

ICHIGŪ KAI
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masayuki Chikuma (MC)
And Bishop Shigemaru Miyao (SM)

Interviewed by panel

Lead interviewer (probably): Rev. Ryokan Ara (RA) 荒了寛
Plus unknown others (Unk)

Interview date unknown (probably 1979)

This interview is one of a series of video interviews conducted in Japanese by Hawaii Ichigū Kai, a Buddhist service organization, led by Bishop Ryokan Ara. The group made video recordings of 100 Issei sharing their life stories.

Note: Unclear words or sentences are shown by ((?)). Comments by the translator are enclosed in brackets [].

RA: It flashed across my mind to invite both of you to our oral history interview. We felt it would be worthwhile to record your stories about shrines on videotape. Hence, you are here. Thank you very much for coming. Mr. Miyao of Izumo Taisha is at my immediate side, followed by Mr. Chikuma, bishop of Inari Shrine. I think [Japanese] temples and shrines first appeared in Hawaii about 80 years ago. I think Mr. Miyao [Katsuyoshi Miyao, father of Shigemaru Miyao] came to Hawaii around that time [in 1906]. Since Mr. Chikuma came to Hawaii earlier [in 1924] than Mr. Miyao here [in 1931], I would like to ask Mr. Chikuma to tell me your story first. I know it is an old story, if you could remember it. (Laughter)

MC: As for the subject of shrines, Mr. Miyao has a detailed knowledge about them. My father and mother started their Inari Shrine around Taisho 6 [1917]. At that time, it was a flat one-story structure. My father studied as an associate member of Izumo Taisha under Mr. Katsuyoshi Miyao, who was chief priest and the father of Mr. Miyao here. My mother had the Inari Shrine at ((?)). There used to be Wakamiya Inari Shrine in Moiliili, which was run by Mr. Akizaki.

Unk: Yeah, I remember it.

MC: I heard that Mr. Yoshio, the father of young Akizaki, who recently died, transferred the sacred spirit from the head shrine [in Japan] to his new shrine [in Hawaii].

RA: I see.

MC: As for our shrine, it was reconstructed from a flat to higher structure in Taisho 8 [1919]. There was a shrine carpenter, Mr. Takata. They asked him to raise the shrine. I still have photos of the original shrine. My mother [in-law] was a medium there. She lived in ((?)). My father [in-law] was a disciple of Mr. Miyao, diligently studying under him. He eventually received an appointment as a certified member—it is now called a chief priest.

In those days, the title of “chief priest” or ((?)) needed to be licensed by city or village authorities. He also must be sanctioned by the head of the shrine. Mr. Miyao repeatedly told me never to call myself *gūji* [chief priest] without official sanctions. Therefore, I called myself the master of religious ceremonies, or presiding priest. *Gūji* became popular only after the war. Furthermore, shrines, so-called Kanpei-taisha and others, were semi-governmental. And the Jinja-cho [the local administrative organ of the Association of Shinto Shrines] was very stringent in those days. You were educated in school and ((?)). I am not like you, not at all. My father [in-law] came to Hawaii as an immigrant. Thanks to Mr. Miyao—the elder Miyao—he became a Shinto priest. Mr. Miyao told my father, “If you wanted to worship Inari [the god of harvests], I could help you to obtain the sacred spirits of god from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine [head shrine of all Inari shrines] when I go to Japan.” I am not sure whether it was before or after Mr. Miyao went back to Japan—it was from Chief Priest Senge, the superintendent priest.

SM: Yes, Takamochi [Senge].

MC: It was Takamochi. It was a letter of appointment from him [given to my father]. I also received a letter of appointment from him at the start. Then, thanks to your father [Katsuyoshi Miyao], we received the sacred spirits of god from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine in Kyoto, which were transferred to our shrine. Until then, our shrine was not a public organization. It was private. Therefore, we had to pay taxes—we had a hard time.

RA: I can imagine.

