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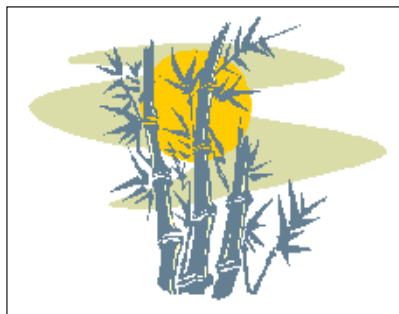
Beyond Nationalism: The Inculturation of Christianity In the Diversifying Context of Japan

Editorial

The inculturation of Christianity in Japan can be defined as the inclusion of Japanese culture in worship. However, most churches in Japan often lack such inclusion since many were Westernized during their establishment by Western missionaries. Also, views on the inculturation of Christianity in Japan tend to focus on the Japanese majority. Thus, Japanese Christianity has often been seen as being coupled with nationalism within Japan's de-facto and fictitious framework as a nation state under the Emperor System. Furthermore, due to the lack of a defining cultural root for Japanese churches, they have no obvious cultural alternative to the Emperor system, which exists in tandem with the progress of militarization and rising nationalism, and their culture can thus become nationalistic. On the surface, the majority seem to have an obscure cultural identity simply as "Japanese". Thus, the inculturation of Christianity in Japan has often been understood within the rather stereotyped framework of the Japanese nation-state without much attention having been given to the fictitious character of the framework.

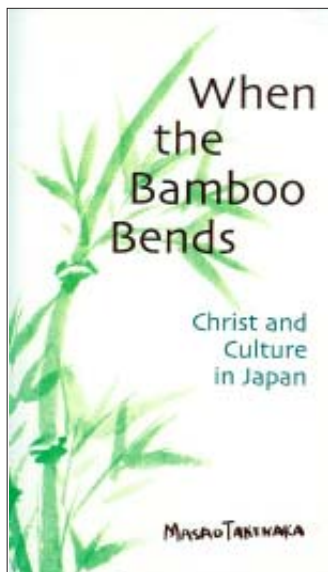
But thanks to ground-breaking historical studies over the last few decades, such as *Rereading Japanese History* by the late historian Yoshihiko Amino (English excerpts: www.udel.edu/History/figal/Hist138/Text/honors.html), many aspects of the historical diversity of what is now known as Japan have been revealed. For instance, the very name of the nation, "Nihon" or "Nippon" (Japan) did not even exist before 7th century, and the present Hokkaido and Tohoku regions in the north of the country and the southern Kyushu and Okinawa regions in the southwest were not part of Japan at that time. Moreover, as we look at the indigenous Ainu and Okinawan peoples, as well as migrants into Japan who were brought over for forced labor before the war or came as migrant workers, students, or accompanying family members, etc., the historical diversity of Japan as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country in the age of localization, regionalization and globalization becomes much more evident.

In such a context, what does it mean for Christianity to seek its inculturation in Japan? Can we find any new and hopeful potential for Christianity, like different colors of flowers blooming side by side in Spring, to take root in the diversifying soil of Japan? The articles in this newsletter should help us to reflect further on these questions. *H.Y.*



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Art, Bamboo, and Church - An Interview with Takenaka Masao

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (Exodus 20:4)

“This prohibition of idolatry makes life hard for painters and other artists except composers. At least in the Protestant tradition that does not recognize their work. In the Catholic Church they are met with more acceptances but in return the motifs will usually have to

conform to the taste of the church leaders, at the cost of artistic freedom,” says Masao Takenaka, professor emeritus in theology from Doshisha University in Kyoto.

“The Roman Catholic Church is organized with congregations of 200 members or more and that enables them to invest in art such as the 12 stained glass panels in St. Ignatius’ Church in Tokyo, commissioned from the Protestant artist Ueno Yasuda,” he says. “If you suggest buying a stained glass window in a Protestant church, the idea is likely rejected as extravagant and unnecessary.”

On a sunny April afternoon I met with Prof. Takenaka in his private study in Kyoto. Sitting by his one by one meter low table, having a small landscaped garden outside the window to his left, and facing two men in tranquil conversation surrounded by a pine wood and a Chinese landscape in black ink, Professor Takenaka devotes his scholarly energy to a study on Christian influence on Japanese artists in the past.

As a lifetime connoisseur of art, and Christian Art in Asia in particular, Takenaka first wanted an art historian friend to do the work, but as the friend has passed away he feels an obligation and the challenge to pioneer this area by himself. His biographical studies on painters in the earlier decades of modern Japan has left him with the impression above.

Takenaka is a specialist on theology and culture. Not only from a theoretical perspective but also from a practical one, as was evident at Kansai Seminar House in Kyoto, which he directed for many years. He is still a very active member of and preacher at his church.

When the Bamboo Bends: Christ and Culture in Japan was published by the World Council of Churches in 2002 as a follow-up on his God is Rice. In both books Professor Takenaka deals with the inculturation of Christianity in Japan. The Bamboo is widely used for many purposes in East Asia and as such it is an intimate part of the local cultures. It has four characteristics that fit well with a Christian identity: a grove of bamboo brings a clean wind; the bamboo is flexible almost to the point of being unbreakable; its roots form a strong network; and the bamboo’s stem is hollow, a fact Takenaka compares to Christ’s

emptying himself in order to save humans, as is written in Paul’s letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2: 8).

Thus bamboo can bridge gaps felt to exist between Christianity and local culture. People who culturally treasure bamboo may get a new and intimate understanding of Christianity if bamboo is included in their worship. Furthermore, we can gain new theological insights when the analogy is made clear. So inculturation is a dual process. Takenaka emphasizes that the focal point of faith is Christ, so participants in this process should be aware of not substituting Christ for any other element.

Professor Takenaka argues that the Protestant churches in Japan need a renewal. New people are needed to overcome schisms from the past, and a holistic attitude that allows for a variety in expressing and communicating the gospel is needed to attract these new people.



In his own church an art exhibition is held once a year. The pieces of art are produced by church members and include many kinds of art. People from the neighborhood are among the spectators, so the roots of the church in the local community are strengthened.

Asked if he can imagine ways of incorporating bamboo or scrolls of calligraphy in the worship service, he said, “I can, but one must go slowly. It is important to gain the acceptance of the congregation. Our art exhibitions are one way of familiarize the congregation with art.”

As a final example of inculturation, Professor Takenaka mentions Aoi Church in Kyoto. That church has had a cross and a chalice made in Kiyomizu pottery, a famous local product of Kyoto.

This example illustrates that inculturation is not necessarily the same as nationalization. Rather it is a local process, for what feels intimate to one group feels strange to another. Thus, people living in the Japanese territory but identifying with a different culture should work out their own symbiosis of Christianity and culture without forgetting Christ in the center, and without insisting on their way as the best for everybody else.

Interviewed by Christian M. Hermansen, Danish missionary and associate professor at Kwansai Gakuin University.

Gospel in Bunraku

Narrator tells where they meet

Since December 1991, Mr. Hanasabudayu Toyotake, a leading Christian *tayu* (narrator) in Bunraku (Japanese traditional puppet theater) has performed the unique and inspiring Gospel in a Bunraku play. The play has become increasingly popular amongst Christians and non-Christians both in Japan and abroad. What is the relationship between Christianity and Bunraku? What is the relationship between Bunraku and Toyotake's own faith? JCAN interviewed him as part of an examination of the inculturation of Christianity in Japan. (H.Y.)

JCAN: Have there ever been any other instances in the history of Bunraku of Joruri (dramatic narrative chanted to samisen accompaniment) performances with Christ as their theme like Gospel in Bunraku?

Toyotake: None.

JCAN: Have you ever sensed any cultural gap between Christianity and Bunraku?

Toyotake: As you know, Bunraku is part of Japanese culture, but Christianity came to Japan more through Europe and America than Asia. Christianity in Japan is therefore Westernized. Due to this, I thought that Japanese culture and Christianity were incompatible. But ever since Monzaemon Chikamatsu, Joruri playwrights have made great inventive developments. Forgiveness is one example of this. The female lead character in the play, Sewamono, (a Bunraku play concerning the lives of common people) forgives her husband for an affair. This woman (the female lead) who says the words of forgiveness to her husband is like a female version of Hosea in the Old Testament. This is biblical material with a Japanese method of expression. It's an amazing thing because it is an expression of eternal love.

JCAN: So, that's where Christianity and Bunraku meet, is that right?

Toyotake: Yes. It's something that I finally discovered last year. Another theme is sacrifice. Isaac offers to sacrifice his son for God, while characters in Bunraku sacrifice their children or perform seppuku (ritual suicide) for their lords. So, the object of sacrifice is different, but offering sacrifices fits the biblical context. This is also an amazing thing.

JCAN: Do you pay a special attention to that in your role as a *tayu*?

Toyotake: Yes, especially when I perform plays like Gospel in Bunraku. Performing arts find their origins in communication with gods. So, tones and vocalization that inspire people with the Japanese view of religion are scattered throughout Bunraku melodies. For example, (singing) "In the Great Japan of Butterflies, since the incarnation of the god Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto, the gods in heaven in their many times, and the beginning of the gods on earth, Amaterasu Sun-Goddess (has existed). *The play continues, "O! O! O greatest day, greatest day" These are the



Mr. Hanasabudayū Toyotake speaking to JCAN at the National Theater in Tokyo on February 26, 2005.

tones and vocalization of religious inspiration. I simply replaced them with Biblical words: (singing) "For God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son." "O! O!" is replaced with "Oh, hallelujah, oh hallelujah, greatest day" and "Jesus is here, Jesus is here with us." **Cultures and performing arts come from God. They were created by God. It's all about creation.

JCAN: Have you experienced any opposition to using Jesus Christ as a theme in Bunraku?

Toyotake: There was some opposition at first. My late master, Koshijidayu, would often go to Hawaii where he had two good friends who were Japanese Christians. He also knew I was a churchgoer. One day, his two friends in Hawaii showed him my video (of Gospel in Bunraku). He was surprised and said, "Oh, I didn't know Hanabusadayu was doing this." He then said to me, "I saw the video and I think it's a good thing. Please keep doing it." Since Koshijidayu was the most respected master of Bunraku at the time, nobody complained about it after that. It was a mysterious and miraculous occurrence.

JCAN: So, what does it mean for you to perform Gospel in Bunraku in Japan, where Christians are a minority?

Toyotake: I have travelled and performed it from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and people who have never set foot inside a church before have come to see it. For instance, we performed Gospel in Bunraku and the Keisei Awano Naruto play (at a church) on Awajishima Island, which is the home of Joruri (in the western part of Japan). Christian churches and Jesus are not popular in the countryside, but many members of the rojinkai (senior citizens group) of the local village came to listen to the Joruri. They then came to the church at Christmas and asked if they could join us. The pastor of the church said, "For forty years I have been evangelizing to people here, but none of them have ever come to church for Christmas." Some of them may have been saved without having had any prior con-

*(Taken from the Bunraku play, Kotobukishiki Sanbanso. Excerpts are available here: www.ne.jp/asahi/anata/watasi/bun006.htm - click either of the two red links). **This is audible at www.ne.jp/asahi/anata/watasi/bun006.htm.

nection to the church. I think this is a good way to lead people to salvation. It is even more effective when we perform Gospel in Bunraku abroad. Audiences say, "It's great!" They love it because it is a Japanese performing art.

JCAN: What led you to start your career in the world of Bunraku?

Toyotake: I owe it all to my grandfather. Originally, I didn't really care for it. I wanted to become a novelist, but after my grandfather passed away, I was encouraged by people around me, so I went into it thinking I could use Bunraku stories as themes for my novels. I never imagined I could go this far.

JCAN: I read about the relationship between Bunraku and your life and faith in your book, *Watashi ni Totte Fukkatsu Towa* (What the Resurrection Means to Me), in which you identify three things at the core of your faith; Jesus' tears of blood at Gethsemane, his cry of "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" on the cross, and when he ate fish after his resurrection. How do you feel when you express them in Gospel in Bunraku?

