



Essentials of the Konko Faith Practice

By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister

On March 9, 2025, the second KMH Rotary Hanashikai ZOOM session was held. As the host church, I introduced the following material as a resource for the discussion on the theme of the meeting. The theme for the meeting was “Essentials of the Konko Faith Practice.” I found a very appropriate story shared by Rev. Shikie Kouda of the Konko Church of Ōtsuru, Ōita Prefecture. The original Japanese article was found in *Ametsumichi*, an official monthly publication of the Konkokyo organization, in the February 2020 issue. The following is my English translation.

Unexpected Message

My husband, who was an instructor at Konkokyo Gakuin Seminary, became unable to teach due to some serious issues. He secluded himself in his room and was bedridden, never coming out for about a month.

During that time, I had to take care of our three children. My husband didn't leave his room. I had to cook and bring food to him. I became so frustrated and could no longer bear the situation.

Then I went to see Konko-Sama and expressed my complaint, saying, “My husband refuses to go to work at the Gakuin Seminary.”

But Konko-Sama responded to me abruptly, without referring to my husband, and said, “Do you cook rice? Do you clean your rooms? Do you wash your clothes?”

I looked at Konko-Sama, puzzled. Konko-Sama continued, “When you cook, do you say thank you for the elements involved in cooking? Do you pray that your cooking will go smoothly without any disruptions? When you use your rice cooker, do you say thank you for the rice cooker? Do you pray for the good health of your family members through the food you cook? When you finish cooking rice, do you say thank you for being able to cook without

any trouble? When you wash your clothes, do you say thank you to the washing machine? Do you say thank you for the water used for washing? Do you say thank you for being able to use the machine and wash clothes? Do you say thank you when the laundry is done? When you use the dryer, do you say thank you for the dryer? Do you say thank you to the machine when it finishes the task?”

He continued speaking in such a meticulous manner.

After a pause, Konko-Sama said, “I have been doing all those things I just shared with you every day. When I find myself awake in bed in the morning, I say thank you for waking up. Thank you for the life I've been given that day. Thank you for the clothes I wear. When I wash my face in the morning, I thank the water I use. When I put my feet into my geta clogs at the entrance, I say thank you for the clogs. Thank you for the path on which I can walk to Hiromae. When I arrive at Hiromae, the worship hall, I say thank you for being able to walk all the way from my residence to this place without any disruptions. I say thank you for being able to fulfill my duties here. If I ever forget to say thank you for any of those things, I try to make up for it later once I realize what I forgot. You say you wish to actualize and practice this way of faith in your own life. But without practicing what I have shared with you, there is no way to fulfill your wish!” Konko-Sama stated firmly.

This was the first time I had ever received such a message from Konko-Sama. I had no idea how what he said was related to the practice of Konko Faith.

I even had the rude thought: “Konko-Sama just recently became the Head of the Religious Organization. Maybe he hasn't developed a full appreciation of the true essence of the Konko Faith.”

After returning home from church, I felt a sort of reluctant obligation to follow what Konko-Sama had shared with me, simply out of respect for him. When I cooked, I tried to say thank you for the utensils I used and for washing them. I wasn't very serious about expressing thanks for those everyday things, but I did it as a way to remind myself of Konko-

Sama's words. I was like a nursery school student simply following the instructions of a caretaker. But I kept reminding myself to say thank you for whatever I did in my daily life by saying, "Thank you. Please let me do such and such things."

The following day, my husband got out of bed and greeted me normally, saying, "I'm going to report to Gakuin Seminary from today." I was truly surprised to witness such a drastic change in my husband, who had been bedridden and isolated in his room for a month. How could he have gotten out of bed and become so energetic and motivated to fulfill his duties at the Gakuin Seminary?

In pleasant surprise, I went to see Konko-Sama and said, "Konko-Sama, thank you very much. My husband has gotten well and will report to Gakuin Seminary."

Konko-Sama simply responded, "Sore mi!" or "You see the blessing you received!" After that remark, he said nothing else.

I looked at Konko-Sama in puzzlement. I was just 31 or 32 years old at the time and couldn't fully comprehend the meaning of "Sore mi!"

I came to realize that following and practicing the words given by Konko-Sama brought about the blessed situation.

I just cut short the latter part of the article.

Voice of the Universe...

1. There are people between Heaven and Earth. Heaven is father and Earth is mother. Humans, plants, and other living things live on Earth through the blessings they receive from Heaven.. *I Ishibara Ginzo 12.*
2. Heaven and Earth continue to live. Because Heaven and Earth are alive, all people are able to live. *III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 104*

Bulletin Board

May 2025

- 1 Thr -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No
Kami-Sama (7:30 pm)
4 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Wailuku Church Godaisai (11 am)

- 11 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko
Daijin-Sama (9 am)
18 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-Hilo Church Godaisai (11 am)
25 Sun -Monthly Memorial Svc (9 am)

June 2025

- 1 Sun -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No
Kami-Sama (9 am)

- Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis The next activity will be on Fri, May 2 @ 10:30 am
- KMH Kyōten Study Group via Zoom Voice of the Universe Join us: Wednesdays, May 7 and 21 at 9:00 am, ZOOM ID: 815 2952 9465 PASSCODE: 914385
- Join us in celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Honouliuli National Historic Site! Throughout the year, there will be various activities marking this special milestone. As part of the celebration, the Konko Mission of Wahiawa will be hosting a public tour of our mission on **Saturday, May 17th, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** While we're not sure how many guests to expect, we would greatly appreciate your support and presence in helping us welcome and host the public during this event.
- Join us for the KCNA/KMH Joint Conference in Sacramento, California, from **July 4-6, 2025!** If you're interested in attending, please let us know. The deadline to submit all registration forms and payments is **May 25th.** KMH will subsidize your \$130 registration fee, and the Konko Mission of Wahiawa will provide a \$200 airfare subsidy, as approved by the board members on April 27, 2025.

