

Uzo Takami — Opening Words: A Note to the Opening of the “Public Lectures on Tenrikyo Studies”

As announced in this publication, from September, we will commence the 2016 Public Lectures on Tenrikyo Studies. This year’s theme will be “Tenrikyo’s Teachings in Response to Contemporary Issues: the Teachings and Its Practice, from the Perspective of Tenrikyo Studies.” As noted in its mission statement, the world in which we live today faces various crises, and these can truly be summed up as “Contemporary Issues.” These are “issues” that must be engaged by the society as a whole; at the same time, we must confront and contemplate upon such issues from the perspective of the Path’s teachings.

The themes to be addressed are “ultra-aging society,” “sexual minorities and gender,” “social isolation,” urbanization and rural flight,” “information society,” “recyclable energy,” and “war.” All of these are important issues that must be contemplated by the faithful, but we ask you to look forward to our thoughts on how we can approach and develop these issues from the perspective of Tenrikyo studies. I have used the term, “issues,” as a way to highlight our stance as a faithful, to purify our minds in listening to God the Parent speaking to us through these issues and to contemplate upon them.

Mikio Yasui — Short History of Tenrikyo Theology (108) Kitano Manuscripts [10] Transcriptions of Copies of the “Osashizu”

I will examine a volume from the Kitano manuscripts, a source that I have introduced in parts previously. Early missionaries from the Kitano Branch Church were already engaged in salvation work and expanding the church, carrying copies of the Divine Directions and the Ofudesaki.

Chuichi Fukaya — Deep Reflections on the Life of Oyasama (27) Villagers

On page 108 of Chapter 7 of the Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo: Manuscript Edition, there is an episode in which villagers demand that the followers either give up their faith or provide compensation to the villagers for their inconveniences. From 1875 onward, police oversight became increasingly strict year after year while the faith expanded beyond the confines of Yamato and the numbers of followers grew rapidly. On the other hand, they did not ignore the villagers: Shuji served as village head and donated large funds to the establishment of an elementary school. Yet, the villagers came with demands that “we wish you would stop the Tenri faith, or else give us compensation each year.”

There is a common refrain that “a faraway God is a thankful one.” Relationship with those faraway can be based strictly on faith, but relationship with villagers must be established, first, on common grounds before a faith-based relationship can be made. In the scriptures, we can find God the Parent’s strong desire to save the villagers, but the effort to communicate the faith to the villagers is “a path that must but cannot be hurried”: it is one that require years of dedicated efforts.

Akio Inoue — A Preliminary Study of Tenri Linguistic Theology: The Future Image of “Koto” Worldview (29) Chapter Four: Minakata Kumagusu’s “The Philosophy of *Suiten*” and “Study of Things” [4]

In 1906, Hara Takashi, who was serving as the Minister of Home Affairs in the Saionji cabinet, issued the Shrine Merger directive, which sought to consolidate the shrines to one for each village and town. Minakata Kumagusu’s extreme action-drive activities, based on his earth environment’s cosmological philosophy, which, in turn, was grounded in his theory of ecology, which sustained his opposition to the shrine merger, was able to foresee that local issues shared common cause with global ones. Today, Japan, as well as Japan and the world, is deeply shaken by the nuclear plant crisis. In face of this urgent crisis that threatens the existence of human life, Japanese religionists have a lot to learn from Minakata’s “study of things.” What kind of “things” are in demand, in order to avoid leaving behind, to the next generation, a tragedy of thriving on “material” but ruined in “heart”? This is the reason why serious and innovative enlightenment activity by Tenri practical theology from a “glocal” perspective” is in demand.

Koji Fukaya — Milepost Usage of the Ofudesaki (13) Regarding “Cleaning” [4]

In a series of verses beginning in XIII:21, the term, “cleaning” appears. Its usage differs from previous appearances: it states that “dust” has accumulated not only in human hearts but in God’s heart, and to cleanse it away is difficult (21, 22). Also, in Part XIV, the language in the Ofudesaki encouraging “the cleansing of the mind” is more forceful. Because “No matter how I try to tell you the truth by words, there is no understanding” (75), “regret” (77) for humans occurs: such episode comes across as urgent words to those who are truly suffering and in anxiety. And at the root of this series of incidents, there are the concerns of the “Parent” (75). This “story” itself is grounded in a fundamental relationship that, for God, human beings are “My

children.”

