

TENSHO KOTAI JINGU-KYO (1)

(The Dancing Religion)

Sayo Kitamura

(Mrs. Sayo Kitamura, the founder of TENSHŌ KŌTAI JINGŪ-KYŌ,* the so called "Dancing Religion," was born on January 1, 1900 on a farm in the small village of Tabuse in Yamaguchi prefecture in the western part of Japan's main island, Honshū. At the age of twenty she married and until 1942 lived the hard life, which is the customary lot of a farmer's wife in Japan. That year, as a result of the destruction of her barn by fire, a series of religious experiences began which culminated on May 4, 1944, in the beginning of direct revelations, or rather, direct conversations between herself and the God whom she believed took up residence in her body on that day.

In the following year numerous unique public incidents are reported to have occurred, but she did not preach her first sermon until July 22, 1954, when she invited neighbors to her home for that purpose. Since then she has continued to preach almost daily, one might almost say, incessantly. She declared

* The name of this sect is composed of the Chinese ideograms used to write the name of the sect's deity and the ideogram *kyō* 教, meaning teaching, which is one of the ideograms commonly used as the ending of Christian and Shinto sect names.

Tenshō Kōtai Jingū, whom Mrs. Kitamura calls the Absolute God of the Universe, is composed of the ideograms used in the name of the mythological imperial ancestress, the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu 天照, and the name of the Inner Shrine, Kōtai Jingū 皇大神宮, of the Grand Shrine of Ise, sacred to the worship of the Sun Goddess of whom the foundress speaks and writes with considerable derision. Ed.

herself to be the savior of mankind, gathered followers around her, and announced that her sacred mission was to establish God's kingdom. A unique feature of her movement, the one that brought her the most public attention, is a form of "creative dancing" in which all the followers participate in connection with their meetings and when preaching. Although said to be spontaneous, it has very plainly become somewhat stylized. Her followers (reported to number 126, 275) call her "Ōgami-sama," meaning "The Great God."

As for her teaching, let her speak for herself. Her sermon (*seppō*)^a—she says that she cannot talk about her movement, only preach—was one of a series of talks sponsored by the International Institute for the Study of Religions.* Editor.)

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Mrs. Kitamura began by chanting in an impromptu manner, both the words and chant being improvised and presumably inspired. While the words were generally intelligible, the meaning was not entirely clear.

Na-myō-hō-enge-kyō

We have worshipped gods thus far. Now, listen. The time for worshipping gods is over. Human souls must go up to heaven. The Absolute God of the Universe** came down into this world to make this truth known. It is the end of the world. In 1944 God declared that the time of worship was over.

Every day, day after day, we read about murders in the papers: parents killing children, children killing parents, hus-

a. 説法

* This talk was given at the Institute on November 21, 1959.

** *Uchū zettai naru kami* 宇宙絶対なる神

bands killing wives, and all manner of killings.

There are only three people who have been sent down to the world by God. They are Sakyamuni, Jesus, and I. I, myself, am not speaking. I am made to speak. Listening to the heavenly instructions. I am putting them into words you can understand.

There are many religions in the world and they are divided into many sects. Even the Christian church is divided into many sects. Looking at this phenomenon, the Absolute God of the Universe couldn't help doing something, so he finally came down into the world.

When you turn on the television you hear voices and see figures. Divine mechanism is the same as a television set. Divine inspiration is broadcasting every minute all day long.

You have a receiver right here. (*She points to her stomach.*) You don't know what I am going to say until you hear my voice.

You know, world events have happened just as I have prophesied during the last fourteen years.

Everyone who understands my words raise your hands. (*Many raise their hands.*) All right. Thank you. I have spoken to many scholars from various countries of the world at Harvard University. No interpreter assisted me, yet I was understood. My speech was understood in spite of the language barrier.

The first step in pious living is purification from the six evils: desire, greed, hatred, pity, love, and lust.

I have a receiver right here, you see; and I listen to every communication. There was a man who visited me five times during the last three years, because he could not find any

savior in America. He didn't understand Japanese, but he preferred to hear my Japanese rather than to listen to my interpreter. If you have a radio set, you can understand everything. If you have no faith, your heart will never be purified. If you want to be saved you must believe in the one God. This is the true faith. If your heart is in unison with the Absolute God, then you are one with him.

