

## IN BUDDHIST TEMPLES :

### X. HONKOKUJI

Honkokuji is one of the four main temples of the Nichiren sect having been founded by Nichiren himself. Originally it was in Kamakura. In 1253 Nichiren built a small hut there and called it Honkokuji. In 1398 it became a temple and twenty-eight years later, Nichijō, a disciple of Nichiren, brought the edifice to Kyoto where it received the patronage of the Emperor. The temple met with some vicissitudes for it was burned down by the priests of Hieizan of the Tendai sect. This was due to chagrin over the popularity and power of Nichiren. The once one hundred sub-temples on the temple ground have now become twenty-six, but it still is a flourishing centre of the vigorous Nichiren sect.

Honkokuji is entered by a great gate containing large carved statues of the Deva kings. There are many temple buildings in the wide yard where children play and doves flock. In the Hall of Śākyamuni is the standing statue of the Buddha which Nichiren dearly loved. It was given to him by the governor of Ito while Nichiren was exiled there. When the governor was seriously ill he was healed of his disease through the prayers of Nichiren and in gratitude he gave the statue to Nichiren who loved it so much, he carried it with him wherever he went. The statue is now enshrined in this special hall guarded by two ancient Korean dogs carved in wood brought from Korea by Kato Kiyomasa. The hall is richly decorated with the ornaments generally found in Nichiren temples.

In the Ikimiedo is the statue of Nichiren carved by Nichirō and which Nichiren himself saw before he died and on which he wrote the sacred phrase: "Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyo" (Hail to the Wonderful Lotus Sutra).<sup>1</sup>

\* *The Hokkekyo (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka)*

In the building called the Soshidō are statues of Nichiren the founder of the sect, Nichirō the celebrated second head and also those of the third, fourth and fifth Patriarchs. They all wear peculiar red and white strips of cotton-wadding on their heads.

The origin of this is of interest. It is said that in 1264 Nichiren restored his mother from a serious illness, and that after doing so he was proceeding with his disciples through the pine forest at Tōji. The governor of the province, Tōjō Kagenobu, with many soldiers attacked Nichiren and his friends, and two of the party were killed as well as the feudal lord of Amatsu who was coming to greet Nichiren.

When Tōjō Kagenobu came upon Nichiren with the intent to kill him by the sword, Nichiren raised his rosary and cried out, *Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyo*. The jewel in the rosary was broken into two parts and Nichiren's forehead was injured. The cotton-wadded hoods revive the memory of this incident and the statues wear them from October 12 (the anniversary of Nichiren's death) to April 8 (Buddha's birthday).

In the temple compound is a shrine sacred to the memory of Kato Kiyomasa. It is called Kwanji In and is supposed to be built on the site of the house where Kiyomasa lived.

Kato Kiyomasa was a devoted retainer of Hideyoshi and a fervent follower of the Nichiren sect, and in Ōsaka he founded a temple Hommyōji where he installed the memorial tablets of his ancestors and which he visited once a year at New Year's time. Kiyomasa was devoted to the abbot of Hommyōji, and later when he became Lord of Kumamoto he removed the temple there from Ōsaka, and Nisshin followed him also and became the abbot. From the red gate of Honkokuji Kiyomasa's army marched out for the campaign in Korea. On Kiyomasa's army flag were the seven characters representing the sacred phrase, "Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyo." At his shrine here at Honkokuji is his memorial tombstone. His posthumous religious name is Seishō Kō.

The remains of his wife and daughter are buried here.

Besides the shrine for Kiyomasa there are several others, one to Myōken, the Bodhisattva of the Pole Star, popular in the Nichiren sect. Before it stands the image of a bronze horse, for the horse is the messenger of Myōken as the fox is of Inari. There is a shrine to Inari, the Shinto god of the harvest of rice, and also one to Kishimojin, the Indian goddess Haritī, who was converted to Buddhism by Buddha from her previous life of eating children. Now she is regarded as the protectress of children, and represented as a beautiful woman carrying a child with a pomegranate in her hand. To her shrine come mothers who have lost their children and pray for the welfare of their dear ones in the other world.

The Kyōzō (revolving library) is very ancient and is a national treasure. The half life-size lions on the central washing trough are very charming,—lions instead of the usual conventional dragon, and one lion is standing with his back legs on the ground and his front feet resting on the trough while another lion is standing on the edge of the water basin. It is quite unique in design.

Among the treasures of the temple are pictures of the Four Mandalas drawn by Nichiren, the one of Oshidori being noteworthy because it is decorated with a piece of cloth said to have been taken from a dress belonging to Yōkihi (Yang-kue Fei) the unfortunate, beautiful lady beloved by Emperor Gensō of China. This brocade is embroidered with the figures of the *oshidori*, a species of duck noted for their beauty and their fidelity, for when one of a pair of mates dies, the remaining one remains faithful unto death.

