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The Japanese Catholic Women's Religious Corps and Its Activities in the Philippines during World War II

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The Japanese Catholic Women's Religious Corps and Its Activities in the Philippines during World War II

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1 Introduction

On 31 December 1942, the so-called "Catholic Women's Religious Corps (CWRC)," consisting of four Japanese Roman Catholic nuns and fifteen female members of the Catholic laity, landed in Manila after a three-week journey, which began in the port of Ujina, Japan on December 7th and included a stopover in Taiwan.

The group was dispatched to the Philippines during a time when the Japanese military occupation had reached an impasse and the guerrilla resistance movement had become active throughout the country. Just after the start of the Pacific War, in December 1941, the Japanese Fourteenth Army (Philippine Expeditionary Forces) entered Luzon's Lingayen Gulf, took Manila, and set up the Japanese Military Administration (JMA) on January 3rd of the following year. On January 23rd, the Philippine Executive Commission was set up, with Jorge Vargas as its chairman, to handle administrative affairs dealing with Filipinos. Despite Japan's recognition on 14 October 1943 of an "independent" republic headed by Jose P. Laurel, the Japanese military remained and continued its occupation governance policies. During the CWRC's year and a half stay in the Philippines, during which it observed first hand the time before and after the establishment of the republic, the Corps took on the tasks of giving Japanese language courses in the country's Catholic schools and meeting with prominent Filipinos for the purpose of promoting goodwill between the two countries. All nineteen members of the Corps had returned home by June, 1944.

This paper discusses this little known group of Japanese Catholic women and

describes how it was organized, the situation surrounding its dispatch to the Philippines, and its activities in Manila, using both primary source materials and interviews with those directly involved.¹⁾

2 Why the Philippines?

From before the outbreak of the War in the Pacific, the General Headquarters of the Japanese Imperial Army planned to send to the Philippine front, as part of the Fourteenth Army, a Religious Propaganda Corps (later to be called the Religious Section in the Philippines) made up of Japanese Catholic priests, Protestant ministers, seminarians and lay members. In August 1941, the Army contacted the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tokyo, Tatsuo Doi, and asked him to recommend members for that Corps. On 24 December 1941, the Religious Section, consisting of twenty-five members and headed by Lt. Colonel Tomoji Narusawa, landed at Luzon, and for one year carried out the Army's propaganda strategy towards the Christian churches in the Philippines.

In Japan, Christianity was regarded as a religion antagonistic to the state and its policies, and the oppression of both Christian institutions of learning and foreign-born missionaries was on the rise. However, in Japanese-occupied territories of Southeast Asia, especially in the Philippines, three centuries of Spanish rule from the mid-sixteenth century, and the U.S. takeover from the end of the nineteenth century, had fostered the social influence of Christianity in general, and Roman Catholicism in particular, to a point where ninety percent of Filipinos called themselves Christians. Because the Japanese military, which was dedicated to rooting out all vestiges of U.S. colonial rule over the Philippines, needed the cooperation of the Filipinos, it was in no position to suppress Christianity as an antagonistic religion. Instead, it was decided that the Religious Section, made up of Japanese Christians, would be dispatched to the Philippines along with the Japanese Fourteenth Army, entrusted with the mission of acting as an intermediary to the Philippine churches and guaranteeing freedom of belief and religion, as long as this was carried out in a spirit of cooperation with Japan's war effort.²⁾

3 The JMA Takes the Initiative

After the establishment of the JMA in January 1942, many Japanese bureaucrats

came to the Philippines to serve as administrators. One of them was Yoshio Uchiyama, who after being transferred to the Ministry of the Army from the Ministry of Education, was sent to the Philippines in February to become the education section leader in the JMA's Department of the Interior. Regarding the plan to teach Japanese to Filipinos, Uchiyama advised JMA's Colonel Naokata Utsunomiya that Japanese language instructors in the Philippines should, in the first place, have actual teaching experience, and, secondly, be using standard Japanese in their daily conversation, "but I [Uchiyama] would also like to request that since the majority of Filipinos are Christian, Japanese of the same religious persuasion be added to the teaching staff." (Uchiyama 1991; Yamada 1989). After consulting with the Army, Uchiyama made a request to the Japanese Government that an appropriate number of Japanese Christians be dispatched to the Philippines.

