

Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin



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2016 No. 29

Commemorative Symposium, Honen Buddhism, East to West

In Celebration of the 120th Year Since the Arrival of the First Jodo Shu Ministers to Hawaii

Rev. Kosen Ishikawa



From the left: Rev. Shinri Hara, Bishop Hara, Bishop Atone, Dr. Fujimoto, Rev. Sakaki, Gary Link, and Leonard Chow

Jodo Shu in Hawaii began with the arrival of two young ministers from Japan in 1894. Supported by the Hawaii Senkyoshikai (Hawaii Missionary Association), Rev. Taijo Matsuo, followed by Rev. Gakuo Okabe, were sent to Hawaii to visit sugar plantation camps where many Japanese immigrants worked as contract laborers. Their camp lives were incredibly



Hawaii Council President Leonard Chow

severe and harsh so it is not difficult to imagine that they naturally needed spiritual guidance and protection.

Unfortunately, detailed records of our pioneer ministers' activities in Hawaii have been lost. However, their sacrifices and dedication planted the seeds of Jodo Shu teachings in Hawaii, which later blossomed into the founding of 16 Hawaii Jodo Shu temples. With the untiring efforts of all of our pioneer ministers and members, Hawaii Jodo Shu served the spiritual needs of the community for 120 years.

Today, however, the needs of the community and people have changed within the milieu of social and technological transformation on a global scale. Four of the 16 Jodo Shu temples closed, and the Jodo Shu ministry—not only here in Hawaii but in Japan and

elsewhere—face new challenges in this ever-changing environment. How do we change with this trend? What do we need to do to attract more members to our tradition?

This is how we came to plan various 120th anniversary events within the context of remembering our pioneer ministers while looking forward to the next generation of Jodo Shu ministry. It was extremely fortuitous that one of the leading Jodo Shu scholars, Dr. Kiyohiko Fujimoto, Director of the Jodo Shu Research Institute, accepted our invitation to be our keynote speaker to offer suggestions and proposals for our future through his talk, *Eastward Movement of Honen Buddhism*. Incidentally, Dr. Fujimoto is also the resident minister of Sairen-ji Temple, where one of our first missionaries Rev. Gakuo Okabe came from.

According to the typical western viewpoint of history, civilization moved westward—from Greek to Rome, Rome to Europe, and Europe to the U.S. People have also moved westward (i.e., the American frontier). The transmission of Buddhism, however, gradually moved eastward over many centuries, from India to the rest of the Asian continent and to Japan. This is what is meant by “eastward movement” (J. *tōsen*)? Japan as the far end of the so-called East had been the final point of Buddhism and other Asian cultures and thought for many



Rev. Eduardo Sasaki of Brazil



Keynote speaker Dr. Fujimoto

years. These ideas transformed over time in Japan into “new” ideas. One of these Japanese transformations is the Buddhism that emerged during the Kamakura period (1185–1333), beginning with the Pure Land teachings of our founder Honen Shonin.

In the modern era, many from both East and West have gathered in Hawaii, near the center of the Pacific Ocean, where East meets West. Not only people but also different beliefs have come to Hawaii. The migration of Honen Buddhism from Japan to Hawaii represents one example of eastward movement. East of Hawaii is the U.S. mainland and further east is Europe. What possibilities and potential does Honen Buddhism have as it moves eastward to what is generally considered the West?

The commemorative symposium, *Honen Buddhism, East to West*, was held on March 14 and 15, 2015, at the Jodo Mission of Hawaii, to ask these questions. On the first day, Dr. Fujimoto gave an informative 3-hour presentation on this theme in Japanese, and its synopsis was translated and presented by Rev. Shinri Hara in English on the next day. We were also fortunate to have Dr. Joji Atone, Bishop of Jodo Shu North America Buddhist

Missions, who gave a lecture on cultural and religious differences between Christianity and Buddhism through his experiences in Japanese on the first day. The next day, Rev. Eduardo Ryoho Sasaki of Jodo Shu South America in Brazil and resident minister of Maringa Nippakuji Temple, Gary Link, a Nenbutsu devotee from New York, and our own Leonard Chow, President of the Hawaii Council of Jodo Missions, delivered excellent presentations of their experiences and viewpoints. Through this symposium, we were able to hear various ideas to help us with more flexible and creative ways of ministry in the future.

