



Struggle, Perception, and Little Seeds of Faith

*Testimonial given during the
Wahiawa Church Spring Grand
Ceremony, held on April 13, 2023*

Aloha. My name is Trisha Suwa Adkison, and I am a fourth-generation Konko believer and practitioner. In our religion, we believe that even the smallest things that most people take for granted are blessings. We have all made it through the night and were able to wake up this morning, and we are blessed to live another day. We are blessed with sight to see our loved ones and the beauty of nature. We are blessed with hearing to listen to the stories of our ancestors, to hear danger before we see it, and to be moved by music and art. We are blessed with the sense of smell and taste to enjoy delicious food. We are blessed with touch, allowing us to feel things like hugs and the softness of our pet's fur, but also to keep us safe. For example, heat tells our brains to recoil our arm so we do not damage our hand on a hot stove. We give thanks for our food, the sun, water, the earth, the farmers, the delivery drivers, the store employees, and anything and anyone else who inadvertently helped us get the food to our table. We understand that we are receiving okage from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep and all through the night until we wake up again. Everyone has so much to be thankful for because we are all receiving okage all day, every day.

With this way of thinking and so much to be thankful for, I could spend all night listing my okage. However, I do not like talking about myself because sometimes sharing all of my okage feels like bragging. So instead, I want to talk about okage in relation to struggle, perception, and faith.

One of my biggest okage is my family. My great grandmother and grandmother on my dad's side, and mother are devout Konko practitioners. I am grateful that even though my parents divorced when I was one, my mom remained close to my dad's parents and continued to attend church with my dad's mom. If my mom and grandma had not maintained that relationship, I would probably not be sharing with you today.

Recently, my sister Kimberly and I had a discussion about struggle, perception, and faith. We talked about how things seemed like a struggle back then; but in hindsight, we see things differently. I thought about how it must have been a struggle for my mom being a single parent, trying to raise two stubborn and sassy girls by herself. My mom worked long hours, so my grandparents helped take care of us. We did not have the latest and greatest toys, but that was okay. Looking back, it is funny to me that my favorite thing to do in the summer was to play with ice. My grandparents had a big freezer by the back door, and every other month or so, we would have to defrost it. When you do not have many toys,

you develop a very active imagination. So, I was always excited to defrost the freezer because I would imagine tiny penguins and polar bears walking around inside, as if it were a tiny frozen tundra. Then, we would use an ice pick to chip off the ice, put the big chunks of ice in a large plastic bowl, and take it outside. I do not remember what I was pretending or imagining, but I would sit outside and play with the ice for hours, thinking it was the best thing ever!

My sister and I also talked about how we didn't have our own room or bed. Often times, we would sleep on the living room floor. Some might perceive that as something negative, like we were poor. But we weren't poor, and I never thought of it as something negative. My perception of our upbringing was actually pretty positive. I thought sleeping on the floor was fun, like having a sleepover every day.

I think my mom said that I started coming to church when I was 5. So from a very young age, I have had these little seeds of faith planted in me. And that's why Konkokyo is my second biggest okage. In Konkokyo, even when bad things happen, we are thankful because it could have been much worse. We see bad things as blessings because Kami-sama turned a mountain into a molehill. We also believe that things are put in our way for a reason, and that reason might not become apparent for a while. We sometimes say that it was a blessing 5 or 10 years in the making.

Struggle is inevitable. Sometimes bad things happen to us. Sometimes we put ourselves in predicaments. Sometimes, some of us are more stubborn than others, so we keep making the same mistakes over and over.

But that process is necessary because that is how we learn life lessons.

Konkokyo has taught me to appreciate struggle by changing my perception of situations that I encounter. My family, Rev. Yano, and his family have continuously watered the little seeds of faith that were planted in me all those years ago. All of their love and prayers have encouraged those little seeds to blossom over the years; and now, faith provides me with an overwhelming sense of peace because I know that everything will work out for the better. I know sometimes it drives my husband crazy because it seems like I don't care enough about certain things. But it's not that I don't care. I just have the utmost faith in Kami. Isn't it amazing what a little watering can do?