A colleague of Uchiyama, Tokujiro Nishimura, who worked in the Education Ministry's Religious Affairs Section, happened to be lodging at the Archbishop of Tokyo's headquarters in Sekiguchi, Tokyo. Hearing of Uchiyama's request, Nishimura conferred with the archdiocese officials regarding the possibility of dispatching a group of Catholic nuns to the Philippines as Japanese language teachers. It is said that Father Katsusaburo Arai promised to do all that he could in the matter.³⁾ Since a group of nuns, called the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (presently the Mission Sisters of the Sacred Heart), a religious order based in Fujisawa, were working at the archdiocese headquarters at the time, they were first approached about going to the Philippines. Also contacted was a group of nuns in Sapporo called the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George, which was closely affiliated with the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Congregation in Sapporo was first requested directly by the Ministry of the Army to send two nuns for service in the Philippines. After consulting with the head of the Sapporo Diocese, Toda Taito, the Congregation decided to cooperate, since refusing such a request during wartime would no doubt be disadvantageous to the Church.

According to the initial plan, a total of twenty nuns were to be dispatched to the Philippines, but recruiting this number soon proved impossible, so the call went out to such parts of the lay community as Catholic women's schools and churches, throughout Japan. In addition to being of the Roman Catholic faith, volunteers were required to speak English fluently.⁴⁾

As a result, a group of nineteen Catholic women, including four nuns and fifteen

members of the laity, were dispatched to the Philippines as the Catholic Women's Religious Corps (CWRC). Of the lay members, Toyoko Uetani heard about the plan from the Daughters of the Sacred Heart and decided to volunteer;⁵⁾ Fujiko Kawakami was contacted by both the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and her school, Yokohama Futaba Women's Academy, and decided to send her résumé to the Daughters;⁶⁾ and Hideko Toda and Toshiko Kiyota were American-born "nisei" who had returned from the United States, so their English was very good. The original plan called for twenty Catholic women to be dispatched, but one member of the Corps was unable to make the trip due to family problems. The leadership of the Corps was taken over by Sister Taeko Kato of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

4 Training at the Ministry of Education

On September 25th, 1942, Tatsue Yamakita, a twenty-five year old nun belonging to the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George in Sapporo, was unexpectedly informed by her mother superior that she was to be dispatched to the Philippines. She and the other members of the Corps were first required to attend an intensive training seminar held at the Ministry of Education in Tokyo from November 11th to the 13th. The seminar agenda began with a lecture by the chief of the Ministry's Propaganda Bureau,⁷⁾ who described the aim of the Greater East Asia War as an attempt "to realize the great ideal of world unity" ("hakko-ichiu" lit. eight corners of the earth under one human family) and stated that "it was only natural and necessary" that all Japanese religious groups cooperate in the war effort. Since religion was organically intertwined with daily life and culture among the peoples of the southern area [Southeast Asia], "our religious strategy is important, while at the same time complex... We should respect all religions that show no antagonism toward our cause and adopt as tolerant an attitude as possible regarding them." Then he stated the mission of the Catholic Women's Religious Corps, emphasizing "religious action through Japanese language education."

The next lecture was given by Ichirosuke Aihara on religious affairs in the Philippines, the daily life and culture of the Filipinos, and some historical background. Then a Lt. Colonel Shirai further explained the significance of the Greater East Asia War using such phrases as "the goal of the War is victory for Japan", "administration of occupied territories will be carried with the same goal in mind", "the character of war is cold; it is the role of women, your role, to lend warmth to the cause." Shirai then laid out

the duties which the Corps would be performing: first, the diffusion of Japanese language skills; secondly, Since religion is an important factor in the southern area, the military deeply respects both religious sentiment and practices, but rather than approaching the problem with missionary zeal, we emphasize making people of the same religious persuasion feel warm and comfortable when meeting them in conversation; and, thirdly, the Corps, as representatives of the mission entrusted to the Japanese Roman Catholic Church, shall approach that mission “in the same manner as military inductees, with strict loyalty, obedience and dedication to duty.” He explained, “Your role as Japanese women is to impart to the Filipinos the will of the Japanese government.”

