



GASSHO

May
2014

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



BEGINNING DAYS OF SHINSHU KYOKAI

By rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

On April 23, 1914 *Shinshu Kiyokai Mission of Hawaii* was formally incorporated as an independent eleemosynary Jodoshinshu temple. Therefore, the twenty-third of last month, Shinshu Kyokai entered its 100th year. So, on January 1st of this year 2014, we entered our centennial year.

Those born after World War II would never imagine that at the turn of the 18th century the land under today's high-rise business, professional and residential buildings from the base of Diamond Head up to the Palolo, Manoa, Nuuanu and Moanalua valleys and Keehi Lagoon areas were verdant estuaries fed by the waters of flowing streams and gushing artesian wells such as the ones in Sumida Watercress Farm and the Pagoda Floating Restaurant. Temperatures were cooler as rainfall and trade winds were ample. The waters of the coastline from the base of Diamond Head to Barbers Point and beyond were once a mosaic of interlocking coral reef systems. That is, until deep channels were dredged, especially in the Honolulu Harbor, Keehi Lagoon and Pearl Harbor areas.

So the interconnecting ecosystems and coral reefs from Waikiki all the way along Ala Moana, Kakaako, Honolulu Harbor, Moanalua, Honolulu Airport and down to Barbers Point areas were once full of inlets, mudflats and coral outcroppings that were subject to incoming and outgoing tides. These areas were once full of fishponds and taro patches tended by native Hawaiians, that is, until the first trading and

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"Be prepared to be corrected in any way by others. Confide the depth of your mind to your fellow believers. It is a pity that there are some who do not take the advice of their subordinates but never fail to get angry with it. You should always be prepared to be corrected by others."

Rennyō Shōnin (Hisao Inagaki. *Thus I Heard From Rennyō Shōnin*. No. 107).



whaling ships began to come. They were followed by New England missionaries who began imposing their Calvinist convictions on the native peoples who they sought to "convert." The Hawaiian royalty were especially targeted for conversion and soon intermarriages of Europeans and Americans with Hawaiians began occurring, such as between Archibald Scott Cleghorn, a Scotsman, and Princess Likelike, who was the sister of King Kalakaua. They were parents of Princess Kaiulani, one of the last heirs to the Kingdom of Hawaii.

During the Depression years before WWII I remember often standing on the highest point of the temple roof on 1014 Aloha Lane (now Kaheka Street) to enjoy a panoramic view from Diamond Head to the Honolulu Harbor areas and even beyond. On a clear day, the distant Waianae Mountains could be seen.

In those days you could see the ivory white Moana Hotel (first hotel built in 1901) and

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR MAY 2014

1st SUN May 4th:

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

2nd SUN May 11th:

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

3rd SUN May 18th:

Commemorating Shinran's Birthday

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Guest speaker:
Rev. Alan Urasaki

4th SUN May 25th:

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 a.m. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Sakamoto

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

Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi
will be off island
May 24 to June 6, 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

REV. SAKAMOTO'S CORNER

THERE IS A WORLD WHERE WE CAN MEET OUR ANCESTORS AND AMIDA BUDDHA!

"Bodhisattva Dharmakara is now dwelling in the western quarter, one hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-lands away from here. The world of the Buddha is called 'Peace and Happiness.'"

— The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life

Hello everyone! We are now beginning the month of May. How are you spending your days? This is my fourth month as an assistant minister at Shinshu Kyokai. I still have many things to learn, so please help me, and teach me about the Hawaiian way of life.

Rev. Tatsuguchi has started to teach me how to clean the columbarium (*Nokotsudo*) and arrange the altar flowers. On Saturdays, from early in the morning, Mrs. Tatsuguchi cleans the inside of the Hondo. She is so hard-working. She is always doing things for the temple, without rest. Because of her, we have a clean Hondo. So I am trying to help her. I am also learning how to clean the Nokotsudo and upper sanctuary from Rev. Tatsuguchi. I am also learning how to do the altar flower arrangements.

In Los Angeles and at Reedley, the flower shop brings the flowers to the temple before every service. The flowers are already arranged by the florist. They're ready to be put in vases. But here in Hawaii, flowers are quite expensive at the flower shop. I heard the price from Rev. Tatsuguchi and was quite surprised — it is three times the price paid on the mainland.