So as you go about your day, please remember that the grass is not greener on the other side. That perception is an illusion. Truthfully, the grass is greener on the side that you water. Every time you attend a service in person or online, and every time you invest in your relationship with Kami-sama, you are watering the little seeds of faith within you. When you attend a service or help out at a church function, you are watering the seeds in your church. So thank you for joining us and pouring your love into our garden, and we hope to see you again soon.

Konko-Sama said...

Konko Daijin said, "People have often wondered why a man who is honest, doesn't do anything bad to others, and is like a kami or buddha, is often afflicted with many misfortunes. This is because he has somehow shown irreverence to Kami. [GIII: Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.1]

2 No matter how honest and good he is, he is apt to commit irreverence to Kami if he does not practice faith. There is a difference between having a good personality and showing reverence to Kami." [GIII: Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.2]

3 No matter how good he is, if he doesn't practice faith, he will not receive divine blessings. [GIII: Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.3]



Honoring the Mitama Spirits

May	
Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
Rev. Masahiko Yoshino	5/9/2013
Rev. Mitsuko Yasutake	5/1/2020
Saichi Eguchi	5/9/1997
Fernie Furusho	5/26/2001
Hideo Fujimoto	5/26/2005
Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka	5/16/1972
Toshiko Yogo	5/2/2010
Hiroshi Katsura	5/26/1959
Takahiko Yano	5/28/2016
Avelino Roldan	5/7/2017
Koji Hiramoto	5/1/2018
Gloria Miyasaka	5/29/2021

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 May 2023

- 1 Mon -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 7 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Wailuku Church Grand Service (11 am)
- 14 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 21 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)
- 28 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

June 2023

- 1 Thur -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 p)

Announcements and Acknowledgements:

We express our sincerest gratitude for your tremendous support in making the Konko Mission of Wahiawa impromptu garage sale on 4/30 a success. Your generous donations contributed greatly to the event, which raised a total of \$1106.78, including proceeds from the garage sale and additional donations. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful members of our church community who assisted in organizing and carrying out this event. Mahalo!

●Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis

The next activity will be on Fri, May 5 @ 10 am

●KMH Kyoten Study Group via Zoom

The main reference book will be "Voice of the Universe."
Join us: May 10 & 24 (Wed. from 5 pm to 6 pm)
ZOOM ID: 815 2952 9465 **PASS:** 914385

●KMH CEOC Meeting

ZOOM on Friday, May 12, 2023 (3 pm)

●KMH Minister's Gathering

ZOOM on Saturday, May 20, 2023 (2-4 pm)

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 92 to 95) (continued from the previous issue)

Divine Instructions and Guidance

Hand-divination

Bunji began to recognize a direct response from Kami to the prayer he extended for the first time on March 15. He experienced a so-called “hand-divination,” which was a response from Kami through his hand in the posture of prayer. If the prayer would be fulfilled, the hand moved upward, while if the prayer would not be fulfilled, the hand moved downward. The hand-divination was an extraordinary development in the relationship between Bunji and Kami. Bunji inquired of Kami for anything in his daily life and followed Kami’s instructions faithfully.

In April, while engaged in the work of threshing hulls of rice, Bunji developed a sudden high fever and a headache. The symptoms were quite similar to those of the serious illness he experienced at the age of 42, just three years prior. On that occasion, he received attention from medical doctors and shamanistic prayers. On the contrary, this time, he prayed to Kami for his condition and took a rest for a while, regaining good health quickly. He was deeply grateful for the recovery, attributable to Kami.

Extended gratitude from the ancestors It was July 13, and on this day, each household in the village observed the annual “Shouryo Eko” or the Bon Memorial Service. Bunji also began to prepare for the service by lighting candles at the altar of Kane No Kami and extending a prayer in the evening. While he was engaging in his prayer, an unexpected thing

happened. He delivered a message that was not his own. “Bunji, tonight being the bon memorial service, you are serving your ancestors at your family Buddhist altar. Though there is little candle oil left, the candle flame will not go out. Think about how long the flame has lasted since dark. The mother and wife, please come here, I will tell you stories”

(Oboegaki 5-5-2).

