

Nichiren Shu News

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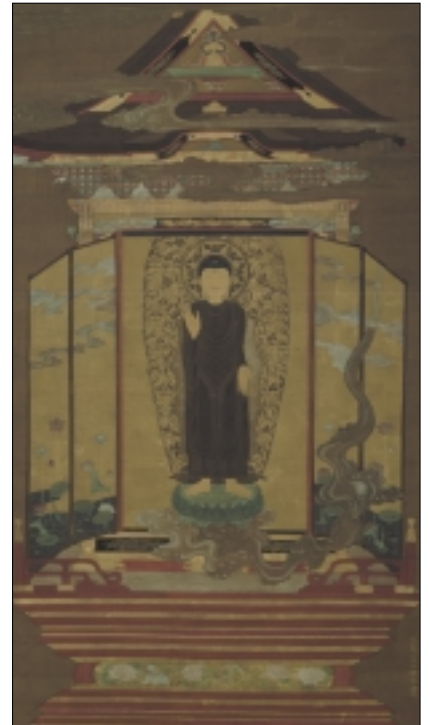
Wat Vishun, Laos



Wat Luan, Laos



Wat Benchamabophit, BKK



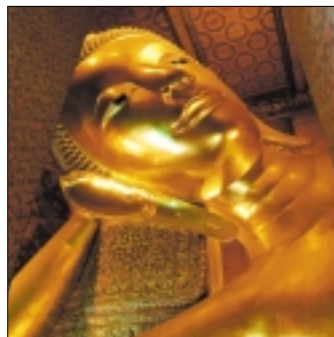
Jokyoji Temple, Tokyo



Wat Suthat thepwararam, BKK



Wat Suthat thepwararam, BKK



Wat Phrachetuphon, BKK



Wat Phrachetuphon, BKK



Wat Pho, BKK

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY: A statue of the Baby Buddha is adorned with flowers at Buddhist temples all over the country on April 8, which is regarded as the birthday of Sakya-muni Buddha in Japan. Visitors to temples pour "sweet tea" over the statue of the Baby Buddha who is pointing to heaven with His right forefinger and to earth with His left finger, showing that He is the sole honored one in this whole universe. Photos: courtesy of Rev. Keitsu Ito (Laos), Ms. Nipatporn Penghaw (Thailand) and Ms. Khin May Thant (Myanmar)



Wat Amarintharam, BKK



Wat Poramayikawas, Nonthaburi



Wat Patumwanaram, BKK



Wat Incharawiham, BKK



Wat Lokayasutha, Ayutaya



At a shop selling Buddha statues, BKK



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon



Kayauk KaSan Pagoda, Yangon



Kayauk KaSan Pagoda, Yangon



Garu Vihara, Sri Lanka

The Life of Sakyamuni Buddha (10)

By Rev. Shinkai Oikawa, Litt. D.

9. Sakyamuni's Manhood

(8) Liberation or Emancipation

Everybody wants to be happy. What is happiness, then? Sakyamuni continued to earnestly think of happiness for six years of His practiced asceticism. He also thought of it as hard as He could under the Bodhi tree. He contemplated the structure of human beings or human bodies and the structure of the human mind, and was finally delivered from worldly existence. He was emancipated and set free.

What then was Sakyamuni emancipated from? At first He was emancipated from "bonds." He had already left His family and formally given up the bonds with His father, mother, wife, and child. Nevertheless, I think He could not stop being strongly attached to them. It is extremely difficult to cut the attachment to our family. He cut such relations and was set free. Secondly, He had abandoned all kinds of hopes and desires, such as desires to get money, to eat delicious food, to have a good position, to manage a firm well, and to live on in the end as safely as possible without any illnesses.

It is said that He abandoned and felt free from the desire for existence. I



Rev. Shinkai Oikawa

think He found Himself developing supernatural powers to see all things such as the human past, present, and future.

I have read books written about 1,500 years ago. I found a lot of very strange things written in them, such as flying in the sky, slipping under the ground, and staying in the sea for a long time.

We cannot understand these tales. But a person with true abilities to understand human beings may know somewhat of how they lived in the past and how they live now, and how they will live in the future. There are psychics in the world, aren't there? They can understand things by using a kind

of telepathy or a radio wave. Sakyamuni went into such a sphere as this. He could do so because He perfectly abandoned Himself or the desire for existence.