The garden back of the priests' apartments is small but dainty in conception.

Honkokuji may be called the Mother of the Nichiren temples. It is faithful to the spirit of Nichiren (Lotus of the Sun) who originally belonging to Tendai established his own sect. To him the idealised Śākyamuni of the *Saddharma*

*Puṇḍarīka* was most worthy of worship. Nichiren himself is considered to be an incarnation of Bosatsu Jōgyō, one of the first disciples of Śākyamuni.

The sacred phrase, "Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyo," is on the lips of every devout member of the sect, carved on stones, written and painted on paper. It may be translated: "Adoration to the Sacred Scripture of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law." Temple worshippers repeat the sacred phrase to the accompaniment of the drum. In fact, the Nichiren followers like noise and the peculiar rhythm with which they strike the drum is often deafening.

Nichiren made the assertion: "If my benevolence is really great and far-reaching, the Holy Book of the Lotus of the Good Law will continue predominant for a million years." Again he said, "Indian Buddhism came from the West to the East. Now Japanese Buddhism will go from the East to the West." When he lay dying he recited: "My constant solicitude is how can all beings be led to the incomparable Way and ere long attain Buddhahood?" May not one of the ways be along the lines of his own teachings which we see symbolised here at Honkokuji?

A visit to this temple or any one of the chief fanes of Nichiren Buddhism cannot fail to make an impression as to the powerful personality and character and spirituality of the great Buddhist Nichiren.

## XI. HONNŌJI

The Nichiren temple of Honnōji is situated in the heart of the city of Kyoto. It is just off one of the busy streets, yet when the visitor enters the temple yard he at once becomes aware of a spirit of calm which descends upon him as he views the quiet temple roofs, around which the doves are circling.

Honnōji was founded by Nichiren in 1416. The temple is famous as the scene of the assassination of Oda Nobunaga by Akechi Mitsuhide and his tomb is to be seen here. The temple has suffered much from fire in the past and the present Hondo is new. The interior is very rich and beautiful, the gold predominating. Here is enshrined a life-sized statue of Nichiren which is only shown on the 12th and 13th of each month. Nobunaga's memorial tablet (*ihai*) is also enshrined here. On the altar are the statues of Śākyamuni Buddha and Tahōtō Buddha revered in the *Sadharmapundarīka Sutra*.

In the treasure-house there are some interesting pictures and things connected with Nobunaga. Here is a halberd which was used by his wife Ano-no-tsubone when she was trying to protect her husband.

Nobunaga defended himself valiantly when the enemy caught him at Honnōji. When severely wounded and recognising that his cause was helpless, he set fire to the temple and committed suicide, his young son perishing with him. But thirteen days later Mitsuhide's own severed head was exposed in front of Honnōji gate where Nobunaga had met his end.

In the treasure-house are also some interesting pictures of Arhats by Chōdensu and some black-and-whites by Kano Motonobu and a Mandala drawing by Nichiren himself. This is called the Daimoku Mandala and depicts the sacred phrase of the Nichiren sect, "Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo." The writing is mounted on a special kind of damask silk

with a vine pattern, and brocade with this pattern is now sold with the name of *Honnōji-gire*. There are a number of articles preserved here which will interest the student of Japanese history. Among these is an exquisite screen of mother of pearl representing the poem of Seki-heki (the Red Cliff) celebrated by the Chinese poet Su Tung P'ō.

On each side of it are two large incense-burners in the shape of kirins. The kirin (unicorn) is really a creature of the imagination and found in the oldest examples of Chinese art. It is said to be composed of the essence of the five elements. It is represented with the body, legs, and cloven hoofs of a deer, and the head and breast of a dragon. It emits flames from its tail and joints and on its forehead is a horn while its body has scales like a fish. Like the Hōō (phoenix) it appears only when great events occur and is symbolic of gentleness and virtue. These kirins belonged to the Emperor Hui-tsung of Sung who himself was a painter and art lover. These kirin, looking much like dogs, are marvels of power and vitality.

Among the tombs at the back of the temple besides the imposing one of Nobunaga's are those of Nichiryū and Nichiren, in the latter case probably only a memorial tomb or perhaps erected over a part of his ashes or bones since his real sepulchre is at Ikegami near Tokyo.

Near these tombs are those of the painters Uragami Shunkin and Uragami Gyokudo.

Uragami Gyokudo was born in 1745 and his family adhered to the Daimyo of Okayama. Uragami was the family name. It is interesting to note how he took his brush name of Gyokudo. He loved the koto instrument very much and spent much time playing upon it. He came into possession of a koto of seven strings which had belonged to Ko Gensho a Chinese. This koto was called *Gyokudo-sei-in* (the clear rhythm of the jade hall) and so beloved by the painter that he carried it everywhere he went and took his name from it.

