



“Aien Kien” a fortunate encounter and a twist of fate -By Rev. Reiko Yano



The following is an English translation of an article of the Rev. Reiko Yano that was submitted for the monthly publication of Konko Church of Hirao in Fukuoka, Japan. Reiko was asked to contribute an article for the section of the publication called “Michi wo Tsunagu” that is to pass on the tradition of the Konko faith from generation to generation. She was a member of the Hirao Church while she worked as a nurse at the Fukuoka Red Cross Hospital in Fukuoka, before she married and moved to Hawaii. The Rev. Yasuhiro Yano made the English translation of the original article. Picture above, taken in 1983.

We have been receiving monthly publications of the newsletter from Konko Church of Hirao named “*Michi no Hikari*.” I have enjoyed reading every article of the publication. There have been a lot of inspiring articles and I have learned a lot. I especially liked reading the “*Michi wo Tsunagu*” corner or “Passing on the faith tradition of Konkokyo from generation to generation” corner. Each time, I feel so impressed by the deep faith understanding of the people who have contributed the articles. I also feel grateful for the wonderful work of the editorial staff members.

Last November, I received a packet from Ms. Reiko Uchikawa, who was one of the members of “Shinyūkai group” of the Hirao Church. When I opened the packet, I was so surprised to find out some pictures of the pilgrimage made to Gohonbu in studying the Founder some 47 years ago. It also included every article of “*Michi wo Tsunagu*” in the past. I also found a request for a contribution an article for their upcoming publication.

This year marks the 46th year since both my husband and I came to Hawaii to take care of the responsibilities of Konko Mission of Wahiawa. Both my husband and I were just married and only

26 years old. This year, I will be turning 72, the year of the hare according to the Chinese Zodiac. I was a bit surprised at the request of an article for the publication. I was hesitating at first, but convinced myself that the request must be made by the Mitama Spirit of the late Rev. Masato Yoshino, the second Head Minister of the church.

On our way to depart for our missionary work in Hawaii, we visited the Konko Church of Hirao. I believe some big church function was in progress when we arrived. So many church members were present at the church. The Rev. Masato Yoshino congratulated us by giving out a loud encouragement of “*Hawaii Fukyō, Banzai, Banzai*” or “*Congratulations on your missionary work in Hawaii*” three times. The church members also joined the chorus of congratulations. We attribute our 46-years of fulfilling missionary work in Hawaii to the extended thoughts and prayers of those people like Rev. Masato Yoshino.

My grandfather initiated the Konko faith tradition in the family. My father was also a devoted practitioner of the faith. Every morning, I have tried to show my gratitude for my life in Hawaii; being able to serve Kami-Sama as a minister; being allowed to live in the church premises; and engaging in my daily prayer in gratitude. I feel grateful for my father who passed the Konko faith to me; and grateful for my husband who has taken me on this wondrous journey of missionary work in Hawaii through our marriage.

I just could not fathom how much my parents were concerned about my wellbeing and evolvment in Hawaii after I got married to my husband. When I introduced the news of my possible marriage to my parents, they were surprised. But they did not respond with an instant refusal of this opportunity. My father accepted the situation through his firm spiritual conviction, and responded by saying, “*Reiko, join me on my pilgrimage to attend the Grand Service at Gohonbu Headquarters, so we can get a definite answer from Kyoso-Sama (Founder’s Spirit) and Kami-Sama for this matter.*” We joined a pilgrimage tour of the church. At Gohonbu, he sat down on the stone paved floor of the grave site, and engaged in an intense prayer. When I witnessed my father praying from behind, for some reasons, I could not hold back my tears. He stood up from the floor and told me, “*Reiko, I have never felt such an intense feeling of gratitude in my whole life. Your marriage is extremely promising. You have my blessing to get married.*” It was my father’s conviction to receive a divine answer from the Founder, Konko Daijin and Kami-Sama for allowing me to get married.