Today, I spoke about the most difficult and inexpressible parts of Buddhism, which are called spiritual enlightenment. Sakyamuni acquired wonderful power. So He had been constantly respected in India for 45 years, saving the people everywhere.

Buddhism is not a religion in which a certain god does everything. Sakyamuni is a kind of doctor. He gave people appropriate treatment at many places. So He is called a good medical doctor and His teachings good medicines. The important thing in Buddhism is not that we depend on an absolute being but that we should act according to the truth that everything consists of cause and effect. So if you endeavor hard, a bad matter can be changed into a good one. The relation of trust between patients and doctors in charge is important. The relationship of trust between Buddhist devotees and Sakyamuni is also very important. However, Sakyamuni's prescription tells us only the law of causation.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)
(to be continued)

Measures to Step up Overseas Missionary Work Adopted

The Nichiren Shu Shukai or Congress adopted measures to step up overseas missionary activities at its 47th meeting held from March 10 to 13 at the Shumuin office of administration.

One of these measures is the introduction of the system of "kaigai fukyo shi" (International Ministers: priests engaged in overseas missionary activities.) They will be appointed from among those actually engaged in overseas activities even if they are not "kaigai kaikyo shi" (priests formally assigned to overseas missionary work, which number 25 at present.)

"International ministers" include local ministers, sons of the "kaigai fukyo shi" (formally assigned missionaries), or those dispatched from home temples, those who regularly visit overseas on missionary activities, and those engaged in the internal work to support overseas activities.

Their term of assignment is four years, the same as the term of office for "formally assigned missionaries." The administration envisages that the introduction of the new system will make good use of the experience and talents of many priests.



Temple Events

By Sandra Seki

PORTLAND

Resignation and Installation

On Sunday, April 12, the resignation ceremony of Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi and the installation ceremony for Rev. Myosho Obata will take place. The ceremony will be followed by a Hanamatsuri celebration to celebrate the birthday of the Buddha. Bishop Shokai Kanai of NONA will give a sermon at the service.

LAS VEGAS

First Chanting

On the morning of April 28, 1253, Nichiren Shonin climbed Mt. Kiyosumi in Chiba Prefecture and while facing the rising sun, he chanted "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" for the first time. This

began the salvation of all beings through the chanting of the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra and the beginning of the Nichiren Sect. In order to commemorate this memorable event, Rev. Kanai will hold a special service at Lake Mead National Recreation Area Monument on Sunday, April 26 at 5:45 a.m.

The participants will beat hand drums and chant the Odaimoku vigorously. Please notify Rev. Kanai if you are interested in participating.

TORONTO

Odaimoku and Study Class

Starting on Sunday, April 19, Rev. Kennou Fukushima will conduct the hour-long Odaimoku chanting session. The temple will also hold a study class on Buddhism after the Sunday service when there

are no other events.

Lecture in Shiga Prefecture

Rev. Fukushima gave a lecture in Shiga Prefecture at the Shiga Prefecture Goho Totsu Shingyokai on February 22. The theme of his lecture was "Hoping a flower of the Lotus Sutra blooms in Canada."

About 350 ministers and followers gathered at the Ninja no Sato Pulala Hall in Koga City, Shiga. Rev. Fukushima talked about how he became a minister at the age of 55 and his missionary work in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Toronto, Canada. He also talked about how religion in Japan is viewed from overseas.

The Religious Affairs Director of Shiga Prefecture gave a generous donation to the Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple. Also donations and

words of encouragement were given to Rev. Fukushima from the participants which deeply moved him.

TEXAS

New Members from Costa Rica

In February, the Houston Sangha welcomed its newest members: Ileana and Luis Calderon Dotti of Costa Rica. They are the first family from Central America to receive the precepts and Shutei Omandala.

Rev. Ikenaga of Brazil contacted Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett last year about a family who was interested in Nichiren Shu but the distance to Brazil and the expense was greater than coming to Houston, so Rev. Myokei got in touch with the Dottis.

Every Monday evening Ileana and Luis hold a video conference (via skype) with Rev. Myokei to study not only Buddhism and the Nichiren Doctrine but also English while Rev. Myokei learns Spanish.

Ileana and Luis spent four days in Houston receiving directions in the faith and practice and encouragement to practice alone in Costa Rica. The Houston Sangha members were able to spend some time with them and create a strong bond.

The jukai ceremony was conducted entirely in Spanish (except for the Dokyo) to show support to Ileana and Luis for their tremendous efforts to prac-

tice in spite of the distance and language barrier.

