



## We love PBA!!

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii ministers together with students and faculty of the Pacific Buddhist Academy joined together in a walk-a-thon in Honolulu on December 9, 2013.

Since the first walk in 2011, this is the second time this event was held in efforts to raise money for the newly developing PBA facility.

Following a 6:30 am service at Hawaii Betsuin, the group started on their 6-mile journey to Kapiolani Park. Along the way, they stopped at Moiliili Hongwanji for a break to recharge with some refreshments that were prepared by temple members.

Ministers who were dressed in their black robes and *wagesa* helped PBA gain attention by the local television station. A student participant expressed her appreciation to the ministers and temple members for their support. "I am overjoyed at how the *kyodan*, as a whole has helped support us in nurturing our future leaders. Having the students and ministers working together is meaningful," shares Head of Schools, Robert Cody.



(Hongwanji Journal, December 20, 2013, p.18)

### *Hōtō Keishō Shiki*

Ceremony of transmitting the Jodo Shinshu tradition

To be conducted June 5 and 6, 2014 at Hongwanji, Kyoto



## The hidden Nembutsu of the Ryukyu—the Nembutsu-ban experience of Seiryu Nakaoshi

Introducing the history of Jodo Shinshu in Okinawa, Shinshu Network Ryukyu (Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Okinawa branch office) sponsored a special presentation in Naha on November 30, 2013 at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum.

The program was based on the life of Seiryu Nakaoshi (1810-1876), an influential religious leader of modern-day Ryukyu. Professor Sadahiro China (Kobe Womens University), spoke on the life history of Seiryu Nakaoshi, followed by folk singing by performer Tetsuhiro Daiku, who sang in the traditional Yaeyama style (Intangible Cultural Heritage of Okinawa) about Nakaoshi.

The Nembutsu was banned until 1878 while the Ryukyu Kingdom (modern-day Okinawa) was under the forces of the feudal domain of Satsuma. With much of Okinawa's written history destroyed during the Battle of Okinawa (April 1 – June 22, 1945), Professor China referred to the Hongwanji records of Satsuma, along with limited texts by Nakaoshi himself and Fuyu Iha, who was known as “the father of Okinawaology” (studies on various aspects of Okinawa). Nakaoshi, who worked for the kingdom office, is the only source that can be linked to the propagation of Jodo Shinshu in Okinawa.



He began quietly propagating since he was 35, hosting dharma gatherings and sending donations to Hongwanji through his nembutsu peers in Satsuma (Kagoshima) in addition to building four facilities for propagation activities. He had also focused a great deal in propagating among the so-called comfort women in Okinawa.

However, as word began spreading that Nakaoshi was a nembutsu follower, the king no longer had a choice but to have him punished. Unwilling to give up his faith, at the age of 44, Nakaoshi was exiled to Ishigaki island.

With much of the roads being destroyed following a natural disaster, Nakaoshi put his life savings toward building a bridge for the people of Ishigaki island. Favored by the people of Ishigaki, a pardon petition had also been submitted. In 1864, Nakaoshi, who was then 55, was pardoned and in the following year returned to Naha. However, he passed away six years later.

Nakaoshi was the fifth generation to receive the Jodo Shinshu teaching since it was first introduced into Okinawa by Uhei Nakamura. Mentioned in the writings about Nakaoshi, majority of the family members had received their dharma names despite the nembutsu being banned by the government. In addition to Nakaoshi refusing to give up his faith over becoming known as a criminal, Professor China infers that “the young Nakaoshi was deeply in love with a comfort woman. As he worried over the women's situation, it is likely that Nakaoshi also became attracted to the Shinshu teaching that the woman valued. By that time, the Shinshu teaching was readily available and he was fascinated by the teaching which states that all persons are equally saved.”

In building the bridge and making other contributions to the community “he hired those in need and offered higher wages so as not to damage their sense of independence. Expressed as *Go'on Hoshu* in Shinshu terms, it is likely that Nakaoshi's feeling of gratitude led to his act of kindness in wanting to help others” explains Professor China.

