

Nichiren Shu News

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A Biography of Nikko Shonin (1)

By Rev. Shincho Mochizuki, Ph. D.
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Nikko Shonin was one of the Six Senior Disciples of Nichiren Shonin, who always served him closely, and did splendid work as a right-hand man. I would like to touch upon Nikko's life and religious faith, tracing his footprints and introducing temples and treasures in connection with him.

The Life of Nikko Shonin

Birth: Nikko was born at Kajikazawa, Kai Province (present Kajikazawacho, Yamanashi Prefecture) on March 8, 1246, according to the lunar calendar. (This also applies to the following cases.) There are now stone monuments to the memory of Nikko's birth and life erected at the Rengeji Temple, Kajikazawa. At the nearby Renkyuji Temple, there is a well in which it is said that he was given his first bath as a newborn baby.

Nikko's father was a samurai of Oinosho, who originally lived in Totoumi Province before moving to Kai Province. His mother was a daughter of the Yui family at Fujikawai (present Shibakawacho, Shizuoka Prefecture), and was said to have had more than two brothers. His father died when he was very young and his mother remarried into the Tsunashima family in Musashi Province. He was taken into the Yui family at Fujikawai then, and went to the Shijukuin Temple at Kambara in his early childhood.

Education: Although there are four places where the Shijukuin Temple is said to have been located, a place named Shijukuin exists today at Iwabuchi, Fujikawacho. So this is regarded as the more probable place. Nikko learned reading and writing kana (Japanese syllabary) and kanji (Chinese characters), and studied Confucianism and Japanese classical culture at the Shijukuin Temple. He also learned Chinese characters, calligraphy and the art of composing tanka poetry



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in Suzu (present Fuji City). His handwriting in his later years reveals gracefulness in his tidy way of writing, and grandeur and brilliance in his Mandala H o n z o n because he learned the calligraphy of the Reizei family. Later he went to the Jissoji Temple at Iwamoto (Fuji City) to study Buddhism, including the doctrines of Tendai and Shingon.

The Jissoji Temple in those days was a great temple of the Tendai Sect, and it was teaching comprehensive studies of Buddhism in addition to its sectarian doctrine. In 1257 Nichiren entered the Jissoji Temple's library, which had a complete corpus of the Buddhist scriptures, and read many of them in search for the causes of the great earthquakes happening at that time. Later Nichiren wrote the "Rissho Ankoku-ron (Essay on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)" with reference to this study. Nikko was accepted as a disciple by Nichiren one day while he was engaged in studies in the library. Nichiren accepted him as a disciple because Nichiren had an insight into his excellent character though he was very young, expecting him to become a leader among his disciples in the future. Although Nikko called himself Hokibo then, he was reported to have been given the name Nikko by Nichiren, and he used the names Nikko, Hokiko and Byakuren Ajari from then until the demise of Nichiren.

Service in Rotation by Six Senior Disciples: The main disciples and followers were assembled and the Six Senior Disciples (Nissho, Nichiro, Nikko, Niko, Nitcho, Nichiji) were selected on October 8, 1282 because of Nichiren's critical illness. Some people

called themselves direct disciples of Nichiren in those days. These six disciples were selected to keep order among followers of Nichiren as a religious body. It was decided that Nichiren's grave would be guarded and served in rotation chiefly by the Six Senior Disciples. According to the "Shuso Gosenge Kiroku (Record of the Founder's Demise)" written by Nikko, which now belongs to the Hommonji Temple at Nishiyama, the disciples assigned to the guard service were as follows: Nissho in January, Nichiro in February, Echizen-ko and Nikken in March, Nitcho in April, Nichiji in May, Nichiben and Nisshu in June, Iga-ko and Nichigo in July, Nippo and Nichii in August, Nikko in September, Nichijitsu and Nichimoku in October, Niko in November, and Nisshu and Nikke in December. Many of these members were Nikko's disciples and persons in relation to his disciples. We may say that almost all of the members who offered the services to Nichiren's grave in rotation were related to Nikko.