Toyotake: It doesn't actually include scenes of his tears of blood or eating fish. It only includes, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani." I express it as a human cry. That's why I use the method of a samurai committing seppuku to express the pain he felt as a human. This is the essence of his sacrifice for us. At first, I got it wrong and wondered, "Why is he such a bad loser?" But now I believe the opposite. His cry at the height of his pain as a human was literally the incarnation. He came as flesh and experienced human pain. He was the only one to overcome it, despite the fact he was sold to the Satan. Some people like Rev. Nakahara put forward a theory that the words, "Why have you forsaken me?" can be found in the Psalms and he simply shouted it and that's all, but I don't think so. The words he spoke at Gethsemane, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me," are very human. So, I express his pain with the sound of trembling as human pain. At first, I didn't believe

in his resurrection. But once I believed it, I was able to believe everything in the Bible from the first page to the last. That's it. That's why I can perform the Gospel in Bunraku. I don't think I could without that belief.

JCAN: Are you going to focus on Gospel in Bunraku in your Christian Bunraku performances?

Toyotake: Yes. This year, we will perform it at the Osaka Christian College on November 1 and in Sapporo on August 19.

JCAN: What about performing abroad?

Toyotake: We would like to do that, but I am busy these days. Bunraku performers around me are putting the squeeze on me. Since my master Koshiji Day passed away three years ago, Gospel in Bunraku is under some pressure. Sometimes I hear them saying, "You should stop performing it."

JCAN: What if our readers ask you to come to their country to perform Gospel in Bunraku?

Toyotake: We will go if a budget is provided. If such a request comes up, I can ask my acquaintances at the Japan Foundation for financial support.

JCAN: Could you give us a message for our readers?

Toyotake: As Gospel in Bunraku is partly an introduction to Japanese Bunraku, I hope they come to appreciate it as a Japanese classic performing art. I especially hope they will see the essence of the high culture that was brought about by three-hundred years of peace during the Edo Period when samurai did not fight with their swords. Bunraku was recognized as World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. I would recommend it to people, including those who are new to Christian faith, as an introduction to both Bunraku and Christianity. Many people who are not Christian also find Bunraku to be very enjoyable. I hope they will come to enjoy Bunraku through this article.

Toyotake's CD and DVD of Gospel in Bunraku are available in Japanese yen only for 1,500 yen plus tax and postage. Toyotake's website is located at:

www.ne.jp/asahi/anata/watasi/bun001.htm

and he can be contacted in English at

hysymyd@mtc.biglobe.ne.jp

Enquiries and orders for his Gospel in Bunraku video (item number 687, published by Harvest Time), can be made in

English by contacting Ms. Murayama at the Division of Missionary Work of the Pacific Broadcasting Association in Tokyo:

Tel +81-32954921, Fax:

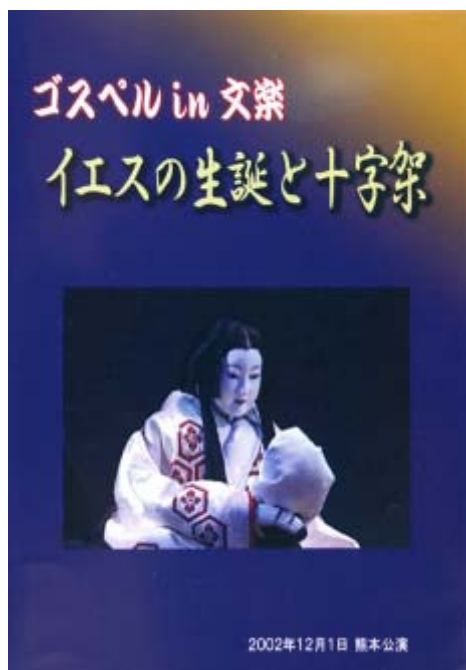
+81-3-3233-2650, Email:

mail@pba-net.com. For more information on

Bunraku in general, see the bilingual Bunraku

Kyokai homepage at

www.bunraku.or.jp.



Left: Toyotake's Japanese DVD, *Gospel in Bunraku* (front).

Above: Toyotake's Japanese CD, *Gospel in Bunraku*.

Inculturation in Assimilation? The Ainu Christian Struggle for Identity

It is difficult to find examples of the inculturation of Christianity among the originally polytheistic and nonliterate indigenous Ainu people in their northern island of what is now known as Hokkaido Prefecture. But Ainu Christians have about 270 years of history since their encounter with Russian Orthodox missionaries on their island in the 17th century. The earliest recorded Ainu conversion occurred as a result of this contact in 1734.

Two prominent examples of Ainu Christians are Matsu Kannari (1875-1961) and Yukie Chiri (1903-1922). Kannari was a Christian preacher. Her Ainu name was Imekano, and her Christian name was Mary. While working as a preacher, she became the successor to her mother's Yukar epic. She wrote 9 Ainu language volumes of the *Collection of the Epic Ainu Yukar*, but it does not contain any reference to her Christian faith. She transcribed the Yukar in Roman letters in around 160 notebooks, which she left to her nephew Mashiho Chiri and her friend Kyosuke Kindaichi, a well-known Japanese scholar of Ainu and Japanese languages.

Yukie was the niece of Matsu Kannari and sister of Mashiho Chiri. She was Anglican and spoke Ainu, English and Japanese. She was later adopted by Matsu, but died at the young age of nineteen while working as a proof-reader under Kyosuke. Her bilingual (Ainu/Japanese) book, *Collections of the Ainu Chants* (1923), is historically significant as the first genuine record of Ainu chants by an Ainu. The book includes a variety of chants concerning the traditional Ainu way of life regarding faith in their ethnic gods, which were completely integrated with nature, as represented by *iwomante*, the Ainu ritual of sending bears and other animals back to their gods' world after raising them. Although it does not contain any reference to her Christian faith, she wrote in her posthumous manuscript of Christian repentance that recording the literature passed down by her "beloved compatriots" over more than a thousand years was her "great mission".

But Ainu history has a dark side; since the 8th century, Ainu have faced much discrimination and have been deprived of their own traditional culture and dignity by the dominant Japanese in the process of their assimilation into Japan. This assimilation was carried out in under Japan's policy of expansion and development, particularly since late 19th century under the modern Emperor system, against which the Ainu have struggled and fought to escape from for more than 130 years. Rev. Toshimitsu Miyajima, a Japanese pastor of the Hokkai Diocese of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) in Hokkaido Prefecture, wrote about the history of the assimilation of the Ainu people by missionary groups in a recent Japanese book that he co-authored: *Nihon Senkyo no Hikari to Kage: Ainu Dendo to Megutte (The Glory and Shadow of Evangelism in*

Japan: Ainu Evangelism, etc.), published by Word of Life Press Ministries, Tokyo, August 2004. One such group was the *Sekishin-sha*, a Japanese Puritan group that migrated from the main Japanese island of Honshu to Hokkaido. Rev. Miyajima wrote how the *Sekishin-sha* were used "as frontline soldiers of invasion into the land of the Ainu people by the Meiji Government, which used political mechanisms under the Emperor system to remove the Christian backbone out of the group, dissolve their faith within the notion of the (Imperial) national body, and subdue them by state power."

Some of the most major works of evangelism amongst the Ainu people were carried out by John Bachelor, a British missionary from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Church of England, who translated the New Testament, the Anglican Book of Prayer and Hymnal, and preached the gospel to the Ainu people in their own language, and also trained Ainu evangelists from 1877 to 1940. These acts can, in a sense, be seen as examples of inculturation of Christianity among Ainu people.

However, Rev. Miyajima, who is the author of the English book, *Land of Elms: the history, culture and present day situation of the Ainu people* (United Church Publishing House, 1998), wrote that "Bachelor's evangelism amongst the Ainu people followed in the footsteps of the Western Christianity that Christianized, invaded into, assimilated and conquered indigenous peoples in the world by regarding them as primitive and barbarous."

He also pointed out that "the problem was the innate characteristics of the churches that were apathetic to the history of resistance of the Ainu people, who faced hardship and crises in their survival (due to discrimination and poverty) as a people under colonial rule by modern Japan."

Rev. Miyajima is a leading figure of the Diocese's Committee on the Ainu people. The Committee's missionary agenda is to recover the rights of the Ainu people. This represents a change of direction from the agenda of assimilation to solidarity in their struggle for self-determination.

Rev. Miyajima has baptized a number of Ainu people. His church is a log house that was built in 1989 in order to reflect the Ainu's wood culture, which is common in traditional Ainu houses, called *chise* in Ainu. This is a reversed form of inculturation: Christianity adapting to Ainu culture by the Japanese.

The UCCJ Ainu Tribal Information Center has more information on Ainu ministry. Email oron@jade.plata.or.jp or fax 0164-43-0216. See also the article in the previous issue of JCAN, Support the UCCJ Ainu Center by Buying a Calendar!, on page 8.

Unique Culture Discovered in Okinawan Christianity

In Okinawa, the indigenous islands in southwestern Japan, examples of the inculturation of Christianity are hard to find. Rev. Aika Taira, a pastor of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) from Okinawa, says, "I don't think Christianity in Okinawa is ever fused into Okinawan [nonliterate] culture and tradition. We rarely use Ryukyu [the original name for Okinawa] language in our worship services."

From his own experiences, however, he raised some rare inculturation examples including a prayer on the offerings of a deceased elderly person, an Okinawan hymn sung at an Okinawan church, the Lord's Prayer in Okinawan language, a sermon in Okinawan language by Rev. Katsuichi Yamazato, the moderator of the Okinawa Diocese of the UCCJ, Okinawan hymns being sung, played

and danced to celebrate Christmas and the Easter, and Okinawan food served at fellowship meetings.

"When Christianity came to Ryukyu, it spread among the elite, but not the common people," he explained, "and when Ryukyu was integrated into Japan (in the 19th century) and forced to be Japanized, Ryukyu culture was banned and seen as vulgar."

"That may be the reason why the non-elite Ryukyu culture was incompatible with Christianity," he concluded.

According to Rev. Taira, a worship service of thanksgiving for harvest is provided in February at a local congregation of the UCCJ in Okinawa when sugar cane is harvested. (H.Y)

A Korean Pianist's Struggle for Identity in Japan

For a Korean Christian who is part of the ethnic minority in Japan, her struggle over nationality, identity and rights in the context of her assimilation into Japan matters far more than the inculturation of her faith.

Ms. Choi Song-Ae Lois is a Christian pianist and third generation Korean descendant living in Japan. In April 2000, she won a 20 year legal battle for permanent Japanese residence, which was denied by the government when she rejected the required fingerprinting upon her return from studying music in the United States in 1981. She shared her testimony and music during the Evening for the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) Supporting Members, which was held in Tokyo on December 3, 2004.

Choi, speaking between emotive performances of Beethoven's *Sonata Opus 27, No.2, in C# Minor "Moonlight"* and Chopin's *Nocturne in C# Minor* and *Revolutionary Étude* (to be made available on the Internet courtesy of Choi Sun-Ae Lois), told the audience about her view of the sufferings experienced by the composers who, like her, lost their home nations and languages.

Many Korean residents in Japan were brought over from Korea by the Japanese government for forced labor from 1910 to 1945 while Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Many of the younger generation, including Choi, lost their Korean language after being brought up in Japan.

"Beethoven (1770-1827) was struggling with loneliness as he suffered from the loss of his hearing," she said to the audience. "His life was full of suffering, but he was certain that he could overcome it to experience joy and believed that God would deliver him."



A testimony of suffering for peace in song. Choi Sun-Ae Lois, speaking to the audience at the Evening for NCCJ Supporting Members at Waseda Hoshien Small Hall in Tokyo on December 3, 2004.

"He sought salvation in the midst of suffering and said that his principles led him to do good works and play his music for the poor, since he and his family were poor," she added.

"Chopin (1810-1849) was born in Poland, which was divided by great powers and ruled by Russia, just like Ko-

rea,” she explained. “Though he wanted to travel Europe to play his music, he had a stronger desire to join and dedicate his life to the revolutionary army of Poland. However, after he left Poland (to travel Europe and play his music upon the failure of the Polish revolution of 1831 against Russia), he was unable to return there until he died.”

“His music was banned in Poland during World War II,” she added.

“Those who have lost their nation can speak of their patriotism,” she said, “But I think that those who have not lost their nation or language should be careful when they speak of their patriotism.”

“For those who have lost their nation, it is natural for their feelings regarding their nation to strengthen,” she said. “When asked how Chopin’s outpouring of enthusiasm could be described, Frantz Liszt wrote that Chopin said that it could be described only in the Polish word ‘zal’, meaning ‘the sadness that is felt when something that should be is lost’.”

