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Let's All be There As One for Our 80th Anniversary!

By Masahiko Oka

Happy New Year, 2006! Welcome to the 80th Anniversary of our Konkoko propagation in Hawaii. We are so grateful for the many blessings of Tenchi Kane no Kami, our Parent God. We're also grateful for all the dedication and hard work that our ancestors have put into bringing life to Hawaii. We will continue working hard to share Konko Daijin's timeless Faith - "Kami and people live together through an interdependent (*Aiyo Kakeyo*) love-and-sharing relationship" - as we move on to tomorrows.

Holding fast to this vision of a wish, the Konko Missions in Hawaii will stand up and be counted for our 80th Anniversary Conference from August 18th to 20th of this year. "**Prosperity from Generation to Generation**" will be our theme for this conference. Representatives from each church have already been planning for what's coming up in late Summer.

Through a number of meetings to date we're making sure that our anniversary will mean not only having events, but that each of us will strive to continue to attain the divine blessings by practicing faith at our churches with an eye toward what's coming this year. Let's put some real thought into the meaning of this coming conference. Let's get involved in what will soon be upon us.

We hope to get together for these events, and festivities, with the great blessing of Kami-Sama. I

believe that a combination of our daily earnest prayers, coupled up with hopeful wishes for the future, will prepare us for events.

Konko-Sama, on January 16, 1883, the year of his passing, said, "Today, I will tell you about the name of Konko. Konko means, 'Golden light shines'. The 'Kon' comes from 'Kane' in *Kane no Kami*. The 'ko' comes from 'hikari,' meaning sunlight. Sunlight provides the world with light. Therefore it means that the entire world is being

blessed by *Kane No Kami's* light shining throughout the world." He continued, "I'll tell you this little poem that Kami revealed to me: The true way of Konko makes the world bright, shines through Heaven, and will last forever." (Gorikai II, Konko Hagio 21)

In looking at our modern lives, we can see there's no shortage of material things. But we know too there are hardships all over: pollution, war, violence, crimes, disasters, and the list goes on. Worries, anxieties, fears never end; we may always seem far away from much ease in our spirits; we may always seem far away from spiritual fulfillment.

The time is now, though, to live up to the way of the universe, to find ease, to find peace. Our founding ministers and ancestors practiced faith. They passed down what we have in 2006 with one wish - that true peace might be achieved in the world, and



Replica of the Founder's Original Mediation Place

Our Young Ministers Shared their Passion at FEM

On Sunday, November 20, 2005, the Konkokyo Hawaii Center held a Faith Enrichment meeting at the Konko Mission of Honolulu, focusing on the philosophy of Konko Daijin. Our KMH young ministers took a very active part.

Our first presenter was Rev. Koichi Konko (Honolulu), who through a laptop computer with large screen projection, compared the new biography of Konko Daijin to what is found in the older one. He divided our Founder's life into decades, traced the development of his faith until his passing, and drew attention to the many hardships Akazawa Bunji was always facing, yet overcoming through the steadfastness of his faith, and by being positive, and continually praying for the well-being of all people, that they might prosper from generation to generation. Rev. Koichi concluded with the words: "Let us improve our faith, and show it forth, and pass it on to the younger generations!"

Our second presenter, Rev. Todd Takahashi (Honolulu), raised these questions: "What do you think of Konko Daijin? and of Konko Daijin's Teachings?" People wrote down their thoughts to these questions on post-its, which were then attached to a large poster board. Rev. Todd shared his insights to the feedback received, and concluded: Konko Daijin was a simple man who was given by god a real chance to make choices in his life. He chose to follow the "red carpet" of a plan laid out by Kami for him and family. Konko Daijin's many teachings are the inspiration of Kami, meant for all (and NOT JUST for Japanese). And so Konkokyo is a universal faith, whose many teachings are timeless.

Our third presenter was Rev. David Yano (Wahiawa), who shared his insights in this way: Konko Daijin was a man who accepted all types of human beings, in all types of situations. Even completely new things never slowed him down; he accepted all matters as a testing from Kami. And this helped him to connect all the dots in his life, and to

develop for Kami-Sama a broader heart and mind. Rev. David concluded: "Konko Daijin teaches us different ways to Achieve, different ways to understand, and different ways to perceive how Kami works in our everyday lives."