Many disciples to whom the services in rotation were allotted devoted themselves to their own missions in many localities, and under these circumstances it was gradually getting difficult for them to keep to this rule because of poor traffic conditions. Therefore, Nikko decided to always stay in Minobu as the chief priest with the approval of Nambu (Hakii) Sanenaga, Nissho and Nichiro around the end of 1285. Niko came to Minobu and became the chief lecturer the following year. Meanwhile Nikko caused estrangement with Sanenaga due to his obstinately strict nature. On the other hand, Niko had a moderate and generous personality. While the nature of both priests showed their characteristics in many fields of missions, conflicts between them escalated gradually.

Three Ways of Slandering the True Dharma: Before long Nikko pointed out that Sanenaga committed the sin of slandering the True Dharma for the following reasons:

He produced a standing image of

the Buddha and tried to make this image the Honzon.

He paid homage to temples and shrines, which Nichiren forbade. Especially he paid homage to the Great Shrine of Mishima.

He attended a memorial service for the Nembutsu Pagoda at Fukushi in the Nambu District.

Although Sanenaga had been imploring Nikko to permit him to produce an image of the Buddha, Nikko flatly rejected his offer for the reason of the doctrines of Nichiren.

But Sanenaga was not satisfied with his rejection at all.

The Great Shrine of Mishima had been fervently worshipped by samurai families since Lord Minamoto Yoritomo, and it was under the patronage of the Hojo family, the backbone of the Kamakura Shogunate in those days. Izu Province was the fief of the main Hojo branch of the family. Furthermore, the Mishima Shrine was where Lord Yoritomo swore to make his comeback. Among the military commanders servicing the Kamakura Shogunate, therefore, it was the custom to pay homage to this shrine, and Sanenaga is believed to have simply followed such a custom.

When a monument of the Fuji religious association was erected at Fukushi (present Nambucho, Yamanashi Prefecture) in the fief of Sanenaga, he held a memorial service for it and signed the visitor's book. Although for Sanenaga it was simply a political action taken to show his power as an estate steward of the Nambu District, according to the teachings of Nichiren it was no less action than the service for the slanderers of the True Dharma.

Convinced that it was the duty of a disciple of Nichiren's to preach the teaching of Nichiren Buddhism correctly no matter where he was, Nikko decided to leave Minobu behind. Later he also said that he left Minobu to establish an ordination platform at Fuji.

I wrote the life of Nikko this time as stated above. I hope that the readers could understand his strict character and sincere religious attitude. I plan to look at his disciples and his relationship with them next time.

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

Rev. Woo Accomplishes 100 Days' Aragyō

By Rev. Shingyo Imai

Rev. Woo Hee Tae held the Kizanshiki (returning to his temple from the 100 days' Aragyō) ceremony at the Hodoji Temple in Seoul, Korea. This was his second Aragyō ascetic practice since 1999. About 70 Korean people gathered together to celebrate Rev. Woo's completion of the Aragyō by chanting Odaimoku together, and about 20 Japanese priests also attended the ceremony to assist him.

Mr. Kim Jong Haw, the president of the Hodoji adherents, led the

Odaimoku chanting during the ceremony. Mr. KJH was the president of SGI, Korea, before he joined Nichiren-shu. "We are planning to build a new temple in this place this year to achieve further development of the true Nichiren Buddhism in Korea. In order for our hope to come true, Rev. Woo's completion of the Aragyō is very important," said Mr. Kim.



Rev. Woo and his three children in front of the Aragyō seminary on February 10



Rev. Woo and his followers join the parade with the priests who wind up the 100-day Aragyō ascetic practice on February 10. The parade proceeds from Hokekyoji Temple, where the practice is carried out, to nearby Taifukuji Temple, where Rev. Shinno Kageyama, the master of Rev. Woo, welcomes the parade

The Doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen (13)

Theorem (RI) and Actuality (JI)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura

Various Meanings of "JI: Actuality" (3)

Nichiren Shonin introduced the doctrine of the Ichinen Sanzen of "JI: actuality," that should be practiced and realized in this real world. "JI: actuality" has various meanings, and in the previous articles, we learned some of them: (1) to actually feel Lord Sakyamuni, (2) to chant the Daimoku, (3) to worship the Great Mandala as the Most Venerable One, (4) the practice of sowing the Daimoku, seed of the Buddhahood, and (5) to read the Lotus Sutra through "Shiki: color" and to spread peace by establishing the True Dharma (Rissho Ankoku). In this article, we learn more meanings of JI: (6) to spread the Daimoku in the present-day society in the Latter Age of Degeneration (Mappo).