Born in Osaka, Choi, who is the author of the Japanese book *Jibun-no Kuni wo Toitsuzukete (Continuing to Question My Nation)*, published in 2000, is a member of the Korean Church of Christ in Japan (KCCJ, a member church of NCCJ) and the daughter of the late Korean pastor of the church in Fukuoka. Her strong opposition to the fingerprinting system, which is only used for criminals in major Western countries, and the strengthening of the relationship between Korea and Japan led to the abolishment of the system in 2000.

She writes, “I am already much like the Japanese. I think that it’s natural that one will assimilate (into a given society) if they live together with its people. But I cannot bow down to (the government) attitude that forcibly pulls people toward it on the one hand, but forces me to give up (what I am) on the other, which means that I assimilate even if I don’t try.”

Regarding her legal battle against the fingerprinting system, Choi told JCAN, “I felt that I wanted to be treated not as someone who gets fingerprinted, but as someone who has an individual personality.” In her first statement against the government’s charge of her rejection of fingerprinting at the Kokura Division of the Fukuoka District Court in 1984, she said, “I don’t believe that God will condemn me over my rejection of fingerprinting. How can man condemn me when God does not?”

“These days I wonder if peace is an illusion,” she said. “I feel that times have changed so much that the word ‘peace’ now sounds empty. I even wonder if we really have hearts that seek peace.” “When we talk about peace, I always wonder if we are seeking salvation and solidarity with those who suffer,” she said. “Those who seek salvation must suffer.”

The piano concert finished with the audience singing a Korean folk song called *Ko-hyang-eui Pom (Spring in My Home Village)*. Just as Chopin thought about his home nation, Choi’s father dreamed about his mother in North Korea and thanked God before his death.

“When we die, we may feel that everything on the earth was an illusion. Peace can become an illusion just like the images of ourselves,” Choi said. “But I feel that peace is always a repetition of gathering up what is broken and starting over from the beginning.”

“To me, to build peace and to love your neighbor are one and the same,” she told JCAN. “The suffering of Chopin, who was displaced by war, and my own personal feelings are gradually approaching each other.”

“The words of the (Korean folk) song make me think of a poem (of a vision of hope for Korea’s future) that was written for the unification of Korea by Pastor Ik-hwan Moon when he was imprisoned for joining former President Kim Dae-Jung, who was abducted (in Tokyo by the Korean dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan in 1973),” she said.

A drama of her life story entitled “Destination Japan”, based on “Continuing to Question My Nation”, was performed as one of the events for the Korea-Japan Friendship Year 2005 in Seoul on March 25 and 26, in Busan on 28 and 29, and in Tokyo from April 13 to 17.

Her new CD entitled *ZAL*, recorded in collaboration with a cellist and her husband, Susumu Miyake, is now available. Email her at lois@nifty.com for more information. (H.Y.)



Behold the Birds of the Air

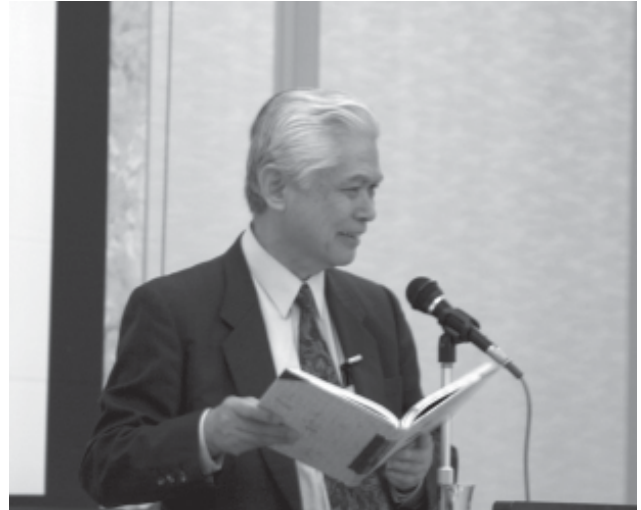
Bible Translated into *Kesen* Dialect

Dr. Harutsugu Yamaura, a Catholic physician in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, is now well-known among a wide range of Christians in Japan for the other side of his work; translating the four Gospels into Kesen dialect for ordinary people in the *seken* (society) of his home Kesen coastal district. Dr. Yamaura, born and baptized as a Christian in Tokyo, grew up in this area of northern Japan. The four Gospels in Kesen dialect were translated from the Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition), which is said to be the most authentic Greek original text. The translation series was completed in May last year, and it is a unique work of its kind.

"I have sincerely wished to tell my local fellows about my beloved Jesus," writes Dr. Yamaura. "But the Bible is written in the standardized (Japanese) language of Tokyo which is far away from us. We can understand it with our head when we read it, but it doesn't come down to the bottom of our hearts." He also criticizes the ecumenical Japanese translation of the Bible in the standardized Japanese language of Tokyo which was jointly done in 1988 by Catholics and Protestants, saying that it contains a lot of church jargon that is hard for the ordinary *seken* people in Japan to understand. But the Kesen dialect, which has its own pronunciation, accent and grammar that is different from the "standard" nationalized Tokyo language, does speak to the bottom of the hearts of the Kesen people, according to Dr. Yamaura. "I had wanted to translate the Bible into our own dialect somehow. That had been my dream since I was a little child."

On April 27, 2004, he presented the late Pope John Paul II, when he was still alive and in office, with the translation during an audience on occasion of his visit to the Vatican. He explained that as Jesus grew up in the countryside of Galilee, he certainly spoke in dialect. Therefore, according to Dr. Yamaura, a translation in dialect is very appropriate. In one of his translation books of the four Gospels in the dialect, he points out evidence in Matthew 26:73, where it is written that the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "We know that you are also one of them. We can tell by your accent." At his lecture given in Tokyo on April 10, 2005, however, he said that there haven't been any baptisms resulting from the translation yet.

In 1999, when he read the Sermon on the Mount in the dialect at a ceremony commemorating the 25th anniversary of the dedication of his church, Ofunato Catholic Church, in the Kesen district, some of the people giggled at the dialect, which had been despised and considered shameful, never to be spoken in public. But after the service an older woman said to him, in dialect, "It was good!



Dr. Harutsugu Yamaura reads from his Kesen dialect translation of the Gospels at his lecture in Tokyo on April 10, 2005.

I have been to the church for many years and listened to the word of Jesus in many ways, but I have never understood the feelings that Jesus had better than I did today!" In an attempt to avoid direct translation and preserve the common sense and feelings in the Kesen dialect, he sometimes made free translations of some biblical words. For instance, from the words of Jesus on a rich young man in Matthew 19:24, he translated the Greek word for "camel," an animal that the Kesen people have never seen, as "beko" in Kesen dialect (or "ushi" in standardized Japanese, meaning a "cow"), which is familiar to them in their daily lives.

And he also dared to translate the word "Jesus" into *Yasó* in Kesen dialect, which has been used in Japan to refer to and discriminate against Christians. "Because the Gospels say that it is where God's 'glory' is found," he writes. "The name of the despised is the most holy. That was the spirit of Jesus." Included with the Kesen dialect translation of the four Gospels are CDs of the scriptural texts that Dr. Yamaura read out and recorded in the dialect, which is originally non-literate and spoken. A liturgy of the mass in dialect, which was actually used at his church, is also included in his translation of the Gospel according to Mark.

His activities to promote the Kesen dialect have not been limited to his translation of the Gospels. He has even compiled a dictionary of and an introduction to the dialect, composed and sung a Psalm and a hymn of the Lord's Prayer in the dialect and organized a theatrical company perform works in Kesen dialect.

"I dream of a day when the words of Jesus become words that make sense to people (in all dialects) of all homes in the whole country of Japan and get indigenized in this way in due time," he writes.

“Lord, We Come Before Thee Now (Kami yo Mima e ni)” A Song of Prayer Sung in a Traditional Japanese Scale

Words: William Hammond
Music: Tomoaki Bunya

Taken from Sambika 21 (The Hymnal 21), hymn no. 500, United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) Hymnal Committee, Tokyo, Japan, 1997.

1. Lord, we come before Thee now,
At Thy feet we humbly bow:
Oh, do not our suit disdain!
Shall we seek Thee, Lord, in vain?
2. Lord, on Thee our souls depend;
In compassion now descend,
Fill our hearts with Thy rich grace,
Tune our lips to sing Thy praise.
3. In Thine own appointed way
Now we seek Thee, here we stay.
Lord, we know not how to go
Till a blessing Thou bestow.
4. Send some message from Thy Word
That may peace and joy afford
Let Thy Spirit now impart
Full salvation to each heart
5. Comfort those who weep and mourn
Let the time of joy return;
Those that are cast down lift up,
Make them strong in faith and hope.



“Sound the Bamboo”: a shinobue (Japanese bamboo flute) behind a bamboo thicket (Yokosuka, Japan)

6. Grant that all may seek and find
Thee a gracious God and kind.
Heal the sick, the captive free;
Let us all rejoice in Thee.

“It somehow makes me feel nostalgic!”, a Japanese woman said, after I sang this hymn along with my guitar-playing at a Sunday worship service at my church in July 2001.

With a beautiful melody in a traditional Japanese pentatonic scale, this hymn makes many Japanese imagine a place dear to their hearts, which gives them a nostalgic feeling as they had in a children’s song that they sang on the way home by the foot of a mountain at twilight in their childhood.

This hymn tells many Westernized churches in Japan the importance of the hymn as part of their native culture. Although the original words of this hymn are in English, its Japanese translation is just as wonderful! Since my church, Tokyo Union Church, is an English-speaking and international church, I sang it in English, and the congregation from abroad was pleased with this hymn, saying, “Oriental!” and “Nice!”.

I have come up with an idea that this hymn can be played with Japanese traditional musical instruments, particularly a Japanese bamboo flute called *shinobue* (see photo), and it sounds so beautiful! (audible through the version of this article on the JCAN website).*An ocarina or a recorder is also suitable.

In December 1998, when the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was held in Zimbabwe, a friend of mine who participated in it sang this song at a local church in English. Then she said, “(Japanese churches) need to think about what our own hymns are.” To me, this song is exactly my own hymn.

Lord, we come before Thee now
[© : William Hammond, 1719-1783] INORI
曲 : 文彦知明, 1942-

1 か み よ、み ま え に よ ろ-こ び つ ど う
2 め ぐ み ゆ また か に り こ こ-ろ み た た さ れ
3 せ い れ い に よ り す く-い を た し め す
4 も と や め る も の し み や す-て た ま わ な
5 な と み、く る し み、 や む-と た き ま お

わ れ ら の い の-り う け-い れ た ま え。
-み 名 の さ の か え-を う た-わ せ た た ま え。
-め ぐ の の か こ と-ば い さ と-ら せ た た ま え。
上 に あ る め ぐ-み よ ろ-こ び た た ま え。

♩ = 60

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Biblical Noh Artist and Theologian: Dr. Yuko Yuasa

Yuko is engaged in a uniquely Japanese theological experiment that has garnered worldwide appreciation: the fusion of biblical themes with Noh, a traditional Japanese dramatic form.

Born into a Protestant family as a third-generation Christian in Japan, Yuko was baptized into the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) church as a high school student. Her education at the International Christian University in Tokyo opened her eyes to the multi-cultural interaction, an area she continued to develop through the experiences in Edinburgh and Sussex, U. K. where she accompanied her husband for his medical education. Returning to Japan she started some international exchange activities, and felt the need of consolidating the foundation. In 1990 when their daughter entered Kyoto's Doshisha University, Yuko also began studying culture and theology there as a graduate student under Professor Masao Takenaka, one of Japan's best-known Protestant theologians.

While working on her M.Div. at Doshisha, Yuko was inspired by Taiwanese theologian C.S. Song, then a visiting professor, to begin looking at theology as story. A seminar organized by Dr. Song in Seoul in 1990 on the theme of the Holy Spirit's movement in one's own culture led her to choose Noh drama as the subject for her seminar paper. It was a decision that led her to discover a rich potentiality for the inculturation of Christianity in Japan by using traditional Noh plays as theological texts. "The pieces of Noh drama currently performed never fail to offer good themes for in-depth Biblical dialogue," she notes, "the Bible and Noh have three points in common: a special perspective that is aware of eternity in this life, a deep insight that



penetrates into human nature, and the loving heart that reaches out towards all sentient beings. These common virtues are suppressed by the earthly nature of selfishness. The suppressed voices can also be heard in the worlds of the Bible and Noh."

