

## **Last Chapter**

### **Life of Sacrifice that Embraces the World**

In this final lecture, let us explore Konko Daijin's faith, while facing his own imminent death. I hope that you will be able to understand the Konko Faith's thoughts on human life and death in a broader way.

How to walk towards death, or how to take steps towards death, has always been considered a major life issue at any age. As people walk towards death, they are subjected to various mental preparations, significant and minor. Sorting out one's assets, taking care of one's affairs, and writing a will are all part of the preparation, but the biggest preparation is the mental one of wondering, "How will my life end?" and "Is it okay if it ends?"

Konko Daijin passed away at age seventy, on October 10, 1883 of the solar calendar, which is September 10, according to the lunar calendar. It is said that he had been thinking about his own death several years before his passing. A follower named GOKA, Keishun (1844-1919) left these words regarding Konko Daijin:

When I went to the Hiromae in the fall of 1876, Konko-Sama gave various revelations. Then in a small voice, he said, "There's the lunar calendar and the solar calendar. There will be a time when the 9th and 10th day of both calendars will fall on the same day. On that day, I will leave this world." [GII: GOKA, Keishun:21]

Among the stories about his own death that Konko Daijin shared with his disciples, this was the first. Aside from material written by his disciples in their own memoirs, in "Konko Daijin Oboegaki," Konko Daijin revealed an incident in 1873 that indicates he was thinking about his own death:

On February 15 (March 13), Kami-Sama said, "Konko, be reborn. Take your first bath in ten years." He made this day my new birthday. [Oboegaki:21-4]

In 1873 (Meiji 6) Konko Daijin turned 59 years old, one year before his Kanreki (rebirth at 60 years old). On the twenty-first day of the lunar new year, the village headman ordered Konko Daijin to stop propagating his faith. Kami advised him to rest, which he heeded. Shortly afterwards, he received the divine message from Kami:

On December 10 of the lunar calendar, Konko Daijin's service day, Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama declared, "The Year of the Rooster (1873) is your new year of birth. You are now one year old." Since the date was January 27, 1874, according to the Gregorian calendar, I was two years old then. [Oboegaki:21-27]

In other words, it was through Kami's urging that Konko Daijin was able to understand that he was reborn in the Year of the Rooster, to live as if he were born in that year, and to consider himself as being one year old. Then, he turned two, three, and so forth, as the years went by. The fact that he lived with the awareness that life after the age of sixty was a life of rebirth can be understood to mean that he was living a life in which he and Kami were readying Konko Daijin for his own death.

Our average life span is longer now, but in those days, people who reach the age of sixty hear whispers from death - the final destination of life -- like a secret message. Whether we live as if we missed the message or heard it, and live our lives accordingly, is a major issue for everyone.

Through Konko Daijin's writing in Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho (Record of Revelations), let us see in detail, how Konko Daijin experienced the physical signs in his body that death was approaching. There is no specific description until 1877 (Meiji 10). He turned 64 years old that year and a description about his physical condition starts to appear.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon on August 4, 1877(September 9), I suddenly got diarrhea. After one bowel movement, all the poison was eliminated from my body, and I was very thankful. [Oboe-cho: 21-16]

I gave thanks early on the morning of the fourth (September 10). Kami-Sama revealed, "I shall make it so that you won't have to go to the toilet everyday. I will also see to it that your clothes won't get dirty because of the diarrhea. I will enable for you to go to the toilet only every third or fourth day." [Oboe-cho:21-17]

Konko Daijin wrote that he suffered from diarrhea. The symptoms were described in more detail in 1879 (Meiji 12), the year that cholera epidemics spread throughout Japan. Not only in the Okayama region, but in Osaka as well, many people

died due to cholera. As previously mentioned, this same year Reverend SHIRAKAMI Shinichirō left Okayama for Osaka to begin full-scale outreach efforts, with the desire to earnestly help people suffering from difficulties.

From January 1879, Konko Daijin suffered from diarrhea and stomachaches. This was five or six months before the cholera epidemic spread to the Okayama region.