As to the content of the cultural propaganda strategy, Shirai mentioned, “It is not necessary to teach everything about Japanese life and culture, just the elegant aspects and its intellectual side;” however, he emphasized that “since the outbreak of war in China, it has become necessary to mobilize every aspect of daily life in the building of a Greater East Asia;” and stated, “The unification of all aspects of both intellect and daily life is what we strive for in our cultural strategy.... Spreading the Japanese mentality, while at the time making it possible for nations to find themselves, is by no means contradictory. This can be done by treating people with an attitude of benevolence and friendship.” He further pointed out, “The nucleus of our cultural strategy is the diffusion of Japanese language skills.” It was in this way that the military intended to employ the CWRC in its cultural propaganda program: bringing them into contact with Filipino Catholics via their Japanese femininity and similar religious persuasion.

While the Catholic Church in Japan did not get involved officially in the recruitment and dispatch of the CWRC, the January 1943 issue of its organ entitled *Koe* [Voice] published a collection of short essays under the heading “Good luck to the Catholic Women’s Religious Corps in their valiant march to the southern area.” Here we find comments like “Make Japan known to the Philippines through your strength of character and excellent upbringing” (Fr. Tatsuya Shimura); “Be patient, and success will eventually come” (Sumako Takamine); “The esprit de corps of Japanese womanhood has been unfurled over the southern area” (Shiori Narusawa, wife of the commander in charge of the Religious Section); and “Outright honesty and wholehearted devotion are the keys to success” (Shizue Ito).

5 The Arrival in Manila

Three weeks after this intensive training at the Ministry of Education, the CWRC again assembled at Tokyo on December 4th, 1942 and boarded a train bound for Hiroshima. On December 7th, at Ujina, they boarded the 8,234-ton hospital ship *Buenos Aires Maru*. The ship arrived in Takao, Taiwan on December 12. After a two-week layover at Takao, they boarded a freighter by the name of *Tajima Maru*, which was to take them to their destination. They entered Manila Bay on either December 29th or the 30th, but it is certain that they had set foot on Philippine soil by December 31st.

They were met by an entourage consisting of Religious Section head Lt. Colonel Narusawa, an administrator by the name of Takeda, Engracio Fabre of the Bureau of Religious Affairs under the Philippine Executive Commission, and Mrs. R. Ledesma representing Catholic women's groups in Manila. The CWRC was then divided into two groups: eleven members under the leadership of Sisters Taeko Kato and Mashi Maki were lodged at St. Paul's College, while the remaining members, under the leadership of Sisters Shiori Makino and Tatsue Yamakita, were boarded at Holy Ghost College. Both institutions, which were under the direction of Roman Catholic congregations and places of learning for wealthy young Filipino women, were located in the vicinity of Malacañang Palace.

In the diary⁸⁾ kept by Tatsue Yamakita, there is a detailed account of the comings and goings of the group in their efforts to introduce themselves and their mission to Philippine society. This is an excellent source for tracing the activities of the CWRC in Manila. On January 2, 1943, just three days after their arrival, all the members, led by Sister Taeko Kato, appeared at JMA headquarters to make an official announcement of their arrival to the commander of the Fourteenth Army, Lt. Gen. Seiichi Tanaka. The four nuns in the group were dressed in their religious habits, while the lay members donned Japanese regalia in accordance with the highest ranking dress code known as "*daiichi koshiki*." On the same day, the group also paid their respects to the Philippine Executive Commission's chairman, Jorge Vargas. On the following day, they attended a special Mass held at St. Paul's College Chapel and celebrated by Cesar Maria Guerrero, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila. After the ceremony a reception was held by the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Then on January 4th, the Corps was introduced to the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines Guillermo Piani and the Archbishop of Manila Michael J. O' Doherty.