Shinshu Network Ryukyu member, Rev. Kitamura of Shinjoji Temple in Yomitan Village comments, “*Kakure Nembutsu* (Hidden Nembutsu) in the Ryukyus is not well known even among the locals. To have someone from Okinawa, 150 years ago, be so influential is something the locals have to be proud of.”

(Hongwanji Journal, January 20, 2014, p.2)



Orin-chan, Hongwanji Monzen-cho's (trans., community in front of temple gates) mascot character dances to “Koisuru Fortune Cookie” by Japanese pop group, AKB48, in a promotion video introducing Kyoto City attractions. Video is on YouTube (<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QV2aXw600E0&gl=guid=ON&hl=ja&client=mv-google>)



## Time with the Buddha

For assisted living residents and hospital patients to take part in the customary new year's eve ringing of the temple bell, Kagoshima Betsuin joined with Vihara Kagoshima in offering a *Joya* (new year's eve) bell delivery service to medical facilities.

With a specially-designed portable bell tower, the event which was started in 1998 as an educational project, has been covered annually by the local news introducing Nishi Hongwanji's involvement within the community.

On December 27, Vihara Kagoshima visited the Youkouen nursing home as part of its monthly visitations which began last June. A service was conducted in the facility's gathering hall before those in attendance each rang the bell. Kagoshima, known for its large population of Nembutsu followers, had many in attendance.

Mr. Nobu Hozo (90), who was recognized by the betsuin for attending the *Heartful Daigaku* open-seminar program for ten years comments, "There are many who wish to go to the temple, but are unable to do so due to physical disabilities. I am grateful for these monthly visitations from the temple." Ms. Hideko Iwasaki (78) shares, "My father was very devout. I thanked my father for always looking over us as I rang the bell. I am glad to be in a facility where the Nembutsu is practiced."

Takeshi Higo, president of the Youkoukai group which operates the nursing home and member of Kagoshima Betsuin says, "Buddhist practice and gathas like *Ondokusan* are deeply embedded within us that those with Alzheimer's disease are also seen with smiles on their faces. Although the event may soon be forgotten, it makes me happy to see that they are relaxed in the moment, when they feel they are with the Buddha. Our staff have their hands full in meeting the daily needs of our residents and facility operations that it is difficult to get around to providing emotional care and comfort. I am really grateful for the time we are wrapped in the compassion of the Buddha."

Other visitations carrying the bell tower were also conducted throughout Kagoshima care facilities.



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## Sharing the Experience

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We were glad to have the opportunity to visit the Hongwanji in Kyoto and participate in the Kikyoshiki ceremony. Our minister in Hawaii, Rev. David Fujimoto, suggested that we receive our *homyo* at Honzan when he heard that we were planning a trip to Japan. We have been attending services regularly and became official members of the sangha because of all the friends that we had made. Taking part in the ceremony is just one more step in the lifelong journey of following and learning the dharma. We hope to keep all of our good dharma friends and make many more here in Hawaii, while continuing to receive Rev. Fujimoto's guidance and encouragement.

Submitted by Maiki and John  
(Hongwanji Journal, February, 10, 2014, p.7)

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### From Canada to Hongwanji

Kyoko Hirota (64)

In 1982, Kyoko Hirota and her family moved from Oita prefecture to Richmond, Canada. She returns to Japan annually to visit her mother, but after husband passed away four years ago, she has also been making an effort to visit Hongwanji in Kyoto. This year, she visited Hongwanji on January 22 and in an interview with Hongwanji Shimpō reporter she shared, "Previously, I had no connection with any temple or religion. But, my husband's death provided me the opportunity to encounter the Buddha at Steveston Buddhist Temple. Now, I participate in study sessions, services, Bon odori, and other activities. I even attended the 750th Memorial in Canada and at Hongwanji. I've been able to make many wonderful temple friends."

(Hongwanji Journal, February, 1, 2014, p.8)