From the twenty-sixth (February 16), I had diarrhea. During the night of the 27<sup>th</sup> and on 28<sup>th</sup> (February 17-18), I had five bouts of diarrhea. I suffered from chronic hemorrhoids. Kami-Sama revealed, "I shall relieve you of the poison in your body.... Again my stomach rumbled, and I had diarrhea. Then I expelled flatus loudly...[Oboe-cho: 23-3~4]

The description began in this way. Konko Daijin suffered from stomach pain, diarrhea, and hemorrhoids intermittently until the end of July. The excerpt describing these symptoms are as follows:

On the night of July 20 (September 6), I, Konko Daijin, had a fever, a headache, and severe diarrhea four times... I could eat as usual from the 22<sup>nd</sup>(September 8) ... . In our area, cholera was spreading and people were very worried. I received Kami's blessings. [Oboe-cho:23-17]

Later descriptions suggest that during his illness Konko Daijin did not see a doctor and continued to conduct Toritsugi Mediation at the Hiromae worship hall. Whether he had cholera or not, it must have been a very difficult experience for him, to be afflicted by a long-term illness as an elderly person. Even if one practices faith, illness can torment the body. It is likely that while he spoke about the Way of Faith to people who came to see him, he also sincerely prayed to Kami for himself.

Konko Daijin had never experienced this condition before, although he wrote the cause was "I suffered from hemorrhoids, which have been chronic." Living with an illness of unknown cause would be very difficult for us to do nowadays. In such a case, we would not just accept the situation; we would seek medical treatment at a hospital, have X-rays and other tests taken to find out the cause, receive appropriate treatment and care for the condition. We could then eventually live with hope and wish for a full recovery.

Even if the cause is known, it is human nature to become anxious and distressed if the illness continued for a long time. While cholera was spreading throughout the world, the symptoms were recognized but the cause was unknown.

Moreover, as Konko Daijin's body grew weaker day by day, one can only wonder about the delicate state of his mind as he lived with the illness for such a long period of time.

The following year and the year after that, Konko Daijin was struck by similar symptoms every summer, although it was not as long as the previous twelve years. While he was feeling ill, he received a revelation from Kami-Sama on August 9, 1881 (Meiji 14) of the lunar calendar:

Kami-Sama said, "Konko Daijin, you have contracted a critical disease."

I had diarrhea every morning for three days. I did not feel very well and had no appetite, but I could eat meals. [Oboe-cho:25-24]

This sentence sounds rather strange, but we can understand its meaning. Konko Daijin had diarrhea for three days, accompanied by stomach pain, and he did not feel well. He could eat, but had no appetite. He received the revelation, "...he had contracted a critical disease," while he had these symptoms. We must understand that Konko Daijin accepted this message from Kami-sama of having a disease that could cause his death.

The "disease," which had been gradually revealing itself since 1879 (Meiji 12), and its true nature had now become clear, through a divine message to Konko Daijin that death, would be residing in his body towards the summer of 1883. If we assume that Konko Daijin's preparations for death, both conscious and with resolve, began around the time he turned 60, then the physical symptoms did not hasten his preparations for his death; rather, it was enough to encourage him to live while feeling actual death.

When the body is repeatedly plagued by illness and one is told that it is fatal, many people are likely to give in to this news and allow life's light to fade. As if in inverse proportion to the increasing physical pain, increasing physical suffering and weakening, Konko Daijin's outlook of his heart seems to have expanded, ignited a flame, became uplifted. This outcome can only be described as a miracle of faith.

When we catch a cold and have a fever, our hearts can become weak, as if it has caught a cold, as well. When we injure our fingertip, the pain may make us feel like we do not want to do anything, and it may even hurt our heart. That is normal. In Konko Daijin's case, even though his body continued to deteriorate, his heart seemed to be uplifted and filled with energy.

This may be common among true spiritual people. It is a characteristic of not only believers, but also scientists, engineers, artists, and literary figures who have

entrusted their lives to truth and their mission. The history of the world is filled with the footprints of people who lived through death with strength, such as Ludwig van Beethoven, who continued to compose music and conduct orchestras even after he lost his hearing. Also, Wilhelm Nietzsche, who did not stop thinking and philosophizing even though he was losing his cognitive functioning. Konko Daijin was one of those people.

