

Chuichi Fukaya — Opening Words: Towering Trees and Weeds

In the world of botanical studies, it is said that plants evolved from giant “trees” to small “grass.” The small weeds, which bloom flowers and leave behind fruits and seeds within a span of a year, are a more evolved form of plant than the large trees such as cedars and pines. For plants to leave a greater number of offspring in the form of seeds, a shorter span of time in reaching a mature stage reduces the risk involved in unforeseen events. That is, a giant tree is an impressive thing but from the perspective of productive range and numbers of the species as a whole, grass, which grows in abundance anywhere in the world, is better than giant trees that can only be found in places far removed from human settlements. This comparison among plants can also be found in human society. For example, nations whose political powers have grown strong and whose average life span has grown longer are beginning to see a declining birth rate and a dwindling population. On the other hand, nations with smaller economies and shorter average life span have seen an increase in population and a younger population. Whether to fill the entire country with a forest of large trees, or to aim for a large prairie with lots of grass and flowers, the issue of which to emphasize in order to heighten the nation’s fortune is a matter that requires further thinking.

Ichiro Soda — Histories of the Tenrikyo Mission (17) Tenrikyo in Oita and Fukuoka

I will examine the mission in Kyushu’s Oita and Fukuoka Prefectures. Tenrikyo first reached Kyushu in Kumamoto Prefecture, and then in Oita followed by Fukuoka.

Fukuoka has, by far, the largest population among the prefectures in Kyushu, and therefore also has the large number of churches. Oita has the largest ratio of churches in comparison to the population following Saga Prefecture. As of 1896, the number of churches was particularly large in Fukuoka and Oita Prefectures. Both regions saw an active Tenrikyo mission from the earliest stage.

In 1890, Tokichi Izumida, a missionary from Osaka, upon request, came to Nakatsu of Oita Prefecture to engage in missionary work. The people of Nakatsu listened enthusiastically to the stories of a god that they had not heard before. Eventually, the mission spread to the neighboring town of Usa, and these formed the foundation of Nakatsu and Usa Grand Churches. The mission from Usa spread through Oita Prefecture while Nakatsu began many churches in Fukuoka.

In 1891, Ushimatsu Tsutsumi, a missionary and a mosquito net merchant from Shiga, came to Nogata of Fukuoka Prefecture. During the day, he sold mosquito nets, and during the evening, he went about doing salvation work. When he saved a child from typhoid fever, word spread far and wide throughout the neighboring villages. This led to the founding of Chikushi Grand Church, and eventually to Saikai, Asakura, and Chinzai churches.

The mission that spread from Fukuoka reached the neighboring prefectures of Saga, Kumamoto, and Oita, but did not spread to faraway places.

Koji Fukaya — A Growth of Faith through Ofudesaki (13) Part III: 15-18

According to “Notes” of Ofudesaki, we can understand “the central pillar” of the verse 8 in three ways: “in relation to the Service, the phrase means the Kanrodai; in relation to person, the one who is to become the center of this Path; and, in relation to mind, the central idea.” Then, the Ofudesaki, by referring to the beginnings of origin in the following verses, shows that these three aspects of “the central pillar” are deeply connected. In particular, we can see that the word of “muddy” (3:7, 9) in the topic of “the central pillar” implies “the muddy ocean” (3:16) in the creation story.

The story of the beginnings of origin is a description of indescribable things in the sense that they “never existed.” Therefore, judging by measures that we use in our “existing” world, the story seems irrational and makes no sense. From this, God the Parent has strived to make people understand the truth of the story: that is, God the Parent sought not only to tell the truth by words, but also to have people experience the truth by showing a life based on the truth in the person of Miki Nakayama. This way of relating the truth is akin to taking people to the beach to see the ocean for themselves in addition to telling them by words as to what the ocean is like.

