

Nichiren Shu News

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BUDDHIST PRIEST TEMPLE RACE

JAPAN'S FIRST TEMPLE
TRAIL-RUNNING EVENT

By Yasuo Uchisaka Photography by Sho Fujimaki This article first appeared in Tarzan magazine (Issue No. 649) in Japan. Translated by Kanjo Bassett.



And they're off: 193 runners joined in the first Buddhist Priest Temple Race, a 36-kilometer run, starting from the Sanmon Gate of Minobusan Kuonji Temple.

The sport of trail running came to Japan in 2001, brought over by Hiroki Ishikawa, an alumnus of "Team Tarzan." An enthusiastic challenger in the American 100 Mile race, he attained the highest overall ranking in the Big Four 100 Mile Ultramarathons that year. In recent years Japanese trail runners such as Tsuyoshi Taburagi, Kenichi Yamamoto, Shogo Mochizuki and Hiroko Suzuki have become well known participants on the European Alpine Ultramarathon scene.

I assumed trail running was just a sport outside Japan, but am embarrassed to admit that I could not have been more wrong. After all, hasn't Japan always had mountain religions? Huge boulders, giant trees, the mountains themselves are the sacred vessel bodies of gods to be worshiped. Pilgrimage paths of old that reached into the deep recesses of mountains are the trails of today. Ascetics and Buddhist priests journeyed those steep trails through valleys and peaks as part of their spiritual practice. If that is not trail running, what is?

The path running west from Minobusan Kuonji Temple, head temple of Nichiren Shu, to Keishin-in Temple on Mt. Shichimen is a steep mountain pilgrimage trail with a long history. Already a long established sacred

mountain when Nichiren Shonin arrived in 1274, Mt. Shichimen was a place that Shugendo Buddhists (a mystic-esoteric Buddhist/Shinto sect) would climb so that their souls could be reborn in the new light of dawn there in the afterlife.

practitioners of old climbed the beastly path wearing Tengu one tooth geta? And that brave people did it in an hour?

Perhaps the people of those times walked faster. It is said one might meet the Tengu demon on the way up. At the



High point of the race: Jumping through the Keishin-in Temple gate at the highest elevation on the course. Keishin-in Temple is directly west of Mt. Fuji. On the equinox in spring and fall, the sun rises directly over Mt. Fuji, and these have become favorite times for pilgrims to climb Mt. Shichimen to worship there.

A panoramic view of Mt. Fuji lies directly east of Keishin-in Temple, a main reason it was built there. The first rays of the rising equinox sun shine forth from the top of Mt. Fuji, penetrate Mt. Shichimen and shoot in a straight line west to Izumo Shrine in far western Honshu.

Reverend Yuji Komatsu, a priest of Keishin-in Temple, thought about this steep mountain path that many climb to worship. For some, it can take 10 hours. Pilgrims well into their 80s climb as if using the last breath of their life. For some reason Rev. Komatsu ran up Shichimen instead of walking. Of course it was a hard, painful experience. But wait a minute, don't the legends of Shichimen say that spiritual

trail head, there are pilgrims who look like mountain ascetics. Why not take up the challenge? And so the priests of Keishin-in had the idea of holding a race on the pilgrimage trail and put their plan into action.



Getting into the spirit: Priests from Keishin-in Temple, the race sponsor, enthusiastically cheer on runners at the midway turning point of the race.



High relief: Runners take a break from the race and some quick refreshment, sweet Shiruko porridge, served by the Keishin-in priests in the temple foyer.

The first race was held on December 1, 2013. Keishin-in Temple, at the mid-point, is at an elevation of 1,714 meters, and the Minobu area is cold that time of year. Snow in the higher elevations is not unusual. The elevation profile of the race course covered 2,700 meters. Due to the cold conditions and short daylight, race participation was limited to trail runners who qualified with a full marathon time of less



The road less traveled: Heading back to Minobusan along the Akazawa Road. Akazawa used to be a popular overnight stop for pilgrims when they had to climb over Mt. Minobu to get to Mt. Shichimen. Better roads provide direct access to the base of Mt. Shichimen, and most pilgrims now choose the easier route. The pilgrim inns have mostly closed, but villagers have preserved the historic buildings.

than four hours. Even so, the shorter 13-kilometer race event alone had 380 participants. The race staff was lucky to have 140 volunteers on hand to help manage things.

