Gomonshu’s Message: On the Commemoration on the Accession of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition

On June 6, 2014, I came to inherit the legacy of the Jodo Shinshu tradition through receiving the transmission of Gomonshu, succeeding to the post of the resident priest of Hongwanji and the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Mombusho. Today, I would like to announce that the Accession of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition (Dento Hokkai Hogyo) shall be scheduled for the years 2016 and 2017. My succession of the Jodo Shinshu tradition will be officially proclaimed to the Buddha and Masters, and through its observance, it is anticipated that the teaching of Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow shall gain prosperity and Hongwanji in its eminence shall achieve further growth.

Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow is directed without discrimination to every life and saves them just as they are. Despite our being filled with delusions and suffering, we are enabled to entrust ourselves wholeheartedly to Amida Tathagata’s great compassion and be born in the Pure Land. The manifestation of the Buddha’s true enlightenment. Although everything in this world, including ourselves, is unreliable, which Shinran Shonin expressed as “emptiness and false,” we are always able to realize the assuredness in the working of the Primal Vow. Modern scientific and technological sophistication urges us to pursue convenient and luxurious lifestyles, thereby making our desires swell boundlessly. However, I feel that people have begun to realize the futility of these efforts. In addition, such factors as the nuclear family unit and demographic shift from rural to urban areas have forced the conventional social structure to change greatly. As a result, the bonds between people have become weak, causing new anxieties and feelings of uneasiness to arise. On the global scale as well, we can see that there are a number of issues that threaten humanity’s existence, such as armed conflict, economic instability, climate change, and the proliferation of nuclear materials, and it is anticipated that the situation will likely intensify.

Therefore, I believe it is important for us to listen to the Dharma. Listening to the Dharma clarifies for us the compassionate working of Amida Tathagata that always embraces us as just as we are and never abandons us. Hence, we should share our appreciation and gratitude for it with as many people as possible. As Nembutsu followers who are guided by the Buddha’s wisdom, it is important for us to take the initiative and actively carry out programs to cope with the numerous problems and issues in contemporary society. I feel that such efforts will contribute to the actualization of a society in which everyone is able to live a life of spiritual fulfillment.

It is my hope that this upcoming Commemoration on the Accession will become a significant event as well as a major step of our organization. May this occasion serve as the impetus for the Hongwanji to effectively cope with the changing times while upholding the traditional religious values based on Amida Tathagata’s unconditional compassion. The Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha administration is currently formulating new long-term plans in anticipation of the 850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s Birth and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching. We kindly request your active cooperation and participation.

January 16, 2015
Shaku Shinryo
OHTANI Kojun
Mombusho
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

Terao Hall Dedicated in Spokane

On the evening of June 12, 2016, Buddhist Church of San Francisco’s resident minister, Rev. Ron Kobata, with Kasukake Myoami Sensai and Elaine Chinni Sensai, joined thousands of people who gathered in San Francisco’s Castro district for a vigil and march in City Hall in remembrance of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters killed in Orlando, and to recommit to peace, unity, and gun control. SF City Hall was lit in rainbow colors and flags were lowered to half-staff as a memorial for the dead. See page 5 for article.


Response to the Shooting in Orlando, Florida

We are deeply shocked and saddened by the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. We wish to express our profound sympathy to the families and friends of the victims. When we encounter tragic events such as this, we turn to the Buddha for guidance on how to live our lives without hating and harming each other. We recognize that the root of hatred is very difficult to identify. It comes from deep inside of our karmic consciousness. We live our lives based on emotions and feelings of love and hatred. This is one of our daily actions. But there is a true and real realm beyond love and hatred. This is the Buddha’s realm, the realm of Enlightenment. Deeply grieved our condition, the Buddha urges us to listen to the Dharma and to hear the words from the world of true equality. Through this realization, we are able to see one another as fellow travelers on a journey to the world of true equality. Regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, we should live our lives with respect and kindness.

Namo Amida Butsu

In Gasillo (With Palms Together),
Rev. Kodo Umeme, Bishop, Buddhist Churches of America

On April 23, 2016, the Spokane Buddhist Temple honored Mrs. Joyce Terao, her late husband Rev. Eiyu Terao, and his late brother-in-law, Rev. William and Mrs. Mary Terao. Also participating in the ceremony were Rinban Don Castro (far left) and Senrai Paul Vieille.

