. Although he moved to Omosu, he loved this place very much and was given a piece of land by two estate stewards, Ishikawa Yoshitada and Nanjo Tokimitsu. He began building in 1293 and completed three buildings in 1298—the Main Hall containing the Daimandala of Nichiren, the Mieido containing the Namamie (statue of Nichiren made while he was alive), and the Suijakudo containing the statues of the Goddess Amaterasu and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman with the cooperation of the Hokke Koshu (groups of believers) living in the districts of Ueno and Koizumi. This temple has a plate of the "Hokke Hommonji Temple Kongen" representing the basis of the Precept Dais in the essential section of the Lotus Sutra, which Nichiren Shonin wanted to establish. He opened Omosu Dansho (a school for priests) to educate his followers and was living there trying to propagate the Daimoku for 36 years until his death on the seventh day of the second month in 1333 at the age of 88 or maybe 87. This is why the Hommonji Temple is called the temple where Nikko's spirit lives.

Treasures in relation to Nikko:

"Shuso Gosenge Kiroku (Record of the Founder's Demise)," is the whole record of Nichiren's funeral service recorded by Nikko. "Goimotsu Haibun-cho (List of Articles Left by Nichiren Shonin)," and "Minobusan Shuban-cho (List of Priests Guarding the Minobusan Kuonji Temple Monthly)" were also written by Nikko. These are valuable materials telling us the will of Nichiren in his later years. We should notice that Nikko wrote for Nichiren. We can see many pieces of Nikko's handwriting in Nichiren's letter and records telling

Nichiren's will in his later years. He seems to have always served Nichiren as a secretary and to have been engaged in telling Nichiren's disciples and followers his will and thoughts. Materials written for Nichiren by Nikko are valuable treasures expressing Nichiren's belief. Nikko's handwriting, however, appears to show his own strict character.

Nikko wrote "Ankokuron Mondo," "Gojuengi," "Kaimokusho Yomon" and so on. Although it is confirmed that approximately 300 pieces of Gohonzon written by Nikko exist today, he probably wrote and gave many more Gohonzon to his disciples and followers. It seems that Nikko wrote "Gohonzon" in the way that Nichiren approved because they have "Nichiren Zaigo-han" or "Gohan" written under the "Daimoku." He seemed to have reproduced the Mandala by looking up to Nichiren as his great master because he wrote "reproduce this" and "copy this" beside his signature. That there are many reproductions of Mandala dated on the 13th day of the 10th month shows he believed in Nichiren as his master heartily. There exist pieces of Gohonzon written for about 48 years from the age of 42 to 88. He continued to write Gohonzon for half a century.

Mandala Honzon is a bond that unites its writer and its receivers as the object of worship. So many of them were damaged because they were hung in halls of temples and at important places in believers' houses. Therefore not many pieces of Gohonzon written by Nikko exist and many pieces of block-printed Honzon copied from Nikko's Mandala were made after his death to be given to believers.

The treasures noted in relation to Nikko are preserved carefully, mainly in temples connected with him. In particular, "Goreiho Okazeire-e Hoyo (a service for letting in fresh air onto the treasures)" is performed at the Kitayama Hommonji Temple on April 13 and at Nishiyama Hommonji Temple on April 18 every year, and parts of the Mandala Honzon and treasures are opened to the public. We can gather Nikko's teachings by looking directly at these treasures. We can understand his teaching through his writings and handwritings even today, 700 years later. We can also experience for our-



Rev. Nisso Uchino

Rev. Uchino New Head Priest of Minobusan

Rev. Nisso Uchino, 80, succeeded Rev. Nichiko Fujii, 97, as the 92nd Head Priest of the Minobusan Kuonji Temple in a temporary ceremony held at Minobusan on July 31. Rev. Fujii has retired from the office due to his ill health.

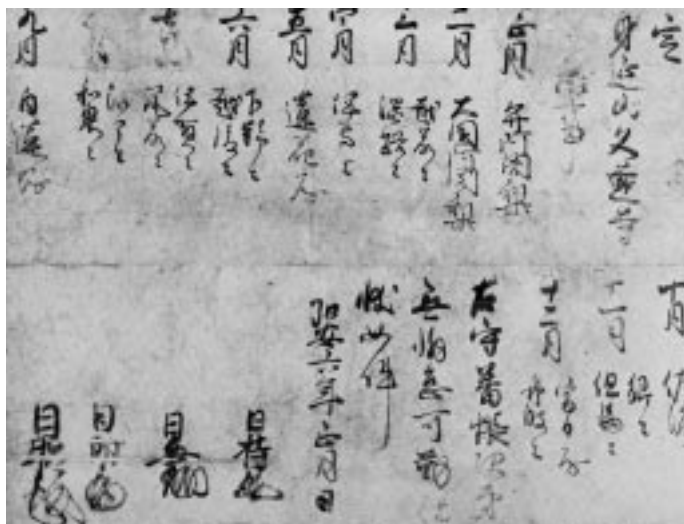
Rev. Uchino is a descendant of Lord Hakii Sanenaga, who invited Nichiren Shonin to Minobusan, part of his domain. Nichiren Shonin spent the last eight years and four months of his life there.

Currently Rev. Uchino serves as head priest of the Zuirinji Temple, Yanaka, Tokyo. Previously, he used to be the head priest of the Shimizu-bo Temple, Minobusan, serving as Deputy Secretary General of Minobusan and Head Priest of the Shichimenzan Temple.

selves the religious world Nikko had gone through by visiting the sacred places noted in connection with him.

