

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

"Live honestly with a pure heart."

In this world, some honest people experience difficulties, while some cunning people become wealthy.

Seeing these situations, we may feel that the world is unfair. Indeed, although the world sometimes appears like that, we should believe that the goodness of the human heart will be revealed sooner or later.

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, "Your mind will be expressed as your speech and attitude."

By this, he meant that humans' fundamental value exists in their sincerity.

Let us live honestly without regard to profits. We may deceive some, but we can never deceive ourselves.

Let us be true to ourselves and sincerely try our best in our daily duties and activities. We will then be trusted by others and live a full life.

NOVEMBER 2023

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	14	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Thu – Fri	23 – 24		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)
Sun	26	10:00 am	Appreciation / Gedatsu Kongo Birthday 7-5-3 Children's Celebration

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5		No Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Thu	16	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	19	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / 7-5-3 Children's Celebration and Luncheon
Thu – Fri	23 – 24		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)

DECEMBER 2023

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Church Clean-up
Tue	11	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sat-Sun	23-31		Church Closed for Holidays

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3		No Service
Sun	10	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	17	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Holiday Program and Luncheon
Thu	21	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sat-Sat	23-31		Church Closed for Holidays



November “Never Forgotten” Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held monthly at the Gedatsu Church to honor the memory of those who have passed away during that particular month.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, November 5, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **George Akiyoshi, Henry Calderon, Harold Horner, Maio Kino, Kaoru Ide Kotabe, Toshiko Kusahara, Hirohide Obu, Tracy T. Takahashi, Dorothy Tomita, Yasuno Niguma Tsuboi, and Sho Akira Wakabayashi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, November 12, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Kakujiro Arakawa, Moto Arakawa, Ibo Roque Chaves, Hatsue Hiram, George Imuta, Ikuko Inoue, Seiji Inoue, Fumio Ishida, Hitoshi Ishida, Chiyoko Deguchi Kamei, Seitaro Kawamura, Fude Kikuta, Masaji George Kikuta, Ken Kimura, Tomio Kubo, Patsy M. Matsumoto, Robert Miyamoto, George Joroshi Miyasako, Masao Roy Mizokami, Emiko Okimura, Manabu Okimura, Nami Sakuma, Jon Nobuyuki Tanji, Dorothy Kiyoko Tomita, Henry Urada.**

Renew Your Church Membership for 2024

Annual Membership: Renewable annually

Individual	\$45
Family	\$70

Lifetime Membership: Pay your membership dues just once, instead of paying annually

Individual	\$450
Family	\$600

Pay Online or by Mail

- To pay online – by credit card or ACH/bank payment – go to the Membership page on the church website at www.gedatsu-usa.com.
- Or mail your check – made payable to Gedatsu Church USA – to your nearest church branch.

Renew Your Holy Paper Plaques

The new year is the time to renew your holy paper plaques for placement throughout the home for the protection of our dwellings and happiness of its inhabitants. See your local church branch for details on types of plaques and prices.



Children Ages 7, 5 and 3 Years To Be Celebrated

This month, Gedatsu members in Los Angeles and Sacramento will observe the *Shichi-Go-San* Festival, the traditional Japanese celebration for the well-being and healthy futures of children ages seven, five and three. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews of those ages, complete the application form available from your local church office to honor the children.

The 7-5-3 Celebration will be held on the following dates:

Los Angeles – Sunday, November 19

Sacramento – Sunday, November 26 TBD

For the L.A. Church celebration, children will receive the traditional *chitose ame* candy, protective amulet, and gift card from the Sunday School. Lunch will be served. A donation of \$25 is appreciated.



Donate to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

Membership dues and donations help to ensure the day-to-day operations of our church. Donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund give the church an additional boost – providing sustaining dollars that help us achieve our longer-range plans for growth and development.

Participation in the Fund requires an annual pledge of \$600 a year, which is in addition to the general membership dues. This \$600 may be paid in a single lump sum; two biannual payments of \$300; or 12 monthly installments of \$50. Complete the application form that is available at your local church office.

Update Your Contact Information

To protect the privacy of members’ personal information, the year-end membership directory will no longer be published and distributed. However, member contact information will still be maintained by the church to keep you apprised of the latest communications and announcements. Therefore, please notify the L.A. Church of any changes to your home address, email address, phone/cellphone numbers by December 1. Email **Rev. Naoya** at naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com, call at (626) 288-1212, or text at (626) 233-2359. Or email **Mariko Locheo** at locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com.

