



A



Missionary
in the
Shadow of
the Sun

一床ひろし

日之影の宣教師 (2)

Part 2

Chapter IV

Since my trip to Takajo, 20-odd years had passed when I singled out this matter about Zepeda from the travelogue I had written but had not completed yet, to make an independent non-fiction story. However, I had thought that I should not publicize this matter, for it could compromise God's name. At the same time, I had felt an urge to publicize it. In the meantime, I was writing an adventure story about the prophet Jonah, and I tended to compare the two missionaries of God and would come to an easy conclusion that in attitude Zepeda was superior to Jonah. (They each heard voice of God twice. In the case of Jonah, he did not obey the first and only after hearing the second he went to Nineveh. In the case of Zepeda, he followed the voice of God on both occasions. Thus, I wondered, and asked myself why not write about Zepeda and let his strong calling reach the readers?

Thus had I wondered long, and then wondered again at the time when I finished Chapter III of this book, which I had intended to be the concluding chapter, if it was really incorrect to publicize this non-fiction - if it would compromise God's name. I inquired of God. As a consequence, I came to believe that I myself ought to go to Hinokage, which Zepeda failed to reach on his second journey, and wait for God's revelation.

(I believe in revelation. For I have had a couple of occasions in which I believed I got a revelation from God. For instance, when I was a young Sunday school teacher in a Mennonite church in the suburbs of Tokyo, I was preparing for a talk about Moses in Exodus with the help of a teacher's guidebook. In the story there appears manna. I had thought it a good idea to replicate manna in accordance with the description in the bible ("tasted like wafers that had been made with honey" Exodus 16:14). Thus, I had purchased wafers and honey and planned to make a replica of manna from them for each one of the pupils in the church. But on the Sunday morning when I had planned to serve the manna to the children, it so happened that as I was in the bathroom in my house and was about to sit on the toilet stool, I suddenly threw up over the wall. I had not felt any nausea prior to this, and it was not that I had sample-tasted the manna myself. All of a sudden this unexpected phenomenon took place and I did not feel ill or pain during this occurrence. This kind of thing had never happened to me – vomiting without first feeling ill. Hence I considered this as a sign from God, cautioning me against carrying out this plan of serving children the fake manna.)

So, I visited Hinokage alone on 13th of January, 2018, and stayed there for two days (Saturday and Sunday), wishing I could get some sort of revelation from God. It was only on January 11th that I decided on this trip to Hinokage. Prior to this decision I had visited several internet sites to know more about Hinokage and how I could reach there from Tokyo best. I found airplane, express train and bus are to be employed in this

order. I also found that if I take a plane leaving Haneda airport (in Tokyo) at about eight o'clock in the morning I should reach Hinokage by bus at about 13 o'clock. Then I found that there was going to be a festival in Hinokage on 13th and 14th of January this year, wherein specifically "kagura" would be performed for two days and one night. Kagura, for which a literal translation is "god-entertainment", is a traditional Shinto religious theatrical dance, in which I have long taken an interest. So, I promptly decided to go to Hinokage on the 13th and stay there until 14th, which I did.

It turned out to be a good decision, for during a festival one can meet more citizens than during non-eventful days, when people are busy working; and thus I could meet and talk with more people than I could have hoped to do otherwise, for I am not myself a social person either.

The kagura was scheduled to be performed from the noon till 16 o'clock of 13th at an Iwaigawa Jinja (shrine) and after a three-hour intermission it would start again and continue overnight at a community center near the shrine until the noon of 14th. So, I planned to go directly to Iwaigawa Jinja after my arrival.

From Tokyo I flew to Miyazaki Airport, took an express train to Nobeoka City, and from there took a bus, which brought me in about an hour to a bus stop named Seiun Bridge, which overlooks Hinokage Town.

Stepping off the bus at the bus stop at about one o'clock in the afternoon, I found the distance from there to the town was not only long but contained much downward slopes, because Hinokage lies in the bottom of a huge ravine. It meant that my way back to the bus stop the day after would be like a hill climbing and I am now 67. (Actually, there are buses that go through the town and stop at various places, but if I had taken such a bus, the time of arrival at Hinokage would have been more than one hour later according to the time table of the bus company, for I had to wait about an hour at Nobeoka station.) Only automobiles passed by me, as I walked down the valley.