Yuko Yuasa was awarded a Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Feminist Studies from the San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1997. Her dissertation on Mary Magdalene also incorporated a video using Noh. Her videos have been shown and her Biblical Noh dramas performed at the Expo in Hanover, the Loccum Academy, and during ecumenical conferences in Bali, Bossey, and Selly Oak. One of her most famous pieces is "Wings of Love," which creates a dialogue between St. Francis of Assisi and the Zen priest Ryokan through the voices of their close women friends, St. Clare and the Buddhist nun Teishinni.

Dr. Yuasa concludes, "A Biblical Noh drama is an attempt to realize on stage the special spirituality shared by the Bible and Noh. Through the symbolical meaning of the Noh stage and its dramatic structure, it is possible to symbolize eternal life using the things of everyday life. The prophets too used symbolic language. The parables of Jesus are full of everyday objects which he uses to point to the reign of God and eternal life. This common quality of spirituality shared by the Bible and Noh makes it natural to attempt a dialogical inspiration." (C.G.Y.)

*Editor's Notes: See this JCAN issue, pg. 27, for info in next performance. Publications by Dr. Yuasa include **Poems by Ryokan** (Kokodo, 2002), which contains haiku poetry by the Zen Buddhist priest Ryokan in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Arabic, and a co-translation into Japanese of a lecture series by Phyllis Trible entitled **Feminist Interpretation of the Bible** (Shinkyō, 2002).*

- The "Wings of Love" video and books can be purchased and used as a resource in churches, schools, and seminars. See <http://www.kokodo.co.jp/pub/> for more information or email pub@kokodo.co.jp

- For information on her upcoming performances, contact Dr. Yuko Yuasa at yuyugen@nifty.ne.jp.

- Excellent article on "Wings of Love" by Dr. Masao Takenaka, on the the Asian Christian Art Association (ACAA) website at http://www.asianchristianart.org/performingarts/noh_drama2.html

"Lord, We Come..." (continued from previous page)

So far, when it comes to Japanese hymns, songs with Western melodies such as *Mabune* ("Behold the Man" or "In a Lowly Manger Born") have been popular, but most of the rest have been those with unpopular melodies of *gagaku* (Japanese traditional court music). So, I think that a "nostalgic" hymn like this is very precious. I hope that this hymn will become more popular among churches in Japan so that they can make the gospel take root in the soil of Japan and sing songs of praise rooted in their native culture. And also for churches in the rest of the world. How

about singing and playing this hymn at your church? (H.Y)

**Most of this article was translated from the Japanese original which appeared first in the June 2002 issue of *Shinto no Tomo* (A Friend of Lay Persons) magazine, United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) Publication Section, on page 94.*

For more information on *shinobues*, see the English website on the *Shakuhachi/Shinobue* Japanese traditional flutes shop in Tokyo, at http://www.mejiro-jp.com/eng/e_home.html.

Christian Conference of Asia 12th General Assembly

Building Communities of Peace for All

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) held their twelfth general assembly from April 1-6 in Chaing Mai, Thailand, under the theme, Building Communities of Peace for All. Approximately five hundred people from many parts of Asia and beyond attended. The CCA represents about 55 million Christians belonging to nearly 100 Protestant and Orthodox churches in 19 Asian countries, including Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The National Christian Council and the National Council of Churches (NCCs) of each of the Asian countries that are members of CCA, send their general secretaries, moderators, and delegates to attend the general assembly which is only held every five years.

This year, general secretaries such as Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia of the World Council of Churches who was one of the guest speakers and Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar of the NCCCUSA and special guests from other parts of the world were in attendance. The Prime Minister of Thailand, Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, a Buddhist, also came to the general assembly on April 5 as a speaker and shared in his message on the importance of building communication of peace for all in a multireligious context in Asia and the world.

From Japan, the delegation was made up of these participants: Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, General Secretary of NCCJ, Ms. Reiko Suzuki, moderator of NCCJ, Rev. Ms. Koto Masuda, Secretary for the NCCJ General Assembly and pastor for the Kyodan (UCCJ), Mr. Kazuhiro Seikino, Youth Delegate from the Lutheran Seminary, Rev. Noburo Takamae, General Secretary of the UCCJ, Rev. Ms. Hiroko Ueda, Executive Secretary of Missions for the UCCJ, Rev. Park Soo Kil, General Secretary of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, Rev. Minabe, General Secretary of the Nihon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK, Anglican/ Episcopal Church in Japan), and Mr. Michinori Mano, NCCJ's Executive Secretary for International Relations and Ms. Makiko Tanaka of the Japan Christian Women's Organization who came as observers. Two other Japanese observers from Thailand included Ms. Mieko Aoki and Ms. Fumino Hayakawa. The delegates from Japan met the delegates from the NCCCUSA during the assembly and proposed that the issue of the planned construction of the U.S. military heliport off the coast of Henoko, Okinawa (see previous issue of JCAN), be included in the assembly's public issues statement.

Other Japanese at the CCA General Assembly were; 17 year old Ms. Sayaka Yubuki (UCCJ) who was a steward, and Mr. Hisashi Yukimoto, JCAN Contributing Editor, who helped on the CCA media team at the assembly. The CCA General Assembly is a time for leaders from churches in Asia to come together to strive for visible unity of the



The CCA 12th General Assembly meets at Lotus Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Asian churches. It is also a time to share their ecumenical journeys, a time to work together on the social justice and peace concerns affecting Asia, a time to enjoy meeting one another, a time to worship together in an ecumenical setting, and a time to make Christian ecumenical connections. It is also a time to bring up and share new programs and ideas. This year, the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) Asia Focus 2005 was also formally launched during this 12th General Assembly. Dr. Ahn Jae Woong, the present CCA general secretary, called for setting up an Ecumenical Peace Congress (EPC) as a forum to explore possible ways of peace building and networking for peace mission.

A motion was made at this year's general assembly to relocate CCA headquarters from Hong Kong to Chaing Mai, Thailand. The Church of Christ in Thailand strongly supports the proposal and has not only offered some land for CCA use but will provide legal and administrative support as well. Another major decision there was that the general committee of the CCA, on 31 March in Chiang Mai, elected a new CCA General Secretary, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn for a term of five years. Dr. Prawate, the present Associate General Secretary for finance of the CCA, was born in Chiang Rai, Thailand, studied theology and philosophy at Payap University where he received his BA and BD, studied for a master's degree at Thammasat University, Bangkok, and obtained his PhD in community development from the University of the Philippines in 1992. He is a member of the Church of Christ in Thailand and began working at CCA in Hong Kong after teaching at Payap University from 1984 to 1989. Dr. Prawate Khid-arn will assume office as new General Secretary of CCA on June 1.

JCAN wishes Dr. Prawate Khid-arn our congratulations, blessings, and prayers in his new position. (For more information on CCA or to see more photos of the general assembly, go to <http://www.cca.org.hk> and <http://www.cca.org.hk/12ga/index.htm>)

Japanese Textbook Controversy: The Truth Will Set Us Free

The Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology approval of new junior high history textbooks, which are alleged to be inaccurate by a number of Christian and civic groups, has added new tensions to Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors. China and Korea, in particular, have said that the newly approved textbooks "whitewash" Japan's history of atrocities. The textbooks were prepared by a voluntary association known as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and published by Fusosha Publishing, Inc.

Distortions include avoidance of the word "invasion" when describing Japan's military occupation of China and Korea, the use of the term "Nanking Incident" to describe the infamous 1937 Nanjing Massacre in China, and the absence of information on Japan's military sex slaves, also known as "comfort women". Regarding the forced conscription of Koreans and other foreign groups, the textbook states, "the drafting and conscription system was enlarged toward the end of the war." Particularly inflammatory to South Korea are statements that a set of Korea-controlled islets, located midway between the two nations, belong to Japan. South Korea considers this renewed territorial claim to be a "colonialist act".

The National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ), the Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21, the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace, and other concerned groups, expressed their dismay over the distorted textbooks and held a press conference on April 1 in Tokyo. The Asian Network for History Education, Japan (Asia-Net), a coalition formed in 2001 upon the urgent international conference in Tokyo to protest the previous version of the textbooks, also raised objections. Due to the support of Japanese citizen groups, petitions, letters from other Asian countries, news conferences, and even a human chain event, these groups succeeded in limiting the use of this text to only 0.039 percent of Japanese schools. The government is responsible for approving and issuing the standardized textbooks, but the decision to use them is up to each individual school. NCCJ and other groups are again working to protest the use of these textbooks in the hope that schools will choose not to use them.

It was stated at the press conference that "...there seems to be a link between the textbooks, which gloss over information regarding Japan's invasion of Asia in the first half of the 20th century, and rising Japanese nationalism." This "rising nationalism" includes the government's attempt to change the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, enforce the singing of Kimigayo (the

Japanese national anthem regarding the Japanese Emperor) and the raising of Hinomaru (the national flag), Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines "class-A" and other war criminals, and exclusion of and discrimination against foreign residents and migrants.

On April 5, 2005, Asia-Net, Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21, and 15 other organizations issued a joint appeal entitled, "Don't hand over the 'dangerous textbook' that aims to distort history, glorify wars, 'amend' the Constitution, turn Japan into a war-making nation, and promote a path of isolation from the international community."

"It is not right to conceal and glorify national history," said a Christian supporter. "We must not hide the past nor deny what is happening in the present. In the case of the often disputed textbooks, Japan must tell the truth, ask for forgiveness, and never allow its atrocities to reoccur. As it says in the scriptures, 'the truth will set us free.'" (John 8:32)

The English website of the Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21: http://www.ne.jp/asahi/kyokasho/net21/english_contents.htm

The English website of the Asian Network for History Education, Japan: <http://www.jca.apc.org/asia-net/english/index.shtml>

Editor's note: A symposium on the textbook issue is planned for May 29, 2005, at the Bunkyo Civic Center in Tokyo. The meeting includes a keynote address on the history of Northeast Asia and an alternative sub-textbook by China, Japan and Korea, and a panel discussion comparing German and Japanese history textbooks.

The Asia Peace Alliance, an NGO of which the NCCJ General Secretary is a member, has produced a statement. NCCJ General Secretary Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto is one of the cosigners, together with scholars and other activists. The statement will be translated into English and posted on the NCCJ website. (C.G.Y.)



Interfaith Unity for Article 9

Nine people in Japan, who are well-known because of their books and involvement in peace-making, helped establish a group called “the Article Nine Association”. These people are:

- 1) Mr. Hisashi Inoue, Catholic Writer, President of Japan Pen Club.
- 2) Mr. Takeshi Umehara, Philosopher, first director of International Japan Culture Research Center.
- 3) Ms. Mutsuko Miki, Director of Takeo Miki(her late husband, prime minister of Japan) Memorial Center.
- 4) Mr. Kenzaburo Oue, Writer, Nobel Prize Winner.
- 5) Mr. Shunsuke Tsurumi, Philosopher and Critic.
- 6) Mr. Yasuhiro Okudaira, Researcher of Constitution, (Ex-Professor of ICU)
- 7) Ms. Hisae Sawachi, Writer
- 8) Mr. Makoto Oda, Writer.
- 9) Mr. Shuichi Kato, Critic.

In June 2004, when the debate on the amendment of the Constitution was intensified, nine well known people from the various fields in Japan established a group called “the Article 9 Association” and issued an appeal which said, “Let’s Make Article 9 Shine!” The movement to support this appeal, in which many religious leaders are participating, has spread all over Japan.

Considering the situation of Japan and the rest of the world in the 21st century, this appeal has a very significant meaning for us. In order to deliver it into the every corner of our country, we have called on religious leaders for their cooperation. Thus we are now able to launch the “Interfaith Unity for Article 9”, with their warm support. Obviously the aim of this project is to share the spirit of the appeal of “the Article 9 Association” with people of all religions. Though we have different faith traditions and believe in different religions, we can together express our concern and appeal as part of the “Article 9 Association”. We, therefore, would like to encourage people of faith to become more aware of the importance of this appeal through the “Interfaith Unity for the Article 9”.