When "JI: actuality" and "RI: theorem" are clarified under the concept of time, "JI" indicates the real time elapsing from the past to the future while "RI" implies the enlightened, peaceful and religious state of mind that transcends time. It is like the mental state of feeling the eternity in a moment. In the "Kanjin Honzon-sho (Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One)," Nichiren Shonin uses the term "Honji," which means "this time" or "the original and true time." This concept expresses a religious state of mind, where we, who receive and keep the Teaching of the Daimoku, become unified with the Original Buddha Sakyamuni in this world of endurance (Saha World), and at the same time this Saha World itself is transformed into the eternal pure land. Thus Nichiren Shonin asserts that we are able to be embraced by such eternal time by believing and chanting the Daimoku. However, as for this real



Rev. Kanji Tamura

world, we are in the midst of the Latter Age of Degeneration called "Mappo," when this world is full of troubles and suffering people. Therefore, Nichiren Shonin tried to realize the pure land of "Honji" (the time of RI) in the real world in the "Mappo" (the time of JI) by spreading the Daimoku among sentient beings. Facing the reality of "Mappo," he did not choose to accommodate himself to his own practices for enlightenment, but he strove instead to eliminate the suffering of people by spreading the Daimoku.

He also describes the state of enlightenment in "Honji" as the Ichinen Sanzen equipped in the minds of the people who receive and keep the Daimoku. However, this real and fluctuating world in the Latter Age of Degeneration can also reflect the phenomenon of Ichinen Sanzen in the overlapping Ten Aspects of the primary causes, environmental causes, effects, rewards, retributions and so on. The former, however, is the state that is united with Sakyamuni Buddha through the faith of receiving and keeping the Daimoku while the latter is the factual world of the confused and suffering minds of sentient beings. In this real world of "Mappo" it could be said that all people suffer the same sufferings in the same manner, so society cannot be reformed no matter how a person corrects his wrong views. Nichiren Shonin, standing in the real society of Mappo, thought that, in order to save all sentient beings, there must be nothing but one way. It was to correct all of their wrong views from the bottom of their minds in

the same method. Then, he discovered the teaching for correcting the minds of all sentient beings in the doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen, and this doctrine should be connected directly to Sakyamuni Buddha through receiving and keeping the Lotus Sutra by faith. For Nichiren Shonin, that was the Daimoku composed of the Five Characters (Myo, Ho, Ren, Ge, and Kyo).

In the following paragraphs, we learn the meanings of spreading the Daimoku composed of the Five Characters in this Latter Age of Degeneration ("Mappo") referring to the fifth point of the various meanings of "JI" in the previous article. That is, reading the Lotus Sutra through "Shiki: color."

6. To renovate history (reading the Lotus Sutra through "Shiki: color" and the realization of the Buddha's predictions [Mirai-ki])

The "Mirai-ki" literally means "the future description," but in reality it is the predictions of the Buddha. For example, there is a prediction of the Three Ages: the Age of the True Dharma, the Age of the Semblance Dharma, and the Latter Age of Degeneration. The 1000 year-period following the passing of Sakyamuni Buddha is called the Age of the True Dharma, when righteous teachings are transmitted, and the next 1000 year-period is called the Age of the Semblance Dharma. During this period only superficial teachings remain. After the Age of the Semblance Dharma, the Latter Age of Degeneration (Mappo) starts. It is said that during this period the righteous teachings disappear, conflicts arise incessantly, and the world gets confused. The Latter Age lasts for 10,000 years or longer, and in the end the world will be devastated. Many Mahayana sutras describe this chronological prediction, and Nichiren Shonin was firmly convinced that this is