For our missionary work, the late Rev. Shōichi Okuno, the then Chief Administrative Minister of Konko Missions in Hawaii and also Head Minister of Konko Mission of Hanapepe told us, “*Be prepared to start your missionary work from scratch ‘kaitaku fukyō’.* Just think that you are only equipped with a rice bowl and a pair of chopsticks. The destination of our missionary work was Konko Mission of Wahiawa on Oahu, Hawaii. The church is a branch of the Konko Mission of Honolulu, initiated in 1940.

The founding minister, the late Rev. Haruko Takahashi passed away in 1972 at the age of 62, five years prior to our arrival in 1977. During the five years, the Rev. Hiromichi Ishii, who was a staff member of Konko Missions in Hawaii, was stationed at the church and took care of the church functions for three years. After he returned to Japan, Rev. Haruko Takahashi's siblings and the family members of the Takahashi family took care of the church with the help of the church members.

In a sense, the church was at the brink of closure if no minister would arrive with a limited number of members. Those suggestive words of the Rev. Okuno depicted the real situation of the church. Fortunately, my father was assigned to the position of lieutenant of the Imperial Army and was engaged in the educational department for main officers at "Rikugun Shikan Gakko" or the Military Academy during the war. After the war in defeat, he could not engage in any public work place because of the imposed governmental regulations. He joined a group of "Kaitaku-dan" or reclamation group from Ehime to Oita and settled down in an unpopulated, remote mountainous region to start agriculture.

I was literally raised in a "Rice bowl and a pair of chopsticks" kind of lifestyle. So it was ironic when Rev. Shōichi Okuno mentioned that. I grew up where there was no public water supply system, no electricity and lived in a cave at the initial stage. I had traveled on foot for the distance of 8 kilometers every day to attend elementary school. Although my family lived in such an impoverished condition, my father lived the Konko faith. Thanks to the harsh living condition, I learned to develop the spirit of endurance, perseverance and humility.

In blessedness, I have never experienced any fears, or any worries at all. In the beginning, I thought we have to start with a few necessities of daily living. But when I arrived, I realized that everything we needed for our missionary work in Hawaii was present. In those days, all the ministers struggled to deal with the English language barrier. The top priority of the missionary work in Hawaii was to deal with the language barrier. I also understood the necessity of English proficiency in our missionary work. At first, I was able to take up my driver's license. I also enrolled at the local community college for eight years, while raising my children, and graduated from college.

We were blessed with three children, David, Rodney and Edna. The late Rev. Fumio Yasutake used to say, "When you get blessed with children, have them become Konko ministers." In a sense, his extended message has been actualized in our family. What we are could be attributed to the fact of actualization of prayers extended by the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake. From the very day that each of our children came home from the hospital where they were born, they were placed on the floor of the Ohiromae worship hall and have been exposed to the recitation of our prayers. We tried to take all of our children to attend the monthly service held in the evening of the 22nd of every month at the parent church, Konko Mission of Honolulu, till they graduated from high school.

We sent our first son, David to Amagi Church soon after his graduation from high school. The first year was intended to get familiar with the Japanese language and the daily life at the church. At the second year, he enrolled at the Konkokyo Gakuin Seminary and finished the minister ordainment program and returned to Amagi Church for another one year for further

training. While David was at the church, our second son, Rodney went to Amagi and followed the same path taken by David. Our daughter, Edna also went to Amagi Church. She was a girl, and so we felt that two years at the church would be adequate. In all, it took six years for all of our children to receive full spiritual exposure at the Amagi Church and Gakuin Seminary.