There were flowers in the church yard, so we gathered some. In the back of the Hondo, I learned how to make an arrangement from Rev. Tatsuguchi. How the flowers were arranged had

deep meaning for me. While we were arranging the flowers, a family arrived. I talked with the family and found out they came to offer flowers to their loved ones in the Nokotsudo.

It was almost 10 a.m. when we finished. Rev. Tatsuguchi said, "Oh! It gets hot after 10 a.m.!" Then when we entered the Nokotsudo, I felt, "Oh, so cool! Why is this!?" For there was no air conditioning, but it was so cool and comfortable. Then a memory came to me.

In Japan, most members have a *butsudan* in their homes. So it is an important job for ministers to visit the homes of members and chant a sutra before their Amida shrine. During Obon season, I was asked to chant a sutra before a member's home shrine. While I was chanting, a strange thing happened. Suddenly, something emerged from the butsudān. I was so surprised! It was a small black cat. He had been sleeping in the butsudān. At the time, I didn't understand why the cat was sleeping in there. But now I understand. The cat wanted to rest in a cool place where he felt safe and comfortable!

I guess the family who visited the Nokotsudo came to seek for the same thing. It is not only for the coolness. Family shrines and niches of beloved ones in columbaria are a world which is calming. Memories of loved ones make you feel peaceful, and you can connect with your ancestors and Amida Buddha. I believe that the family came to meet their ancestors and Amida. Everyone, don't you feel how fortunate we are? We can share a calm, comfortable world, meeting with our ancestors and Amida Buddha at the temple. From now on, I will do my best to keep the Hondo and Nokotsudo clean, so that when members come, they can enjoy communicating with their ancestors and Amida Buddha.

Namo Amida Butsu, Namō Amida Butsu,
Namō Amida Butsu

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the pink Royal Hawaiian Hotel (built in 1929). You could also see the coconut palm trees swaying with the gentle trade winds along the Waikiki and Ala Moana coastline. You could also see Tantalus towering majestically over the Makiki and the Pawa-Sheridan neighborhoods. Punchbowl then also towered over the downtown Honolulu areas above Iolani Palace.

Eventually, the Hawaiian Monarchy was toppled on January 17, 1893. The overthrow was accomplished by a *coup d'état* comprised of missionary descendants, roguish speculators and ambitious sugar barons backed by the military and naval ships in Honolulu Harbor. Many by then had married women of Hawaiian royalty. After the overthrow, large tracts of native Hawaiian lands were appropriated (The Great *Mahele*) for plantation acreages and, eventually, real estate development and speculation. At the beginning of the 1900s, Diamond Head Crater, in anticipation of WWI, was converted into a multi-tiered, tunneled military facility with battery stations and observation stations at the topmost tier. By 1934, \$42,000,000 had been spent on Pearl Harbor in anticipation of WWII. By then, Oahu was full of military installations and facilities.

The European and American entrepreneurs, speculators and descendants of New England missionaries and Hawaiian royalty came to control things. They came to be known as the "Big Five." This inner circle of interrelated families came to be led by Walter F. Dillingham, who came to be known as "the Baron of Hawaii's Industry." The "Big Five" by then were dominating and controlling the life, economy, politics and courts of Hawaii with the backing of Congress.

Now, it is to be noted that these were times when Japan was emerging as an industrial, imperialist and militaristic nation as already had the Europeans, beginning with the Dutch and the Portuguese who introduced the culture of steel implements, guns and machinery. Japan, however, was the only Asian nation that escaped Western colonization and Christianization. Japan, as European nations in the Far East were already doing, began competing for the world's natural resources and cheap labor during the Meiji Era

resources and cheap labor during the Meiji Era (1868-1912), Taisho Era (1912-1926) and the Early Showa Period, which began with Emperor Hirohito's reign and ended with his death in 1989. With Japan's surrender in 1945, Japanese ultra-nationalism came to an abrupt end and the emperor was no longer revered as a "living god." Several radical changes were made.

In 1885, the first wave of *Issei* came to Hawaii as contract plantation laborers. The *Issei* came after the Chinese. The first Chinese came as single men in 1778 and 1788. Many had taken native Hawaiians for wives because there were no Chinese women. Other *Issei* came especially during the Depression Years and settled in ethnic neighborhoods such as the Pawa and Sheridan neighborhood districts.

