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A Case Study of a Japanese Rural Temple Actively Involved in Social Activities

[*abstract]

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Abstract

Generally speaking, Japanese Buddhism is said to be less interested in social activities. Even though a chief priest of a temple wants to get involved in such activities, many parishioners do not support his policy. This is because what interests them most is to conduct funeral or memorial services for their relatives and ancestors. In addition to that, especially in rural area, the temples often have financial difficulties due to lack of enough parishioners and cannot afford to involve in social activities. However, recently there are some temples which attempt to get involved in social activities by finding alternative financial resources different from traditional parishioners' money.

The aim of this paper is to pay special attention to one rural temple named Tentoku-Ji which actively getting involved in social activities like relief of children living in developing countries, and to examine how the temple have solved above mentioned dilemma many traditional temples have. The key of this solution is a new style graveyard. Running the new graveyard, in this case tree-burial sites, the temple can get financial support and human resources from outside.