



The initial thought about the annual mochi pounding



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We will be holding the 27th annual mochi pounding on Sunday, December 30, 2018 in celebration of the coming New Year 2019. Whenever New Year's draws close, we made "okagami" stacked rice cakes in preparation for our New Year's Day Service. I used a mochi-making machine. But it was always my wish to be able to pound mochi in the traditional manner, using the "usu" mortar and "kine" wooden mallet. I simply wanted to show the enjoyment of mochi-making in the same manner as I did at my native town in Ehime. Though I found a stone mortar at a local Japanese market. But the cost was over \$1,000. It was just not possible for me to purchase. I have tried to find a big wood trunk that could be carved to make a wooden mortar, but that was not realistic. I found there were different types of mochi-mortars, such as volcanic stone mortars, and casted-cement mortars. They were creations by the Japanese immigrants to Hawaii who wanted to perpetuate the traditions of mochi-making in limited resources in Hawaii. But it still was not what I had in mind. I could import a stone-mortar from Japan, as some relatives of mine expressed that they can donate a stone-mortar to me at no cost at all. It was an option, but then again, the cost of shipping would again be unfeasible.

The only way I could think of was to somehow make a mortar myself. I made a prototype *usu* using a stainless-steel mixing bowl and a perfect fitting galvanized trashcan I bought from the store. I cut out the floor of the trashcan. The mixing bowl was placed on the top of the can and secured to the edges with wires. I placed the trash can upside down on the floor and poured cement to fill the trashcan. The gadget turned into a stainless steel-shelled mochi-mortar. The edges of the mixing bowl were rather sharp. To prevent the rim from being hit by the wooden

mallet, I surround the sides of the trashcan with 2 x 3 bars of wood. And again, that was our prototype *usu*. A remnant of our prototype *usu* is still in our yard, and acts as a deluxe cat water bowl/bird bath in our garden. As for wooden "kine" mallets, when I traveled to Japan, I brought "kiri" (paulownia tree) logs one at a time. Also my eldest brother contributed in making me several hand-made mallets. I also made mallets using the guava tree trunk and the all spice tree from our yard. Currently we have over one dozen wooden *kine* mallets in various sizes.

We used the prototype *usu* for a few years, and noticed that it got worn out rather quickly. So, I designed a full stainless steel shelled *usu*. Fortunately one of our past church members' son-in-law, Mr. Neal Abe was a sheet metal specialist. I requested if he would be able to cut, shape and weld together the *usu* I had in mind. He offered much time and skill in helping me to materialize the first all-stainless steel *usu*. We were thrilled and thankful. We are currently using the 3rd generation *usu* with refined features. Much thanks again to Mr. Abe in his expertise for making our stainless steel *usu*. It's not only durable, it's sanitary and helps to retain heat while pounding mochi.

Before we launched the annual mochi-making fund-raising event we have today, I enjoyed pounding mochi with our children. My wife, would make batches of delicious "anko" azuki bean jelly, which is rolled into balls to fill the mochi rice cakes. At the initial stage of making mochi using a machine, the mochi didn't turn out smooth and tasty. I asked my mother about this problem. She responded that the sweet rice needs to be rinsed well and soaked in water for one night. Actually, at my house, she placed the washed rice in a large container and a small stream of water was pouring into the tub to prevent the spoilage of the rice.

This annual event kicked off as a small-scale fund-raising activity in corresponding to the durable stainless steel *usu* and a suggestion made by one of the church members who extended the thought of fund-raising by making mochi in a traditional manner. One of the first customers who came to order was Chad Hiromasa. He was a childhood friend for our three children. He now enjoys helping with the event and assisting us for making mochi from time to time.

The mochi-making event on December 30 evolved to become one of the biggest functions of our church. Core supporting church members and a lot of community people have responded to this annual tradition. We process about 350 pounds of sweet rice into mochi. They enjoy pounding, shaping, turning the manual mochi-cutter, tending the fire-stoves for steaming rice, packaging the mochi and eating curry for lunch. It is just amazing. We have never expected this event to grow so big. Without the cooperation of everybody, the mochi pounding

event would not be possible. The capacity of the church yard is very much limited, and causes some traffic confusions in the area on that day. But it has been great blessings that we have been able to conduct the function in the last 27 years without any accidents and injuries for all those years. Just one year, on the day of mochi-pounding, it rained so much that we moved the heavy *usu* in the basement to pound mochi.

A lot of preparation goes into this function. We have to secure and clean the place by washing the pavement with a pressure washer and covering the walls and ceiling with plastic lining. Even if it rained, the fire has to keep on steaming rice and we should be able to pound with two mortars. Rainy weather is the biggest challenge; although we have been blessed with good weather majority of the times. My wife, Reiko makes more than a dozen pots of sweet bean jelly. And we have several volunteers come the day before to help roll *anko*-balls. Mochi packages have to be pre-counted and labeled to make it easier for the packers.

