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SECTION E

POSTCARD FROM JAPAN



Spared by the Divine



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CONTRIBUTOR

MATSUSHIMA, Japan:

THERE IS something about Zuigan-ji temple that touches the soul. Serenity permeates in the temple compound – the cedar-tree-lined dirt path, rows of caves carved on the rocky cliff with some moss-covered memorials for the departed

souls – cool October breeze and blooming hydrangeas – bliss.

One of the holiest and revered sites in Japan, Zuigan-ji, a Zen Buddhist temple that opened its doors to the world in 828 AD, attracts visitors from across the world.

Zuigan-ji is Matsushima town's hub of activities – visitors, believers, some in awe, others in peace, yet others putting their best pose forward to take selfies – this pious spot sees them all.

Located at Matsushima-kaigan, a sea-face town that is revered as one of the scenic

spots in Japan, Zuigan-ji was made the site for burial by the ruling Date (pronounced Dah tay) family. They used the temple for holding memorial services for the departed souls.

Rain, sunshine, storms – Zuigan-ji has seen them all, and March 11, 2011 is etched in the mortal souls who lived to tell the story.

The tsunami surged into the town, as the world watched in horror, wiping anything that came its way, wall of saline water uprooting buildings, cars, boats, and rushing into the temple compound ... but the

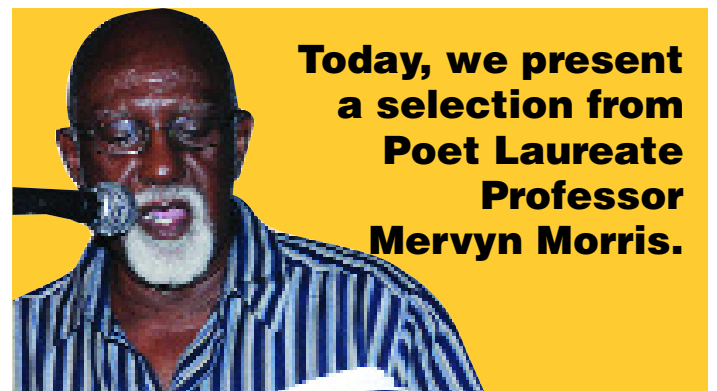
deadly waves stopped just outside the gate of Zuigan-ji.

"It was the blessings of Date Masamune (samurai warrior and ruler of Matsushima) that we were able to avert a major disaster," Sensei (teacher or master) Yoichi Chiba, monk at Zuigan-ji, said.

Chiba, attired in a black robe, with a calm composure, was one of the first responders.

"We had people coming into the temple, locals and tourists, and we immediately moved

PLEASE SEE **DIVINE**, E3



Today, we present a selection from Poet Laureate Professor Mervyn Morris.

The Poet Laureate of Jamaica Presents...

From our Poetry Books



MY CIRCLE JUST

by Mark McMorris

Let me follow your track alongside tobacco berries to our house near a catchment a slope in the hills, where gravity and sun can emphasize the body, its weight – a sack on the shoulder meant for a neighbour across the valley, who lives at a height – its pigmentation, and beat on it steadily, so that my tale can grow as deep as your wish into my legs and even farther to the shelf below our feet.

From *The Black Reeds* (University of Georgia, 1997)

From Our Poetry Books, a weekly feature, presents a Jamaican poem selected by the Poet Laureate of Jamaica, Mervyn Morris.