Our fourth presenter was Rev. Edna Yano (Wahiawa), who sallied forth with her outline: "What made Bunji so special? How did this farmer become Konko Daijin? Who helped him rise to the title of *Ikigami*? How can we update what our Founder did years and years ago to the 21st century?" Bunji was humble, she pointed out, and very loyal to Kami-Sama. He interpreted everything to mean a kind of correspondence from Kami. He went through real ordeals in his life (truly "been there and done that"). He bore seven heart-wrenching tragic deaths within his family, and almost lost his own life. Nonetheless he came to realize that a positive grace resided in *Konjin*, not a popular view held by many at that time. Kami-Sama would at last bestow the divine title of *Ikigami Konko Daijin*, upon Bunji. In order to bring Konkokyo up to date, Rev. Edna concluded we should go to our churches to re-energize our hearts, refer to the Divine Reminder, seek *Toritsugi* mediation, and step forward to see what WE can do for Konkokyo; not what Konkokyo can do for us.

Our final presenter was Rev. Alvin Yasutake (Wailuku), who began in a light-hearted way: "Everyone's already covered what's in my presentation." Not true. He pointed out in an original way that Konko Daijin, in always following Kami's words with such a steadfast faith that lesser beings felt he might have been obsessed, was doing more than just obeying. He was trusting Kami-Sama through and through. In looking truly into life, he knew there was little he could do, or anyone else could be able to do, all by himself: "Konko Daijin is trying to teach us to believe in the vital Kami that lives inside each of us: Let's become one."

We went to Q/A and to discussion. Give-and-take



Revs. Koichi (left) & Edna



Revs. Todd, Alvin, & David from the left

An Interfaith Rainbow Gathering Prayers for Peace

On Sunday, October 30, 2005, the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace (HCRP) and the Interfaith Alliance of Hawaii (TIAH) held their annual Interfaith Gathering of Prayers for Peace at the Gedatsu Church in beautiful Maunaloa Bay.

There is such strife in the world nowadays, and so our theme for the evening's Peace Prayer was simply "Peace Through Kindness." We need so much more of this virtue in the world. It is hoped that through gatherings like this one we might be able to light a little candle of peace within the darkness of the world.

A good number turned out. Over sixty good souls from over 10 different faiths (Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Perfect Liberty,



Hindu, Baha'i, Seicho-no-Ie, Konkokyo, and more) met as one. We offered prayers within a rainbow of religious traditions. Rev. Yasuhiro Yano (from our Wahiawa Church) shared his message with one and all.

The keynote address for the program was presented by Rev. Yukio Hamada, of the Punahou School. Many uplifting kindly homilies followed. An assortment of music (the universal language!) was presented. Many joined in with dancing while in song. In relieving our minds in these ways, we were able to twist, shake, and shout out our feelings to bring more kindness to the world.

After this we dove into a delicious potluck full of really ono food, plus even more conversational wonders in our sharing of the threads that we all share in common, and which bind us together in spirit. How we mingled!

Our KMH Homepage is Here!

With a big *kokua* from our local Konko churches, and especially great efforts from our webmaster, Mr. Randy Furusho (Wahiawa Church), the Konko Missions in Hawaii (KMH) will introduce our official Homepage on January 1st, 2006. How exciting!

Now, you can check the information of the local Konko churches, KMH office, and other news & events. You can see general Konkokyo information too, such as teachings, philosophies, and organization. Of course, if you have a question you can drop us a line or you can check the FAQ page too. Since our KMH Homepage should be "active", information will be updated at least once a month.

Please visit our KMH Homepage at



Many Mahalos for Your Kokua!



The Konko Missions in Hawaii would like to give thanks to all of KMH members who contributed a donation for the victims of the Katrina disaster. The total amount raised was \$2,753.80.

We sent the donations to the American Red Cross Hawaii State Chapter, in order to help aid the families, children, buildings, emergency medical services, and other victims hurt in the



My FTI Experience

By Mr. Randy Furusho

(Wahiawa Church)

As I reflect upon my experience at the KCNA 2005 Faith Training Institute (FTI) in Gardena this past October, I'm grateful that I was given the opportunity to attend the program. Having attended one of the faith training seminars a few years back, I thought it would be a good trip to socialize with the Sensei's from KCNA and get some ideas for the web page I'm developing for KMH. Upon receiving approval to attend from the Hawaii Center, Koichi Sensei and I were to be the attendees from Hawaii. It was a quick trip, leaving Friday morning to arrive at LAX about two hours before the start of the FTI and return to HNL Sunday evening. Shortly after I received a training schedule from Uzunoe Sensei and class outlines from the various instructors to review and prepare for the upcoming event. That's when my expectations started to change, just what have I gotten myself into. The schedule was a full plate; activities started Friday evening and ran until Sunday afternoon. As the date neared, I was notified that Rodney Sensei



wouldn't be able to attend the FTI because it conflicted with the chicken teriyaki sale that was scheduled at the San Francisco church. I was bummed out, since I haven't seen Rodney for quite some time and wanted to know how he was doing on the mainland. Well maybe it was a divine arrangement, one less distracter during class.

