



Greetings from Japan!



The following is an email from Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. He is currently in Japan to celebrate the Centennial of the Konko Church of Iwatani. The head minister of the church is Rev. Sejiro Inagaki, who is Yano sensei's elder brother. Picture above was taken from his hotel room.

I am writing this message for the newsletter for the month of November, 2021 at a hotel in Chiba, near the Narita International Airport. I am spending about 2 weeks in the quarantine hotel due to the mandatory COVID-19 regulations set forth by the Japanese government, regardless of vaccination status. If everything goes well, my quarantine will end on November 3rd. I will be traveling in Japan and return back to Hawaii on November 11, 2021.

During the period of quarantine, my every move is being surveilled via GPS, and I have to submit to daily briefings of my health condition via SOS app on my smartphone. International travelers during this time of pandemic is put through many restrictions and tedious conditions that must be obeyed. Knowing this, I went to Japan anyways, because I simply wanted to fulfill my firm decision to attend the 100th anniversary function of Iwatani Church operated by my brother, Rev. Sejiro Inagaki.

I made this decision to attend the function to be observed in November, last year, but the pandemic affected all travelers, globally. I had predicted that

the pandemic would have somewhat subsided by this time of the year, so I kept my airplane reservations for both my wife and I. We have been quite aware of the unyielding threat of the coronavirus but just hoped the restrictions would be eased sooner. However, the government has kept the impositions of the strict regulations for overseas visitors till this day.

About a month before my flight from Hawaii, I noticed that the flight got cancelled. So I made another reservation just for myself without informing my other family members. Then again, the reservation got cancelled. But right after the cancellation of the flight, I made a third attempt to reserve another flight. However, when I arrived at the airport for check-in, the attendants told me that my reservation could not be found in their system. But they managed to find a round trip to Narita on the spot, and I was able to safely fly to Tokyo.

I was just so determined to find my way to attend the Centennial Celebration of Iwatani Church even if I have to encounter inconveniences. I also wanted to make pilgrimages to Gohonbu, Headquarters Church in Konko Town, Okayama and the Konko Church of Amagi for safely being able to hold the 80th Anniversary of our church. I kept my intent of going to Japan from my family members or others up until a few days before departure because I knew they would call me crazy or insane for traveling during the pandemic.

Normally, people would not travel during this time of uncertainty and further sacrificing 2 weeks of solitary confinement in a quarantine hotel for the travel. But I pondered that it's not impossible. There would be some ways to travel to Japan under this condition. I chose to spend 2 weeks to quarantine as the government requires.

I would like to tell you my personal experiences for my trip so far. First, I made my airplane reservation. Second, I extensively researched the regulations for entering into Japan. I needed a special PCR test and

documentation done that was acceptable by the Japanese government. I couldn't just get any PCR test at like CVS or Walgreens. It had to be specially certified. I also needed to fill out regulatory documents for my intended trip and lastly needed a reliable smartphone that can install the four required applications. I am not very smartphone savvy and I intended to just rent a smartphone at the airport. But my daughter purchased a smartphone for me a few days before my trip and installed the apps prior to flying out. Edna gave me a crash course on how to use the new phone and taught me the most important features that are necessary to know how to operate. Handling the smartphone is not so easy, but I somehow learned to get a hang of it.

At the Honolulu International Airport, they checked every requirement before boarding. I was thankfully cleared of the requirements. There were only about 50 or 60 people on board the plane, just three or less people in a row of chairs. Many of the passengers were young. Some of them were with their infants and children. It was a comfortable flight to Japan.

When I arrived at the Narita airport, passengers who had a connecting flight to other parts of Asia had left the airplane first and all other passengers deplaned and were asked to wait in two lines.

The people in charge led us to clear the COVID-19 regulations. We were introduced in a waiting room with chairs. They provided us with documents and checked the required documentations with our passports. The session was over in about 10 minutes. Our documents were checked at every stage of the procedure. Arriving passengers who were cleared of infections went to a station to check the saliva for the presence of corona virus. It took over 5 minutes to fill the required amount of saliva for testing. The result was reported at the end of the procedure. Those people who do not take the saliva test took the nasal swab testing technique. We were told not to eat or drink anything 45 minutes before taking the saliva test.

After that was done, they checked the functions of our smartphones, installed the necessary applications and explained to us how to use it one on one. All instructors were young women.

