

## Learn the Story of Konko Daijin

by the Reverend Oya Yomisu, Director of Konkokyo International Center

**H**appy New Year! The Coronavirus pandemic changed our lives. Under an abnormal circumstance, we had the annual Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony in Konko, Japan with limited number of attendees. The address was given during the Grand Ceremony by Rev. Iwasaki Michiyo, Director of Konkokyo (<http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1602379213>).

In his address, Rev. Iwasaki focused on the Founder's visitation to the shrines after recovering from his critical illness. He went to shrines on the 1st, 15th, and 28th of each month.

Rev. Iwasaki simply thought that these visitations were Founder expressing his gratitude. However, he realized that setting the dates for every month must have been a hard commitment as a farmer. Why did our Founder visit three days a month despite difficulty? Rev. Iwasaki said, "The Founder probably tried to express his sincerity towards Kami's extraordinary blessings that he received. At the age of 42, Kami cured the Founder's severe illness. For the Founder, not only did Kami save his life, but he first encountered Kami's thoughts and working at that moment." Rev. Iwasaki expressed his gratitude by imagining the Founder's thoughts, "Ah, Kami went above and beyond to save me."

Rev. Iwasaki continued, "The Founder was in awe for Kami's love and favor. He showed his utmost reverence and sincerity for Kami's benevolences and favors by visiting shrines. He could not

help but continue his pilgrimage." The Founder demonstrated unparalleled devotion.

Rev. Iwasaki extended his thoughts that all the people attended the service with their sincere hearts. Sincere hearts just like the Founder's heart. He stated, "Kami received our prayers and our Founder's prayer. This is what it means to receive Kami's assistance and divine arrangement." He added, "Since you made great effort to attend the service, Kami accepted your truly sincere hearts. Perhaps Kami might ask you a favor as Kami made a request to our Founder."

He then concluded, "The Way of Kami and humanity will be actualized in our daily lives. This is the blessings in this way of faith."

We, the Konko Followers should learn from our Founder as Rev. Iwasaki did. Fortunately, we have our Founder's own writing. Konko Daijin started writing the Oboegaki on November 23, 1874, upon a divine instruction from Tenchi Kane No Kami. The Oboegaki contains events which span from his birth in 1814 up to 1876 and later can be found in the Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho.

Rev. Fukushima Yoshitsugu, the first Director of Konkokyo International Center (KIC), introduced the uniqueness of Konko faith in the article of Konko-shinbun issued on September 20, 2020. According to his article, we could learn Konko faith by reading "stories" written in Konkokyo Kyoten.

Konkokyo Kyoten was consisted of five sections. They are Oboegaki, Konko Daijin's auto-

biographical record centering on the development of his religious beliefs, Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho, a record of revelations received by Konko Daijin, and Gorikai I, II, III, Konko Daijin's teachings written by the Disciples, teachings dictated by researchers, and teachings published by the Disciples. Rev. Fukushima introduced what we could learn from Konkokyo Kyoten. He stated:

First, we could learn from a story of Konko Daijin. This is a true story of a person who encountered hardships and difficulties, and he found the way of the Universe. Then, collection of Konko Daijin's teachings could tell us how people suffered and received the blessings through his guidance.

In addition to this, Rev. Fukushima explained three characteristics of the stories written in Konkokyo Kyoten:

1. All teachings tell people how to live their lives. Therefore, the teachings inform how humans could relate to Kami in their daily lives. This is not an absurd, outrageous, or preposterous story.

2. Teachings do not contain taboos and impurities. Konko Daijin freed himself from folk traditions. Thus, his teachings contain freedom and creativities. Everyone can practice their own faith. As the Founder once said, "The only thing that matters is saving people."

3. There is neither the creation of the universe or the humanity, nor mythology. The creation for divinity and humanity takes place at every moment. Women are equally respected. Generosity is advised so that all religions should be respected. There is

no biased view for medical practices or scientific accomplishments.

