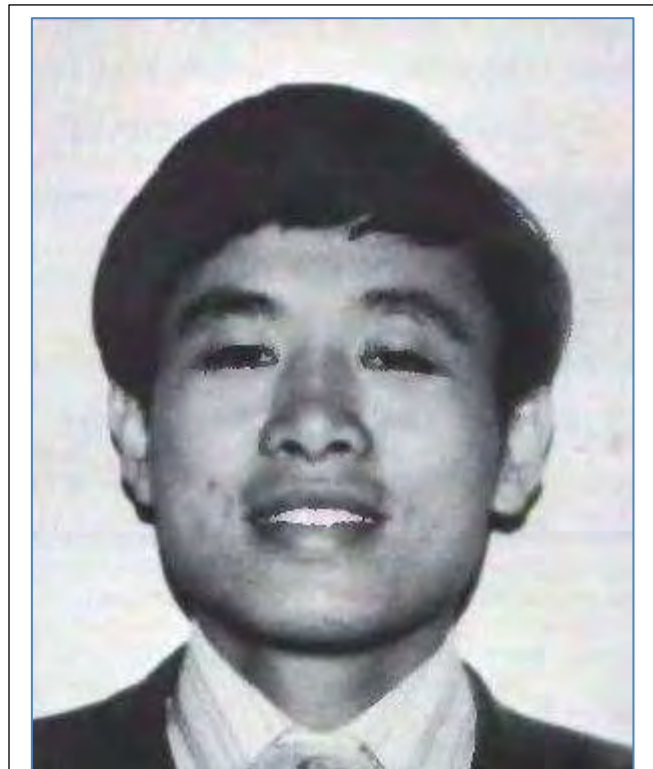


Masaki Sasamoto - The first Unification Church Martyr in Africa

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December 19, 2013



Unification Church Martyr Masaki Sasamoto

Born on March 23, 1950

Murdered on December 18, 1980

33 year later

Tanzania government offered official apology for its government soldiers murdering Mr. Sasamoto in cold blood.

After the ceremony at the tomb, to mark 33 year since murder, the Tanzania prime minister wife, invited Mrs. Chieko Sasamoto and few Ambassador of Peace to the Tanzania prime minister home for Dinner. During the dinner time at his home yesterday evening, the Tanzania prime minister offered in-tears an official apology on behave of his government for the murder of Mr. Masaki Sasamoto, which was planned and executed by Tanzania government. At that time in 1980 Tanzania was a socialist state.

He Asked Mrs. Sasamoto if she has totally forgiven the Tanzania Nation for killing her

husband?

In response, Mrs. Sasamoto - said - I LOVE Tanzania people and the nation very much and I do not consider that event as a crime at all.

Masaki Sasamoto was born on March 23, 1950 in the town of Yatsuta in the Yamanashi prefecture of Japan. He studied philosophy at Housei University and later worked in the Hikawa Printing Company. He was very quiet by nature and had a special talent in painting and sculpture. His early life was characterized by an intense desire to find the truth. He studied the Mormon and Jehovah's Witness teachings, but was not satisfied until he found the Divine Principle.



Masaki Sasamoto with swimming with members on God's Day, January 1, 1979, Lake Malawi

He had a special interest in mountain climbing and spent a great deal of time in the hills. On one occasion, he climbed a mountain in the winter time and lost his way. He went deeper and deeper into the mountain and eventually found himself on the border line between life and death. He dug a hole in the snow and lay down, preparing to die. When he was rescued, he felt the preciousness of life.

Soon after that, he met the Unification Church and found the truth he had been seeking. Just as he faced death on the mountain, he continued to challenge death, yet without fear. He became a member of the Unification Church on April 10, 1973, joining the Nakano church in Tokyo. In the first part of his church life, he witnessed and sold flowers and during 1974 he sold ginseng. During this time, he was a team leader and set a good example, always doing his best in whatever mission he had. After dedicating his life to True Parents, he strongly felt the desire to become a pure offering to Heavenly Father and even tried to sacrifice himself to reach the absolute standard of purity.



Sun Myung Moon comforting Chieko Sasamoto

He and his wife Chieko were among the 1800 couples blessed in Seoul, Korea on February 8, 1975. Originally assigned as a missionary to Malawi, he later worked in Zambia. His final mission was in Tanzania, where he worked until the end of his physical life, on December 18, 1980.



Thirtieth Anniversary of Masaki Sasamoto's martyrdom

"Upon receiving the assignment as missionary to Malawi, I was puzzled at such an enormous blessing and could not believe that it was real," he wrote in his three-year mission testimony." But considering the deep love of the True Parents, I determined to sacrifice myself under any miserable situation, again and

again. I left Japan on May 24, 1975, with a stalwart heart, thinking about how to actualize the heart of love, compassion and expectation of God and the True Parents in Malawi."

In Malawi, he was unable to explain himself well in words, since he did not know English. So he tried to show his heart through action and determined to do any physical work he could. Also, he led an exemplary prayer life, going to a nearby mountain to pray from early morning until midnight. He understood that he could not establish a reciprocal relationship with the other missionaries unless he served them from a servant's position. Once he made up his mind to do this, a deep and peaceful feeling came to him, and by making the effort to become a complete servant, he felt like a parent to them. Although he experienced deep loneliness, he persisted in his attempt to establish a true relationship, realizing that it is an honor to be given the opportunity to overcome differences of race, nationality and culture. Mr. Sasamoto searched for the best qualities in the people of Malawi.