MC: Nevertheless, people from the countryside such as Waialua, Wahiawa, and Aiea came to visit our shrine, although it was rather expensive to travel. In those days, many men as well as women came to visit our shrine. Many of them were from Waimanalo. Many were plantation workers. I recall one visitor who recently died—he died at age 50-something. He grew papaya. His name was...

RA: Where was he from?

MC: From Waimanalo.

SM: Oh, Mr. Jutaro Omizo.

MC: Yes, Mr. Omizo. Mr. Omizo and other farm workers. Mr. Yoshida and all other people. They had a strong faith in the cult of Inari. Accordingly, many people came to visit our shrine at the time of festivals. In those days, ((there was another shrine next to ours?)). Afterwards, that shrine was replaced by a Shingon Buddhist school. I think it was the Chinese Consulate before the Shingon Buddhist school took over.

RA: I think that is correct.

MC: I think I heard that there was also a facility owned by the Jodo Sect of Buddhism. In those days, one lot of the land around there cost \$1,000. Accordingly, we heard the Shingon Sect of Buddhism acquired three lots for \$3,000, and all of us were shocked by its absurd cost. Anyway, at this time, all the Japanese were kicked out of that area when the government decided to construct a road there.

RA: Yes.

- MC: Rental and other properties were totally demolished, and the residents were forced to move to other areas such as Kaimuki. Most of them moved to the Kaimuki area. One person who lived in the front side of our neighborhood was forced to move when they decided to put a new road there. (Laughter) We bought one lot of rental properties from a owner who lived between us and Mr. Tanabe. Another lot we had on this side was a leased property. When they took our property after the war, the government paid us, and we bought the lot on this side by paying about \$4,000. When they took over our property, it was damaged—demolished. They told us to take anything we like from our old property with us since it would be demolished. In any case, the government forcibly purchased our old property in order to construct a new road. Although we complained that it would be difficult for us if we sold our property, they took the entire area by paying the market price. When it was over, they paid us \$16,000. We built our current shrine with that money. It was in September '51. My mother died less than one month after we moved. My father was alive for another ten years. Since he injured his leg when he fell down, he had been ((?)) and told me to perform his duty instead. I have been running our shrine since. Mr. Miyao was already in Hawaii around that time.
- RA: Which year was that?
- SM: Well, it was Showa 6. It was 1931.
- MC: That's right.
- SM: I came [to Hawaii] in May.
- MC: My father took me to Mr. Miyao's [the elder Miyao] in the year 27 [Showa 27, 1952] for the first time [to be trained for the Shinto priesthood]. When the elder Miyao died, or even before that, I had been trained by young Mr. Miyao—at that time, he was a young teacher. (Laughter) I worked diligently learning many things, which led me to the present day.
- RA: You [addressing the younger Miyao] were still young, right, after you graduated from school?
- SM: Yes, I was. Earlier it was mentioned that a lot cost \$4,000. According to Mr. Shimura, who is very knowledgeable about ((?)) buildings, there were many small cottages around ((?)) on the market for around \$1,800—not even \$2,000. If you were willing to pay more than \$2,000, you could have an ordinary house rather than a cottage.
- RA: When you came to Hawaii, was the Izumo Taisha shrine on Beretania?
- SM: Yes. It was called ((?)).
- MC: You were there a long time.
- SM: Yes.
- MC: I was there around year 24 [Showa 24 - 1949]. After I was there for three years, you came there.
- SM: Yes.
- MC: I was amazed by the Bon festival dancing and went to see it. People in the neighborhood came to participate in Bon festival dance.

Masayuki Chikuma Oral History Interview

[Tape ends abruptly here.]

Translated by Ari Uchida, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i volunteer, January 2018.

Dates of birth/death:

Mr. Masayuki Chikoma 4/21/1902 - 10/2/1991.

Mr. Shigemaru Miyao 4/15/1903 - 8/5/1993.