

# SOTO ZEN BON FESTIVAL



On the island of Kauai, the Bon dance festivals are celebrated in its own special way. The season runs from June to August. At the Soto Zen Bon Festival, we showcase the best of the Bon Dance culture in Hawaii. On Kauai, the folk arts and religious traditions have evolved over five generations in the Japanese American community. The Bon festival educates visitors and island residents about this unique cultural tradition. Even descendants of Japanese ancestry can deepen their own understanding of their heritage.

**JUNE 16-17, 2023 6 pm - 10:00 pm**

The center stage is the **bon odori**, the Japanese folk dancing with lively music and singing, and taiko providing the rhythm and energy. The dancers dance in concentric circles around a raised platform (**yagura**), dressed in colorful **kimonos**, **yukatas**, and **happi coats**, under a canopy of lanterns (**chochin**). Over 500 lanterns decorate the temple grounds and the dance ring, making our festival the largest and most colorful in the islands. Guests are encouraged to join in the dancing to capture and enjoy the spirit of the festival. The Soto Zen Bon Festival brands itself with a festival logo and a theme, "**Let's Bon Dance!**" It is a festival for all ages. It is a gathering of joy when ancestral spirits return and are united with the living. It is a time to return to your hometown, reunite with family and remember the loved ones who have gone before us.

**HANAPEPE, "KAUAI'S BIGGEST LITTLE TOWN!"**

The most colorful & largest Bon Festival on the island!

The temple's immigrant and sugar plantation heritage are celebrated with informative exhibits and displays. Cultural performances in song, dance and music are also staged. Guests are encouraged to taste and enjoy traditional Japanese, local, and festival food fare. **Flying saucers** originated at our temple in the 1950's is the most popular food item, unique to the island of Kauai. Other menu items tied to this locale are pronto pup, Goteborg rice cup, spam musubi, and hard ice. Enjoy the food booths & game booths.

**JOIN US! EXPERIENCE KAUAI AS NEVER BEFORE!**

**"Let's Bon Dance!" by Celebrating our Roots, our Plantation Heritage**

A special performance of the **Hole Hole Bushi** a unique genre of songs sung by the women working in the sugar canefields of Hawaii, will be presented as an intermission program. These songs are often referred to as the "Buddha-head Blues." It chronicled life on the sugar plantation, the struggle, hard work, mean bosses, and even about love and romance. View the extensive cultural and historical exhibits & displays.

Kauai Soto Zen Temple - 1-3500 Kaumualii Hwy – P.O. Box 537 - Hanapepe, HI 96716

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arts.gov

PRESS RELEASE

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Kauai Soto Zen Temple, Hanapepe, HI

## **Kauai Soto Zen Temple to Receive \$20,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts**

Hanapepe, Hawai'i – Kaua'i Soto Zen Temple is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to receive a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$20,000 to support Soto Zen Bon Festival. This grant is one of 1,251 Grants for Arts Projects awards totaling nearly \$28.8 million that were announced by the NEA as part of its first round of fiscal year 2023 grants.

"The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support arts projects in communities nationwide," said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. "Projects such as this one with the Kauai Soto Zen Temple strengthen arts and cultural ecosystems, provide equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, and contribute to the health of our communities and our economy."

"I think the NEA recognized our preservation efforts in our folk traditions here on Kaua'i, and our outreach into the community," temple President Gerald Hirata stated. "At our Bon festival we celebrate our cultural heritage through our plantation immigrant experience and continue to enjoy the unique festival food fare that is found nowhere else. The *hole hole bushi* genre of songs sung by women working in the canfields, and *flying saucers*, an original festival food item that originated at the temple in the 1950's, are two examples of our folk culture that is underscored by the NEA grant."

Ed Goka, Project Director expressed, "This is a huge honor for the Kaua'i Soto Zen Temple and the community. It acknowledges that what we are doing here on this island, although it may seem very ordinary for us is quite extraordinary because of its value and significance to our community and to the visitors and guests that will be coming to experience the Soto Zen Bon Festival."

The festival is scheduled for two evenings on June 16-17, 2023 at the Soto Zen Temple in Hanapepe.

For more information on other projects included in the NEA's grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news). There is a state-by-state listing of grant awardees and another by grant category/discipline.

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