Grandparents “Warmly” Feted

In September, the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church observed National Grandparents Day at its Sunday Appreciation Service. All grandparents among the congregation were presented with special “Love Warmer” appreciation gifts, microwavable



heating pads encased in colorful cloth bags sewn by members (inset at left).



Grandparents pictured from left to right: Paul Nakamura, Judy Hamamoto, Karen Nakamura, Janice Wakasa, Toyoko Murakami, June Kizu, Kazumi Chinen, Tom Okimura, Kiyoko Fujii, Mark Ishida, Victor Mizokami, Sandra Martinez, Marian Mizokami, and Max Martinez.

Hawaii Church Bazaar Delights Community



Gedatsu Church of Hawaii held its Autumn Bazaar in October, bringing enjoyment to the local community. Tasty offerings, such as *Inari* sushi, curry rice, *chaw-fun*, and Hawaiian sweets known as “*Andagi*” were particularly popular. The event was the church’s second bazaar of the year, following its Spring Bazaar in April.

Twelve-part Series:

Brief History of Gedatsu Kongo

An Extraordinary Life of Purpose and Faith

Our Founder, Gedatsu Kongo, died in Japan in 1948. Today, here in America, among his followers, his spiritual legacy remains undiminished – despite the differences of culture, tradition, language and history that it has faced since his passing 75 years ago.

His legacy endures for two reasons: The absolute truth and spirit of the Gedatsu teaching, and the extraordinary personal character of the Founder himself.

It is important for us, as serious Gedatsu students, to understand not only the Gedatsu teaching, but its architect as well.

How did his personality affect his actions? What awakened his religious outlook? What events led him to formulate the Gedatsu teaching? How did his successes and failures influence his thoughts and actions? The answers are practical life lessons that we can learn from and apply to our lives.

To commemorate the Founder’s 75th memorial anniversary, the *Gedatsu Companion* republishes its 12-part series on the life of our Founder. The condensed version of *The Biography of Gedatsu Kongo*, which was published in 1988 (with English translation published in 1998), begins on the following page.

As with many Gedatsu written materials, we are indebted to **Rev. Hisakazu Taki**, who translated the original volumes into English and condensed them for this series.

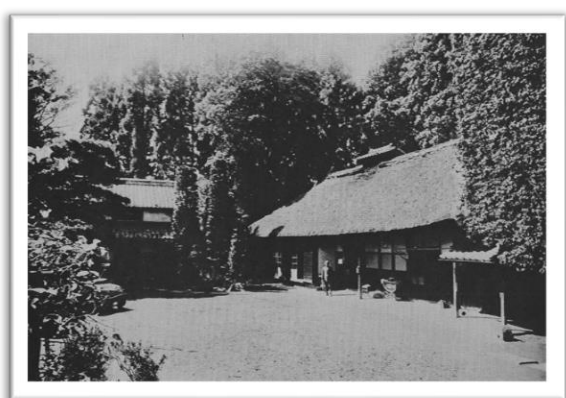
Editor

A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Chapter 1

Childhood and Youth

Gedatsu Kongo,* founder of the Gedatsu Church, was born in Kitamotojuku Village of Saitama Prefecture near Tokyo, Japan, on November 28, 1881. He was born into the Okano family, the fifth child of Makitaro and Kise. His childhood name was Eizo.



The thatched-roof home in Kitamotojuku Village is the birthplace of Gedatsu Kongo. The home is preserved today just as it stood when the Founder was born in 1881.

The Okano family was one of the wealthy farmers in the village and had served as village head for generations. Eizo grew up healthy with his parents' love.

Several episodes from his childhood illustrate the personality and character of young Eizo.

Firm and dutiful

When he was six years old, Eizo's father, Makitaro, told him to take a parcel to the home of the Oshimas, his grandparents, and get some ointment from them.

* "Gedatsu Kongo" is the Founder's Buddhist title, conferred upon him posthumously by the Daigo Temple of Shingon Buddhism. "Gedatsu" means liberation, and "Kongo" means wisdom as indestructible as a diamond. Therefore, Gedatsu Kongo is literally the durable wisdom of liberation.

The Oshima home was two miles from the Okanos. In order to reach it, Eizo had to walk on a winding path through a dense forest, and it was easy for a child to get lost. Other family members worried whether he could return home safely, but Makitaro sent him out saying only, "The path is under your nose," meaning that if young Eizo got lost, he could simply use his mouth to ask someone for directions.

