

GASSHO

April
2014

Issue No: 04-14

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



STATUE OF SHINRAN SHONIN HAS ARRIVED!!

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

I was told that the long awaited statue of Shinran Shonin (1173-1263) would be arriving early Tuesday morning, February 18, 2014, at 7 a.m. The previous nights and days had been drizzling rain off and on. So there was concern that Tuesday morning would also be raining. If it was raining, the erecting of the 700-pound-plus statue would have to be postponed.

For some inexplicable reason, it did not rain for some three hours. The skies were clear and blue. It took four men built like sumo wrestlers to manually uncrate, upright, place and finally secure Shinran's statue on its base permanently with a mixture of special epoxy and cement. It now stands on the Ewa side of the temple facing in the easterly direction, looking to St. Louis Heights where each morning's dawning sun rises daily.

So, whenever you come to the temple, please look at Shinran's statue welcoming you to the temple grounds even before you begin ascending the steps to the upper sanctuary where Amida Buddha's central shrine is. Even before going to the columbarium to pay your respects to the memory of a loved one, you should first pay your respects to Amida Buddha. You should light incense, lay it down flat in the center of the incense burner (koro), place a pinch of powdered incense on the burning end, then put your hands together to express gratitude and reverence to Amida for her Benevolent Wisdom and Beneficent Compassion that has never abandoned anyone.

To Amida's right is the scroll of Rennyo Shonin. And to Rennyo's right hangs the scroll of the Seven Pure Land Sages of our faith. To the left of Amida is the scroll of Shinran Shonin. And to his left hangs the scroll of Prince Shotoku Taishi who introduced Buddhism into Japan.

MONTH'S THOUGHT

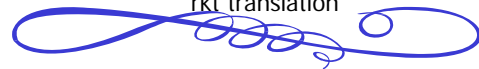


... be fully confirmed in the thought
that your karma has no destination
but that of Naraka* [hellish outcomes].
Nothing will be left for you
but to hasten forward and take hold
of Amida's helping hands.
In doing so you are assured
of rebirth in her Pure Land.

Gojun Shichiri — a Shin Mystic

* *naraka* — place of torment.

rkt translation



Later that afternoon and into the wee hours of the night, I surfed the Internet to see what information was out there about Shinran Shonin's statue. I was pleasantly surprised to come across a set of photo images of the Shinran Shonin statue that had somehow survived the atom bomb detonated over Hiroshima city. In a previous issue of GASSHO [August 2013] I wrote about how declassified secret military documents show that it was really unnecessary to have atom bombed Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and then Nagasaki three days later on August 9, 1945, to force Japan to surrender. For it was well known by U.S. military intelligence even two or so years after Pearl Harbor, that Japan was being defeated and well on its way to surrendering.

In reading about how this scorched and discolored fifteen-foot-tall bronze statue of Shinran Shonin survived the initial atomic flash and blast (*pika-don*) that leveled the whole city of Hiroshima for me was something of awesome significance. For every thing directly under the intense heat of the initial flash (6,000°C/10,800°F) was instantly vaporized. Everything else left standing was leveled

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR APRIL 2014

1st SUN APR 6th:

HAWAII BUDDHIST COUNCIL'S
HANAMATSURI
SERVICE
at Jodo Mission
Speaker:
Dr. George Tanabe

2nd SUN APR 13th:

Shinshu Kyokai's
Hanamatsuri Service
9 A.M. English Service
Rev. Tatsuguchi

3rd SUN APR 20th:

9 A.M. English Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

4th SUN APR 27th :

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 A.M. English Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE SINGERS CLUB Mon 7 – 9 p.m.
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 – 8 p.m.
Shihan — Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP
Tuesday 9 a.m. – noon

With Deepest Sympathy

Mrs. Dorothy Nishimitsu
90 yrs. Feb. 7, 2014

THANK YOU
for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

2014 Memorial Service Schedule

2013	1 Year	2012	3 Year	2008	7 Year
2002	13 Year	1998	17 Year	1990	25 Year
1982	33 Year	1965	50 Year	1915	100 Year

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REV. SAKAMOTO'S CORNER

Amida's Immeasurable Light

Although my eyes, blinded by passions,
Do not see the brilliant light which
embraces me,
The Great Compassion never tires,
Always casting its light upon me.