In Konko Daijin's case, we must ask ourselves what it was that lifted his heart, deepened and expanded the world of his soul, and allowed him to come to a clearer understanding of this. By doing so, we may find a guide for living while facing death someday, or we may have already encountered it.

Previously, the Konkokyo Research Institute asked several doctors to diagnose Konko Daijin's illness, as recorded in the book of Revelations "Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho," and provided their findings for reference. Only one doctor stated that it was due to natural causes, and no one specified the name of the illness, but the rest stated that it was an abnormality in the digestive system, which was certainly believed to be the cause of death. Even while harboring an illness that was leading to his death, Konko Daijin strongly and profoundly took an important role as a Sashimuke from Kami; i.e., Ikigami. Konko Daijin was divinely sent to reveal Tenchi Kane No Kami to this world and save people from suffering.

If we consider the relationship between Kami and people that Konko Daijin taught us, accepting an important role from Kami does not mean that Kami unilaterally issued orders to Konko Daijin. Instead, it means that it was also Konko Daijin's wish. Therefore, as Kami requested him to teach the people, he responded to Kami's words "The Way of the Universe is collapsing. Broaden the Way. Teach the Way which can help people in trouble." [Oboe-cho:20-16]

In other words, the request from Kami to open the Way of Kami and to save the people of the world from human difficulties, suffering, misfortune, and hardships is exemplified by Konko Daijin's determination in life. It is important to think of Kami's Wish, Kami's request, and Konko Daijin's determination as all interrelated and inseparably intertwined. The Divine Request made to Konko Daijin in his later years – the role that Konko Daijin assigned to himself -- was to live a life being "sent" by Kami, as already mentioned. As Konko Daijin began to direct his attention solely towards Tenchi Kane No Kami, a deity whose form is invisible to humans, whose voice cannot be heard, and whose existence cannot be confirmed, Tenchi Kane No Kami was revealed to the world through Konko Daijin.

Konko Daijin was called as a benefactor for Kami by Kami in the following teaching: "Kane No Kami has been thought of as a fearful kami for thousands of years. But Konko Daijin has discerned the true kami to the world. Thanks to Konko Daijin, people can receive Tenchi Kane No Kami's blessings. Konko Daijin benefits Kami and people." [GI:KONDO, Fujimori:71.3]

Kami's benefactor is the word that Kami used to describe the person who can give shape, realize and historicize the formless Parent Kami's wish. Kami's wish is to help people who live and suffer, who are distressed, who always create problems without knowing anything about the relationship between the Universe and human beings. Kami's wish is also to rebind the relationship with Kami, who is the ultimate Parent of human beings. This addresses hardships in this world. The sashimuke or Divine dispatched is used for people who received Kami's wish and fulfill it. Simply said, the sashimuke is the person who reveals Kami - who has no physical body - as "tangible" to the community and world. Kami attached meaning to the life of Konko Daijin as the Sashimuke. Konko Daijin accepted that his life should have the role as the Sashimuke.

To be human is creating a meaning of his or her life in relationship with others while he/she is still living. For example, I shall live for this work and my life is watching over my child. People search for meaning for their lives and try to accept that meaning and purpose as they live. In the case of Konko Daijin, his life's meaning as Kami's Sashimuke, was divinely dispatched.

There are so many people who do not know about their core meaning of life and about the relationship between the Universe and humans in the world. Some of those people who happened to attend Hiromae, the worship hall of Konko Daijin, prayed for their salvation from hardships individually. Some said Konjin haunted them, while others said evil spirits and dead persons possessed them. Some asked for discord, financial difficulties and illnesses for relatives. There was no end to these. When Konko Daijin - as Kami's Sashimuke who dedicated his life to be such - thought about hardships in the world and faced people with difficulties at his Hiromae worship hall, he could not leave from the worship hall although he suffered from diarrhea, stomach pain and even had high fever.