The weather for the race was perfectly clear, with blue skies, but cold. 193 participants for the 36-kilometer "Dragon Climb Race" ran up Shichimen to the Keishin-in midpoint. The foyer of the temple was transformed into a warming up station serving hot azuki bean soup with rice flour dumplings in it. A tiny slice of paradise along the cold, hard way.

The winner was Skyrace champion Takujiro Iida. The second place winner was Shogo Mochizuki. It looks like the start of a new legend.



Coming full circle: The long race comes to an end, returning to the same place where it began, at the Sanmon Gate at Minobusan Kuonji Temple.



Odaimoku on the run: A chanting priest welcomes a runner climbing up Mt. Shichimen. Most hikers take four to five hours, but the runners did it in one hour.

Nichiren Shu & Women (4)

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett

Nichinyo Gozen Gohenji is a letter from Nichiren Shonin to a female follower on the subject of faith and the use of honzon.

into Nichiren Shonin's formulation of the physical form of honzon. He also describes the timing of the honzon's appearance during the beginning of the Declining Latter Age of the Dharma as "a symbol of propagation of the Lotus



"In the next life, the honzon, like a lantern in the darkness or a carrier on a steep road, will stand by you, Lady Nichinyo, and protect you." This has always been one of my favorite passages during my own difficult travels through life.

The recipient of this letter is identified only as Lady Nichinyo. In Nichiren Shonin's time, this was not unusual. Women were usually identified only by their male familial relationships. It is also significant that Nichiren Shonin shows his regard by referring to her as "gozen," an honorific term meaning "My Lady." This letter is a clear expression of Nichiren Shonin's deep gratitude for women's efforts in faith; he never fails to express his appreciation. It reminds us of how far women have traveled in the journey of faith.

The great significance of this letter is its explanation of the origin of honzon and the importance of the honzon appearing in Nichiren Shonin's time. Using his extensive knowledge of Buddhist history and sutras, Nichiren Shonin begins a conversation on faith and the use of honzon.

Nichiren Shonin locates honzon in the Buddha's teachings contained in the Lotus Sutra from Chapters 15, "The Appearance of Bodhisattvas," to Chapter 22, "Transmission." Careful reading of this portion of the Sutra provides insight

Sutra." He specifically states that this honzon was "not my creation, but is the honzon created by Shakyamuni and other Buddhas in the Stupa of Treasures." He then explains that while T'ien-t'ai and Miao-le of China, Saicho of Japan, or Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu of India were aware of the honzon, none of them actually revealed it to others. With these comparisons, he proclaims not only his mission of propagation, but how he was indeed a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin describes the specific figures included on the honzon, such as Hariti (Kishimojin), Devadatta and "an ignorant female dragon." Also seated in the honzon, without exception, are all those beings in the first Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "Introductory." He makes clear that this honzon is the "true aspect of all existing things" which "cannot exist without taking into account all existing things, and that all existing things necessarily possess ten aspects, which must exist in the ten realms."

He cites Dengyo's interpretation of the principle of ichinen sanzen,

three thousand existences contained in one momentary thought, as "the equivalent of the enlightened body of the Original Buddha... which has never been revealed."

The importance of the honzon is also described in terms of faith. "A lady like you, who makes offerings to the honzon, should have happiness in this life. In the next life, the honzon, like a lantern in the darkness or a carrier on a steep road, will stand by you, Lady Nichinyo, and protect you." This has always been one of my favorite passages during my own difficult travels through life. How wonderful and reassuring to know the meaning of the continuing presence of the honzon in one's life. What a treasure this letter must have been for Lady Nichinyo!