Talk at Houston Zen Center

Rev. Myokei gave a talk at the Houston Zen Center on Nichiren Buddhism and the Dharma of Life. It was quite well received and provided some clarity about the various Nichiren schools in America.

Later that day, she provided invocation at the interfaith "Freedom to Marry" ceremony, the cultivation of a week of activity organized by the Foundation for Family and Marriage Equality.

This foundation is committed to seeking equal opportunities for families headed by GLBTQ couples who do not receive the same legal protection for themselves and their children as compared to other families.



Jukai ceremony entirely in Spanish



Photo shows (L to R): Christie Carrington, Ileana Calderon Dotti, Meri Eckhoff, Rev. Myokei, Craig Lira and Carlton Smith

NONA Sponsors Minister's Workshop

By Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi
Portland Nichiren Temple

Nichiren Buddhist Order of North America sponsored a minister's workshop on February 21 and 22 at the Nichiren Buddhist International Center in Hayward, CA with about 15 NONA ministers in attendance.

Rev. Yosei Ikegami, a professor at Minobusan Universi-

ty was invited to the workshop as the guest lecturer. He talked about the history on the research of the Lotus Sutra, Buddhism and other topics regarding the Lotus Sutra, based on his academic background.



Attendees of the workshop at NBIC

Nichiren Shonin and His Lay Followers (10)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura, Litt. D.
Associate Professor,
Rissho University

Abutsu-bo and His Wife, Nun Sennichi (2)

Abutsu-bo's Birthplace

Abutsu-bo is presumed to be a man of Sado Island. In a letter to Nun Sennichi, Nichiren Shonin referred to her husband as "an ebisu (rowdy warrior) on the island of Japan's north sea (meaning Sado Island)."

Since he made three trips to Minobusan, and his son, Tokuro Moritsuna, visited Nichiren Shonin at Minobusan twice, and was educated, he is supposed to be a well-do-do "myoshu" (village headman) living in the "kokufu (the provincial capital)" in the Kuninaka Plains located in the center of the island.

An official dispatched from the central government, a "kokushi," rules the area and surrounding districts, assisted by a "myoshu." Myoshu are chosen from among influential persons such as rich farmers and they engaged in collecting taxes from farmers. Abutsu-bo was believed to be one of those myoshu.

The "Sammai-do, a small temple in a graveyard at Tsukahara, where Nichiren Shonin stayed in exile was located some four miles from the presumed residence of the Abutsu-bo family. It makes us think of the hard-



Rev.
Kanji Tamura

ships experienced by the Abutsu-bo and Ko-nyudo couples who stealthily carried food to Nichiren Shonin every evening.

Memorial Visit to Minobusan

Abutsu-bo died in the third month in 1279 at the age of 90. Tokuro Moritsuna, his son, carrying the ashes of his father hanging from his neck, visited Nichiren Shonin at Minobusan in the seventh month of that year, and buried the ashes of his father on the mountain.

In the seventh month of the next year, Moritsuna made a second visit to Minobusan to pay a visit to his father's grave. It is apparent that Moritsuna visited the holy mountain as he was told by his mother, Nun Sennichi, to take 1,500 mon of coins tied with a string, nori laver, wakame seaweed, dried cooked rice and other offerings to Nichiren Shonin.

Merits of the Lotus Sutra

Responding to Nun Sennichi's will of paying homage to her husband, and expressing his appreciation for her offerings, Nichiren Shonin wrote a letter to her, in which he says:

"It is stated in the Lotus Sutra whoever listens to the Lotus Sutra will never fail to attain Buddhahood. Every

word and phrase of the Lotus Sutra contains the total contents of all the sutras. That means when one reads even a word or a phrase of the Lotus Sutra, he reads the total volumes of all the sutras.

"For example, it is like the word Japan includes the entire provinces of the country, all the mountains of the country, all the trees and plants which grow there, and all the humans and beasts living there. Also it is like a small mirror that reflects even a great mountain or a figure or face of a person.

"Likewise, the entire merits are condensed in the Lotus Sutra.

"Though all the living beings are different in their figure, character, taste and conduct, they all become Buddhas as rivers taste salty alike when they enter the ocean. Even doing wrong, man is guaranteed Buddhahood when he or she practices the Lotus Sutra as Devadatta attained Buddhahood."