Mrs. Joyce Terao was honored by the Spokane Buddhist Temple as one of its founders. Terao Hall was named after her and her late husband, Rev. Eiyu Terao, and the late Rev. William and Mrs. Mary Terao. Also participating in the ceremony were Rinban Don Castro (far left) and Senrai Paul Vieille.

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January 16, 2015
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OHTANI Kojun
Mombusho
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha
"Great King, it is like a magician at the crossroads conjuring all varieties of men and women, elephants and horses, adornments and robes. The ignorant think them real, but the wise know that they are not." (Collected Works of Shinran, p. 136)
Are We Worthy Enough?

By Rev. Yushi Mokujo, Mountain View Buddhist Temple

Recently, I feel keenly how old I am getting. I am ashamed to say that I often get back with young people. I get tired and when I fall asleep what about what I was taught. Believe it or not, I even learned a few things about the teachings of the Buddha.

First, we lose our health. When we are old, we will get sick. I think that I am still young, I just keep doing my best to carry out tasks that can be finished today and never put them off until tomorrow.

Second, with the Nembutsu teaching, one is able to have rich experience in attaining the precious and lasting Dharma talk, condoning the Buddha’s teachings. As I grow old, my mind becomes clearer and more vigorous. Having a peaceful mind as he grows older. For our old age, the Buddha still said that a person who listens to the Dharma, but spreading the Dharma, but listening and learning about the Dharma, and pebbles, are turned into gold.”

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Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Board met at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC), marking the first such meeting in Rev. Kodo Umezu’s second term as BCA Bishop and Ken Tanimoto’s first as BCA President. President Tanimoto reported that he held a retreat at the JSC in April with BCA past and present leaders focusing on issues facing the BCA, with an emphasis on building BCA on the Dharma talk, condoning the Buddha’s teachings.

Rather than focus on “Three Great Losses of Old Age,” my teacher told us to consider the “Three Great Benefits of Old Age,” which are given by the Nembutsu teaching. These are the precious gifts that we only receive with age.

As we attain old age, we will lose many advantages. Although this is true, we also gain a precious gift of life that has immense wealth.

Let’s rejoice in the precious gifts. “Three Great Benefits of Old Age” as told by the Nembutsu teaching that make old days shine more and more brilliantly.

By Ken Taninoto

BCA President

Watsonville Buddhist Temple

Growing up with my family in Central California, I was very close to the Temple community. The Temple was both a religious and social community. I looked forward to attending “Sunday School” after WWII. “Sunday School” was used instead of “Dharma School” as the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) needed to “Americanize” their teachings. I felt comfortable being with my Japanese American friends and attending many activities at the Temple. Although I was socializing with my friends most of the time, I knew that there was a way to follow in my stride as it is hard to read books… I don’t think this would have happened several years ago, but when I was in college... I was missing what had earlier given me great joy: the teachings of Shinran and the unity of a Sangha. I found the Watsonville Buddhist Temple and rediscovered the joy of the Dharma and temple harmony.

The BCA temples are here for us to address the question of “why” things happen. The Sangha continues to provide inspirational role models for “giving back.” I realized the importance of helping the Buddhist Church as well.

Rev. Masami Hayashi of the Lake Hall Buddhist Temple is an inspiration to me. A retired geologist from the state of Utah, he received his Master’s degree from the Institute of Buddhist Studies, then studied for Tokudo ordination and Kyosho certification. Rev. Hayashi has been Rev. Jerry Hirano’s student since the BCA Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP) started almost twelve years ago. I was astonished by his physical energy and enthusiasm for Buddhism at the age of 93!

Initiated in February 2004 by then Bishop Koshi Ogi, MAP has certified over 150 BCA lay members to engage in assisting their ministers in various roles such as providing the hongyo and or/attending for services. Since Sunday services in the absence of the minister, helping with Dharma study classes, and performing temple office and clerical work.

Minister’s assistants vary in age and backgrounds. Some grew up in BCA temples; some came from other religious traditions. Some have been inspired by the Dharma that they have become BCA ministers. I thank Rev. Hayashi as well as the other minister’s assistants who have dedicated a large part of their lives to serving at their temples. They are truly worthy members of the Sangha.

