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My Personal Experience With Benzaiten Diety

By Jackson Ito

Being an engineer by profession, I have had enormous help from the *Benzaiten* deity throughout my student days and in my early career. When I was a student at Caltech, I always prayed for help to understand my subjects to the spirits of the early scientists who made the initial discoveries in the various subjects I was studying. This is because to fully understand a subject, it is best to follow in their footsteps to “re-invent the wheel,” rather than just being spoon fed with answers provided by the internet. This is just another aspect of expressing my appreciation for my teachers.

In this respect, Gedatsu has as its basis for understanding Nature from the Shinto side of our teachings. Although modern science knows that there are well over 100 basic elements (some only artificially made in the laboratory and lasting only for microseconds), historically, I think of the early scientists who thought the world consisted of only four elements (earth, fire, water and air). Based upon our Shinto origin, I associate:

Earth with our *Jizo* diety
Fire with the *O Fudo Myo* diety and
Both water and air with *Benzaiten*

After graduating from Caltech and starting my career as a rocket scientist, I found myself venturing beyond the known boundaries of science and into the realm of the unknown. Thus, I could no longer pray for assistance from the spirits of scientific predecessors. Therefore, I took advantage of my Gedatsu background, as both Bishop Kishida and Rev. Jerry Shiroishi told me that I could, to pray for understanding for my work from *Benzaiten* diety for water and air (liquid or gaseous propellants) and fire from *O Fudo Myo* deity.

Early in my career, I made a lot of requests for assistance. That help came from unexpected sources. Often, while searching for reports in the technical library (there was no Internet available in the 1960s), I would come across reports

on entirely different subjects from what I was searching for, but which were essential for my overall understanding. With each new discovery, I would express my appreciation for the help and understanding. Soon my expressions of appreciation far outnumbered my requests for help. That is because each time I repeated my appreciation for all the help I had received up to that point. Although I have been retired now for a number of years, I still express my appreciation for those assistances, because I am still reaping the benefits from that understanding in the form of my employer's continuing lifetime retirement pension and Social Security benefits. In addition, it allowed me to save for additional stock investments, which have become increasingly valuable with time.

Expressing appreciation to God and deities is similar to putting money in a bank. You have to make deposits before you can make a withdrawal. If you continually express your appreciation and build up your deposits with God, there may be a better chance of having your request granted. When you make requests from God, it should not be over trivial matters that you can accomplish yourself through greater effort on your part. It should be reserved for something that you would never be able to accomplish by yourself, no matter how hard you try.

For example, during our recent years of extended drought in California, I have never asked for more rainfall. Instead, I have prayed to *Benzaiten* deity to make people appreciate the value of fresh water to encourage them to conserve and appreciate what we have been granted, no matter how little.

However, there was one time I made a fervent request of *Benzaiten* for its assistance and I was amazed by the response.

I am sure everyone remembers Hurricane Katrina and the flooding, devastation and the drownings it caused to New Orleans and the Mississippi gulf coast around 10 years ago. I remember it distinctly because my younger sister and her family lived in New Orleans during Katrina. I had my sister and her husband and their dog stay at my home in Sacramento for about six weeks until the water, sewage system, electricity and supermarkets were able to re-open for business. About three to five years later, there was another Hurricane Gustav that was expected to hit the same area with even greater ferocity.

Whereas Katrina hit New Orleans with about 135 miles-per-hour winds, Gustav was predicted to hit at 155 to 165 mph winds. As an engineer, I know that

to calculate the wind energy, you have to multiply the speed by itself. Therefore, when comparing a 141 mph wind with a 100 mph wind, it is not just 41% higher energy, it is double (100% greater). When comparing a 173 mph wind with a 100 mph wind, it is not just 73% higher energy, it is triple (200% greater). Thus, I was very concerned about Gustav.

I was in Sacramento, preparing for the Fall Festival when the news started reporting regularly around Thursday preceding the Fall Festival about the location and wind speeds of Gustav. It was predicted to hit on either Saturday or Festival Sunday. When I attended the Goreichi on Saturday for cleanup, I prayed to *Benzaiten* diety to please minimize loss of life, and oh, by the way, please reduce the property damage as much as possible because that area had suffered so much already from Katrina. When I attended the Fall Festival on Sunday, I again repeated my same request to be spared from Gustav's fury.

As usual after the Festival, Calvin Tanaka and I counted the donations and prepared them for bank deposit. That usually takes until 6:00 to 6:30 PM before we finish. Thereafter, I went home, ate dinner, took a shower and went directly to bed since I was tired. It was not until Monday morning that I turned on my TV to catch the morning news to see what had happened to Gustav. I was puzzled that none of the news channels had any reports on Gustav. I went on the internet and found out that the wind speeds had steadily increased as predicted and had reached a maximum of 135mph (the same as Katrina) at 2 PM PDT on Sunday. That is about the time when we finished our lunch at the end of the Fall Festival and started preparation for going home. But unexpectedly, instead of heading directly to New Orleans as had been predicted, it stayed in the gulf. It finally hit land in Texas, but the winds had diminished in speed to 110 mph. There was no reported loss of life attributed to Gustav and minimal property damage. That is why the event was considered to be "un-news worthy". As an engineer, I can understand that wind speeds dissipate rapidly once it is on land due to wind resistance from trees, telephone poles, billboards, homes, etc. However, on open water, there is minimal resistance and usually winds pick up speed while picking up moisture from the sea. I cannot come up with a scientific explanation for what had happened. Upon learning the above details, I immediately jumped into my

car and drove to the Goreichi to give my thanks and gratitude to *Benzaiten* deity for answering my prayers far beyond my expectations.

That is why I say giving thanks to God is like putting money in the bank. I encourage each of you to make your own deposits into your Appreciation Account. You can never know when you might some day need it.

I can recount numerous other instances when I have been helped by *Benzaiten*, but none with results as dramatic as Gustav.