Nichiren states, "Do not try to obtain this honzon just anywhere, for it exists only in the flesh of those who have faith in the Lotus Sutra and who chant 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.'"

This reveals a lot about the strength of our own Buddha nature and its sufficiency in our journey of life

and practice. Based upon our own faith, we are free to enter into the stupa or Treasure Tower just as Shakyamuni did.

Nichiren reminds us, "Although the teaching of the Buddha is as broad as the ocean, one can enter Buddhism merely through faith." Nichiren explains, "Accepting and adhering to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and reciting Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is the same as completing the five kinds of practice: upholding, reading, reciting, expounding, and copying the Lotus Sutra." Nichiren Shonin assures us that one who upholds this sutra will, without fail, attain enlightenment.

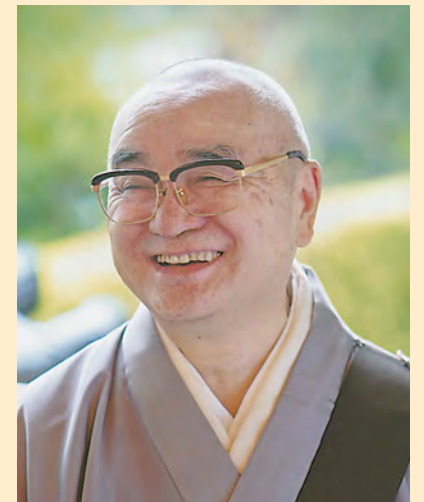
This letter is a splendid reminder of the power of hope for a future of happiness. After all, this is the goal of faith and practice. No matter what, true faith is the key, because the basis of Buddhism lies in the strength of our faith, pure and simple.

Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett is the resident minister for the Myoken-ji Temple in Houston, Texas.

REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (33)

"In order to cause them to rejoice, I expounded many sutras to the four kinds of devotees."

—The Lotus Sutra,
Chapter XIV,
Peaceful Practices



The Power of Faith

I understand this teaching of the Buddha as follows: "The Buddha Shakyamuni expounded His teachings in many ways to save monks and nuns, as well as male and female lay devotees, from their sufferings. Those who accepted and practiced Buddha's teachings were all relieved and rejoiced."

When we come to read this part of the sutra, we may say, "How merciful the Buddha is." And stop there. But, when we consider our own sufferings, such as discord with relatives, or our own illness, we may think it is impossible to get rid of our sufferings by going through every one of these kinds of scriptures.

Some 1,500 years ago, the Great Tendai Master, Chinese monk Chi-I (538-597 CE) read through the Whole Scripture of Buddhism, and explained that all the Buddha's teachings expounded in these scriptures were contained in the Lotus Sutra.

Even the Lotus Sutra is voluminous for us. Chinese characters of the sutra total so much as 69,384, and English words are 86,296. However, Nichiren Shonin teaches us we are able to receive all the merits of this Whole Scripture by chanting the Odaimoku: Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

If you are worried by discord with relatives or suffering from illnesses, chant the Odaimoku, asking "please let me be freed from these sufferings."

You should not speak ill of others. You should totally depend on the Buddha's power and the power of the Dharma. I pray for the enhancement of your power of faith.

Rev. Nisso Kanno, Head Priest, Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka Prefecture

ITALIAN STUDENT RECEIVES NICHIREN SHU SCHOLARSHIP

As an international student studying the doctrine of Nichiren Shu in Japan, Emanuele Davide Giglio was chosen to receive financial help from Nichiren Shu for his tuition and fees. The presentation ceremony was held at the Nichiren Shu Headquarters on October 8.

Davide was born in 1980 in Turin, Italy, and is now attending Tokyo University as a graduate student. Feeling Western Christian-based society reaching an impasse, he became attracted to Buddhist doctrine, especially Japanese Buddhism in the Kamakura period. As he found the Pure Land sect close to Christianity and

Zen Buddhism already researched deeply, his interest went toward Nichiren Shonin, who established his own Buddhist view based on the Tendai doctrine.