The BCA has many paths that encourage and teach us how to give back. I have been chosen to be involved with my temple, district, ministry, reported, and BCA Board. But even today, I am still questioning, “Am I worthy enough to serve the Dharma?” Perhaps you are asking yourself the same question. Shinran gives us the answer in his Notes on “Essentials of Faith Alone,” “When we entrust ourselves to the Tathagata’s Primal Wisdom, we are like bits of tile and pebbles, are turned into gold.”

(Collected Works of Shinran, p. 439)

The Three Great Benefits of Old Age

By Rev. Yushi Mokujo, Mountain View Buddhist Temple

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Let’s rejoice in the precious gifts. “Three Great Benefits of Old Age” as told by the Nembutsu teaching that make old days shine more and more brilliantly.
On June 11, 2016, the Mountain View Buddhist Temple (MVBT) Choir was honored to host a Choir Festival attended by over 150 singers, representing eight Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) choirs. This choral tradition was started by the San Jose Betsuin Choir in 2005, and since then it has been held approximately every other year. This year, participating choirs included San Jose, Palo Alto, San Francisco, Fresno, Mountain View, Salinas, Berkeley, and Southern Alameda County.

In the morning, we held a short service with an inspiring message from MVBT’s resident minister, Rev. Yushi Makorima. He spoke about the deep connection between choir music and Buddhism, and their relationship to the festival theme: “Together in Harmony and Gassho.”

Mr. Mokojima’s message, along with 150 singers chanting Jangie and singing Ondokusan II, made the service a wonderful experience. Many people commented that they’d never heard Ondokusan II sung so beautifully.

The afternoon included a performance in MVBT’s Sanja Hall, where each choir was invited to perform individually. We were treated to a tremendous variety of music and the song, “We Are the World” by Lionel Richie.

For the members of the MVBT Choir, this year’s festival far exceeded our expectations. We are extremely grateful for the support from our local Sangha, as well as the participation of all the singers and attendees. It was truly a day spent together in harmony and gassho.

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Camp Fire Awards Presented at Seattle Betsuin

By Dana Nakashima, Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple

On Sunday, May 22, 2016, three Seattle Betsuin Temple Camp Fire group members received the Wohelo Award. “Wohelo” stands for work, hustle, and love. Rick Taylor, Executive Director of the Camp Fire Central Puget Sound Council, presented the awards to Amanda Hamakami, Meghan Horn, and Emi Nakashima. Amanda Hamakami and Marie Koski-Lake, previous Wohelo Award recipients, assisted in the awards presentation. Melissa Poole, who served as Wohelo Award Youth Advisor, also attended the presentation.

The Wohelo Award is the highest achievement award presented by the Camp Fire organization. It involves completing intensive coursework aimed at developing skills in leadership, teaching, service, and speaking. Additionally, recipients must complete three individually-selected advocacy projects that enable them to demonstrate their dedication to community service and abilities to work with others to achieve common goals.

Amanda, Meghan and Emi worked for four years to complete their Wohelo Award requirements. The first two years were dedicated to completing the Karuna Award, which requires participants to deepen their knowledge of Buddhism and their Japanese ethnic/cultural heritage. During their final two years, the girls completed their Wohelo coursework and their three advocacy projects.

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2016 BCA Educational Events

Programs subject to change. Events at the Jodo Shinsu Center unless otherwise noted.

July 5 & 19, August 2 & 16 - Mirrors of the Mind: Buddhist Cosmology & Western Psychology. Lectures and discussions at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple. $50 includes workshop materials Pre-registration and details: dchena@lodi.yahoo.com


August 19 - Institute of Buddhist Studies Symposium: Shin Buddhism & Globalization. 4:00-7:00 Permission to attend: Dr. Yugo Doi, Dr. Elisabeta Porcu, Dr. Jessica Main, and Dr. Scott Mitchell.

August 19-21 - Summer Pacific Seminar: Jodo Shinshu Buddhism Beyond Borders. Begins Friday at 7 pm. Keynote speakers: Dr. Yugo Doi, Dr. Elisabeta Porcu, Dr. Jessica Main, and Dr. Scott Mitchell.

August 20-21 - Jodo Shinshu Correspondence Course August Workshop will be held at Ekoji/Eko-Haus in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Buddhist Churches of America, Inc. Email: cbe@bcahq.org Phone: (510) 809-1460

Buddhist Churches of America, Inc.
The Enlightenment of Nondiscrimination
By Elaine Shomoyo Donlin Sensei, Buddhist Church of San Francisco LGBTQQ Group

On June 19, 2016, the Buddhist Church of San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQQ) Group facilitated its first Sunday service. What was originally meant to be a celebration of the anniversary of the group’s founding one year prior in 2015, took on a more somber tone as more details unfolded about the June 12 massacre at the gay club, Pulse, in Orlando, Florida.