Dr. Fujimoto pointed out the significance of “glocalization,” that is, a necessity for a “local” base in order for Honen Buddhism to become global. Thus he concluded it would be of utmost importance to realize and establish a local-style “Nenbutsu” practice deeply rooted in each place. It is our hope this symposium

can become a great asset and entrance to invite more people to our Jodo Shu.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of the Hawaii members and Jodo Shu, the Shinko Kyokai, and the Association of Former Overseas Ministers. We are also grateful for the participation of our former Hawaii ministers Rev. Kodo Tanaka, Rev. Yutetsu Hara, and Rev. Junyu Kudo, who came to support this event.



Group photo of guest speakers and ministers

SPECIAL 2

The 8th Anniversary of the Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center



On July 4, 2015, the association of the Jodo Shu European Buddhist Center was presented to the people of Acon, Normandy, where our head office is now located.

Acon in Normandy is a beautiful area where the small L'Avre River follows from the same riverbed as the Seine before flowing to the ocean. We first presented the association to the mayor and the municipal counsel. Then, we



Enjoying fellowship in Acon



New friends from the community

decided to gather with the residents of Acon in July, during a very warm period in France.

Four or five days before this meeting, we organized a ceremony with the help of our neighborhood.

The day before, three members of the association and a professional chef came to prepare the menu, which included yakitori, sushi, and kushikatsu.

For most people, it was the first time that they ate Japanese food and it was a real discovery.

The day of the anniversary, other members came in order to help and prepare the ceremony.

At noon, the temperature reached 40 degrees but fifty or so people gathered.

First, Reverend Koso made a speech as the President of the Association and presented Jodo Shu, its origins with Honen Shonin and its influence on Japanese Buddhism. Then, the members presented themselves and the mayor and the President of the Japanese members association in Paris also spoke. The mayor insisted on the spirit of tolerance in France. He also added that he was very pleased to discover another culture.

During this gathering, Rev. Koso proposed to the mayor to organize conferences about Buddhism in the future.

Moreover, Rev. Koso suggested the same kind of discussion to take place in larger towns as well. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed the wonderful buffet. The day ended in a peaceful and quiet atmosphere.



Our friendly and energetic neighbor



Town councillors

2015 International Kaikyo-ku Report

North America



The Significance of Family Memorial Services

Rev. Kodo Tanaka
Jodoshu North America
Buddhist Missions

Since the U.S. is a society that embraces “individual freedom” and “independence” under God, the family oriented temple supporting system, which is traditionally called *danka* in Japan, is not popular in American society. Also in Western countries, celebrating anniversaries of birth is popular such as the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s birth, but it is not common to count the years after one’s death to commemorate memorial anniversaries. However, in Japanese Buddhism, we count memorial anniversaries and periodically observe services to dedicate merit to the deceased. This unique custom may be regarded as a distinctive feature of Japanese Buddhism. In such broad and large areas as Southern California, it is not easy for families and relatives to arrange their schedules to set up a memorial anniversary service for the deceased. But still, we are making our best effort to encourage our temple supporters to observe one for their family.

It is often said that “a man dies twice.” The first death is his physical death regarded to occur when he dies. The second is considered to occur when no one cares to remember him. In that sense, Japanese Buddhism provides us a practical system to not only prevent the deceased from their “second death” by repaying them for their favor, but to also face the issue of our own “first death” through the reminiscence of them. Most importantly, these customs help connect the past and present within families and encourages us to put religious acts into practice at home. Let us all be delighted to have



Special blessing for new-born babies



Extending a special prayer for our ancestors: Bon Segaki Service

had this tradition that passed down this great religious custom to this day. Let us be proud to have it and with much joy, let us put it into practice today.

Brazil



South America Maringa Nippakuji Temple and Wajunkai Nursing Home 40th Anniversary

By Rev. Ryoho Sasaki
Jodoshu South American Missions

The Jodo Shu South American Missions celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Maringa Nippakuji Temple and its social welfare program known as Wajunkai Shelter for the Elderly. On June 6, 2015, blessed by a sunny sky, the commemorative program was attended by over 500 people, including the temple members, supporters, and Brazilian authorities from the local town hall to state officials, as well as the Japanese consular representatives. Our event was part of the official calendar celebrating 120 years of diplomatic and friendship ties between Brazil and Japan.

Starting the day was the religious ceremony conducted by Rev. Shinko Kanda of Osaka Shozen-ji Temple, accompanied by many other Jodo Shu members, along with all the South American kaikyoshi missionaries. The congratulatory letter from our Jodo Shu Archbishop Yuishin Ito and Bishop Ryoji Toyooka from the Jodo Shu administrative headquarters were read. The temple overflowed with many people who attended the ceremony.

