

Question: Who is Nanjo Tokimitsu?

Nanjo Tokimitsu was the steward of the Ueno District, Fuji region. In the spring of 1289 (the second year of Sho'ō), Tokimitsu invited Nikko Shonin, who had left Mt. Minobu, to stay on his property at the Jibutsudo, which is the current day Shimonobo Temple. Tokimitsu protected and took care of Nikko Shonin for some time. Furthermore, he donated a vast tract of land to Nikko Shonin called "Oishigahara." There, on Oct. 12, 1290 (the third year of Sho'ō), Taisekiji was formally established. The strong faith and practice of Tokimitsu, who served Nikko Shonin, enabled the present day Taisekiji to be built. We must follow the example of the faith and practice of Tokimitsu, who made utmost efforts for kosen-rufu.

This is the reason why all the priests at the Head Temple, led by the High Priest, who is the Master of the Seat of the Law, conduct a memorial on the 1st of May every year for Nanjo Tokimitsu.

Ueno the Wise

The members of the Nanjo family originally lived in Nanjo, which was located in Izu Province. Later, they moved to Ueno at Mt. Fuji, the neighborhood of Head Temple Taisekiji. Thus, Tokimitsu is called both "Lord Nanjo" and "Lord Ueno." Tokimitsu's father, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, practiced sincerely; however, he passed away from an illness when Tokimitsu was seven years old. The Daishonin made a long journey to visit his grave in Ueno in Fuji.

Nine years later, in May of the 11th year of Bunei, Nichiren Daishonin returned from Sado Island and took up residence at Mt. Minobu. Upon hearing this, the Nanjo family brought clothes and food to Minobu and made sincere offerings to the Daishonin many times.

On New Year's Day of the following year, the Daishonin sent Nikko Shonin to visit the grave of Hyoe Shichiro in Ueno, where the Nanjo family resided. From this period, Tokimitsu developed a strong relationship with Nikko Shonin and started to receive frequent guidance from him. He also started to become extremely active in doing shakubuku in the Fuji district. As a result, many priests and local farmers discarded their erroneous teachings and took faith in the Daishonin's true teaching.

There were influential heretical priests and others in the area who did not like what was transpiring. They persuaded the government officials to threaten the farmers who were propagating true Buddhism. In response to this persecution, the

Daishonin's followers never stopped chanting and as a result, three leaders of the farmers who followed the Daishonin, Jinshiro, Yagoro, and Yarokuro, were beheaded cruelly without reason. This incident is known as the Atsuhara persecution. Receiving guidance from the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, Tokimitsu fought with all his might to protect the farmers who were faced with such a dire situation. The Daishonin honored Tokimitsu with the title, "Ueno the Wise," since he clearly was impressed by his efforts.

Receiving Many Letters

During the fifth year of Koan, when Tokimitsu was 24 years old, he suddenly fell critically ill. Upon hearing this, the Daishonin immediately prayed for his recovery and sent letters to Tokimitsu instructing him, "Never yield to your illness and strive in your faith and practice." Tokimitsu, who upheld sincere faith and practice throughout his life, received many letters from the Daishonin. These letters were handed down to us in the present day as precious words of the Daishonin, which serve to encourage our faith and practice.

On Oct. 13, 1282 (the fifth year of Koan), the Daishonin passed away at the Ikegami residence. Tokimitsu rushed to his side and later attended the Daishonin's funeral. After the Daishonin passed away, Tokimitsu served Nikko Shonin, who received the transmission of the Heritage of the Law from the Daishonin and became his successor.

Seven years later, in the second year of Sho'o, Tokimitsu welcomed Nikko Shonin to his estate. Nikko Shonin stayed at Tokimitsu's residence after leaving Minobu, carrying the Daishonin's ashes, because of the deep karmic relationship they had.

After Taisekiji was built, Tokimitsu protected Nikko Shonin and the Third High Priest Nichimoku Shonin. He continued to strive in his faith and practice. He passed away peacefully on May 1, 1332 (the first year of Shokyo), at the age of 74.

The Spirit of Protecting the Temple

In order to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism correctly, it is crucial to protect from within and without. To protect from within signifies protecting the Law from within Nichiren Shoshu. This means that, following the High Priest, all the priests must uphold and transmit the true Law correctly. To protect from without

signifies protecting the true Law from the outside. This means that lay believers must protect and propagate the true Law through various kinds of offerings for kosen-rufu while they work and live in society. Lord Nanjo Tokimitsu strove to do shakubuku, following the guidance of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin. He offered the land for Head Temple Taisekiji, which is the center of kosen-rufu. His life was dedicated to protecting the Law from without.

Nanjo Tokimitsu serves as a great example for our faith and practice. Let us strive to do shakubuku, protect the Head Temple and local temples in order to accomplish kosen-rufu.