

## Ene Marie Thomsen: Her Missionary Years in Japan 1955-1966

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In 2011, I wrote a short introduction to Danish Christian Mission in Japan, 1898-1998, including the work by Ene Marie and Harry Thomsen, sent by the Nordic Christian Mission to the Buddhists (CMB) (Hermansen 2011). I noted then, that comparatively speaking the voices of the missions' women were comparatively weak if not outright absent when stories were told the audience at home. At that time, I only had two or three sources actually written by Ene Marie Thomsen, the latest of which was a 1960-speech she gave at a gathering in Norway. Returning to Japan in 1961, the Thomsens worked intensely with building up a center in Misawa village, Shizuoka Pref. that was to combine, "a brotherhome, a church, Denmark Farm, and a farming school." Ene Marie, too, must have been busy, but little is said *about* her and nothing *by* her in the mission's official bulletin "Nordisk Kristen Buddhist Mission" (NKBM). At the end of the Thomsens' second period in Japan, in 1966, she became ill, and letters exchanged during the furlough between Harry Thomsen and the then general secretary of CMB, Rev. Notto Norman Thelle, made it clear she could not return to Japan.

Knowing that Ene Marie Thomsen now lives in the US, I had hoped to talk with her, but circumstances have not allowed this so far. Fortunately, in 2013, her second son, Professor Hans Bjarne Thomsen of Zurich University, kindly agreed to interview his mother based on my questions. It follows below. For the sake of perspective, Appendix one charts the Thomsens and The Nordic Christian Mission

to the Buddhists' activities in Japan between 1954 and 1970, and Appendix two is a complete translation of Ene Marie's speech at Fiskumstævnet 1960.

====The following interview with Ene Marie Thomsen was made by professor Hans Bjarne Thomsen with questions formulated by Christian M. Hermansen. It was recorded in April 2013 at Mrs. Thomsen's home in North Carolina, US.

The direct quotations have merely been translated from Danish to English whereas the text in between mostly consists of information from the interview but also has explanations deemed necessary for understanding the information.

### *Going to Japan*

“Simply being in Kyoto, in Japan, was my greatest joy. When we arrived, we were still newly wed and my husband was just a darling. Family life with him and our children was bliss.”

Ene Marie Thomsen was born on 25 June 1931, in Timring Village, Denmark, as the second daughter in a family of four to Sigrun Bredkjær Engelbrektsen (22-6-1900 – 9-1-1992) and Charles Sigvald Jensen (30-4-1898 – 30-3-1972). Both of her parents were from Nøvling sogn, Hammerum Herred, Ringkøbing Amt, but they lived in Timring sogn, Ulfborg herred, Ringkøbing Amt, where they had a farm (cf. Bredkjær Pedersen 2013). Her home took out the *Indremissions Tidende* (Tidings of the Inner Mission), and the family participated in “mission weeks” where she heard much about China. Meeting missionaries from China left a desire in Ene Marie to go to that far away country to serve God and



Photo 1 Hans Bjarne, Ene Marie, Harry and Erik Thomsen in Shugakuin, Kyoto. (Areopagos Archives, Oslo).

mankind. *Finishing junior high school in the late 1940s*, she entered a nurse school at Århus Amtssygehus (Provincial Hospital) from which she graduated in the early 1950s. On 13 May 1951 she was engaged to Harry Thomsen, who studied for a masters degree in English at Aarhus University. While he studied, she worked as a qualified nurse at Århus Amtssygehus (cf. Thomsen, EM. 1955, NKBM Oct 1956: 107). They had agreed with one another that once he graduated they would join a mission.

Harry Thomsen (21 Feb 1928, Vildbjerg – 10 Nov 2008, Colorado Springs, USA, cf. Thomsen 2008) graduated from Aarhus University with a MA in English and Christianity, 1953. At the commission of a missionary, Harry had met Gerhardt Reichelt, son of the renowned Norwegian missionary to China, Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877-1952). G. Reichelt was secretary of his father's sending mission in Scandinavia, The Nordic Christian Mission to the Buddhists (CMB). Harry was taken in by the methods of that mission – to go and meet the monks and other religious leaders and engage them in dialogue. The meeting and Harry's enthusiasm for the method resulted in the couple's application and mission's commission of the two to go to Japan.