Konko Daijin is a human being with a physical body. People might have questioned why he had to think about another person's problems while he himself was suffering. I assume he messed his clothes when he suffered from diarrhea. There is a revelation that says, "I shall make it so that you won't have to go to the toilet everyday. I will also see to it that your clothes won't get dirty because of the diarrhea. I will enable for you to go to the toilet only every third or fourth day." [Oboe-cho:21-17-1] I cannot help

but think this is Kami's urgent response to Konko Daijin. I think Konko Daijin prayed hard: "Dear Kami-Sama, I sit here as a Sashimuke everyday even when I feel sick and have pain. When nobody is here, I can go to restroom. However, when people are attending this Hiromae, I cannot go to the restroom and I messed my clothes. Please help me."

People came to his Hiromae worship hall and brought many hardships, seeking their salvation. Yet, all the while illness which deeply infected his body and limited his lifetime as the Sashimuke, those people had no knowledge about Konko Daijin's condition. In addition, police officers constantly surveilled him because his work of helping others was against a government policy for religion. Also, villagers in Otani village tried to change his Hiromae worship hall to becoming a traditional shrine for the local community. His family members made their demands on Konko Daijin urging their individual thoughts and opinions, disregarding Konko Daijin's wishes. Worshipers could not understand the true meaning of teachings. Thus, there were various problems around him as Konko Daijin persisted in his life as the Sashimuke.

We should not have the erroneous perception that Konko Daijin was not a typical individual. Konko Daijin always stayed calm in any of the situations he encountered because he already achieved enlightenment. I mentioned already that Ikigami lived within his physical body. Various problems within himself and also those outside of his control inflicted hardships on him. Konko Daijin received the words, "Konko Daijin, endure even if other people urinate on you. I shall clean you up." [Oboe-cho:20-16-1] because he had experienced humiliation such as someone urinating on him. Although someone did spread false rumors about him, Konko Daijin had to be patient. Konko Daijin struggled and was confused how to deal with these humiliations. However, he turned his heart toward Kami-Sama as he experienced those embarrassments. He was requested to be patient and abide by Kami. The request by Kami was also Konko Daijin's appeal to himself who was in anguish for deciding to be the Sashimuke.

Why did he have to be patient and abide? The Way of the Universe and relationship between Kami and people needed to be opened, as I cited before, and people then will certainly be able to walk forward on the way. Kami said that Konko Daijin did not need to worry about Kami's glory and appearance, and he did not need to suffer from thinking that he lacked enough virtue. Kami did not want Konko Daijin to suffer because Kami's way was not established and to be sorry to Kami for that. Instead Kami entreated Konko Daijin to understand Kami's wish that Konko Daijin "... not care how people treat me" [Oboe-cho:20-16-3], "Then you, Konko Daijin, should rest by lying flat

on your back with not a care on your mind” as the Kami’s Sashimuke: [Oboe-cho21-26-3]. Kami’s words regarding the life of Konko Daijin were sent to the world with Konko Daijin as “the Sashimuke” with Kami’s words of deep meaning, “...it does not matter whether this faith becomes independent or not, as long as people can be saved.” [GⅢ: Naiden 10-3]

Energy, which destroyed the life of Konko Daijin from within, was a specific problem for Konko Daijin, the Sashimuke. His illness was eating his life as the Sashimuke. How to deal with it was a huge problem for Konko Daijin. But during this difficult time, the bond between Konko Daijin and Kami became greater.

In 1877, Konko Daijin received a revelation:

“The villagers are trying to build a Konjin Shrine in Otani Village. Through Ikigami Konko Daijin, Tenchi Kane No Kami is gradually being revealed to Japan and the whole world. Convey this message to the villagers.” [Oboe-cho:21-27-5~6].

The lay villagers of Otani who attended Konko Daijin’s Hiromae worked to build a shrine for Konko Daijin as the village shrine, and sought official approval from the authorities. However, Kami wanted to make clear the basic character of Konko Daijin’s Hiromae worship hall.

