



## "Orei" Expression of Thanks

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Head Minister

"Orei ga tarinai" means lack of extended thanks, and "Orei ni natte inai" means it's not a sincere form of gratitude. Those expressions are some of the common expressions I used to hear among the Konko faith community both in Japan and in Hawaii. I don't hear these expressions as often these days. I used to hear this expression from the ministers and devoted Konko believers in the past. They used these expressions of their conviction of advancing their own belief in Kami.

If these expressions were directed to other believers in the faith community, it would cause much distress and affect the atmosphere of the entire faith community. If I blame my wife and children by saying, "You do not express many thanks for what I have done for you for all these years. I never hear you say thank you." Then the relationship will instantly collapse. The whole family would collapse. I see this pattern of family relationships quite often. It is said that only a handful of married couples enjoy good, harmonious loving relationships.

The founding minister of Konko Church of Amagi, the late Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake used to express that he could not catch up with extending thanks for the blessings received from Kami-Sama. The moment he expressed his thanks to Kami-Sama, the more blessings he received.

The third Konko-Sama used to say that he always extended his apologies to Kami-Sama for not being able to fulfill thanks for the blessings received.

The late Rev. Masahiko Yoshino of Konko Mission of Honolulu used to say, "orei ga taran" in his daily services to Kami-Sama.

All those expressions made by ministers are reflections of their own pursuit of faith. If they did not engage in their services to Kami-Sama, they would not express such

thoughts at all. Instead, they would have directed the blame on the believers.

But the concept of "taru" fulfilled or "taranai" inadequate of expression of thanks can be relative. It's relatable to the "cup half full" or "cup half empty." Depending on the viewer, both cups can have some space to fill. One believer would say, "I have not expressed much thanks to Kami-Sama for the blessings received while pointing out the half filled cup of blessedness."

While other believers express, "I have not expressed much thanks to Kami-Sama while pointing out the almost empty cup of blessedness." Both could be all right for their expressed thought. When we understand the infinite blessings we enjoy from Kami-Sama, no matter how much we offer, there would be no limit.

As I always have shared the thought of "Konnichimade no orei" or extending thanks for any and all blessings that have contributed to the sustenance of our normal life. It is not just a random act of extending our thanks for the blessings we have enjoyed. It is a continuation of the act of blessings we have ever extended our thanks for. I have jot down the names of all the people who have ever come to our church, including our regular church attendees. The first message I add to each and every believer's name is the message of "Konnichimade no orei" or extending thanks for the continued enjoyment of the blessings each of us have received. It includes good health, good relations and good financial standing. Our life becomes difficult if even one of the three elements I have mentioned is not fulfilled. If you have enjoyed good health, try to extend thanks for your good health. If you have enjoyed good human relationships, try to extend your thanks for the relationships. If you have been much blessed financially, or even if you may encounter some stressful situations, as long as you have been enabled to continue your normal life, try to extend your thanks. These are the due prayers of thanks to Tenchi Kane No Kami, Our Divine Parent as Konko believers.

Whenever I extend my thoughts for visitation to church, especially to the Headquarters Church at Konko Town, I always remember an episode that took place while the 4<sup>th</sup> Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko was serving at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk. I would like to share the story just for your reference to the practice of faith.

A very poor elderly woman who lived day to day with a meager income saved money in hopes of making a pilgrimage to see Konko-Sama at the Headquarters Church at Konko Town. One day she was able to make a pilgrimage. Upon her arrival to see Konko-Sama, Konko-Sama spoke even before she uttered a word by saying, "Kami-Sama has accepted all of your spending for your

pilgrimage today. You had purchased a pair of new shoes and new clothes, paid for your travel expenses. You also ate at the Tsuchiya restaurant. Kami-Sama has accepted all of your spending as your extended offerings.” I understand her pilgrimage was the ultimate expression of thanks she could ever try to fulfill.

I learned this episode soon after both my wife and I started serving at the local church in Wahiawa some 42 years ago. The more I spend time in serving for the church community, the more I appreciate deeper meaning of the message shown in this quoted episode. What I appreciate the most is the profound meaning of acceptance of what we have forwarded towards Kami in appreciation of the blessings we have become aware of.

