

Gaikokujin Bōmorikai to be organized

Ass'n of Foreign Women of Japanese Temples

Japan has been changing and more and more foreigners are visible on traditional Japanese positions every coming year. The process of internationalization, however stimulated by the leaders of Japan, has shown some spontaneous currents.

Currently, there are some resident ministers (*jūshoku*) of temples in Japan whose spouses (*bōmori*) are foreign-born citizens. Those women, who have come to live in very traditional Japanese conditions due to their choice, are pioneers, who face a quite difficult situation. Not only do they have to learn quickly the Japanese language and culture, but also they have to deal with religious matters. In fact, those Japanese families with foreign *bōmori* experience some emotional and practical difficulties of adjusting to such a situation.

It may be possible that in the relatively near future, the Hongwanji will have a number of resident ministers thinking internationally and understanding the Shinshu teaching from both a Western and Eastern viewpoint due to their natural bilingual education.

Such a process of internationalization, which has come as a result of international marriage of Hongwanji ministers, may be however welcomed as a good opportunity for enhancing the way the Nembutsu teaching is promoted. A group of foreign *bōmori* are attempting to establish an association that will contribute to such a mutual understanding between Shinshu members of Japan and Shinshu members of other nationalities who reside in Japan

and overseas.

Membership will be open to non-Japanese female residents of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha temples in Japan who have received ordination and are working as *sōryo* (minister) or *bōmori*. However, special consideration will be given to ladies of Buddhist temples who wish to support the organization and who are fluent in English, regardless of their nationality. The only language that the Association will use is English.

Included in their plans are supportive activities to introduce the Jodo Shinshu doctrine and culture to new foreign ladies of the temples, as well as any consultation for their families, and an annual three-day seminar for studying and discussing the teaching in English. The seminar will be held in conduction with a major Jodo Shinshu event, such as Hoonko or *Gotan'e* (Shinran Shonin's birthday) at Honzan and accompanied, if possible, with the visitation of historically famous Buddhist sites. A newsletter will be published or circulated on the Internet for better communication among the members. A first meeting is scheduled for September 25–27 at the Hongwanji International Center.

In addition, they hope to provide mutual help for understanding the temple environment, [general] Buddhist culture, and Jodo Shinshu doctrine and tradition, and also access to available English sources of Shinshu text.

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