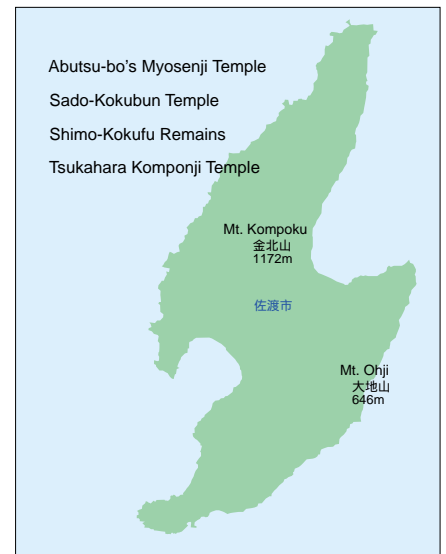
The Pure Land

Nun Sennichi was worried about where her husband would go after death since he had been devoted to the faith in Amitabha Buddha before the couple became followers of Nichiren Shonin. In this regard, Nichiren Shonin relieved her anxiety saying:

"You may wonder where the soul of the late Abutsu-bo is. As I see, he sits in the Tower of Many Treasures Buddha standing on Mt. Sacred Eagle,



Statues of Abutsu-bo and Nun Sennichi, enshrined at Myosenji Temple, Sado



Sado Island has long been a place of exile

facing to the east (facing to Japan where we live). This is not a lie at all since it is based on the Lotus Sutra, the true words of various Buddhas."

(Tr. K. S.)
(to be continued)

'We Go Through Three Types of Suffering'

By Rev. Junsei Nagayoshi
Wahiawa Nichiren Mission

This winter, I entered the aragyō or "rigorous ascetic practice" of the Nichiren Sect, held every year at the Hokekyōji Temple in Nakayama of Chiba Prefecture, Japan, for a period of one hundred days. I was provided this opportunity by the members of the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission. It was my long-cherished dream to take this practice since I became a Nichiren-shu priest.

I entered the aragyō taking with me the statue of Kishimōjin enshrined at the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission. Kishimōjin is a deity before which we in Nichiren Buddhism perform the kito blessing. I thought that it was important to maintain a connection with the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission during my aragyō training.

After completing the 100 days of aragyō training, I can vouch that we experienced three types of suffering: constant cold, lack of sleep, and

hunger. Our daily practice started with suigyo in which we shower ourselves with cold water. We practiced suigyo seven times a day, beginning at 3 a.m., and every three hours thereafter, until the last suigyo which was at 11 p.m. We were allowed to sleep at around midnight which was after the last suigyo. We were then awakened at around 2:30 a.m. Thus, we were always without sufficient sleep.

While we were not performing suigyo, we were constantly chanting the Lotus Sutra. We repeated this schedule for a hundred days. After going through the first week of this rigorous practice, I became incoherent. I could not count past a number more than 20 and it was as though there was a fog or something being squeezed in my mind.

As for meals, we were each served a small portion of rice porridge, miso soup and two pieces of pickle just twice a day. And, we were required to eat each meal in a period of about twenty seconds.

As I am quite a big eater, I was always hungry. At times, my prayer book appeared like a sponge cake and I was always in fear that I might bite into it one day. Never able to discern whether I was sitting up or not, I was in a state of constant delusion.

The most difficult thing for me was the pain in both of my legs. After about fifty days, my legs swelled up and became very painful. Then, they began to get numb day by day. This sensation moved up over my knees, which made it difficult to walk. This was caused by the constant seiza or sitting in the Japanese style aggravated

by the lack of nutrition due to our meager meals.

At some point, my health was so bad that I could no longer sit in the seiza style and do suigyo training. This disappointed me. However, when I experienced this situation, I happened to receive letters from some of the members of the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission. When I read them, their faces appeared in my mind. This gave me encouragement to go on.

Then, I decided to pray, imagining my legs standing in my mind. I was able to arouse myself to attend every session of suigyo practice. At first, I had difficulty in going through the movement of the suigyo practice, impaired by the stinging sensation in my legs.

After completing suigyo, I was often not able to move for a while. So,

I decided to force myself to move. Then, quite unconsciously, the swelling in my legs gradually began to heal. I understood that it was better to be active as much as possible. My aragyō training seemed to come to an end just as I began to understand how to approach my struggles.

I was able to complete the hundred days of training. However, the support of the members of the Wahiawa Nichiren Mission never left my mind. I am certain that this was true of the other ministers as well, so that we would never be lost, and to fulfill our member's anticipations.