There is a dying expression of “*Oya-koukou*” or filial piety in Japan. In the Japanese culture “*Oya-koukou*” means giving back to one’s parents for all that they have done for them in the past. The parental love is perpetual in corresponding to the birth of a child. At some point in life, the child becomes aware of the unconditional caring and loving forwarded by the parents and think of taking some action of showing appreciation for the debt of love and caring being enjoyed for so long. Some people may end their life without any thoughts of appreciation for their parents. Only those who can appreciate all the debts of love and caring can bring forth the state of “*Oya-koukou*,” in which both the parents and child can be mutually fulfilled in the relationship. Some ministers use the expression of “*Kami-koukou*” or filial piety toward Our Divine Parent. The same is true between our Divine Parent and us. We have referred to this state of relationship as “*aiyokakeyo*” mutually fulfilling relationship between Our Divine Parent and each individual.

Konko-Sama also showed us a simple formula to see if we have been in fulfillment of gratitude to Kami. The formula is to see if we have the heart of thanks and appreciation for any element in our daily life. The message is very strong. You have to find out the power of the message on your own.

## 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

### Monthly Services for May, 2019

- 1 Wed -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (7:30 pm)
- 5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
-Wailuku Church Spring Grand Service (11am)
- 12 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
-Hilo Church Spring Grand Service (11 am)
- 19 Sun -Monthly Service, Founder (9 am)
- 26 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

### June 2019

- 1 Sat -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)

### Volunteer Activity

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

### HCRP Meeting

The Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will hold the regular meeting on Monday, May 6, 2019 at Palolo Hongwanji Temple at 1:30 p.m.

### KMH Meetings

The KMH Board Meeting will be held at Konko Mission of Honolulu on Saturday, May 18, 2019 from 10:30 am

The KMH Community Engagement and Outreach Committee Meeting will be held on Thursday at Konko Mission of Honolulu on Tuesday, May 28 at 2:00 p.m.

The Joint KMH-KCNA Committee meeting will be held at Konko Mission of Honolulu on Friday, May 31, 2019 at 5 p.m.

### Spring Grand Services

- 5/5 Sun -Konko Mission of Wailuku (11am)
- 5/12 Sun -Konko Mission of Hilo (11am)

## Honoring the Mitama Spirits

### May

Rev. Koji Hiramoto	5/2/2018
Toshiko Yogo	5/2/2010
Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
Avelino Roldan	5/7/2017
Rev. Masahiko Yoshino	5/9/2013
Saichi Eguchi	5/9/1997
Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka	5/16/1972
Fernie Furusho	5/26/2001
Hideo Fujimoto	5/26/2005
Hiroshi Katsura	5/26/1959
Takahiko Yano	5/28/2016



*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 377, 378 and 379)*

**No. 377: There was a straw hedge around Konko-Sama's house, but it was set afire maliciously. A follower who noticed the partially burnt hedge said, "Konko-Sama, you should curse the people who did this." Konko-Sama replied, "I must pray for those who do such things, so they will reform their hearts." (II Okamoto Shige 2 Kyoten page 470)**

### No retaliation

In general, it would be natural and justifiable to retaliate against the act of violence received. Because of this fundamental social norm, there would be no end to confrontations in the world. There would be no way to actualize true peace in the world if we keep this spirit of retaliation.

The person who set afire the straw hedge of the Founder's property was quite malicious. The house could have been burned down. We can appreciate the anger of the believer who expressed, "Konko-Sama, you should curse the people who did this."

People at large were not aware of committing offenses and irreverence against Kami in their daily living. But once they encounter some grave events, even that could be attributable to their own faults, they would utter frustrations and anger, "I've gotten a divine punishment." In this manner, those people who have paid their attentions to the presence of Kami in their lives respond to place blame Kami when they have to deal with difficulties.

In the Konko religious faith, we do not have the term of "bachi" or divine punishment. Instead, we use such an expression of "okizuke" or an indirect divine reminder or a divine warning. The believers of the Konko faith would naturally respond to deal with such encounters of negativity in such a manner, "Kami-Sama is trying to give me a sign or warning for a serious irreverence if I do not get engaged in the practice of faith more devotedly."

The Founder would never pray for bad things to happen to people who did malicious deeds to him. Those malicious people are likely to confine themselves in their own limited world. They suffer because of their own ill-natured personalities. The Founder stated, "I must pray for those who do such things, so they would reform their hearts."

Some people made a sarcastic joke about those ill-natured people, "Since the Japanese are short-legged, they try to help each other by pulling their legs to stretch." Actually, we see these acts of causing troubles to others in the family, in the communities we belong, in society and even in the faith community. Whenever I encounter those people, I feel ashamed and try to extend my prayer that their hearts would be corrected in line with the heart of Kami.

