

History

The First Recorded Japanese Visitor Ekai Kawaguchi

Reverend Ekai Kawaguchi (1866-1945), a Buddhist monk, was the first recorded Japanese national to visit Nepal in 1899. He visited Nepal four times (1899, 1903, 1905 and 1913) on different occasions, but the main purpose of his visit was to pursue his research and studies in Tibetan Buddhism. During his stay in Nepal, he spent considerable time exploring sacred Buddhist places and collecting volumes of holy manuscripts.



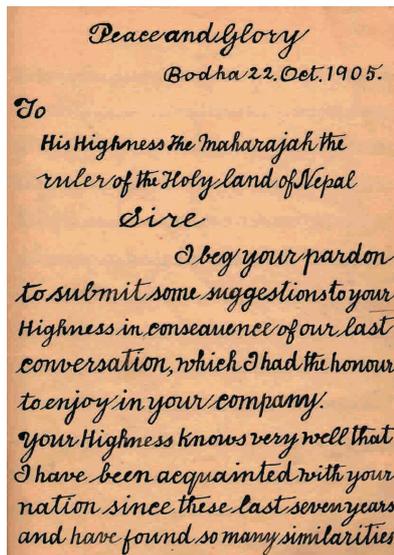
Reverend Ekai Kawaguchi

In 1903 Rev. Kawaguchi approached Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Rana for his help in releasing Tibetan friends from jail in Lasha, Tibet. One of the reasons for approaching the Nepalese government for help was that the Reverend felt Nepal trusted Japan as she had sent a group of students to Japan for study during that time. At the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Dalai Lama's government released Kawaguchi's friends from jail.

During his stay in Nepal, Rev. Kawaguchi met the Prime Minister on several occasions when they discussed their respective nations. During these discussions they became acquainted and as a result of this mutual respect, Rev. Kawaguchi wrote a seventy-five page long letter to the Prime Minister in 1905. In the correspondence he revealed his inner feelings concerning the conditions of the society and the country prevailing at that time. He made several important suggestions for the development of Nepal, in the

area of education for all, improvement of administration, emphasizing vocational education, establishment of industries, banking system, exploration of mines, building of socio-economic infrastructure, etc. He even raised the possibility of Japanese cooperation for the implementation of these programs.

To commemorate the first visit of a Japanese national to Nepal, a portrait of Rev. Kawaguchi was printed on a postal stamp in 2002. This gesture highlights the deep respect that exists between the people of Japan and Nepal.



The letter sent to Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Rana from Rev. Kawaguchi



Rev. Kawaguchi (right in the front row) during his visit to Nepal in 1913



Postal stamp of Rev. Kawaguchi issued in December 2002