During the audience with Archbishop O'Doherty, his eminence asked the women, "Why did you come to the Philippines? Was it because you wanted some ice cream?" (Yamakita 1994). The Irish national O'Doherty, who was first appointed Bishop of Zamboanga in 1912 and had since 1916 been the Archbishop of Manila, the highest post in the Philippine Roman Catholic Church, continued to show a passive attitude towards the demands of the JMA from the beginning of the Japanese occupation, and a portion of the Fourteenth Army's chiefs of staff, who interpreted this attitude as anti-Japanese, were of the opinion that the Archbishop should be replaced. By the beginning of 1943, the Archbishop would for all practical purposes be confined to his quarters in Intramuros. It was this attitude that no doubt prompted the Archbishop's sarcastic remark during the audience with the CWRC. Sister Yamakita recalls the Archbishop's making the Corps feel as if they had come to Manila to serve as "the handmaidens of the army." (Yamakita 1994).

In contrast, the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila Cesar Maria Guerrero "actively" cooperated from the start with the Japanese military, especially the Religious Section and the Bureau of Religious Affairs under the Philippine Executive Commission, and wound up serving as an important liaison between the Japanese and the Catholic Church. This duality of the stubborn uncooperative attitude on the part of the Archbishop and the willingness on the part of his assistant to help at any time were characteristic of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church as a whole during the occupation.⁹⁾ Guerrero was of course very cordial towards the CWRC and made a point of attending the welcome Mass and reception given upon the Corps' arrival.

On January 5th, the Corps was invited to attend a tea party at the residence of Executive Commission Chairman Vargas; then on the following day, they paid a visit to Bishop Guerrero. That afternoon, Religious Section leader Narusawa came to their lodgings to explain such matters as in what capacity the Corps would be working during their stay in the Philippines. For the first year of their stint, they would be dealt with as civilian employees of the Army, then they would be made special consultants to the Army. The order issued by the Education Ministry's Propaganda Bureau on October 31st, 1942, stated that each Corps member would be paid a monthly salary of eighty yen, and that the Army would pay them a per diem allowance of fifty sen per day.

On January 7th, the Corps was given a guided tour by Bureau of Religious Affairs Director Fabre and Mrs. Ledesma of around twelve convents in Manila. On the following day, they went to the office of the Religious Section to complete the paperwork necessary

for their stay, and on January 9th, they were informed about where each member would be teaching Japanese. On January 13th, they appeared at JMA headquarters to hear a lecture by Education Section head Uchiyama on the subject of teaching Japanese. They were given a first-hand account of teaching Japanese to Filipinos by Yuji Iwate, a Roman Catholic who had been dispatched to the Philippines as a member of the Religious Section at the beginning of the War, and had decided to stay behind and work in the Department of Information after most of the Religious Section members returned home in December 1942. On January 14th, they toured the Japanese language school in Escolta run by Rev. Masayoshi Nakashima, Protestant minister of the Manila Japanese Church. It was in this way that the CWRC spent its first fifteen days, introducing itself to Army officers and Church officials, and getting an idea of how and where they would be working.

6 The CWRC's Activities in Manila

The CWRC was stationed in Manila for one year and several months until May of 1944. Their assignment was twofold: to teach Japanese to Filipinos, and to act as a Japan-Philippine goodwill mission.

6.1 Japanese Language Education

The CWRC began its Japanese teaching duties on January 18th, 1943; almost all of the nineteen members were assigned to classes at Catholic schools and convents around the city, including St. Paul's College, St. Catherine's Academy, Holy Ghost College, Sta. Isabela Convent, Assumption College, Sta. Scholastica Academy, Blessed Virgin Convent, The Pentecostal Seminary, La Consolacion Convent School, St. Francisco Convent, St. Paul's Seminary, and such Protestant institutions as the YMCA and Manila Union Church.