Davide is doing a special study of The True Characteristic of All Dharmas (Shoho-Jisso-sho), suggesting in his essay that a new image of Nichiren Shonin can be cultivated by showing the difference between Nichiren's original text and his non-autographical writings.

Professor Kenryo Minowa from Tokyo University, who was present at the ceremony, remarked, "It is so difficult to look through the references on Nichiren's non-autographical writings that no rule on the research has been set up yet." The professor expects this to establish a new approach to study Nichiren Shonin.

Davide commented, "I do not think the Christian-based ethics and values, and their philosophy of life, can keep up with social changes in this day and age. I would like to break down the impasse by introducing Buddhist philosophy to European countries." —From Nichiren Shu Shimbum. Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai



Our Summer Study Tour: Comparing India and Sri Lanka

Professor Kanji Tamura, Ph.D.,
Rissho University

The Faculty of Buddhist Studies in Rissho University conducts both domestic and international study sessions during the summer break under the course name: Practical Studies on Buddhist Culture. This year's program led us to India for five days and Sri Lanka for six days. Fortuitously, this proved to be an opportunity to compare these two cultures. Our group of 79 people, was led by Prof. Kaigen Noritake, with me acting as sub-leader.

We climbed aboard a flight from Narita Airport on August 27 and by the next day were on a pilgrimage. These included the ruins of Nalanda University, the sacred center of Buddhist studies; the remnants of Rajgir City, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Magadha; Venuvana-vihara, where Shakyamuni Buddha once preached; and Mt. Gridhrakuta, where the Lotus Sutra was expounded. Despite the scorching heat of the sun bearing down upon us at Gridhrakuta, and perhaps emboldened by the stamina of our young students, we were able to solemnly chant the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku for a full hour.

On August 29, we conducted a study session at Bodh Gaya, the place of Buddha's Enlightenment. Underneath the soothing shade of the bodhi tree, we read the Lotus Sutra. In time, we found ourselves

immersed in profound emotion. On the following day, we set out for Varanasi.

At early sunrise, we witnessed the scene of Hindu believers bathing and purifying themselves in the sacred Ganges River. The roads of India are graced with cow dung. Its rivers are invariably murky and dirty. Yet its people are not perturbed and continue steadfastly to bathe in their rivers. It is as if we were candidly exposed to a disordered world around which circulate the four basic elements (earth, water, fire, and wind). Finally, we moved our session to Sarnath, where Shakyamuni Buddha delivered his first sermon.

The following day we traveled to Sri Lanka. On September 1, we visited the ruins of the ancient city of Anuradhapura. The entire city can be regarded as a historical remnant of Buddhism. In essence, Anuradhapura portrays the history of Sri Lanka, as Sri Lanka is a country established wholly upon Buddhism.

The population of India is estimated to be 1.25 billion, whereas the population of Sri Lanka is approximately 20 million. Seventy percent of the population of India is Hindu; its Buddhists are a meager minority. We left with an impression of India as a country that had abandoned Buddhism and embraced a society of partiality and bribery, nurturing an environment in which its citizens resided in squalid villages and towns. In comparison, 70 percent of Sri

Lanka's population is Buddhist. Subjective as it is, we felt that the disposition of Sri Lankans, instilled with the spirit of Buddhism, was apt to be honest and pure.

The province of Bihar in India where many Buddhist ruins exist is very poor. Its atmosphere is generally chaotic and dirty. Seemingly, there appear to be an inordinate number of dubious looking people who glare at you as if ready to pounce from within the clutter of trash. While there are renowned Buddhist ruins, one will also come across vulgar, disreputable merchants. As India has a large population, one can also feel something immeasurable and a potential ability from Indian people.