You may receive a radio set as you look at me and listen to me. The other day a foreigner came to me. He had never seen me before. He had had a dream. There was a house in a large garden and the house was filled with people. It was owned by a woman, but people were forbidden to approach the house. Yet people went up to it. The garden had no trees at all. Then he awoke.

The dream was so strange that he went to a friend and told him about it. The friend showed him a picture of me in the *Book of Life* (*Seisho*^a). What he had seen in his dream was this picture. He couldn't forget my portrait. So taking advantage of his three-week vacation, he came to Japan to see me. Then he flew back to America.

It is fourteen years since my inner person* began to speak. My inner person never fails me. The world is being moulded as my inner person foretold.

Religion speaks of selflessness. Selflessness is to follow what the Absolute God of the Universe teaches. Religion is nothing but the purification of the soul (*tamashi*^b).

At least two persons among you will never be able to for-

a. 生書, The compilation of the founder's life and teaching. b. 魂

* hara 腹, literally, the abdomen or stomach.

get my face and can't help following me, I am sure.

A man called Dr. M. was studying at a university in Japan for a year and a half. He was a specialist in sociology. He used to visit me every Saturday. He felt my power four train-station-stops before he had to get off to come to my house.

God speaks to your inner person and gives you instructions, regardless of race or country. Mine is the easiest religion to follow. Man has only to follow God's way. He need not study at all.

However wise and pious you may be, I am ready to answer any question you ask, although I won't know how to answer until the words come to my mouth. This way of answering has never failed during the last fourteen years. If a human being lives faithfully, he will come to the world of God and Buddha. But human beings take the crooked way and fall into hell. The Absolute God of the Universe has come down to the world and is giving instructions on the law of going to heaven or to hell, and is showing the way for the peace of the world.

You talk about world peace, but world peace can never come unless you have peace in your own mind. God uses human beings as tools to bring world peace.

You are listening to me and, if your hearts are purified by this, God, who creeps into your inner person, works to bring peace to the world. The peace of the world is realized after peace comes to your soul (*reikon*^a), to your own family, and to your own country.

a. 靈魂

Discussion

Q. Would you explain about your organization and its administration? About life at your Tabuse headquarters? About the believers?

Mrs. K. We have no professional workers. Every believer serves God within his own profession and skill. Mr. Sakiyama^a, who is accompanying me, is a tailor. His employees are all believers. My interpreter has her own dressmaking school in Hawaii. Her apprentice is taking care of the school while she serves here as an interpreter. There are no professional teachers in this organization. Believers are all comrades. There are about 200 branches in Japan. There are 18 branches in America, mainly in Hawaii. The comrades meet together for "mutual polishing*".

If a new meeting place is needed, some comrade is ready to open his home. This is the way the number of branches increases. Believers of other religions make offerings, but we need no offerings because we have no expenses at all.

Recently it was decided that a large auditorium was needed for my preaching. This project was planned and carried out by the believers. They are responsible for the construction. This expense is the only money they have to pay. That's all.

We learn without charge. We teach without charge. We are saved without charge. This is the way we save the world. This is the purpose of the Absolute God of the Universe. This

a. 咲山 * *tomo-migahi* 共磨き

is a divine, not a human, project.

I won't go to America, not even if I get a free passage, if my voyage is for a human cause. I am doing this because this is a divine cause. I am going to New York and to Cambridge, Massachussetts. These belong to my kingdom.

International Day is held every month at Columbia University. When I talked at Columbia, everyone who attended the meeting was happy. They enjoyed my talk and Japan Day more than any of the others. Religion must make man happy. All the religions are too serious and are no good. That religion is a fake which fails to make man happy or improve his lot.

The Absolute God of the Universe called me to this mission. Because of this divine calling I was able to continue to work for the last fourteen years. I am not wise. I have had only six years of schooling; yet the Absolute God of the Universe came down and made me teach the way for man, using my mouth for the cause of world peace.

I am a tool of God. God became my inner person. People call me a dancing goddess. Dancing isn't my aim. Isn't it the kingdom of heaven, if people feel so happy that they cannot help but dance? Isn't this heavenly bliss? Shall I show you a dance after this discussion?

Q. If you will show us the dance first we can understand why your religion is called the dancing religion.

Mrs. K. Well, I will do that. But remember, we don't dance consciously. Those who dance do their dancing with their eyes closed. Ask your questions after observing our dance. Let us arrange the room for the dance.

