



Blessed Nature of Water: How to connect to Kami-Sama through water



*By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano
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I found an interesting story in the latest Konko Shinbun publication issued on April 13, 2022. I want to share with you the story of an English translation of the article.

We are working to host the annual Konko Missions in Hawaii Zoom Gathering to be held on July 9, 2022 from 1:30p-3:30p. The theme of the gathering is "Blessed Nature of Water: How to connect to Kami-Sama through water." Any major religious tradition has their own distinctive recognitions of water in their practice of faith.

The episode I am going to share with you can be just a common story in Konkokyo and shows some very vital meanings for the believers.

The title of the article showed in original Japanese, "Omizu wa Kami-Sama" which means "Water is Kami-Sama." This sounds quite unfamiliar and may not be understood by many people. The expression of "Omizu wa Kami-Sama" may be derived through the cultural interpretation commonly found in Japanese expressions. People regard a giant mountain as the presence of Kami, a giant tree is regarded as a sacred tree or "goshin boku" and so forth.

The expression of "Omizu wa Kami-Sama" implies that the water is a manifestation of divine water. The author of

the writing was kept unknown for privacy. The following is an English translation of the article:

This episode took place when I was a 6th grader. While I was spending summer at my grandparents' place in the country side, I was suffering from the symptoms of atopic dermatitis. The irritating skin condition tortured my whole body.

I had been experiencing an onset of the skin disease periodically from early childhood. No medicine helped to ease my torturous skin condition. Because of the unbearable irritation of the skin, I had a tendency to scratch my skin often, which would develop into a wound. Sweat affected my condition even more seriously. I just could not help but to scratch even harder. The wound became even worse.

My grandmother who worried so much about my suffering approached me and said, "When you sweat, try to take a shower. The water you bathe is Kami-Sama. When you get into the bath tub, try to believe you are going to bathe in Kami-Sama." The message from her was a surprise. I responded instantly and repeated the phrase, "Oh yes! The water I bathe is Kami-Sama." I could accept the remark made by my grandmother.

My grandparents initiated the practice of Konko faith in the household. In the family, we have been told that the work of Heaven and Earth is the manifestation of divine work. For example, any elements that sustain our lives, such as the light and the warmth given forth by the Sun, the water we use, the foods we enjoy and any other things are beyond our human power.

All elements we need to sustain our lives are the blessings from Kami-Sama and as such we need to respond to them all in gratitude. They also taught us that the presence of Heaven and Earth is the sacred body of Kami-Sama. Because of these basic understandings, we were taught about the blessed nature of Kami-Sama and I could naturally accept the message of "Omizu wa Kami-Sama."

I could appreciate the thought "The water you bathe is Kami-Sama." But when I tried to bathe in the water and used soap, it caused terrible irritation to my wounds. I hesitated to get into the bath out of fear. However, I tried to follow the words of my grandmother who said, "Say 'Konko-Sama' when you take a shower and bathe in a bath tub."

Some unexpected phenomenon happened when I took a shower by saying, "Konko-Sama." I felt little irritation of the skin when I soaked myself in the bath tub. I developed an illusion of being warmly embraced by Kami-Sama. From that moment on, whenever, I have taken a bath, I tried to say out loud, "Konko-Sama" in my heart. Close to the end of my stay at my grandparents' house, my skin condition was improving and it eventually healed over time.

I have become an adult and lived a normal life without any worries about the onset of the skin condition at all. But when I lived an independent life away from my parents, the atopic dermatitis showed up again. It could be attributed to the change of my living condition. The irritation of my skin disappeared soon. This episode of the onset of the disease reminded me of the life I spent at my grandparents' house and my sincere prayer in request of healing my skin disorder when I was young.

When I looked at my skin that showed no trace of my past skin issues, I reminded myself that Kami-Sama responded to my earnest prayers for healing. However, I showed Kami-Sama no response in gratitude for the blessing I received at all. On the spot, I sincerely extended my prayer of gratitude to Kami-Sama. I attribute the blessing of healing to my grandmother who taught me about the wondrous nature of water as being Kami-Sama. I still perpetuate the habit of saying "Konko-Sama" which I learned in my youth till today whenever I bathe in the comfortable tub of water.