Because of these reasons, Rev. Fukushima concluded that we could feel freedom, resiliency, generosity, flexibility, and universality when we read Konkokyo Kyoten. However, he admitted that Konkokyo Kyoten needs to be edited and revised continuously. Thus, he concluded that we should reinvestigate this book, including English translated materials.



by Shinko Okuhara

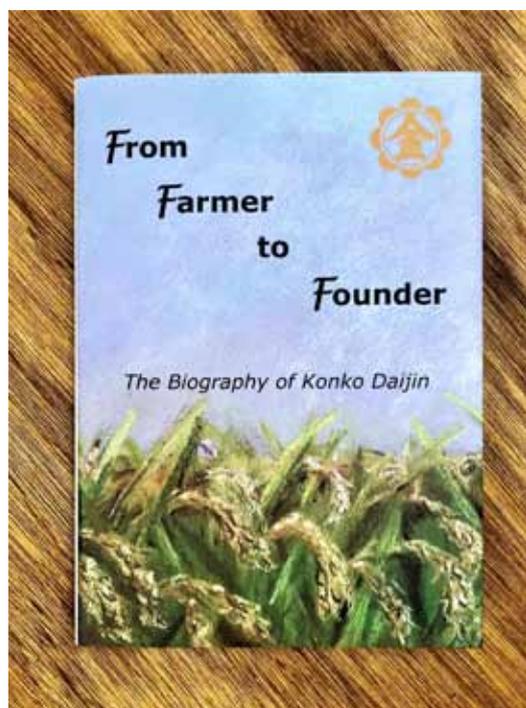
We want to make the Kyoten universal. Konko Daijin said, "Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth by having

Konko Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception."

Rev. Fukushima insists that Kyoten should be considered as "world cultural heritage for humanity."

Respecting Rev. Fukushima, who dedicated his life to introduce Konko Daijin's faith to the world, we would like to work for Konko Daijin's faith to reach out all the people of the world. We wish and pray for all people to develop their own story of Kami. We hope to embrace the world by having Konko Daijin throughout the world.

Have a happy, joyful new year!



### *From Farmer to Founder : The Biography of Konko Daijin*

We are very pleased to announce that a complete biography of Konko Daijin is now available in English. This publication is a culmination of a half-century project, and it was made possible by a group of KCNA volunteers.

The following is excerpted from the introduction: "The Konko Church developed its faith by examining its Founder's faith development through his experiences. Thus, when confronted by new challenges or when we seek to energize and revitalize our faith to promote further development, we always return to the examples of the Founder provided us to find solutions to the challenges we are facing and peace in our present situation." Contact KIC for a copy of the book.

## Stories by the Directors

We were happy to reconvene the monthly services after a long absence at the Main Worship Hall in Konko, Japan. The July-appointed directors delivered the following sermons after the services.



Rev. Yamamoto Shozo gave a sermon following the July 10 Monthly Ikigami Konko Daijin Service. He shared a story about his ancestor and spoke about the importance of sharing faith stories with others. See <http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1594360729> (Japanese only).

Rev. Yamamoto's ancestor is Yamamoto Sadajiro who recorded many teachings of our Founder. According to his record, Sadajiro's mother grew ill and was unable to walk after she gave birth to his younger brother. Sadajiro's father checked the Days and Directions, had mountain priests give prayers, and followed their instructions, yet she did not recover. Then someone told him that divine blessings could be promptly received if one went to the Konko-Sama of Otani. In 1864, Sadajiro's father went to Konko-Sama's Hiromae, gave his request, and asked how to receive blessings.

Konko-Sama imparted, "She should rely on Kami-Sama wholeheartedly. Don't be irreverent by believing in the Days and Directions, following taboos, and burying impurities in Kami-Sama's ground in certain directions. Accept with gratitude the things created by the ground, then you needn't worry. Direct the energy of your worried heart toward practicing faith instead, then you will receive divine blessings easily" (*Gorikai II: Yamamoto Sadajiro 1-6*). Konko-Sama taught him the importance of turning to Kami wholeheartedly, rather than focusing on the hardships and going to great lengths to avoid them.

Sadajiro's mother recovered completely just as Konko-Sama had said. But after that, his father stopped going to worship fearing rumors of Konko-Sama performing mythical tricks. Eleven years later, Sadajiro returned to Hiromae and started practicing faith. Konko-Sama taught Sadajiro, "There are people who come to this Hiromae, request to be cured, and come to give thanks after complete recovery. That's all. Rather, if you have been completely cured by Kami-Sama's blessings, tell those in distress about my teachings. Spread my teachings so more people will start to practice faith sincerely. This is giving true thanks to Kami-Sama. I don't tell people

to come to worship. But those who do, end up receiving more divine virtue. For example, learning under a teacher or from a school for a long time brings much knowledge. In the same way, coming to worship often and listening to my teachings brings more wisdom" (*Gorikai I: Yamamoto Sadajiro 67-1, 2*). The Yamamoto family practiced faith and spread teachings for many generations.