(*A group of about ten followers dance, while the leader sings. The song begins with "Na-myō-hō-renge-kyō."*)

First of all people must be friends.

(*She begins to chant again*)

The Kingdom of God is being revealed. The world of devils is vanishing. Religion is nothing but practice. The time of studying religion is over. The period of scholarship is over. Practice, practice, practice. Practice is the heart and the core of religion. If you realize that the teaching is true, you must practice what you have learned. This is everyone's short-cut to heaven. If you want to go to heaven by studying at a desk, you will never be able to go to heaven, even if you spend your whole life at it. If you find the teaching is true, you must specialize in this teaching by purifying your heart. Receive the truth. Make use of it by practice. Otherwise you can never go to heaven. *Na-myō-hō-renge-kyō, Na-myō-hō-renge-kyō. (The chant is over.)*

The essence of religion is practice, not study. Christ said that scholars and religious leaders would never be saved. If you stick to a scholar's chair and cherish clerical orders, you will never be saved.

If you find that the doctrine is true, you must simply believe it and go deeper into the truth. The world of devils must become a world of peace.

People with a sword are not allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. We are building up the kingdom of heaven. The dance you have just seen is the symbol of world peace.

You see, I scold those who believe in me. I speak frankly. I say what is wrong. The Bible and sutras use soft words, don't they? But I use hard and harsh words.

Q. How about your sermons?

Mrs. K. I deliver sermons. They are not teachings. Sermons are the truth. I recommend that you listen to my sermons.

They need no interpretation. Those who do not understand Japanese must listen too and receive what they can.

Q. Did you ever study about Christianity before you began your teaching?

Mrs. K. Does a radio set answer if you ask it why it talks?

A radio set won't answer at all. It talks because there is a broadcasting station. I talk because the Absolute God of the Universe makes me talk. I have nothing in my mind. I talk. I just talk and just keep on talking.

Q. What is the essence of your religion?

Mrs. K. Practice. To keep the way of humility is essential for man. I was married to a man whose mother changed daughters-in-law six times. I was the seventh wife. I raised one boy. It is essential for us to be trustworthy wives and trustworthy parents. This is practice. To keep one's life decent and pious is the essence of human duty.

Q. Your members are all over the world. How do you communicate with them? Does someone receive your prayers? Do you dictate them, or do you use a tape recorder?

Mrs. K. God does everything. This is a wonderful mechanism we have. There is a right person for the right place? Those who understand are willing to share with others.

Q. Don't you write anything?

Mrs. K. No.

Q. Does someone write for you?

Interpreter Tape recording is one device we use. Ōgami-sama contributes articles to various periodicals such as *Jinsei*^a (*Life*). Her sermons are edited by Mr. Nakayama^b and others

a. 人生 b. 中山

and are found in *Seisho*^c (*Book of Life*). You may be interested in *The Prophet of Tabuse*.[†]

Q. Do members read the *Book of Life*? Do they meet at polishing halls (*dōjō*^d)?

Mrs. K. Of course they all read it. There are meetings for members three times a day at the hall: nine to twelve in the morning, one-thirty to four in the afternoon, and seven to eight-thirty in the evening. Local gatherings are held once a week for two hours, from seven to nine in the evening.

Mr. N. spent almost a one year editing the book (" *The Prophet of Tabuse* "), and enjoyed the work very much, so he said. They say that the book is written in both English English and American English.

Dr. M. is going to rewrite it in the near future.

My religion is open to all peoples. A student of Oklahoma University, where Dr. M. teaches, wrote to me because she is going to have a baby. Learn without charge. Teach without charge. Save without charge. This is my way.

Q. Isn't there any obligation beside attending the mutual polishing meetings, such as regulations, food, etc.

Mrs. K. No. We are free to do anything. Since World War II everything has been changed, and this has caused much trouble. This situation must be put in order again. People must free themselves from selfishness, praising *Na-myō-hō-venge-kyō*, both Buddhists and Shintoist together.

Q. Are your disciples able to receive revelations?

a. 生替 b. 道場

* *Tabuse no Yogensha* 田布施の予言者.

Mrs. K. If you become one with God, you begin to talk and talk. You just keep on talking.