In 1794, Gyokudo started on a journey to the eastern provinces accompanied by his two sons and carrying with him his beloved instrument. Later he settled at Kyoto because he loved and appreciated the natural scenery of the city and its surroundings. Here he painted assiduously and played the koto for his amusement. No one was his teacher of painting, he painted entirely from his own artistic inspiration. Although he may be classed as a Bunjinga artist, his work is so individualistic, so versatile that he may be classed by himself. One of his characteristics is that in his brush-work he used horizontal lines in depicting trees and foliage as if done by pencil and this is most characteristic of him and gives his pictures a certain charm and air of modernity.

Now a word about the Patriarchs of the Nichiren sect. Nichiren selected six of his disciples to follow him in the work of preserving and developing the sect. The first was Nissho born in 1221. He was a Tendai priest originally and studied at Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei, Toben as he was called then. Nissho had the same doubts which Rensho (Nichiren) had held before him, for they both felt that the doctrines of Jikaku and Chisho were contrary in some parts to those of the founder Dengyo. Toben was therefore advised by his teacher to seek out Rensho who had left Mt. Hiei for Kamakura. Toben decided to do so and joined Nichiren there and became his fervent disciple and faithful server. In fact he managed all the practical affairs so well that Nichiren was able to devote himself entirely to propaganda. After Nichiren's death he compiled a collection of Nichiren's literary work. Later his believers in Kamakura built a temple for him there where he died at an advanced age leaving the propagation of the Nichiren sect to Nichiryu.

Nichizō was the nephew of Nichiro and was brought as the boy Kichizōmaru to Nichiren by his father. He became a devoted disciple and later was known as Nichizō. When Nichiren was going into exile from the shore of Kamakura

in 1260, Nichizō hurried up to the boat and held by his naked feet the rope of the boat, pleading that he might be allowed to follow Nichiren into exile. But the guard struck him so severely that his right arm was broken. Nichiren comforted him and counselled him to be brave and to be a true believer in the Lotus Gospel and that he Nichiren would think of him everyday during his exile. After Nichiren's departure, Nichizō would stand on the seashore every evening to think of his beloved master and once finding a piece of wood drifting on the water he took it and carved a statue of Nichiren.

After the disastrous attack at Komatsubara on the way to Kamakura when Nichiren was severely injured Nichiro nursed him faithfully in the cave where they both took refuge. It was Nichiro who took the document of pardon to Nichiren at Sado where he was exiled. In 1282 Nichiro met with the sad event of Nichiren's death at Minobu. For one year he entered into quiet mourning for his master and then he returned to Kamakura in order to propagate his religion and in 1318 he settled at Ikegami near Tokyo where Nichiren's tomb is situated. He left many eminent disciples.

Nichiko the Third Patriarch helped Nichiren in his literary work and became the founder of Daisekiji, and Nikko, the Fourth Patriarch, became Nichiren's disciple when he was only thirteen years old and was constantly with him, visiting him during his exile at Sado and taking care of him at Minobu. He also wrote a number of important books. He became the second abbot of Minobu.

Nitcho the Fifth Patriarch worked for the sect at Honkokuji and elsewhere.

Nichiji, the Sixth Patriarch, was noted in boyhood for his beauty and clever mind. At the age of fourteen he became a priest at Hieizan where he studied very hard. But he had grave doubts in regard to the Tendai teaching and was advised to consult Nichiren at Kamakura. He became Nichiren's disciple. After Nichiren's death he com-

piled the work of *The Questions and Answers* in regard to the *Hokke Kyo* (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka*). Thirteen years after Nichiren's death, in 1294, he set out quite alone upon a journey of evangelisation. First he went to the Hokkaido, then through the coast country of Siberia to Manchuria and finally to Peking and other places in China and then onwards to India where he diligently preached his doctrine. He died and was buried in India. It is said that over his tomb was placed a tablet bearing in Tartar letters the words, "Namu Myōhō Rengekyo."

Nichizō is not one of the patriarchs but he was a great worker for the sect especially in Kyoto. When Nichiren was dying although Nichizō was only a boy, he instructed him to carry on the work in Kyoto, and he faithfully obeyed even though he met with troubles and persecutions. He founded a number of temples in Kyoto, Myōkenji being the largest and most important.

Nichiryū was the founder of Honnōji as the head temple of the Kempon School of Nichiren Buddhism and he was a very influential priest of his time, the promoter of the Honkakyuretsu doctrine.

SEIREN (BLUE LOTUS)