As I arrived in the *downtown*, the road went by a river, and I crossed a bridge and came by a building, which was a museum of straw works. I tried to drop in it but the doors were closed. I wondered if it was closed on Saturdays, when would it be open. As I went on the riverside road, I came to a small tourist information center and finding women in it through the transparent door, I opened it and asked them the way to Iwaigawa shrine.

There were several relatively old women sitting around a table, enjoying afternoon chat over tea and small food such as pickles. They kindly told me the way to the shrine, and invited me to sit there. Thus, I joined their talk awhile, availing myself to hot green tea and the small treats they served me. When they learnt that I had come all the way from Tokyo, they wondered what had brought me to their small town. I, of course, mentioned first about my being attracted to their time-honored kagura (which is particularly known as "Ohito" kagura, according to them) to flatter them, and then I also mentioned about the American missionary Zepeda (of course using the right name), hoping it would ring a bell in anyone of them. I said that I had met him in Miyazaki city 43 years ago, that he had come from Hinokage, and that he had recommended my visiting it for its beauty, the third

part being my invention added to flatter them again. But no one seemed to know or remember him. The length of 43 years seemed not easy even for the elderly women to look back.

One woman, who happened to have seen me descending the valley, as she was driving past me, offered to give me a ride to Iwaigawa shrine if I could wait till three o'clock when she would leave the tourist information center. I accepted her kind offer. It was about one and half o'clock, so I decided to while away my time at a nearby hot spa center. This center is part of a railway station building. The station itself has been closed down since a flood in 2005, caused by a typhoon, destroyed two railway bridges and other facilities, and forced the railway company to abandon the business, to great regret of the people living in the towns and villages connected by the railway. I could however see the time table of the trains still hanging on a wall. Also two refurbished passenger cars on the rusted rails are now used as petit hotel cabins. I had planned to stay there overnight if I had to, which I did not.

I had expected the town to be more densely occupied by buildings at least in the busiest part of it, but what I saw were relatively quiet streets with dilapidated buildings dispersed here and there. Probably the cessation of the railway service prompted depopulation of the town and caused many young ones to leave the town.

Now, I went to the hot-spa center and took a bath. It is always proper to clean one's body before entering a religious festival, whatever the religion is. The hot-spa center was on the second floor of the station building and consisted of a restaurant and some amusement facilities. A group of men and women had rented a large tatami room and they were having a karaoke contest. After purchasing a 1800-cc bottle of *shochu*, a Japanese vodka, at a liquor shop to donate to the festival committee (for it was recommended to do as a courtesy, on an internet site), I went back to the tourist center. There were newcomers and they did not know or remember Zepeda either. After talking for a while, I learnt that most of the townspeople only go and see the kagura toward the end of the festival the next day whereat more famous programs of kagura are performed.

Around three o'clock I was given a lift by the afore-mentioned woman and brought to a place where there was a relatively new public community center, from which I could walk up to Iwaigawa shrine. The driver of the car said to me that she would come to the festival the next morning and would give me another ride on my way back to the bus stop if I liked. According to her, Hinokage is a town where one needs a vehicle if they want to live a life of quality. Most probably Zepeda, I think, was not a driver there. He probably used a bicycle like Mormon missionaries do, and it would have been hard for him for most of the roads there are sloped and in those days most likely they were either not well-paved or not paved at all.

The first part of the Ohito kagura festival was held at the ancient small shrine Iwaigawa Jinja, which is on a mountain side and one has to climb a long slope paved with long ancient stone steps.



(Steps to Iwaigawa Jinja, taken by Kazuhiro Nagamitz)

It was very cold and I had to keep my gloves and muffler and cap on. In the shrine building, I could see one young performer shivering with cold while waiting to dance in kagura performance.

(A kagura performance at Iwaigawa Jinja, *Mr. K* on the drum):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlhkmAhq-uw&t=2s>

When the rituals and kagura performances there were over, the people descended in a

formal procession along the long stone steps of the shrine, and entered a square belonging to the community center, and kagura dance was performed participated by all the performers.

