

Nichiren Shu News

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Nichiren Shonin's Shokutaku (1) The Oeshiki Memorial Service



Nichiren Shonin passes into Nirvana, Chugasan, preserved at Kyoninji Temple, Chiba Prefecture

Editor's note

We have started a new series from the October issue, recreating the various kinds of food Nichiren Shonin had been eating at his time. The dishes show how they were very seasonal, and the ingredients were those brought to Nichiren Shonin from near and far by his followers. The dishes were recreated by Mrs. Takako Shimizu, wife of Rev. Kairyu Shimizu of Toeiji Temple, Chiba Prefecture. The scroll paintings depicting Nichiren Shonin's life history from his birth to his passing were taken from a memorial book published by Kyoninji Temple, Chiba Prefecture. The order of the photos are in reverse order since the series begins in the month of Our Founder's passing.

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph.D.

In 1282, Nichiren Shonin's health began to fail. His disciples were worried about his worsening condition. Nichiren Shonin took their advice and decided to go to a hot spring in Hitachi (present-day Ibaraki Prefecture). He left Minobusan on the eighth day of the ninth month, arriving at Ikegami (present-day Tokyo) on the 18th day of the same month. But his condition was too serious. At 8:00 a.m. on the 13th day of the tenth month, he passed into Nirvana surrounded by his disciples and followers.

"Nichiren Shonin Chugasan" are illus-

trated biographies of Nichiren Shonin created by painters in the 16-17th century. This depiction shows the scene of Nichiren Shonin's Nirvana. This work is preserved at Kyoninji Temple (Chiba Prefecture). The people are drawn with round shoulders, and the precise pattern of the clothes and the furniture shows the characteristics of the Momoyama Period: the latter half of the 16th century. Kyoninji Temple is near the site of the Komatsubara Persecution where on the 11th day of the eleventh month in 1264, Nichiren Shonin was attacked and injured by steward Tojo Kagenobu. This year, 2013, is the 750th memorial of that day.

Nichiren Shonin's writings show details of Nichiren Shonin's meals in those days. Because he lived in a hermitage at Minobusan with his disciples, his food was not always sufficient, even though his followers eagerly presented him with many goods. His handwritten letters of thanks still exist. Therefore we know about what was presented to him at the time. Mrs. Takako Shimizu, wife of the chief priest of Toeiji Temple (Chiba Prefecture), has reproduced these dishes based on one of Nichiren Shonin's letters.

On the 20th day of the ninth month in 1281, Lord Nanjo Tokimitsu presented so many taro roots that a horse carried them on its back. He also donated burdocks wrapped in straw, and six radishes, or possibly six bundles, to

Minobusan. Nichiren Shonin was very glad and expressed his joy humorously: "All the vegetables grow very well. The taros are hard like a stone. The burdocks are long as the horn of the big bull. The thick radishes seem to be the big nails of great Buddhist temples. Food is very important for the human being. The virtues that you presented the food to us are very precious." Dishes in the photograph are "taro and burdock cooked in soy sauce broth" and "radishes with citrus flavored miso."

(to be continued)



Nichiren Shonin's meals in autumn

Recipe for the Recreated Dishes

By Sandra Seki
Editor

Ingredients:

Three-five satoimo (Japanese taro)
Peel the skin and place in water.
Boil till the taro is soft inside then add soy sauce and mirin (Japanese sweet sake) Simmer and let the flavor soak in.

Gobo (Burdock)

Two-three pieces. Scrub the skin and peel. Soak in water then boil till it is tender. Add soy sauce and mirin. Simmer and let the flavor soak in.

Daikon (Japanese radish)

Peel the skin and cut into two cm. slices. Boil until soft. Then place miso flavored with yuzu (Japanese citrus) on the boiled daikon.

In the days of Nichiren Shonin soy sauce was not created yet.