the very period when the true and righteous teaching should spread, finding that true teaching in the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra states that when the Buddha Dharma is about to disappear, the practitioner of the True Dharma will appear to spread it despite the various persecutions he encounters. For instance, chapter XIII, "Encouragement for Keeping This Sutra," describes the resolution of the practitioner, who tries to spread the Lotus Sutra at the cost of his life in the dreadful age after the Buddha's demise. He will endure various persecutions such as slander, abuse or threats with swords and sticks. Also it is preached in chapter XX, "Never-Despising Bodhisattva," that Sakyamuni Buddha in one of his previous existences single-mindedly practiced to pay respect to sentient beings as the Never-Despising Bodhisattva, and was persecuted by corrupt Buddhists. He had been slandered, abused and threatened with a stick, a piece of wood, tile or a stone. After the bodhisattva purified his retributions from his previous lives by enduring those persecutions, he met the teachings of the Lotus Sutra when he was about to pass away.

Then his life span was extended, and he was able to propagate the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shonin states that chapter XIII shows the vow of the future propagation while chapter XX indicates the example of the past propagation, and that these two episodes are consistent through the past, present and future. He thought highly of those episodes, as they were very similar to the persecutions he had experienced. Consequently, Nichiren Shonin deepened his awareness that the Lotus Sutra was not a fantastic tale about an imaginary world but the live prediction of the Buddha, throughout this real world from the past to the future, and that Nichiren himself was its embodiment, namely; the practitioner who would renovate this defiled world of the Latter Age and realize the pure land based on the prediction described in the Lotus Sutra.

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

The Legend of Nichiren (20)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph. D.

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution (1)

Defeated by Nichiren Shonin in the prayer contest for rain, Ninsho slandered Nichiren Shonin to the leading figures of the Kamakura Shogunate. Being threatened by the crisis of Mongol invasion, the military government could not ignore the growing popularity of our Founder.

At around 4 PM on the 12th day of the ninth month in 1271, Hei-no-Saemon, a high ranking official of the shogunate, accompanied by many soldiers, raided the hermitage of our Founder and arrested him. Tied with a rope on horseback, our Founder was taken to the execution ground as a major criminal.

When the party came near the Kamakura Hachiman-gu Shrine, Nichiren Shonin requested the soldiers to stop and let him get off the horse. Facing the shrine, Nichiren shouted: "I was arrested only because I was doing my best to spread the Lotus Sutra. You, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman! You have sworn to protect the believer of the



Rev. Gyokai Sekido

Lotus Sutra. Why don't you protect me?" Then he got back on the horse.

The execution ground was located at the seashore of Tatsunokuchi on the outskirts of Kamakura, facing Enoshima Island. Execution by decapitation was scheduled to take place at around 1 AM on the 13th day. The outward sentence for him was banishment to Sado Island. However, it was schemed to behead him late at night.

At the moment when the execution was about to be carried out, an extraordinary natural phenomenon occurred, forcing it to be suspended. Later, Nichiren Shonin's execution was formally suspended thanks to the petition made by his disciples and lay followers. And Nichiren was taken to Echi (Atsugi City today) to be banished to Sado Island.

According to legend, Nichiren Shonin remonstrated Great Bodhisattva Hachiman when he came in the front of the Kamakura Hachiman-gu Shrine,

near the present "Akahashi." This is historically evident. Then, the party escorting our Founder passed Hase and arrived in front of the Goryo Shrine. Receiving a message from our Founder, Shijo Kingo (?-1296), who lived nearby, hurried to see Nichiren Shonin. He clung to the horse, and offered to follow him in death. The party of escorts passed the gorge of the Gokuraku-ji Temple and arrived at Shichiri-ga-hama Beach.

When they came near Inamura-yama, Nichiren took off his robe and hung it on a pine tree as he did not want to have his robe stained with blood upon execution. The remains of the pine tree remain to date. The party arrived at Tsumura, where lived an old lady, about 70 years of age, who became an ardent believer of the Lotus Sutra after meeting Nichiren Shonin in Kamakura. She had been chanting the Odaimoku everyday since then. Feeling deeply sorry for Nichiren Shonin, she made a rice cake in a hurry on which she put sesame and offered it to our Founder. He was pleased and ate it. Since Nichiren Shonin escaped decapitation, people call this rice cake "Founder's neck connecting rice cake." Hence, rice cakes with sesame are served at memorial services of the Nichiren Sect.