The first Shinshu Kyokai was built as an annex temple in the back of a judo hall at the makai end of Aloha Lane which was a dead end. Then it was relocated to 1014 upper Aloha Lane (now Kaheka Street). Then there were several mama- and papa-san stores, shops and family operated businesses on both sides of King Street between Kalakaua Avenue and Sheridan Street.

The famous Zen scholar Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966) in those difficult times had studied and written about the simple, unadorned, unpretentious expressions of faith of nonliterate persons in Amida Buddha. According to Suzuki sensei such expressions of pure faith spring from "something internal that has become externalized." For, said he, "it was definitely something in them that was most crucial that of necessity became natural expressions of gratitude, humility and penitence." Professor Suzuki then tells of hearing fellow scholar and contemporary Soga Ryojin (1875-1971) who, upon reading the words as expressed by myokonin then in awe uttering: "Ah, such sentences and meanings ... I myself ... incapable of composing!"

Furthermore, Professor Suzuki, in his *Biographies of Myokonin (Myokonin Den)*, wrote: "I believe it can be said that there are astounding numbers of other *myokonin*." This made me recall and think of *Issei* members of our temple of yesteryear who, in my eyes, were

According to Suzuki sensei the term "*myoko*" means "wondrously beautiful like a radiant lotus flower." In this imagery a lotus blossom epitomizes a *myokonin's* unadorned faith. We get an image of a person much like a lotus being showered with soothing raindrops of serenity that have turned into the glistening tears of pure joy and gratitude much like the mysterious dewdrops that keep appearing out of nowhere on the petals of a lotus with the morning's dawn. According to Suzuki sensei, the utterances and expressions of gratitude of such a lotus-like person manifest an unpretentious, unadulterated and uncontrived faith, much like drops of dew that mysteriously keep appearing out of nowhere. They are like crystal clear, pure dewdrops of water free of assumptions and presumptions of an ego-self working and contriving.

Therefore, once again, I wish to recall a bald-headed man, a bachelor, who had come to Honolulu to work as a houseboy for a well-to-do haole family living right across the mauka side of Leahi Hospital. Way back then Leahi was a hospital for tuberculosis patients, one of the diseases that had decimated the native Hawaiians because they had no immunity to it. I remember him as *Inouye no oji-chan* and did not know his first name. For way back then I was going into my fifth year of a carefree childhood full of mischief. In the old days we were taught to refer to our elders with deference and respect. *Oji-chan* conveys the meaning "uncle." So, *oji-i-chan* means "an endearing grandpa!"

Inoue no oji-chan was in his late thirties or early forties. I fondly remember him because he used to come to the temple well before Sunday morning services. He came to cook and prepare the *O-buppan* or rice offerings put before the image of *Amida-sama* and before the hanging scrolls of *Shinran-sama* and *Rennyosama*. *Inouye no oji-chan* was fastidious about keeping all of the utensils and pot he used to cook rice for *O-buppan* offerings. Therefore, he did not allow anyone to use them to cook meat foods. He was well aware that offerings to Amida were not to be derived from that which was once muscle, blood or bone. So, in his own inimitable way, he made sure that these utensils and the

WORDS OF SHINRAN

"... (being) disposed of ... monkhood, ... and consigned to distant banishment, ... Hence, I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life. For this reason, I have taken the term Toku ("stubble-haired") as my name,

"I Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni, discarded sundry practices and took refuge in the Primal Vow in 1201. ..." SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization*, Vol. I p. 614.

pot were to be used only to prepare rice offerings. They were not to be used to cook beef, fowl or fish. So he would wash, dry and store them in a separate, designated place to indicate that these utensils were to be used only for cooking rice for offerings to Buddha.

The thing I cannot forget about *Inouye no O-ji-chan* is that he always cooked some extra rice to make one or two *musubi* with *umeboshi* (pickled plum) inside just for me. In his own way he would always have warm words of encouragement expressing his hopes that I would follow in my father's footsteps and become the next minister for Shinshu Kyokai. He would speak to me as an uncle to his nephew. So he always called me *O-bocchan* to acknowledge that I was a minister's son. This is how, even before Sunday services began, I got to know *Inouye no O-ji-chan*. In fondly recalling him to memory, I truly believe that he was one of the "astounding numbers of *myokonin*" that D.T. Suzuki believed to be living in his days during the later 1800s and early 1900s.