I was able to gain valuable experience through the suffering that we endured. And, I will put this experience into good use, to be able to understand and aid my members with suffering. Aragyō training was very difficult for me. However, if I am offered the opportunity to attend it again, I would be honored to do so.



Rev. Nagayoshi fresh from the 100-day practice

Events

February–March 2008

- Feb. 3: Setsubun Services at temples all over Japan
- Feb. 10: Service commemorating the completion of the 100-day ascetic practice at the Nakayama Hokekyōji Temple
- Feb. 15: Nirvana Day Service
- Feb. 16: Service in commemoration of the birth of our Founder
- Mar. 10–13: 97th Regular Session of Nichiren Shu Congress
by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

Half Century of Bishop Ogawa's Overseas Mission

Bishop Joyo Ogawa formally announced his retirement as the bishop and head minister of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii as of March 31, 2009.

This concludes his 20th year as bishop of the Hawaii missions. A special retirement luncheon in honor of Bishop Ogawa was held at the Mandalay Restaurant on Sunday, March 29.

When Bishop Ogawa arrived in 1989, he heard the pleas from the last issei congregation to build a new worship hall for the Mission. Many bishops and board members started the project but decades went without any progress.

Bishop Ogawa made the decision to realize this dream by the 100th anniversary of the Nichiren Mission in 2003. Not only did he succeed in achieving this goal but the new worship hall was an incredible building with a new altar costing over \$5 million.

With a membership of less than 300, it was virtually an impossible task

to collect the funds. Bishop Ogawa worked tirelessly to persuade the overseas propagation support group in Japan for help in raising funds for the project.

He actually went from temple to temple, visiting many ministers in Japan to convince them to make a donation for this project. To make matters worse the original estimate, which was \$3 million, increased due to rising construction prices and an unexpected foundation issue. To encourage others to donate, he donated significant funds of his own.

He experienced health-threatening complications in the midst of the fundraising but he never let it interrupt his efforts. He continued his personal visits to temples in Japan as soon as he was discharged from the hospital.

The Mission has rarely had the same bishop for more than 10 years so many of the members owe so much to Bishop Ogawa and Mrs. Yasuko Ogawa for their sacrifice and dedica-

tion. His wise leadership and virtues have built a new worship hall for us and also has preserved the Nichiren Shu tradition for the members and their family in Hawaii.

At the luncheon the mission presented a token as a gift of appreciation for their many years of service. Also the members set up a fund to which members and friends contributed and presented it to the Bishop and his wife at the party.

(excerpt from Honolulu Betsuin newsletter)



Leaving Yokohama aboard President Cleveland December 21, 1961



Celebrating his assumption as head minister of the Salt Lake temple with Rev. Ryobo Fujiwara (left) and Mrs. Yasuko Ogawa, his wife on the extreme left in the front row, July 1, 1962



Officiating the ground-breaking ceremony for the new building of the Sacramento temple, June 6, 1970



Posing for a photograph with Rev. Okuno (left), assistant minister, in front of the newly built Sacramento temple building. Bishop Ogawa served there from February 2, 1968 to May 31, 1989



Photo shows from left to right: Rev. Ryusho Matsuda, Rev. Yohaku Arakawa, and Rev. Joyo Ogawa and Rev. Shokai Kanai, on the occasion of the grand ceremony commemorating the 750th anniversary of our Founder held at Minobusan, October 13, 1981



Attending the welcome party for the new bishop held at the Ala Moana Hotel, June 1, 1989



Seen sitting next to Archbishop Nichiyu Iwama of Minobusan at the main table of the banquet at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on August 30, 1992, following the grand service commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii



Officiating a service with participants of the Japan-American Nichiren Shu retreat in summer 1993 at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii



Celebrating his 60th birthday on July 28, 1996, with Rev. Gakugyo Matsumoto



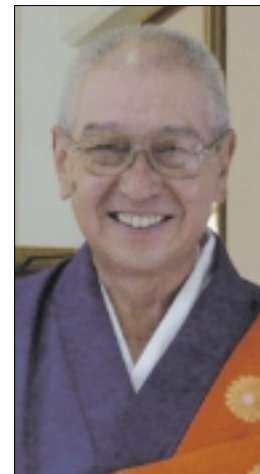
Signing the contract for the construction of a new temple building in 2000. Francis Sonomura, president of the mission, seen on the left of the bishop



The attendees at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new temple building of the Hawaii Mission, June 21, 2003



Pounding New Year mochi assisted by Rev. Shingyo Imai, December 2007



2008

Nichiren Shu News

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