Ene Marie married Harry on 4 June 1955. In August that year, they left Denmark, but first, Harry Thomsen was ordained a pastor of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. Ene Marie joyfully recalls the ceremony:

“I was on duty that day and told my unit leader about the ordination ceremony. ‘You should be there yourself,’ she said, ‘take the day off and go.’ As far as I remember, the ceremony took place in Randers city. It was about to start as I sneaked in through the entrance. You won't believe it, but Bishop Noack, officiating the ceremony, saw me, and came to the door and led me up the center aisle through the whole church to a seat at the very front, where Harry was sitting dressed in his new pastor's dress. It was like a second

wedding,” she laughs. “He was a really a very kind man, that Bishop Noack. We felt so very sad when he died.”<sup>1</sup>

From Denmark, the Thomsens first went to Chicago as Harry had obtained a scholarship for a year of study at the University of Chicago before travelling to Japan. He studied Japanese Religions with Professor Joseph Kitagawa and established contacts with several Japanese and American Buddhists (Thomsen, H 1955; Thomsen, H 1956a, 1956b).

Ene Marie meant to prepare herself for the life overseas by taking English classes while still in Denmark, but her fiancé dissuaded her, arguing that he, as an English teacher, could teach her. However, they were too much in love to focus on language drills, wherefore she did not master it well when they arrived in Chicago.

While in Chicago, she gave birth to their first child. Harry had checked for the least expensive hospital but had found the sanitarian standards too low, so the delivery took place at the University of Chicago Hospitals. The clinical conditions were good, whereas the language barrier was felt when, for instance, the doctor gave instructions that Ene Marie could not readily understand. The child turned out to be a son, and the happy parents planned to have him christened in Denmark yet “the doctor told us, ‘You have to have a name on this boy’”. Unprepared as we were, we gave him the interim name “Boy” Thomsen, later changed to Erik.” The humorous approach typifies the style of the adult Thomsens’ letters.

“We met some Japanese before arriving in Japan. My husband studied Japanese religions at the University of Chicago, and a Japanese he met, whose father was a monk in Japan, invited us home for a sukiyaki dinner. Harry had a talent of befriending people that others envied him. As a supplement to the

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1 Bishop Carl Wulff Noack (1885-1960), bishop of Haderslev Diocese 1937-1955, was chairperson of CMB in 1955.

stipend, he would give lectures in the weekends at a rate of five dollars.”

From Chicago, the family moved to Kyoto, or more specifically the Shūgakuin area, northeast of Kyoto University, at the foot of Mt. Hiei, because this was the location of the mission chosen by its first missionaries in 1953.

Commuting to the language school from Shūgakuin meant they had to cross the Kamo River. “One day it would be red, the next day blue. At first we did not understand why, but then we learned there was this big textile factory that would rinse dyed cloth in the river.” From this description it seems likely that the adult Thomsens were attending the Kyoto Japanese Language School, initially set up for missionaries of any denomination and located a block west of The Imperial Garden (Gosho) near the corner of Ichijō Street and Muromachi Street.

At the school, Ene Marie was in a class with two Catholic nuns. Her husband studied with two Catholic priests in a neighboring room. “Through the wall, we could hear the men laugh. They had a feast going on due to Harry’s wit.”

“It was a fantastic time. We studied Japanese at a language school, while a babysitter took care of Erik. Harry was in a class with two other missionaries, and he was a fast learner. He easily finished the textbooks and within a year he joined his Norwegian colleague, pastor Hemstad.”