During the service, we read the words of Shin’s third patriarch, Tan Luan, “Compassion does away with the distinction between self and other. When one sees the illusory nature of self, true compassion arises.” I expressed my gratitude to be “home” in a tradition which not only celebrates the Buddha’s teachings of Universal Oneness, but practices it as well.

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) has a long history of acknowledging and honoring the LGBTQQ community. From the mid-1960s to the present, same-sex marriages have been performed in Shin temples. In 1988, the BCA gave the Hartford Street Zen Center a financial grant to help establish one of the first hospices for AIDS patients in the country.

The Koromo Fund is a BCA Endowment Fund dedicated for monetary grants to Churches of America’s (BCA) youth leadership and Buddhist education activities. Our up-and-coming ministers need the support of our BCA youth, both financially and emotionally. These new ministers are truly grateful for the continued support and generous donations from our own BCA future!”

By Megan Doi and Brooke Shimazaki, Buddhist Church of Stockton Jr. YBA Co-Presidents

Calling all youth groups! Join the Stockton Junior Young Buddhist Association (JYBA) in Project Koromo Our BCA Future” challenge to help the Koromo Fund of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Endowment Fund survive.

So, now you are asking, “What is the Koromo Fund and why should I care?” The Koromo Fund is a BCA Endowment Fund dedicated for monetary grants to newly ordained Kekaiyai ministers. Thanks to our former YBA member, Rev. Candice Shibata, we better understand the dedication, countless hours of studies, and expense of becoming a minister. Ministers are not born overnight. They study a complex curriculum and endure a multitude of tests at each level along the way to becoming a minister.

The Koromo Fund assists with the purchase of their required and very costly robes, called koromo. At the 2015 National Council Meeting, our YBA Advisor, Darlene Bagshaw, learned of the precarious predicament of the Koromo Fund. Fund facilitator, Tom Nishikawa spoke of how the Koromo Fund was created by the now defunct Western Adult Buddhist League. Since they disbanded, support for this very important fund has dwindled immensely and the Koromo Fund is nearly depleted. Our up-and-coming ministers need the support of our own BCA youth, both financially and emotionally. These new ministers are our BCA future!

Now, perhaps you are wondering, “What is my role in this picture?” The Stockton Jr. YBA, 25 members strong, raised a total of $4,000 for the Koromo Fund. We are truly grateful for the continued support and generous donations from our own Sangha as we are passionately supportive of this fund. Bishop Kodos Umezu recognized our chapter at the 2015 National Council banquet. He sincerely appreciates that all the youth can and do are for the livelihood of the BCA.

If our small group can raise $4,000, what can a larger BCA YBA achieve? We challenge you and your YBA or youth group to join in our efforts to replenish and revive the Koromo Fund. Every bit counts and will make a huge difference in the lives of our new ministers and our BCA future.

Watch for our challenge letter with more information or contact our advisor, Darlene Bagshaw at projectkoromo@yahoo.com.

We again, invite each and every BCA member to support your local YBA, our future temple ministers, and the Koromo Fund. We strongly feel this is a very worthwhile project. Please help us strengthen the future of our BCA! Project Koromo: Raising funds for new ministers: Stockton Jr. YBA members who raised $4,000 included (left to right) Darlene Bagshaw (advisor), Brian Ir. Kathy, Melinda Orzala, Danielle Levine, Annette Estrada, Megan Doi, Gary Long, Yvonne Sakata, Greg Breuer, Shimazaki Chloe Shimazaki, and Alex Padua. Not pictured are Tiffiny Shibata and Karen Shimazaki. Photo by Catherine Fujimoto.

The Drhamakara Series: Our Lifelong Learning Challenge
By Rev. Henry Adams

In these summer months, the neighborhood park by our house is in constant use by soccer teams of all ages. Watching the players chase the ball across the grass brings back memories of my junior year of high school, when I decided that rather than continue to play as a forward, I would play soccer in goal. I had played football every fall since the seventh grade, and had hardly touched a soccer ball since primary school, so I didn’t have any expectations or aspirations that I would excel during the season. Mainly I was hoping to have fun and stay in shape for alpine skiing and tennis, the sports I was most enthusiastic about.

