



## Autumn Memorial Service

You are cordially invited to attend the service for our deceased family and friends on **Sunday, September 26, 2021 at 10:00 am**. If you would like to honor someone who has passed, please let Yano sensei know by phone or email by 9/24 and their names will be added to the main pastoral prayer. Take-home bentos will be distributed after the service. Please RSVP by Friday, 9/24.

## Totsukawa County Resident Monk Memorial Service

By Rev. Toyobisa Harada (Head Minister of Konko Church of Totsukawa)



*Translated by Rev. Mitsuko Yasutake and edited by Rev. Edna Matsunaka and Rev. Reiko Yano*

I'm sure there are many people who may wonder why a Konkokyo church would conduct a memorial service for Buddhist monks.

Totsukawa was called Totsukawa-go until the Meiji-era (1868-1912), and consisted of 59 villages. The villages at that time were the present-day Ōaza (大字).

In 1873 (Meiji 6), there were 55 temples in Totsukawa-go. However, due to the movement to abolish Buddhism, all the temples were closed down. The "Separation of Buddhism and Shintoism" decree issued by the new Meiji government triggered a nationwide movement to abolish Buddhism. While in other parts of Japan, measures such as consolidating 100 temples into 10 were taken, the temples in Totsukawa were completely abolished. There is a historical story to all of this, for which I will be sharing.

Totsukawa had been sending soldiers to fight for the emperor since before the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (around 1340). In the third year of the Bunkyo era, the Totsukawa warriors asked Miya Nakagawa for help in guarding the Kyoto Imperial Palace. He then worked with the new government forces to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, Hokuetsu, Hakodate, and the Civil War. One of the policies of the new Meiji government to unify the country around the emperor was the nationalization of Shintoism through the "Shinto-Buddhist Separation Order." As a result, the Totsukawa Shogunate became more and more devoted to Shintoism, and it is believed that they thoroughly abolished Buddhism. However, even though the temples have been closed down, the cemeteries, stone monuments, and memorial tablets of the long-time monks of the temples still remain in each district. In addition to religious events such as weddings, funerals, and

ceremonies, successive generations of priests have done their best for the people, the village, and the country by teaching, working in government offices such as the family register, and introducing cultures from other countries to the village.

When I was young, I had only heard that there were many temples in Totsukawa, that there was the Abolition of Buddhism, and that the monks were massacred or kicked out of their own temples. In 1978, when I was 28 years old and had returned to help the church for about a year, an elementary school student who was a member of the children's association, who we will call "M", had a terrible accident in which he fell off a bridge while he was hitching a ride on a motorcycle. He had been admitted and treated at a hospital in Shingu City, but was still in an unconscious state.

When I visited the Nanki Church on the morning of the monthly service, Ms. Yae Kubo, a member of the Nanki Church,

came up to me and said, "Whenever I pray for the recovery of M's consciousness and full recovery, I visualize a Buddhist monk wearing a robe appear and push him violently. No matter how many times I pray for him, the monk always appears. At the parent church, they held a vigil for the boy. When I heard about this story, it touched my heart very deeply. And since I heard that there was a temple in the area where the accident occurred, I decided to go there. One day, I went there while asking people in the district and was amazed at how it looked. Because even though the place was relatively close to a villager's residence, the property was overgrown with grass and hard to get to. There was also a tombstone of a monk. It was a shock to see this unkempt neglected spot in a residential area. It's hard to imagine what happened to the ruins of temples all over Totsukawa.

I began to feel the urge to check the other places where the temples used to once stand. However, more than a hundred years had passed where the Buddhist temples in the village had been thoroughly eliminated. There would be no way of knowing where to find these sites. So I visited the town hall and the history and folk museum to see if they had any books or materials. I found the name of the temple and the name of the Ōaza in the book. At the museum, they carefully searched for old documents and a map of the area where the temples were located and copied them for us. From these documents and books, we were able to get a general idea of the area in which the temples were located.

One day, during a monthly service sermon, I shared about how I was trying to find the original location of the Buddhist temples that have been abolished. After the sermon, one of the Shinto Soudai (church representatives) approached me and offered to help find the locations. I of course asked Rev. Mabuchi Nishizawa, the first head minister of Nanki Church, to pray to Kami-Sama to allow us to do so.