In this community center citizens practice kagura and other art skills on normal days. The woman who had given me the ride said she participates in mahjong game session there, where no money is bet, and she added that it is well-known that to play games would lessen the possibility of falling into senile dementia.

The second part of the festival was held in this building where it was air-conditioned but the temperature did not rise high enough due to the extreme coldness outside, so that many did not remove caps, mufflers or gloves in the spacious theater room where the kagura performance was staged. There is not a stage though, and the performers and audience were on the same floor. Only there was a boundary that separated the performers' area.

The intermission period between the first and the second parts of the festival was the only intermission time when the consecutive series of kagura performance programs was discontinued. And during this period free supper was served to the people in the theater room. They served a lot of alcoholic drinks too, especially shochu. I normally drink only two spoonfuls of spirit each day and that after diluting it in hot milk. But on the first day of the festival I took more shochu than I should, and this prompted my talking to the strangers.

Eager to meet someone who remembered Zepeda, I braced myself to talk to the strangers who sat nearby. But I did not have to do much. It appeared that many of the visitors knew each other for they had come to the festival more or less regularly, and it appeared that I was the only stranger in, and furthermore, many had learnt that this newcomer had come from Tokyo, which seemed the farthest of the various places from which the visitors had gathered for the festival-seeing, so that many seemed to have taken interest in me. I was therefore asked questions including how I knew about Hinokage. Consequently I said about Zepeda of course, who was the first person to bring the town Hinokage to my attention; but I did not mention his name in particular; I only described how I met this American missionary in Miyazaki city 43 years ago, who said he had come from Hinokage. I hoped my mentioning of the American missionary would ring a bell in someone there, for an American missionary living in a rustic town is a conspicuous presence.

Forty-three years is almost a life-long period or even a longer period for many who were sitting by me, and I could only count on the ones older than 50 or so. There was a man sitting by me who looked older than myself. After a period of silence during which I devoted myself to eating and drinking, I managed to talk to him and asked questions about the tradition of kagura in Hinokage. He was Mr. F, and was with his wife and daughter, who had been married to a Hinokageite man. Thus the couple constantly visited the town on various occasions including festivals. Mr. F liked shochu very much and kept filling my cup with it, and I kept pouring hot water in it to dilute the spirit. When he asked what

had brought me into Hinokage, I explained my motivation and mentioned about Zepeda. Being not a Hinokageite, Mr. F did not of course know about the American.

When the supper was over and the tables were removed, we went to a smaller room to continue the conversation and the drinking since there was yet some time to spare before the beginning of the second part of the kagura festival.

Then, a Mr. K appeared in the room and he came to our place, for he was a close friend of Mr. F. The latter introduced to me Mr. K, who was a Hinokageite, and whom I had remembered as he was playing the drum at the kagura ceremony at Iwaigawa Jinja (I even had taken a video of his playing, for the collaboration of his performance with a young man's performance on wood plate had attracted me. See the video above). So I praised his and his colleague's performance, and expressed my sympathy with them for it was very cold out there and it must have been hard to hold the sticks with naked hands. He said the coldness stimulates the performers and thrills them into ecstasy.

Then, Mr. F said Mr. K is a town counselor and an important member of the group which promotes preservation of Hinokage's time-honored Ohito kagura.

Then, the conversation shifted to center on me and I talked about myself and why I had come to take interest in Hinokage town, and thus about the American missionary that had lived in the very town 43 years ago, and I asked if any one there remembered him. After telling me about one wrong Westerner, Mr. K said that he also remembered an American missionary who taught English in his junior high school many years ago. He even remembered the missionary's first name. He told us about how the townspeople memorized his first name, which was Norman. It involved a pun and went like this, "Wine or cigarette he 'noman' (takes not)", or "sake or tobacco Norman noman" for Norman abstained from wine and cigarette. Thus Mr. K had remembered the first name of the American English teacher throughout these forty-odd years, and it rang a bell in me, for Zepeda's first name was indeed Norman!

Mr. K remembered Norman well for he was a student at the junior high school in Hinokage and learned some English from Norman in his classroom. (Nowadays, every junior high school in Japan has a native English speaker as an assistant teacher, but it was very rare in those days.) So, Zepeda taught English not only at his rented house but also in the public junior high school, probably as the assistant teacher. I wanted to ask more questions to Mr. K about Norman, but he got busy talking with other visitors on various other topics, especially about kagura, so that I could not monopolize him, although he seemed interested in talking more about Norman with me.