Konko Daijin’s life as the Sashimuke and his Hiromae worked not only for Otani village but to all Japan. Even beyond Japan, Kara (China) and Tenjiku (India), were also beneficiaries of Konko Daijin’s efforts. This revelation means that Konko Daijin should understand the meaning and purpose of his life and his Hiromae, and his role and relationship with the world as Sashimuke that needed to be explained to villagers to make them understand.

Kami is the Parent Kami, Divine Parent of the Universe. So naturally, not only people who lived in Otani, but also all people who live under the sky on earth no matter where they lived, are Kami’s children. People in the world had disrupted or abandoned the relationship between Kami and people, and therefore suffered from various difficulties. Kami as Parent Kami, wanted to guide them, to mend them, and to change their situations. Kami revealed a purpose for fulfilling the life of the Sashimuke. Kami showed,

“Right now, the world is human-centered. All things are done by people's own power, and many people are going against my teachings. Those who do as I say shall each become a kami. Long ago, it was a kami-centered world. Now it is



a human-centered world. Because of this, I shall teach people to return to a kami-centered world. Difficulties and suffering are caused by people's own hearts. Whether or not they can live in a peaceful world also depends on their own hearts.” [Oboe-cho:24-25, revealed on October 24 of lunar calendar in Meiji 13 or 1880)

I already explained about the meaning of this revelation. In chapter 3, I provide some references, and in this last chapter, I want to discuss more fully. The human-centered world should be changed to Kami-centered world. The human-centered world is the world established through accumulating and creating difficulties without comprehending the meaning of life within a relationship with Kami and within a relationship with Heaven and Earth. Konko Daijin - as the Sashimuke from Kami - exists here as the person who takes the central role in fulfilling this change from the “human-centered” to the “Kami-centered” world. I need to explain more completely about the “Kami-center world.”

We understand “Kami-centered world” of Konko Daijin to add a new meaning in Konko Daijin’s Faith to the concept of “Kami-centered world” from ancient Japanese beliefs. There is a connection with the notion of “Kami-centered world” as found in ancient Japanese books, such as The Kojiki: Records of Ancient Matters and The Nihon Shoki: The Chronicles of Japan. It is not the concept of “Land of Kami” as used during World War 2. “Kami-centered world” included a concept that common Japanese cherished during ancient times when their long-distance ancestors lived as part of “Kami’s era.” Thus, in the “Kami-centered world,” human beings lived as deities and deities existed as humans. Consequently, both human beings and kami could communicate with each other. That kind of world and era is called “Kami-centered world” where faith is the purpose of life.

There is a teaching: “Save one person, and you will be a kami to that person. Save ten people and you will be a kami to all ten.” [GII:SHIRAKAMI, Shin'ichiro:1] There is also the word Ikigami or living god. Human beings can emerge as *kami* in the tangible world and live lives that can become kami. Therefore, the community of these lives shall form the “Kami-centered world.”

Konko Daijin understood the role of “the Sashimuke” was about changing the “human-centered world” to “Kami-centered world.” Kami expressed words on October 24 of lunar calendar in Meiji 13 (1880) that I referred to. Konko Daijin’s body was definitely getting weaker at that time. The following year of Meiji 14 (1881), Kami told him, ‘Konko Daijin, you have contracted a critical disease.’ Konko Daijin understood his

role as the Sashimuke even though he struggled with his unhealthy physical condition. We may think that Kami's request of such a big role for Konko Daijin, who would die soon, to be terrible.

If Kami is really our Divine Parent, Kami should take care of Konko Daijin with consideration. We may have expected Kami to say to Konko Daijin that he should retire from all roles since he was sick and getting weaker. If his stomach was weak, Kami should have let Konko Daijin take a restful walk in the village, leaving the Hiromae, and when Konko Daijin felt better, Kami should let him take care of plants. I am sure this would have been what some people would think. But thinking this way is just human.

