

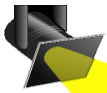


Kyoto Station Building as an entrance into the heart of Kyoto city, recently celebrated its 15th anniversary hosting a Tug-of-war competition. Ten individuals representing Hongwanji participated in the March first event held at the Muromachi Square stage.

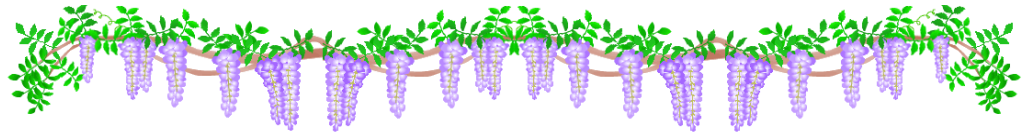
Fourteen groups took part in the event with each team consisting of an 8-member unit, weighing in at a total of less than 600 kilos and including at least one female team member. Hongwanji went up



against the Shimogyo Police team in the first match, followed by Higashi Hongwanji in the second round, and Shimogyo Fire department in the semi-finals. In the final round, Hongwanji went face-to-face against the Japan Railway (JR) West Japan General Building Service team to bring home the win. Team members shared their joy in being able to win the competition as representatives of Hongwanji and expressed interest in continuing active participation within the greater community.



**PEOPLE**



**Newly ordained Brazilian  
Cristina Sato (51)**

Her encounter with Jodo Shinshu began while on a stroll ten years ago. Attracted by the sight of Brasilia Hongwanji, she had stepped foot into the temple for the first time. "The building was exquisite and everyone was chanting in unison. I was touched" recalls Sato. In 2005, she married Brasilia Hongwanji resident minister, Rev. Shojo Sato, and later decided to become an ordained priest, not only to gain knowledge, but wanting to deepen her grasp of the teaching.



"I would like to make the temple a place where children feel welcome and can come. The emphasis of family rather than individuality is what is wonderful about Jodo Shinshu. This is something Brazilians need to learn to appreciate," Sato shares. In addition to her career as a graphic designer, Sato plans to become active with Vihara and environmental issues. As a priest, Sato hopes to play a vital role in people's encounter with the infinite light of Amida Buddha.

**Canadian teacher and students visit Hongwanji  
Rainer Mehl**

A member of the Steveston Buddhist Temple board and teacher at Kitsilano Secondary School, Mehl has been organizing a study trip to Japan that is conducted once every other year. This year, 12 students led by Mehl visited Hongwanji on March 21 during their stay in Kyoto.

"Through an introduction by my friend, Rev. Grant Ikuta (bishop of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada), this is my third visit to Hongwanji. My heart and mind is always at ease when I come here" Mehl happily comments. A tour of the *Shoin* chambers and *Karamon* gate was led by a Hongwanji staff with additional information on the paintings shared by Mehl himself, leaving the students surprised.



Moving to Vancouver five years ago, his love for Japan and an interest in Buddhism let him to visit the temple near his home, where he met Ikuta. "Sunday services are now a part of my life. I am now learning about Jodo Shinshu" comments Mehl.

## Romanized Service Book with English Translation In Commemoration of the 750th Memorial of Shinran Shonin



The Hongwanji school is a community of people joined together revering the teaching of Shinran Shonin and saying the Nembutsu. We seek to share with others the wisdom and compassion of Amida Tathagata. By doing so, we shall work toward the realization of a society in which everyone is able to live a life of spiritual fulfillment.

(excerpt from *The Essentials of Jodo Shinshu – My Path*)

With this ideal in mind and the intention to further enable many others to encounter the Jodo Shinshu teaching, our Hongwanji headquarters in Kyoto has published a newly created Romanized version of its *Nichijō Gongyō Seiten* (“Daily Service Book”) as one of the projects of the long-term plans for the 750th Memorial of Shinran Shonin. It is also in response to inquiries and requests from the English-speaking overseas districts, regional districts, metropolitan cities in Japan, and also areas from different parts of the world where there are not any local temples.

From the outset of planning for the 750th Memorial, one important ideal became a major pillar: to provide opportunities that will enable as many people as possible to come in contact with Shinran’s teaching. Therefore, the memorial was held on numerous occasions at various levels, ranging from the national, district levels to the overseas district, sub-district, and local temple levels, finally culminating with the *Goshōtō Hōonkō* services that were held for one week in January of this year at Honzan. The same style of service, though with slight variations in regard to locale, was conducted, thereby renewing and strengthening the feeling of unity of our Shinshu sangha.

In continuing with this concept, after careful thought and deliberation, the Hongwanji International Center decided to use the same basic layout and format of the Japanese service book with some slight variations and adjustments. In this way, both *monto* (Nembutsu followers) overseas and in Japan may use the same book, conduct the same style of religious services, and follow the same tradition. Our overall focus for this service book is to transmit the Buddhist tradition, and specifically our Jodo Shinshu legacy.