When Eizo arrived at the Oshima home, his grandmother was surprised that he had come alone. Eizo gave her the parcel he was instructed to deliver and received a bottle of ointment from her. He then left, arriving home toward evening. He calmly gave the ointment to his father.

Early religious influences

Before he entered elementary school, Eizo often visited the neighborhood Tamonji Buddhist Temple. He listened to the priest's discussions and asked him questions until he was satisfied with the answers. (In those days, he often gazed admiringly at the setting sun at a commanding spot. In later years, after he established Gedatsu, he built the Sun-Spirit Monument at that same spot.)

When he took over as head of the family, Makitaro became the parishioner representative of the Tenmanten Shinto Shrine and the Tamonji Buddhist Temple. He also had faith in *Fuji-ko*, a religious association connected with Mt. Fuji. He climbed Mt. Fuji every year as his religious practice, and he paid his respect and appreciation to the country, society, teachers, parents, and all creation in the universe.

Makitaro, who considered himself the restorer of the Okano family, established the following precepts for the Okano family:

1. Choose an occupation with prudence.
2. Be prompt in everything.
3. Be thoughtful and judge fairly.
4. Be patient in times of difficulty.
5. Don't forget integrity.
6. Be honest in your duty.
7. Pay your debts promptly.
8. Don't do anything unbecoming to you.

(Continued on page 5)

(Biography – Continued from page 4)

Parental guidance

Eizo spoke about his father as follows. “When I was a boy, I asked my father what I should do that day. He scolded me, saying, ‘Can’t you see what I’m going to do now by looking at me? How can you become a man if you can’t do anything without someone’s instructions?’”

Eizo’s mother, Kise, always instructed her children, “By looking at your father’s eyes, you can tell what he is about to do. Learn to read his mind and act accordingly.” Eizo was raised in this family environment.



Eizo Okano’s father, Makitaro, and mother, Kise, raised their children in a strict, but loving, manner.

Bold and courageous

Eizo entered elementary school in 1888. He had a lot of new friends. Among them, he was outwardly vigorous and active. Not a follower, he was always the leader and played the main role. His classmates called him *Abatei*, which means *Rascal Tei-chan*. He was also called *Teruzo*, and his friends called him *Tei-chan*.

He later wrote of that period, “In truth, as the leader of naughty boys in my childhood, I damaged the shutters of the Tenmanten Shinto Shrine and used them as firewood.” When one of his friends said, “God will punish you for it,” Eizo calmly replied, “I will build a much better shrine when I become an adult.” He was already showing something of his boldness in his early school days.

In those days, the Okanos were engaged in silkworm cultivation and had a big mulberry field near the temple. They gathered mulberry leaves to feed silkworms. Silkworms have a big appetite when they prepare to spin cocoons and had to be fed at midnight

and again early in the morning. Every evening, Makitaro gathered mulberry leaves and kept them under straw mats on the veranda of the Tamonji Temple, but the mulberry leaves were often stolen during the night.

One day, when Eizo was ten years old, his father instructed him, “Go to the Tamonji Temple and watch over the mulberry leaves.”

Although his family worried about sending Eizo alone in the night, Makitaro flatly refused to retract this order. Rascal Eizo had to be taught a lesson.

Thus, despite his family’s anxiousness, Eizo calmly left home and serenely sat cross-legged on the temple veranda throughout the night. Early next morning, he came home rubbing his drowsy eyes. When his family asked him, “Were you okay?” Eizo told them, “*Niou* (a godlike being) appeared in the middle of the night, but I passed gas and shouted, ‘*Niouka!*’ (Do you smell that?).” Makitaro was amazed at Eizo’s brazen courage and wit.

Eizo was not simply naughty, but a boy of unusually strong mind. His friends respected him, and he took good care of them. When one of his friends was mistreated by someone, he fought against even an older boy to defend his friend.

Admiration and respect for his father

However, there was one person with whom Eizo could never compete: his father. When Makitaro played a major role in the village festivals, or when he climbed Mt. Fuji wearing his white uniform, Makitaro displayed indescribable dignity. Eizo looked up to his father as a hero, with admiration and respect.

When Eizo finished elementary school, Makitaro considered whether Eizo should continue school or not, and concluded that he should start working as soon as possible. He arranged for Eizo to apprentice at Isekin Liquor Shop in Tokyo. Eizo accepted his father’s decision, and the two of them left for Tokyo together.

All his family members helped with the preparations for his leaving and gave him a warm and loving send-off with heartfelt words of advice and care. Thus, Eizo left his boyhood days of school behind to embark on a new life in business in Tokyo.