Shifting to the Wajunkai Main Hall, it was the local and state officials’ turn to deliver the speeches. A letter to remind us of the origins of the social welfare arm

of the Jodo Shu mission in Brazil was also delivered from Rev. Masatoshi Hasegawa, chairman of Shukutoku Educational System and son of the first South American Bishop, who wrote about the historical path, the importance of the mission, and its commitment towards the community social development through social welfare, education and religious work.

Bishop Yomei Sasaki has run the institution for all the 40 years, since the very beginning when he was 40 years old. He greeted all the attendants and mentioned that sheltering the needy in our community was only possible by the support and understanding of all peoples who were fortunate enough to overcome the challenges that our early immigrants and ancestors faced in this new land. They were all compassionate in order to extend their hands for those who were not able to reach their own dreams.



Bishop Shinko Kanda of Hozenj Temple, Osaka, representing Jodo Shu at the 40th Celebration in Maringá

Australia



Small Changes, Big Difference

By Rev. Tetsuyu Wilson

2015 was a year of experimentation at Amidaji. As in previous years, I performed the annual ceremonies such as Ohigan and Obon but this year I tried some small changes. For example, for this year's Obon, instead of having 'Ocha-e', tea and Japanese sweets, inside Amidaji at the conclusion of the ceremony, we went outside into the backyard. For Australians, the 'backyard' of one's home is a place where family and friends gather informally to converse and share food and drink. It usually takes the form of a barbeque and on any weekend someone is having one in your neighborhood. It's part of Australian culture. This small change was greeted with enthusiasm by all who attended. As it was just an experiment, we made do with temporary furnishings, which consisted of chairs

and folding tables placed under trees. Our plan now is to construct a proper roofed area that could also be used for a range of outdoor activities. Anyone wishing to make a donation towards this construction can contact Amidaji.



Ocha-e in the backyard

Another experiment that I initiated in 2015 was to change the activities held every Saturday. In previous years, the first three Saturdays of the month would be devoted to Dharma talks and the last would be set aside for the Magpie Bunko. The problem for the Dharma talks was that they did not take into account how much those in attendance already knew about Honen's teachings. In addition, rather than listening to doctrine some people wanted to discuss personal issues. To address this, I changed the Dharma talks to an 'Open Day' held on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. This way, I can attend to the needs of each individual.

Lastly, in 2016 I am going to experiment with the Magpie Bunko. It will change to a 'terakoya' to be held every first and third Saturday. Here, children will not only have exposure to listening and reading Japanese but will also develop skills in speaking and writing Japanese.



Magpie Bunko

Hyakumanben Chion-ji, Head Temple in Kyoto

By Rev. Shinri Hara



The Main Hall, Miei-dō ("Founder's Hall"), which houses a wooden image of Hōnen Shōnin

In addition to the grand head temple Chion-in and head temple Konkai Kōmyō-ji, which we introduced in previous issues, Jodo Shu has another head temple (*daihonzan*) in Kyoto, known as Hyakumanben Chion-ji. Located next to Kyoto University's main campus, this head temple is a popular local temple referred simply to as "Hyakumanben" (literally, "1 million times" [of Nenbutsu chanting]) or "Chion-ji san." According to tradition, the temple's origin dates back to the Tendai master Ennin (794–864), who is said to have built a small temple called Kōtoku-in (Temple of Merit and Virtue), north of the Kyoto Imperial Palace (the temple moved to its current location in 1661). After Hōnen Shōnin established the teachings of Jodo Shu in 1175, he left Mount Hiei and was invited to reside here to teach the Nenbutsu. Later, Hōnen Shōnin's close disciple Seikan-bō Genchi built a hall in this location in memory of and gratitude for his master and named it Chion-ji, or the "Temple for Knowing Gratitude."



Juzu kuri, practice of passing the beads of a large rosary while chanting the Nenbutsu.

In 1331, a large earthquake hit Kyoto, causing much destruction and an outbreak of diseases. At that time, Emperor Godaigo asked the temple's abbot Zenna Kūen to offer prayers to end the scourge so the abbot chanted the Nenbutsu a million times over a period of seven days and seven nights. With the end of the pestilence, the Emperor granted the temple the name “Hyakumanben” and donated a large rosary with 540 beads and a hanging scroll, known as *Riken Myōgō* (“Namu Amida Butsu” written with characters in the design of the bodhisattva Manjusri’s sword), by the Shingon founder Kūkai (774–835). Thereafter, the priests hung this scroll and formed a circle to chant with this rosary to offer Nenbutsu prayers after calamities. This was the beginning of *juzu kuri*, or rotating a large rosary while chanting the Nenbutsu, which later spread throughout Japan.



