



## Food in the Konko Perspective



By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano

Head Minister of Konko Mission of Wahiawa

On Sunday, August 1, 2021, after the observance of the monthly service for Tenchi Kane No Kami at our church in Wahiawa, we hosted the KMH Zoom Rotary Hanashi Kai Gathering from 10:30 am to 12 noon. The Rotary Hanashikai is a program aimed to engage intra-church conversation on a topic of that gathering. The gatherings are casual and people are free to comment and ask questions. Usually, we have taken turns among the local churches on Oahu to host the gatherings, and provide some refreshments and a light luncheon. But we have not been able to hold the gatherings in persons due to COVID-19. This was the first ever ZOOM Rotary Hanashikai. And even though we were not able to meet in person or have a lunch with everyone, we were still able to enjoy the gathering thoroughly. There were some 26 people from Honolulu, Waipahu, Wahiawa, Wailuku and San Diego Churches who joined.

The theme of the gathering was on "Food". At the beginning, I introduced one message about food given to Tokunaga Kenji from the Founder Konko Daijin for a reference and the discussion followed.

The Founder Konko Daijin related to Kenji Tokunaga, "They say eating oily foods during an illness is unhealthy. But without such strength-giving foods, the body will get weak. Oily foods make the body strong. And when the body gets strong, the illness will be defeated. Without oily foods, the body will become weak. And when the body gets weak, the illness will triumph. Therefore, it is better to eat strength-giving oily foods" (GI:Tokunaga, Kenji:5.1).

"Even if oily foods were bad, no one would refuse to give some to a dying person who wants to eat some. Everyone, even a doctor, would tell you to give the dying person whatever food there was. If the dying person manages to eat a bite, it would relieve everyone. Thus, wouldn't it be better for him to eat oily food? We were born into this world to eat" (GI:Tokunaga, Kenji:5.2).

What I wanted to focus for the discussion was the message, "We were born into this world to eat." Actually, this can be true for any other living things. We have been taking care of the neighborhood cats. The cats approach and beg for food. The cats identify us as the source of food in a sense. Even roaches scavenge for some food.

How we consume food can determine what we are in a sense. As a saying goes, "We are what we eat." Eating without taking the lives of other living things is simply impossible. We sustain our lives by taking lives of other living things. Some people deny this fundamental nature of the food we eat. We simply cannot sustain our lives by eating non-living elements. We can sustain only because we consume elements of living things. Some people eat only vegetables, some other people eat only meat, some people eat raw food material and there can be some other extreme manners of food consumption. Some people practice mindful consumption of food. The Buddhist community practice eating "Shoujin Ryori" which are plant-based foods in regards to their religious values.

The Founder's message, "We were born into this world to eat" can justify the various food consumption communities. They believe their practices are the most reasonable manners of consuming foods. And that should be respected. If all the people in the different communities get together, what would happen? If each group tries to convince the other group that their way of eating food is wrong, there would be conflict. There would be peaceful consumption of food if each of the groups show their respect for different manners of consuming food.

Have you noticed that the host says "Itadakimasu" before taking a bite on Japanese TV programs? They may be instructed to say "Itadakimasu" as they eat foods. This is an important element of the Japanese culture. "Itadakimasu" implies a deep sense of appreciation for the food prepared for consumption

through countless elements, people's hard work and blessings, especially, Kami-Sama's work and showing our appreciations for the lives taken. As Konko believers, we have a distinctive manner of eating food as Konko believers. I wanted to witness and identify distinctive elements of food related perspectives in the Konko faith community.

A person mentioned that Konko ministers always try to eat every grain of rice, every morsel of food on their plate without any trace left over and wanted to know the reason for that. Not all of the Konko ministers eat in such a manner, but basically, the ministers practice their conviction that all food are the elements of blessings from Kami-Sama and should not be wasted.

The same spirituality was also introduced during the discussion. At one time the rice placed in the plate attracted a lot of ants. The family members suggested it would not be sanitary to eat ant-infested rice. But the mother didn't mind at all and said, "It would be all right." She rinsed off the ants from the rice and made the rice into gruel and ate it. She displayed her conviction about food that was a blessing from Kami-Sama.