Another such a *myokonin* of Shinshu Kyokai was mentioned in a past GASSHO. He was Matsumoto Katsujiro. I used to call him *Matumoto no O-jii-chan*, as a way of showing endearing deference to one's "elders" because they were in their twilight years. For, he was in his nineties. When the term *O-jii-chan* is fondly expressed, it does not mean an "cranky, fuddy duddy ol' man." It is like a grandchild adoringly calling his grandfather "gran'pa." *Matsumoto no*

O-jii-chan lived to the ripe old age of a hundred and five. He was about my height. He was thin, frail looking and unassuming, but boy was he wiry, tough and strong. He could lift and carry a hundred pound bag of rice on his shoulders.

Before and during WWII, he would come to the temple at the old Kaheka Lane site and volunteer to do the yard work. After cutting the grass with a sickle, pulling out the weeds, raking and bagging the rubbish, he would wash his face and hands to freshen up. Then he enjoyed what my Mom always had waiting for him on our kitchen table, pupus, hot sake and lunch. He would savor each sip of sake with a bite of pupu in between. Then he would eat his lunch, quietly thank my mom and depart just as unobtrusively. The thing I remember about *Matsumoto no O-jii-chan* is that he was an unassuming person without pretensions or airs of self importance. He was always expressing thankfulness for life's many blessings. I often heard him in his own unobtrusive way inaudibly uttering *Namoh-amida-butsu* as he went about doing things.

I remember visiting him at Kuakini Hospital's Old People's Home. He was already well past a hundred years. There was nothing physically wrong with him. Next to his bedside always was his personal portable Amida shrine. He would always acknowledge my visiting him with gratitude and deep appreciation. There was nothing fake or insincere in his expressions of thankfulness and gratitude as he put his hands together in *gassho* to thank me for coming. In such moments the words of Shinran would come to my mind: "Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never ending compassion which is true, real, and sincere."

Indeed, in my eyes, *Matsumoto no O-jii-chan* was a *myokonin* who quietly manifested his gratitude to Amida Buddha though often unnoticed. You could feel the sincerity in his almost inaudible utterances of *Namoh-amida-butsu*. As I recall to memory this unobtrusive, unassuming "old man," I believe there was "something quite deep in his heart of hearts," a simple faith free of doubts, uncertainties and fears on entering the Great Unknown Beyond that awaits us all. Indeed, he was a person living

each moment with gratitude.

Another member of our congregation also mentioned in a former GASSHO was a Yasu Murakami. I used to call her *Murakami no O-ba-chan* (again, differs from *O-baa-chan*). This incident happened soon after I returned in 1961 from Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan, as a fully ordained minister of the Nishi Honganji denomination. I had returned with wife Sumiko and daughter Karen just a ten-month-old baby.

Now, one early Sunday morning, my father, out of the clear blue, told me to conduct the 10 a.m. Japanese service after the 9 a.m. English service, for he had to entertain guests from Japan. You can only imagine how this suddenly sent feelings of anxiety of delivering my thoughts in understandable Japanese. Unprepared as I was, I tried my best, mixing in pidgin English that the local *Issei* understood.

My whole person, especially below my knees, was shaking. If it wasn't for the pulpit I was holding on to with both hands, my upper body would have been trembling as well. The minutes went by as though moving at a snail's pace. You could see the polite smiles of amusement because of my awkward Japanese expressions. In the eyes of others I also could see surprise that someone like me was having difficulty in delivering a sermon in Japanese.

After everyone had paid their respects and left, I was about to return to the rear of the sanctuary. It was then that *Murakami no O-ba-chan*, sitting unnoticed in the pew, called out: "*Botchan! Bot'chan yo!*" So I turned on a dime, surprised. It was *Murakami no O-ba-chan*, with her hands in *gassho* pressed on the right side of her cheek. She came in a rush right up to the pulpit. There we were, face to face, she looking right up into my eyes and I right down into hers.

Then, with a most endearing voice of warmth and understanding the following words were showered upon me. To this day her words remain in the heart of my hearts. For whenever I recall her to memory, what she said then even now makes me remember other *Issei* who also showered supportive words on me to help me

through those difficult years as a minister, who, by the way, is still “wet behind the ears” as an octogenarian. The words of such *Issei* members were always encouraging and supportive, never judgmental or condemnatory as are those of people whose tendencies and proclivities are to “opine” and make snap judgments of others.