Chieko Sasamoto at the ceremony at Masaki Sasamoto's tomb in Tanzania

He wrote that he saw in the young people unity, harmony and peace, and although it is one of the poorest countries in the world, he found the people determined and hardworking, with hope for the nation's prosperity. "If I can offer and sacrifice my life for this nation," Mr. Sasamoto wrote, "it will be the greatest honor for me, and from this nation the restoration of Africa will be realized." In Malawi, he found a warm welcome among the people in general, although the established churches and the police responded with severe rejection and persecution. On September 5, 1975, when the other missionaries were picked up by the police, Mr. Sasamoto was able to escape temporarily and go to the mountain to pray. The view from the mountain was so beautiful, he nearly cried.

He could understand that their mission work during their short stay in Malawi had been suspended by the government; but he did not feel any resentment. He thought that such a trial was necessary in order to restore a nation which God loves and from which God expects so much. He felt that they had to continue to work to save that nation, at any cost. His determination to persevere in spite of organized opposition is an example to members who are working in less difficult countries. He was later arrested and spent three days in prison. He wrote that he would never be able to forget the feelings he experienced there. Even in prison, he always looked for opportunities to learn.

After being released from prison, he went to Zambia to assist the missionaries there. During his time in Zambia, he was able to use his talent in painting to further his mission work and serve the people on God's behalf. Unable to speak the language well, he searched for a way to win the hearts of the native people. So he observed the people and made paintings of prominent leaders, as well as scenes from daily life. The Africans were amazed and touched that a foreigner could paint them with so much sensitivity and feeling. He learned according to the Principle that if we set up an indemnity condition and ask for something, we will receive a response. Upon his first anniversary of moving to Zambia, he set up a one-week prayer condition and wrote a letter to Mrs. Won Pak Choi, reporting on his one-year course in

Zambia. After three days, Father appeared to him in a dream. He showed so much understanding and sympathy towards the situation of a missionary who was expelled from his mission country and was waiting in a neighboring country. This communication from Father gave Mr. Sasamoto much encouragement.



Chieko Sasamoto at the ceremony at Masaki Sasamoto's tomb in Tanzania

On October 21, 1977, he was able to return to Malawi. He was struck by the power of the native religions and felt that they hindered the process of developing a modern nation. He saw that the native brothers had to fight so desperately to free themselves from evil spirits. This filled him with unspeakable disturbance and shock, and he wanted to rescue them. Mr. Sasamoto did not consider his responsibility fulfilled by just teaching the Divine Principle, so he worked to establish a real relationship with each person; he realized the eternal value of the relationship between parents and children. He returned to Japan for a visit before beginning his mission to Tanzania. When his spiritual daughter saw him after so many years of separation, she ran to him and embraced him, and both shed precious tears. By following his example, we too can establish eternal bonds with our children.

During the December 1979 missionary conference with Rev. Kwak in Kenya, Mr. Sasamoto expressed his desire to go to Tanzania as a missionary and Rev. Kwak approved. "The world is big, and there are many countries and peoples," he wrote shortly after receiving his assignment. 'America and Europe are in the mainstream of God's providence and have received much grace from God. But many countries have not received these blessings. When I think about this, I feel that God desires me to go to a country such as Tanzania, which has fallen into a miserable situation -- even though my course there might be long and difficult, as though it were through a desert. I feel that my life up until now has been a kind of preparation or training, and I am determined to start the way of suffering and sacrifice from now on.'" From Mr. Sasamoto, we can learn how we should never become tired of sacrificing for God and mankind, but rather keep looking for the place where we can suffer the most, in order to bring God's blessing to all mankind.

When he arrived in Tanzania on July 6, 1980, he determined to make a new start and bring God's blessing to a country which had imprisoned and expelled the three missionaries sent in 1975. With a deep desire to pray, he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Ascending from the jungles at the foot of the mountain to the eternal snow at its summit, he experienced internally the dramatic change of scenery. "In the tension of adjusting myself spiritually and physically to the changes, I found the unlimited energy of the creation of God," he wrote. "During the thousands and thousands of years of the process of the creation of so much grandeur and beauty, God as a parent must have been waiting and brooding over it, with so much deep expectation! Deeply moved by this new discovery of God's energy and especially God's heart, I embraced stones, grass and trees."

In May of 1980 his wife Chieko came to Africa to join him in his mission. He was happy to be able to do pioneer mission work, uplifted by her presence. Under very difficult circumstances in Tanzania, Mr.

Sasamoto persevered to gain and renew his visa to stay in the country. The only missionary in the country he worked to secure an economic foundation and had many dreams for helping the people and the country. Nevertheless, one week before his wife was planning to join him, his life on earth ended.

Although not all the details surrounding his death are clear, it is known that the police had previously questioned him and that at approximately 7:30 a.m. December 18, they broke into his room, apparently on a city-wide search for foreigners residing illegally in the country. Mistaking the police for thieves and thinking that they had come to rob him, Mr. Sasamoto argued and resisted them. Finally, they drew a pistol and fired at him. Although he was shot twice, in the head and in the stomach, his face even in death had a remarkably peaceful expression. His life shows us how we can face even death with no regrets. His body was not discovered until the following morning.

His wife arrived from Zambia on December 21. After identifying her husband, she immediately went to pray, telling God how grateful she was to have had the opportunity to give such a wonderful offering to the country of Tanzania as her husband. She pledges to eternally keep the same heart as her husband, and her prayers go to the salvation of the people of Tanzania. United as a couple in their mission, the Sasamotos are a shining example to all blessed families. On December 26, he was buried in the country for which he gave the ultimate offering -- his one life.



*Masaki Sasamoto, World Missionary, 30th Memorial of Martyrdom
December 20, 2009 - signed Sun Myung Moon*