I was pondering where to start to get around efficiently. The Ōtani area was the farthest away, so I thought that I should go there last, but despite my thoughts, I ended up going there first. On January 24, 1979, our project started from Nishinakaoya district (42 years ago). The day before our journey, I called the Rev. Mabuchi Nishizawa to seek Toritsugi Mediation and then I

went to sleep. When I woke up in the morning, my body felt indescribably tired. I ate breakfast, but it was hard to sit down, so I leaned against the wall and rested for a while. If it were only the two of us on this journey, we would have definitely postponed the trip. However, for our journey, we had reserved a guide for us, so we couldn't postpone. Therefore, after resting for about half an hour, I prayed intently while we walked toward the meeting place. At 10:30 am, as we began our journey, I walked behind the guide, chanting the Ōharai prayer over and over. The reason why I did this was because I have heard that in the past, some of these monks had been chopped to death with swords, boiled in a cauldron and some left the village with a grudge and firmly stated that they would never let this village prosper.

There was also a teahouse which we were heading to. There was a road where the Kumano Kodo goes to Mt. Koya. There is an old story about a man who killed many travelers at this tea house and dumped their bodies off a cliff, and stole their money. The fear of not knowing what kind of spiritual challenges are waiting, combined with the indescribable fatigue of today, made me pray with all my heart as we proceeded.

We finally arrived at our destination. I was so exhausted that I flipped over on my back in the mountain lodge (Matsushita House). During the time I was knocked out in fatigue, Mr. Kakino was outside praying that he could find any clues of temple remnants in the area. Just then, I awoke to the shouting of Mr. Kakino saying "I found something!" I forced myself up because I didn't know how long this journey would take, as it is January and this is my first time being at an altitude of 1,000 meters in Ōtani, Ōkuno. I would also never know when it might snow, this was our first attempt at something like this, and we had no idea how long this would all take. Moreover, in winter, the sun sets early, and so if we dilly dally, the sun will set and we would not be able to return back safely, so I forced my tired body up and said a prayer sitting in the grass.

After about 1 or 2 hours of reciting the Amatsu Norito and Ōharai Prayers several times, I felt it was enough and so I finished praying. On the way back, we took a completely different route. To my surprise, my body, which had been so tired when I came here, felt so light that I could fly and run. It took us two hours and forty minutes to go uphill, but about an hour and thirty minutes to get back to the national highway.

When I later asked Rev. Mabuchi Nishizawa, the first head minister of the Nanki Church, about it, he said, "This was a trial." I was thinking this ordeal was all a test from the Mitama Spirits, but this was Kami-Sama watching us see how much faith and determination we had in our quest to find the temples and whether we would be able to carry this through during our various challenges. Then, with the cooperation of Mr. Kakino, followers, and the residents, I continued to search for all the past temple sites and memorialize the monks who have been massacred. I felt sorry for them. It seemed as if they were completely forgotten in the mountains without being remembered by anyone. Although we had a general idea of where the temple was, it was an extensive area, so we started by visiting the residents and asking them about its exact location. Since it was over 100 years ago, many people didn't know about the temple. Still, as we proceeded with the project, perhaps with the guidance of Kami-Sama and the spirits of the people, we encountered many people who were related to the temple, such as the owners of the land where the temple once stood. Many of the past temple locations had been reclaimed into

forests, rice fields, fields, lake bottoms of the dams, river bottoms, community centers, and schools. Whenever I discovered an unkempt cemetery, I always felt a cross between two thoughts. The first thoughts of "Oh, it's here!" and the thoughts of "I've been waiting for you to find us!" Whenever I discover these forgotten cemeteries, I begin by cleaning the graves as they were weathered and worn. After we cleaned the graves, we put up a grave marker with the name of the temple written on it. Then we made offerings, laid a plastic sheet in front of the grave, sat on the ground, and prayed intensely for an hour or two. In addition, to glorify the priest's spirit in our church's sacred hall, I transferred the priest's spirit to the Goreiji Memorial tablet. After the prayer, we wrote down the priest's name on the tombstone in our notebooks and took pictures to archive the location. There were many stone monuments whose precepts and names could not be recognized without scrubbing with a brush. During the three years of our findings, we prayed on days when the sun was blazing, when the snow was piled high, when it rained heavily on the way, and even amid swarms of bush mosquitoes. However, we did not shorten our prayer time no matter what.