However, Kami and Konko Daijin had a different type of relationship. While the whole world of human beings comprised the "human-centered world," Konko Daijin's significant role was to teach people to change from "human-centered-ness" to "Kami-centered-ness," even though Konko Daijin's time for death was getting closer. As it was, Konko Daijin decided to fulfill the Sashimuke role. One year before Konko Daijin expected his death, he received a message from Kami, which clarified the role of Konko Daijin. He wrote in Oboe-cho: Record of Revelations,

"No one is aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth, which enable people to live. Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth by having Konko Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception." [Oboe-cho: 26-22-3]

This happened on October 14 of lunar calendar of 1882, (Meiji 15). Konko Daijin expected his death would be during the following year, September 10 of lunar calendar of 1883, Konko Daijin's last year. Ordinarily, most people would spend time thinking about what they would do during their last year before death. In the case of Konko Daijin as the Sashimuke, Konko Daijin decided to let himself live to teach the blessings of Heaven and Earth to people. Kami who created the Sashimuke to help people, decided to send the person who took this the role to the whole world.

We shall understand the meaning behind of this teaching. This means the more the fatal illness in Konko Daijin's physical body was destroying his life, the more Konko Daijin was passionate about using his life as the Sashimuke.

I admit that even as I am saying this, I am stating a paradox or contradiction. On one hand, I am saying Konko Daijin was very special person. But I am also saying

that he was an ordinary person just like us. I assume this contradiction is based on the commitment Konko Daijin had and his full awareness of himself as a human being.

The mission of Konko Daijin's life as the Sashimuke sent by Kami while his physical body was going to the end, was transcendent. Konko Daijin was aging since he was a human being. Although an elderly person may not have any illnesses, he or she diminishes every year. I could say all lives in the universe, all nature embraced by the universe, and even space age every year. Konko Daijin recognized this aging for himself every year.

According to the weather record in Meiji 16 (1883), it was very hot summer. There are some comments that Konko Daijin expressed to worshippers, such as "the hot weather in this summer affected me." Acknowledging his weakened body due to his continuing chronic diarrhea during the very hot weather at that time, must have seriously affected Konko Daijin. His spirit struggled through a commitment to fulfil Kami's wish help people, while completely cognizant of his diminishing health. These two different things were simultaneously happening, thus creating the big contradiction or paradox.

His close disciples and people around him saw the declining of his physical body. They worried that he could pass away. But this worry created the work to establish Konkokyo Organization.

When the Founder offered prayers on January 1, Meiji 16 (1883), he received the following revelation, "This year, Konko Daijin will suffer from a critical disease." That summer, the Founder looked slightly weak, and on July 17, I asked him, "Konko Daijin, how long are you going to live and save people?" He replied, "I wish I could live forever, but with a physical form. I sometimes feel pain and think I cannot fully save people." I then realized that because the Founder gained virtue in the latter part of his life, he could not spread the divine virtue to save as many people as he wished in his physical form. [GIII: Naiden:13-13]

There were some people who expressed to Konko Daijin about their concern for his weakening body. Konko Daijin's answers to those people were similar to the quotation I just mentioned. Please remember several stories I referred to in Chapter 4 section 3. As we read them, Konko Daijin said that he would live with Kami with the vision to continue to save people who were suffering, even after his physical form disappeared.

“Disappearance of physical form” means that he can work while becoming the invisible and without a voice; that is, to become a kami. Konko Hagio recorded that Konko Daijin even crawled to the Hiromae worship hall for toritsugi mediation. As a young person, Konko Hagio felt sorry to witness the aged Konko Daijin crawling to the Hiromae. Konko Daijin looked pitiful, but his heart went everywhere in the world and reached people who were suffering.

How did Konko Daijin who had physical form feel? He wanted to save people in every country though his life as Sashimuke from Kami, and wanted to help people who had the same role as Konko Daijin. As his life declined and his body deteriorated, he struggled even to eat. He could have only water and biscuits in August of his last year, according to Oshirase-goto oboe-cho: Record of Revelations. Kami showed the huge mission of the Sashimuke to Konko Daijin who was reaching the end of his life. The mission seemed overwhelming; it seemed impossible for Konko Daijin - with such a weakened physical condition - to complete. The mission became much bigger when expanded “... to every country without exception.”