Shinran Shonin

Hello everyone! The season of spring is beginning.

To me, spring is the season of departure. With a variety of dreams for the future, many youth are graduating from school, and ready to go on to the next school or leave for the new world. We hope that they'll lead happy lives. Every youth is a special existence who has something unique to offer.

Here is a poem of a junior high school student who is disabled:

"I'm a candle.
Till I burn out
I want to do a good deed,
Something which can light human heart
I want to do"

I feel I can't compare with him. His heart is much purer than mine.

Here are some writings of boys in a reformatory:

"To have dreams of my home town, I sleep piling mother's letters near my pillow."

— Longing for dreams of his home town, he saves his mother's letters, and he sleeps with them stacked near his pillow.

"Mother's poor character which only I can understand. When my friends fall asleep, I read it deeply."

— He seems to be ashamed of mother's poor character. He wants to touch mother's heart and help her without anyone knowing.

"Sleeping with a thick arm tattooed, my friend says 'Mother' in a whispering voice."

— A youth with tattoos is saying "Mother" in his sleep. Usually he behaves badly, but he misses his mother and dreams of her.

Amida's compassionate love is not a thing that chooses human beings by their school or job or appearances, and never judges them. Amida's compassionate love encompasses everyone — the weak, the strong; the poor, the rich; the good, the bad. There are no superior or inferior differences among us sentient beings. We sentient beings are all the children of Amida Buddha. But often, we foolish sentient beings make judgments about one another. We must always remember that Buddha Nature is inside everyone — even disabled persons and boys in a reformatory. Don't you think that we sentient beings only make differences in our hearts? We should always remember that Amida is calling to all of us to come, just as we are, and that his compassionate love is always embracing us.

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by the tremendous blast that followed. This is why this particular bronze statue of Shinran Shonin that once stood with its back to a temple facing the epicenter of the initial flash and blast only 1.5 miles away is so significant! The temple itself was completely demolished and incinerated, but this very statue of Shinran was not! My wife tells me that when she returned a month later to her temple home Kakuhoji in the Yaga district, a view of the completely devastated and leveled city was visible. It was estimated that more than 90 percent of the structures, mostly wooden, were demolished and some 150,000 lives were lost.

This fifteen-foot-high statue of Shinran was cast in 1935. Ever since 1955, it has been standing with its back to the New York Buddhist Church. This statue now serves as a memorial and monument for world peace and as reminder of the first atom bombing of a city in history. It also serves as a reminder of how frightening the power of any future nuclear war can be. Today, it is said, superpower nations and rogue nations yet are surreptitiously developing even more efficient nuclear bombs and nuclear tipped weapons a 100,000 times even more powerful than the ones that were detonated over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

So, how did the scorched and discolored image of Shinran Shonin's bronze statue get from Hiroshima to New York? This story hopefully will make our recently erected Shinran Shonin statue most meaningful and significant for us. The story also will make other statues of Shinran that you may see also moving, inspiring and "humanizing" as you endure and also survive the hardships of this world full of falsehoods and violence.

Our temple and dormitory as it stands today on 1631 So. Beretania Street was realized after my father was released as an enemy alien imprisoned in an internment camp as were other Buddhist priests during WWII. Buddhist priests in Hawaii were suspected of promoting Japanese nationalist sentiments and loyalty to the emperor of Japan. So were Buddhist priests on the continental United States also interned. Way back then Sears & Roebuck wanted the joint temple properties on 1014/1020 Kaheka Lane (formerly Aloha Lane) to expand the parking lot facilities. Now the parking area has become the Pawaa Neighborhood District Park.

Shinshu Kyokai was founded on April 14, 1914, because of two visiting itinerant Jodoshinshu ministers, Rev. Untai Toshima and Rev. Jyakujo Takeda. Then in 1914 Shinshu Kyokai as an annex

to a Judo Hall at the lower dead end of Aloha Lane was relocated to 1014 Aloha Lane (now Kaheka Street). The temple was a family home that was converted into a temple. Then in 1927 its first husband and wife team, my parents, arrived to serve its members.