There had been no practical training given at the seminar sponsored by the Ministry of Education before the Corps' departure from Japan, and after its arrival it was found that no Japanese textbook had been prepared. Sister Yamakita describes the teaching conditions in the following manner: Teacher's copies of the three-volume textbook entitled *Hanashi-Kotoba* [*Spoken Japanese*] were available, but no textbooks were distributed to the students. Classes were taught on the average of three times per week, once every other weekday (Monday, Wednesday, Friday); however, the time of day

depended on the schedule of each individual school or convent. Therefore, some members of the Corps commuted to work from their lodgings in the morning, some in the afternoon. Those who taught at schools and convents away from their lodgings were transported back and forth by either horse-drawn rig (Calesa) or automobile, and on hot afternoons they were served something to drink before class. If their destination was far off, they would be accompanied by a Filipina nun on the journey. The CWRC Japanese language project was the first such organized effort in the Japanese occupied Philippines, and the Corps was treated with the utmost care by both the Japanese military command and their Filipino hosts. It is clear that this group of Japanese nuns and young Catholic women were the recipients of special treatment during their stay in Manila.

Yamakita taught over fifty students at Holy Ghost College, dividing them into beginners and advanced classes of between ten and twenty odd members. Speaking and listening comprehension were the main subjects of study. The beginners' class covered all three volumes of *Hanashi-Kotoba*, while the advanced classes completed three volumes of the five-volume *Nippongo Dokuhon* [*A Japanese reader*] before Yamakita's return home. On September 20th, 1943, a test open to the public was conducted to evaluate Japanese language ability. According to Yamakita's diary, "The ten students from my beginners' class and one student from the advanced class who took the test all passed." Since the students taught at the convents were adults, including nuns and teachers, the curriculum consisted not only of conversation, but also instruction in writing the phonetic system known as *katakana*. The students were also taught to compile their own textbooks.

According to Yamakita (1994), upon the CWRC's arrival in Manila, English was widely understood, but almost no one could comprehend Japanese; however, when departing in May 1944, "Wherever one goes, there are genuine efforts to respond in Japanese. The language has certainly spread." She recalls telling a horse rig driver that the fare he charged was too high. To her English comment, "It's too high." The driver responded, "Keredomo, ima, nan de mo takai" (I beg to differ, but everything is expensive these days).

The Japanese language curriculum at the convents had a special purpose: as soon as the nuns completed the beginners' course, they were sent to the schools run by their congregations to teach their students Japanese. Many of the nuns who completed the beginners' course continued on to the advanced course, in addition to their teaching duties. There were also many nuns and priests who were not required to teach Japanese,

but still wanted to attend the classes given by the members of the CWRC. Although the JMA had not made Japanese compulsory for the Philippine clergy, given the special conditions brought about by Japan's occupation, there were many Filipinos who felt the necessity in their daily lives to speak Japanese. For this reason, the Japanese language program continued to suffer from a lack of teachers, classrooms, and textbooks. Other members of the CWRC, besides Sister Yamakita, also recall the eagerness on the part of Filipinos to learn Japanese.

However, Japanese language study under the occupation was in actuality a perplexing experience for the Filipinos. On October 14th, 1943, the Philippine Republic was established with Jose P. Laurel as president. On that day Yamakita wrote in her diary, "Restaurants and dance halls have been allowed to remain open all night to enable drinking and dancing in celebration, but how many people realize that they are truly independent and are happy about it?" She records telling her classes just before independence, "On account of the Independence Day celebration, there will be no class tomorrow and the day after," and recalls receiving a rather dull response from her students. Just before her return home, she asked her students to compare their feelings about Japan before and after studying Japanese, and received essays with such severely critical comments as "Why did I have to learn Japanese in the first place?" "I'd rather receive independence from the Americans than have to rely on the Japanese for it," "Other than your group of teachers, I don't give a damn about the Japanese," "Since the Japanese arrived the morality of Filipino women has been corrupted," and "Women aren't respected in Japan." (Yamakita 1994).