The people of the Kamakura Period used to season their food with a seasoning called 'hishio'. It was made with a mixture of soy beans, mochi rice, rice, flour, salt, and sake. It seems Nichiren Shonin ate the vegetables donated by the followers and farmers seasoned with 'hishio'.

Shu-ron, and Ai-kyogen of Renjishi (3)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura

Visiting Scholar
Reishauer Institute of Japanese
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“Renjishi” also finds its roots in Noh. It is a Kabuki dance that has its origins in a Noh play titled, “Shakkyo”. The script to Renjishi was written by Kawatake Mokuami (1816-1893) in 1861 (Bunkyo). Although it would undergo revision, it has been passed on to us successfully in its present form. Within Kabuki, the Shakkyo-mono (Shishi-mono, that is the dance form depicting the transformation into a lion) is assessed to be on an equal footing as that of Dojoji.

The setting is Mount Seiryō, Tenjiku (India), the sacred grounds of Manjusri. It is a deep mountain visited by faithful believers. However, as Manjusri himself is portrayed riding a lion, there are many fearful lions that live in these mountains.

In the first half of this play, the parent-child kyogen actors with their hand puppet lions act out the Shakkyo dances and the scene where lion pups are thrown down to the bottom of the cliff. In the second half, the lion heads, this time, are red and white, representing parent-child lions. The father lion cheers on the lion pups who try to climb up the cliff. When the lion pups successfully climb back up, the two lions display their exhilaration by shaking their manes. The shaking of their manes has become a famous scene. The interlude joining the first and second parts of the play (Ai-Kyogen) was taken from the Kyogen, “Shu-ron”, which represents a sectarian debate between two priests from differing sects (Hokke Shu and Jodo Shu). However, what transpires is not a religious debate as is suggested by its title, “Shu-ron”, but rather a small skirmish between two priests on a pilgrimage to Mt. Seiryō.

The Hokke Shu priest is Rennē and the Jodo Shu priest is Hennen. I would like to introduce the dialogue of the sectarian debate.

Rennē:

“I am a priest of Honkokuji Temple from the capital city. I have decided to climb Mount Seiryō of Tenjiku and study. Well, let’s proceed slowly. From what I have heard, Mount Seiryō is very steep and deep. Let us take a rest here. Finally.

Hennen:

“I am a priest of Kurodani Temple, from Higashiyama of the capital city. This time, I seek to cross Shakkyo of Mount Seiryō in Tenjiku, and pay my respects to Manjusri. Anyway, let’s go slowly. I have heard that Mount Seiryō is a very steep and deep mountain. Well, there’s someone here. That person there . . .”

In this way, Rennē of Kyoto Honkokuji and Hennen of Konkai-komyoji Temple of Kurodani, Higashiyama in Kyoto find themselves on the road together. But, when they learn of each other’s origins . . . Hennen: “Well, anyway, I’m certainly sharing

the road with someone quite detestable.”

So they end up traveling together quite against their wish. Later . . .

Rennē:

“If you want to go with me, take with you these wonderful and precious rosary beads which I have received from our master, Nichiren Shonin. Take them!”

Hennen:

“Oh, no. I do not need such a thing.”

Hennen:

“Such a filthy thing. Such a filthy thing. Then, take these rosaries from Ippen Shonin. Take them!”

Rennē:

“I do not need such a thing.”

In this manner, there is an exchange of whether to accept or not to accept either Nichiren Shonin or Ippen Shonin’s rosaries. Next, we enter the scene concerning “Shu-ron” or religious debate.

Rennē:

“Filthy, filthy. Hey, priest. If you’d like, why don’t we have a religious debate right here.”

Hennen:

“That’s something I’d be in favor of.”

Rennē:

“Let the ignorant priest be shown the power of my merits.” Nagauta/Takemoto: “The merits of happiness spread in “gozui denden” (transmission of the teaching over 50 times) is vast. If one is to dig the great earth, cut the long potato of happiness from one end, and sprinkle pepper, the pepper is painful, yet it is congenial. A mysterious relation. You end up feeling thankful even when you shed tears.”