Nikko's teachings have been handed down by his disciples and followers and are still alive and effective today with the temples of Nikko Monryu as footholds, as seen in the three articles about his life and footprints. Finally, I would like to recommend readers to visit the temples connected with Nikko and to directly look at the historically valuable places and treasures, though needless to say, it is important to read his printed biographies and writings.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)



The note on which the rotation for the service at Minobusan written by Nikko (preserved at Ikegami Honmonji Temple)



The Mandala of Nikko Shonin, preserved at Sesonji Temple, Sado

The Doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen (15)

Theorem (RI) and Actuality (JI)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura

Various Meanings of "JI: Actuality" (5)

The religion of Nichiren Shonin aims to realize the ideal in the actual world. It is a religion for those of us actually feeling the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha's existence and His salvation in our minds. It is a religion for those of us carrying out Sakyamuni's prediction in this world, and it is a religion of personal experience, visible (as the Mandala) and audible (as the Daimoku). Moreover, it is oriented to the reformation of the actual world, nations and societies, through the righteous Dharma (Rissho-ankoku). These characteristics of his religion are based on the teaching of "the Equation of Secularity with the Buddhist Dharma" of the Lotus Sutra. That means, "Everything in the world fundamentally consists of the Buddhist Dharma," and these are all various aspects of the ichinen-sanzen in actuality. So far we have learned the eight aspects of actuality, and in this article, we will learn about "sokushin-jobutsu (attaining Buddhahood with one's present body)."

8. Sokushin-jobutsu (becoming Buddha with one's present body)

Sokushin-jobutsu means for us to become Buddhas in an instant with our present bodies. This concept does not drive the attainment of Buddhahood to the state of the faraway enlightenment but rather tries to describe it with the real life before us.

Originally Buddhism holds that in order for us, the unenlightened, to become Buddhas, we have to go



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through limitless practices during numberless transmigration. However, the Threefold Lotus Sutra often describes the immediate "attainment of Buddhahood with our present body." As we know, the

Lotus Sutra has expanded the concept of Buddhahood, stating that it is not limited to the absolute existence, but "the Buddhahood-realization begins when one takes only one step towards it." Agreeing with that idea, Nichiren Shonin has maintained that in this Latter Age of Degeneration "the attainment of Buddhahood with the present body" preached in the Lotus Sutra can be achieved through upholding the Daimoku.

The typical example of "attainment of Buddhahood with the present body" in the Lotus Sutra is the Dragon Daughter's attainment of Buddhahood described in the Devadatta chapter. In this chapter, the eight-year-old dragon girl offered a gem to Sakyamuni, and immediately she changed into a man, completed the bodhisattva practice, went to the Spotless World in the south, obtained the 32 major and 80 minor good marks of physical excellence of the Buddha, sat on a jeweled lotus-flower, and began to expound the Lotus Sutra for all living beings. This example shows that all the bodhisattva practices and Buddha's merits are completed in an instant and Buddhahood is attained at the same time. The

gem described in this chapter also reminds us of the Daimoku of the five words which crystallize the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin regarded the "3,000 existences contained in one thought" doctrine as the very basis of "the Buddhahood-realization with the present body." He states in his "Shijo Kingo Shakabutsu Kuyo-ji (Shijo Kingo's Offering to Sakyamuni Buddha)" that "The 3,000 existences contained in one thought" consists of the Three Factors of Existences (1. Living Beings, 2. Five Constituent Elements and 3. Country and Land), and the Factor of Country and Land is also called the Factor of the Plants. "In order to pour the soul into the portraits or wooden statues made of plants, we need the power of the Lotus Sutra. When this is applied to living beings (when the soul of the Lotus Sutra is poured into living beings), 'Buddhahood with the present body' is attained. When that is applied to portraits or wooden statues, Buddhahood-realization of the Plant is attained." That is, when the soul of the Lotus Sutra gets into our bodies, even if our bodies are tainted by worldly desires, we become Buddhas immediately in our present bodies as they are through the Buddhahood-realization based on the Ichinen-sanzen doctrine. Actually by the doctrine of the Ichinen-sanzen, "the Buddhahood-realization of the present body" can become consistent because the realm of the Buddha (the state of enlightenment) and the other nine realms (the states of delusions) are directly connected and united with each other.

Nichiren Shonin preaches in his

"Shimon Butsujo-gi (the Meanings to Start to Hear the Buddha Vehicle)" that the word: "Myo" (wonderfulness) of the Lotus Sutra has the effect of turning the poison (the worldly desires of the unenlightened) into medicine (enlightenment of the Buddha). It has the meaning of the mysteriousness (being unable to be thought), and that meaning is the key word representing the doctrine of "3,000 existences contained in one thought" as well. Thus based on the "3,000 existences contained in one thought" doctrine, "the attainment of Buddhahood with the present body" is achieved. Nichiren also teaches us in his "Ota-dono-nyobo Go-henji (Response to the Wife of Lord Ota)" that attaining Buddhahood based on the "Myo" reveals "the Equation of Worldly Desires and Enlightenment, (the mind of the unenlightened who suffer anguish equals to the enlightenment of the Buddha.)," and "the Equation of life and death with Nirvana, (life and death of the unenlightened equal to the very Nirvana of the Buddha)."

Moreover, in the "Myoho-ama Gozen Go-henji (Reply to My Lady, the Nun of Myoho)," Nichiren Shonin explains that if one chants "Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo" in the last moment of one's life, all the evil karma (bad deeds) one has ever committed changes into the seed of Buddhahood, and that this is "the Equation of Worldly Desires with Enlightenment," "the Equation of Life and Death with Nirvana," and "the attainment of Buddhahood with the present body."

The standard writing, in which Nichiren Shonin explains "the attainment of Buddhahood with the present body," is "the 33 Sino-Chinese Word Phrase" in the "Kanjin Honzon-sho (Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One)."