It was a totally surprising condition. The family members noticed something unusual was going on and gathered together in the room.

The reference to the candle was in response to the thought held by Bunji, who was wondering about the condition of the lantern that was almost out of oil. He was to start the preparation for the Bon memorial service when the light was to burn out of oil. Despite the oil almost running out, the lamp kept burning. Bunji was puzzled at the unusual situation. Then Kami responded to him about the unusual condition of the lantern. Bunji focused his attention on the preparation of the service but was aware of the unusual situation in the room.

Hachiemon Morita, who lived in the same village of Otani, noticed the unusual scene and asked quizzically, “Does Bunji always speak like this?” “No, tonight’s the first time,” a family member answered.

“Since that was the service day of the Gion Shrine, I offered a pair of oil candles to Gion-Sama’s altar and gave prayers. Then, Kane No Kami-Sama spoke again, ‘I will tell your family about your ancestors. Behind this house is the Ohashi home from where Hachibe`e came to establish this household.’ The ancestral spirits spoke, ‘Bunji, because you have come to this house, it has become prosperous. We are grateful and we express our thanks. (Oboegaki 5-5-6-7).”

Bunji pondered, "How many years have passed since I was adopted into this household?" The thought that dominated Bunji's heart was the revival and prosperity of the household since he was adopted. In the past, Bunji was about to succumb to many hard

encounters and felt hopeless about the fate of the household. But Kami's message, given through the mouth of Bunji himself, gave him substantial hope for the prospective bright future of the family. He learned that the family ancestors had kept watching over his entire life in the past and acknowledged his dedication and contributions to the household, and shared the same gratefulness he held. He could finally fulfill his responsibilities for the household as an adopted family member. The words of gratitude extended for the contributions made by Bunji were the greatest reward he could have ever fulfilled in his life.

More than that, he had never experienced the sense of security for the life he had lived as an individual. That is to say, in those days, they perceived the household as the unit of their own identity. They perceived that their own meaning of existence and their own personal fulfillments could be actualized by their own contributions to inherit the ancestral worshipping of the household. And their ascendants in generations would also perpetuate worshipping their own Mitama Spirits. They depended on their ascendants for the fulfillment of their eternal lives.

At this stage in life, Bunji as a household head and as a farmer could fulfill his responsibilities and his meaningful contributions in life. Bunji began to have a new growing perspective for his pursuit of faith. He acknowledged the fact that the household ancestors extended deep gratitude for Bunji's presence in the household and gained the status of a thriving family that could be attributed to his pursuit of faith. His pursuit of faith was about to enter into a new perspective. In this sense, the words of deep gratitude from the household ancestors helped to close the chapter of life he had lived so far and marked the opening of a new life for Bunji.

"Then, the kami Marodo Daimyoujin requested, 'From Omi province (Shiga Prefecture), I came here 831 or 832 years ago. Your ancestors built a cemetery near here. I would like for you to move this cemetery.' I took note of this request" (Oboegaki 5-5-8).

According to a legend of the region, the kami Marodo Daimyoujin shrine was initiated when a wooden placard that belonged to one of the branch shrines of Hiyoshi Shrine in Omi Prefecture reached the shore of the area when the region was still part of the ocean in olden days. The people picked up the wooden placard and enshrined the deity. Thereafter, the Ohashi household, the main household of the Akazawa household, took care of the shrine and perpetuated the operation of the shrine. Annually, all the families and the relatives got together and observed the Bon memorial service. The Akazawa household was also deeply involved in the faith community from generation to generation. But Bunji could not respond to the forwarded request by the kami Marodo Daimyoujin. He could just listen to the request without taking any action.

Pictures from the Spring Grand Ceremony 4.13.23