In one cemetery, I saw a suffering spirit of a monk appear. As I was praying with all my heart to Oyasensei and Konko-Sama for the salvation of the spirit, the monk's pain and suffering eased, and I heard the monk say, "I am grateful." The monk continued, "I am a monk who died at the age of 26. I was in pain and suffering, and I wanted help, so I turned to various religions, but no one could help me, but Konko-Sama helped me. Now I can go out into the world. Thank you," he said. I felt so true that the spirit said, "Konko-Sama helped me. It was not that I helped the spirit, but that the supreme work of Otoritsugi divine mediation secured his spirit, and I was being utilized for Kami Sama's purposes.

There was also another experience. On January 16, it was warm and sunny at our church location, but there was still a lot of snow deep in the cedar forest where there was another cemetery for monks. I laid a plastic tarp over the pile of snow and prayed. During the prayer session at the church that evening, I suddenly heard the words coming from the mouth of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation minister of our church. He said "I am the 10th generation monk. Thank you very much for coming here today, despite the cold weather. Please thank Konko-Sama for me. Even though our religious beliefs are different, the way to help others is the same. I would like to practice faith together with you." The weather around the church was warm and sunny, and our 1<sup>st</sup> generation minister had no way of knowing what was going on in the mountains, so this was indeed the world of Kami Sama and the spirit, and I was genuinely grateful to know the high virtue of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation minister.

Some people do not really care about the lost temples; others are impressed, saying, "No one has done anything like this in a hundred years." On a summer day under the blazing sun, a person who might have heard our loud prayer voice came from far away to bring an ice cold bottle of Calpico. There was also a time when a person held up an umbrella until the very end when heavy rain came pounding down during the prayer. More than a dozen people gathered to clean and pray together, and many experiences conveyed the joy of the monk's spirit. But on the other hand, there were many challenges (for example, my child woke up in the middle of the night, eyes glazed over and crying hysterically! I changed into Kokui (robes) and prayed for him,

and he fell asleep as if nothing ever happened, etc.). Also, I often found myself wondering why I was doing such a stupid thing.

Having continued my quest through various trials and tribulations, I have extensively researched the history of the temples in this area. As I was doing so, depending on the various documents and books I have read, I have noticed that there were discrepancies in the actual numbers of temples and even errors in the names of the temples, such as the kanji characters for the temple names would be inaccurate, even if the pronunciation were the same. Back in the days, it really didn't seem to matter how it was written, as long as it was readable. There were no standards in the way words and characters needed to be written. It wasn't until the Meiji restoration that reading and writing standards were made.

After three years of visiting all the temples, we finally visited the main temple of Totsukawa County in Kyoto. The Sōtō sect is Uji Kosei-ji Temple, the Rinzaï sect is the Daihonzan Myōshinji Temple, the Tendai sect is Shōgoin, the Shingon sect is the Yasui Monseki. The ruins of the Yasui Gate were lost in the destruction of Buddhism and have been turned into a shrine and park. When I visited Kōshōji Temple, many monks were leaving one after another in their cars before the appointed time, probably for a big Buddhist memorial service. When I was led into the room, there were several monks and the resident monk. So I went there to explain my situation and to see if there were any paperwork of the temple ruins left. At first they thought that I was a member of the school board. A monk, who was having his ears picked on a woman's lap stated, "How does that make any money?" I was very angry at his attitude and words, but I kept my patience and said, "I'm doing this because I feel sorry for the monks."

The resident monk who had been sitting in front of me listening attentively, said to me without pause, "That is for you to receive virtue." Then the monk who was having his ears picked got up and yelled at the young monks, "You guys are losing!"

The next day, I visited the Konkokyo Headquarters and went before the fourth Konko-Sama. I had nothing to say. I couldn't help but cry out loud. Then without mentioning what happened the day before, Konko-Sama said, "Let's receive blessings together." It seemed as if Konko-Sama was addressing the message to me at first, but then I felt that Konko-Sama was giving that message also to the unseen spirits behind me. At that moment, I strongly felt that the many spirits of the Totsukawa-go temple priests were visiting the Headquarters with me, and I truly felt as if Konko-Sama was talking to them.

Later, with the publication of the new scriptures on the 100th anniversary of Kyoso-Sama's passing (October 1983), it became possible to know the new teachings of Kyoso-Sama.