After that was done, we had another session of verifying documents and requirements. At this point, a number was given for each passport. And then we were told to sit at a designated chair in a waiting space. It took about 10 minutes or longer for each passport to be examined and cleared, then we would be called and proceed to the final stage of finding out the results of our saliva test. After a negative test result, we were given an orange colored card as proof. Then we went through the last stage of getting out of the airport. This all took about two hours for the entire process of certified clearance.

For modes of transportation, the passengers would not be able to use any forms of public transportation, such as regular bus, taxi, railroads systems, domestic airplanes and ferry boats. The hotel provided a special bus that picked up passengers who had different hotel accommodations. We showed the proof of negative test results to the operator of the bus. The bus was available every hour, free of charge.

About 20 minutes later, I arrived at the hotel and checked into my room. I didn't ask to food services during my stay at the hotel. A convenience store was located in the vicinity of the hotel to buy any needed items, including foods and drinks.

I am writing this email as of the third day of my stay at the quarantine hotel. The "My SOS" application shows the last day of stay at the hotel to be November 3, 2021. If everything goes well, I should be able to travel throughout Japan using public transportation. Currently, only Japanese nationals can enter Japan. I have been enjoying my trip so far, even in quarantine. I hope everyone is in good health.

Bulletin Board

Church Services for November 2021

- 1 Mon -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 7 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 14 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 15 Mon-KMH ZOOM Yatsunami Gathering (5 pm)
- 21 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)
- 28 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
-24th Mem. Svc for Rev. Kikue Kodama (HNL)

December 2021

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

The Church Doors are Open

You are more than welcome to walk in to speak with sensei or make an appointment. Our church is open from 6 am to 8 pm daily. Let Kami-Sama help you with your problems. Please continue to follow COVID-19 precautions of wearing your mask and washing your hands before entering.

Garage sale success!

Mahalo nui for your great help in raising money to offer to the Konkokyo Headquarters Church in Okayama, Japan. We held a Garage sale on October 16th and were able to raise \$799.25. We added in an additional \$200.75 to the total to even it out to \$1,000. We also added in Teespring t-shirt sale profits of \$192.09. In total, we were able to send \$1192.09 to the Konkokyo Headquarters. Several other church members have also extended their offering to Gohonbu.

KMH

- 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.
-Wednesday, November 10 at 5 pm
- Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Friday, November 12 at 5 pm (ZOOM)
- KMH Yatsunami Gathering on ZOOM. Monday, November 15, 2021 from 5pm-6:30pm. **ZOOM ID:** 872 8433 4754 **Passcode:** 620614. Room will be open from 4:30 pm. There will be a message from the current 6th Spiritual Head: Rev. Hiromichi Konko. Several willing volunteers will also be sharing their talents.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

November

Katherine T. Kawaguchi	11/7/2016
David Suyeki Oka	11/8/2006
Ronald Minoru Miyatake	11/14/2000
Chieno Hirota	11/17/2009
Nobuko Yano	11/18/2016
Toshihiko Hosaka	11/20/2008
Crandal Ancog	11/21/2008
Cecilia Asako Soma	11/24/2003
Tei Yoshiiwa	11/24/1973
Yoshitoshi Uyehara	11/25/2000
Rev. Kikue Kodama	11/28/1997

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 紀要別冊 叢書 2

The following is an English translation of a book titled, "Konkō Kyōso 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.

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The Days and Directions and Konjin

When I did some research about the way Bunji took actions in following the rules of the Days and Directions, he showed some extraordinary commitment in following the rules. Why did he respond in such a manner?

The initial understanding of his behavior could be assumed based on his in-born nature of honesty that dictated him to follow the Days and Directions. But the way he displayed his actions at this special occasion may be different from his passive manner of just following the rules. It could be true his inborn character of honesty and the way of seeing things was based on his true honesty. It could be assumed that his basic way of life based on this principle could be drastically transformed into a pro-active way of living by some influence.