**No. 378: When a theft has occurred, give thanks to Kami for turning a major misfortune into a minor one. Then pray to Kami for the thief to reform his heart and to pursue an honest line of work. (II Okida Kisaburo 17 Kyoten page 455 )**

### A major misfortune into a minor one

When we ever encounter a theft and some valuables and money were stolen, we feel so agonized. Despite the fact that some part of that development could be attributable to our own negligence— the effects of such unexpected encounters would be just overwhelming. We may feel so angry that we may curse them and hope they get caught and punished by authority.

But the Founder stated, "When a theft has occurred, give thanks to Kami, for turning a major misfortune into a minor one. Then pray to Kami for the thief to reform his heart and to pursue an honest line of work." The concept of interpretation of negativity in such a positive manner is referred to as "omatsuri-kae" or a conversion of one element into another element through divine work.

Initially, the author felt a bit awkward toward the concept of "omatsuri-kae" or a conversion of one element into another element through divine work. I thought the concept could be just an excuse for a bad thing happening. It could be much worse than the turn out. I had encountered an episode about my daughter. She was still a toddler and was placed in a foldable baby carriage. For some reason, she fell out of the seat and hit the ground. There happened to be an empty canned food container. She cut her forehead just above one of the eyes. If the injury was a bit lower, just one centimeter below, she would have been blind for sure. Reflectively, I felt a jolt of joy and remembered a teaching of the Founder, "Care about all things and practice faith to have major misfortunes turn into minor mishaps, and minor mishaps turn into nothing at all" (I Yamamoto Sadajiro 43-5).

I truly appreciated the truthfulness of the message at that instance and extended a sincere thanks to Kami for the blessing received. In this manner, we learn to appreciate the truthfulness of the teachings through our own personal experiences.

In my understanding, those people who commit thefts could have been influenced by the environment of their upbringings, such as family relationships and drop outs of the main social system and isolated in their own limited world.

A person revealed his own experience how he dealt with his habit of stealing. He learned the enjoyment of stealing when he was young. But later on, he became tormented of his heinous character of stealing. He even developed a thought of amputating his own hands.

As Konko believers, we should learn to appreciate the truthfulness of the teachings and try to extend our prayers, "Pray to Kami for the thief to reform his heart and to pursue an honest line of work."

**No. 379: Kami has come forth through Konko Daijin. Tell others exactly what Konko Daijin says. Tell them about the divine blessings you have received. You needn't worry about anything. I, Konko Daijin, will be behind you.**

*(II Fukushima Gihe'e 10-4 Kyoten page 672 to 673)*

Gihe'e Fukushima made the first visit to see the Founder in 1869. At that occasion, the Founder gave Gihe'e the message, "Gihe'e, practice faith and become a kami."

In 1872, Gihe'e went to see the Founder since he reached the age of "yakudoshi" unlucky year. The Founder responded to him by saying, "In My Way of Faith, 'yaku' does not mean unlucky as people think. It is written with the 'yaku' character from the word 'yakunin.' So 'yakudoshi' is not an unlucky age, it is the age when you will help others. Think of your extra-unlucky age (taiyaku no toshi) as when you will be of extra help to others. Then practice faith with a heart full of joy, courage, and strength" (II Fukushima Gihe's 9).

In that year, his eldest son developed an acute illness and was bedridden for half a year. In blessedness, he recovered from his illness. In appreciation of the recovery of his son, Gihe'e went to see the Founder in gratitude during the New Year of the following year. The Founder responded to him by saying, "Tenchi Kane No Kami is Tenchi, the Universe. He is not in a shrine. He dwells in a truly sincere heart."

He further imparted, "Kami has come forth through Konko Daijin. Tell people exactly what Konko Daijin says. Tell them about the divine blessings you have received. You needn't worry about anything. I, Konko Daijin, will be behind you." It could be assumed that the Founder identified Kami's call to Gihe'e from the initial visit and dealing with his son's illness that helped him to advance his faith to be able to help people.

The Meiji Government imposed strict regulations for religious activities for the sake of promoting the national Shinto-oriented religious policy in Japan. Gihe'e Fukushima was quite aware of the difficult condition to promote the Konko faith religious teachings under the restrictive circumstance. But Kami encouraged him by stating, "Tenchi Kane No Kami is Tenchi, the Universe. He is not in a shrine. He dwells in a truly sincere heart."

Later on, the government prohibited the Founder to engage in his religious work. The Founder confined himself in a room. It could be assumed that the Founder might have prayed for Gihe'e

in such a manner as stated, "I, Konko Daijin, will be behind you." I can appreciate the Founder's perpetual prayer to promote the teachings to the world.