

Hongwanji International Center NEWS



The Shoshinge resonates to the world

In conjunction with the Hoonko observance being conducted at Hongwanji, temples throughout the Buddhist Churches of America (Continental U.S.) district were conducting their own Hoonko services chanting the Shoshinge. In the U.S., Shoshinge is not chanted regularly. However, sangha members at the Lodi and Florin Buddhist temples have been practicing the Shoshinge from last year, in time for this year's Hoonko service.

We will strive to expand the voice of the Nembutsu so that it will resonate throughout the world.

Submitted by: Rev. Yuki Sugahara
Buddhist Church of Florin
(Hongwanji Journal, March 1, 2013, p. 7)

From top: Buddhist Church of Lodi, Buddhist Church of Florin

Kukodan House welcomes public with Open Door

The Kukodan House located in Southampton (UK) on February 16 and 17, hosted a public event known as Open Door, introducing the sangha and Jodo Shinshu tradition to the greater community. The gathering held on the first day included socializing through informal dialogues and a meeting to discuss the tentative plans for the upcoming 17th Biannual European Shin Conference scheduled to be hosted by Southampton in 2014. On Sunday, the 16 participants took part in a service of chanting and Dharma talks concluding the weekend activities.

For more information on Kukodan House (Pure Land Buddhist Fellowship), <http://www.purelandnotes.com>.



Top: (L-R) Reverends Robinson, Kobs, and Martens
Below: Participants of 2013 Open Door



Building at historic Taiwan Betsuin site restored

A recent survey conducted by Professor Mikio Shibata (Niigata University) and his research team, has confirmed that projects to restore and preserve two prewar Hongwanji-related buildings in Taiwan are taking place.

The two buildings being restored are the former site of Taiwan Betsuin in Northern Taiwan and the former residence of Ohtani Kozui, known as Shoyo-en, located in Kaohsiung City of southern Taiwan. The historic Taiwan Betsuin, was built in 1897 as an operations facility for propagation activities in Taiwan. Later in 1922, it was officially recognized as Taiwan Betsuin and is been said to have been the largest Japanese temple in Taiwan during its time. The site today, which includes the recently restored bell tower, a hall, the *Rimban* residential quarters, and walkways, all of which have been designated as historic landmarks is known as the Nishi Honganji* Square and is a public area.



Nishi Honganji Square bell tower before & after renovation
Photo contribution: Rev. Dr. Hisao Inagaki

Restoration of Taiwan Betsuin site moves forward~ signboard put up at Nishi Honganji Square

Following the article introducing the history of Taiwan Betsuin, it has been indicated that the restoration project is nearing its completion and a signboard has been put up at the site where the temple's main gate was once standing.

On the signboard, it is explained that following a fire in 1975 which destroyed portions of the temple grounds including the main temple hall, the area became polluted with the construction of illegal buildings which resulted in the temple buildings to become abandoned. It was then in 2005, that the city wanting to develop green growth decided to demolish the illegal buildings and begin restoring the former Betsuin.

Located in southern Taiwan in the city of Kaohsiung was a former residence of Ohtani Kozui, known as Shoyo-en. Nationalist military members were said to have been residing at Shoyo-en following WWII, but the building has since been vacated. In recent years, as the city is in the plans to revive the city, it has been brought to their attention that the temple buildings were constructed through traditional Japanese-style carpentry which has led to advocating preservation activities.

Following the fire in 1975, Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha representatives have made periodic visitations to the site, with the most recent one being in 2006, when the announcement of the Message on the Seven hundred fiftieth Memorial for Shinran Shonin was presented to the regional district of Taiwan. During that time, the bell tower and foundation to the main temple hall at Honganji Square were inspected and plans to restore the site were introduced to the group.

Presently, the Taiwan regional district office located in Taichung city oversees Kuang Jaw Temple and Kuang Min Temple both in Taichung city, and The Hong Kong Horai Association Limited.

In 2004, Monshu Koshin Ohtani visited the Taiwan regional district for the first time to attend the commemoration of the establishment of Kuang Jaw Temple and opening of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Taiwan regional district office, during which seventy Nembutsu followers received their Dharma name in a Confirmation Ceremony.

In 1940, Shoyo-en was built and university students were taken to Taiwan by Ohtani himself, to engage in farming and writing. The dedication ceremony was attended by many local dignitaries and a commemorative plate decorated with bananas and sugarcane was distributed as mementoes of the celebration. Over the years, the Hongwanji buildings were left abandoned resulting in much needed repair and care. As a result, a team headed by Professor Chen Chi-Jen of the National University of Kaohsiung has taken on the project in preserving the historic site. "The project is not only to preserve the buildings, but is to restore and preserve the Shoyo-en as what was once the thriving center of the community. Although discussion with the town cultural association and local government are under way, the project continues to face financial challenges. We would like to ask for your understanding and support" comments Chen.

Shibata expressed his anticipation that the awareness of Jodo Shinshu would expand into the local community and its surroundings if the restoration plans move along.

For more information on the restoration project, contact Professor Mikio Shibata at 025 (262) 7509.

(Hongwanji Journal, February 20, 2013, p. 8)

Note: Nishi Honganji Square, as named by local officials is spelled differently excluding the silent "w" as spelled by Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha.