

# Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu

VOLUME IV MARCH 2008

Where ancient traditions thrive

## 14th Annual Honolulu Festival ~ March 15 and 16

The word *matsuri* can refer to any occasion for offering thanks and praise to a kami at a shrine. It comes from a word meaning 'to entertain' or 'to serve'. Matsuri is also used to refer to Shinto festivals.

Shinto festivals generally combine solemn rituals with joyful celebration, and these celebrations can include drunken and loud behavior.

To western eyes the combination of extreme solemnity and vulgar revelry can seem irreverent, but the mix of very different moods is an important feature that may encapsulate the intimate relationship that Shinto has with the world as it really exists.

Festivals center on a particular kami, who are treated as the guests of honor at the event. The celebrations are very physical events, and may include processions, dramatic performances, sumo wrestling, and feasting.



They are bright, colorful, loud, aromatic with the smells of food, and involve much activity.

The processions often feature a mikoshi, a 'divine palanquin', used to carry a kami (or an image of a kami). The mikoshi is often described as a



portable altar or portable shrine.

The procession of the mikoshi is effectively a visit by the kami of the shrine to the local community that is devoted to them, and is thought to confer a blessing on that community.

Because Shinto originates in the agricultural prehistory of Japan, most of its festivals are tied to the farming seasons.

The Honolulu Festival is Hawaii's premier cultural event, promoting understanding, economic cooperation and ethnic harmony between the people of Hawaii and the Pacific Rim region. It also showcases the many matsuri celebrated by shrines throughout Japan.

Each year, the Festival draws thousands of new and returning spectators who are looking for an experience beyond Hawaii. Through educational programs and activities sponsored by the Honolulu Festival Foundation, a non profit organization, the Festival continues to successfully share the rich and vibrant blend of Asia, Pacific and Hawaiian cultures with the rest of the world.

The three day extravaganza occurs every year in March on a weekend from Friday through Sunday. Dance performances and traditional art demonstrations are displayed by artisans from Japan, Australia, Tahiti, Philippines, Republic of China (Taiwan), Korea, Hawaii and the rest of the United States. The Festival culminates with a spectacular parade down Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki, Hawaii.



Honolulu Festival activities are held at various locations in the heart of the city, making them easily accessible to residents and visitors alike. Moreover, admission to all Festival events is free, ensuring that everyone can take part in the festivities.



## Mahalo for your generous donations

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Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha - Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu is a 501C3 nonprofit church.  
All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

## GIVE 5 Campaign - March

### Mahalo Volunteers

Bob Harada	Jon Lower
Arthur MJY Isa	Shinken Naitoh
Juston Isa	Axel Obara



*We would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the late*



Richard Sakai



Hanayagi Mitsuaki II  
(Karen Fujishima-Lee)

## SHRINE CALENDAR

### 神社スケジュール

#### April 四月

- 6 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service  
月次祭
- 12 Clean-up & Mochi pounding  
掃除と餅つき
- 13 Spring Thanksgiving Festival  
春季感謝大祭

#### May 五月

- 6 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service  
月次祭
- 10 Pet Expo - NBC Exhibition Hall  
ペット・エキスポ
- 10 Pet Expo - NBC Exhibition Hall  
ペット・エキスポ
- 25 Honolulu Shinto Renmei  
Memorial Day Service  
ホノルル神道連盟 メモリアル  
デー・サービス
- 31 Clean-up & Preparations  
掃除と準備

#### June 六月

- 1 Pet Blessing Festival  
ペット清祓い
- 8 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service  
月次祭
- 14 Clean-up & Mochi pounding  
掃除と餅つき
- 15 Dazaifu Tenmangu Sukei Kai  
Festival  
太宰府天満宮崇敬会大祭

# PLASTIC BENTO GRASS

Those strips of green plastic, cut on one end, are called *haran* or *baran*. *Haran* is the name of an actual plant that has short, ti-leaf looking leaves. *Haran* is used to add color and as a divider to prevent flavors from seeping from one dish to another. The separation of foods also slows bacteria growth. This, of course, pertains to real *haran* and not the plastic grass-like decorations used in bento.

Certain plants release very active antimicrobial substances called phytoncides that prevent the plant from rotting. When the leaves from such plants are used to wrap or divide foods, the phytoncides in the leaves inhibit the growth of bacteria in the food. So meals packed with real leaves stay safe longer than meals packed with plastic.

Although Japanese people have long had simple ways to carry prepared foods away from home, such as wrapping cooked rice in leaves, the bento as we know it, with small amounts of many foods presented attractively in a compact container, has its roots in the Edo Period (1603-1867).

In those days, well-to-do people ordered elaborate meals for outdoor parties and excursions. The food needed to be packed tightly to prevent shifting during transport, but also had to look good because playful, attractive presentations were then prized.

In the Kansai area, which includes Kyoto and Osaka, the plant of preference was a member of the lily family, *Aspidistra elatior*. In Edo (present-day Tokyo), cooks tended to use *sasanoha* or leaves of the bamboo grass plant, particularly for sushi.

Plastic substitutes came into use around the mid-1960s when supermarkets were getting their start in Japan, and the big stores were looking for ways to cut costs so they could offer lower prices. In more recent years, with the internationalization of sushi, the plastic variety has spread overseas where it is marketed as "sushi grass."

If you stop to think about it, it's perhaps surprising that manufacturers haven't added some kind of antimicrobial agent to the plastic grass strips. After all, there are all sorts of products in Japan with built-in antibacterial properties, ranging from kitchen sponges to luxury pantyhose. The clear films used to cover commercial bento in Japan incorporate a compound derived from wasabi root that inhibits the growth of microorganisms.



## Gaku restoration

The Gaku or plaque with the name of the shrine - Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu was restored by our head shrine in Fukuoka, Dazaifu Tenmangu.

The characters on this special plaque was written by former Chief Priest Nobusada Nishitakatsuji, father of the present Chief Priest of Dazaifu Tenmangu, Fukuoka.

The Nishitakatsujis are the direct descendants of Sugawara no Michizane, to whom the shrine is dedicated to and who was renown as a most accomplished scholar, statesman and calligrapher.

The restoration was performed by artisans in Japan by first stripping the aluminum plaque of all oxidation, pollutants, airborne contaminants and residue from the freeway, accumulated over the past decades. Next, an analysis was done to determine the best method that was efficient and environmentally friendly. The plaque was then refinished and restored to its original color and condition. The complete process took about two months. Mahalo Chief Priest Nishitakatsuji and Dazaifu Tenmangu.



Before restoration



After restoration



# Oya koko - Filial Piety - revering our parents

The social ethic of the Japanese people are - - honor, duty and obligation.

Traditionally, it was the duty of a man to care for and protect his family, and the duty of a woman to bear children and obey her husband; it was the duty of a teacher to guide students to intellectual and moral heights, and the duty of the students to revere and obey the teacher; it was the duty of a leader to be an exemplary model for the subjects and rule with moral rectitude, and the duty of the subjects to abide by the ruler's directives and offer committed support.

In one sense, Japanese society may seem like a society plagued by social and family constraints. However, such a cultural sense of responsibility for one another may have been the significant contributor to Japan's social cohesion and national strength, which fueled its resilient transformation after the devastation of World War II.

However, of all the duties and obligations, none is as widely ingrained in the Japanese psyche as *oya koko* or filial piety. Filial piety can be generalized as the proper behavior and attitude one must show one's parents and elders. Filial obligations include using the proper respectful form of speech when addressing an elder, unconditional obedience to one's parents and their decisions, and carrying on the family name by producing heirs.

Parents give their children the ultimate gift of life. In a culture where family is so valued, parents, as the heads of a family, mean the world to the children. Our ancestors and the elders of society provide us with the history, culture, and tradition that define the world you live in.

Therefore, filial piety is an expansive concept with a matching range of obligations, but one that arises not from blind obedience to our parents and our ancestors, but one that signifies a profound and heartfelt sense of gratitude, honor, and respect.

Confucius considered filial piety an imperative moral conduct. To the Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, it is the central ideology, and moreover, provides the foundation for all other attitudes.

Although filial piety is such a dominant ideology in Asian culture, it is often absent from American society with rebellious, intractable and pretentious youths.

Even without knowing the word filial piety, many people are pious towards their parents. Nevertheless, young children can benefit from having more encouragement and reinforcement of such positive behaviors, especially today, with American society facing such severe declines in morality.

Interestingly, Indian Buddhism did not have a strong notion of filial piety. Buddhism in India rejected respect for ancestors and parents. The true Buddhist had to reject all family ties, just as they had to reject social and class ties if they were to achieve enlightenment. Family was viewed as just another encumbrance of mortal life that had to be dealt with. Buddhist monks were obligated to sever all ties with their family and to forget their ancestors.

Early Buddhism stressed individual salvation, and had little room for the interdependent society that Confucianism had created in China, which stressed the good of the community more than the good of the individual. In India, Buddhism also advocated celibacy among its monks which was unacceptable in the Confucian world view, as heirs were necessary to continue the family lineage. When Buddhism was introduced to China, it was redefined to support filial piety and other Confucian beliefs.

Concerns of an aging population are widespread around the globe, and Japan is no exception. With younger generations embracing the western ideals of individualism, a national long term care insurance system was established to address major concerns about aging and the care problem. The new system grew out of the recognition that, even in modern Japan, the practice of filial piety has weakened to the point of disappearing, due to changes in the society.

With weakened community ties, increase in small-sized families, and growing number of working women, the financial and psychological burden of families facing the care for the elderly in Japan has become unbearably large.

Will *oya koko*, the reverence for parents considered in traditional Japanese ethics a prime virtue and the basis of all human relationship ever be revived in the hearts and minds of the younger Japanese? Will *oya koko* have something substantive to offer in response to the awesome needs of our graying society in the U.S. and the potential to provide crucial support in its preparation for the future.