Rennē:

“How fortunate it is.”

Hennen:

“Well, that’s probably because the pepper was so potent that it made the tears to flow.”

Hennen:

“Let’s express ourselves in a religious debate. Are you familiar with “ichinen Mida-butsu sokmetsu muryo-zai”, that even one thought upon Amida Buddha would erase a myriad of sins?”

Rennē:

“I’ve never heard of anything like that.”

Hennen:

“If you’ve never heard of it, let me tell you, then.” Nagauta/Takemoto: “The world of the Buddha’s teaching is represented by the ability to save people and the effectiveness of causality. Just one thought of Amida Buddha also empowers the Three Honorable Buddha’s ray of prayer with the immediate extinguishment of uncountable sins. The merits such that those are blind or are unable to walk are relieved of their difficulties are the result of the honorable teachings of the Jodo Shu.”

Hennen:

“How thankful it is.”

Rennē:

“No, no. What that represents is that they are all hungry demons with no possessions.”

Hennen:

“No, no. They aren’t hungry demons

without possessions.”

In this way, the debate is projected as being very farcical. No one wins this argument. The rivalry continues on with the subject of drums and bells.

Rennē:

“With assumptions such as that, the lion will not be scared away. The lion will be frightened off with the merits of the wonderful drum (don d-d-don don) given to us by our Nichiren Shonin.”

Hennen:

“No, no. You can’t scare a lion with something like that. Then, on our side, we behold the bell (ch- chin chin) passed on to us by Ippen Shonin. Let us slay the lion with the power of this bell.”

Then, each of them proceed to chant the daimoku and nembutsu while beating on a drum and striking a bell, respectively. The scene concludes with a twist where in which the characters have unknowingly switched their chanting of the nembutsu and daimoku.

Rennē:

“This is a drum (don don).”

Hennen:

“This is a bell (chin chin).”

Rennē:

“This is a drum (don don).”

Hennen:

“This is a bell (chin chin).”

Rennē:

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo (don don).”

Hennen:

“Namu Amida Butsu (chin chin).”

Rennē:

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo (don don).”

Hennen:

“Namu Amida Butsu (chin chin).”

Rennē:

“Namu Amida Butsu.”

Hennen:

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”

Rennē & Hennen:

“We’re switched around? Ha ha ha ha . . .”

While they are occupied with themselves, they sense the approach of a lion. Nagauta/Takemoto: “The bad winds that blow from the folds; they’ve forgotten their sutra books; shake, shake, shake.” Hennen: “For the mountain to suddenly begin to rumble; this is not something of little importance.” Rennē: “Well, this must be the old lion that we just heard about at the bottom of the mountain.” Hennen: “Like this . . .” Rennē & Hennen: “We can’t stay here!” Nagauta/Takemoto: “Seemingly without using their feet, they frantically rise, and rolled down the hill like Daruma-daishi (Bodhidharma doll).”

Then, Rennē and Hennen make their exit stumbling and wavering.

If we were to limit our observations to the Renjishi, we can infer that the view of the common people at the time was one in which people probably thought that: “The Hokke Shu and the Jodo Shu each promote the daimoku and the nembutsu to each other; and thus, are extremely unfriendly. But, since they are both Buddhist, they must not be too different from each other.”

(to be continued)



Renjishi-the lion shaking its mane

Rev. Kanno Preaches (26)



“I know who is practicing the Way and who is not. Therefore I expound various teachings To all living beings According to their capacities.” (Lotus Sutra, Chapter XVI: the Duration of the Life of the Tathagata)

Being Thankful

Sakyamuni Buddha knows who is practicing the Buddha’s teachings or not practicing at all, or practicing sinful deeds, or indulging in evil passions and so forth. Sakyamuni Buddha is expounding his teachings in accordance with the mind of the people.

This means, as I understand, that the Buddha is expounding his teachings even to the people who are least accomplished in their practice in the Way of the Buddha.