In contrast, we found Sri Lankans to be generally sincere, honest, and assuring. What stood out in Sri Lanka were the green trees and coconut trees along its thoroughfares. The general impression of Sri Lanka was that of a beautiful resort. It would be worthwhile to see how Sri Lanka develops in the future.

On September 2, we went to see the Sigiriya Rock, a palace constructed from a single massive stone. At Polonnaruwa, we took in the collection of sites registered on the World Heritage List. On September 3, we went to see the Aluvihara Rock Cave Temple where the oldest extant sutra is said to have been written. After that, we were enchanted by a performance of traditional Sri Lankan dance in Kandy

City. Later that evening, we made a trip to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, a gorgeous temple which retains a tooth of Shakyamuni Buddha as an object of worship. We were fortunate to be allowed to view the innermost chambers of this temple.

On September 4, we made an official visit to the temple of Bhikkhu Sudhamma, a graduate of the Department of Buddhist Studies at Rissho University. At the temple, we were served a variety of exotic fruits such as bananas, pineapples, and mangosteen, all very tasty.

In summary, I have but one regret—that we were not able to go to the Minobusan Sri Lanka Betsuin due to our busy schedule. The first half of our trip with its Buddhist ruins was filled with awe-inspiring moments. However, what we witnessed near and around these ruins, portraying a disjointed India that had abandoned Buddhism, urged us to think.

By contrast, the second half of our journey, to Sri Lanka, made us feel almost as if we had arrived in paradise. This trip was indeed stimulating in that it presented us with a sharp cultural dichotomy.



INTERVIEWS WITH NONA MINISTERS

Reverend Zuigaku Kodachi

By Rev. Shinkyo Warner

Rev. Zuigaku Kodachi came to North America in 1957. He is the resident minister of the Minori-kai Temple in Portland, Oregon. He has been an instructor at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon and has published several papers on the Lotus Sutra. Rev. Kodachi has received numerous awards from organizations both in Japan and the United States.

Why did you want to come to North America?

Since my childhood, I have been impressed with Nichiji Shonin's mission to China. I was born on the Tsugaru Peninsula at the northern tip of Japan and visited Tosa Harbor many times. In Nichiren Shonin's time, Tosa Harbor was one of the most famous ports in Japan because of its link with foreign countries, including China.

In the Tsugaru Peninsula, there is a strong oral history of Nichiji Shonin before his departure to China. I was impressed how Nichiji Shonin was such a great scholar of Tendai and that he was the best writer of Nichiren Shonin's six disciples.

At the age of 23, I left my temple, hometown, family and friends with the strong determination of Nichiji Shonin and the vision of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku to promote world oneness through Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.

What surprised you most about North America?

America is a long way from Japan. My journey to America was aboard a lumber boat in 1957. It took two weeks. In those days, Japan could not export anything to the U.S., so the boat was empty. This made for a very rough trip.

In March of 1957, the largest earthquake of the 20th century struck near the Aleutian island of Andreanof. The resulting giant tsunami hit our empty ship so hard it was knocked over 45 degrees and nearly capsized. Surviving that terrifying experience gave me great patience and confidence for my mission.

In the 1950s, a Japanese Buddhist temple in the U.S. was not just a place for religious functions. It was also where the Japanese community socialized; a second home for Japanese immigrants.

The temple members had strong powers. The board members controlled and managed the temple. Even the priest, who was my former head minister, experienced great stress from the temple board members and passed away at the age of 49. As his assistant, I felt so sorry for him and his family as I saw the demands made on him from the board members. His untimely and tragic death came only six months after I arrived in Portland, Oregon. I learned later that this unfortunate treatment of priests by board members occurred not only in the Portland temple, but also in temples of other Buddhist sects across America.

In the 1950s, a Tokyo Meiji University professor addressed this issue with good suggestions for American Japanese communities in his book, *Umiowatatta Nihon no Mura* (Village Across the Pacific Ocean).

This experience taught me that patience is the most valuable investment to ensure future success.

What made the greatest impression on you in North America?