Another group of teachers dispatched by the Japanese Government arrived in Manila in April 1943. At a cabinet meeting held in August 1942, a decision entitled "the matter of Japanese language instruction and diffusion in our southern territories" was issued, and the Ministry of Education was instructed to set up a facility to train Japanese language instructors for dispatch to the southern area. The Ministry of the Army was to appoint graduates of this facility to the post of Japanese language instructor with the status of either civilian employee of the Army or Army administrator. There was a plan to dispatch to the Philippines twenty-five such administrators and 130 civilian employees, and the implementers came close to realizing this target.¹⁰⁾ Although the CWRC did attend the welcome party at the Manila Hotel for the initial eighteen language instructors who arrived in April of 1943, there was no close contact between the groups during their respective stays in the Philippines.

6.2 Japan-Philippine Goodwill Activities

Apart from teaching Japanese, the other duty entrusted to the CWRC was to be active in spreading goodwill between Japan and the Philippines. Japanese nuns and members of the Catholic laity were quite well-suited to such activity and participated in such events as tea parties given for mainly important figures in the Philippine government and their families.

The CWRC had already been told at their training seminar prior to departure from Japan that “we would like you to open the hearts of the Filipinos by making friends with those of the same faith.” (Yamakita 1994). Teaching Japanese to the daughters of wealthy Filipino families at Catholic schools and convents can in itself be classified as a goodwill activity, but the CWRC went beyond such formal occasions to meet with people on a more cordial, personal basis, introducing to them various aspects of Japanese daily life and culture.

The most important aspect of such activity was hobnobbing with Laurel, Vargas and their families, as well as meeting with members of the Philippine Catholic Church on both official and unofficial levels. Sister Yamakita's diary informs us about how such goodwill intercourse was carried on. The following is a list of related events recorded there (comments in brackets added by Terada).

1943

- Feb 7 Attended a rally for the Catholic military chaplains at the Manila Hotel.
[Many Filipino priests were in attendance.]
- Mar 7 Invitation received from General [Emilio] Aguinaldo [leader of the
revolution for independence from Spain].
- Mar 27 Invited to a dinner party given at Malacañang Palace by Mrs. Vargas.
- Apr 22 Invited to the home of Vice-Commissioner of the Interior Bonifacio by his
wife.
- Apr 29 Mass in commemoration of the Emperor's birthday held at St. Paul's
College. All CWRC members attended a celebration held at 10 a.m. at St.
Theresa's Academy sponsored by the Nippon-Filipino Good-Will [Catholic]
Association.¹¹⁾ Motoe Sakai greeted the guests in English. The daughter of
Vice-Commissioner Bonifacio performed a skit in Japanese.
- Jun 29 Conversed with the wife of Vice-Commissioner Bonifacio.
- Jul 23 An automobile arrived to take us to the wedding reception for Chairman

Vargas' oldest daughter, Nena, held at Malacañang Palace.

- Sep 26 Japanese course graduation ceremony held at the St. Scholastica auditorium. In attendance and representing the JMA were Bureau of Interior Director Kato, Colonel Urabe and Section Head Uchiyama. Representing the Philippines were, among others, President-Elect Laurel, Mrs. Vargas, Bishop Guerrero standing in for Apostolic Delegate Piani, General Aguinaldo, and Vice-Commissioner Bonifacio.
- Oct 10 No longer able to put off an invitation to a millionaire sugar grower's home in New Manila.
- Oct 13 The day before independence. A mass of thanksgiving was said by Bishop Guerrero at the Manila Cathedral in the Intramuros and attended by such dignitaries as Chairman Vargas and President-Elect Laurel.
- Dec 26 Accompanied Taeko Kato, Mitsue Matsumoto and Fujiko Kawakami to New Manila in an automobile lent by President Laurel.