The Buddha is expounding his teachings to you, all the readers of this newspaper. Whether we have “the mind to feel thankful” about it is of the greatest importance.

I wish you are reminded of this important mind on the occasion of the this year’s Oeshiki, commemorating the 732nd anniversary of Nichiren Shonin’s memorial.

(Rev. Nisso Kanno, head priest of Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka Prefecture)

A Perfect Beginning: The Glory of Tokudo

By Christine Tello-Lorenz
Member of the Nichiren Sangha of Greater New England

On Sunday, August 4th, family and friends came together at a small New England town to celebrate a milestone unfamiliar to many yet a momentous to say the least - the Tokudo ceremony for my husband, Mark Lorenz.

Watching with new eyes and intrigue, we were amazed as the ministers carried us through the Tokudo ceremony and delivered our new Shami. Watching this profound, centuries-old ritual was one to remember. Even my

usually less than enthusiastic twelve year old nephew gazed with an interest I've never seen.

As Mark proceeded through the ceremony, showing courage and focus, beginning in white and returning in black, we were all in awe as we watched his transformation. This was not only a testimony to his commitment; it was a perfect start to an inspiring journey that embraced us all.

Clearly, Mark was where he needed to be. From a young age, his heart called for this day and we all saw it. It was a long awaited day that offered a new beginning. I was very proud

and happy to be part of this glorious event and to have the support of our sangha and temple members from around the country.

"Tokudo reaffirms my devotion to this Buddhism; something I felt has been inside me for a very long time. Walking this path, living the faith and teaching others, brings great joy. I am grateful and thankful to all the ministers for their support, especially to Rev. Faulconer whose humble leadership inspires and enlightens me," said Mark.

As always, thanks to everyone involved in making it an incredibly special occasion for me, Shami Ryuden,

and our family and friends. I look forward to the next step of the journey! Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo.



L-R Christine Tello-Lorenz, Shami Ryuden, Rev. Faulconer

2013 NONA Retreat



Participants practice shakyo



Lecture by Rev. Faulconer

By Rev. Shoda Kanai
Kannoji Temple, Las Vegas

In the early evening of August 2nd, 13 participants and four Shonins eagerly waited to begin the NONA Weeklong Retreat sponsored by the Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Greater New England. The retreat was an opportunity for all those gathered to learn the practices of Nichiren Shu. The event was held at a Buddhist retreat center in Newmarket, New Hampshire, about one hour's drive north from Boston. Many participants were new to the Nichiren Shu way of practicing. This retreat promised to be quite beneficial to them. Participants were mainly from the east coast, Texas and as far away as Puerto Rico. After opening service and orientation, the intensity picked up.

The schedule for each day was packed with events that kept the participants busy and mindful of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin. The day started with Suigyō in which everyone participated. Morning and evening services lasted around one hour as we chanted the Lotus Sutra in Shindoku according to the 32 day breakdown used at Minobusan Kuonji Temple (two days were chanted at each session). There was also Dokyō prac-

tice which consisted of chanting one of the days. Immediately following each service, there was a lecture on the parts that was just chanted in order to give insight into the deeper meaning behind the Lotus Sutra. Everyone was split up into different 'Han' for daily cleaning/Tōban duties. There was also time for Angya, Shakyō and Shodaigyō, followed by an open discussion. Vegetarian meals were prepared by a cook from the New England Sangha.

The meals were eaten in silence. They consisted of rice, miso soup and vegetables. As we ate, we contemplated all that went into this meal, from the farmer in the fields to the supermarket. The participants were also able to

experience Tokudo Shiki, Obon/Segaki Hōyō, Rai Hōkke Gi Shiki (Hōkke Senbo), Kaji Kito and Nyūshinkishō Shiki. Each of these special services added to the excitement and exposed everyone to other facets of ritual that are used in Nichiren Shu. Everyone even wrote their own Tōba for the Segaki Hōyō. Other types of ritual were also explained such as proper etiquette when in the Hondō, Shoten-zenjin and life at a Japanese temple.