The flight over went well, it gave me a chance to review the material one final time. Our schedule consisted of morning and evening prayers with a short sermon given by each of the attendees (seven of us) and 6 two-hour sessions facilitated by the seven staff members. The topics scheduled this FTI were:

- Ikigami Konko Daijin – Rev. Oya
- Konkokyo Early History – Rev. Andy Uzunoe

- Tenchi Kane no Kami (2 sessions) – Makoto Tsuyuki
- Faith Development – Debbie Hamano
- Potpourri (Q&A with the staff) – Jack Okazaki

Upon check-in, we were given a quick orientation and introduction period, and then we were off to the races. The sessions gave me flashbacks of being back in school, with the exception that some of the questions required some critical thinking or soul searching of one self to come up with a justifiable non-definite answer.

The FTI has evolved quite a bit during its existence for the past twenty years. Currently scheduled bi-annually, the classes are scheduled based on the needs of the objective to be met. The focus of the FTI has expanded from a program that helped prepare prospective ministers prior to attending the *Gakuin* Seminary, to training leaders for activities such as the youth camps, and lay members within the organization to enhance propagation. This was quite an interesting concept, group leaders actually move or graduate from age specific target groups as they mature. As youths advance to the young adult group, they are given the opportunity to become leaders for the youth activities, a big brother or big sister concept as they can better relate to the younger members. I had the opportunity to meet three of the young adult leaders during my brief stint at the FTI and was pleasantly surprised to dedication to the program. As with all organizations, they were battling for funds for future projects from a very tight budget. My hat goes off to you John, Erin, and Kyle (if you see my article) for your commitment to the church. People like you are the future of the Konkokyo religion. Maybe we can coerce one of them to



The New Year's Day Revelation of 1864

By Rev. Kyoji Muta

What is the meaning of the New Year's Day Revelation of 1864? And how should we receive this famous Event? And what should our relationship be with Events of the Revelation of 1864 on New Year's Day?

Introduction

I would like to interpret, and help you see, if I can, the meaning of the Revelation that took place on New Year's Day in *Genji Gannen* in the lunar calendar (February 4, 1864 AD). I hope we can meditate on how to look at the Event today, now, here, where we are today.

The Revelation on New Year's Day of 1864 occurred as follows, in the words of our Founder, Konko Daijin:

Kami-Sama instructed, "There is no shrine or place anywhere in Japan where *Konjin* can be worshipped. So build Me a shrine."

These words were written in the Record of Revelations, a kind of journal into which our Founder put his divine experience. We call this Record the *Oshirase-Goto Oboe-Cho*. Our Founder also wrote the Memoirs of Konko Daijin (which we call the *Konko Daijin Oboegaki*). Kami had ordered him to rewrite what now is called the Record of Revelations on November 23, 1874, and because of this, he added the history of his own life beginning with his birth.

In the Memoirs of Konko Daijin, our Founder looks back upon a Revelation and writes as follows:

"There is no shrine nor place where *Tenchi Kane no Kami* can be worshipped. Build Me a shrine, one that is square in area. I will look after the safety of the people. No government will ever rule over *Tenchi Kane no Kami*. However, a government now rules over you. Ask your assistants to apply for official approval of My Shrine's construction.

If the wood is already prepared and the government does not approve of the construction, never mind. The wood can be given to someone else who needs it. Start preparing the wood promptly. If the government does approve, you can then build the shrine

and it shall be yours. Should I, *Tenchi Kane no Kami*, enter this shrine, the world shall turn dark. This shrine is to be a place where people can make requests and offer thanks. Through your *Toritsugi* Mediation, Kami, as well as humanity, will be fulfilled."

When our Founder wrote the Record of Revelations, the actual request to build a shrine was made in fewer words. However, later on, when he recorded the incident into his Memoirs of Konko Daijin, he attempted to develop his Faith, and to evaluate his understanding of the Will of Kami, and so he added more words of insight about the event.

It is not without meaning that the Founder taught us that "The whole world is *Tenchi Kane No Kami's hiromae* (worship hall)" (Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 6), and also "If you want to meet Kami, just step out of your house and look around you. The sky above is *Kami* and the ground below is *Kami*." (Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 12). Kami exist in all things.