Another legend says that when she

tried to offer the rice cake to our Founder, she dropped it on the ground and it was covered with sand. Appreciating her kindness, Nichiren Shonin ate it, saying, "Sesame tastes good on the rice cake." The Ryukoji Temple now stands at the execution ground. The service commemorating the "sesame covered rice cake" is conducted at the temple. Sesame cookies are also available there.

(to be continued)



Nichiren Shonin remonstrates the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman on his way to the execution ground. (This wood-block print is reproduced from "Nichiren Shonin Chugasan")

People I'll Always Remember (2)

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda



'Life Is the Most Essential of All Treasures'

A Letter to Mr. Charlie Tagawa

Dear Mr. Charlie Tagawa,

I would like to thank you and the Peninsula Banjo Band for the wonderful musical performance at our temple's 25th Anniversary Banquet in October last year. Your participation uplifted the celebration markedly, and all the participants enjoyed the banjo performances so much. Your selection of music was excellent. "San Francisco Bay Blues," "Dinah," "I've Been Working on the Railroad" and others were all fondly remembered. You also played some foreign songs, like "Sukiyaki, (Ue o Muite Arukoh)" and "Sakura Sakura," that we could sing together.

Charlie! Do you realize that we have been good friends for the past 25 years? I still remember the day when I met you for the first time at the Sakura Gardens Restaurant in Mountain View. I had heard that there was a banjoist from Japan who had organized a banjo

band that had been playing on a volunteer basis, solely for the enjoyment of their listening public.

I wanted to have your band come to play at the Dedication Banquet of our temple in 1980. When I explained our wish to you, the first words you said to me were, "How much do you guarantee?" Seeing your serious face, I timidly offered a small amount of our budget. You burst out laughing, and accepted our request willingly. Later on, we learned that you had been donating all the money that you received as gratuities from many organizations to local charities including the Research Institute of San Francisco, Stanford Hospital, Hospice of the Silicon Valley and others. According to a notice of the Peninsula Banjo Band, which I received recently, your band has donated over \$182,000. What a wonderful band; and a wonderful cause you have been leading!

Ever since the dedication ceremony of our temple, your band has been

coming to our anniversary banquets every 5 years. I appreciate the support you have given to our temple.

You once told me that you played the guitar in your early years in Japan, but became interested in the tenor banjo. You became a protégé of the great tenor banjoist, Harry Reser, who encouraged you in the single string technique. No wonder that the owner of Sakura Gardens Restaurant was impressed by your version so much that he offered you a contract to come to the United States in the 1960's. I can tell how you and your family were so pleased when you were elected the best banjo player of the year by the New Orleans Jazz Club of Northern California in 1967.

We were so proud of you when you were inducted into the National Four-String Banjo Hall of Fame in 2003, joining banjo greats such as Eddie Peabody, Harry Reser and Perry Bechtel. You were recognized for your teaching, leadership, and dedication to the band as well as for your excellence on the tenor banjo. I am sure that your wife, who passed away in 1993 at the age of 55, was the first person to say "congratulations" to you and shared happiness with you from the Buddha Land.

You and I are getting older, and we do not have much time left to devote ourselves to our communities. However, Nichiren Shonin preaches in his "Jiri



Mr. Charlie Tagawa

Kuyo gosho (Phenomenal Offering and Noumenal Offering), "Life is the most essential of all treasures," and "To maintain our life is more valuable than gaining a million pieces of gold," so let us take care of our health. Please continue to teach your technique to many students. Then your performance will give pleasure to many people, and consequently your generous charity work will give much encouragement to them all.

As you say all the time, "Playing the banjo is my life—I love it," so let us work harder for a little more time to fulfill our lives.

Interview with New Chief Administrator

'I Would Like to Promote *Visit Minobusan*'

On December 20, 2005, at an extraordinary session of the Nichiren Shu Congress, Rev. Joshin Komatsu of the Takei-bo Temple, Yamanashi Prefecture, was elected the new Chief Administrator of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters. He has succeeded Rev. Tansei Iwama, who retired due to ill health. The following is an interview with the New Chief Administrator by the Nichiren Shu Shimbusan staff.