Konko Daijin might have thought in his mind, “Kami-Sama, you told me to do such a huge work, but I do not know what to do. I am breaking down.” He also had to question himself, “My body is weakened. I am about to die. It is Kami-Sama’s request for me to save people in misfortune in every country. Why am I thinking about such a big thing?” The question must have been asked along with his desperate request, “Please convey to me much more life to live so I can provide the way for troubled people in the world to be saved.” His desperate request was expressed: “When my body is gone, I can go to where I am requested and save people. [GII:KARAH, Tsunezo:4-2],” and “My physical form will also disappear someday. But I will still be here. Konko Daijin shall live forever.”[GII: FUKUSHIMA, Gihe’e:22-1]

When we rationally look at his situation at that time, we can see that the disciples of Konko Daijin worked hard - often through the use of the Hiromae worship hall - to save people and spread the way of Konko Daijin’s faith. Thus, we could say he did not need to worry about the Way of Faith and saving people after he died. That could be true when we study the history of Konkokyo. However, the life of Konko Daijin as the Sashimuke could not work from such a simple perspective.

Konko Daijin determined and meant that his life should be used for people in suffering. The work of his disciples should belong to them rather than the idea that Konko Daijin’s role in his life must be split or delegated to the disciples. If this were the case, then Konko Daijin would have retired from his role as the Sashimuke.

Instead, Konko Daijin shall continue to bear his life as the Sashimuke, appointed by Kami directly until the end and even beyond. The weight of the meaning of the Sashimuke role never can be diminished. It is similar the concept of art. In faith, a role and meaning given by Kami to each life cannot be divided or proxied, just as the meaning in art cannot be divided or proxied.

Konko Daijin might have had a desperate request: Why is my death coming to me now? Please give me more time to live ... as a life with a physical form.” The thought that the Sashimuke lives a life trying to run around the world is not correct. If one thinks, “because I have a physical form, I cannot go where I need to go,” then this thought is incorrect. Physical form is cast out as a premise for being a Sashimuke. The life as the Sashimuke shows an incredible aspect. According to the Japanese perspective of ancestral spirits, I mentioned in the last chapter “unbelievable aspect of life” In other words, Mitama Spirit of Konko Daijin in his last moment as a physical form, promised to be the guide deity for protective deities in Japan as well as world. Konko Daijin said, “When my body is gone, I can go to where I am requested and save people.” [GII: FUKUSHIMA, Tsunezo:4-2]. In rephrasing the Japanese traditional words, Konko Daijin’s life with a physical form after he died, became an Ancestral Mitama Spirit for all people in the world, to save and guide people calling for help.

I cannot help but think this to be an “unbelievable aspect of life,” “a astonishing life who does not know how to give up,” or “his life was not mediocre” from Kami’s perspective, because I have cared deeply about the very last quote in Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho: Record of Revelations for long time.

“ Early in the morning on the twenty-first (September 21), Kami-Sama instructed, ‘Do not drink tea and do not eat rice today and tomorrow. You may have only water and biscuits.

‘For the sake of all people, and to save those who give me requests, I shall sacrifice you. This is for the eternal dignity of Konko Daijin's virtue.” [Oboe-cho: 27-15-1~2]

Kami sacrifices Konko Daijin for all people, as well as those who are praying for Kami because of suffering. Kami told Konko Daijin this was hirei -- divine virtue -- and Kami’s glory. This was for value, dignity, and majesty of the life. There is a condition: the word “sacrifice” and the relationship between Kami and Konko Daijin when Kami threw this word to Konko Daijin.

I mentioned “a life who doesn’t know to give up astonishingly,” or “his life wasn’t mediocre” from Kami’s perspective. I believed the Kami’s word, “I shall sacrifice you.” is related to these two perspectives.

A gap between the weakening of his physical life and the elevation of his life as the Sashimuke must be a key to understanding, “I shall sacrifice you.” We are usually resigned to continuing to live, and to letting go as we face our death. People look for a peaceful ending. We unknowingly search the path to end our life. We imagine something like a flower garden in heaven, at the far end of the other side of a dark tunnel. Maybe we dream that Buddha comes for us from a far shore. However, it is quite different in the case of Konko Daijin.