While Mr. K, sitting across the table from me, was talking with others, two relatively young women came to the table to dine and sat by my side. As they said they liked shochu, Mr. F placed glasses before them and poured the spirit into their glasses, and I passed to them a thermos bottle filled with hot water. They said they had just arrived and had come from Miyazaki city by car. Thus, we started talking about the city where I used to live years ago. And soon I was speaking about the American missionary again whom I

had met in Miyazaki city 43 years ago and who had been living in Hinokage then. I talked about how he had come to live in Hinokage as a Christian missionary and how he had to leave it, and how he impressed me when I met him in a church in Miyazaki city. This talk about Norman seemed to interest one of the ladies. She was attentive to my talk, and I felt Mr. K was also trying to listen to my talk while engaged in the conversation with others.

But before I could finish my talk about what had become of Norman thereafter, I had to stop because a Mr. O, a young man and another kagura performer, came and he was introduced to us by Mr. K as a man who had come to Hinokage, after graduating a university in Tokyo, as a member of certain Japan countryside cooperation volunteer corps. His assignment had been for one year, but he chose to stay longer to work under a different public project and eventually decided to live in Hinokage to be a Hinokageite. The two girls happened to have met him before at an exhibition of farm products and he remembered them too. When they met at the exhibition, he was promoting sale of his jams, and he now explained about his new product – a jam of chestnut, which I had never heard of. So, I asked if he had filed a patent application for his novel jam, which he had not. This man happened to have brought some bottles of the chestnut jam to this community center, which the girls bought forthwith.

Now it became about the time the kagura performance had to restart, and Mr. K as well as this young jam maker left the place, and somehow, we, I and the two girls from Miyazaki, did not restart our conversation about Norman, nor met again to chat during the rest of my stay there, so that I passed the enigma about Zepeda to the two women.

Now, I felt the lucky encounter with Mr. K made my trip to Hinokage a success. It was as if I found a missing link to complete my non-fiction about Norman.

Having this luck, I could relax thereafter and did not make a special effort to find others who might remember Norman.

Now, the kagura performances went on and on, and some spectators including myself got sleepy after midnight, when hot *udon* noodle was served. Having seen some others start sleeping on the floor with coverings over them or in their sleeping bags, I too slipped into my sleeping bag, which I had purchased only one day before the trip, and had a good sleep in spite of the loud drum beats, thanks to the hypnotic effect of shochu. Besides, since the drum beats often repeated same rhythm patterns over and over again, the vibration that came to my ear and body, which had learnt the patterns, through the air and the floor, respectively, did not surprise me, but rather made me feel comfortable so much that a deep dreamless sleep visited me and I did not wake until about six in the morning. Over the night, 26 members of the kagura preservation team performed in turn without end, and there were 28 programs in all that were to be performed in the community center from 13:00 of 13th till the noon of 14th, some almost two-hour long. There might have been moments when only the kagura preservation team were awake, some performing and others watching and cheering, while all the non-members were asleep. This I hope did not offend them for kagura is to entertain the god - not us.

After awaking, I lingered in the sleeping bag and watched the performances, resting my head on my right hand, and the everlasting kagura play went on and on. But gradually it became difficult to stay lying, for as the kagura program approached the climax end,

citizens of Hinokage came to the community center by families, and the floor was gradually filled with them so much that there was less space for sleepers. So, I got out of my sleeping bag and sat on my tripod stool at the back side of the theater room.

A man sitting on a foldable chair nearby came to talk with me, saying that the portable tripod stool that I was sitting on was a very good idea for this place – and thus he had thought that I was a frequenter to overnight kagura festivals. I said that I was not good at sitting on flat places so I had thought the stool would be nice. This man turned out to be a graduate of Miyazaki University and that he was also in the Technology Department as I was. We talked about the days when we were there, which did not overlap with each other, for he was more than six years younger than me and I was in Miyazaki six years. Among his hobbies, according to his visiting card he gave me (not shown), are drinking shochu and watching kagura. No wonder he was there.