At present, we hope to invite as many as 10,000 supporters so that not only people of faith, but people outside of any religious tradition can also realize how precious and valuable the Article 9 is for the whole world.

c/o Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace
2-10-10 Shiomi, Koto-ku, Tokyo, 135-8585
Tel: 03-5632-4444; Fax: 03-5632-7920
<http://www.shukyosha9jonowa.org>
E-mail: s9wa@cbcj.catholic.jp

The appeal states, “Considering the situation of Japan and the rest of the world in the 21st century, this appeal has a very significant meaning. In order to deliver it into the every corner of our country, we have called on religious leaders for their cooperation. Thus we are now able to launch the ‘Interfaith Unity for Article 9’, with their

warm support. Obviously the aim of this project is to share the spirit of the appeal of ‘the Article 9 Association’ with people of all religions. Though we have different faith traditions and believe in different religions, we can together express our concern and appeal as part of the ‘Article 9 Association’. We, therefore, would like to encourage people of faith to become more aware of the importance of this appeal through the ‘Interfaith Unity for the Article 9’. At present, we hope to invite as many as 10,000 supporters so that not only people of faith, but people outside of any religious tradition can also realize how precious and valuable the Article 9 is for the whole world.”

(Editor’s note: An appeal to support “the Article 9 Association” has been made to religious leaders all over Japan. 54 Catholic, Buddhist, and Protestant religious leaders have signed. Thus far, 30 Buddhist priests, monks, and abbots who have signed are from many sects such as Jodo-shu, Shingon-shu, Nichiren-shu, Tendaijimon-shu, Rinzaishu, Shyugen-su, Rissho Kosei-Kai, Konkoykyo Peace Activity Center), 14 Catholics including the Cardinal, Bishops, auxiliary Bishops, and Archbishops and 10 Protestants including all the General Secretaries of: NCCJ, the Japan Baptist Union, Japan Baptist Convention, Kyoto Christian Council (chairperson), Korean Christian Church in Japan, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, Anglican Church, United Church of Christ in Japan, National YWCA of Japan, YMCA of Japan.)



Christianity in Japan

The Interview with Prof. Yasuo Furuya – Part 2

The following is the part 2 of an interview with Rev. Dr. Yasuo Carl Furuya on one of his books, “*Nihon no Kirisutokyo*” (*Christianity in Japan*). Part 1 was in the previous issue of JCAN, Number 737. Dr. Furuya was a pastor at International Christian University Church for 40 years. He has taught courses at Princeton Theological Seminary, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, and ICU. Presently he is a professor at Seigakuen Graduate School and chairperson of the board of directors of the Asian Rural Institute.

JCAN: You mentioned in your lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary, which was also translated into Japanese in your book, that, there are many reasons why approximately 70% of the Japanese say that they are “irreligious”. Does that have anything to do with the reasons why Christianity in Japan does not spread and remains below one percent?

Prof. Furuya: Many people say that Japanese people are not religious people at all. But according to some scholars, because of the influence of Christianity, which is monotheist, many people think that religion is like Christianity. It must believe in one God. Some scholars say that majority of Japanese people are still adherent to *shizen shukyo* (spontaneous religions), but Christianity, Buddhism and Islam are *dokuso shukyo* (founded religions), (with Jesus Christ, Buddha, or Muhammad as their founders, (respectively). But Japanese people believe in religions without their founders. So, their religions are *shizen shukyo*. So, the majority of the Japanese go to their Shinto shrines and temples after Christmas. In that sense, Japanese people are very religious. So, this is an irony. Why are Christians in Japan only one percent? Because university education is based upon Western culture, and Western culture is based upon Christianity. So, when we teach religion at universities, it means Christianity. So, their idea of religion is Christianity. But actually, ninety-nine percent of the Japanese are not Christians. So, from a Christian point of view, they are not religious. But their religion means something when you believe in gods and nature. They are still religious.

JCAN: Speaking of religious education, you mentioned in your book that no religious education is provided from primary schools to universities in Japan. Then what is your view on Christian education? How do you see that? And what are the other reasons for them saying that they are “irreligious”?

Prof. Furuya: When the Meiji government leaders tried to modernize Japan, the modernization meant westernization. They liked it to be like the West - Europe and America. But at the same time, they knew that America was based upon the separation of church and state. So, you can't teach religion at school. At the same time, when modernization started, it meant natural science which was against Christianity at that time. So, Meiji leaders thought (that it should be) *wakon yosai* (Japanese spirit and West-

ern science / technology). The Western technology was okay for them, but as for religious concerns, Christianity was not but the Japanese spirit was. But the Christians were those people who saw the limitations of the Japanese spirit and Western science. For (they thought) the natural science was based upon Christianity. So, natural science without Christianity was not something that Japan should learn. So, we're a very critical people of both nationalism and natural science. But the majority of Japanese people are those who believe in the Japanese spirit and natural science. That's the difference. And so, among the Japanese Christians were good scholars of natural science and technology. But the samurai mentality comes in, (they say), “We are elites. We are different.” They are like Pharisees who said, “Oh, God, thank you that I am not like other people; thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector”(Luke 18.11). They are so happy (with it and say,) “We know Christianity, and we are not like the mass.” They are elites. And that is why we are always one percent, a minority of minorities.”

JCAN: What is the religion of the mass or what you call “*Nihon Shukyo* (Japanese religion)” that you say are at the root of the Japanese culture to which the Christianity in Japan is facing with today? How do you define that term?

Prof. Furuya: *Nihon Shukyo* is *Nihon-kyo*, an anthropocentric “religion” in which all Japanese believe that Japan is the center and the best. It is human-centered, not God-centered. It doesn't really believe in God, but believes in us. They don't like foreign missionaries, who don't think that the Japanese spirit is good and have tried to teach Christianity. As far as they teach us science and technology, it's okay, but not spiritual things. But the Japan-centered religion is wrong; it is an isolated island-country mentality. When Americans came to Japan (at the end of the Edo-period), they said, “Your mentality is like that of a frog in a well”. Still, the Japanese said, “We think that we are great because we can see the depth of the well and the heights of the heaven.” They think that it's deep, if not wide and therefore, the deeper, the better. That's the problem.

JCAN: Does it have anything to do with their spontaneous religion?

Prof. Furuya: Yes. Because it's anthropocentric, Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed are all human beings to them and they don't make them absolute. Even Kanzo Uchimura (the founder of the Japanese Non-Church Group) said, “We didn't learn anything from Christian missionaries about religion and what we learned, we learned from our ancestors.” That's the problem. *Nihon-kyo* is a religion which believes that Japan is “*shinkoku*” (God's nation). Why Japanese Christianity didn't emphasize the Kingdom of God? They were afraid of the conflict between “*shinkoku*” and “*kami no kuni*” (the kingdom of God). Albert Schweitzer wanted to publish his last book on Christianity and the Kingdom of God but it wasn't published until

1965 after he died after his daughter found the book . And in the beginning (of the book) he said, "Christianity is basically a religion of proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God." But we don't emphasize it. Then I found out how the Apostle Paul and John didn't mention about the Kingdom of God, which is found so much in the Gospels. Why didn't they mention it? That's the problem. That's why churches became so inward-looking. They are not interested in society.

JCAN: A very, very small percent of them are. They are sort of like the activists, but they are very much on the periphery. And the majority of the local church doesn't know what they are doing.

Prof. Furuya: Then I found the reason why Paul and John didn't mention about the Kingdom of God and why the Japanese churches didn't say much about the Kingdom of God. They are the same thing. It's because they were afraid, if they had mentioned about the Kingdom of God, then, of course, naturally the Christianity would have crashed with the Roman Empire. Here in Japan, the former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori said that Japan was a nation of gods. Wolfhart Pannenberg said, "The Church is the sign and the tool for the Kingdom of God." But the church became what was itself. Uemura emphasized so much about the church, as though the church itself was the purpose. And that's why the "Non-Church Group" started. But both (Masahisa) Uemura and Uchimura were interested in the Kingdom of God. It was only Toyohiko Kagawa who was interested in the Kingdom of God before the war. That is why the Kyodan (UCCJ) split between "church" and "society". The church should emphasize the kingdom of God.

That is one of the reasons why today young people do not go to church. But young people today are interested in work camps, like going on work camps to South East Asian or work camps to the Asian Rural Institute here in Japan.

If the churches change their attitude, then we will have a great chance for evangelism in Japan. We have so many problems now at schools, homes, etc. Why don't they come to church? Because the churches are not interested in the kingdom of God. My next book is about the Kingdom of God and addresses this problem. (H.Y.)



BOOK REVIEW

God's Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor

Katherine V. Dillon , Donald M. Goldstein , Gordon W. Prange

368 pages; 5 X 7 3/4 inches

List Price: \$9.95

ISBN: 1574886959

GOD'S SAMURAI is the unusual story of Mitsuo Fuchida, the career aviator who led the attack on Pearl Harbor and participated in most of the fiercest battles of the Pacific war. A valuable record of major events, it is also the personal story of a man swept along by his times. Reared in the vanished culture of early twentieth-century Japan, war hero Fuchida returned home to become a simple farmer. After a scandalous love affair came his remarkable conversion to Christianity and years of touring the world as an evangelist. His tale is an informative, personal look at the war "from the other side."

Mitsuo Fuchida led the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and served as air operations officer in subsequent Pacific campaigns. Based on interviews that began soon after the war and continued until Fuchida's death in 1976, this bi-

ography covers Fuchida's dazzling wartime exploits and provides insight into Japanese naval air tactics. The account of his comedown from war hero to obscure dirt farmer is poignant. The authors compare him to an unattached samurai during this period, searching for "a liege lord to receive his ardent allegiance."

Fuchida found a banner for his sword when he converted to Christianity and became a nondenominational evangelist, campaigning in the U.S. and Europe as well as in Japan. The story of his military career, his conversion, his first fumbling efforts as a preacher and his success as an international evangelist make for a story that is alternately exciting, moving and spiritually rewarding (from a review of the hardcover edition).

First published in hardcover in 1990, it is now available in a paperback. (the publisher's official website: <http://www.potomacbooksinc.com/Books/SearchResults.aspx?str=God's+Samurai>) (H.Y.)

A Time Apart: The Trinity Benedictine Monastery

When I first arrived at the Trinity Benedictine Monastery in Fujimi, it seemed so unimpressive, swallowed up by nearby condominiums and nothing like the pastoral setting that seemed so impressive from brochures or websites. It was hard even finding someone to greet me, and there only seemed to be a handful of guest rooms off in one wing. Yet, I wonder if first impressions of heaven would be that way too—unimpressive on the surface, but with a depth surpassing comprehension?

After a few days, the total immersion in silence (outside of meal times) began to wrap around me, stilling my frenetic heart which had been overtaxed by months, even years, of churning activities. I began to notice the serene vistas from each window of the monastery, the plain monastic (or was it Japanese) lines of the hallways, the soft and variegated tones of wood and concrete. As the light of the day would change from dawn to bright noonday to nightfall to evening, the shadows and the filtered light would also change and each room would look like a different place, touched by surprising alterations of life.

Yet don't we all want to know about the food? Each meal was unique as it appeared that the monks alternated cooking and there were European monks as well as Japanese monks, so Japanese curry rice might be followed by a fine Italian pasta dish the next meal. At each meal, I would chat with whomever the guests were — maybe a Catholic nun from Kyushu, a Protestant pastor from Switzerland, several non-Christian young females on a holiday, an elderly Japanese man from Kanto who had been through World War II. Then on the five days when there were no other guests, each meal was taken in blissful silence, one of the hallmarks of some Benedictine monasteries.

One highlight was meeting Father Neal Lawrence, now deceased. We took an instant liking to one another, and besides showing me his "tanka" poems, we sat for hours talking about his experiences in Okinawa and in the post-war occupation of Japan under General Douglas MacArthur. Talking to him was like sitting with history, with a priceless porcelain vase, fragile, delicate, and perhaps soon to be hidden from view forever. He seemed to grasp for more recent facts, but his recall of events maybe 70 years ago seemed fresh and vivid. (*Ed. Note: Father Neal died, age 96, in November, 2004.*)

Just as Father Neal was a treasure, so were the walks outside Trinity. Simply ambling along at a gentle pace, I found small villages, farms, and stopped to chat with a local lady who was bemoaning the recent "attack" of rodents on her "daikon" radishes! "Oh those nasty things! Look what they did to my daikon," she said with very un-



Fujimi Trinity Monastery Chapel

Tokyo-like animation and gusto. I laughed but she wasn't amused. Then I walked on for quite a long while and found a ski lift which went up to a mountaintop from which I could view the entire valley, and, "of course," Mount Fuji (for that is why it is called "Fujimi" or view of Fuji-san). I walked back at dusk to rejoin the rhythm of the community, the chanting of vespers.