(Trans. by Rev. Kanjin Mochida) (to be continued)

The Legend of Nichiren (22)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph. D.

The Way to Sado

There is a record about the way from Tatsunokuchi to Sado Island in the "Shuju Onfurumai Goshō (Reminiscences)" of Nichiren Shonin. Unable to execute Nichiren at Tatsunokuchi on the 12th day of the ninth month in 1271, the shogunate officials took him to Echi (present Atsugi City), where Nichiren Shonin was detained for 28 days till the 10th day of the next month. Homma Rokuro Zaemon Shigetsura (? - 1296), Deputy-Protector of Sado, had his domain and mansion in Echi and was going back and forth between Sado Island and Echi. The "Shuju Onfurumai Goshō" mentions a strange star that came down in Echi and the arrest of Nichiren's disciples. Homma Shigetsura was assigned to keep an eye on Nichiren Shonin while the shogunate was trying to decide what to do with him. Nichiren Shonin prayed for the protection of believers of the Lotus Sutra in the evening of the 13th day of the ninth month in the starlit sky. Then, a big star like Venus came down from the sky, and hung on the branch of a plum tree. Today, three temples of Myojun-ji, Myoden-ji, and Rensho-ji are in Atsugi City, each claiming to be the sacred ground where the star came



Rev. Gyokai Sekido

down.

While Nichiren Shonin was in Echi, seven or eight cases of arson and many murder cases occurred in Kamakura. It was rumored that Nichiren's disciples committed these crimes. Nichiren's disciples and lay followers (about 250 of them) were imprisoned or exiled. Soon, it became known that the rumor was a lie created by Pure Land Buddhists, and Nichiren's disciples were released. But his followers decreased drastically and his order faced a crisis.

Nichiren Shonin left Echi on the 10th day of the 10th month, arriving at Sado on the 28th day of the same month.

When Nichiren Shonin left Echi, he was seen off by such disciples and followers as Nikko, Niko, and Lord Toki. He stayed at Kumegawa (present Saitama Prefecture) that night. He met Sumida Jiro Tokimitsu, steward at Nizo (present Toda City) on the 11th. His wife was having a difficult labor. When her husband prayed to a god, he dreamed a strange dream in which he was told, "Tomorrow a great priest will pass through this way; ask him

for help." Tokimitsu waited on the road from the morning, and asked Nichiren Shonin for help. Nichiren Shonin sat in a little shrine along the way, drew up the principal object of worship (honzon), and recited the sutra. As a result, she had an easy delivery, and the child grew up healthy. They became ardent followers of Nichiren Shonin, and Sumida Jiro Tokimitsu later became a priest named Nittoku, and built the Myoken-ji Temple. This temple today treasures "the child-care honzon" that Nichiren Shonin drew.

Nichiren Shonin and his party arrived at Kuritsu (present Gunma Prefecture) on the 14th, and stayed at the house of Hasegawa Chogen, which became the Chogen-ji Temple. It was later moved and renamed the Tenryu-ji Temple (present Fujioka City).

They went through the mountain path of Echigo braving snow and hail. They arrived at the port of Teradomari (present Niigata Prefecture) on the 21st. After waiting for the favorable wind, they left for Sado Island on the 27th, but their ship was blown back to Kakuta Beach (Niigata Prefecture) due to the strong wind. Two beautiful children on the beach told Nichiren Shonin, "A terrible poisonous snake in a cave of the mountain is hurting people and animals. Can you help us?" That poisonous snake left when Nichiren Shonin wrote the sutra on a stone and threw it into the cave. The Myoko-ji Temple was built in Kakuta.

Though their ship left Kakuta on

the 28th, it seemed to sink in the angry waves. Nichiren Shonin advanced to the bow of the ship, and chanted the Lotus Sutra. Then, he took a paddle, and wrote the Daimoku on the surface of the sea of angry waves. The white character of the wave of the Daimoku that he wrote didn't disappear for a while. They call it the "floating Daimoku of Sado Island." The sea became quiet and they arrived at Matsugasaki of Sado Island. Later, the Hongyo-ji Temple was built there.

(to be continued)



'A big star like Venus comes down from the sky and hangs on a branch of a plum tree' (reproduced from "Nichiren Shonin Chugasan")

People I'll Always Remember (4)

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda



'There is no difference between the merit received by a sage who chants the Odaimoku and that received by us, ordinary persons, who chant it.' (A Reply to Lord Matsuno)

A Letter to the Late Aiko Hirata

Dear Aiko Hirata,

This is a friendly reminder! Our temple will be observing the Bon Festival (Ullambana Memorial Services) in July this year again for the repose of our departed friends. Since you passed away in 2000, this is the 7th Bon service for you and we would like to offer our merits to you. So, please do not forget to visit us, and enjoy the sound of us reciting the Lotus Sutra and "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" and meet your many friends in faith whom you made at this temple.

You started coming to our temple in 1996. I still remember clearly the day I met you for the first time. I visited your home at your request to talk with a Nichiren minister. You told me, "Shame on me, I have not visited a Buddhist temple before. I am now over 60 years old, and would like to have peace of mind. But I am sinful and have many illusions. Above all, I

do not have much education and lack wisdom. Would such a person be relieved from sufferings and receive the Buddha's compassion?" To answer your questions, do you remember that I told you, "Certainly! All people who accept the Lotus Sutra will be relieved. Please chant the Odaimoku—Namu Myoho Renge Kyo." Then I explained about Nichiren Shonin's guidance.

"There is no difference between the merit received by a sage who chants the Odaimoku and that received by us, ordinary persons, who chant it. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses. However, there is a difference if one chants the Odaimoku while acting against the intent of this Sutra."