Question: What are your plans at the moment?

Answer: I have always been thinking of a "New Religious" movement. I would like to promote the *Visit Minobusan* campaign. In order to make this possible, all the followers and priests of the Nichiren Shu Order should come together and pay homage to Minobusan. The first and basic step for the New Movement is to go and pray on Minobusan, the foundation of the Nichiren Shu Order.

Q: Were you born in Minobu?

A: Yes, I was born at the Takei-bo Temple in Minobu, where I am a resident minister now. However, I spent my childhood and university days in Tokyo.

Q: I heard that you were the president of the student council when you were studying at Rissho University, were you not?

A: I entered Rissho University in 1966, and when I was in the third year I became the president of the student council.

At the time, Japan was in the midst of the radical student movement, protesting against the government policies and university systems, and Rissho was no exception. Radical students boycotted classes and held anti-establishment rallies on campus. Although I



Rev. Joshin Komatsu

was the president of student council, I was also a student of the department of Buddhist Studies. This put me in a position to side with the university. I lived on campus

200 days of the year in the student council room. The most impressive experience I had was when I joined a protest demonstration at the Yokosuka U.S. Naval Base. One of my friends from Keio University encouraged me to join the rally protesting the entrance of a U.S. battleship to dock in Yokosuka. When I arrived at the site, it was chaos. I was splattered with blood from the clash between the protesting students and the police and I fled to a friend's temple nearby.

From then on, my viewpoint towards the radical movements changed. There were several aggressive leaders on campus. They would give long difficult speeches that were hard to understand. I told them to express their thoughts in simple words which even children and old folks could understand. This upset them, at first but eventually they accepted me. All these incidents taught me that one must get a first hand experience in order to really see and understand what is going on. In order to show and guide people this first hand experience is most effective.

Q: How do you keep yourself so healthy?

A: I used to play rugby in junior and senior high schools. I have kept fit

ever since. Even when I had to climb up and down Mt. Shichimen in Minobu on a daily basis, I was able to do so because of my good health. I am also very careful to get rid of stress daily. I never carry the stress of one day onto the next. I am an expert in finding ways to release stress.

Q: What do you think of the graying of Japanese society and education for the youths?

A: Nowadays, parents depend too much on the schools to educate their children. Because my temple is a shukubou (pilgrims' lodging), I have been accommodating many young priests. In the past 15 years I find that even if I scold the youths severely, it doesn't seem to bother them. I think this is because they have never been scolded by their parents. The parents expect the educational system to discipline their children and teach them common sense and manners. The popular term "kireru" (get uncontrollably upset) is common these days in Japan. I feel that this tendency sprouts when they are very young, and if they are not scolded or cautioned about this kind of behavior in their childhood, there is no way they can be controlled when they have reached adulthood. This is why many of the children cannot control their feelings of anger, hatred and aggression. When children fret, the parent should scold them at that moment and make them realize what is wrong. If they are well-behaved or if they have accomplished something, a parent should praise them wholeheartedly. If the child has suffered sorrow or pain, it is only natural that the parent shares the hurt with his child. Joy and anger should lie side by side and be handled naturally. The parent plays an important role in educating a child. With

families breaking up and grandparents living apart from the family, individualistic ideas grow rapidly. I feel that religion should play an important role in bringing the family together.

The temple is where old folks go; this is a common thought nowadays, but children should visit the temple with their family to pay respect to their ancestors. If they visit the temple with their family from their very young days, it becomes a custom which will be passed on to the younger generation. If the feeling towards religion is deeply rooted from their childhood, religion can be passed on down without force. It is important for the parent to do Gassho and say "Itadakimasu" before a meal and "Gochisousama" after a meal. Also chanting the Odaimoku in front of the altar every day is very important. The actions of the adults will set good examples for the children.

Q: Finally could you give a message to all the Nichiren Shu followers throughout Japan and the world?

A: Let us always chant the Odaimoku without putting on a special air or making it ritualistic. Let us chant it together always with a light heart but from the bottom of our heart. (S. S.)