For those who are Catholic and even those of us who are not, the offices of the day, the times of prayer (conducted in Japanese only) are points of reference, of centering. The library has a vast array of English books on Japan as well as the obvious storehouse of Catholic devotional and theological literature. And the monks, though few in number and usually confined to simply going through the offices then retreating to their side of the monastery, all seem so gracious and loving. Every time I would fumble over finding the proper place in the books during the offices, one of them would gently help me find the right page.

My ten days at the monastery flew by, refreshing periods of silence, prayer and contemplative reading punctuated by heart-to-heart conversations. I left rested and renewed, connected with my soul and with my God.

Those interested in learning more about monastic life at Fujimi or in booking a retreat at the monastery may refer to the following website: <http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/fujimi/>. The monastery's email address is fujimi@osb.or.jp.

The author of this article, Dr. Joseph Ozawa, a Nikkei sansei, is a clinical psychologist, pastor and speaker sent to Japan with his wife, Andrea, by St. Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore—a Chinese Anglican church. His special ministries are healing and reconciliation. He first visited Trinity Benedictine Monastery in November, 2003.

Women's Ministry in the United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ was established with 35 denominations in 1941. During the war, the Christians in Japan formed a religious community without denominations. However, the resulting organization, the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), given birth by national demand, had no common understanding of ministry or theological education. It was not always obvious what it meant to be a minister in the United Church of Christ in Japan. Over the years, the United Church of Christ in Japan has accepted the concept of women's ministry and its tasks. In 1941, about 30 women were ordained into ministry. By 2002, there were 336 women out of a total of 2,161 active ministers, or around 15%. However, it is necessary to define what it means to be a "woman in the ministry." Since its inception in 1968, The Study Committee on Women's Ministries Issues, part of the Union of Sororities, has taken an active interest in these issues. They have utilized a series of questionnaires distributed to both men and women to assess roles and attitudes toward women in ministry.

The 1994 questionnaire asked women in ministry about the content of their work, scale of their churches, conditions of invitation, salaries and benefits, problems and the like. The 1996 questionnaire asked men in the ministry about their impressions of women's ministry and improvements thereto. The 1999 questionnaire asked participants at the National Convention (women aged 50 and over) about the desire for women in the ministry, expectations of their role as "pastor's wives" and so on. Instead of overcoming stereotypes, the questionnaires helped to solidify previously existing gender roles and images. The challenges for women in the ministry are both tangible, like local arrangements, and intangible, like problems of conscience. For instance, the system of inviting ministers to a particular church is problematic. There is no organization or advisory to assist with calling a minister by sex. Neither denominational personnel administrators nor the churches bring conscience to this matter. Further, in the case of married clergy couples, the woman does not get benefits, or she is expected to serve as "pastor's wife" rather than pastor. If the man is invited alone, the woman cannot serve as minister because she does not have a place to work. Additionally, there is no system for women requiring maternity leave, needing flexibility during child rearing years, or dealing with old age. Women pastors are also prevented from becoming part of denominational decision making agencies because the agency requires that regular voting members by head pastors. The need for affirmative action, supervisors and mentors for women ministers is acute. Another important issue is the consciousness (mind) of the members of a church. We want to overcome the stereotype of "gender roles," consciously and unconsciously by read-

ing the Bible and discussing it. Women did not have this right when the Bible was written. The Christian church has consciously fixed gender roles based on the traditional interpretation of the Bible. However, the consciousness of awareness of feminist theology has shown clearly that the Bible (or author) reflected the paternalism of that time. So, we can now read the Bible with the benefit of feminist theology. When we study women's stories in the Bible, we find that women were repressed persons. Listening to the voices of the oppressed opens to us new ways of understanding and presents renewed challenges to the established order. When we read the Bible, we do not necessarily find the answer to our questions about roles; instead, we touch the pathos and joy in our lives. Together we find community, not a community governed by power but one which evolves through living together. We desire to be released from gender roles and relationships of violence by reading the Bible with a female perspective. (By Rev. Koto Masuda)

Editor's Note: The author, Rev. Koto Masuda, is a pastor of the Sugamo Tokiwa Church, Tokyo. She was formerly pastor at a Kyodan Church in Tochigi Prefecture where she worked closely with Asian Rural Institute. She is a graduate of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and the mother of three children. Rev. Masuda also serves on the Board of Directors for NCCJ.

(This article was edited and adapted from the original which appeared in the Center for Feminist Theology and Ministry in Japan newsletter, No. 16, July, 2004. To become a member of the Center or to receive more information, contact the Co-Directors: Dr. Hisako Kinukawa hkinukawa@nifty.ne.jp Dr. Satoko Yamaguchi satoko125@u01.gate01.com)



Christians Defend Rights of Foreigners in Japan

In the midst of a trend of globalization inevitably resulting in the migration of people into Japan, 150 Christians gathered together at Meguro Catholic Church in Tokyo to affirm the necessity of enacting the “Basic Law for Foreign Residents” in Japan on January 29, with the theme, “Let us Eat, Sing, Dance and Pray Together!”

The 19th National Christian Gathering for Demanding the Enactment of the Basic Law for Foreign Residents in Japan was held by Gaikikyo, or the National Christian Conference for Discussion of Problems of the Alien Registration Law. This interdenominational group was formed to defend the rights of foreign residents, with an emphasis on celebrating the richness of the diversified society as evidence of God’s blessing that invigorates Japanese society. Activities included prayer, listening to testimonies of foreigners in Japan, and enjoying other cultures’ songs, music and food.

Under the existing Japanese laws on foreigners, including the Alien Registration Law and the Immigration Control Ordinance, the rights of many foreigners are controlled and even violated by the government, rising Japanese chauvinism and discrimination in the context of militarization.

The Basic Law is a proposal by the group mooted in 1998 for a bill to be legislated at the Diet of Japan to secure the human rights of foreign residents being discriminated against or deported from Japan, as “a missionary agenda of the churches”.

According to the Immigration Bureau of Japan, those foreigners include 1,915,030 people registered as foreign residents in Japan as of December 2003, in addition to unknown number of unregistered foreigners overstaying

their period of legal residency. Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese residents, or their ancestors, who were brought to Japan from the former Japanese wartime colonies in Northeast Asia for forced labor, or who came here as migrant workers after they were exploited by the Japanese colonial governments, have received status inferior to that of Japanese nationals.

In Japan, few asylum-seekers have been granted refugee status, and the rights of many migrant workers and their families illegally overstaying their visa are not guaranteed. Many of them have been deported back to their home countries.

“I was scared to see the police suddenly arrive at our house in November 2003 when I knew that my family had overstayed our visa,” said a high school girl from the Philippines who came to Japan with her family and shared her story in Japanese at the gathering.

“When we appeared at the Immigration Bureau of Japan, I thought that we might be arrested and deported back to the Philippines by the Bureau, but we were able to come back home in safety thanks to support from my friends and others through CCS (Club of Children and Students working together for multicultural society), a Tokyo-based non-governmental organization supporting children of foreign residents at the church, who petitioned the Bureau to grant us tentative residency by collecting signatures from the public for the Office’s permission of our tentative residency,” said the girl.

She is still seeking further residency status with the support of the CCS, as she does not speak Tagalog, and her family has no basis for making a living back in the Philippines.

“Being a refugee is not something anybody wants to be,” said a male refugee named Paul from Africa who had to undergo five years of complicated procedures before receiving protection from the government. “It’s something you are forced to become.”

“I am now engaged in activities to raise awareness of conflicts in troubled areas as my service to God,” said the refugee, a Catholic who had dreamed of becoming a priest but had to give up the dream to escape from his conflict-ridden country.

“It is extremely important for us to accept these foreigners as our brothers and sisters to live together,” said Tokyo Catholic Archbishop Takeo Okada, in his message to the participants, noting that a considerable number of them are Christians whose human rights are being violated. “We Christians are being asked if we are truly living in Jesus Christ and believe the love of God,” he added, referring to biblical verses in Luke 10:25-28.

“Christians are people who are informed of the gospel of reconciliation,” said Shoji Akiba, Secretary General



“Accept foreign residents as our brothers and sisters to live together” – Tokyo Archbishop Takeo Okada speaks to the participants at the National Christian Gathering for Demanding the Enactment of the “Basic Law for Foreign Residents” at Meguro Catholic Church in Tokyo on January 29.

of Gaikikyo, who spoke to the audience at the gathering. "We should change the society which is characterized by chains of discrimination, injustice, violence, hatred, conflict and revenge into a society in which we can live together in tolerance and peace."

"I pray that the God of peace, who established reconciliation between God and humans and among humans through Christ, will use us further through our movement," said Akiba, asking the audience to support their movement.

The participants adopted a declaration in which they confirmed that they would strengthen and widen their activities to seek the enactment of the Basic Law for Foreign Residents. The organizers submitted a petition to the Diet of Japan for the legislation of the Basic Law on January 27.

"This movement is a faith-based witness to the fact that all humans, as God's creation, were sent to this world for God's work and that we are to protect the dignity of those humans as workers for God," the declaration said, urging the government and related agencies to enact the Law and several other specific pieces of legislation.

These include policy measures for the rights of foreign residents in Japan relating to their right to vote, ordinances against racial discrimination, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural education, redress to wartime victims of sexual slavery, and a peace treaty between Japan and North Korea.

For the English translation of the text of the Basic Law for Foreign Residents, see website: <http://www.ksyc.jp/gaikikyoku/rireki.htm> and click "Basic Law for Foreign Residents 1" and "Basic Law for Foreign Residents 2". To view and download the texts, you will need an updated Adobe Reader. See website: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.



Sadao Watanabe: Christian and Inculturation

(Some of his prints are used as graphics used in this issue of JCAN.)

Sadao Watanabe was born in Tokyo in 1913 and became a Christian at the age of 18. He decided to dedicate his life and artistic talent "to the glory of God." He was one of the first Japanese artists to express the inculturation of Christianity through artwork. He found the art that the missionaries brought to Japan "too pretty and too sentimental ... and not strong enough to express the vitality of the biblical message." His prints were simple and rough, using his own Japanese stencil print style. His goal was to produce art that was "close to the hearts of the people" and to portray Christianity as being part of Japan.

Some of his art incorporates unique twists and his humor such as the "Visitation of the Magi" with three horses rather than with the traditional camels. Many of his prints use subtle Japanese themes such as having the disciples and Jesus eating rice balls and fish in the "The Last Supper" and "Washing the Disciple's Feet" where Jesus is using a simple "tenugui", (a Japanese towel) wrapped, Japanese style, around his waist.

Watanabe was a member of the Logos Kyodan (UCCJ) Church. The church was originally in Mejiro, Tokyo, but later moved to Hachioji, Tokyo. The church has been blessed with the gift of many of Watanabe's prints, which are now hanging in the sanctuary. NCCJ's General Secretary, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, preaches on the first Sunday of every month at the Logos Church as its pastor and enjoys seeing the beautiful art work each time he goes.

During his life, Watanabe traveled internationally and became popular abroad. His works are displayed in many international museums including the Vatican Museum of Modern Religious Art, the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, and the New York Museum of Modern Art. He died in 1996, but the message of his artwork continues today. (C.G.-Y.)



Okinawa Christian Center

Kyoko Matayoshi has worked at the OCC (The Okinawa Christian Center, built by the Okinawa Parish of the United Church of Christ in Japan) since the year after its foundation in February 1986. She told me about the diverse ministry they have conducted and expanded over their 19 year history as they approach two decades of Christian service in Asia.

Okinawa has a long history of being a “bridge of nations,” a focal point of trade and exchange, due to its central location and proximity to many countries in the Southeast Asian region. The OCC has made full use of this advantage to develop a truly international ministry, expanding their activities into countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines to the benefit of the Church in many regional areas of need as well as in Japan.

The OCC’s basic statement of purpose is to “foster the growth of individual Christians through fellowship with a diverse range of people, cultures and ideologies, and to build a place of responsible living alongside the people who Jesus Christ loves, suffers with and leads,” which they achieve through a number of different fields of activity.

One of these is in the provision of apartments to students from the University of the Ryukyus and the Okinawa Christian University. The apartments are located in the OCC Ginowan Seminar House building, which also features a chapel and rooms for workshops and meetings, thus providing important opportunities for students to interact with Christians and to widen the OCC’s human network into local universities. Such networking represents one of the foundations of effective Christian ministry, the outreach beyond the body of believers to provide services to the local community.