Soccer is a sport played on a wide field with constant action and limited breaks. I encountered many soccer coaches who communicated with their players by consistently bellowing instructions from the sidelines in a loud voice in the hope of being heard above all the other field. This style of coaching is quite different from what I experienced with my skating and tennis coaches, who encouraged us to concentrate while in motion, and took the opportunity for calm, focused instruction during breaks between runs or side changes.

It seems to me that these two styles of communication—assuringly shouting urgent messages and calms conveying well thought out ideas—can be found in many aspects of our lives. Many times, it is the ones with the loudest voices who attract the most attention and drown out the voices of those who speak with the clarity of quiet reflection.

Nevertheless, there have been great teachers whose words carry the power of the truth and endure for generations unabated by the clamor of society. For me, the words of Shakyamuni Buddha resonate in my heart and mind with a power undiminished by the 2,500 years and thousands of miles that separate our lives in this world.

Because of the great truth they convey, I feel that the words of the Buddha were spoken just for me. The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life (Delivered by Shakyamuni Buddha (The Larger Sutra) contains a message of boundless wisdom and compassion that I find to be a source of wonderful inspiration. The Larger Sutra tells the story of Dharmakaras Bodhisattva who established forty-eight vows expressing his aspiration to deliver all beings from suffering. In the sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha tells us that Dharmakara Bodhisattva fulfilled his vows when he attained enlightenment, and henceforth was called Amida Buddha, the Awakened One Expressing Immeasurable Life and Light. In the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition, we revere Amida Buddha as a tangible expression of the marvelous truth of enlightenment, a truth that cannot be expressed using ordinary speech and concepts.

Because a Buddha’s words are an expression of the true reality that is realized at the moment of enlightenment, they have special power to inspire us. The Larger Sutra contains a section where the Buddha called the Juzi or “Three Sacred Vows,” which we regularly chant together during our services. The following stanza expresses the Bodhisattva’s aspiration to speak the truth with the power of Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings: 

I shu kai ho zō
ko se ku doku ho
jo o dai shi chu
su po shi shi ku

For the sake of all beings I will open forth the Dharma-store. And understand and become a treasure of virtue upon them. Among the multitudes of beings I will always preach the Dharma with a lion’s roar.

The Lion’s Roar (The Larger Sutra), Yudan H, The Larger Sutra, p. 31)

The Buddha does not shut up at the sidelines of life. To say that he speaks with a lion’s roar does not mean that he has a bellowing voice. The Buddha speaks to us with the intimacy of a close companion who has gone forth all the way down the path to awakening and returns to show us the way. Knowing this, educators, artists, scientists, and philosophers feel free to include messages from Buddha’s words.

Our spiritual ancestor Shinran described the words Namo Amida Butsu that we recite in the Nembutsu as the voice of the Amida Buddha calling us to the realm of immeasurable wisdom and compassion. Namo Amida Butsu is the voice of enlightenment speaking to our lives, sometimes softly in quiet gratitude, sometimes with rich tone and full volume when we gather as a Sangha, but always with the majesty of a lion’s roar. Namo Amida Butsu.
The Wheel of Dharma interviewed a couple of the 2016 IBS graduates to give readers a sense of the broader leadership role that IBS plays in the field of Buddhist education in the US and English-speaking world.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) attracts students from all over the United States as well as internationally. Thomas Calobrisi, a native of Austin, Texas, received his Master of Arts degree from IBS on May 20, 2016. The title of his thesis was "On Mindful Civil Religion: A Study of the Rhetoric of the Mindfulness Movement in the United States."

Calobrisi expressed his appreciation for IBS in this way: "There are many things which make the Institute of Buddhist Studies special, not the least of which is that it was the first institution of its kind in the United States, and in that spirit continues to innovate in the arenas of Buddhist studies, Buddhist ministry and Buddhist chaplaincy, pushing the boundaries of what it means to provide education and service in light of Buddhist teaching."

The Wheel of Dharma (The Wheel): What first piqued your interest in Buddhism? Thomas Calobrisi: I first became interested in Buddhism as a teenager. Disillusioned with the faith I was born into, I began to search for alternative forms of religion. I was particularly fascinated by intellectual cogito and humanistic tendencies of Buddhism.