Q. I would like to know more about your meetings. Is there any leader at your meetings at headquarters.

Mrs. K. Yes. Two people are assigned to them. All the members are willing to help others.

Q. Who gives the assignment?

Mrs. K. Mr. Nakayama does.

Q. Who appoints Mr. Nakayama.

Interpreter Ōgami-sama does.

Q. I understand this is an organized institution. Who does Mr. Nakayama consult with about various matters?

Interpreter Ōgami-sama.

Mrs. K. Two years ago when I was on my way back from Hawaii, I met two American sailors on board ship. They became interested in my teachings, and one of them used to come to my headquarters. He said that his hands shook when he recited *Na-mi-ō-hō-enge-kyō*, though he understands no Japanese at all. He wrote to me that this chanting is more valuable than several million dollars.

Q. I understand the Nichiren Sect also repeats this expression, *Na-myō-hō-enge-kyō*.

Mrs. K. No, it is quite different. Nichiren's is "*Namu Myō-hō-enge-kyō*."^a Our's is "*Na-myō-hō-enge-kyō*."^b

Q. Isn't *Mi-ō-hō-enge-kyō* a Buddhist sutra?

Interpreter Yes. According to Ōgami-sama, however, *Na* is

^a 南無妙法蓮華經 ^b 名妙法蓮華經

(Note that, although pronounced almost the same, the ideograms for *a* and *b* are different. Ed.)

“name,” *myō* is “wonderful*,” *hō* is “sutra,” *rengē* (*ren-ketsu*) is “putting together,” and *kyō* is “sutra.” So “*Na-myo-hō-rengē-kyō*” means that a humble woman (Ōgami-sama) connects both man and God with the heavenly sutra, and is quite different from Nichiren’s practice.

Mrs. K. I am not speaking out of reason. I am not a professional religious leader. God resides within me, and makes me speak.

Q. Do you think of yourself, Mrs. Kitamura, as an especially gifted person, something like a prophet? Do you need a successor?

Mrs. K. I am in the line of Buddha and Christ. My granddaughter is going to succeed me. My religion is not grasped through schooling, or reading books. God entered into my granddaughter, and began to talk through her. She is in the third grade. Her teachers are quite confident about her because God is taking care of her.

The other day we had a huge typhoon called IDA, which caused severe damage to the Ise and Atsuta shrines. This shows that these deities are fakes or phonies. The world of devils is vanishing, one after another. The world of God is revealed as the world of devils is fading out. This is clearly shown, and you must see it with your eyes wide open. Man is returning to God by following the true way of man.

If there is a God, there will be no disasters or typhoons. The world of idol worship is over. We have many members

* The ideogram *Myō* 妙 is a combination of the ideogram 女 meaning “woman,” and 少 meaning “small.” Therefore, according to Mrs. Kitamura, these ideograms *Na* and *Myō* 名妙 together mean “a woman of low name,” that is, “a nameless or humble woman.”

in the area (*that is, the Nagoya-Ise region. Ed.*), yet not one of them suffered from the typhoon. They say they are quite confident. They fear no typhoon at all. The battle between the true God and the wrong god is fought day and night. The world is divided into two. The true God is siding with the righteous, while the wrong god is helping the wicked.

Q. You say "devil." Do you think there is a chief among devils?

Mrs. K. The god of devils is assisting. Your own wicked thought is evil. The evil spirit is a spirit which lost its way after death. It is not yet purified from evil thoughts. You will be caught with the evil god unless your evil thoughts are cleansed.

Q. What will happen if Ōgamisama dies? Will world peace be realized after your death?

Mrs. K. The world of peace is around the corner. When we danced just now, that was the world of peace. The world of God is appearing, while the world of the devils is disappearing. The reign of God has begun. Those who meet disasters with a smile are under the reign of God. This place is the world of God.

Q. The Bible tells us about the resurrection of the dead. Do you believe in life eternal?

Mrs. K. Human souls are separated from divine souls. God came down to this world so that you may be able to go up to heaven. Man was born into this world to enjoy life. Man came to this world for training in order to go back to God. It will be the end of the world, unless man forgets the human heart possessed by desire for position, property,

and success. Human souls go back to God after having been purified through training.

Q. If souls are sent down to the world, do they come from God?

Mrs. K. Souls are sent down by the Absolute God. You know, there are many kind of lights, but they come from the same electric power.