Early in the week, the participants were a bit timid as this type of practice

was new to them. With patience, each day they improved. I was pleasantly surprised how everyone started to chant louder as the week progressed. Even Suigyō Kanmon and the Oke motions improved. By the end, I could see in everyone's eyes the difference this week had made for them. I believe that they all came away with a newly found appreciation of the Lotus Sutra and are now able both to practice chanting the Nichiren Shu way in their homes and to be more confident in their practice at their respective temples.



Rev. Shoda Kanai

Memorial Service for War Victims



Nichiren Shu held a memorial service on August 15 at the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery. This service has been held each year since 1959 and is a memorial for the souls of all war victims and a prayer for World Peace. It was conducted by Shobin Watanabe Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu.

Temple Events

Kannonji Temple Las Vegas

By Bishop Shokai Kanai

Peace March

On October 13, the temple will conduct a special memorial service for the passing of Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin who passed away in 1282. His lifetime work was to establish righteousness and bring peace and security to the nation. In starting a new tradition, we will hold a Peace March, walking and chanting for about ten blocks (Sahara Ave. north and south) with a banner of the Odaimoku and a placard saying, "Peace and Security with Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo". This peace march is to pray for the community.

Receiving the Mandala Gohonzon

By Rev. Shoda Douglas Kanai

Following the Obon service on July 28, a special service was held for one of our temple members, Katie Hutchinson, so that she could receive her Mandala Gohonzon. Many wonder why we hold an "Eye Opening" ceremony for the Gohonzon, which can be purchased very easily or even printed off the internet. As the object of worship, this Gohonzon represents all the ten worlds in Buddhism. This is the representation of the Buddha Land, balance and harmony of the universe. By having a dedication ceremony, especially done by a Shuhoshi (a priest who performs special prayers with bokken or wooden sword), energizes the Gohonzon, awakening its

spirit and opens a portal to the other worlds. When Katie chants in front of her Gohonzon, her prayers will be heard directly by the Buddha. This connection is very sacred thus giving this Gohonzon a special meaning.

San Jose Nichiren Buddhist Temple

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda

Pilgrimage Tour to Sado Island

This past June, my wife and I had an opportunity to visit Sado Island and went on a pilgrimage tour to three notable Nichiren Shu temples. This was my second visit in 40 some years. I had always thought that Sado Island was too far away but on the contrary, the trip was easy and comfortable. It took only two hours from Tokyo to Niigata by the Tohoku Shinkansen (bullet train) and a two and a half hour ferryboat ride from Niigata to Ryotsu Port in Sado, a distance of 42 miles. If you take a hydrofoil you can get there in an hour.

On September 12, 1271, Nichiren Shonin was arrested as a political offender. However, he miraculously escaped execution at Tatsunokuchi, Kamakura, and was exiled to Sado Island. He crossed the sea on a small boat.

In his "Letter from Teradomari," Nichiren wrote, "After traveling for twelve days from Sagami Province, we reached the port of Teradomari (Niigata). We are to cross over the great Sea of Japan to get to Sado Island, but we do not know when we shall be able to cross it because we do not have a favorable wind for sailing." According to this letter, he departed Teradomari

on October 28. It was already winter and the sea was rough. The boat sailed on through the heaving waters. It is said that Nichiren Shonin stood at the bow of the boat and wrote the Odaimoku on the waves. Then the raging waves suddenly calmed down.

On November 1, he was escorted to a small, crumbling shack on Sado Island. The place was called Tsukahara, where the people of Sado disposed of their dead. He was abandoned there to survive the freezing winter with only a straw cape to keep him warm. On the way back to the mainland after he was pardoned, Nichiren Shonin's boat was carried away to a southern port, Kashiwazaki, where he landed two days later. Nichiren Shonin endured such hardships and privation in order to propagate the true teachings of the Buddha.