The Wheel: How did you first hear about the Institute of Buddhist Studies? Thomas Calobrisi: If I remember correctly, I first encountered the Institute of Buddhist Studies through the Dharma Realm podcast hosted by Rev. [Harry] Bridge and Dr. [Scott] Mitchell. I had been curious about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism around the year 2010 and their program tackled certain issues I had in engaging with the teachings of Shinran and his Pure Land path.

The Wheel of Dharma (The Wheel): What was the topic of your thesis? Calobrisi: My thesis studies the rhetoric of "the problem of disconnection," used in the promotion of mindfulness meditation in the United States. I argue that this problematic, insofar as it claims that modern people are somehow disconnected from themselves, others and their environment, utilizes the work of Bruno Latour and Michel Foucault, among others, to demonstrate how this is so and how mindfulness meditation functions as a confessional technology of the self, coaxing modern people into confessing the falsehood that they are "disconnected."

The Wheel: What are your future plans? Calobrisi: I’ve recently decided to continue my studies at the doctoral level through the graduate programs at IBS. In my doctoral studies I plan to build on the research I’ve conducted in my graduate work thus far. Beyond this I am looking to teach at the collegiate level. Optimally, I’d like to teach courses on the issues of religion in postmodernity, religion and terrorism, and cross-cultural philosophy (Buddhist and Western philosophy in particular).

The Wheel: Finally, what is your favorite Buddhist quote? Calobrisi: "When I consider deeply that this rite presents a false dilemma, kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone!" Shinran Shinshin, as recorded by his disciple Yuien in the postscript to the Tannisho.

The 2016 Summer Pacific Seminar – 21st Century will take place starting the evening of August 19 and continue to noon, August 21, at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. Online registration is now open. Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) member rates are $125 until July 25; general registration is $140 and the deadline is August 6. Visit BuddhistChurchesAmerica.org where Byers, tentative schedule, and registration forms may be downloaded. Contact cbu@bcahq.org or (510) 809-1460.

The Saturday sessions will focus on the two keynote presentations, and interactive sessions with Dr. Ugo Desili will present, "Making Sense of Shin Buddhism as a Religion Beyond Borders," and Dr. Elisabetta Porcu will present, "Jodo Shinshu in a Global Context: Between Tradition and Innovation." Online registration is now open. Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) member rates are $125 until July 25; general registration is $140 and the deadline is August 6. Visit BuddhistChurchesAmerica.org where Byers, tentative schedule, and registration forms may be downloaded. Contact cbu@bcahq.org or (510) 809-1460.

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お盆ミュージック

北米における

「お盆」もしくは「盆」の語は「盂蘭盆会（うらぼんえ）」が省略されたものだといわれています。目蓮尊者の母が救われたという内容の「盂蘭盆経（うらぼんきょう）」に加え、アジア各国の「ゴースト」に関連するお祭り、儒教や道教、神道、各地の習俗などが混ざり合ってお盆の行事となったと考えられています。一般的にお盆の期間には、お墓やお仏壇にお参りし、先祖のたましいを家に案内するために、ろうそくや提灯、灯篭に火をともします。ある地域では先祖のたましいが楽しく、スピーディーに家に帰ってこられるようにと、キュウリやなすびを馬や牛にみたてて、お仏壇の前にお供えします。けれども、浄土真宗には、そのような信仰がなく、第21代のご門主、明如上人はお盆を歓喜会（かんぎえ）と呼び、私や先祖が阿弥陀仏に救われることを聞き、喜ぶ法会だとされました。

盆踊りは空也上人（10世紀）が始めた念仏踊りに源流があると言われています。この念仏踊りがお盆の行事に取り入れられ、時代を経るうちに、さまざまな歌や踊りが各地で作られていくようになりました。けれども明治時代のはじめころに起こった、西洋化の波や神仏分離令などの影響を受けて、お盆の伝統が、前近代的な古臭いものだとみなされるようになったのです。それによってお盆が完全になくなってしまうことはありませんでしたが、そのような背景もあって、明治時代にハワイや北米へ移民してきた人々には、日本のお盆への思いいれは、あまりなかったとも考えられています。

浄土真宗本願寺派（西本願寺）は、1889年にハワイ、1898年に北米の開教を始めました。そのころ、お盆の法要はホテルの一室や、門徒の自宅、建てられて間もないお寺などで営まれ、盆踊りはお寺の集まりや県人会のピクニックなどで小規模に行われていました。北米での盆踊りに関して、正式な記録として残っている最初のものは、1930年に開教使として赴任した岩永義雄師のものです。