The following Sunday, I was surprised to see you at the service. You told me it took almost two hours to get here by bus, a light rail train, and another bus. You had leg trouble and a heart illness, so it must have been hard

for you to visit our temple by public transportation. But without showing any signs of tiredness, you gave us a bright smile. Since then, you participated in our Sunday services and our activities like Shakyo class—and after a while, your son or his wife brought you here on many occasions.

On October 24, 1999, your son, Alex, called me. "My mom had a heart attack and she is in a critical condition at a hospital. Her doctor says there is no chance. . . ." Hearing it, I rushed to the hospital immediately, and saw you unconscious. Looking at me, the nurses and your family members shook their heads. With the doctor's permission, I started chanting the Odaimoku holding your hand. I do not know how much time passed when you opened your eyes slightly and murmured the Odaimoku with me.

As if it was the turning of the tide, you regained consciousness and your condition improved. A few days later, you were able to chat with your family members. You said, "I do not remember anything at all." Your son asked me jokingly, "What magical technique did you use?" I never used such technique at all. I did not even ask the Buddha for the recovery of your life, but I sincerely chanted the Odaimoku for you to be embraced by the Buddha's compassion.

With benevolence of the Buddha, you were able to prolong your life on

this earth for three months, by sharing happiness with your family members during the holiday season and a happy New Year of 2000.

On January 5, you finally took your last breath on this earth. It was sad for all of us. After you passed away, your son found a whole bunch of your transcriptions of the Odaimoku (Shakyo). We counted over three hundred rice papers each with the writing of seven Odaimoku. Probably you wrote ten or twenty Odaimoku with a brush pen every day, though you never told me about your practice at home. I was so amazed to find your strong faith in the Lotus Sutra. Your sincere practice of the Odaimoku in chanting and writing has undoubtedly already guided you to the Buddha Land and in addition enabled all your descendants to escape from the evil paths.

Observing the Bon festival this year, I pray that you may come to our consecrated place and accept our sincere offerings, and also visit your children's houses to see how they are living peacefully and joyfully.



Odaimoku writings by Ms. Aiko Hirata

Third Retreat of Youth Leaders

By Rev. Shingyo Imai

The third Nichiren-shu International Youth Leaders' Retreat, sponsored by the Department of Missionary, Nichiren-shu Headquarters, was held from July 24–28, 2006, in Minobu, Sado, and Ikegami, Japan. Thirteen youths, eleven from Korea, one each from Hawaii and Brazil, attended the retreat led by Rev. Giko Tabata, head instructor, and Rev. Kanno Nakayama, assistant instructor. They gathered at Minobu on the first day, traveled from Minobu to Sado Island on the second day, and came back to Ikegami, Tokyo, on the fourth and the last day. During



Trainees chanting Odaimoku at the opening ceremony of the retreat led by Rev. Giko Tabata at Minobusan Kenshu Dojo. (front from right: Kang Hyun-il, Han Ji-yeon, Park Sung-hee [all from Korea], Rev. Chisen Maeda, Beau Aihara [both from Hawaii], Rev. Eko Ishimoto, Anderson Silva Candido [both from Brazil] and Lee Hyoun-seok [Korea])



Trainees climbing the Bodaitei stairs at the Kuonji Temple in Minobusan. (from left: Han Ji-yeon, Kim Eun-hyeon and Cho Nam-kwon from Korea)

the retreat, they were trying to trace Nichiren Shonin's footprints, especially on Sado Island, where Nichiren Shonin was exiled by the Kamakura Shogunate in 1271 and wrote his major writings of Kaimoku-sho in 1272 and Kanjin Honzon-sho in 1273. On the Island, they visited Konponji and the Myoshoji Temples where Nichiren Shonin was confined as a prisoner and felt what he felt 735 years ago.

The instructors lectured on the history of our Founder and the Great Mandala revealed by him in Sado. Active discussion was held during the retreat. They asked the instructor during the discussion why Nichiren Shonin's statue in the temple is facing us, not the Buddha, or why his statue is bigger than that of the Buddha. They also practiced Shodaigyo in Minobu and Ikegami. All of the attendees seemed to have made up their minds to spread the Odaimoku after they went back to their countries as the youth

leaders.

Participants:

- (Hodoji, Seoul, Korea)
 - Min You-mi, Park Sung-hee,
 - Kim Hye-min, Kim Eun-hyeon,
 - Cho Nam-kwon, Cho Kyoun-hee,
 - Han Ji-yeon, Kang Hyun-il,
 - Lee Hyoun-seok, Kim Eun-jeong,
 - Kim Hyun-zu
- (Emyoji, Sao Paulo, Brazil)
 - Anderson Silva Candido
- (Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, Honolulu)
 - Beau Aihara

Head Instructor:

- Rev. Giko Tabata
- Assistant Instructor:**
 - Rev. Kanno Nakayama
- Special Instructor:**
 - Rev. Renjo Takenaka
- Interpreter:**
 - Rev. Eko Ishimoto (E-
myoji, Sao Paulo), Rev.