Q. You say that souls come down to this world from God, and yet they are imperfect.

Mrs. K. That's right. They come to this world imperfect. They come to this world to go back to God again. If you take this way, you are led to hell. If you are in hell, you are just devils even though you believe you are human. Some come from hell and return to hell. I am teaching the human way to return to God, casting away all unimportant things.

Q. You say that human souls were sent to this world from God. Do you mean that those souls came to this world in an imperfect state and must return to God refined in this world? Is that right?

Mrs. K. Those who are from the imperfect world are devils, though they are in human form. Many people forget human training and are seeking success, money, position, and vanity, because they have no leader at all. It is at the end of history that you cannot find the right leader. So the Absolute God of the Universe comes down once in three thousand years, and is calling you to the kingdom. So I say to you, listen to God, listen to me, although my head is empty as a bumpkin.

Q. You said that Christianity and Buddhism are dead religions. I would like to know why.

Mrs. K. Don't you know that Christ said that he will be with you to the end of the world. The end of the world has come. You know it's over. When I talked at Shibuya Public Hall, a certain American minister who has a doctor's degree came up to me. He had been studying the Bible for thirty-three years, but couldn't understand many things and asked me to him teach about them. He couldn't understand the end of the world, as Christ used the word. He couldn't understand why the Word is God. It is written that God teaches with authority, but he has not met a minister yet who preaches with authority. He asked me these questions one after another. So I told him to listen to my sermon first, rather than raising questions one by one. He said he would listen, and after the preaching he thanked me for real preaching. You have heard that the Word of God is God. If you listen to me and purify your hearts following my sermon word by word, you will grasp the real faith and God will jump into you. Don't you know, you have a radio set right here! (*Points to her stomach.*)

Q. When you heard the voice of God, Mrs. Kitamura, you realized that you had a great mission in this world, didn't you?

Mrs. K. No. I never thought of such a thing. I don't know why. God just began talking through me so loudly that people thought me crazy. They spoke ill of me. But they are following me now, respecting me as the living God.

Q. If you know that some disaster is coming, do you think it

is your duty to tell the people that a disaster is approaching?

Mrs. K. I don't think so. People are anxious to know what God is doing because they want to take advantage of him. I speak what God makes me speak. You know that man Kishi, who is the Prime Minister of Japan. He called me before he was taken to prison. I told him to be strong because he was going to be Prime Minister in later years. I don't know whether I said that it would be after three or five years. Anyhow, he became Prime Minister twelve years later.

He was lying ill of rheumatism. I promised to give him my life, if he had pains while listening to my sermon, and to take his if he had no pains. Well, his rheumatism was perfectly cured, and he is the Prime Minister as I foretold. Prophecy isn't my true purpose. The true God and true religion only teaches man to be a real man and the way to go to heaven. Religions that use medicines and tricks are not religions at all. They are phony doctors and calling on man just for their own sake. They are no good.

Q. Is Mr. Kishi a follower?

Mrs. K. No. He is grateful for what I have done, you know. He went back to the world of worms where he belongs. And I became famous because of this incident. The power of Christ was over eleven years ago. Both Sakyamuni and Christ left their homes and family to perform their missions. I am preaching while I am heading my own family in this busy world.

Several years ago, when we were to go fishing, both the radio and papers said that a typhoon was approaching on

that day. But we dared to go fishing after offering prayer. There were no boats out but ours. We ordered the sea to be calm with our prayers, and our boat with God's children came back with plenty of fish.

Q. Do you think you need the same miracles as Christ did for you to be recognized by the public?

Mrs. K. I didn't know about the miracles of Christ eleven years ago. Both Buddha and Christ are powerless today. It is the day of Ōgami-sama. I was told to become greater than both Buddha and Christ, so I expect too much. I'm still a farmer's wife. I do everything myself. I do my own washing. This kind of thing is done by those who are faithful to their daily life.

I would like to add one more very important thing. Remember this. I am not God. I am just a human being. God is the one who uses me. You say Christ. Christ is everything to you. But Christ is nothing but a man. You confuse the body of Christ with God. The God who sent Christ is the Absolute God of the Universe. Christ was human as I am human. This is the point you must be very careful to understand. You will never find truth if you forget that Christ was a man. A thousands years of study is useless, if you miss this point. Keep this in mind.

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