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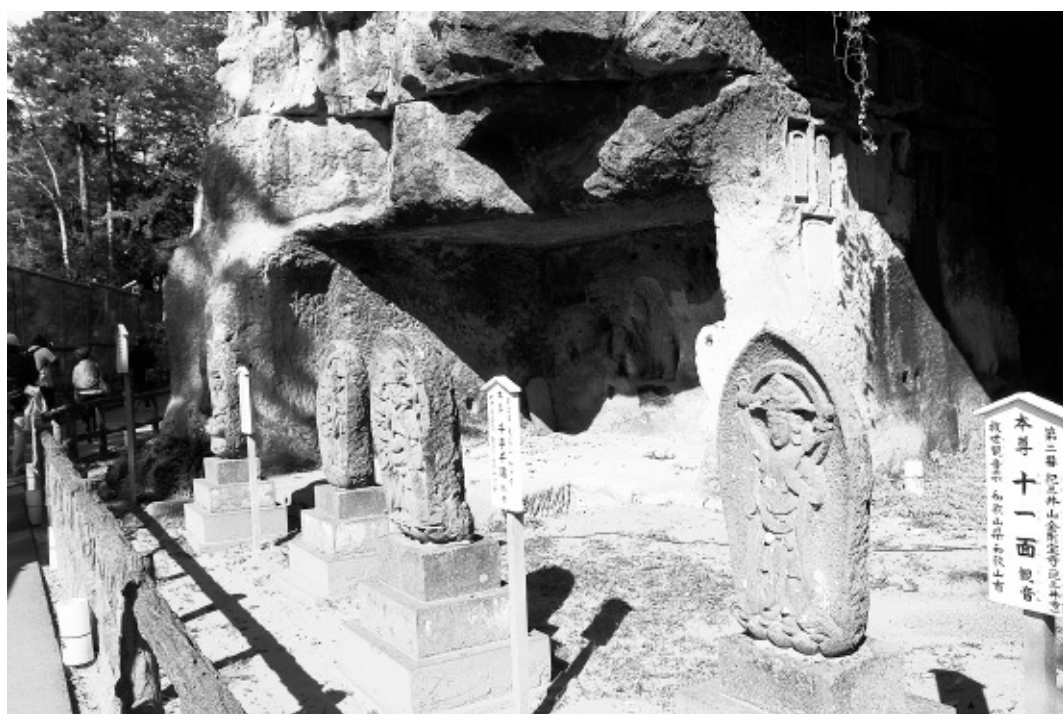
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PHOTOS BY AMITABH SHARMA

Statues and caves, which are memorials to the departed souls, line the path at Zuigan-ji.

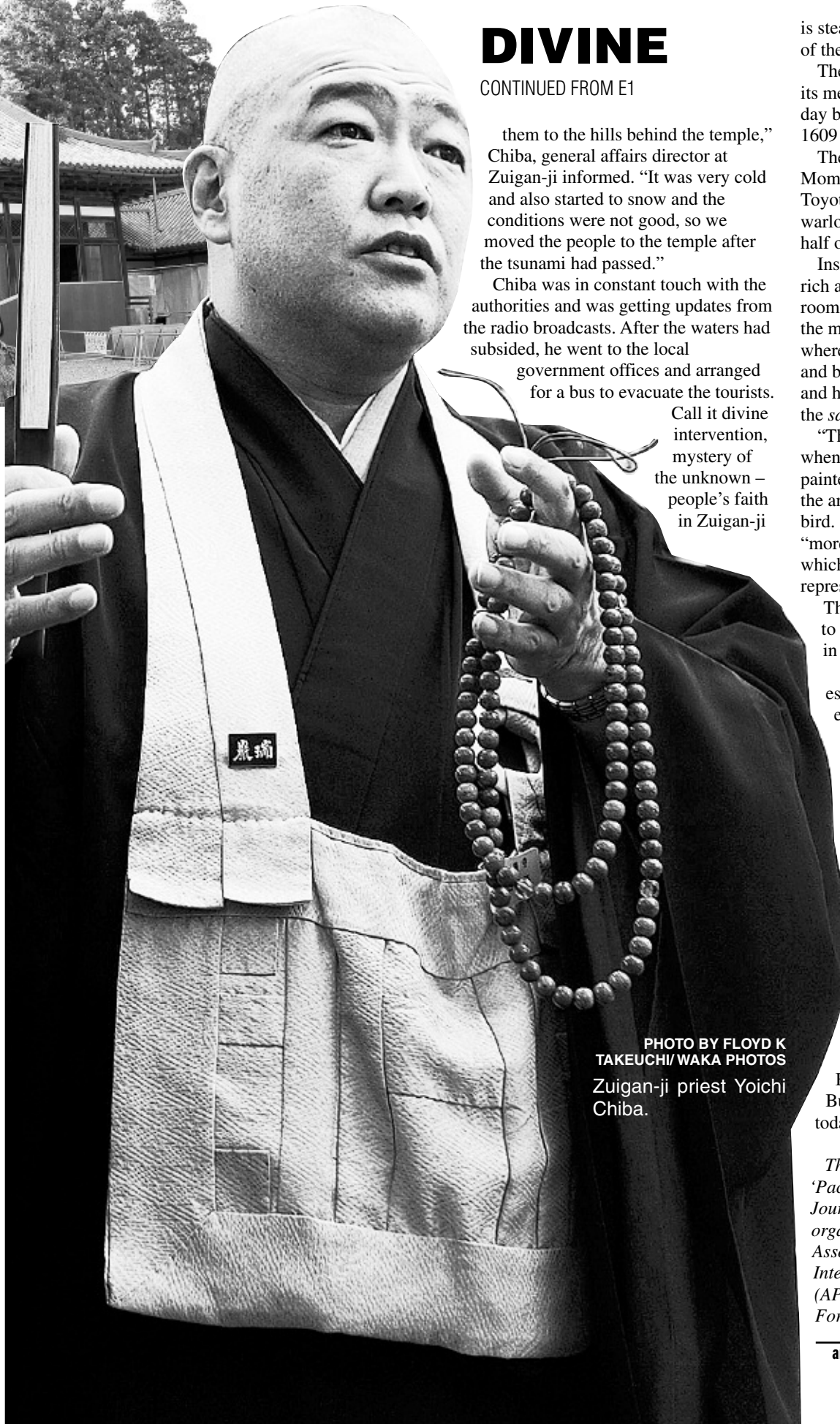


Statues and caves, which are memorials to the departed souls, line the path at Zuigan-ji.