But why do you suppose that Kami-Sama asked the Founder to build Him/Her a shrine? Do we here in Hawaii need to think about this? Should we believe, perhaps, that the request originally made of Konko Daijin, continue to exist for us as well, here and now, for we the believers in Konkokyo?

Let me try to explore this thought for awhile with you, by looking to the background of the Founder's era, and checking into the meaning of his Revelation. Then I'd like to try, if I can, to propose a way in which we can live up to the Revelation given to Konko Daijin, even now, here in Hawaii, at this time.

Background of the Revelation

Let's begin by taking a look at the background of Konko Daijin when he first beheld his Revelation. He was 42 at the time, and by this time in his life he understood that *Konjin* god, *Tenchi Kane no Kami*, was not a fearful deity, but the Kami who helped guide people through the suffering in their lives. The Founder tried to live within the spirit of this *Konjin* god. And little by little, he was able to receive Revelations

from that Kami, and especially, Revelations in detail on matters concerning agriculture. And these instructions given in the Revelations, he heeded very well. For example, even though it looked like it might rain outside, Kami might reveal to the Founder that it would not rain this day at all, and he could thus continue tilling his soil. Another Revelation might inform him, "It will rain this afternoon, so you should finish up your farming and go home." Kami told him not to worry about insects in his fields, told him to sow a particular seed in a particular paddy, and so on.

You can imagine, that with this kind of oversight, a farmer could become very successful. And Konko Daijin made out well, and prospered, and was a first-rate peasant farmer in Otani Village.

People around Konko Daijin marveled at his success, and they begged him to pray to his Kami also for their own welfare. And so he did, and these people prospered. And then rumor followed rumor, and ever-larger groups of people came to Otani Village, and to his farm, and they sought salvation. The Faith which the Founder had been practicing at one time alone, was now starting to reach out and touch, and turn around the lives of many other people, and it was growing, and becoming well known.

On the other hand, the more that some people were seen going to Otani Village, and to the Founder, the more it seemed that other people began to think of the Founder and his followers as a dangerous group. Konko Daijin, after all, was a farmer. He was not officially permitted to guide people in any religious activities. At that time in the Edo era, rigid class distinctions ruled Japan: the Samurai class, the Farmer class, the Craftsman class, the Merchant class – each of these classes was expected to fit in, and perform in traditional ways. And so it came to be thought that the Founder had been propagation a religion –oh my god–without a license.

And then one day Mr. Juemon Saito, a follower of Konko Daijin who had been helped by him, and who had propagated his teachings in *Kasaoka* district, was arrested and thrown into jail. The Founder's teachings, as it turned out, now were thought to be a threat to mountain priests, of all people. Soon the Founder too was to be persecuted by these mountain priests. One would try to kill the Founder with a sword. Another

story has it someone threw urine at the Founder. Another story has it that these same priests took away his altar and his offerings.

These and other matters made it difficult for any to go to the Founder in peace, as before, and Konko Daijin's followers felt afraid, and stayed away from him. It was at this time that Kami, who had seen these things, sent a message to the Founder. And this message is the Revelation from New Year's Day in 1864.

Contents of the Revelation

Now I'd like to go over the contents of this famous Revelation in more detail. At the beginning, as I mentioned before, Kami said that there was no shrine. Now what do you suppose Kami meant by saying that there were no shrines in Japan? In Japan there are, and of course there always have been, many types of shrine. There are shrines, for example, that house gods from Japanese mythology, as in *Tensho Ko Taijin*, or *Yamato Takeru no Mikoto*, or *Ohkuni Nushi no Mikoto*. Other shrines house gods who come from China, or India, such as *Benzai Ten*, *Hotei*, or *Fukurokuju*. A shrine houses a god who was originally human, but then he or she was enshrined as a god after death, like the emperors, *Shotoku Taishi*, *Sugawara Michizane*, or *Tokugawa Ieyasu*. Other shrines house gods who are considered special to the local people of surrounding villages or districts. These kinds of shrines are places where people can visit and make wishes in appreciation of particular gods.

However, at this time, in 1864, there was no shrine which housed *Tenchi Kane no Kami*, either in Japan, or anywhere else in the world, because this was the first time that Kami had revealed Him/Herself to the Founder. And so Kami asked for a shrine, and the scale of this shrine was to be square in area, three-point-six meters by three-point-six meters, which all together would come to about 140 square feet. Now, this was not so big as other shrines, but it was three to four times bigger than any other shrines on Otani Village.