We are indebted to the generosity of the Rev. Michiyoshi Yasutake and the resourcefulness of the Konko Church of Amagi. It could be outrageous and irresponsible to send our children to Amagi Church for spiritual training, but we believe the Rev. Michiyoshi Yasutake and the late Rev. Fumio Yasutake might be in great joy to witness our children who have evolved to be active ministers in their missionary work in America. After returning from Japan, all of our children have enrolled in college and graduated safely. David became an RN and currently works at a hospital in town and helps with goyo at the Wahiawa Church. Rodney accepted a study and work program sponsored by the Konko Church of San Francisco. He graduated from college and has been serving the faith community as Assistant Head Minister. Edna also earned her RN license and works at a local hospital, while also helping with church goyo at Wahiawa Church. We are happy in witnessing our children engaged in their roles as Konko ministers in this manner.

My husband used to express his one fear, "What if our children would not follow the Konkokyo faith tradition? It would be a devastation as a minister and impossible for other people to follow the tradition." It would be considered parental gratitude to witness our children talk about the Konko faith in confidence and pride in any given situations. I wish to witness the glorious expansion of the Konko faith in America.

Three years after we came to Hawaii for our missionary work in Wahiawa, the Rev. Masahiko Yoshino and the Rev. Sugako Yoshino came to Hawaii to take responsibilities of operation of Konko Mission of Honolulu from the Konko Church of Amagi. Thanks to their presence of the Rev. Masahiko Yoshino, we received great encouragement and prayers to send our children to Amagi for their spiritual training.

Whenever I visit Japan, I always visit the Konko Church of Hirao. I have been grateful for the prayers and support of the ministers and church congregation. At this point, I want to hand a baton to a next person who would share stories for passing on the Konko faith tradition from generation to generation.



This picture was taken after the 2020 Spring Godaisai

Konko-Sama Said...

Everyone is now able to receive the blessings of Tenchi Kane No Kami because Konko Daijin received divine blessings first. If there is one true believer in a family, then all of the family members will become believers. If there is one family in a village who truly believes in this faith, all of the villagers will begin to receive divine blessings. Practicing faith is like one seed becoming ten thousand. Therefore, those who initiate faith should sow a good seed. If the seed is bad, it will be a bad start, and it will be difficult to raise no matter how hard you try. (III Jinkyukyogoroku 37)

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

February

Umi Yasuyo	2/3/1965
Ichiro Yano	2/5/2006
Dennis Fujio Tamashiro	2/6/1998
Thomas Takahashi	2/9/2005
Yoshiyuki Momotomi	2/10/2003
Rev. Yukio Hiramoto	2/10/2012
Mildred Chiyoko Oka	2/12/2004
Jiro Oho	2/14/1937
Rebecca Jean Burns	2/14/2013
Elisa Albarran	2/20/1977
Marilynn Olsen	2/22/2009
Suetsuki Toyofuku	2/24/1995
Norma Teruko Katsura	2/18/2008
Robert Yoshikazu Hirota	2/16/2014
Betsy Tomie Maesaka	2/10/2016
Kay Yamamoto	2/22/2015
Rev. Michio Miyake	2/21/2017
Terry Anne Takase Shlaes	2/27/2018



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

Bulletin Board

Church Services for February 2023

- 1 Wed -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
12 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9:00 am)
19 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

March 2023

- 1 Wed -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)

Announcements:

- KMH CEOC Meeting on Zoom on Friday, February 24, 2023 (3 pm)

- 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 on February 8th and 22 (Wed. from 5 pm to 6 pm)

●KMH General Meeting

Will be held both in person and on ZOOM on Saturday, February 11th from (1:30 pm to 4 pm)

●Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis

The next activity will be on Fri, February 4th @ 10 am

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. (Page 82 to 84) (continued from the previous issue)

(2) Konjin at Kameyama

It was in the evening of October 13, 1857, Bunji experienced an unprecedented encounter that would have changed his life drastically.