When I arrived, American society was so peaceful, and the people were so kind. I was greeted with beautiful smiles wherever I went while I was a student with my American family in 1957 to 1959. During the time Dwight Eisenhower was president, it was the great period of the American dream for the people of the world.

What advice do you have for people spreading the Wonderful Dharma in North America?

Become involved in American society, and make many American friends. It is very important to establish and maintain good relationships with the temple's neighbors. The temple should have a Japanese culture class open to American people so they can learn about and appreciate the activities of the temple.

In the 1960s, during Bishop Fujiwara's time, all NONA priests were competing to build successful Sunday schools, but today there are no temples that have regular Sunday school. Instead, the priests are frantically trying to maintain temples where membership is declining.

The priest should encourage temple members to participate in the Buddhist wedding ceremony. I performed more than twenty wedding ceremonies for my temple members' children. Today, funeral and memorial services are no longer a Buddhist tradition here in the U.S. As priests, we should also be family consultants and participate in our members' everyday lives.

The priest must be educated, should continue studies and present high quality material for the members. Some temple members have higher education. These include attorneys, teachers, doctors, bankers, nurses, etc. The priest must be able to provide educated and sophisticated responses. It is ideal if the priest has published papers and/or books.

As a Buddhist priest, the longer you stay in one place the more friends and supporters you will have. Remember the expression, "Rome was not built in a day." You have to be patient and persevere.

My 57 years of living in the U.S. have led me to believe that America is a beautiful and rewarding country.



TEMPLE EVENTS

Jan Deputy: JD Photography



New NONA Bishop Elected

At the NONA business meeting in Boston in October, Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett was elected to become the next Bishop of the Nichiren Order of North America. Current NONA Bishop Shokai Kanai will retire on March 31, 2015.

Honolulu Myohoji

By Rev. Takamasa Yamamura

Due to a tropical storm, the Oeshiki service at Myohoji Temple was postponed until October 26. As part of the celebration, Mr. Utanosuke Katsura, a famous Japanese Rakugo-ka, came to our temple to entertain us with traditional Japanese comedy stories. About 50 people came to the service and enjoyed his performance.



We will be holding our Bodhi Day Service in cooperation with the Hawaii Buddhist Council on Sunday, December 7. Our guest speaker will be Mrs. Carole Hayashino, president and executive director of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. The theme of her talk will be: "The Internment of the Japanese Americans during World War II and Equality from the point of view of Buddhism."

Nichiren Buddhist Temple of San Jose

By Rev. Arnold Matsuda

Perpetual Mass Memorial Service

The Nichiren Buddhist Temple of San Jose (Myokakuji Betsuin) conducts an annual Perpetual Mass Memorial Service. This is to offer our loved ones and ancestors a prayer of remembrance at a special memorial service every November.

The ancestors included in the service are listed in a special book, the "Eidai Kuyo Reibo." Their Oihai, or cenotaphs, will be enshrined in the temple. Every November on the second Sunday, a special service will be held for each deceased person.

A one-time subscription fee of \$750 (per individual) or \$1,000 (family ancestors) is requested.

Hokkezan Ichinenji Temple of Penang

Rev. Kangyo Noda

Rev. Miwa Conducts a Southeast Asia Dharma Conference

Hokkezan Ichinenji Temple of Penang invited Rev. Zeho Miwa of Minobusan University to conduct a lecture for the members of Southeast Asia Temples. This special lecture was held for three days from August 30 to September 1. People from Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Singapore, Jakarta and Surabaya also made the trip to Penang. 46 members attended and gained



more understanding about Nichiren Shu. Rev. Miwa specializes in the doctrine of Nichiren Shonin and Grand Master T'ien-t'ai in China.

On the first day, we gathered on the third floor of Ichinenji Temple to begin. Rev. Miwa summarized each chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The messages from Shakyamuni Buddha in the Lotus Sutra were introduced to the members, the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in this period of Mappo. Rev. Miwa also explained about the two sections of the teaching of the Lotus Sutra: the "theoretical part" and "essential part," and two locations of expounding the Lotus Sutra: "the ceremonies at Mr. Sacred Eagle" and "in the sky."