Kami-Sama promised that S/He would look after the welfare of the people. Now since Kami had never been acknowledged by any government either in Japan or elsewhere, S/He needed no permission to have any shrine built to Him/Her. But, since the Founder lived

in human society, he would have to get permission to have any shrine built, according to the law. And so Kami told Konko Daijin that he'd have to ask someone to take care of the legal requirements, such as permit-getting, or zoning clearances, and so on, if he wanted to build this special shrine.

But now, a little time after this, Kami revealed Him/Herself in a mysterious way. Kami-Sama pushed the Founder to build Him/Her the shrine with or without the consent of any government authority. Kami's intention was that if the government would not allow Konko Daijin to build the shrine, then our Founder could give the shrine away to someone else who could put it to good use. And if the government would allow him to build the shrine, it could then be used as the Founder's shrine.

Another point. Although Kami-Sama asked Konko Daijin to build the shrine, Kami said S/He His/Herself would not enter into this place, because if Kami did, the world would turn dark. *Tenchi Kane no Kami* exists in the vastness of the Universe, and works everywhere. If Kami were to enter, and thus confine Him/Herself to a small space only, such as inside of this shrine, Kami's influence would be limited, and the world would turn dark, as Kami said.

Now here's another interesting concept. By using the word, 'dark,' Kami did not mean a visual kind of reality, or something you might see, like a shadow, or a cloud, or the absence of the sun. In the teachings, the meaning of darkness has more to do with the idea of 'chaos' or 'confusion.' Indeed, "though they say the world is becoming more civilized, it is not. It is collapsing" (GI: Ichimura Mitsugoro 1.17). Or, "Society today is knowledge-oriented. People always try to outsmart each other, and thus they are losing any virtue within themselves" (GI: Ichimura Mitsugoro 3.24). People at that time were living without Kami, and doing everything by themselves, and for their selfishness they were gaining only suffering. In the Record of Revelations, Kami revealed, "Right now the world is human-centered. All things are done by people's own power, and many people are going against My teachings. I shall teach people to return to a Kami-centered world."

And so Kami was in anxiety about the lifestyle of the people at this time, and S/He called this kind of

world a 'darkness.'

The Purpose of the Shrine

What would be the purpose of this shrine to *Tenchi Kane no Kami*? It was not for enshrining Kami. In order to get rid of the unlicensed position of the Founder (as a so-called farmer), and in order to sweep away the unfair prejudice from society that was being directed against the believers and disciples who were propagating the teachings, and in order to circumvent the problems caused by persecution from mountain priests, Kami needed an official place. This would be a place where the Founder could work for Kami as a proxy, or representative, or deputy, of Kami, in order to help all people of this world. A place where people would be able to visit safely, and officially, was needed. And so Kami needed the shrine. Moreover, Kami asked the Founder to build Him/Her a shrine that would fit in with the culture of the surroundings. In other words, since this was the Edo era in Japan, the shrine in Japan would have to blend in well with Edo values and traditions. If the Founder had been living and propagating in the United States at this time, Kami might have asked him to take out a nonprofit organization status 501 (c) (3). In short, the dynamics of the Founder's revelation tell us that Kami's message to him was made in consideration of the believers in his society, and of their special needs at the time.

Meaning to Us

Up to now I've tried to explain the background, content, and purpose of Kami's Revelation to Konko Daijin. But what does that Revelation mean to you, and to all of us? We who practice the Konko Faith today have religious freedom to worship as we please, and we have our Church. And no one forces our Faith today to gain the protection of any law. Today we enjoy the benefits of a tax-exempt status with the government. And it seems that we don't really need to think deeply about the Revelation today because the purpose of the Revelation, and the social emergency that seems to have caused it, at least in part, no longer exist.

However, that's not the case. Kami's request to build His/Her shrine or church was not a 'hardware' thing, if you think about it carefully. The shrine was not built to be a simple building. It was built for the

80th Anniversary Year 2006 Activities!

In keeping with our long-range goal of creating a Konkokyo for the world, we in the Konko Missions in Hawaii have planned a variety of programs and events which we hope will help believers in Hawaii to deepen their Faith, and broaden their relationship with Kami-Sama.

A few of our plans for future activities are included here:

1. KMH 80th Anniversary Conference (8/18-8/20)
2. Youth Gathering (Summer, TBA)
3. KMH Official Homepage (1/1/06 New Open!)
4. Faith Enrichment Meeting (2/19 w/ Rev. Richard Grange)
5. Insights Into Konkokyo Workshop (2 times @ each church)
6. Kauai Gathering (2 times)
7. Support for Volunteer Activities
8. Konkokyo Movie on TV (October, TBA)
9. The Publishing of our Newsletter *Malamalama* (4 times)

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