At this humble site in 1949:

"... the noted Zen Scholar Daisetsu T. Suzuki, who was participating in the first [actually the second] East-West Philosophers' Conference at the University of Hawaii, addressed the members at the Kaheka Lane temple." Yoshiko Tatsuguchi and Lois Suzuki. Shinshu Kyokai Mission of Hawaii 1914-1984: A Legacy of Seventy Years. p. 77. [] mine.

There is a picture of Dr. Suzuki standing on the pulpit in the old temple on 1014 Kaheka Lane. To his left is me standing in a fuho (robe) and kesa (surplice). Just below my left shoulder is my mom. Behind, are the open shelves holding the urns of deceased members. To Dr. Suzuki's right stand Mrs. Toku Fukushima, Fusa Nishihara, Yasu Murakami and Isome Sasaki. Right behind Mrs. Murakami stands my father. They are no longer in this world.

In 1950, just before I left for Baker University for a B.A. and then for an M.A. at Kansas University, our temple hosted the Reverends Seki and Yoshitaka Tamai. They had come to solicit donations for Seki's efforts to build the New York Buddhist Academy. Their photos are on the same page as Dr. Suzuki's (p. 77). The struggles of Rev. Seki and his wife Satomi to establish the New York Buddhist Academy and Rev. Tamai, called the "Shinran Shonin of Denver," his hardships in building the Tri-State Denver Church has something in common with the struggles my parents had to go through in relocating and rebuilding Shinshu Kyokai.

Rev. Tamai, however, was a bachelor priest who underwent much unimaginable sacrifices to rebuild his church that started as a renovated abandoned brothel. The experiences of both Seki and especially Tamai sensei, therefore, echo and resonate the hardships and sacrifices of my parents as well as the core of faithful and dedicated *Issei* members of Shinshu Kyokai who worked to realize what is now our Shinshu Kyokai and its Student Dormitory as they now stand on 1631 So. Beretania St. These *Issei* now are no longer in this world full of taints and blemishes, for they are now in the Pure Land, or Nirvana without residues.

So, in this April issue of GASSHO, I would like especially to dwell on what is for me the significance of "this statue of Shinran" that survived the intense heat of the initial flash and the blast that vaporized things and people, to then yet survive the fiery, metal melting and bending flames raging all around it. For I would like to have these very significance of this particular statue that survived the initial flash and blast to also be the significance of our Shinran Shonin statue that now stands on the Ewa side of our temple.

So, now, won't you join me in "envisioning" this 15-foot-tall statue of Shinran that survived the so-called *pika-don* (initial flash and blast) and the fires that seared and scorched to discolor it without being vaporized, incinerated or disfigured? But, more importantly, please take a moment or two to pray that there will be no more wars, but that there will be a lasting peace that brings people together in the Truth of the Dharma's Selflessness and embraced by its Reality of Togetherness which all Buddhists refer to as the Ultimate Dharma, unblemished and untainted by divisiveness and violence, or Nirvana without residues.

So, I was somewhat astonished and dismayed to discover that the United Nations had declined Japanese businessman and industrialist Mr. Seiichi Hirose's offer to donate this most significant statue of Shinran Shonin as a symbol of unwavering hope and aspiration for world peace. For in 1955, ten years after Japan surrendered in 1945, the U.N. refused to accept the statue.

So, the question arises as to why Mr. Seiichi Hirose's offer of Shinran's statue discolored, scorched and metallurgically "transformed" was not accepted? For the Japanese Peace Bell, a Buddhist bell (bonsho) hanging under a Shinto styled shrine roof, was accepted by the U.N. on June 8, 1954. Somehow the lame excuse that there was no room to install it doesn't ring true.

So, as of consequence, this is why and how Rev. Hozen Seki, in hearing of the offer, then persuaded Mr. Hirose to donate this discolored, undisfigured and intact statue to the New York Buddhist Church where it now stands.