My grandmother who taught me "The water your use is Kami-Sama" would be a prayer for me for the healing of the terrible skin disease I had, but more to it than that, she might have prayed that I would be able to appreciate the grateful nature of the water I use, and live the Konko faith while directing my heart toward Kami-Sama. The habit of saying "Konko-Sama" and the concept of "the water I use is Kami-Sama" would be a manifestation of the strong prayer for me extended by my grandmother.

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)

Bulletin Board

Church Services for May 2022

- 1 Sun -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (9 am)
-Wailuku Church Spring Grand Service (11 am)
- 8 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Hilo Church Spring Grand Svc (11am)
- 15 Sun -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 22 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)
- 29 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

June 2022

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

Konko Missions in Hawaii

- 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.
 - May 11 (Wed at 5 pm)
 - May 25 (Wed at 5 pm)
- KMH Board Meeting Sat, May 14 (10:30 am)
- HCRP Mtg @Palolo Kwannonji Temple (1:30 pm)
- KMH Minister's Gathering on ZOOM Sat, May 21 (2-4 pm)
Guest speaker: Rev. Yukari Tabe (Konko Church Nagato Funaki)
- Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Wed, May 25 at 3 pm (ZOOM)
- Memorial Day --Visit Punchbowl Mon, May 30 (8 am)
- Wahiawa Gen. Hospital SNF volunteer May 27 (10 am)
- Ehimemaru Mikan tree maintenance Sat, May 28 (9 am)

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

May

Avelino Roldan	5/7/2017
Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
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
Gloria Miyasaka	5/29/2021

In Loving Memory

Alyce Yamamoto	4/12/2022
Jean Noguchi	4/17/2022

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 Konkoko 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.17 page 51, 56)

Innermost heart responses

So far, the author has described the life of Bunji from birth and how he lived chronologically. But if we try to understand how he lived in detail, we need to understand his displayed external way of life, but also we need to understand his distinctive spiritual aspects emerged in his innermost heart. A person's way of life would be formed in the process of accumulating effects of what he wants to get consciously and the thoughts held in the innermost heart. As you might have noticed, the author has tried to describe inner thoughts held by Bunji from time to time. But it was not easy to describe innermost thoughts Bunji held in dealing with many encounters in his life because it could hardly be visualized for sure. It could happen that a person's innermost thoughts and his actual response show just the opposite. For example, we may feel tired physically, but for some reason, our innermost heart is very lively. The author would like to attempt to identify what inner elements Bunji held during the life of up to 30 years through objective observations of his entire life and analysis of the results he reached. Through this attempt, the author believes to clarify the meaning of "Jitsui Teinei Kami Shinjin" that was discussed previously and helps us to understand Bunji's religious pursuit during the age of 40s in his life.

There are two specific reasons why we need to identify Bunji's innermost thoughts he held in the life of up to the age of 30 years old.

First is to identify what Bunji assertively searched and cherished in his innermost heart. In a sense, Bunji was consciously aware of his own innermost heart and directly helped him to form his personality and the way he pursued his religious life.

Second is that there seemed to be some encounters he could not deal with and even tried to exercise the way of life through encountering various twists and turns. We need to identify how Bunji responded in those encounters of impasse. While Bunji himself was not consciously aware when he tried to deal with

helpless situations. Those elements will later get identified. Some of those elements could be identified in distorted figures. In a sense, these uncertainties Bunji experienced may have contributed to the formation of his personality in this respect from the background.

The first could be referred to as "the innermost thought Bunji searched assertively." The second could be referred to as "the innermost thoughts identified later on."

"The innermost thought Bunji searched assertively" refers to the deep thoughts that persuaded him from within to actualize the way of life demonstrated as "Jitsui Teinei Kami Shinjin" which is translated in English as "sincere and caring faith in kami".