One of the elements that could help activate his honesty into a pro-active manner could be attributed to his religious way of living that imposed him dedication and self-restriction, which in his case means for the sake of his determination to fulfill his own wishes. He has restricted his personal preferences and endured some sacrifices for the purpose of fulfilling the rules of the Days and Directions by all means. He convinced himself that this way of life would benefit him the most. The way of life displayed by Bunji could be commonly observed in those people from long time ago. They would gladly practice "shoujin ryouri" (vegetarian cuisine), "monoimi" (reserved attitude for sightseeing), "tachimono" (refrain from eating and doing some things they liked), "nenokoku-mairi" (midnight visitation to shrines and temples). Those people tried to suppress their own eating desires and tried to focus their own energies on the deities they believed, and gained some unnatural powers that could not be attained by ordinary people. Ordinary people might regard such acts of self-restrictions and obsession would be full of endurance and difficulties. But that view may not be true. Look at those people in sports. They put in their utmost

efforts and sacrifices to overcome the great difficulties they encounter. Once they would have fulfilled their wishes, they would get the happiest moments. We are such beings.

The other element was Bunji became strongly aware of the presence of Konjin. Konjin was believed as an evil deity among the general public at that time. They believed that Konjin regularly circulates around the lives of the people. If Konjin stayed at one direction, people believed they must avoid Konjin at all costs by avoiding facing certain directions for construction work, traveling and performing weddings. Not practicing the days and directions was believed to invite the wrath of Konjin, which entailed deaths in the family—and most notoriously, the family would be cursed to encounter seven-deaths of their household members. They believed the traditional belief to avoid these frightening consequences and they conducted prayers to confine the evil power of Konjin. The people were obsessed with following the Days and Directions to avoid the presence of Konjin. Bunji felt something was missing in consideration of the construction project that was carried out through only following the Days and Directions. Bunji too became obsessively aware of the concept of the wrath of Konjin in corresponding to the death of his eldest son that happened just a few years after the construction project of a storage room and the toilet. Bunji feared that the construction had offended Konjin. Because of the situation, Bunji was consciously aware that in regard to the construction project, he should have thoroughly managed the construction work and strictly followed the dictates of the Days and Directions.

In this manner, it would be notable that he became aware of something that was beyond his own powers have affected his way of life despite the fact he meticulously followed whatever he could do. Bunji tried to respond in gratitude, difficulties and some doubts about the rules imposed by the Days and Directions. We should pay much attentions in understanding the behaviors of Bunji at this period of life.

The author would like to give some reference to Konjin. In those days, the people believed the presence of Konjin affected the Days and Directions, but also other elements of Konjin in their lives. One of the theories was that Konjin governed the ground. Konjin was believed to be offended if unsanitary materials and wastes were buried in the ground of the house property. Konjin was also feared to be offended if people build bathrooms and large standing trees at certain directions of the property. Some specialized priests engaged in practices of “*onmyōdo*” and “*shugendō*” that identifies the causes of misfortunes that were based on the violations of the Days and Directions. Another thing is in regard to the fear of the Days and Directions. People tried to avoid the curse of Konjin by building small shrines in the *Kimon* direction which is the

southeast facing direction of the house property. They worshipped Konjin as one of the household deities. Konjin was also believed to join other evil deities. People have attempted to subdue the evil nature of Konjin and tried to confine Konjin in a shrine.

In those days, the entire local region of *Bizen* (Part of current day Okayama) *Bitchū* (Part of current day Okayama) was the central part of *Shugendō Honzan* (the main temple of the religions) in the western part of Japan. The *yamabushi* practitioners of the Kojima 5-Schools influenced the area. They practiced vigorous training at Ishizuchi Mountain for religious practices. The Ishizuchi oriented shugyō faith training was very popular. Shugendō practiced a wide range of ceremonial rites for the purpose of confining Konjin. In other words, they contributed the fear factors of Konjin in the society. Those elements of Konjin contributed to produce many forms of avoiding evil Konjin practices.

In contrast to the established folk beliefs about Konjin, some minority believers responded to Konjin in a different manner. Several decades before the end of the Tokugawa government, these distinctive believers of Konjin responded against the traditional concept of avoiding the evil nature of Konjin who would inflict harm against people. Majority of the new believers actually experienced the seven death wrath of Konjin. They believed “If Konjin has the power to punish people who violated the rules of the Days and Directions it could also be assumed He holds the power to save people.” They sincerely faced against Konjin and practiced a demanding self-restricting way of life and accepted Konjin as the deity of protection for the people.” Uta Ono, and Shigeemon Kandori (brother of Bunji) were some of the typical believers. At this stage, Bunji could have overheard the distinctive perspectives about Konjin in rumors but it would be assumed he did not get any influences of this belief from outside sources.