★◎ "Ikeda Mitsumasa, the Lord of Bizen, favored Shintoism, so he persecuted Buddhism and destroyed some temples. He was then punished by Buddha. Konjin does not discriminate between Kamis or Buddhas. Kami protects Shintoists as well as Buddhist. Shintoism and Buddhism are both within Tenchi. Don't be so narrow by discriminating against other religions or by following one religion obsessively. Open your heart, have a broad mind, and be a person of the world." (Gorikai III, Ichimura Mitsugoro, pg 54 #17) "Imagine having children of which one became a Christian reverend, another a Shinto priest, another a Buddhist monk, another a government official, another a craftsman, and

another a merchant. If someone slandered one of your children, would you, as a parent, feel happy? When you come before me, do not speak ill of others. When slandering others, you do not reflect Kami's heart. Buddha, Christ, and Kurozumi are all children of Kami." (Gorikai III, Sato Norio pg 190, 4-4)

★◎ "A few people living in this world have evil hearts, but most feel sorry and want to do something when they see someone pitiful or hear of someone who is troubled. This is the heart of the parent Kami. It is real compassion (Gorikai III Jinkyukyogoroku pg 70 #5).

Since then, I have had the opportunity to give this talk as a lecturer one after another: at The Mainichi culture center, minister's workshop in Kyushu, Hawaii, Central Kinki district (Ōsaka, Nara, Wakayama), Hyogo, Ehime Minister's Seminar, and each Grand ceremony, including the Headquarters of Konkokyo. I have also had minister's seminars at our church from places such as: Kyoto, Ōsaka, Okayama Higashi and the National Young Ministers' Association. Through this experience, I have developed a deeper understanding of the founder Konko Daijin's teaching that goes "Blessings are like water in a washtub—where if you push the water away, the water comes to you. And if you pull the water to you, the water recedes." If one sincerely devotes him/herself to Kami-Sama and the Mitama Spirits, one will be able to establish a close relationship where the blessings return tenfold. I believe that is the concept of Aiyo Kakeyo (Mutual Interdependent Relationship).

I am very grateful for the fact that we have been able to continue to hold the Totsukawa Gō Jyūsyoku Memorial Service since it was first held at the church on March 15, 1979. I would like for this tradition and blessing to continue.

*Initial translation by Rev. Mitsuko Yasutake, Konko Church of Chikushi Hongo  
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## 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)

## Bulletin Board

### Church Services for September 2021

- 1 Wed -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 5 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 12 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 19 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)  
-Honolulu Church Autumn Memorial Svc (10 am)
- 26 Sun -Autumn Memorial Service (10 am)

**October 2021**

- 1 Fri -Monthly Svc for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 3 Sun -Honolulu Church Autumn Grand Service (11 am)  
-Sunday Service (9 am)
- 10 Sun -Waipahu Church Autumn Grand Service (11 am)  
-Sunday Service (9 am)
- 13 Wed-Autumn Grand Service (6:30 pm)

**The Church Doors are Open**

We welcome you to make a visit to our church and church services. We are open daily from 6 am to around 9 pm. Due to the ongoing pandemic, please continue to follow universal COVID-19 precautions of wearing face masks, hand washing and physical distancing. Feel free to also make an appointment for your personal visit to church anytime. Services will continue to be streamed on Facebook Live and YouTube.

**Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital**

Our monthly visits to provide volunteer activity services at the Long-Term Care Facility of Wahiawa General Hospital have been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

**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.

- Friday, September 10 (5 pm)
- Wednesday, September 29 (5 pm)

•Community Engagement and Outreach Committee meeting will be held on Friday, September 16, 2021 at 5 pm (ZOOM)

**Honoring the Mitama Spirits**

**September**

Mikiko Yamamoto	9/3/2003
Harumi Tokumoto	9/7/2001
Tatsuyuki Kataoka	9/7/2007
Hiroko Toyoda	9/10/2018
Ben Furusho	9/15/1997
Takeshige Ootsuka	9/15/1998
Richard Masao Iwasa	9/17/2005
Kameji Takeshima	9/17/2000
Fumiko Hamai	9/25/1997
Richard Tadayoshi Noguchi	9/27/2009



**Ehimemaru Summer Memorial Service held 8/13/2021**



*Rev. Rodney Yano and his wife, Fong visits Hawaii in early August.*