1930年代に、岩永師は童謡舞踊と盆踊りを西海岸の浄土真宗寺院へ紹介していきました。お寺には日本の各地からの移民が集まっていることを見てとった岩永師は、「花笠音頭」、「東京音頭」、「江州音頭」、「鹿児島おはら節」などを盆踊りの曲に選定し、米国各地で作られた「アメリカ音頭」、「サクラメ... 認識を促すようにされていました。これらの決めごとは北米のほとんどの真宗寺院で採用され、岩永師の精力的な普及活動により、カリフォルニア、オレゴン、ワシントン、ブリティッシュコロンビアでは盆踊りがお盆法要にかかることのできない行事となっていった。岩永師の第二次世界大戦前の最も顕著な活動といえば、1940年のゴールデンゲート国際博覧会でのパレードがあげられます。師はこの博覧会の仏教徒デーに約1000人を集めてサンフランシスコの町を盆踊りでパレードしたのです。

岩永師が盆踊りを仏教行事として普及していったことにに対し、盆踊りをただ単に日本の文化や伝統行事だとして捉える人々もいました。1934年にロサンゼルスで行われた第一回目の「二世ウィーク」で、主催者たちはフェスティバルの締めくくりとして、リトル東京の街を盆踊りでパレードすることを企画しました。パレードには何千人もの人々がつめかけ、ゲストには政治家や高官、チャーリー・チャップリン氏が招かれていました。その後「二世ウィーク」の企画者たちは、日系人向けの盆踊りの音楽を求め、日本のビクターレコード社に依頼、中山晋平氏作曲、西條八十氏作詞のコンビで「羅府音頭（ロサンゼルス音頭）」と「アメリカ音頭」が制作され、二世ウィークでの盆踊りパレードは1941年まで続きました。1935年にはサンディエゴで開催された「カリフォルニアパシフィック博覧会」で500名の踊り手による「マンモス音頭パレード」が行われたと、日系人向け新聞社「羅府新報」が報じています。

（8月号に続く）このエッセイは、音楽学博士で、ポートランドステイト大学准教授の木山ウィン氏が書かれたものを編集部が訳した。現在、木山氏は北米で制作された盆踊りの曲を収集、研究している。氏は10月にお盆の歴史、曲を紹介したブックレットとCDを出版する予定にしている。
伝灯奉告法要についての消息

去る平成26年6月6日、前門主の跡を承けて法統を継承し、本願寺住職ならびに浄土真宗本願寺派門主として務めてまいりました。ここに法統繼承を仏祖の御前に奉告いたしますとともに、あわせて本願念仏のご法義の隆盛と宗門の充実発展を期して、平成28年および29年に、伝灯奉告法要をお勤めすることがありました。

阿弥陀如来のご本願は、あらゆる存在を分け隔てなくそのまま救おうとはたらきかけていてくださいます。迷いと苦悩をかかえる私たちを、阿弥陀如来のお慈悲にとじとじにこの身を任ぜ、至高の勇気の世界である浄土にうまれていくべしと任せていただきます。宗祖親鸞聖人が「そらごとたわごと」とお示しくださった私たちを含むあらゆる存在が、何一つとしてたよりになるものはありませんが、ご本願のはたらきの中に生きる私たちは、確かな依りどころを持つことができます。

科学技術の発達による便利で豊かな生活の追及や欲望の肥大化は、とどまることを知りませんが、人々のさまざまな働き方を追求することで虚しいと気づくきっかけはないでしょう。しかし、核家族化・人口の急激化などによって社会構造は大きく変化し、人間関係は薄韓となり新たな悩みや不安を生み出しています。さらに世界の見え方を移せば、武力紛争、経済格差、気候変動、核物質の拡散など、人類の生存に関わる課題が露呈しています。これらの傾向は今後一層強くなっていくことと思います。

私たちが、凡夫のまま摂め取って捨てないと働き続けてくださる阿弥陀如来の救いのたたきを依りながら、時代の変化に対応する宗門の新たな第一歩として意義を持つものでありたいと思います。宗門では、親鸞聖人御誕生850年・立教開宗800年に向けて新たな長期計画が策定されます。皆様の積極的なご協力とご参画を心からお願いいたします。

平成27年
2015年1月16日
龍谷門主 教専如