Now *Murakami no O-ba-chan's* words at that time were as follows:

“Don’t you worry! Don’t give up! Keep trying! Do your best for you’ll get better and better, you know!”

How different are these words from those who are quick to condemn and pass judgment on a minister for his shortcomings and failings. Today, relationships have become transactional and contractual instead of compassionate and humanizing. Many seem to have a wrong idea of what “freedom of speech” really is. It is as Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai cautioned us decades ago: “We cannot consider only ourselves to be correct, and judge others on that basis” (*Ichinyo*. p. 7).

Now, what finally convinced me *Murakami no O-ba-chan* was a *myokonin* concerns what I serendipitously happened to come across after officiating a Japanese service one Sunday morning. I was resting in the back of the sanctuary when I heard someone mumbling in the upper sanctuary. Since everyone was supposed to have left, I thought it might be an intruder.

So I quietly stepped up to the back of the Amida shrine to peek unnoticed into the upper sanctuary. To my utter surprise, it was *Murakami no O-ba-chan* standing directly before Amida’s image. She had waited until everyone had left the temple hall. There she was standing face to face with *Amida-sama* with her hands in *gassho* right on her heart. She was having a conversation with him. So I instinctively stepped back so as not to intrude on their conversation. What I then heard has never been forgotten.

For when I peeked to look, her head was constantly nodding in agreement with whatever *Amida-sama* was saying to her. Then as I stood

SHINRAN’S WASAN

Though having taken refuge
in Jodoshinshu Teachings,
Difficult to find in me
a true and sincere mind.
For my heart is riddled by
deceptions and falsehoods.
Thus, difficult to find in me
any clarity or purity!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 94.
rkt trans.

unseen behind Amida’s shrine, I heard her simply saying again and again: “Yes, yes ... it is so! Yes it is as you say! Yes ... it is truly so as you say it is!”

As to what she was “hearing” I cannot say, for Amida’s voice is a “voiceless voice.” Such conversations occur between Amida Buddha and a person who has trusted and taken complete refuge in her unfailing Compassion that especially embraces a “karma riddled being” never to ever forsake and abandon such a person of genuine and sincere faith.

As Shinshu Kyokai enters its centennial year on April 23, 2014, let us remember that there were such *Issei* members such as mentioned above who lived *myokonin*-like lives as described by Suzuki sensei. It is hoped that our temple will continue to spawn such persons of simple, unadorned deep faith in Amida Buddha’s All-embracing Compassion that has never or will ever reject to abandon anyone who trusts and takes refuge in his Light of Wisdom and her Life of Compassion. It is my hope that such persons of faith are to be found in our present membership. Namoh-amida-butsu!

BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE

“Truly know that this self is a foolish being of karmic evil, repeating birth-and-death since beginningless aeons ago, forever drowning and wandering without ever knowing the path of liberation.” Shantao’s Golden Saying. Tannisho. Epilogue. p. 36.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Why did Shinran refer to himself as Gutoku Shinran?

ANSWER: According Carol Himaka: "Shinran chose his name 'Gutoku' not to set himself below others around him, but to remind himself that because he recognized the raw naked truth about his ego-self, he could rely absolutely, without a doubt, without hesitation, upon the Nembutsu and Vow of the Amida Buddha. He had seen through and thoroughly given up trust and reliance and all pride on any belief of his own personal power, his own ego-self. When the 'self' is seen this way, regardless of what dharma practice one may follow, this is ultimately the way one achieves liberation from this world of birth-and-death. Why? Because it is the 'self' that creates a false illusion of duality and that is the first step in the creation of Ignorance — the root of all Dukkha." *Gutoku Shinran*. Posted January 5, 2014.

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**The Gadget Group will meet
every Wednesday evening from
6:00 - 7:30 PM starting May 14.**



Bring your family, parents, kids to get your questions answered about what's out there and how you can use it. Laptops, tablets, tablet PCs and an Android smartphone will be available for hands-on demonstration as well as for borrowing for a week at a time.



Our Shinshu Kyokai president, Russell Mukai, is an Information Technology professional who will be available to answer questions as well as provide a hardware library of various tablets and computers.



Call Russell at (808) 351-8047 for additional info

- Open to all Shinshu Kyokai members and their family.
- Meetings will be every Wednesday at 6:00 PM.
- No charge to borrow equipment. Equipment must be returned the next week and will be available for borrowing again.