The OCC, however, has not simply set their sights on local ministry. In little over a decade, the scope of the OCCs involvement has greatly expanded to encompass a wide



The Okinawa Christian Center in Ginowan City

array of fields and services to directly and indirectly provide valuable aid to both the victims of economic, social and health related hardship and the organisations that support them all across the Asian region.

The OCC’s major international field of activity began in 1991 with the development of exchange and support projects with countries in Southeast Asia. Their current projects involve working with centers in the Philippines and Korea that are set up to support the empowerment and independence of women in areas with a US military presence. Many women in these areas end up working in drinking establishments that cater to military personnel. The centers therefore work to educate and financially support the many Amerasian children living in such areas, and to help women set up small businesses etc. The OCC conducts work camps to improve facilities, and runs training and skill development exchange programs with center staff.

The OCC also visits kindergartens and hospitals of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and invites local staff to Okinawa to see how similar work is implemented here, thus resulting in the mutual training of Christian workers in both regions.

Other international work conducted by the OCC includes international Church youth exchange, exchange projects with staff from organizations that deal with US military issues in Korea, study exchanges, and work camps to improve facilities such as Hansen’s Disease rehabilitation hospitals in Thailand.

One of the OCC’s national activities is the provision of research programs, which include eco tours, field trips and camps for elementary school students, peace issues workshops, foreign language classes, international understanding seminars conducted by guest speakers from Asian countries, Okinawa study programs and many other such projects. The reputation of the OCC, which has spread



OCC exchange project in the Philippines

largely by word-of-mouth, has led to approximately 30 groups, or more than 500 people, coming to participate in their programs from churches, universities, schools and other institutions and organizations as far away as Hokkaido every year.

Therefore, while the OCC appears to be small organization, they are in fact active in a remarkable number of projects in a wide variety of fields locally, nationally and internationally. When asked about their future direction, Ms. Matayoshi responded by saying, "We are a religious establishment, so we are seeking what Christ's will is for us in the future. We are driven to learn how we can best respond to the needs that are brought to us and effectively tell people about Christ's love."

If you are interested in the work of the OCC, or if you would like to contact them regarding participation in one of their programs, then their contact details are as follows:

Kyoko Matayoshi
Okinawa Christian Center
Ginowan Seminar House

Tel: (098) 898 4361

Fax: (098) 897 6963

Email: oki-gsh@nirai.ne.jp

Web: <http://w1.nirai.ne.jp/oki-gsh>

Ian Laidlaw

Ian Laidlaw is from Hamilton, New Zealand, and came to Japan in 2001 to work as a support person for foreign residents in Okinawa. He is an active volunteer for the Buraku Liberation League, attends the Central Baptist Church in Urasoe City, and is a maladroit musician and photographer. He was in charge of supporting foreign workers in Okinawa, which included counseling, consultation, mediation and general problem resolution, as well as proactive support system establishment and maintenance including web-page design, newsletter publication, general support project creation, management and coordination, conference presentations and creation of support-focused publications. He was married at Central Baptist Church to Kristy Chibana on March 19, 2005. Congratulations and blessings from the staff and readers of JCAN!

From the Shelves of Christian Bookstores in Japan

Mikio Sumiya, Nihon no Shinto no "Shingaku" (A "Theology" of Lay Persons in Japan), The Board of Publications, United Church of Christ in Japan, June 2004

(See also his obituary in JCAN, No.734, Spring/Summer 2003)

In this Japanese book, which has been among the best-sellers at Christian bookstores in Japan over several months, the late Mikio Sumiya, who was a leading scholar of labor economics at Tokyo University and a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), points out the characteristics and problems regarding lay persons in Japan.

Prof. Sumiya writes that Christians in Japan are less than one percent of the population partly because they are what he calls "Sunday believers", who get lost in the secular and pagan society of Japan from Monday to Saturday and come to church only on Sunday.

By referring to the criticism by a German philosopher, Karl Lowith, who was a teacher at Tohoku University in northern Japan before World War II, that Japanese intellectuals compartmentalize their thoughts, like living in a two-story house where they have Western thoughts on the second floor and Japanese thoughts on the first floor without a ladder between them, Prof. Sumiya describes churches in Japan as 'two-storied' churches in the secular society, whose members listen to sermons, read the Bible and study Christianity on the 'second floor' but come down to the 'first floor' where they live their secular and pagan lives.

He also points out that churches in Japan have been centered on urban intellectuals, because churches in traditional rural communities in Japan were corrupted by the Meiji Government that established the Emperor System through the Imperial Japanese Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education, and because Japan became rapidly urbanized after the Sino-Japan War (1894-95).

"After the traditional Japanese rural family system collapsed, many male believers came to 'graduate' or even 'quit' their churches while female believers did not; The faith of male believers was diluted by their social lives, while the females came back to church after a period of carrying out their traditional family duties of taking care of ancestral altars at home, a time when they were not allowed by the family to go to church. Such women constituted a large portion of ordained and lay persons, including church elders," he writes. "Therefore, many male members were listed in 'unofficial church directories'."

He also points out a problem of the churches in Japan that, while they thank God and make prayer requests, they lack repentance in their prayers, because of the traditionally dominant value among the Japanese for enjoying this-worldly happiness in their lives. "Many of the elderly today were baptized in their youth as they experience a loss of purpose in their lives soon after Japan lost the World War II, and now they constitute the majority of the churches, while few young people attend church," he writes.

Tokudo Letters

On 16 February 2005, the Shimane Prefectural Assembly passed an ordinance designed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Japan's assumption of control over Takeshima Island by establishing a "Takeshima Day." This drew a severe response by the South Korean people and government. The Takeshima/Tokdo problem between Japan and Korea is over these uninhabited and rocky islands. It was during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, that Japan gave the name "Takeshima" to the islands, and this became part of the process of colonization by which all Korea was controlled, turned into a protectorate, and then

assimilated. After Japan's wartime defeat and the independence of Korea, a January 1946 edict from US occupation forces commander MacArthur, excluded Takeshima from the area of Japanese sovereignty. This means that Korea became an independent state possessing territory that included Takeshima/Tokdo. The Korean position is that if the Japanese government really means what it says when it expresses regret over the harm and pain caused by its colonial rule, then it has to concede its claim to sovereignty over Tokdo. In any event, there is no possibility of Japan gaining control of these islands.



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN KOREA

Room 705 Christian Building 136-46 YUNOH-DONG CHONGRO-KU, SEOUL, 110-470 KOREA
TEL : 82-2-763-7990, 8427, 7323 FAX : 744-6189

16th March, 2005

REV. PAIK DO-WOONG
GENERAL SECRETARY

Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto
General Secretary
National Christian Council in Japan
Rm 502, Japan Christian Center
2-3-18-24 Nishi-Waseda, Shinjuku
TOKYO 169, JAPAN

Dear Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ!

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule and of the Japanese defeat of the Pacific War, and also in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the reopening of the diplomatic relationship between South Korea and Japan, we, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK), have worked closely the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) to bury the unfortunate past and to promote friendly relations between the two nations.

It is, therefore, our great regret to hear that today the parliament of Shimane-prefecture in Japan made a very inappropriate decision to observe "Takeshima (Dokdo Island) Day" as if Dokdo is Japanese territory. It is also our great regret to hear that some Japanese textbook tries to distort and twist the historical facts of Japanese invasion to Korea, and that Japanese court of law has continuously refused to recognize the unfair treatment of Korean forced laborers.

We cannot but doubt whether the Japanese government truly reflects on its misconduct in the past and has a genuine will to promote a good relationship with neighboring countries. The Japanese government must learn from the German government which has made from time to time sincere apologies for its historical crimes and which tries to remember the unfortunate past by promoting joint research on history with neighboring nations.

We appreciate and admire that the NCCJ, though a minority in number, has made its sincere and sustaining effort to prevent the Japanese government from turning ultraconservative and to promote and preserve good neighborly relations with various Asian countries.

We ask the NCCJ, Japanese churches, and Japanese intellectuals for a more consolidated effort to guide the Japanese government back to the right path toward a new history of mutual respect and benefits in the region. We, the churches in Korea, will also do our best to overcome the present crisis between the two countries.

In closing, we would like to thank you again for your cooperation and solidarity.

Sincerely yours,

Paik. Do-Woong (Rev.)
General Secretary
National Council of Churches in Korea

CC. Rev. Park. Soo-Kil, General Secretary, Korea Christian Church in Japan



NCC 日本キリスト教協議会

T169-0061 東京都新宿区西早稲田 2-3-18-24 電話 00180-4-75788
 電話 03-3203-0372 (代表) FAX : 03-3204-9485 E-mail:ncc-j@jca.apc.org
<http://www.jca.apc.org/ncc-j/index.html>

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN JAPAN
 JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 162-0061 JAPAN
 Telephone : 03-3203-0372 Fax : 03-3204-9485 E-mail:ncc-j@jca.apc.org
<http://www.jca.apc.org/ncc-j/index.html>

副会長 鈴木 俊子
 幹事 山本 俊正

Ms. SUZUKI Reiko
 Moderator
 REV. YAMAMOTO Toshimitsu
 General Secretary

Rev. Paik Do-Woong General
 Secretary
 National Council of Churches in Korea
 Room 706 Christian Building
 Yunch-Dong Chongro-Ku, Seoul, Korea

March 22, 2005

Dear Rev. Paik Do-Woong:

Greetings from Tokyo.

Thank you very much for your March 16th letter faxed to NCCJ.

It is also our great regret to learn that the Shimane prefectural assembly has passed an ordinance designating Feb 22 as "Takeshima Day", causing quite an uproar in South Korea. We know that the year Shimane Prefecture incorporated "Takeshima" 100 years ago was also the year that opened the way for Japan's annexation of Korea. Therefore, the issue closely connects with the history of Japan's colonial rule. As you also correctly pointed out, this has much to do with the fact that the Japanese government did not and does not reflect and apologize for its past actions and compensate Korean victims from World War II. The controversy over approval of the distorted Japanese history textbooks is the tip of the iceberg for a series of recent moves of the emerging nationalism in Japan.

We will continue, in light of the emerging nationalism, to raise our voices to guide the Japanese government back to the right path toward a new history of mutual respect and understanding in the region. We also will make concerted efforts, together with other ecumenical families, NGOs and the people's movements, to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation in our region. We are very grateful to have close friends like you in the NCCJ and that we can frankly share our concerns, pains and joy with each other. We further treasure our friendship especially during the time of crisis between our two countries. Please keep us posted and let us know if we can be of any further help on this "Tokto" issue.

May God bless you and keep you during this time of Lent and the upcoming joy of Easter.

In solidarity, we remain.

Toshi Yamamoto (Rev)
 General Secretary
 National Christian Council in Japan

NCCJ Committee Chair Urges the Halting of a Drilling Survey for US Base Construction in Okinawa

In a strong expression of opposition to a planned drilling survey for a US military heliport construction off the coast of Henoko, Okinawa, which Japan's defence facility officials tried to resume on April 20, Chairwoman Kimiko Ogasawara of the NCCJ Committee on Peace and Nuclear Issues issued a statement on the same day urging Japan's Defense Agency, Defence Facility Agency and the Naha Defence Facility Bureau to immediately halt the survey in the southwest indigenous islands of Japan.

"The sea off Henoko does not belong to the US military or the Japanese government," said Ogasawara, "You must not destroy the life-producing 'chura-umi' (meaning 'beautiful sea' in Okinawan language) through the inter-

governmental conspiracy that neglects voices of the local residents."

The statement was issued two days after protesters marked one-year anniversary of their protest. It urged the government to "listen to the voices of many people including the elderly who have lived in Henoko, protected the sea for many years, continue to sit in on the beach, and resist the drilling survey", adding that the sea "where precious living creatures such as coral and dugong live must be protected by people worldwide and handed down to the next generation."

(See also an article on this construction issue in the Fall/Winter 2004 issue of JCAN on page 14.)



NCC 日本キリスト教協議会

T 169-0061 東京都新宿区西早稲田 2-3-18-24 電話 00180-4-75786
 電話 03-3203-0372 (代表) FAX : 03-3204-9485 E-mail:ncc-j@ca.spc.org
<http://www.jca.spc.org/ncc-j/index.html>

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN JAPAN

JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwasada, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 169-0021 JAPAN
 Telephone : 03-3203-0372 Fax : 03-3204-9485 E-mail:ncc-j@ca.spc.org
<http://www.jca.spc.org/ncc-j/index.html>

副会長 鈴木 侑子
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Ms. SUZUKI Reiko
 Moderator

REV. YAMAMOTO Toshimasa
 General Secretary

Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr.
 Rev. Dr. Robert W. Edgar
 National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
 475 Riverside Drive, Room 880, New York, NY 10115-0050
 USA

March 28, 2005

Dear Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Hoyt and Rev. Dr. Robert W. Edgar:

Greetings in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

We are grateful for your prayers for peace and for your continuous ecumenical work to bring about peace in the world. We are writing this letter on behalf of the Okinawa Christian Council and the National Christian Council in Japan.

