

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Tanabe & Tanabe/Japanese Buddhist Temples in Hawai'i

is published by University of Hawai'i Press and copyrighted, © 2013, by University of Hawai'i Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

Aiea Hongwanji Mission



99-186 Puakala St. • Aiea, HI 96701 • ☎: 488-5685

Established 1902, present temple (Style 5d) built 1968, dedicated 1970
Architect: Shizuo Oka of Aotani and Oka, Inc. • Contractor: Thomas Tanaka, Inc.

AIEA HONGWANJI MISSION was famous in the 1950s and 1960s for its bazaars featuring handmade *udon* noodles, sushi, pickled onions, and doughnuts cooked over an outdoor fire. The temple was also a busy place, offering classes in Japanese language, sewing, flower arrangement, and etiquette. In addition to its sponsorship of a preschool, a judo club, and a Junior Young Buddhist Association, the temple hosts many activities such as the Lotus Adult Day Care Center, classes in aerobics, karaoke singing, Okinawan *sanshin* music, and math and reading in a Kumon program.

The temple's striking entryway and roofline are done in the traditional *karahafu* style, which is a graceful, flattened, upside down U-shape. At the center of the entryway *karahafu* is the Honpa Hongwanji wisteria crest. While the *karahafu* shape is often seen in exterior architecture and altar shrines, it is rarely incorporated into the interior ceiling design, as it is in the Aiea temple.

Despite the use of the traditional *karahafu*, the temple is striking for its modern simplicity, especially in the altar area, which is uncluttered and devoid of the usual portraits of the patriarchs in the recesses on either side of the inner altar. This



surrounding simplicity highlights the ornate details of the central shrine and front altar table gilded in gold and decorated with lions, dragons, elephants, and the fantastic birds of the Pure Land. Cranes and deities playing musical instruments fly around the candlestick holders, and the eye-bulging ox-horse-dog-turtle-unicorn baring its teeth sits on its flaming tail on top of the censer. The columbarium reflects the same modern simplicity with the eight-spoke Buddhist wheel inscribed with the Nembutsu and demonstrates a successful blending of the old with the new.



Aiea Taiheiji Sōtō Mission (SŌTŌ MISSION OF AIEA)



99-045 Kauhale St. • Aiea, HI 96701 • ☎: 488-6794

Established 1918, present temple (Style 5c) built 1964–1965, dedicated 1966

ALTHOUGH THE CONGREGATION was formally established in 1918, Sōtō Zen believers had been meeting informally in Aiea from 1904. The congregation largely consisted of workers from the Aiea sugar plantation, which gave permission to the members to build a temple on plantation land leased at very favorable terms. In 1920, while the temple was still under construction, thirteen thousand plantation workers went on an island-wide strike to demand better working conditions and pay. C. Brewer Sugar Co. swiftly retaliated against the Aiea workers by confiscating the land

and the temple before it was completed, and it allowed construction of the building to resume only after the strike was settled.

Archbishop Sekizen Arai of the Sōtō headquarters temple Sōjiji in Japan encouraged members to complete the construction of the temple and, along with Abbot Genpō Kitano of Eiheiji, granted the honorary mountain and temple names “Shinjūzan” and “Taiheiji.” The temple still preserves a poem written on a fan in 1921 by Archbishop Arai on the left wall of the inner sanctuary. It reads: “The compassionate gate of the Buddha’s world is absolute. Believers and the Buddha are one; this is true happiness. The Buddha’s abode is everywhere, and the propagation of Buddhism has already begun.”

The present temple is constructed in the modern house of worship style in solid and patterned concrete block. It was originally topped by slender arches forming an openwork cupola, but the cupola had to be removed later because of its deterioration. As if to reiterate the poetic view that the Buddha’s abode is everywhere, a seated Jizō statue from the tropical Bonin Islands some six hundred miles south of Tokyo is enshrined to the right of the stairway. It was donated in 1985 by Minoru Noda.

The outer sanctuary is noted for its distinctive ceiling that locals call the “*kamaboko*” ceiling because its curved form resembles the *kamaboko* fishcake. Based on a famous painting by the Japanese artist Kanō Hōgai (d. 1888), an embroidered Kannon adorns the front left wall of the outer sanctuary and pours the water of compassion around a small child. On the right wall behind the lectern is an embroidered image of the Kannon of Peace and Tranquility dedicated in 1956 for the perpetual remembrance of victims of war. The threads are intertwined with five strands of hair from each member of the Women’s Club.

The most impressive object in the outer sanctuary is a life-sized bronze statue of the eleven-headed Kannon. Made in 1796 for the Seisenji



Temple by Fujiwara Naotane, the statue was donated to this temple in 1955 by Dr. and Mrs. Mannosuke Komu. It stands atop a lotus pedestal and is backed by an openwork halo of lotus flowers amid swirling clouds. The refined casting displays delicate details in the eleven heads, the miniature Buddha atop the headdress, and the fine relief of the jewelry hanging from the neck and waist.

The inner sanctuary is raised and framed by pillars that for special occasions are covered with dramatic gold and black brocades with dragon motifs. A particularly splendid gilded canopy flanked by two ceiling pendants topped by dragon heads hangs above the front altar and bathes the ceremonial area in a golden glow. The altar is a three-tiered, brocade-covered platform enshrining an image of Shakyamuni in meditation. The side altars display a three-dimensional sculpture of Dōgen (right) dressed in plain robes and holding a whisk, and Keizan (left) wearing elaborately painted robes and holding a scalloped-edged lecturer's staff. The shoes for both figures sit on a platform beneath their ornately carved Chinese chairs.



Other art works abound. The small room to the left side of the inner sanctuary holds shelves for memorial tablets, urns, and a lovely small Jizō wearing elaborately painted robes (for photo, see Jizō in chapter 2). Another Jizō, larger and cast in bronze, stands in the columbarium. A mural of Shakyamuni successfully ignoring the attack of the demons of delusion at the moment of his enlightenment was painted by the temple's youth, who won first place in a mural contest in 1979. A painting of Mount Fuji done by K. C. Kondo in 1976 decorates the downstairs social hall. The old and new art works that fill this temple are a testament to its lively inter-relationships between Japan and Hawai'i, the past and the present.

Byōdō-In Valley of the Temples Cemetery



47-200 Kahekili Highway • Kaneohe, HI 96744 • ☎: 239-9844

Independent nondenominational • Constructed (Style 2) 1968
Architect: Robert Katsuyoshi

THIS CONCRETE REPLICA of the famous Byōdō-in Temple, which was constructed of wood in Uji, Japan, in 1052, resembles the original so closely that a photo of the Hawai'i temple was mistakenly identified as the Japanese original in a college textbook. Hawai'i's version was built in honor of the centennial anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese contract laborers in Hawai'i and, in a spirit of inclusivity, displays the crests of the major Buddhist denominations, the Izumo Taisha Shinto shrine, and the Christian cross. It is the centerpiece of the Valley of the Temples, an active private cemetery.

The grounds include gardens, koi ponds, a meditation pavilion, and a five-foot, three-ton bell that anyone can ring by swinging the suspended log against it. The vermilion hall is also called the Phoenix Hall, not only for the pair of phoenixes that sit atop the roof, but also because the structure itself, if seen from above, resembles the bird with the central hall representing the body, the two side pavilions forming its outstretched wings, and the long, narrow portion behind the center forming the tail. While the temple is a popular tourist attraction, the tail section is a columbarium open only for those paying their respects to their departed loved ones. An image of the Buddha is enshrined in the columbarium, but the niches for the