## Takuan Daikon pickles

Takuan or Takuwan (沢庵) is a popular and traditional pickle in Japan made from daikon radish. Takuan is also popular in South Korea, where it is called danmuji (단무지).

There are several stories as to how the name takuan originated. Some say it comes from a Rinzaï Zen Buddhist monk named *Takuan*, who was the first person to pickle *daikon* in this method.

The zen priest Takuan was born on December 1, 1573 in Hyogo prefecture to a samurai family. His father was Suketoyo Yamana, who was defeated in 11581 by Hidoyoshi Toyotomi. Takuan's father became a *ronin* and Takuan was forced to become a priest at the age of ten.

Others say the *takuwae-zuke* pickles eventually evolved into takuan-zuke. The word takuan was used primarily in the eastern part of Japan.

Takuan in western parts of Japan is called *Hyappon-zuke*, *Koh no mono* or *Jakuan*, which some scholars feel eventually became takuan.

The first step in making traditional *takuan* is to hang a daikon radish in the sun for a few weeks until it is bends easily. Next, the supple daikon is placed in a pickling crock and covered with a mix of salt, rice bran, sugar, daikon greens, kombu, and perhaps chili pepper and/or dried persimmon peels. A rock or weight is placed on top of the crock, and the daikon is allowed to sit for several months. The finished takuan is usually yellowish, although most mass-produced takuan rely on food coloring for this effect.

Often times restaurants serve two slices of takuan along with some other tsukemono. This practice of serving two slices of takuan originated during the Edo period where there was a class distinction system of *shi-no-ko-sho*. *Shi-no-ko-sho* was based on Chinese Confucian models of social structure, involving four classes: the warriors (*shi*); the farmers (*no*); the artisans (*ko*); and the merchants (*sho*).

Takuan was a staple in the diet of the people of the Edo period (1603 - 1867). Due to the Tokugawa shogunate's strict policy of *sankin kotai*, the daimyo's wives and heirs were required to remain in Edo as hostages. The expenditures necessary to maintain lavish residences in both their fief and Edo, and for the procession to and from Edo, placed great financial strains on the daimyo, making them unable to wage war. Thus, there was a large population of samurai, both active and inactive ronin in Edo.

It was prohibited in Edo, during this period, to serve any samurai warrior one slice or three slices of any foodstuff - takuan, sashimi, etc. Chefs in the Tokyo area would always serve samurai warriors either two and five slices, always careful of avoiding the numbers one or three.

One slice is "hito-kire" (一切れ) in Japanese. *Hito* is the number one and *kire* means slice. However, *Hito-kire* (人斬れ) can also mean "to kill someone." In this case, *hito* would refer to human beings and *kire*, the act of killing.

Three slices is "mi-kire" (三切れ) in Japanese. Again, "mi-kire" can also mean to be killed or to commit seppuku or harakiri. In this case, "mi" means human body and "kire" to be sliced or killed.

The Japanese believe in the spirit of language" or the "power of language", a Shinto concept called *kotodama*. *Kotodama* refers to the spiritual power that is contained within words, but also refers to the concept that spiritual power can be manifested through the intonation of words.



The notion of *kotodama* presupposes that sounds can influence our environment, body, mind, and soul.

*Kotodama* encompasses the notion that good can be brought about as a result of positive and beautiful words and evil brought about by negative and ugly words.

*Kotodama* is also fundamental to Reiki practitioners and martial artists, for instance, in the use of *kiai*.

Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido, used *kotodama* because of its capability of affecting physical reality and as a spiritual basis for his martial arts teachings.

So, for the samurai, *hito-kire* (one slice) or *mi-kire* (three slices), both referring to either killing or being killed was an ominous omen with possibly negative consequences.



# Olomea Street Construction

February - October 2008

7:00 am - 3:00 pm Mondays – Fridays

Construction is underway by Ideal Construction for a relief sewer on Olomea, Halona and Kohou Streets. The \$4.5 million project began on February 4 for completion in November 2008. Major construction in front of the shrine is scheduled to take place in April.

Meanwhile, we apologize for any inconvenience due to the road closures of Olomea Street. Please feel free to call the shrine at 841-4755 or Bob Shirai of SSFM International, in charge of the Project Hotline at 216-2412 before visiting the shrine.



## **ONE-LANE CLOSURES**

In the case of a one-lane closure, a sign will be posted at Houghtailing and Olomea allowing local traffic only, which includes shrine visitors. Disregard the Road Closure sign and proceed to the shrine using the usual route on Olomea Street.

## **TWO LANE CLOSURES**

In the case of a two-lane road closure, a sign posted at Houghtailing and Olomea will direct traffic to the shrine from Kohou Street. Two-way traffic will be allowed on Olomea Street with entry and exit from Kohou Street only.

## **KAMA LANE**

You may also use the Kama Lane entry from King Street, across the Kapalama Post Office. The Kama Lane gate is closed to cars, but always open to pedestrians. Please park on Kama Lane, in front of the shrine gate and walk through the swinggate. Please disregard the No-Parking sign.

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**Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha**

**Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu**

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