Konko Daijin is a physical person who followed the mission as the Sashimuke to make Kami present in this world. He lived with this understanding. Thus, he could not have an ordinary death, even as his life was falling in decay. While his spiritual soul could go everywhere, and he said to himself that his body was preventing him from saving people, he had to help people. He could not help but to save people when he had life with a physical form as the Sashimuke. This is how he fulfilled Kami’s request. Kami, on the other hand, gave a critical disease to Konko Daijin according to the Way of the Universe. Kami planned to welcome the life of Konko Daijin to the Universe, the side of the formless Kami.

Konko Daijin worked hard faithfully to fulfill Kami’s request as the Sashimuke. But there were so many people who needed to be saved. Konko Daijin could not ignore the fact that hardships were increasing. That’s why Konko Daijin could not think his work was done and that he could leave his duty with his disciples.

Kami, who conveyed the role of the Sashimuke to Konko Daijin, faced Konko Daijin’s wish of “Please spare my life to live in this world,” which was “a life that does not know to give up” or “was not mediocre,” because he had the role as the Sashimuke from Kami. As it was, Kami needed to tell Konko Daijin about the positive meaning of his departure from this world as the Sashimuke while he was alive, before passing. An urgent issue between Kami and Konko Daijin was the reflection of conflict between life with a physical form and life transitioning to “formless” in Konko Daijin.

This is my perception of the relationship between Kami and Konko Daijin as he faced death. The words, “I shall sacrifice you” had deep meaning. These words were the answer from Kami to Konko Daijin, who persevered in his role of the Sashimuke for Kami while Konko Daijin experienced much suffering. He had to pray to fulfill his role while he was alive, although he felt his life was ending. Kami wanted to attach a

constructive meaning to the death of Konko Daijin to let him accept the end of his life with a physical form, serving willingly as the Sashimuke. We should know the context of this situation.

As I understand them, these words meant that Kami would let the Sashimuke role that Konko Daijin committed be fulfilled at Konko Daijin's death. It was a manifestation of Kami's response to Konko Daijin's prayers and questions. Kami made effort to support Konko Daijin, because Konko Daijin constantly heard prayers and helped people of the world experiencing difficulties and hardships. Konko Daijin, who had to die, impacted and affected Kami by his faithful actions. In a sense, it was Konko Daijin, who was about to face death, that moved Kami to act in that way. Moreover, this could be indication that death of Konko Daijin was significant for Kami and people's world. This was Kami's assurance and consent to Konko Daijin, who whole heartedly wished to go everywhere in the world as he requested, even when his body was gone.

As I sated, the last in the revelation,

“For the sake of all people, and to save those who give me requests, I shall sacrifice you. This is for the eternal dignity of Konko Daijin's virtue.” These words expressed deep appreciation from Kami to Konko Daijin, who lived his physical life as the Sashimuke.

The meaning that Kami gave to the death that Konko Daijin was to face can be understood as a meaning that Kami will likewise extend to the deaths of all those who follow Konko Daijin, live as Sashimuke, reveal Kami's presence in the visible, material world, and preach the path of salvation.

I am aspiring for a blessing which will completely embraces the world with this Faith. [GII: KUNIEDA, Sangoro:11]

Of course, it is not easy for us to live following this phrase, in which Konko Daijin clearly expressed his wish to save this world by this Way of Faith, or to embrace the world with this Faith. This is the wish of the Universe for lives who live toward death and accept this while living. Fulfilling the wish must be the ultimate role of our lives; that is, to live as Kami's children.

This is not only for individuals who follow teachings of Konko Daijin. The Universe has been telling the Konkokyo religious organization formed and supported by the individuals as well as, churches, propagation halls, and even individual believers' households to fulfill each role. Whether the life of the organization or the lives of individuals, we shall continue to pray until the last moment as the Sashimuke by

emulating Konko Daijin. We should work hard to fulfill our lives in this visible and material world while the physical forms are existing, having difficulties, and even disappearing. We should live believing the day will come when the life goes back to the Universe and embraces the world.

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