About 80 to 90 percent of the preparations for mochi making would be done by core members. But without the participations of the people who come to enjoy pounding and eating mochi, there would be no mochi-making event at all. This is an event I truly enjoy and look forward to every year.

The same may apply in the operation of the church. Ever since both my wife and I have taken responsibility of operating this church in 1977, one of the top priorities was the expansion of the church and the entire Konkokyo faith community in Hawaii. At an initial stage, I prayed that we would have one new church member come to church every month. Soon, I learned it was a rather reckless prayer. There could be something I can prepare and invest in for the church to grow in the same manner as many people respond to the annual mochi-pounding event. I have been witnessing some signs of emergence of changes that could be attributed to the work both my wife and our three children have contributed in the last 41 years in Hawaii.

Interestingly, in the last several years, we have been invited to pound mochi in public, such as at the Japanese Cultural Center, hotels in Waikiki and at the local community college. When we made a mochi pounding demonstration at Leeward Community College, one of the visiting students from Japan showed a reflective response after one bite of a freshly pounded mochi by, "*Honmonojan!*" in Kansai dialect, which mean, "It's genuine!" I wish to witness the same reaction in the operation of our church and faith with someone shouting, "*Honmonojan!*"

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)

The present is the same as the past. Regardless of how many millenniums pass, the world will not change. It is the same. People and the foods they eat will not disappear. The seeds will keep growing. (II Goka Keishun 8)

A heart in prayer will reach Kami. Tenchi Kane No Kami has a web, much like a spider's enveloping the world. If a dragonfly gets caught in a spider web, the web trembles and the spider will come out. Kami is like the spider. The Way of Kami is spun around the world. Even if you feel you are far away from a Hiromae, your prayer will reach Kami. (II Goka Keishun 5)

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

Monthly Services for December 2018

- 1 Sat -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 2 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 9 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 16 Sun -46th Memorial Service for the Late Rev. Haruko Takahashi (10 am) Naorai luncheon will follow
- 23 Sun -End of the Year Service (9 am) *Offer tamagushi
- 26 Wed -Mochi pounding at Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel (5-6 pm)
- 27 Thur -Mochi pounding at Hawaii Prince Hotel (10-11 am)
- 30 Sun -27th Mochi pounding (8 am)

January 2019

- 1 Tue -New Year's Day Service (9 am) *Ozoni and Osechi
- 4 Fri -Mochi pounding at Ritz Carlton Waikiki Hotel (10-11am)
- 6 Sun- Sunday Service (9 am)

Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility will be made on Friday, January 7, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

KMH Head Ministers' Meeting

The Head Ministers in Hawaii will hold a meeting at Konko Mission of Honolulu on Monday, December 10, 2018 at 10:30 a.m.

46th Memorial Service for the Late Rev. Haruko Takahashi

We will hold the annual memorial service for the founding minister of our church, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi on Sunday, December 16, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. The Konko Mission of Wahiawa has been in operation in the last 78 years. The Rev. Haruko Takahashi served the faith community for 32 years and departed in December 24, 1972. Please join us to remember our dedicated founding minister and extend our gratitude for her contributions we have enjoyed thus far.

27th Mochi Pounding

We will hold the annual mochi pounding on Sunday, December 30, 2018 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We will be pounding about 350 pounds of sweet mochi rice. Orders will be accepted by Thursday, December 20.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

December

Frederick Michael Conti	12/6/2015
Francisco Bareng	12/12/2017
Hilda Kazuno Yamamoto	12/14/2007
Fumitake Yoshiiwa	12/15/2012
Lillian Tanigawa	12/16/2010
Isamu Iwasa	12/17/1943
Shizuko Takayama	12/21/2006
Rev. Fumio Yasutake	12/23/1995
Rev. Haruko Takahashi	12/24/1972
Hitoye Higuchi	12/25/1969

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

Insight into the teachings in “Tenchi wa Kataru” or “Voice of the Universe”

The following are excerpts of series of an English translation of “Tenchi wa Kataru—Kanwa-shu” or “Compilation of Insight into the teachings in the Voice of the Universe” which contains 400 selected teachings from the original “Konkokyo Kyoten” or the “Konkokyo Scriptures.” Three authors, namely, the Revs. Mikio Seto, Yasushi Hata and Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 362, 363 and 364)

Section 2

Becoming a Kami

No. 362: Though people call Konko Daijin an Ikigami, Konko Daijin is not the only one. All people who come to the Hiromae are Kami’s children. To be an Ikigami is to have Kami born within you. Konko Daijin was the first to receive divine blessings. Everyone can receive divine blessings in the same way.