A messenger from the residence of Bunji's younger brother, Shige`emon Kandori located about five kilometers away in the direction of east-west of Otani Village (current Kurashiki City) visited Bunji. The messenger related, "Shige`emon asked the family member by saying, 'Your younger brother Shige`emon has become demented. He claimed that Konjin had possessed him. Deranged, he told me to rush to Otani Village to bring his brother Bunji. Please hurry' (Oboegaki 4-1-1). Bunji immediately responded to the messenger's request and raced to reach the residence of Shige`emon. The relatives and concerned village people showed up at the scene. The house was scattered with the harvested rice plants. Shige`emon was in the state of insanity, as he jumped up on the roof and on the gate lantern fixture. The family members pleaded to Bunji to calm him down.

When Bunji faced Shige`emon, he said, “Konjin-Sama spoke.” “Bunji, I’m glad you came. I had you brought here because I have a request for you. Will you fulfill My request?” As has been mentioned before, Shige`emon practiced faith of Konjin through the connection with Uta Ono. The Konjin faith tradition tried to avoid impurities, strict observance of the Days and Directions, and emphasized fearful curses and punishments of Konjin. The belief of Konjin retained some features of the traditional belief of Konjin at large. But what was distinctive about Shige`emon’s belief in Konjin was that Konjin has some personalized character and tried to have individualized relationships. In this respect, the Konjin Shige`emon believed in was different from the prevailing folk belief of Konjin. For Shige`emon, Konjin was the only deity he could believe, and have the governance of human existence and would respond to requests of people.

Shige`emon’s belief in Konjin was different from ordinary people who believed many deities, and believed that each deity had its own specific power to respond to their requests. His belief in Konjin was clearly different from the belief held by Jiro Furukawa who believed in Shugendo faith that practiced the so-called “Konjin-fūji” or confinement of Konjin practice.

In responding to the request of Konjin forwarded through the mouth of Shige`emon, Bunji responded, “I will do whatever I can.” Konjin explained, “Shige`emon must build a new house, but he has no one to borrow any money from. What I want to request is for you to take care of the construction costs” (Oboegaki 4-1-4, 5).

Shige`emon married a daughter from the Namba family in Kameyama and had a residential household. The household head of the Namba family died. Consequently, there were only an aged mother and young son-in-law in the household, they could no longer sustain the operation of the family business of farming. In responding to the situation, Shige`emon helped the family by living together at the Namba

household and engaged in farming. The family began to experience some negative reactions of the village people who were concerned about Shige`emon’s devoted practice of Konjin faith tradition at the household. He responded to move out of the house and build an independent household. But he could not afford to build a house in his given situation. Bunji accepted the request from Konjin spoken from the mouth of Shige`emon without hesitation. In accordance with a rumor, the new house intended to be built had only an 8-matted living room and some other household facilities. Even if the scale of the house could be small in size, it would need substantial funding for building construction. Bunji accepted to pay for the construction expenses. He wanted to help Shige`emon who had to deal with a difficult financial situation; and the request of Konjin deity who had confidence in Bunji. He developed a resolution after his encounter with the severe illness at the age of 42 that he would accept any requests in pursuit of faith. Because of his conviction, he accepted to fulfill financial responsibilities for the housing construction project requested by Konjin. Through the mouth of Shige`emon, Kami responded, “With this, I am relieved” (Oboegaki 4-1-7). “Soon after everyone left, Shige`emon became possessed again. When I asked him to calm down, he replied in the affirmative. He then leaped toward the altar and fell, falling asleep. His relatives, assuming that he wasn’t normal, talked about having shamanistic prayers performed” (Oboegaki 4-1-9).

“At dawn, Shige`emon awoke and was back to normal. When I asked him, ‘Do you remember everything that happened yesterday?’ he answered, ‘I don’t remember anything.’ I told him, ‘Well, it can’t be helped if you don’t remember anything. Have your wife go and apologize to everyone for the trouble you have caused and to express thanks for their assistance. After that, she is to go to the village office to do the same. Then you can start the construction.’ I returned home. It was October 14 (November 30)” (Oboegaki 4-1-10, 11, 12).