Position of Chief Administrator

The Chief Administrator of the Nichiren Shu (Shumu Socho) is like the position of the Prime Minister of the Japanese government. He is responsible for leading the Administration, giving reports and submitting ideas to the Headquarters. As a representative of the religious organization, his duties are numerous. His term is four years and has to be higher than a Sojo in religious rank. He is nominated by the Shukai (Nichiren Shu Congress) and authorized by the Kancho (Archbishop).



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

SAN JOSE

Hanamatsuri Service

The annual Hanamatsuri service will be held on April 9th from 10 AM After the service there will be a special lecture by Professor Takashi Nakao of Rissho University. The topic will be "Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Mandala."

LOS ANGELES

Workshop Held

The second workshop on Nichiren Buddhism for lay people sponsored by the Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) was held from March 10 to March 12 at the center in Hayward, California. The workshop was open to the public and both members and non-members were welcome to attend. The registration fee was \$50 which included study material, three lunches and two dinners. The NBIC provided accommodations within the facility for 10 people (an extra charge of \$25 per night including breakfast) and for others hotel rooms

were reserved.

Study Class

Rev. Shokai Kanai has started a study class on Buddhism for beginners since January 2006. The class is held on the 2nd Sunday of the month after the Sunday service. The textbook used in class is "The Teaching of Buddha" published by Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai. There are enough texts at the temple for the participants.

SAMGHA

Hanamatsuri, called the "Flower Festival," is a birthday celebration for Sakyamuni Buddha. Here in America, as in China, Japan and Korea it is marked on the calendar for April 8. This is in keeping with the Mahayana tradition. In Southeast Asia, Buddhists observe Wesak, a combined celebration for the Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment and Nirvana of the Buddha on a full-moon day in May (lunar calendar) according to the Theravada convention. Hanamatsuri has become a celebration throughout many major

American cities recently.

LONDON

From Rev. Kangyo Noda's Journal

January

28th—A Japanese man who has been studying English in the UK visited our temple to see what it was like. I was very glad to see that a Japanese came to visit here in London.

29th—Sunday Service from 2 PM.

31st—I went to the real estate agent to renew the lease contract. Due to inflation an increase in the rent was requested, but we agreed to keep it as it is this year.

February

5th—Held a Setsubun-service from 2 PM. I explained the purpose of the service and after that we threw beans, wishing to have good fortune this year.

7th—Weekly Buddhist study class on Tuesday. We study Buddhism rather than Nichiren Shonin's teachings and the Lotus Sutra because I believe that Europeans are not

familiar with Buddhism compared to Asians, though some may disagree. I reckon we had better spend more time to learn the basic Buddhist theories such as the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path to prepare people to understand the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin.



Rev. Kangyo Noda

12th—Shodaigyo meditation from 2 PM. A Sri Lankan family visited the temple. They said that they had been to the Nichiren Shu temple in Sri Lanka when they were there. It did confirm my belief that the city of London is the place where people from all over the world gather and the importance of this temple as a gathering place.

15th—A Norwegian member visited the temple and stayed for a while in order to take part in the Buddha's Parinirvana day and Nichiren Shonin's birthday held on the 19th. During her stay we chanted the sutra and discussed many things.

19th—Ceremony commemorating the Buddha's Parinirvana and Nichiren Shonin's birthday was held from 2 PM. A curtain made of lace was donated and installed by one of the members.

21st—I visited Torquay of Devon, southwest of England and stayed one night. There was a member I went to see and we had a conversion ceremony for a woman who lives in Torquay. Now we have two members in this area.

24th—A Japanese woman who used to live in London visited the temple. We have had many visitors, especially this month from other parts of the UK, France, Norway, and Japan.

27th—The council of Bar-net provided a skip service for us. A skip comes every three months on a road in a residential area. Residents can take out unused items and the council collects them free of charge. When a skip is provided, I try to help the neighbors as a community service. I believe it is important to improve the relationship with the community.

28th—Shodaigyo meditation on every fourth Tuesday from 7:30 PM. Actually, most Europeans reckon that what Buddhism does is meditation to obtain individual calmness of mind.

'Kosenrufu in Southeast Asia' (1)

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

Rev. M. O.: In 2002, 88 people in Malaysia were converted to Nichiren Shu. Would you like to tell us about the course of this conversion?