One interesting distinction Bunji expressed was the expression of, "I like visiting the shrines and temples." "I like" means Bunji enjoyed practicing faith without any additional efforts or burdens. He was natural in his pursuit of faith. Even the people in the community admitted his natural engagement of his spiritual pursuit of visiting shrines and temples. He seemed to get absorbed in his spiritual devotion. His heart was fulfilled in gratitude. People could witness "a spark" in the way he lived. The reason why Bunji spent a whole day of holidays to visit shrines and temples derived from this innermost heart.

The heart that is self-motivated to devote anything of interest is self-imposed. Without devotion the heart is unfulfilled. There can be no rational explanation for a self-driven devotion that arises deep inside the heart from time to time. That can be the innermost drive from within. But to actualize the innermost urge in actions needs considerable physical efforts and training. In this respect, this innermost urge can be different from the state of mind of just "liking" things. It may look hard outwardly, but the situation helps Bunji to become high-spirited, and his life more enjoyable. The reason Bunji worked diligently in his daily life could be understood in this manner. Bunji might have experienced fulfillment of achievements in a heightened spirituality. The spiritual fulfillment manifested in this manner can be likened to the same spirituality Bunji displayed, that other people's happiness can also be shared as his own happiness and joy.

Bunji also displayed his spirituality of self-discipline in his natural manner. The reason is clear that Bunji tried to examine insight of his own heart whenever he encountered some shortcomings in life. Bunji look at his own innermost heart in search of his own shortcomings.

One distinctive feature commonly observed by the Founder is his strong urge that arises within his innermost heart, not caused by an individual will. That urge derives from somewhere deep

in one's consciousness. That urge can be identified as an independent entity, apart from the actions based on one's own will and concept. Even if an individual would attempt to suppress such urges, they keep on arising and helping the individual to guide and correct to the righteous path. The degree of the urge depends upon each individual such as the

personal character and living conditions, but we cannot ignore that every individual has that innermost urge more or less.

Another distinctive feature is, as we have observed, the innermost heart does not necessarily show up outwardly.

Actually, it could appear quite the opposite. Objectively and based on common sense, what we perceive as trifle, irrational and difficult, may be different from those shown outwardly. But we tend to adhere to the thoughts of gain and loss deeply. The two sides constantly show disorders, frustrations and the innermost heart would be suppressed from time to time. At one occasion, the innermost thought could show superiority, but the initial purity of mind could be distorted by some outward effects, such as rewards and acknowledgement by others. In this manner, some innermost elements may show up, but they could hardly mature.

Bunji's life at this stage in life was to take care of the emerging innermost work of his heart more than anything else. In so doing, he also had some conflicts in his heart for the fulfillment of his actual living. He endured many stressful encounters in which the people took advantage of him for their gains; subjugated in the community; and other visible and invisible forms of community pressures that hindered him in his life. But through his endurance, perseverance, and experiences, he could cherish the growth of the innermost work of his heart.

Anybody may experience the same sort of innermost work of the heart; not only Bunji. What is important is whether we respond to any such occasions with sincerity or just ignore the given opportunity. It could be just like piling up a sheet of paper one at a time. The way the paper is stacked is different from person to person. Some people place the papers at random and eventually forget about the presence of the papers. But Bunji carefully placed one sheet of paper precisely and with care. Eventually the piled paper gained a magnificent pile of paper that could hardly be ignored or removed. Eventually, these piled up papers became an integral part of his personality. To live faithfully in accordance with the piled up contents of the papers is referred to as the way of life that is described as "Jitsui Teinei Kami-Shinjin" means "having a sincere and caring faith in Kami."

The author does not believe that Bunji reached to the stage in which he could actualize such a way of life alone, through his efforts and perseverance as we have discussed previously. In encountering the unknown future perspective for his life, Bunji followed a faint guiding light that emerged from his innermost heart. The emerging innermost urge became a force to help overcome his consciously recognizable sufferings and difficulties. In this sense, it could be assumed that Kami had already responded to Bunji's innermost urge of his heart, not at

the age of 40s but even from this stage in his 30s. This helped to guide Bunji in his pursuit of faith and his family life as well.

Picture Memory from 2022 Spring Grand Ceremony