To make this very significance of this Shinran Shonin statue that survived, the significance of our Shinran statue on our temple grounds most meaningful and significant, I now would like, therefore, to quote the words of Dr. D.T. Suzuki in his keynote address he delivered before the unveiling of this 15-foot-tall Shinran statue in front

WORDS OF SHINRAN

Sakyamuni rejoices in the person of shinjin saying, "He is my true companion." This person is the true disciple of the Buddha; he is the one who abides in right-mindedness. Since he has been grasped never to be abandoned, he is said to have attained the diamond-like-heart. He is called "the best among the best," "the excellent person," "the wonderfully excellent person," "the finest people," "the truly rare person." Such a person has become established in the stage of the truly settled...." SBT-Series. Letters of Shinran. No. 2. p 24.

of the New York Buddhist Church.

The words of Dr. Suzuki on September 11, 1955, were:

"The present state of things as we are facing everywhere politically, economically, morally, intellectually, and spiritually is no doubt the result of our past thoughts and deeds we have committed as human beings throughout the whole length of history, though aeons of existence, not only individually but collectively — let me repeat, collectively. As such we are, everyone of us, responsible for the present world situation filled with its awesome forebodings. The bombing of Hiroshima was not after all, the doing of the American armies, but the doing of mankind as a whole, and as such, we, not only the Japanese and Americans, but the whole world are to be held responsible for the wholesale slaughter witnessed ten years ago."

These words of Suzuki sensei express the significance of what I have been saying about individual and collective karma as governed by the orderly and uniform laws of causality, conditionality, inter-dependency, seamlessness and inseparability that undergird what are the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness. For his words clearly express the truth that "your happiness is my happiness," and that "your unhappiness is my unhappiness!" Therefore, we each are contributors for what has, is and yet will happen.

Dr. Suzuki then said words I hope will make

our bronze statue of Shinran most significant for us as well:

"As far as I can see, we must find the living Shonin who is surely among us answering to the call of his name; only we have not been able to hear his response, our ears have not yet been fully opened inwardly as well as outwardly to that still small voice."

Therefore, I have also been referring to the "listening" to Amida Buddha to be the "hearing" of her "voiceless voice." In Master Shan Tao's parable of "The White Path Obscured by The Rivers of Fire and Water," the voice of Amida is eternally calling from the Other Shore as a "voiceless voice." So too is Sakyamuni's voice a "voiceless voice" urging us to cross over to the safety of the "Other Shore." For Sakyamuni Buddha now is no longer living among us. But his teachings on Amida Buddha remain and can be consulted by "hearing" and "listening" to his "voiceless voice" resonating in and through the words in them.

Then, Dr. Suzuki pointed out the facts of causation and that the consequences of karma are irreversible:

"We must realize that modern civilization is thoroughly oriented towards dehumanizing humanity in every possible way; that is to say we are fast turning into robots or statues with no human souls. Our task is to get humanized once more."

This difference as to whether karma becomes "dehumanizing" or "humanizing" depends on our selves, our volitions, our conscious choices and decisions. So you can see this inseparability and connection between one's "innermost conscience-ness" and "outward consciousness" in Dr. Suzuki's words "the whole world are to be responsible." You can also see this fact in the Noble Eightfold Path concerning the inseparability between one's mind, body and spirit, and therefore, between one's thoughts, words and actions. This is because the Noble Path also inseparably connects the world of Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha (all sentient beings throughout the ten endless directions and unbounded regions of the entire universe).

Therefore, the visible pit marks, scorchings and discolorations on this intact Shinran statue obviously make it one of a kind. For me, they indicate that no one passes unscathed in living through this "burning house" full of falsehoods and

untruths full of deceptions and violence. So also did Shinran in his day undergo to survive such suffering in this world. This is why human beings without exception are riddled by blind passions and self vanities.

For me, this very statue that survived the flash, blast and fiery fires symbolizes a person of O-nembutsu living in this world that is a "burning house" full of illusions and delusions. A person of O-nembutsu faith is much like the intact statue of Shinran that had survived and metallically transformed. Though pitted, burnt and discolored, it wasn't vaporized or incinerated into a "no-thingness." So too is a person of true faith "transformed" into a person of "true entrusting" in which "the world of demons and rival paths cannot obstruct his way."