The Founding minister of Konko Church of Amagi, the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake had a legendary episode about the way he treated food as blessings of Kami-Sama. At one occasion, he took a train ride with an attending minister. While they were eating, some rice from the bento box fell onto the floor. He picked up the rice and placed it onto the window sill of the train. When the train passed over a river, he opened the window and tossed the rice into the river. The attending minister asked why he did such a peculiar act. Rev. Yasutake responded, "It would be unsanitary to consume rice once dropped onto the floor, but it could be fed to some fish in the river." It may sound strange, but he extended his thought to treat all grains of rice as blessing from Kami-Sama and try to fulfill his conviction for the blessed nature of rice in this manner.

In the old days, it was said that you will not find food waste in the sink of the house of Konko believers. Mindful food consumption as Konko believers can be identified in the old remarks. We live in the state of overabundance these days. We can easily get food for cheap. The fast food industries provide addicting foods for very cheap and people get hooked on them.

One remark was made about the scary scenario of a food shortage happening in Hawaii in disaster situations. Only 10% of local produce is made in Hawaii. 90% of our food is shipped to us from elsewhere. In a state of emergency and cease of shipping, our islands can run out of food in 4 days. One of the believers tried to encourage the local production of food, and

always has a 2 week supply of emergency rations on hand in case anything happens. Throughout the world, there are many people who die from food shortage. According to [actionagainsthunger.org](http://actionagainsthunger.org) as many as 811 million people have food insecurities.

## **Konko-Sama Says . . .**

Everyone around the world is a child of Tenchi Kane No Kami. The world is full of Tenchi Kane No Kami's blessings. Not having these blessings is like not having any air. So without divine blessings, people cannot live, not even for a minute. (II Sato Mitsujiro 14-3)

"Konko" means "golden light shines." The "kon" comes from the "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 Tenchi Kane No Kami's light shining throughout the world. (II Konko Hagio 21)

Some people have decided to serve the Faith by conveying truthful teachings. If there were such people in each town and village, this Faith would spread easily. (I Kondo Fujimori 80)

Those who are able to live due to Tenchi Kane No Kami's blessings are in between two mirrors. Kami sees all good and bad things that are reflected in the mirrors. You must practice faith and have a sincere heart. (Yamamoto Sadajiro 3)

## **Bulletin Board**

### **Church Services for August 2021**

1 Sun -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (9 am)  
8 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
15 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)  
22 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)  
29 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

### **September 2021**

1 Wed -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)  
5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
26 Sun -Autumn Memorial Service (10 am)

## The Church Doors are Open

We welcome you to make a visit to our church and church services. We are in tier-4, but please continue to wear your face

mask for Covid-19 precautionary measures. You also can make an appointment for your personal visit to church anytime of the days. All services will also be recorded via Facebook Live and uploaded on YouTube as well.

## Garage Sale

We held a garage sale on Saturday, July 24, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Thank you very much for your generous donations of items and help for the program. The proceeds for the sale was \$1,505.62 and deposited to the general fund account.

## Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital

The monthly visit to provide a volunteer activity at the Long-Term Care Facility at Wahiawa General Hospital will be held on Friday, August 20 at 10:00 am.

## KMH

•The Community Engagement and Outreach Committee initiated the bi-monthly KMH Kyoten study group via Zoom. The main reference book will be "Voice of the Universe." Please join the study session and deepen your understanding about the messages of the Founder.

-August 11 (Wed) (5 pm)

-August 23 (Mon) (5 pm)

•KMH Board of Trustees Meeting Saturday, August 7 from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm.

•Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Friday, August 20, 2021 at 5 pm (ZOOM)

## **Honoring the Mitama Spirits**

### August

Masaru Nakano	8/5/2004
Sunao Hayashida	8/8/1958
Jinpei Hayashida	8/13/1939
Helen Y. Eguchi	8/14/1946
Masataka Yano	8/14/2012
Shizue Eguchi	8/19/2012
Kima Yamashita	8/?/1979
Rev. Masayuki Kodama	8/24/1973

*If you wish to have a name added to the church Mitama listing or removed, please contact Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.*

## **The Life of the Founder**

金光教祖の生涯 瀬戸三喜雄

金光教学研究所 紀要別冊教学叢書 2

The following is an English translation of a book titled, "Konko Kyoso no Shougai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto, and was published by Konkokyo Theological Research Center. The publication was made in 1980. There are many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.

No. 9 Page 27 to 29

## **Devotion for farming**

After this person got married, he diligently worked hard for farming more than ever. He inherited the farmland of 2-tan and 6-se, in addition, he also managed to take care of some 1-choho land that was under the control of the landlord. He also earned some gains by responding to help other farmers who needed his help from time to time. In accordance with an official record of the Village Head, he engaged in a wide range of public services, such as maintenance work of roads and reservoir banks in the village; recruited for messenger services of transporting the collection of village taxes and official documents; accompanied the Village Head for his official duties; greeted the arrivals of officials and sent them off; took care of the footwear of the dignitaries; watched the reservoir banks for safety; served as night security for the stored rice collected as taxes; accompanied an Ise Shrine priest for the delivery of hemp bark (used for religious purpose) to the regional villages. He was also assigned as the messenger of village collections; accompanied officials. Accompanying officials were a task given only to trusted individuals in the village. Bunji gained trust from the Village Head, and earned higher wages than anybody else. He response to these public services substantially increased after his marriage in 1936. For over ten years, he responded to these official duties approximately 20 days annually. Especially during the year of 1838, when the traveling government inspectors pass by Otani Village, he responded to official duties for some 100 days. The number that he reported to the official duties was something exceptional.

The exhibited diligence by Bunji should be given some emphasis. In general, it is said that the farmers in recent

times when Bunji lived worked diligently. Basically, farming is dependent on nature. As long as they practice farming in an ideal natural condition without any disruptive elements, such as some natural disasters, they would enjoy good yields of crops in corresponding to their dedicated work. In an old saying, they say, "In farming, the most important thing is to work hard with your wholehearted sincerity." In addition, in modern times, the government tried to solicit farmers to work diligently and discouraged idle life. Confucianism also played a pivotal role in helping the government in the spiritual solicitations.

The self consciousness of the common people under the control of the government also contributed for the people to live a diligent way of life. The common people had little alternative way in fulfilling their given lives under the restriction imposed by the government in those days. Their objective and fulfillment of their given lives was primarily centered to increase their household properties they inherited from their ancestors and gain financial and social status of the household and pass them on to their descendants. Each individual was regarded as just one element of a chain circle that connected their ancestors and descendants. The exhibited industriousness of this person would not be possible without the given social background that motivated people to live diligent way of life.

Even if there existed the fundamental social background that motivated people to live a diligent way of life, it depends on the individual whether they would accept or deny that way of life. In addition, some considerations should be given to this person's consciousness as an adoptee from another village and his responsibilities as head of the household in identifying the reasons for his diligent way of life. The combined elements of the inborn personal traits, influence of the people in close contact and personal perspectives he developed through his life experiences had contributed in forming Bunji's diligent way of life. Bunji's distinctive perspective is shown in his message, "Otentou-sama (the Sun deity) constantly at work without any stop, if I take a rest from work, I feel sorry for the Sun deity." It could be assumed that this Bunji's pure industrious character was formed through his outstanding purity of heart and his unyielding endeavor for the enrichment of the household. Only in good health, he could live a diligent way of life. The inborn physical weakness could have contributed in developing his diligent character. In a sense, his diligent way of life helped him to restore his good health.

Through his engagement in his farming through 1838, he increased the acreage of farm land by one-tan. He also acquired additional land one after another. At the age of 40, the total land acreage expanded to 4-tan and 3-se. His possessions of the land ranked the 10th from the top among some 100 plus households in the village. In a short span of years, he rapidly increased his land assets.