Chisen Maeda (Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI, USA), Mr. Kim He-gyon (Rishso University)

Coordinator:

Rev. Shingyo Imai (Nichiren-shu Headquarters)

Assistant Coordinator:

Rev. Dairyo Tomikawa (Nichiren-shu Headquarters)

Staff:

Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi (Nichiren-shu Headquarters), Akiko Iwama (Nichiren-shu Headquarters)



Rev. Giko Tabata, Head Instructor, bestows a certificate of completion of the retreat to Ms. Min You-mi from Korea at the closing ceremony



All trainees and staff members in front of the Myomanji Temple on Sado Island. (center: Rev. Chiei Takenaka, the priest of the Myomanji Temple)

1600th Anniv. of Lotus Sutra Translation Commemorated



The Japanese delegation, headed by Rev. Komatsu, in front of the main hall of the Sodoji Temple, Xian, June 26

A delegation of 50 from Nichiren-shu, headed by Rev. Joshin Komatsu, Chief Administrator, visited the Sodoji Temple (Cao Tang Si), Xian, China and



Rev. Komatsu is happily reunited with Rev. Di Xing, head priest of Sodoji Temple, Xian, June 26

held services commemorating the 1600th year of the translation of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma on June 26. The Sodoji Temple is

said to be the place where Kumarajiva (344–413) was engaged in translation of the Sanskrit text of the Lotus Sutra into Chinese.

Rev. Komatsu also officiated the dedication ceremony of a stone monument of the Lotus Sutra, one of the 28 such monuments being built in the temple by the Nichiren Shu. The Chapter XII, "Devadatta," is inscribed on the monument dedicated by Rev. Komatsu. Rev. Kaishuku Mochizuki of Hinosawabo Temple, Minobusan, also dedicated the monument of Chapter XV, "The Appearance of Bodhisattvas from Underground." Before arriving at Xian, the delegation visited Beijing on June 24 and paid a courtesy call at the Kosaiji



Rev. Komatsu and Rev. Yi cheng, President of Chinese Buddhist Association at Kosaiji Temple, Beijing, June 24

Temple (Guang Ji Si), where they met Venerable Rev. Yi cheng, President of the Chinese Buddhist Association.

Venerable Yi cheng said that the Chinese Buddhist Association and the Nichiren Shu are firmly tied up with the "gold link" of the Sodoji Temple of Xian, Kumarajiva and the Lotus Sutra."

On the following day, June 25, the delegation visited the Daikozen-ji Temple (Da Xing Shan Si) in Xian and met with Rev. Jie Ming, President of the Chinese Buddhist Association of Shan Xi Sheng. Rev. Komatsu expressed his wish to further promote exchanges between the Buddhists of Japan and China. The delegation also included

Rev. Shoko Ito, President of the Japanese Nichiren-shu Newspaper and Rev. Kaigen Noritake, Assistant Professor of Buddhism, Rishso University.

Kumarajiva (344–413), a missionary from Kucha (Kiji) to China, is popularly called Raju (abbreviation of Kimaraju) in Japanese. His father, Kumaayana, was an Indian, while his mother was a sister of the King of Kucha. Kumarajiva came to China in 401 and during a period of thirteen years he translated thirty-five Buddhist texts in some three hundred fascicles, such as Mahaprajnaparamita-sutra, Saddharma-pundarika-sutra, Amitayus-sutra and so forth. He is the most distinguished translator before Hsuan-tsang (Genjo), and is especially famous for the translation of the Lotus Sutra. He is regarded as the founder of the Sanron Sect, as he often lectured on its teachings.



The statue of Kumarajiva



Sodoji Temple (Cao Tang Si)



The monument of Kumarajiva

The Life of Kumarajiva and the Lotus Sutra

By Rev. Ken'yo Mitomo, Ph. D.
Professor, Rishso University

Precisely 1600 years ago (406 A.D.), a Sanskrit sutra with an elegant title, the Teaching of the White Lotus Flower, was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva. Since then, this highly sophisticated Chinese translation has attracted many as a source of inspiration.

Kumarajiva's mother was a sister of the king of Kucha. When Kumarajiva was nine years old, his mother took him across the Indus River and made him learn the Three Stores of Theravada Buddhism in Kashmir. Then, they went to Kashgar, and the mother guided her son to study Mahayana Buddhism under Suryasoma. At that time, Suryasoma is said to have given the Lotus Sutra to Kumarajiva, saying, "This sutra is bound to spread northeast. You should disseminate it."

In the course of time, the remarkable talent of Kumarajiva resounded even to the palace of the Former Qin in China. King Fu Jian dispatched General Lu Guang with a force of 70,000 strong to Kucha to capture Kumarajiva. General Lu Guang was a man of rudeness. In order to seduce young and talented Kumarajiva, he forced him to take alcohol and confined him into a locked room with a princess of Kucha. We do not know whether Kumarajiva had an intimate relationship with her

that night, but no matter how hard he had resisted, he ended up being an apostate monk according to the rigid Hinayana precepts after taking alcohol or staying a night with a female. This humiliating label largely influenced the idea of Buddhist precepts of Kumarajiva,



Rev. Ken'yo Mitomo

who was born to the royal family and once honored as a phenomenon. He had been expected to be a great monk like Upagupta if he could have kept the precepts until he had reached the age of 35, but on the contrary, he just became a captive of General Lu Guang.

Staying at Guzang (Wuwei), Kumarajiva had to serve Lu Guang during his prime from the age of 36 to 52 as a political adviser as well as a fortune-teller. Ironically, however, this experience made him proficient in the Chinese language and he cultivated the basis of the great and delicate translation of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma. During this period, he also taught Madhyamaka (Middle Way Contemplation) to Seng Chao, who came all the way from Chang'an and later became his prominent disciple.

Around the same time when Lu Guang became the King of the Later Liang, Yao Chang founded the Later Qin Dynasty in Chang'an. Yao Chang tried to invite Kumarajiva, but the negotiation was deadlocked, and he himself passed away. Then, his successor, Yao Xing also deeply believed in Buddhism, and tried to fulfill the long-cherished wish of his father, imploring the Later Liang to permit Kumarajiva to come to Chang'an. Nevertheless, the Later Liang refused again, so in 401, at last Yao Xing dispatched the armed forces, defeated Later Liang, and took Kumarajiva to Chang'an safely. Kumarajiva was at last liberated from the 16-year captivity by the Later Liang after the destruction of his country, forcible apostasy and humiliating captivity.