(III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 18 Kyoten page 781)

Becoming a kami

The title for the Second Section of this Chapter is “Becoming Kami.” It is not said that the ultimate

objective of getting engaged in the practice of faith is to evolve to be a kami. What does becoming a kami mean?

Personally, the thought of becoming a kami sounds like something far remote for me to achieve. The Founder became a kami through overcoming many difficult encounters in life. But the Founder stressed that everyone can get blessed to become a kami in the same manner as the Founder did.

The Founder showed two elements that need to be fulfilled to become a kami.

First, the Founder stated, “All people who come to the Hiromae are Kami’s children.” He said that not only the Founder himself, but all are beloved Kami’s children who have the potential to get blessed to manifest Kami’s work. Anybody can evolve to become a kami like the Founder.

Second is the perception of the term, “Ikigami” literally meaning a living kami held by the Founder. In general, people admire and revere those people who attained some supernatural powers by saying “ikigami-sama.” But the Founder developed a unique concept about the expression, “ikigami.” He defined that “ikigami” could be actualized through an individual who manifested the presence of Kami in their given circumstances. Anybody would be able to manifest the presence of Kami in their lives. Through the introduction of this new concept about the term “Ikigami,” the Founder showed that anybody could pursue to become a kami.

In this manner, the Founder showed us that all have the potential and opportunity to become a kami. What is unique about the practice of the Konko faith is that becoming a kami is not limited only to those who have been given a special inborn talent and destined fate, but to anybody else.

No. 363: Though people say that I am an Ikigami, I, Konko Daijin am human like all of you. I have been receiving divine blessings just by practicing faith. You should also follow what Kami says, and practice faith in Kami sincerely and single-heartedly to receive divine blessings. Save others and you will be allowed to become a kami.

(II Fukushima Gihe’e 1-4, 6 Kyoten page 667 to 668)

Save others and become a kami

Related to the subject of the previous page 362, in the first half of the message, the Founder stressed that he was just an ordinary person like anybody else even though they called him an “Ikigami-sama.” What distinguished the Founder as an “ikigami” could be clearly stated, “I have been receiving divine blessings just by practicing faith.”

In the latter half of the statement, the Founder showed proper steps to evolve to become a kami, “You should also follow what Kami says, and practice faith in Kami sincerely and single-heartedly to receive divine blessings. Save others and you will be allowed to become a kami.” To get blessed for oneself and then save others.

“Following what Kami says, and practice faith in Kami sincerely and single-heartedly to receive divine blessings” is a prerequisite to becoming a kami. Kami can be actualized by saving others. The whole process of becoming a kami is fulfilled through the actualization of saving others. What is unique about the perception of “ikigami” held by the Founder is that becoming an ikigami is saving others, and saving others is becoming an ikigami.

The message was given to Gihe’e Fukushima at his initial encounter with the Founder. This background element gives a much greater meaning to the message. The Founder related to a person who came to see him for the first time, “Save others and you will be allowed to become a kami.”

In general saving others and becoming a kami may sound blasphemous. But the Founder guided us to a different perspective that we could get blessed to save others and become a kami though our engagement in the practice of faith.

No. 364: To say that an uneducated man cannot help others is not true. You may have an education, but without sincerity, you cannot save others. Knowledge can be a barrier. Even educated people suffer. Though Konko Daijin was not well educated, many people are receiving divine blessings. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 99 Kyoten page 797)

Sincerity is a must for saving others

So far we have learned that the essential element of becoming a kami is saving others. How can we save others? The Founder showed how we can save others in the quoted message.

It could be assumed that the quoted message is a partial excerpt of the dialogue exchanged between the Founder and the visitor. The Founder told a visitor to save others on his first encounter. The visitor might respond to the extended message of the Founder reflectively by saying that in consideration of his educational background, it could be inappropriate for him to save others. In responding to him, the Founder explained about the nature of saving others in the manner as shown in the quotation.

The Founder tried to correct about the generally held perception about saving others. He tried to explain about this aspect through different perspectives. For example he pointed out that knowledge could be a barrier and even educated people suffer.

The Founder also referred to his own personal experiences. He said, “Though Konko Daijin was not well educated, many people are receiving divine blessings.” His message was convincing that we felt prompted to help others.

How can a person like the Founder who had little educational background save others? He pointed out that “sincerity” was the essential ingredient for saving others. Then what is the meaning of “sincerity?” Sincerity can be the ultimate true feeling one can ever forward toward Kami. Kami would accept such truthfulness of extended feelings unconditionally. People would also appreciate sincerity extended to them. The power to save others dwells in the heart of wanting to do something to help Kami and people.