(Continued on back page)

Bishop Kishida's Sincere Love for Members

By Senior Reverend Akira Sebe

When I was 30 years old and living at the Gedatsu Church in Sacramento, Bishop Eizan Kishida often came from San Francisco to visit the *Goreichi* Holy Grounds. Bishop Kishida was a man who didn't talk about his feelings, but I could sense what he felt by observing his actions and the way he lived his life. I sensed that the Bishop had the purest, deepest love for the Gedatsu members. Above all else, he truly wished and prayed for their happiness.

I was deeply moved by the absolute sincerity of Bishop Kishida's love for the members. I had never seen such egoless, selfless love before. I also knew that Bishop's sincere wish for members' happiness was his highest priority and went beyond the business aspects of the Gedatsu Church. I realized this sincere love was needed to successfully run a church, because people sought and appreciated this love. Bishop Kishida knew that only sincere love would allow people to be willingly guided, and then the guardian angels could guide them to where they needed.

This is also how our founder, Gedatsu Kongo, guided Gedatsu members in Japan. Praying before each of the divine shrines at *Goreichi*, he would express his deep desire for the members' happiness. He would say, "If you go to the *Goreichi* shrines and pray sincerely to the divine guardian spirits, you will hear my voice. If you ask for guidance, I will answer you." Gedatsu Kongo was able to receive guidance from the Universal Life Force to help guide the members.

I too feel that my top priority as a minister is the happiness of the people. I have tried to follow the direction that Bishop Kishida showed me. He prayed deeply both morning and night, wishing for members' happiness. He would say that true prayer must reach the point of sincerity that your ego disappears. You must stop your brain from thinking of anything else but the happiness of the members. This is not an intellectual act but must be felt deep down in your heart.

I learned from Bishop Kishida that arrogance and human pride prevent us from eliminating our egos. He firmly believed that the great difficulties and tragedies he experienced in his personal life – including the shame of financial bankruptcy – were actually gifts from God. He appreciated those adversities because they struck down his ego-driven pride and humbled him, enabling him to feel the deepest humility and sincerity.

The existence of our Gedatsu Church is possible because of the dedication and help of our members. Those of us who are responsible for the organization and management of our church – administrators, officers, and ministers – must remember this point and must place our members' happiness before everything else. Most importantly, we must practice our sincere love for members. Just as Bishop Kishida lived his life for members' happiness, we must continue to demonstrate that pure love to the members and people. This is our goal and responsibility to ensure the continued existence of our Gedatsu Church.

The realization of Bishop Kishida's sincerity and unconditional love left me with a lasting and deep impression. It was a powerful experience that taught me how to give deep, passionate prayer. At first, I knew nothing about the Universal Life Force and divine spirits, but through observing Bishop Kishida's pure, sincere love, I was able to learn. Through Bishop's spiritual approach to Gedatsu, I learned to give unconditional prayers for the members' happiness.

The profound experience of Bishop Kishiida's deep, sincere prayer for happiness for the members continues to inspire and motivate me. I will forever strive to follow his example. I have only the purest love and appreciation for Bishop Kishida and everything that he has taught me.



Pictured in the mid-1970s, left to right: Senior Reverend Akira Sebe, Reverend Gerald Shiroishi, Bishop Eizan Kishida, and Mother Ine Kiyota



SEPTEMBER 2023 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$12,871

General Donations: J. Tanaka, M/M A. Santander, M/M D. Tsuboi, H. Tsujimura, M/M Ho. Tsujimura, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, J. Kaku, M/M J. Horner, K. Kuritani, M. Fukushima, M. Nakamura, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. Kaku, M/M S. Sekikawa, S./W. Matsumoto, S. Taketa, S. Kizaki, M/M S. Shaklan, T. Bartos, T./I. Hiram, T. Murakami, Y. Oishi, Y/C Oishi, Y. Harai, Kaku/Mahoney Family

Special Acknowledgments

Grand Fall Festival *Gedatsu-kai* Japan (\$1,000), J. Ito (\$1,000), M/M S. Mukai (\$500), A. Sebe (\$600), M/M R. Ito, Appreciation M/M J. Horner, M/M P. Reid, Do. Shiroishi, M/M D. Ide, No Name, B. Yamamura, P./N. Bridgham, V./S./S. Matsuura, M/M D. Tsuboi, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M C. Morioka, J. Tanaka, T/K Ishida, De. Shiroishi, T. Murakami, T. Okimura, M/M K. Long, M/M K. Chinen, K. Fujii, A. Tsujimura, T. Nagao, T./I. Hiram, Y./C. Oishi, M/M G. Wood, M/M N. Chodor, M/M R. Allum, M/M S. Sekikawa, C. Tsujimura, M/M N. Okano