I went to the smaller room where breakfast was served and I quickly ate rice and miso soup and pickles; then I returned to the theater room to see the final programs and took videos of some of the plays. About noon I met again the woman who had given me the ride the day before, and thanked her again for the kindness. She offered to give me a ride again if I could leave forthwith, which I accepted, although the lunch was already being served. She drove me to the bus stop Seiun Bridge, which is at a much higher altitude from the town. After thanking her as she left, I crossed the Seiun Bridge and took pictures of the town of Hinokage. As the weather had been good, I should remember the town as a sunny place rather than shadowy.

Now, as I experienced the friendship of quite a few Hinokageites during my stay, I have come to think that Norman himself should have enjoyed the similar hospitality of the people, all the more so because he was a foreigner coming from an extremely far country. I do not doubt he had been invited, on different occasions including the kagura festival, to many places where wine and maybe cigarettes were offered to him, and that he rejected all of these, saying, with his feeble smile same as the one in his photo, "shochu or tobacco I norman," causing the people as well as himself to laugh. I can now imagine that, even after that unfortunate and sad incident, Norman definitely wished to be back and live with the old folks in the pastoral Hinokage, like Mr. O, when he heard the second voice from God.



(A sunny side of Hinokage, taken by the author on 2018-1-13)

The following is a video taken by the author of a kagura performance:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DelXetr_R_Y&t=202s.

The legend on which several of the famous kagura plays performed prior to the finale of the two-day festival are based is as follows:

Goddess Amaterasu became the god representing the sun and ruler of the heavens. Her husband and brother Tsukuyomi was the god representing the moon and ruler of the night. The two were content for a time, but Tsukuyomi became restless and went on a rampage, destroying Amaterasu's rice fields, hurling a flayed pony at her loom, and killing one of her attendants in a fit of rage. Amaterasu, who was in fury and grief, hid inside the Ama-no-Iwato ("heavenly rock cave"), thus effectively hiding the sun for a long period of time, darkening the world. Eventually, she was persuaded by many gods to leave the cave, whereupon the sun came out to enlighten the world.

In the above videos, a god is frantically and adamantly trying to remove rocks to open the cave and expose the hiding goddess of the sun to enlighten the country; and Norman proved to be no less adamant in his attempt to expose Hinokage to God's glory.

Now, during my stay in Hinokage, although I did not get any particularly positive revelation from God, with respect to the correctness of publicizing this story, I am sure that there was not a particularly negative one either. Therefore, I deem it be the case that this matter had been considered so trivial a one that it was not even brought to His attention.

The End

Appendix I:



I am in the Land of the Rising Sun
with the Love of the Risen Sun
Reaching people in the Shadow of the Sun
with the power of the Glorified Son.

Isaiah 9:2

Please Pray for ---

SOUND MIND – 2 Tim. 1:7

SOULS REMAINING – John 15:4-8, 16

STRENGTH – Isaiah 40:31, Nehemiah 8:10

SUPPLY – Phil. 4:19, 3 John 2

STEADFASTNESS – 1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 6:9

SPEAKING BOLDLY – Eph. 6:18-20

Appendix II:

2 Tim. 1:7 (SOUND MIND)

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

John 15: 4-8 (SOULS REMAINING)

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ”

John 15: 16 (SOULS REMAINING)

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

Isaiah 40:31 (STRENGTH)

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

Nehemiah 8:10 (STRENGTH)

“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is holy* unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Phillipians. 4:19 (SUPPLY)

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ”

3 John 2 (SUPPLY)

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

1 Cor. 15:58 (STEADFASTNESS)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Gal. 6:9 (STEADFASTNESS)

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ”

Eph. 6:18 – 20 (SPEAKING BOLDLY)

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

¹In January of 1951, two villages (Iwaigawa and Nanaori) were merged to become a town, which was named Hinokage (shadow of the sun). This naming was obviously after the name of the railway station there, which was Hinokage, (of Takachiho Line), which had been in service since 1939. How Norman in US came to know of the existence of the town of this unique name in Japan is a question not answered here, except that he claims he learnt it from God.

Complete version at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B078ZVZYHD>

or

<https://www.amazon.com/Missionary-Shadow-Sun-Kazuhiro-Nagamitz-ebook/dp/B078ZVZYHD>