So this statue of Shinran that survived the atom bomb for me stands for a person of indestructible, diamond-like faith. This is what this discolored yet intact statue of Shinran symbolizes. For such a person of faith "The consequences of karmic evil cannot bear fruit, nor does any form of good equal his" (Tannisho VII). That this very 15-foot-tall discolored statue that survived the initial vaporizing flash and blast without being melted or disfigured carries this significance for me. I hope our Shinran statue will have also this significance for you.

There is also a tall imposing bronze statue of Shinran Shonin in the Los Angeles Buddhist Church. This statue was donated also by the same Mr. Seiichi Hirose who donated the original scorched and discolored 15-foot-tall Shinran statue in 1955 to New York Buddhist Church. This replica statue of Shinran was donated in 1972 because Mr. Hirose wanted a Shinran statue on the West Coast as well. This 12-foot-tall statue was damaged during erecting it but was repaired. However, Mr. Hirose later replaced the damaged one in December of 1972 to commemorate the 800th year of Shinran Shonin's birth. The foundation on which the statue stands is made of rocks 8 feet high. Like ours, this statue depicts Shinran in straw sandals holding a bamboo staff in his right hand and a double stranded rosary in his left hand. The one in New York has no rosary and was probably destroyed in the initial flash and blast. Ours carries also a double strand rosary.

Now there is another bronze statue of Shinran Shonin in Okinawa. It was donated by a Mr. Shoshin Kie. This one also is an exact replica of

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SHINRAN'S WASAN

The Fundamental Vow,
is a boundless sphere
simultaneously embracing all
that is defiled and perverse.
To see this truth is to become
instantly aware that
evil passions and Bodhi are not
different things or essences!

Koso Wasan No. 32
rkt trans.

the one standing before the New York Buddhist Church. The statue is in an obscure and secluded place because it is on Maeda Point just off the main road to Onna Village. The place is called Maedabiru, a place where heavy artillery was set up during WWII by the Japanese to defend the island in the Battle of Okinawa. The statue faces Chiranoumi Bay where the battle took. This replica of Shinran's statue was meant to remind people that we should all seek worldwide peace based on the Truth of the Dharma's Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness.

Therefore, whenever entering our temple grounds, please go also to Shinran Shonin's statue in the frame of mind that "all things and life are seamless and inseparable." In doing so, you will come to understand that Amida has never or will ever forsake to abandon anyone until the last one of them safely arrives in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and Serenity, especially the last of the "unsavable ones."

This, then, is the reality and actuality of Amida's promise that is her Vow:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born and in my land, and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect enlightenment. ..." Hisao Inagaki, The Three Pure Land Sutras. p. 243.

Indeed, such a Vow translates into the thought and reality that "your happiness is my happiness," and that "until you find happiness, I myself cannot be truly happy and at peace with myself!" Namoh-amida-butsu.

BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE

Upon receiving the Mind of True Faith
one realizes Great Joy and Bliss.
Instantly leaping right out of
the endless five evil cycles
of endless births and deaths!
Should any person good or evil,
hear and believe in
Tathagata's Universal Vow,
Such a person says Sakyamuni are
"persons of great excellence."
They're persons called lotuses
"flowering and blooming!"*

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rkt trans.

**Lotuses in the swamp's mire
keep sprouting to break through
the water's surface to then bloom under
the brilliant sun's radiance and warmth.*

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *myokonin*?

ANSWER: Most of what is known is the *myokonin* since Shinran's time were illiterate people with deep spiritual insights. Though unable to clearly set forth their faith in logical terms, they all had a faith that was pure and deeply profound. In seeing a mud puddle, for example, they would see Amida as "a great vessel bearing them across the ocean of ceaseless births and deaths most difficult to cross." They also would hear the "voiceless voice of Amida calling" that made them respond with utterances of *Namoh-amida-butsu* in gratitude, humility and penitence.