M/M K. Kuritani	Fall Festival appreciation and enshrinement of Rudy Tsujimura
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for <i>Ohigan</i> and Appreciation Service
Do. Shiroishi	Memorial Tower enshrinement of Kiyoe Ishida
T./K. Ishida	Memorial Tower enshrinement of Kiyoe Ishida
M/M R. Ito	Memorial Tower enshrinement in memory of Louis Ito
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude and appreciation for <i>Higan</i> Service
J. Ito	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$3,000)
M/M G. Wood	Appreciation for Katsu Nagao Memorial Tower enshrinement
M/M N. Chodor	Appreciation and gratitude for Memorial Tower enshrinement of Kiyoe Ishida
A. Tsujimura	Appreciation for Memorial Tower enshrinement of Rudy Tsujimura and Lily Y. Shiba
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation for prayer for new 4 Runner
M/M P. Reid	Appreciation for return of old <i>kuyo</i> plaques
D/M A. Akashi	Appreciation for Fall Festival lunch

Southern California Total: \$2,942

General: Anonymous, D. Shiroishi, E. Ogawa, H. Inouye, J. Hamamoto, J. Kaku, J. Shiroishi, K. Fujii, M. Kimura, M. Nakamura, M/M K. Chinen, M/M M. Hamada, M/M N. Okano, M/M T. Hiram, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, N. Chuck, No Name, S. Kaku, T. Ishida, T. Murakami, T. Okimura, Y. Oishi

Special Acknowledgments

M/M D. Mah	In memory of Tomoki Oyanagi
Y. Oishi	"Never Forgotten" for sister and friend
M/M S. Mukai	In memory of Misako Kobata
Anonymous	With gratitude for Linda Sanchez
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo

Online Donations: Total: \$1,490

General: G. Iwata, J. Mah, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

Special Acknowledgments

R. Sakamoto	Fall Festival
J. Mah	In memory of Tomoki and Margaret Oyanagi
M/M A. Kishida	Appreciation for Fall Festival
B. Shimasaki	Flowers for main altar

*Special Acknowledgments
are listed for gifts \$100+.*

*Dollar amounts are shown
for gifts \$500+.*

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
www.gedatsu-usa.org



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Sally McSwain** of the Sacramento Spiritual Center. Sally is the mother of **Everett** and **Vivian McSwain** and is employed as a public-school substitute teacher. As the daughter of Gedatsu pioneer members,

Steve and **Sadako Taketa**, Sally grew up in the Gedatsu Church and is an dedicated volunteer – particularly in the Grand Festivals, where she organizes the *Ochigo* children.

“I try to follow in my parents’ footsteps by volunteering to help as much as I can,” says Sally. “I feel that Gedatsu has helped me to be more mindful and empathetic and to think about the people and the greater world around me. I hope to instill those qualities in my kids.”

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(Biography – Continued from page 5)

Apprenticeship

Arriving at the Isekin Liquor Shop, Eizo found dozens of *sake* barrels being placed orderly in the store and apprentices working busily. The storekeeper greeted Makitaro and looked at Eizo. He told Makitaro, “He looks strong. With training, he will be a good merchant.” Makitaro sincerely asked the store owner to take care of Eizo. Then, after telling Eizo to do his best, the father left for home.

Next morning, Eizo started his new life as an apprentice. He got up early in the morning and cleaned the shop. He learned from his senior workers about all the operations, including how to deal with *sake* barrels and make deliveries. Eizo worked hard and learned steadily, eventually becoming a full-fledged worker in half a year. He mastered each task rapidly and soon became a central force in the store.

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One day, Eizo received a letter from father, informing him that Eizo’s older brother, Shinzaburo, had been called for military service. Because Shinzaburo was critical to the Okano family operation, Makitaro wanted Eizo to return home.

A few days later, Makitaro came to Tokyo to explain to Eizo in person. The Okano family planned to enter the weaving business. He could not entrust the business to employees. He needed Eizo. Bowing humbly to Eizo, Makitaro asked him to return for the sake of the Okano family. Deeply impressed, Eizo understood his father’s feelings well. He could not deny his father’s request. Thus, he replied, “I understand, Father!”

On the day of his departure, all the store workers gave Eizo a hearty send-off. Eizo walked toward the Ueno Station filled with deep emotion for his work experience. It was December of 1895.

(To be continued next month)