While on the pilgrimage, I toured three major Nichiren temples: Konponji, Myosenji, and Myoshoji. There, I expressed my deepest gratitude to Nichiren Shonin. I also had a chance to visit Senkaku Bay. On that day, the waves were very high and rough. The small boat that accommodated only ten people rocked badly and some young girls on board were screaming with fear. I briefly thought about how Nichiren Shonin must have also experienced his rough ride several hundred years ago.

Choeizan Enkyoji Sangha (Seattle)

By Gregg Tralle
Secretary of Board Members

Welcoming Sangha

From December 2012, Seattle's Choeizan Enkyoji Buddhist Temple has begun working with the Unitarian Universal Association (UUA) to modify their "Welcoming Congregation" program into the "Welcoming

Sangha" program. This program is a voluntary effort by religious organizations to become intentionally more inclusive of people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and/or transgender. It is based on a series of workshops developed by the UUA. The goal of the workshops is to reduce prejudice by increasing understanding and acceptance among people of different sexual orientations and gender identities.

Enkyoji is honored to be the first Buddhist Sangha to participate in the "Welcoming Congregation" program and has received permission to display the "Rainbow Dharma Wheel" while we adapt the workshop material to the needs of a Buddhist Sangha.

Walk for Rice

For the second year, Choeizan Enkyoji has participated in the annual "Walk for Rice." This fundraising event benefits Seattle's second largest food bank and focuses on Asian dietary needs. As part of the Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACSR) this food bank distributes about 1.6 million pounds of food to over 5,000 individuals, mostly young (under 18) or senior (over 65). ACSR calculates that a 50 pound bag of rice will serve over 17 households.

Last year the Sangha raised \$270. This year we exceeded our goal of \$500 and raised \$1,176. Furthermore, \$487 of the collected donations qualified for a 'six to one' matching grant, bringing in an additional \$2,922!

We have continued to improve how we solicit donations and whom to ask. Applying these to next year's "Walk for Rice," we intend to raise even more money for such an important cause. We can also apply these lessons to the Sangha's fund raising efforts in our efforts to set up

a larger facility.

"Walk for Rice" is one of two charities the Sangha board has chosen for its community involvement. The other charity, API Chaya, works equally importantly with domestic abuse among immigrants.

Honolulu Myohoji

Rev. Takamasa Yamamura

30th Anniversary of Japanese Cultural Center

The Honolulu Myohoji Japanese Cultural Center will celebrate its 30th anniversary in October. This Cultural Center was built in 1983 for various Japanese activities. The dedication ceremony of the center was given on October 2, 1983. Until now the center has provided us with many opportunities to learn Japanese culture and renew the relationship between our members and families, bringing joy and happiness to all.

We would like to express our gratitude to our forefathers who made such a great effort to build our center. We will have a special Oeshiki service on Sunday, October 20 at 10:00 a.m. During the service our members, and the teachers and students of our center, will offer incense to express our gratitude to the Buddha, Nichiren Shonin, and our forefathers. Bishop Chishin Hirai of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii will officiate the service. As a special guest, we have invited Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett of the Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Houston to give a special lecture. Also we have invited Mr. Kenny Endo, famous Taiko player, to perform after the service. Other kinds of entertainment are also scheduled. Please join us for the special Oeshiki event since it is one of the most important memorial celebrations for Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin.

Calendar for October - November 2013

October 1: Ceremony of changing the robes on the Statue of Nichiren Shonin, Minobusan
October 10: Service in memory of the Founder's exile to Sado Island
October 11~13: Oeshiki
October 12: Minobusan and Ikegami Mando Parade
October 13: The 732rd Memorial Service for Nichiren Shonin
October 20: The 30th anniversary of Myohoji Cultural Center in Hawaii

November 2~4: Lay Leader retreat in Minobusan
November 11: Service to commemorate the Komatsubara Persecution
November 13: Memorial Service for Nichizo Shonin
November 28: 14th Memorial Service for Ryuguji Temple at Nagpour, India

By Rev. Kaikei Ochiai

Nichiren Shu News

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