On August 10, Rev. Ishiguro Masaki spoke about the blessings bestowed by Kami unknowingly, and he revealed that Kami take steps to prepare people to practice faith in advance. See <http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1597026871> (Japanese only).

One day, a member came to church and said, "I never forget the anniversary of my mother's death, but I cannot remember my father's." Rev. Ishiguro replied, "Your father's memorial day is on the 2nd next month." On the 2nd next month, the member came to church, however, without being aware that it was his father's memorial day. He had come only to exchange a pair of shoes he had mistakenly worn the day before. Rev. Ishiguro told him about a mysterious occurrence at Hiromae that morning and said, "A mysterious thing happened today. A believer saw an old man who looked like your deceased father. And you came here today on your father's memorial day." Kami had made him come. He was so surprised and realized Kami's arrangement for him to practice faith. Four months later, he brought his family to practice faith together.



On August 22, Rev. Oya Yomisu shared his thoughts on the Konko faith after the Monthly Tenchi Kane No Kami Service. See <http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1598078893> (Japanese only). He pointed out that the Konko faith is the way for people to be a kami and that anyone

could learn Kami's way of thinking through mediation at church.



On September 10, Rev. Mori Yoshinobu spoke about a story of his mother's passing eight years ago and how the experience made him realize how grateful it is to have Kami and how practicing faith is joyful. See <http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1599716810> (Japanese only).

Rev. Mori's mother collapsed while she was cleaning up dinner, and she was immediately taken to the hospital. Rev. Mori repeatedly prayed "Konko-Sama" in the waiting room, and he grew keenly aware of how grateful and comforting it is to have Kami who he could wholeheartedly depend on. He then began to think about the blessings he had received. Rev. Mori's mother was treated and returned back to church, yet she continued to go in and out of the hospital. During one of her hospital visits, Rev. Mori's mother told him, "I am here today thanks to Kami's blessings. I prayed for many people, but I realize I should have conveyed even more how grateful it is to have Kami and how joyous it is to practice faith." Rev. Mori's mother passed away six weeks later, and he carries his mother's words with him.



On October 22, Rev. Takebe Hiroshi shed light on the Founder's character and how the Founder's faith shaped the Konko faith that is so vast and profound. See <http://web-konkokyo.info/data/m1603346236> (Japanese only).

A believer ran into an old friend and learned that she was facing a personal difficulty. Although the woman's friend was a non-believer, she invited her to see Konko-Sama and speak whatever what was on her mind. Konko-Sama mediated her request to Kami and told her not to worry. Her friend shared her impression of Konko-Sama as a "strict but gentle person."

Upon reading about this person's encounter with Konko-Sama, Rev. Takebe recalled that these were the

same words people had described the Founder. Akiyama Kinoo, a disciple had shared: "The Founder was a stern yet gentle person. I thought he was god-like, and there is no one else like him."

Rev. Takebe said it was imaginable to see the Founder as both strict and gentle. Throughout his life, the Founder prayed hard to express people's joy, sadness, anger, and apologies. The Founder was able to withstand this rigorous task because he fervently wanted people saved. He warmly welcomed all who visited him and was very kind. At the same time, he was also determined to convey what he needed to convey even if it was a difficult truth. These conditions developed the Founder's strict and gentle character, which has been handed down to all the successive Konko-Samas.

The Founder's strict yet gentle nature extends into the Konko faith, which at times may be trying, yet its openness and deepness encourage us to continue practicing faith and receive blessings. When we receive mediation in the face of adversity beyond our control, the teachings strike our hearts. However, when we look back after some time, we come to realize that the teachings were much more all-embracing and profound.

Rev. Takebe concluded that the Founder too looked back and marveled at his extraordinary life when writing his story past age 60. He reflected on his life as a gift, his encounters with Kami, and his faith. When he thought about the time his life was spared from a critical illness, he came to realize that the event spared not only his life but many others and Kami. He wrote: "how man has been able to be saved and how Kami has been able to be realized" (*Oboe 3-6-3*). Rev. Takebe encouraged us to continuously renew ourselves and feel "reborn," following our Founder's "Way of Kami and People."

At the beginning of this New Year, let us renew ourselves and "live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year's Day" (*Gorikai III: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 35*).

※All the Japanese names in *Face to Faith* follow the Japanese practice of placing the surname first.

## VOICE OF THE UNIVERSE

141 - Without virtue, you will worry. If you receive Kami's virtue, you will not worry.

(*Gorikai III: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 54*)



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