May Memorials

Kiyoka Takahashi	5/5/1999
Rev. Masahiko Yoshino	5/9/2013
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
Mark Shiraishi	5/22/2014
Takahiko Yano	5/28/2016
Avelino Roldan	5/7/2017
Gloria Miyasaka	5/29/2021

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 entitled, "Konko Kyōso no Shōgai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikiō Seto and published by Konkōkyō Theological Research Center in 1980. Many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin exist. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (continued from the previous issue)

Pages 175–178 (continued)

The Yamabushi had their own purposes. Some of them tried to discredit Bunji's religious activities, while others attempted to solicit monetary donations because he was practicing religious rituals without a proper official license. As this issue will be discussed later, after Bunji received a letter of appointment from Sonryūin Temple, they imposed various forms of compulsory donations, such as duty fees and other charges.

“Kami-Sama would be able to get rid of these trifling matters. There must be some divine intent behind the frequent disturbing visits of the monks. I do not get angry at all. If they took away all the offerings placed on the offertory table today, there would be new offerings tomorrow. Kami-Sama is good-natured indeed. Those disturbing monks will disappear sooner or later. The way of life will thrive year after year. You will find fulfillment in the future,” (Tsugawa Haruo).

In this way, Bunji maintained a basic spirit of perseverance and the philosophy of “winning by losing.” Bunji also said to Shige Okamoto, “You should pray for those who do wrong so they may reform their hearts in line with the heart of Kami.” However, when the disturbances became too persistent, Bunji revealed, “Try to kill me, then the Shugendō practitioners will be able to do whatever they wish,” according to Tomie Takahashi.

In dealing with the Yamabushi who confronted Bunji with many difficult issues, he learned to practice the faith while also taking governmental authorities into consideration. Bunji perceived that even the troubling visitations of the monks could be understood as part of Kami's intent.

Governmental Restrictions

The social tides against Bunji surged even more. On January 10, 1863, Juemon Saito used his palanquin to visit Bunji at Hiromae in the style of a samurai lord's procession, accompanied by many followers. His intention was to let people know about Bunji's religious faith. He referred to this audacious act as a “visual practice of faith.”

The following day, Bunji advised him to take a back road on his return. However, Juemon did not heed Bunji's advice and took the same path back to his church. Officials from the *Daikanshō* (police office) were waiting along the route, arrested him, and accused him of ignoring and disrespecting governmental authority. He was detained in jail. The arrest was part of a scheme by village officials who considered Juemon rebellious and disruptive to the village community. He was tortured and imprisoned for 107 days before being released.

The officials also confiscated and burned all religious items from Juemon Saito's Hiromae at Kasaoka. This incident was widely discussed throughout the region, with rumors spreading that the Hiromae at Otani would also be raided and destroyed by government authorities. As a result, people who were only seeking immediate blessings ceased their practice of faith. According to Bunji's prayer notebook, *Negainushi Toshigaki Oboecho*, there was a substantial decline in the number of visitors from the Kasaoka region.

Despite the Kasaoka incident, Bunji appeared to remain emotionally undisturbed. He tried to discern Kami's intent through the event. Tomie Takahashi recalled that Bunji told her the government authorities were indirectly instructing him on how to practice faith. He used the term *sabikae*, meaning “a shifting off” of those who did not practice faith sincerely. Even though many people had visited him, only those who were truly sincere would continue in their faith. *Sabikae* referred to the act of a farmer sifting dirt from rice. This could be seen as Kami's test to determine whether people would continue to believe despite government restrictions and negative social reputation.

This incident made Bunji and the faith community keenly aware of the need to understand how to navigate government relations. Until then, Bunji's close relationship with the village head had helped resolve some issues, even with the authorities. However, the incident showed that both Bunji and

others in the faith community needed formal authorization to conduct religious work. They realized their current approach would not suffice and that they had to find new ways to manage the evolving situation.

Move to Obtain Credentials for Public Religious Work

Some believers responded to the confusion in the faith community by trying to obtain official recognition for religious activities in the public sphere.

Some attempted to obtain permits to practice Shugendo faith publicly. One such person, identified as Bankura (likely Umejiro Kanemitsu) from Kashiwajima (now Tamashima, Kurashiki City), contacted the headquarters temple that governed Shugendo temples in the region in 1862. He tried to obtain a letter of appointment for Bunji as a Shugendo practitioner. This letter was highly prestigious and rarely seen in the Bitchu Province. It allowed the holder to perform all activities permitted to practitioners.

Once the letter was issued, opposition figures hesitated to harass Bunji on the grounds of lacking credentials. However, they imposed other restrictions, such as demanding compulsory donations expected of a practitioner. A priest, claiming to be an official of Sonryuin Temple, took away the letter of appointment. Bunji responded by having a third party contact Sonryuin Temple to retrieve the letter, but it was never returned amidst the confusion.

Another attempt involved seeking a letter of appointment from the Yoshida Family in Kyoto. Yojiro Matsumoto, a member of the Okayama Clan and an ardent Konko believer, contacted the Yoshida Family to obtain an appointment letter for Bunji for the post of “Yotsugumi Yuudasuki Kenyou.” After receiving the letter, Matsumoto contacted the village head and requested official permission from the Lord of the Okayama Clan for Bunji to perform religious activities. However, this attempt also failed. *(to be continued)*



Come see the Boy's Day Koinobori at Wabiyama Kyokai!