This is an urgent request to the NCCCUSA to urge the US government to give up the idea of constructing a new US military airbase by reclaiming land from the sea on the Okinawan coast of Henoko, for which an underwater drilling survey is in process.

Okinawa was used as a "sacrificed stone" to protect the mainland of Japan during the World War II and many lives were taken away. After the war, Okinawa was made to be part of the US war involvement during the Vietnam War as a forward-deployed base. Subsequently, US and Japan, along with building up of military cooperation, have been ignoring the Okinawan people's desire for peace.

The Scripture says, "Thou shall not kill" (Exodus 20: 13) and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). We firmly believe that the history of God will lead us into a direction where we (our countries) may live together, not at an expense of others (other countries). The Scripture also says, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52) We sincerely demand that the huge amount of money, scientific knowledge; and wisdom which is used for killing people should be converted and utilized to bring peace. It should also be noted that war is the number one cause of environmental destruction.

Though the Okinawa prefecture constitutes only 0.6% of Japan, it has been forced to accommodate 75% of US military bases. In 1996, both the Japanese and US governments agreed, through the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SOCO), on the return of Futenma Air station on the condition that Japan would build another huge airbase by reclaiming land from sea within 16 years in Henoko which is located at the east side of the main island of Okinawa. In April 2004, the Japanese government began seabed-drilling survey for construction.

The sea of Henoko is filled with the richest coral reef in all of Okinawa and is the home of the endangered Dugong (sea cow). It is a sea of life. People in Henoko have been leading a life protected by the ocean. Those of the older generation, many of who experienced the ground battle of 60 years ago, have continued to sit-in non-violently for the past 8 years and 300 days, by saying, "I will protect this sea of life, even if I end up with dying for the cause" or "we do not need to construct a base which will deprive people of life." The local fisherman and residents stood up to oppose the construction of the base by calling for the protection of the sea life and they risk their lives to protest by putting small boats in the path of the survey and, drilling vessels. More than 80% of the people in Okinawa oppose the construction of a new base in Henoko. Those who experienced this sad war would not cooperate with the preparation of another war, which will harm and destroy people's lives. They do not want to be a part of the victimizer any more. Furthermore, this struggle in Okinawa has spread all over Japan in solidarity to many people.

On August 13, 2004, there was an accident in which a US transport helicopter attached to Futenma Air base crashed on the campus of the International University and was destroyed by fire. Futenma is the most dangerous air base in the world as it is right next to the residential area in which you can identify the face of the pilot flying by from the classroom window of the local elementary school. We demand, therefore, that Futenma Air base be closed immediately and returned to Okinawa.

The third General Assembly of International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), which was held in 2004, gave advice again, following the last General Assembly, to both the Japanese and US governments to protect the Dugong in the sea of Henoko in Okinawa. The sea of Henoko has been watched carefully by the world.

We oppose the construction of a new base in Henoko. It would be greatly appreciated if the NCCCUSA could appeal to the US government to give up the idea of transferring and constructing a new US military airbase on the sea of Henoko.

In closing, we would like to thank you again for your cooperation and solidarity.

Peace and Grace,

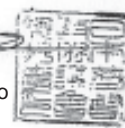
The Rt. Rev. David S. Tani

The Rt. Rev. David Shoji Tani
 Moderator,
 Okinawa Christian Council



Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto

Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto
 General Secretary
 National Christian Council in Japan



(The above letter was adopted by 48th General Assembly of the Okinawa Christian Council on February 27, 2005.)

US Base Construction in Henoko, Okinawa



Protestors occupying one of the four test boring points



Protestors with sign reading 'No huge military base!'



Various political and social groups boarding the protest boats



The test boring points have been occupied daily from sunrise until sunset



The protest drew people from all levels of society from all around Okinawa, including this student from Ryukyu University



After 247 consecutive days of occupation (since April 17, 2004), the protestors were greatly encouraged by the hundreds of people who came to express their support

Photos taken by Ian Laidlaw

Respect for Nature: Statement Issued to Celebrate the Kyoto Protocol Enforcement

An interfaith group headed by a Christian pastor issued a statement to celebrate the enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty which is aimed at curbing global warming and climate change.

The Kinki Religious Federation, a regional interfaith group based in the western part of Japan, held an interfaith service at Kyoto Cathedral on February 16, 2005, on the day when the Protocol came into force.

"It started with the blowing of a conch-shell horn and included silent prayers after representatives of different religions in the region rang a bell before marching to Yasaka Shinto Shrine," said the Rev. Yukio Saeki, president of the interfaith group and chairman of the Kyoto Christian Council.

"Our deepest wish is that a respect for nature will be reborn in the world and that the spirit of cooperation among different nations and cultures will rise up to create a future where we can coexist and create a better world," the statement said. "Unfortunately, we are running out of time for discussion and there is an increasing risk of conflict arising. We need unified action."

In the statement, the group said that the Kyoto Protocol "is a beginning point" and that "we must move forward from here with action and commitment to the earth, to each other and future generations." The statement also proposed "a grass-roots movement that involves all people doing their part as individuals to try to repair the damage that has been done."

On the day before the service, Rev. Saeki, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Japan, told JCAN that "We intend to hold the service tomorrow just as we did eight years ago."

The interfaith service eight years ago was held by the Kyoto Prefectural Religious Federation at the same cathedral on December 7, 1997 when the Protocol was debated for adoption, together with the World Council of Churches (WCC), with Raul Estrada-Oyuela, then chairman of the Committee of the Whole of the Third Conference of the Parties (COP3) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as the guest speaker.

The 1997 service adopted a statement called the Kyoto Appeal for leaders of nations to agree upon the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions after 2000 to 20 percent below 1990 levels in line with the calls by small island countries in the Pacific and international nongovernmental organizations. At the same time, the appeal urged all people to simplify their lifestyles.

The reduction target set out in the appeal, however, was neither accepted at the COP3 nor realized. The 2005 statement does not include any evaluation of this fact.

On the other hand, a small but a growing number of local congregations in Japan have built 'eco-churches' with solar-power or wind power generation systems for the church buildings or the manse. (H.Y)

2006 Women's Conference

Theme: "Come, Holy Spirit"

Keynote speaker: Dr. Hyun Kyung (Chung), Korean woman professor of ecumenical theology at Theological Seminary in New York

Place: Amagi Sanso Retreat Center, Shizuoka-ken

Dates: Jan. 27-30, 2006

Open to all women. For more info, email:

RevClaudia@aol.com.

8th Japan-Korea NCC Consultation

Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5.9)

The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) held the 8th Consultation of the Japan-Korea/Korea-Japan NCCs from December 6 to 8, 2004, at the Korean YMCA in Tokyo, Japan, under the theme of, "Creating a Culture of Peace Together - How Should We Live in an Age of Violence". NCCCK and NCCJ pledged to work together to renounce war, uphold the Peace Constitution, create a culture of peace, look to the future and support the Joint Statement, in remembrance of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence and in solidarity with the member churches of the WCC and the CCA. The Joint Statement can be found on the NCCJ website: <http://www.jca.apc.org/ncc-j/>

Why Violence, Why Not Peace? DOV Study Guide Published in Japanese Contexts

In response to the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) which was initiated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2001, the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) published a Japanese version of the DOV Study Guide, *Why Violence, Why Not Peace?* in the context of its own and Asia, as the DOV is focusing on Asia this year. The Japanese version was sent out to local congregations of the member churches for their use last December. For the English original version, see the WCC website: <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/>

Yuko Yuasa's Noh; Hannya and Mary

(See related article in this issue, page 10)

On November, Saturday, 1 pm, in the Doshisha University chapel, Dr. Yuko Yuasa's Noh dramatic Christian liturgy, Hannya and Mary, will be celebrated. Hannya is a female demon, a popular Noh heroine with a scary mask, who expresses wrath and suffering of the oppressed outsiders. Shizuka Mikata, a powerful Noh actor and prize-winner of many awards, will perform in full costumes to the music of Bach's Magnificat. For the first time in this historical chapel designated as an important cultural property, a procession of Buddhist monks will join in a multi-religious celebration. The lyrics will be read by oversea friends in their own languages. Dr. Yuasa says that the opening line of Sophia was inspired by Dr. Elisabeth Sussler-Fiorenza, whom she met in Kyoto last spring. The feminist biblical readings, which were selected through her Doshisha classes where she lectures, expounds on books by Drs. Phyllis Trible, Letty Russell, and Hisako Kinukawa and will sound in harmony with the rhythm of Noh music. Dr. Yuasa says, "This liturgy aims at empowering the friends and colleagues of cross-cultural/religious dialogue for the sake of Jesus Christ." The public is cordially welcome, admission free.



(Info: Doshisha University Center for Christian Culture. Tel. 075-251-3320)

A Church with Straw Mats



A church built in 1928 with traditional Japanese tatami straw mats on the sanctuary floor: Okaya St. Barnabas Church, Japan Anglican-Episcopal Church (NSKK), Nagano Prefecture (Pastor: Rev. Renta Nishihara, Vice Moderator of the NCCJ)

NCC Center for Japanese Religions in Kyoto

The NCC Center for Japanese Religions in Kyoto offers study programs, seminars, study exchanges, conferences, and special lectures. The Center also publishes journals, newsletters, and irregular book editions. The Center has a library of 6000 books in Japanese and English for scholars to do research. Widespread networking is used with other organizations to foster understanding, research, and dialogue. The English journal published by the NCC Center is an academic journal providing articles on religion in Japan (past and present - including issues of debate), and encourages interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Asian religions. Some of the subjects covered are: Shinto, folk religion, Japanese Buddhist schools, new religions, Christianity and theology, Japanese Christianity and theology (including problems of inculturation issues), Japanese philosophy of religion and interreligious dialogue. The latest journal covers Christianity in the Meiji Period. Check out the website for more information and subscriptions. <http://www.japanese-religions.jp>.

The NCC Center invites Christians and non-Christians in Japan to participate in conferences, joint study and exchange.

NCCJ Calendar Highlights 2005

January

- 21 Submission of signatures by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces from Iraq
- 23 Day of Prayer for Christian Unity, co-sponsored by NCCJ and the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Japan
- 26-30 CCA conference on Tsunami Disaster in Sri Lanka

February

- 12-13 7th Asia Solidarity Conference on Military "Comfort Women"
- 24 Monthly Submission of signatures on a petition by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces from Iraq
- 26-28 International Conference on People's Security in North East Asia at Tainan Theological Seminary, Taiwan.

March

- 4 World Day of Prayer Meeting in Tokyo
- 7 Study Meeting on Ecumenism for the newly graduated seminary Student organized by Division of Christian Education of NCCJ
- 15 Press Conference, Kyoto, on Article 9
- 22 Nationwide Ecumenical Youth Meeting
- 29 Monthly Submission of signatures on a petition by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet

Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from Iraq

April

- 5 CCA General Assembly in Chaing, Mai, Thailand
- 22 Monthly Submission of signatures on a petition by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from Iraq

May

- 3 Constitution Day Peace Rally, 5000 people
- 8 Asia Sunday
- 27 Symposium, Christian Peace Network
- 28-31 International NGO Conference on Humanitarian Aid to DPRK Conference, Beijing, China

June

- 3 Annual NCCJ Dialogue Meeting with the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Japan
- 6-10 NCCJ/NCC Philippine Consultation in Okinawa, Japan
- 20-22 International Symposium on Foreign Registration Law in Hokkaido, Japan

August

- 8-10 16th Seminar: Human Rights Education for Christian Schools in Tokyo
- 9-12 Japan-Korea Children's' Peace Conference in Hiroshima, organized by NCCJ
- 15 Prayer Meeting for Peace (Chidorigafuchi)



Matt Deuel U. Julian, a two years old Filipino born in Japan, is a working on inculturation issues by wearing Japanese boy's kimono. His parents work with Filipino migrant workers in the Yokohama/Tokyo area.

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