Hisayo Tanaka — Japanese Language Education for Japanese Children Growing Up in France (5) Approach to Japanese Language Classes for Children at the Tenri Franco-Japanese Cultural Association [5]

After the children’s class opened in 2000, the number of students increased. Recently, there is a line of parents waiting to register on the opening day. This is a positive sign that the school’s education has earned the trust of the parents; but on the other hand, there has been a

greater number of children whose academic abilities are an issue, and the teachers face a greater challenge of how to maintain a learning environment and a structured classroom, much less the instructions of the Japanese language. In order to relieve the responsibilities placed on the teachers and to put into practice a pedagogical method that allows for a more efficient and enjoyable learning experience for the children, there was a need to share the individual teacher’s concern with the school as a whole and to reflect upon the causes and search for specific solutions together. In an ordinary school, such matters were carried out at the school’s faculty rooms and through group training; however, because most of the teachers at our school were part-time instructors, we suggested an instructor’s study group during their off-hours in which they would participate as volunteers.

Masanobu Yamada — New Religion’s Missions in Brazil (1) Brazil’s Religious Landscape [1]

The Brazilian religious landscape, which had been regarded as Catholic, is undergoing a major transformation in recent years. Religions from Japan, including Tenrikyo, are also being accepted, and these are causing a change in the religious landscape. And these are also causing a change in their own nature as well. Since the sixteenth century, the history of the “sword and cross,” based on colonialism and the Catholic mission, is engraved upon the South and North Americas, which were invaded by the Spanish and Portuguese. Religion brought here by African people coming as slaves mixed with the Catholic faith and the indigenous religious practices, resulting in an Afro-Brazilian religion, and this became the base religion of Brazil. During the transition to a republic, a Religion of Humanity espoused by sociologist Auguste Comte, was built. Japanese religions were conveyed to Brazil that was not necessarily completely Catholic.

Midori Horiuchi — Connecting “Life”: The Phenomenon of Life and Death (17) How Did We Reflect on Death [8]

Taking of one’s own life is always situated in proximity to our life. Among advanced countries, Japan has a high occurrence of self-inflicted death, and it is the greatest cause of death among the younger generation. Based on such situation, the Japanese government has declared March of every year as “Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.” This year’s goal was to heighten our awareness of people who are planning suicide and to be able to recognize the “warning signs” of in our minds as well. Further, there was an appeal to engage in this issue as a society as a whole rather than as individuals, by recognizing and supporting the signals that those contemplating death issue, in the form of “gatekeeper.”

Saburo Yagi — The Path Towards Normalization (15) Urban Design for Social Welfare [2]

In the year 2000, “Transportation Barrier Free Law” was enacted. This law sought to secure the “rights of transportation” as a means for people with disabilities to maintain an autonomous daily and social life. The law was intended not only for users of wheelchairs but also for the elderly and pregnant women; thus, it was a law intended to encourage improvements in the accessibility and safety of the public transportation system as a whole. The goal was to encourage barrier-free in train stations, bus terminals, passenger ship terminals, airline terminals, train cars, buses, passenger ships, and airplanes.

In 2006, “New Law for Barrier Free, which combined the “Heart Build Law” and “Transportation Barrier Free Law,” was enacted. Intended to allow greater means of transportation and accessibility as well as improved safety for the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and those with injuries, the new law was enacted as a comprehensive law to encourage barrier free as an integrated system with emphasis public transportation systems, buildings, and public facilities.

Norihito Nakao — Han Resources in Tenri University Sankokan Museum Collection (5) Toys [2]

Our museum’s Han-era toys include many doll figurines. In this article, I would like to introduce the *ni wawa* (mud dolls) and *zhi renxing* (finger dolls). *Ni wawa* is a doll to pray for children. *Wawa* refers to babies and dolls, and thus, *ni wawa* is a mud doll. Mud placed in molds are dried and its surface is painted. Since most of them do not undergo firing, it is extremely brittle.

Zhi renxing, according to one theory, traces its origin to China’s finger doll plays in the southern parts of Fujian Province. These spread to other areas at a later time. In Taiwan, it is familiar as *zhangzhongxi* as well as *budaixi*. These were brought to Taiwan during the Ming and Qing eras by the people who migrated from the Fujian and Guangdong Provinces. It was often used during festivals for the gods as well as during marriages and funerals. Our museum has several dozen *zhirenxing* as well as a stage in which the figure dolls performed and scripts for the performances as well.