Chinese Pure Land Master Shandao

This practice continues today on the fifteenth day of each month at Hyakumanben Chion-ji. If you visit the temple today, you can see the largest rosary in Japan—which has 1080 beads and measures 110 m (approx. 360 ft) in length and 320 kg (705 lbs) in weight—encircling the inside of the Mieidō, or the Main Hall.

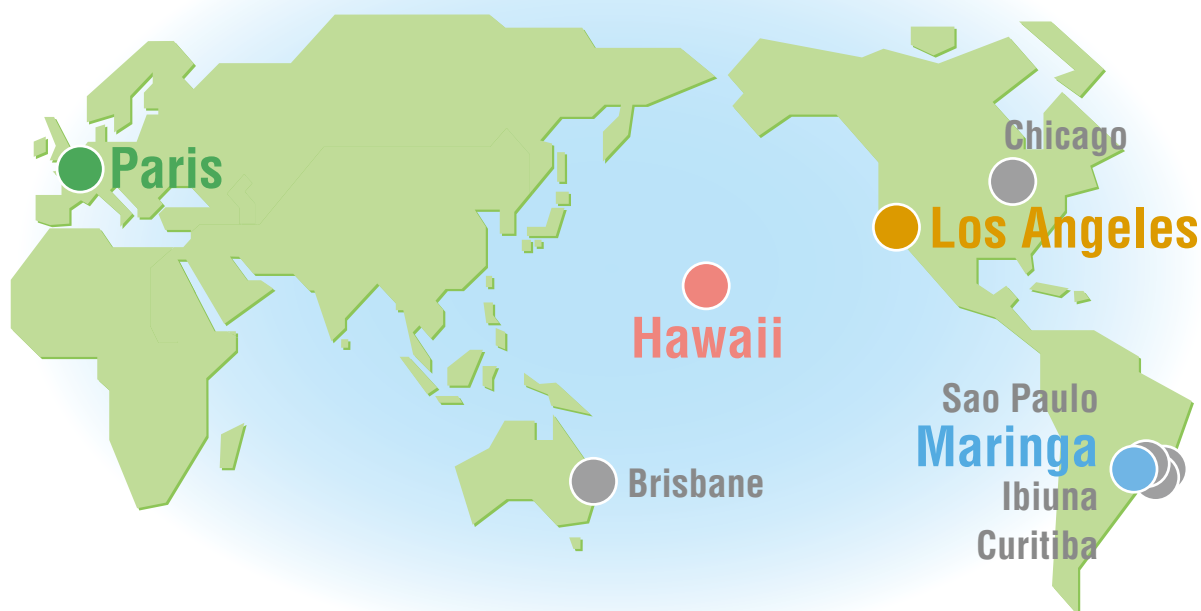
This much-loved head temple continues to offer spiritual solace and a wonderful sense of community as it has done for hundreds of years. Entering from the main gate, you can see the large Mieidō up in front. On the right is the nursery school and on the left is the Amida Hall. As you proceed, you will see the Shakyamuni Hall on the right and a bell tower on the left. Further on the right side is the Seishi Hall, and standing next to the Mieidō is a small columbarium. Surrounding the expansive temples grounds are eight sub-temples. Hyakumanben Chion-ji also has several important cultural assets such as *Standing Amida Buddha* by the celebrated Buddhist sculptor Kaikei (active early 13th century) and *Chinese Pure Land Master Shandao*.

In recent years, the temple has also been very popular among locals and visitors alike for its large monthly *tezukuri ichi* (handicraft market) and monthly *Namuché* (a food fair based on the concept of healthy eating and providing fresh vegetables, and named after “Namu” from “Namu Amida Butsu” and *ché* from *marché* or market in French), held on its grounds.



Standing Amida Buddha

The Readers' Voice section introduces members from Jodo Shu temples around the world.



HAWAII

Jennie Hashiro
President of Kahului
Jodo Mission YBA



Greetings from Maui, Hawaii! My name is Jennie Hashiro. I am a *sansei* (third-generation Japanese-American), who was born and raised in Hilo, on the island of Hawaii, where my family are members of the Hilo Meishoin Temple. After college, my husband Bob and I settled and raised our family on Maui. Rev. Gido Shimbo was very instrumental in getting us into Kahului Jodo Mission as active members. We

will always be grateful to him.

I am currently the president of Kahului Jodo Mission's YBA (Young Buddhists' Association). Our 75th Annual State Convention will be held on Maui in June, and we welcome you to join our celebration. The convention is always a great time to get together with other Jodo Mission members and friends throughout the state of Hawaii. We not only enjoy the fellowship but also discuss ways to strengthen Buddhism for a brighter future.

