

Don't Forget the Blessings from the Land

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November 2017

Recently, I had three Japanese visitors: a couple from Japan and their daughter from Seattle. They were not Gedatsu members, so they asked me about Gedatsu, and I was happy to explain.

The daughter was interested in Gedatsu and wanted to see the altar. I explained that the altar is combination of Shinto and Buddhist styles. The centerpiece is *Tenjinchigi*, the Supreme Spirit of the Universe, on the left is the Universal life energy, and on the right is our founder, Gedatsu Kongo.

The father was interested in the *Kuyo* stupa. He was impressed to see how we offer *Amacha Kuyo* to the ancestral spirits and spirits related to us. I explained the concept of *Kuyo*. "We believe that everything in the world has a spirit. That is why Gedatsu members have a *Kuyo* plaque at home for the spirits of birds, animals, insects, fish, trees and plants, as well as for their ancestral spirits. Chicken, pork or fish we eat were alive, but we took their lives to sustain our lives. *Amacha Kuyo* is performed to say "thank you" to them for their sacrifice.

Gedatsu also focuses on the blessings we receive from the land. If we purchase a property, we naturally think, "I am the owner of the property." However, we should realize that we cannot live or work without land, without a country. That is why we also offer *Amacha Kuyo* to the spirits connected to land and housing. If we forget the blessings from the land, anything can go wrong.

My wife and the three visitors offered *Amacha Kuyo* together.

Today, we did property blessing by spreading *Amacha*. We do property blessing every first Sunday. In the opening prayer, we chant, "I shall reciprocate the profound and immeasurable blessings I receive from my country, my parents, my teachers, society and heaven and all creation."

I want you to remember that "country" comes first. In the original Japanese opening prayer, our founder actually said, "The blessing from our country is the biggest blessing of all." I also told the Japanese family the importance of feeling grateful to one's country, especially the place where they were born.

The guardian deity of the place where we were born – called *Ubusuna gami* in Japanese – protects us from the time we were born, and even after we move away. So, we should always remember that and give thanks to the guardian deity when we offer morning and evening prayers at home.

One of the Gedatsu teachers in Japan emailed me recently and told me about the importance of *Amacha Kuyo* to the land. From the many true stories related to land and property, he recounted one example.

Nara prefecture is a historical place, which held the capital of Japan in the 8th century. Some Gedatsu members work as construction contractors in Nara. They always offer *Amacha Kuyo* at the construction site before they start work to avoid having accidents. In the past, whenever they forgot to offer *Amacha Kuyo*, they had accidents. In Japan, construction firms – especially on government-related jobs – are fined if they cannot complete the work within deadline.

I recommend you do property blessing by spreading *Amacha* at home or at your workplace at least once a month to express your gratitude to the place where you live or work. You don't need to spread a lot of *Amacha* tea each time. My Gedatsu teacher told me to take a bottle of *Amacha* with me and pour it onto a portion of the land.

Let's always remember the blessings we receive from the land and the property.