Inviting Kumarajiva to Chang'an, Yao Xing planned to translate Buddhist sutras into Chinese with a huge funding. Then in Chang'an, 3,000 elites were assembled under Kumarajiva, and various sutras were planned to be translated. As soon as Kumarajiva arrived in that city on the 20th day of the last

month, 401, the translation started at the end of that month.

Kumarajiva was 52 years old then. In total, he had translated a huge number of scriptures—up to 35 works containing 294 fascicles—though a foreign monk close to him said, "Kumarajiva had time to translate less than one tenth of what he had memorized." The translation of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, in which King Yao Xing himself participated, was completed in the summer of 406 at the Chang'an Grand Temple.

Deploring that Kumarajiva's lineage would be lost, Yao Xing pressed ten women on him. Once by the caprice of Lu Guang, he was forced to drink and stay a night with the princess of Kucha, and now in his middle fifties, he was again forced to obey the

(continued on page 5)



The statue of Kumarajiva and the Kizil 1,000-Buddha Cave at Kucha

Pilgrimage of the Nichiren-shu International Buddhist Friendship Association to Italy

By Rev. Nichiyu Mochida
Head Priest, Sogenji Temple

The Nichiren-shu International Buddhist Friendship Association spent 11 days in Italy from June 23 to July 3 to pay homage to the Renkoji Temple at Villasanta on the outskirts of Milan, holding a special service commemorating the first anniversary of the Temple, and to hold a memorial service in Rome for the fifth anniversary of the introduction of Nichiren Buddhism to Italy.

It was in response to the proposal made by Rev. Kanshin Mochida, a member of the Nichiren-shu Overseas Propagation Committee, to encourage Rev. Tarabini's missionary activities in Italy. Officials of the NIBFA and their friends numbering 27 in all went on this pilgrimage trip.

Abbot Kaiko Kato of the Myohoji Temple at Kamakura, President of the NIBFA, joined the trip as the honorary head of the group, which was headed by Abbot Kanshen (Nichiyu) Mochida of the Sogenji Temple (Chairman of the NIBFA). Other ministers who participated on this trip were: Revs. Bungyo Yoshida, Gen'yu Asai, Shoshin Kurihara, Isshi Watanabe, Gisho Watanabe, Hoson Masuda, and Masato Kobayashi. The Revs. were accompanied by their family and temple members.

A dinner party on June 24 (Saturday) in a conference room of the hotel was attended by 14 devotees coming from Northern and Central Italy. It was emceed by Rev. Dairyo Tomikawa of the International Section of the Nichiren-shu Headquarters. Rev. Tarabini made a welcome speech and introduced the visitors from Japan and 14 Italian Nichiren Buddhists. Although the Japanese people did not understand Italian and the Italians did not understand Japanese, they had a friendly evening.

The Renkoji Temple at Villasanta is about 40 minutes away from the center of Milan. The temple is in a rented

independent house with a big yard. The altar consists of the Omandala and a statue of Nichiren Shonin, decorated by an incense burner, a pair of candle stands, and a pair of flower vases on the front table. A service was held with Abbot Kato as the presiding priest, and it was wonderful to listen to the Italians resoundingly chant the "Kaikyoge," "Junyoze,"



Rev. Nichiyu Mochida

"Jigage," and "Odaimoku."

The ceremony of the presentation of a missionary automobile was held after the service, in which the mokuroku of the present and the car key were presented to Rev. Tarabini. The gift was jointly presented by the Nichiren-shu Buddhist Order, NIBFA, and NOPPA (Nichiren-shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association) for the purpose of helping Rev. Tarabini's missionary work in Italy. The presentation ceremony was concluded with a photo shoot and a garden pizza party.

On July 1, Saturday, the memorial service commemorating the fifth anniversary of Nichiren Buddhism in Italy was held in Rome. As the Byakuren in the Temple could not accommodate everyone, the service was held in the auditorium of a former grade school with 25 Italian members participating.

The great mandala gohonzon and a statue of Nichiren Shonin was enshrined on the stage, and we performed the ceremony according to the Nichiren-shu manual, exactly the same way as the service in the

Renkoji Temple at Villasanta. After the service three Italian members recited the Lotus Sutra in Italian. They sounded wonderful against the background of classical music.

Then a dinner party was held in a restaurant in a nearby park. Rev. Kangyo Noda of the Nichiren Buddhist Temple in London came all the way to be the master of ceremony. Japanese and Italian folk songs were sung together to liven up the international gathering. The Italian members do not understand Japanese, so we could not communicate with them in Japanese. However, we could communicate with them in spirit through the compassion of Sakyamuni Buddha and salvation through the Daimoku chanting.

The NIBFA visited many places such as India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Europe, where the Japanese language stopped being the means of communication. Nevertheless, we could confirm our common faith and chant the Odaimoku together with the people in those foreign lands. Let us try to establish the communication with Nichiren Buddhists abroad to plant and raise the seed of Odaimoku among all the people in the world.

Address at Dinner Party in Milan

Nichiren Shonin has taught us, "We can accomplish anything if we unite our minds in one; nothing can be done when our minds are not as one. As my followers are of one mind, even though

they are small in number, they can accomplish the all important matter, the spread of the Lotus teaching."

I beseech you all to master the teaching of Nichiren Shonin, through the guidance of Rev. Tarabini, and unwaveringly pursue spreading the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shonin has also taught us, "You should endeavor the two ways of practicing and studying the Buddhist Dharma. There will be no Buddhist Dharma without practice and study. You should devote yourself and encourage others to do this."