Jodo Buddhism plays an important part of my life. I try to live by the teachings of Honen Shonin, the Eight Fold Path, and the Golden Chain, and hope to share these teachings with others.

FRANCE

Chieko Kase

**Member of Jodo Shu European
Buddhism Center, Paris**



Since the creation of the Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center 9 years ago, Archbishop Mano has visited us every year to deliver his Dharma talks. It is always a joy to hear him and be able to have exchanges about Buddhism. I feel deeply grateful for his teachings.

I came to France with my husband, 49 years ago. When he died 10 years ago, I felt really depressed. At that time, I heard about the conferences on Jodo Shu organized by Rev. Koso. I started to participate and came to enjoy studying about Buddhism.

In recent years, France has been hurt by the terrorism. With the tragic events, I feel our future is uncertain. Unfortunately, we now live with fear and anxiety. This is why I am deeply convinced that we have to live with the teaching of Buddhism in order to carry on in our future. Personally, I try to work on my spirit based on Buddhist teachings in my daily life. I sincerely thank Rev. Koso for his efforts.

NORTH AMERICA

Torao Tad Uyemura

**Member of North America
Buddhist Missions, Los Angeles**



Hello, everyone. My name is Torao Tad Uyemura and I was Chairman of the Board of Directors for many years for Jodoshu North America Buddhist Missions, when we were located on Jefferson Blvd. When we undertook the building of the new temple in Little Tokyo, I also served as Chair of the Building

Committee. Remembering the pursuing years, we had many ups and downs, but through the support of temple members and especially from Jodo Shu Japan and Bukkyo University, our project was completed.

Today, I am glad that this beautiful building has become a place of gathering of love and friendship for our congregation where we can come to hear the Nembutsu prayer and meaning of Jodo Buddhism, and enjoy tasty lunches served by our Fujinkai ladies. What more can we ask for? So, please continue to support the temple activities and attend the wonderful services at our temple. With Gassho.

SOUTH AMERICA

Mr. and Mrs. Teruaki Morimitsu

**Member of Jodoshu South America,
Maringa Nippakuji Temple**

Mr. and Mrs. Teruaki Morimitsu are members of the Maringa Nippakuji Temple since the beginning of its activities back in 1975. His late father, Mr. Shikazo Morimitsu, was the first board president

of the temple's Gojikai Support Fund Group. The Morimitsu family came from Fukuoka Prefecture in Japan, and his appointment to the post was due to his direct relationship with Zendo-ji Temple, one of the most important head temples of our denomination. Mr. Shikazo was well acquainted to the late missionary Rev. Shunyu Shikamori who was instrumental in passing down the tradition of Nembutsu recitation. Mr. Shikazo was also a successful coffee farmer, and Mr. Teruaki is a retired VW car dealership owner.

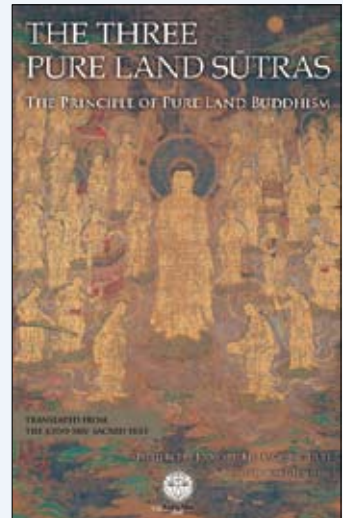
Announcing a Book!

The Three Pure Land Sutras: The Principle of Pure Land Buddhism

Translated and Edited by

Karen J. Mack and the Jodo Shu Research Institute

Honen Shonin (1133–1212), as the founder of Japan's first independent Pure Land Buddhist community, is one of the most essential figures of Japanese Buddhism. As a basis for establishing his new community, Honen selected three essential sutras for the study and practice of the Pure Land way. These are what he called the *Three Pure Land Sutras (Jodo Sanbukyo)*, consisting of the *Larger and Smaller Sukhavativyuha Sutras* and the *Visualization Sutra*. This publication is the first authoritative English translation of these sutras by Jodo Shu, the denomination that Honen founded in 1175. As the collaborative work of Jodo Shu's top scholars in a variety of fields and containing full annotation, this book is designed for both scholars as well as student-practitioners of Pure Land Buddhism and will be an important contribution to understanding Pure Land thought and practice in Japan.



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OUR ENGLISH HOMEPAGE



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