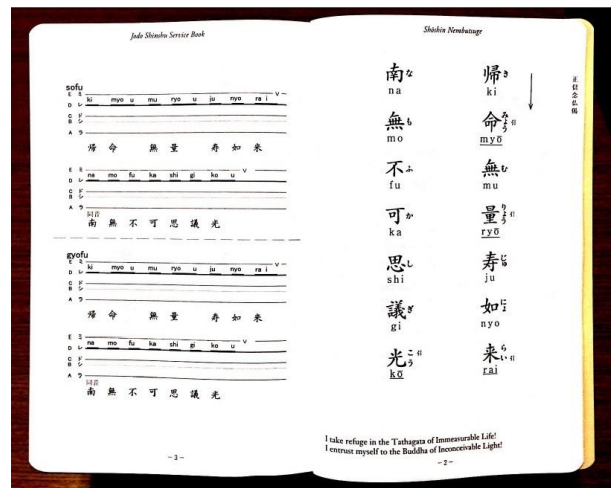
The service book contains *The Essentials of Jodo Shinshu*, *Three Treasures*, *Jodo Shinshu Creed*, *Shōshin Nembutsuge* (hereafter, *Shōshinge*), *Sambutsuge*, *Jūseige*, *Jūnirai*, *Bussetsu Amida Kyō*, several of Rennyo Shonin’s *Gobunshō* Letters, *Shinshū Shūka*, *Ondokusan*, *Ryōgemon*, and other pertinent information regarding the Jodo Shinshu tradition. The book is divided into two parts, with the main portion opening from left to right, as is done in the west. However, one portion, the section for *Shōshinge* opens from right to left, Asian style. Special review and consideration was given to the various English translations of the Three Treasures and the Jodo Shinshu Creed that were done by the Buddhist Churches of America, Hompa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, and Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada over the years, and the Shin Buddhism Translation Series Committee was asked to edit, revise, and standardize them.

One fundamental intention for this service book was to make it convenient and easy to use for not only religious services, but also as a study and educational resource, so it includes the English translations that are all from Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha’s Shin Buddhism Translation Series. As much as possible, we have positioned the translations paragraph by paragraph or phrase by phrase so that the content of the sutras and scriptures can be understood and properly appreciated by all. We feel that when these translations are used in conjunction with those that were done in years past by *kaikyoshi* ministers and other devout members of the overseas districts, it will help to further enhance the significance of the sutras.

In *Jūseige* it states, “For the sake of all beings, I will open forth the Dharma store....” In regard to this, we feel that our Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha headquarters is likened to the Dharma store[house], which is the archives or repository of Buddhist sutras, and it is the institution of academia that provides information and instruction. Therefore, it maintains a somewhat conservative role of guidance learning. This allows people to come and freely acquire understanding of the Dharma, and thereby follow the recommended guidelines for taking and propagating it in new areas.

We have added simplified instructions in regard to the chanting of the sutras, with more specific and detailed explanation in the section titled “Chanting Instructions for *Shōshinge*.” There were several obstacles that arose in Romanizing the reading of the Sino-Japanese characters in the sutras for proper pronunciation, as well deciding the type of marks that ought to be used to indicate the melody. An example of the former was the nasal sound for “tsu” as in “butsu” and “hotsu,” so we have chosen to indicate this by using square brackets, bu[tsu], ho[tsu]. As for the latter, we had entertained the idea of using musical notes, but we would use the traditional marking system with a bit of adjustment.

The sutras that are chanted basically monotone, such as *Sambutsuge*, *Jūseige*, and *Bussetsu Amida kyō*, are shown written left to right, top to bottom, as in western books. Although *Jūnirai* has its own unique melody, since it is widely known and often used, this too, is shown similarly without the use of any indication marks. Choosing the layout for *Shōshinge* was somewhat problematic because there are two melodic styles for it, *sōfu* and *gyōfu*, and we wanted to include both using as few pages as possible. Due to this, the layout went from horizontal to vertical, and back and forth several times, finally deciding on the current layout, which is vertical.



This traditional format was selected after using this layout with the recent group of tokudo and kyoshi candidates that came to Kyoto and discussing this situation with them. Several frankly stated that it was a bit awkward at first, but after becoming accustomed to it, nearly all commented that this format was easier to follow than musical notes, especially by those who said they could not read music. In addition, this format follows the actual, literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *sūtra*, which is thread or string. This string was passed vertically through the leaves of paper or bark on which the words of the Buddha were written when they were transcribed. In this way, both chanting styles can be followed for *Shōshinge* as well as using a traditional method and indication marks for the two melodies. This further enables prospective student candidates to learn to read and execute other required chants for kyoshi certification without much difficulty.

Following the section containing five of Rennyo Shonin's *Gobunshō* Letters is *Ryōgemon*, which is a type of personal declaration or proclamation that has been customarily stated aloud during services throughout Shinshu's history from Rennyo's time. Written in the oratorical style of classical Japanese, which can be likened to Old English or Shakespearean English, it states the core concepts of the heart that is settled in entrusting to Amida Tathagata's working, gratitude for our assurance of birth in the Pure Land because of the Primal Vow, reverence to the virtue of Shinran Shonin and eminent Masters who transmitted this teaching, and to always abide by the prescribed ordinances. Unfortunately, since the Japanese language and society have evolved and times have changed considerably from that of the Warring States period of feudal Japan, it is difficult and confusing for the Japanese to understand the significance of *Ryōgemon* properly, especially the last portion. Therefore, the 23rd Monshu, Ohtani Kosho, during his tenure, composed the Jodo Shinshu Creed (*Jōdo Shinshū no Seikatsu Shinjō*) using simple, easy to understand contemporary Japanese. This possesses the essence of *Ryōgemon* and is more commonly used today and recited in unison during services. Moreover, Monshu Ohtani Kosho also penned the original *Jōdo Shinshū no Kyōshō* (The Essentials of Jodo Shinshu), which elucidates the vital points of our teaching, the principal sutras and scriptures, and our purpose as a religious community. Later, in April 2008, Monshu Ohtani Koshin revised and created our present version, "The Essentials of Jodo Shinshu – My Path."

Lastly, we hope that our members will have their own copy of this service book and familiarize themselves with the contents. Further, in consideration of the environment, natural resources, and the concept of *mottainai*, we would like to suggest that everyone take it with them to not only temple services, but also conventions, workshops, and other sangha gatherings so as to eliminate the need for printing the sutras in the programs, thereby reducing cost and paper usage.

Commentary by Gene Sekiya