1944

- Jan 28 The third day of lectures introducing Japanese culture. Everyone donned traditional Japanese outfits.
- Feb 16 Invited by [Japanese] Ambassador [to the Philippines Shozo] Murata to a dinner party at the Imperial Embassy.
- Feb 20 Invited to the home of Vice-Minister Bonifacio. Mr. Fabre and Mrs. Ledesma were also in attendance.
- Feb 27 Invited to a party given by Mrs. Vargas. Wives of Bonifacio, Hill, Vasquez and Ledesma were also in attendance.
- Mar 5 Invited by Mrs. Laurel to an informal get-together at Malacañang Palace. The President made an appearance and performed on the violin an original piece he composed, and was accompanied on piano by his daughter. He then played a march which he had composed together with [Takaji] Wachi, [deputy-commander of the Southern Expeditionary Army].
- Mar 11 Given a farewell party at the Sugiyama home. Mrs. Vargas was the guest of honor.

Sister Yamakita's diary entries tell of the many opportunities given the CWRC to promote goodwill between the two countries among the Philippine political élite. The

CWRC was at times also referred to as a “goodwill mission,” no doubt due to its frequent attendance at social gatherings bringing together Japanese and Filipino guests. The CWRC’s attendance *en masse* at formal gatherings were without exception under instructions from the Army. The small-scale informal gatherings were at first planned and organized by such people as the Bureau of Religious Affairs Director Fabre and Mrs. Ledesma, but as personal friendships deepened, members of the Corps began receiving direct invitations to parties, teas and the like. For example, Sister Kato was put in charge of teaching Japanese to the wives of Philippine government officials, including Mrs. Vargas, while Fujiko Kawakami tutored the Laurel children. In addition, many of the Corps members were given the opportunity through their respective schools and convents to meet privately with important Filipino civilians and Church-related persons to perform for them the Japanese tea ceremony, etc. In the recently published history of the Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation, there is a photograph of the young Toyoko Uetani, the member of the CWRC who taught Japanese at the convent during the occupation (Jaime B. Veneracion and Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation 1992). In an interview with a member of Our Lady of Consolation,¹²⁾ I was told that Uetani and the sisters who befriended her met under very trying conditions brought on by the Japanese invasion, but were able to overcome such difficulties to form deep personal friendships via commonly held religious convictions and the passion with which this member of the CWRC taught Japanese.

For the members of the CWRC, the time they lived and worked in Manila provided them, despite the wartime atmosphere, with an enriching experience in the midst of ardent students and friendly Filipino Catholics. Toyoko Uetani remembers,

I may be out of line, but I must admit that we were treated as VIPs, and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay in the Philippines. Personally, I found the religious environment there totally magnificent. Between 5:00 a.m. and noon on Sundays, no matter where one went, Mass was being said at a church nearby. Attending Mass at San Agustin Church or the Cathedral within the thick walls of the Intramuros was heavy with the atmosphere of the Spanish administration.¹³⁾

7 Repatriation

It finally became time for the CWRC to return home. On February 12, 1944, the Corps was invited to a dinner party given at the home of Colonel Utsunomiya. The

daughters of the finance and agriculture ministers were also in attendance. It was only when the Corps members saw the headlines in next morning's newspaper, reading "Japanese Catholic Nuns and Lay Women to Return Home," that they realized the dinner given the evening before had been a farewell party. The reaction to the news article at St. Paul's College was quick and furious. The phone lines were filled with calls confirming the correctness of the article, including inquiries from the wives of Vargas and Bonifacio, Ambassador Murata, and many students.

The year 1944 had marked a turn for the worse in the War for Japan, from which it would never recover. It was a time in the Philippines when taking even one step out of Manila would put you in the middle of anti-Japanese guerrilla activities. The decision by the military to send the CWRC home was no doubt a top priority issue stemming from concern for its members' personal safety; and it was this very concern that kept the decision secret. Moreover, difficulties in how to transport the Corps home arose, since priority for boarding all flights out of the Philippines was being given to uniformed military personnel. Finally on May 18th, 1944, the CWRC boarded a freighter anchored in Manila Bay to await departure scheduled for May 24th. Some members of the Corps had already been shipped home due to illness, etc. The arrival at Ujina on June 7th of the remaining members completed the repatriation of all nineteen original members to Japanese soil.