Wooden marker at Zuigan-ji, the destructive Tsunami waves of March 3, 2011 stopped right there.



The main temple building of Zuigan-ji.



DIVINE

CONTINUED FROM E1

them to the hills behind the temple,” Chiba, general affairs director at Zuigan-ji informed. “It was very cold and also started to snow and the conditions were not good, so we moved the people to the temple after the tsunami had passed.”

Chiba was in constant touch with the authorities and was getting updates from the radio broadcasts. After the waters had subsided, he went to the local government offices and arranged for a bus to evacuate the tourists.

Call it divine intervention, mystery of the unknown – people’s faith in Zuigan-ji

is steadfast as the rocky edifice of the complex itself.

The temple has gone through its metamorphosis. The present-day building was completed in 1609 by Date Masamune.

The structure is in the ornate Momoyama style, used by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, supreme warlord of Japan in the latter half of the 16th century.

Inside the main building are rich and ornately decorated rooms. The Peacock Room in the main hall is the focal point where the royalty presided, rich and bright colours, ornate walls and high ceilings, personified as the *sanctum sanctorum*.

“There were no peacocks here when the first panel was painted,” Chiba said, pointing to the artist’s rendition of this royal bird. “Subsequently,” he added, “more paintings were added, which were more realistic representations.”

The main building reopened to the public after restoration in April 2016.

Zuigan-ji encapsulates the essence of the Momoyama era – the carvings and paintings representing the confluence of nature with man’s creations.

A wooden marker outside the gates of Zuigan-ji shows where the waters of tsunami stopped – a testament that there are nuances that are beyond realm of moral souls, Matsushima and its people have lived that fateful day. “Every morning, we are born-again,” once said Gautam Buddha, founder of Buddhism. “What we do today is what matters most.”

PHOTO BY FLOYD K TAKEUCHI/WAKA PHOTOS
Zuigan-ji priest Yoichi Chiba.

The visit to Japan is part of ‘Pacific Islands and Caribbean Journalists’ Programme’ organised by the Tokyo based Association for Promotion of International Co-operation (APIC) with support from Foreign Press Centre, Japan.

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

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MODERN BIDDING

East-West vulnerable, North deals.

NORTH

♠ 3
♥ K J 9 4 2
♦ A Q J
♣ 9 8 7 2

WEST

♠ K 7
♥ A Q 7 6 5
♦ 10 9 7 6 5
♣ 3

EAST

♠ A J 6 5 4
♥ 3
♦ K 8 4 3 2
♣ K J

SOUTH

♠ Q 10 9 8 2
♥ 10 8
♦ Void
♣ A Q 10 6 5 4

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	1♠	2♣	Dbl*
3♣	3♦	5♣	Dbl

All pass

*Diamonds with tolerance for spades

Opening lead: King of ♠

Social bridge players and rubber bridge players still play a game similar to what Charles Goren left us many years ago. Tournament players, however, play a game with which Mr. Goren would not be familiar. On occasion, we like to show some of the simpler bids used by modern tournament players.

West’s first double, used after the opponents have bid two suits surrounding an overcall by partner,

showed the fourth suit, in this case diamonds, with tolerance for partner’s suit. Without that bid, West would have to pass with his useful hand, or perhaps raise partner with only two-card support. In this instance, the double unearthed the huge diamond fit for East-West. In fact, East would surely have competed to five diamonds, a fair contract that would succeed on a luckier day, had West not doubled five clubs.

When the opening lead is going to hold the trick, and there is a singleton in that suit in the dummy, it is common expert practice to give a suit-preference signal. It is unlikely that an attitude or count signal will help the defense when there are no more cards in that suit left in dummy. East might well have played a low spade at trick one to signal for a diamond shift, but he knew from West’s first double that declarer was void in diamonds. East played the jack of spades at trick one, instead, and West duly shifted to the ace of hearts and then gave East a heart ruff. Well done all around!

(Bob Jones welcomes readers’ responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001. E-mail responses may be sent to tcaeditors@tribpub.com.)