Address at Dinner Party in Rome

The Nichiren-shu Order of Buddhism today is actively spreading the "Risho Ankoku. Odaimoku Kechien (Establishing Peace through the True Dharma. Spreading the Seeds of Buddhahood by Odaimoku Chanting) Campaign." In order to realize the ideal of Nichiren Shonin: peace in the world, all the people in the world must be Buddhas through the Odaimoku chanting.

The first step toward this goal is to plant the seed of Buddhahood in people. In order to sow the seed in people, we have to establish a connection with them, which is possible only through the Odaimoku. In this sense we are very happy to have been able to establish a connection with you by chanting the Odaimoku together in Rome.

Please try to enlarge this circle of Odaimoku in various parts of Europe.



At Renkoji Temple, Villasanta, Milan

(continued from page 4)

order of the king in order to accomplish his translation works. Because of this, he had to commute to the translation office inside the temple without living there. Buddhayasha, a well-known Buddhist scholar, is said to have lamented, "Kumarajiva is like good and soft cotton, but why does he have to be put into thorns." It must be very trying for Kumarajiva to preach the Dharma in front of 3,000 elite monks with the remorse for betraying the Buddha's teachings. Every time he began the translation works, he used to say, "As lotus flowers bloom in the dirty mud, please take the flowers but not the mud."

Around that time, he started to translate the Buddha-Pitaka Sutra, in which the Mahayana precepts are preached. It is preached in this sutra, "The reality of all phenomena is increate and indestructible. When one does not comprehend this, one is against the precepts even if one keeps them. To leave the useless theory or discrimination means to hold the precepts." The Lotus Sutra also preaches, "Keeping the 250 precepts does not mean to hold

them in reality. Holding the Lotus Sutra even temporarily means to hold the precepts; without being dyed with worldly laws as lotus flowers bloom in the water."

This must have been the basic standpoint of Kumarajiva. He passed away on the 20th of the 8th month in 409 at the age of 60. When he was about to die, he vowed, "If there are no mistakes in my translation, my tongue cannot be burnt when my body is cremated." It is said that in his ashes, his tongue surely remained unburned.

Now his grave is placed inside the Caotangsi Temple near Xian. Looking at his tomb from the south, you can see why he was buried there. Mt. Chungnan spreads before you, and the right end of that mountain immediately recalls Mt. Sacred Eagle in India, where Sakyamuni Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra.

There is a phrase in the Lotus Sutra, Chapter XVI, which Kumarajiva translated as, "The Buddha always stays on Mt. Sacred Eagle." Thinking of Sakyamuni Buddha on Mt. Grdhrakuta, Kumarajiva must have wished to build his grave there. The

Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, handed by Suryasoma to Kumarajiva, saying, "This sutra is

bound to spread northeast," will always be living in the belief of the people of Southeast Asia.

Three Generations of Wedding Ceremonies



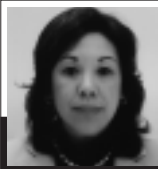
Midori Howo, Dennis Lewis and Rev. Kanai

Rev. Shokai Kanai conducted the wedding ceremony of Midori Howo and Dennis Lewis on March 25, 2006, at the Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple. The bride's grandparents, Michiko and Masaji Makino were also married at the LA Temple in 1931. Midori's parents, Aiko and William Howo, were also married at the temple in 1964 with Rev. Kanai assisting Rev. Ryobo Fujiwara, the resident minister at the time. Midori and Dennis were proud and honored to follow the



Grandmother Michiko and family members of Midori and Dennis

to follow the path of two successful unions in a temple filled with tradition and love. Grandmother Michiko, who is 92, attended the service along with the family members of Midori and Dennis.



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

HONOLULU

Rev. Kaneko Returns to Japan

As of June 10, 2006, Rev. Bungen Kaneko has resigned as overseas minister and head minister of Puunene. Due to personal reasons he has returned to Japan. The following is his farewell sermon delivered on Father's Day, June 18, in the Honolulu Betsuin Temple.

"I am very sad to leave all of you who have supported me throughout the six years I have been in Hawaii. This is the seventh Father's Day since I came to Hawaii. I will be 29 years old next month. When I came to Hawaii to go through training as an overseas minister, I was only 22 years old, just out of college. I didn't know how to adjust to life in Hawaii, and all of you helped me to adjust my easy-going personality.

Through the first three years in the Honolulu Betsuin, I really learned a lot, but when I was assigned to be the resident minister at Puunene, I was really unsure of myself. After working with the members of the Board of Directors as well as regular members, I was able to find a goal.

Through the Odaimoku I was able to meet many people, and the membership of the Puunene Temple has slowly increased. I think through the Odaimoku, a person to person link has been established.

Since last year the Board of Directors in the Puunene Temple has been rejuvenated and many younger members have been active. Even so the Church is barely able to meet ends. Without the support of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters we cannot think of any bright future. I sincerely hope that all the church members will cooperate with the next resident minister, Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bishop Joyo Ogawa, and all the other ministers who have helped me during my six years in Hawaii. Also I give my thanks to all the members at both the Honolulu and Maui temples, who advised me and supported me through these years.

"Although I will be returning to Japan, this is not an eternal farewell. I will be back someday. Till then please continue chanting the Odaimoku. When the lotus flowers bloom in the pond, I will be happy if you remember me. Thank you for all your kindness. Take

care of yourselves and I hope to see you all again someday. Aloha!"

SAN JOSE

Obon Sermon by Rev. Shinko Matsuda

Everyone has heard of Venerable Maudgalyayana and how his mother was suffering in Hell because she had cared too much for her son. Because of this strong feeling of love towards her son, she became stingy to others, greedy and selfish and that is why she ended up suffering in Hell after her death. When Maudgalyayana went to the Buddha to ask Him how to save his mother, the Buddha told him to ask for the blessings of all His disciples.