Jiro Sawai —Reflections on the Words of the Osashizu (19) “Path” in Osashizu, Volume 1, A Conclusion [2]

Until now, I have repeatedly pointed out that, in volume one of the Osashizu, Revised Edition, following the establishment of Church Headquarters in Tokyo in April of 1888, there were many examples of contrast made between “world’s path” and “God’s path,” and there were instructions to consistently undertake “God’s path.” In the previous article, I confirmed the flow of the usages of “path,” in conjunction with the historical contexts pertaining to Tenrikyo. In this article, I will conclude my study of volume one by contemplating upon what exactly is being taught through the words, “God’s path.”

Masanobu Yamada — New Religion’s Missions in Brazil (41) Seicho-no-Ie [5]

Similar to the example of a convert from Kardecism, introduced in my previous article, a former follower of Afro-Brazilian religion points to liberation from karma as one of the appeals of Seicho-no-Ie. She was active as a spiritualist, but began to believe that she could change her fate for the better not by relying upon various spirits but rather by heightening her inner discipline. This relates how she came to feel the continuity between herself and “the greater existence,” through the Seicho-no-Ie teaching of “human as divine child.”

Kazukuni Watanabe — Paving the Way Towards Local Community Welfare: Creation of a New Culture of Philanthropy (21) Relief Fund and Support Fund [3]

In order to support volunteer groups and NPO involved in disaster relief activities in response to the East Japan Disaster that occurred in 2011, the Central Community Chest Society founded the “Disaster Volunteer and NPO Activity Support Fund.” This funding has many characteristics, including its support to a wide range of groups, including volunteer groups as well as large scale organizations, its availability for labor costs as part of its aid category, and its aid program that contours to the phase of the organization’s needs. It also enables a choice of two donations at the time of disasters, of relief fund and support fund. The role that this fund plays in the shaping the future modes of fund donation during crisis support is extremely large.

Hisao Kuwabara — Messages from Ruins (15) Survey of Ruins in Israel [1] Commencement of the Tenth Excavation Survey of Tel Rehesh

On July 31, 2016, after detailed preparation, the excavation survey of Israel’s Tel Rehesh began. Since the beginning of the excavation survey in 2006, this is the tenth year. In addition to the staff of the survey team, students and ordinary citizens with interests in archaeology, bible studies, history of religion, and history took part in the excavation survey as volunteers. It takes roughly twenty minutes by car from Kibbutz Ein Dor, which serves as the base camp for the survey team, to the ruin. In the morning, excavation activities are carried out at the ruin, and in the afternoon, the findings are processed and categorized at the kibbutz. Through life at the kibbutz—an experience unique to Israel—I am able to spend each day immersed in the excavation survey while deepening my ties to various people.

Yomei Mori — Preliminary Thoughts on African-European Relations as Found in Congolese Society (8) History through Geographical Names

History and its background can be read through geographical names, an Africa is no exception. During the Age of Discovery, Portugal approached Africa, and place names bear its vestige. Also, for the slave era and the colonization of Africa by the European powers, there are contemporary place names that bear the names of those involved. In this article, I will briefly reflect upon the relationship between Africa and Europe through the prism of place names.

Juri Kaneko — Contemporary Religion and Woman (10) Conservative Movement and Changes in Joint Participation of Men and Women

Today, it indispensable for gender studies to apprehend religion through its association with conservative movements. This is because the focal point regarding conservative movements, which have allied with certain religious groups, point toward gender equality, education, and peace. After 2013, Japan embarked on a full-scale population policy, and while accelerating its intervention upon the domain of the reproductive organs, it has encouraged virtually unpaid modes of mutual assistance such as “family” and “community” as if to supplement the reduction in social security. That is, the concepts of “reproductive health/rights” and “unpaid work” are rendered toothless and “joint participation of men and women” is undergoing change. However, the “temple clan issue” in Buddhism, involving the issue of spouses of Buddhist priests, is a moment where these two concepts intersect.