On the second day, we held a regular Sunday Service at the main hall of the temple with several Penang members who were not able to attend the lectures. After having lunch, we continued the study session. This time, Rev. Miwa focused on the doctrine and practice of the T'ien-t'ai School of China.

He explained about the Five Periods of Eight Teachings, revealing how Shakyamuni Buddha expounded his teaching to the disciples. We learned the "three main differences between the Lotus Sutra and other sutras" and "20 Important Teachings in the Lotus Sutra."

On the last day, we studied the doctrine and practice of Nichiren Shonin. Rev. Miwa

taught about the meaning of chanting Odaimoku and the reason that it became the main practice in the Period of Mappo. Chanting Odaimoku is a way for us to learn to be humble and honest. It helps us find the Buddha nature inside us.

During the lectures, attendees raised many questions and shared their opinions. We had a nice discussion on the Lotus Sutra, the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, Grand Master T'ien-t'ai, and Nichiren Shonin. This discussion also helped members to better understand the meaning of the teachings and our daily practice. As most members in Southeast Asia are Chinese people, this was a great opportunity for them to feel that the teachings of Nichiren Shonin have deep connection with T'ien-t'ai in China. They all became more interested and closer to the Dharma.



The Nichiren Shu English website launched on Friday, November 28.

www.nichiren.or.jp/english

We greatly appreciate your comments and any suggestions.

RISSHO UNIVERSITY STUDENT ON EXCHANGE PROGRAM IN HAWAII

By Mia Katanuma

Aloha! I am a student at Rissho University majoring in Buddhism. Last summer, from August 20 to September 16, I stayed at the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii on an exchange program.

I took part in the program for two reasons. First, I am interested in overseas propagation. Second, I want to learn the culture and history of Hawaii, and experience its way of life. At the age of 12, I saw the hula dance and learned about Hawaii. Although I had visited Hawaii often, it was always such a short stay that I was not satisfied. I wanted to know more about real Hawaiian life and understand the true essence of hula.

The Nichiren Mission of Hawaii is located in Nuuanu. I know this name because I have performed a hula composed for Nuuanu. The real town of Nuuanu, however, is totally different from what I learned from secondhand knowledge. Nothing is ever real until it is experienced!

The temple starts with morning sutra chanting. After chanting for about an hour, we would have breakfast. Then I usually help with different jobs. While



there, we prepared for the Bon Dance Festival. This gave me a chance to talk with many members of the Mission. On the last Sunday service before I went back to Japan, I was allowed to make a speech

about my stay in Hawaii. Hopefully, the speech was good enough to make the congregation understand me as I had tried hard to improve my English under the one-on-one guidance from the members.

While there, I found that the temple events and activities were

decided not only by the ministers but also by the members. Only by mutual consent can the temple activities be carried out.

It is often said today, that people in Japan turn away from any religion. As I experienced the exchange program, I had a different opinion. It is true that the Buddhist members in Hawaii show more willingness to study Buddhism, but it does not follow that Japanese resist accepting the Buddhist ways of life. Rather, they already are accustomed to the Buddhist way. Thanks to this program, my love for my country has become deeper.

I really appreciate the Shumuin, ministers and members in Hawaii for this wonderful opportunity. Mahalo Nui Loa!

—Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai

Calendar for December 2014–January 2015

- DEC 3-7** Shami Seminar at Nichiren Buddhist International Center
- DEC 4** Nichiren Shu Seminar at Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple Las Vegas
- DEC 8** Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment
- DEC 31** New Year's Eve Service, Bell ringing ceremony held throughout Japan

- JAN 1** Memorial service for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin
- JAN 13** Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple
- JAN 21** Memorial service for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

Compiled by Rev. Kaikei Ochiai

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