On July 15 when the disciples gathered for the general confessions, Maudgalyayana was to make offerings to them. As soon as Maudgalyayana chanted the Lotus Sutra and made offerings to the Buddha's disciples, his mother's long suffering disappeared. This is the origin of Obon.

From July 13-15, we decorate the Obutsudan, family altar and go to the cemetery to pay our respects to the deceased family members and our ancestors. Our ancestors

are the roots of our family tree. We are the branches and the twigs. In order to grow good, healthy branches, the root must be taken care of. In the same way as we continue to grow as individuals, we must respect our ancestors and constantly perform services to them.

Nichiren Shonin said, "A vice will bring suffering not only to us but to our descendants. Similarly, good conduct will bring happiness and peace to our descendants."

Obon is one of the most important Buddhist events. During the period we should have a memorial service for our ancestors and with the merits in doing so, we renew our sense of gratitude and enrich our lives.

PORTLAND

NONA Meetings and 75th Anniversary

On August 17, Thursday, ministers will be arriving in Portland for the annual NONA meeting. On August 18, Friday, from 10 a.m. the ministers will be in meetings all day and the NONA delegates will be arriving in Portland, and on August 19, Saturday, there will be a NONA business meeting all day and a NONA dinner at 7 p.m.

On August 20, Sunday, a special service will be held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple fol-

lowed by a luncheon.

LOS ANGELES

Rev. Kanai Speaks at Faith Panel in USC

The graduating class of 2006 USC Masters of Social Work wanted to learn more about the principle values of various religions so that they could be culturally sensitive in their practice. People have a tendency to stick to something they are familiar with. Engaging in experiences that are different from our norms helps us to dissolve stereotypes and become aware of the values and traditions that guide people's everyday thoughts and actions.

On April 4, 2006, Rev. Shokai Kanai was one of the four panelists who presented their basic precepts, beliefs and traditions that were most important in their respective faiths. Other panelists were Rabbi Allen Krause, Congregation Beth El of South Orange County, Rev. Tanya Pervis of Friendly Baptist Church and Brother Sadullah Khan of the Islamic Center at Irvine.

The students enthusiastically listened and engaged in discussions with the panelists on topics such as unique celebrations, life and death, the meaning of life's challenges and extending hope. It seemed that everyone in the room walked away with enlightening information about different beliefs.

'Kosenrufu in Southeast Asia' (3)

Interview with Mr. Ang Tiang Soon, Chairman of Penang Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association: the Ichinenji Temple in Malaysia

By Rev. Myosho Obata, Nichiren Shu Southeast Asia



Rev. Myosho Obata

Nichiren Shu teaching.

Regarding how we should encourage others, I think that first important point is that we must be sincere and try to tell others the actual fact and should not exaggerate. We should share with each other our experience in our way of practice. Our genuine expression, honesty, and compassion are key indicators of any individual who is committed to serve the Three Treasures.

Rev. M. O.: In November 2004, members of the Lotus Sutra Buddhist Association of Singapore joined Nichiren Shu and established a Nichiren Shu Temple called the Daimoku Ji Temple in Singapore. What do you think about spreading the Lotus Sutra and chanting the Odaimoku, Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo, in Southeast Asia?

Mr. Ang: Buddhism is widespread in Southeast Asia but through cultural

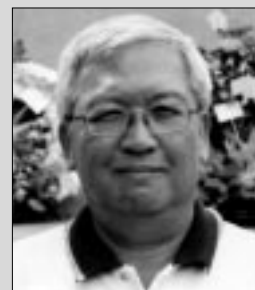
Ichinenji Temple in Penang. With the encouragement and strong conviction from all our members, we were able to establish a strong bond of trust and belief. As a result they finally agreed to follow

diversity, inter-marriage, and family bonding, there emerged an assortment of beliefs revolving mainly in the countries local customs, Taoism, Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. I personally believe that the basis of spreading the Lotus Sutra is the strong conviction and the fundamental of Buddhist knowledge. Supported with such knowledge will one be able to differentiate the Lotus Sutra from the other sutras? We must also be able to relate to the context of the Lotus Sutra in all our daily life and practice. The Lotus Sutra forms the most fundamental foundation in propagation and missionary endeavor. Moreover, we must also be compassionate in applying the Buddhist way of teaching in the Lotus Sutra when we need to counsel others. It is my belief that to successfully spread the Lotus Sutra, we should be able to preach, explain Nichiren Daishonin's teaching and the Lotus Sutra within the context of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Rev. M. O.: Lastly, I would like to ask you about the donation of the Lotus Sutra in Chinese, Would you tell me about it in detail?

Mr. Ang: Mr. Henry Tjioe was introduced to me by Mr. Sidin of Indonesia. After a great deal of communication he proposed to donate 1,000 copies of the Lotus Sutra in Chinese. Henry Tjioe is

a firm believer of the Lotus Sutra and has always generously donated the printing of Lotus Sutra for distribution. I had the privilege to meet him during one of my visits to Jakarta and understand that he reads the entire 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra every week. I am truly touched and appreciative of his generosity and devotion to the Lotus Sutra.



Mr. Ang Tiang Soon

Conclusion

Although we have different cultures, we respect each other and try to understand others. I believe that all the Nichiren Shu members in Southeast Asia, fulfill the aspiration of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin.

The members and I propagate the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin and the Lotus Sutra together. Furthermore, we sow the seed of Buddhahood, the Odaimoku as the seed of Buddhahood in the minds of all living beings in Southeast Asia. We are convinced that this is our mission. Sincerely in Gassho.

Nichiren Shu News

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