Mr. Ang: During the earlier years, the group of believers particularly in Penang and Klang were rather conservative in their religious practice. We were exposed fundamentally only to Nichiren Shoshu and SGI. Throughout our years in chanting the Odaimoku and the Lotus Sutra, we were steadfast in our devotion to the Great Mandala Gohonzon.

It was in early 2000, when the Nichiren Shoshu Headquarters in Japan wanted our Penang organization to donate our premises to another organization in Malaysia under the pretext of consolidation and formation of a head temple in Malaysia. We felt very awkward with such an arrangement as our center of activities was the premises donated by some of our pioneer members. We were told, moreover, that the donation of our premises will not assure us membership to the Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple in Malaysia. This truly upset our mem-

bers as we felt it unreasonable. Since the situation has deviated from our main religious objective, our members in Penang and Klang decided to dissociate ourselves to avoid any further unpleasantness.

In the course of our constant chanting of the Odaimoku and continued belief in Nichiren Daishonin's teaching, our self taught conviction made us more determined and we began to study the entire 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Our members did many hours of research especially over the internet and started to communicate with various Nichiren Buddhist organizations worldwide. We were surprised with our findings as we began to appreciate and understand the true teaching of Nichiren Daishonin, the Lotus Sutra and Sakyamuni Buddha.

Through our internet surfing, we were fortunate to discover the Nichiren Shu of USA and started to communicate with Rev. Kanai. We managed to understand and had a better perspective of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching, the Lotus Sutra and Sakyamuni Buddha. Rev. Kanai continued to support us and later introduced us to the Nichiren Shu Headquarters in Ikegami, Tokyo. I have also made an effort to

personally visit Ikegami Honmonji and Minobusan.

After my return to Penang, I managed to impart my experience to Penang members. With the support of the members, we started to correspond with the Nichiren Shu Headquarters in Tokyo by letters and faxes and waited for their positive reply. After nearly one year of uncertainty, our prayers were one day answered when Rev. Imai contacted me saying that he was in India and was on his way back to Japan. He wanted to know where Penang, Malaysia, was and whether there was any flight that could take him to Penang. We were all excited and when Rev. Imai arrived in Penang on August 9, 2001, we knew the Buddha had answered our prayers.

Rev. M. O.: In April 2003, the Indonesia Nichiren Shu was established in Jakarta. Subsequently Nichiren Shu believers in Indonesia established the Rengeji Temple in Jakarta. I would like to know how you introduced and propagated Nichiren Shu Buddhism to Indonesia.

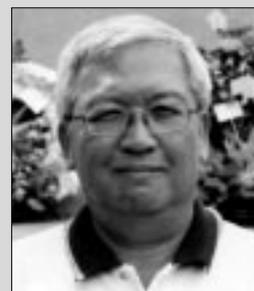
Mr. Ang: Coincidentally, when Penang formally established contact with the Nichiren Shu Headquarters in 2001, we were fortunate to stumble upon the Nichiren Shoshu Jakarta through the internet. Mr. Sidin who was an internet savvy person had just left Nichiren Shoshu Jakarta and kept our communication through the internet and later through telephone conversations. We also requested them to

understand Nichiren Shu teaching further through research over the website.

They later understood the fundamental of Nichiren Shu's teaching and agreed that Sakyamuni Buddha is the original Buddha. During one of the missionary visits by four Reverends to Penang in the year 2002, we took the opportunity of inviting those in Jakarta to come to Penang to have a look and understand more about Nichiren Shu.

Out of the four members who wanted to visit us in Penang, three of them were youths. During their stay in Penang, we were able to exchange opinions, experiences and belief. This was reinforced further through discussion with the visiting Nichiren Shu Reverends. Upon their return to Jakarta and firmly believing in Nichiren Shu philosophy, they finally accepted and wished to become members of Nichiren Shu. With this propagation milestone achieved, Rev. Kanshin Mochida thereafter arranged for the three Reverends to visit Jakarta and perform the "Receiving Precepts" for the converts and "Eye Opening" ceremony for the Gohonzon Mandalas and Buddha's statues.

(to be continued)



Mr. Ang Tiang Soon

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