In this paper I have attempted to trace the activities of the Catholic Women's Religious Corps dispatched to the Japanese-occupied Philippines. The plan to send young Roman Catholic Japanese women to Manila for the purpose of teaching Japanese to Filipinos was originally the idea of Yoshio Uchiyama, head of the Education Section in the JMA Department of the Interior. This plan to send teachers with religious convictions similar to the majority of the Filipino population was in line with the Japanese military command's Philippine strategy, which called for a Religious Section to take charge of one part of the propaganda effort to arouse sympathy and understanding concerning Japan. In this sense, the dispatch of the CWRC was carried out within the larger framework of Japan's religious policy for dealing with the Philippines.

The CWRC, as a group of Roman Catholic nuns and lay women not involved in combat, were cordially welcomed by the Catholic schools and convents where they resided and taught. In a time of military rule by a foreign army, during which the war effort was gradually failing, and food and other daily necessities were in scarce supply,

one cannot but be amazed at the way in which this small group of Japanese women representing Imperial Japan was accepted in a relatively spontaneous manner by Philippine political leaders and their families, daughters of the country's élite, and the Manila Catholic community in general.

Notes

- 1) The author was able to interview many individuals, including former members of the Catholic Women's Religious Corps. Sister Tatsue Yamakita of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Martyr Saint George was especially helpful in providing valuable materials. Here let me express my deepest gratitude to all these individuals.
- 2) Concerning the activities of the Religious Section and Japan's policy towards the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, see Terada (1999).
- 3) Letter to the author from Tatsue Yamakita, October 3, 1992.
- 4) Interviews with Tatsue Yamakita, November 15, 1992 in Sapporo, and May 9, 1993 in Tokyo. Content of the latter interview has been published in Yamakita (1994).
- 5) Interview with Toyoko Moriguchi (Uetani), December 7, 1992, Kyoto.
- 6) Interview with Fujiko Kawakami, November 19, 1992, Tokyo.
- 7) The description of the seminar is based on personal notes kept by Tatsue Yamakita.
- 8) Tatsue Yamakita kept a diary during the entire period of her stay in the Philippines, a summary of which was given to the author. She also wrote a short article about her experience in the Philippines for the annual report of her congregation: Sister Maria Agatha, "Hito no Omoide [Memoir of the Philippines]".
- 9) Bishop Guerrero was tried at the People's Court after the war as a Japanese collaborator. Concerning the relationship between Archbishop O'Doherty and Bishop Guerrero, see Terada (1999) and Guerrero (1988).
- 10) Concerning Japanese language teaching in the occupied territories of Southeast Asia, see Kimura (1991). Muneo Kimura himself was sent to the Philippines as a Japanese language instructor. The memoir written by Hidekichi Yamada (1992), who was also sent to the Philippines as Japanese language instructor, contains a description of the Catholic Women's Religious Corps. *Samupagiita (Sampaguita)* Nos. 1 (1967)–8 (final issue, 1991), which was edited and published by the Moto Hito Nihongo Kyoiku Yoin no Kai (The Association of Former Japanese Language Instructors sent to the Philippines), contains a series of memoirs and detailed reports of their activities.
- 11) Founded in Manila on December 6th, 1942 by Bishop Yoshigoro Taguchi of the Religious Section. In Tagalog, it was called *Kapisanang Katoliko ukol sa Mabuting Pagsamahan ng mga Hapones*. Its publication, *Tagapagturo* (or *Michi Shirube* in Japanese) includes several short articles by the members of the CWRC.
- 12) Interview with Sister Joaquina Dacuycuy, January 5, 1993, Manila.
- 13) Letter to the author by Toyoko Moriguchi (Uetani), September 28, 1992.

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