Ragnvald Hemstad (1923-) was one of two missionaries sent by CMB and living in Kyoto when the Thomsens arrived. According to Ene Marie, Hemstad was very good at visiting and getting along with religious professionals and Harry admired his talent. Years after Hemstad had returned to Norway and had left the mission in 1958, Harry actively visited him in Norway, and recommended CMB to re-commission Hemstad for Japan. This was not accepted. Correspondence between HT and Hemstad from 1966 confirms Ene Marie’s account as far as Harry’s proposal is concerned. On

the other hand, it also clarifies that while Hemstad found Harry's proposal appealing he did not believe it possible for him to re-enter as missionary for CMB. He listed age as a one of his reasons for this assumption.

The other missionary was Mr. Kung Tien Min (1925-), born in Hangchow, who had been ordained in 1954 at Tao Fong Shan in Hong Kong and married a Japanese woman in Japan (cf. NKBM 1956). They had a young daughter at that time of the Thomsens arrival. Ene Marie has favorable memories of the families' interactions.

“They lived in a new house. I always invited her for the kitchen meetings I organized for neighbor women. Once, she complained, though, that I had forgot to inform her. But that was the only friction we had. Otherwise, she helped me, and was a good support because she knew the language. At the women's meetings, the ladies and I would cook together in our small kitchen. We then ate together and when your father was absent, on one of his many travels outside of Kyoto, Mrs. Kung or Mr. Kung would make a testimony.”

The Kung's daughter went to the same kindergarten as Erik. Mr. Kung got a stipend from CMB to pursue further studies in theology in the US, and later the family moved to Taiwan.

The kitchen meetings mentioned here, have some tradition in mission, at least in Japan. The first Danish missionaries to Japan, Jens M.T. Winther and his wife Andrea Winther, too, used them as an outreach when they lived in Kurume from 1901.

On their first furlough, Thomsens participated in the CMB summer gathering called Fiskumstævnet in Norway. Ene Marie gave a speech on that occasion, telling her audience how the kitchen and food were keys to the Japanese heart (cf. Thomsen, EM 1960. See Appendix 2 for a full translation). In her Japanese kitchen, she did not possess an oven, but during her years as a nurse she had learned how to prepare cakes in a pot. The result was marveled at by the Japanese housewives. To attract them,

it was important to bring new recipes. Sometimes, the participants found the new food clashed with their traditions, as when, for example, Ene Marie prepared a pork tenderloin with parsley or prunes, broiled it, sliced it and served it. “Then, when I followed my Danish recipe, the Japanese women thought I ruined the fine slices as I covered them with gravy.”

From her Kyoto time, Ms. Musui and Ms. Saito have left the greater impressions on Ene Marie. Ms. Musui was a neighbor who loved Erik and sometimes would babysit him, while his parents attended the language school. Ms. Saito, on the other hand, belonged to a group of people that Ene Marie classifies as “strange” or “weird” (describing them as “sjove” in Danish). A Saito family lived further up the road from the Thomsens. They were “Så ivrige efter alting” (lit. wanted everything, but here: curious) to the point where they would befriend the maids of Thomsens to get information about the Danes. When Thomsens moved in, they had no experience with the Japanese *furo* bath, so they did not know one should insert a wooden deck to avoid burning the feet. The first time, their maid had fired the bath, and the whole family had bathed. Harry was not aware that the maid was supposed to bath there as well, so he put out the fire. She then went to the Saitos and used their bath instead. On another occasion, Ms. Saito brought Ene Marie a hen. At first, she was delighted. Sunday diners in her parents’ home often had hen on the menu, so Ene Marie was used to prepare the fowl. Harry was away, wherefore Ene Marie asked her maid to hold down the bird, as she chopped its head off, much to the bewilderment of the neighbors. “That probably became the talk of the town.” As she proceeded, she realized the hen had been ill, for it was filled with “something wrong inside – not worms but some kind of liquid.” Ene Marie believes Ms. Saito knew the hen was sick, and had wanted to see the Dane’s reaction.

One of the maids, a Kyushu native, also “wanted to learn everything.” She was going to marry shortly, so to help her, Ene Marie gave her the wedding dress and a matching jacket she had used for her own wedding. Ene Marie felt a bit annoyed,

though, when the same girl asked for or took a Japanese wrapping cloth *furoshiki*.

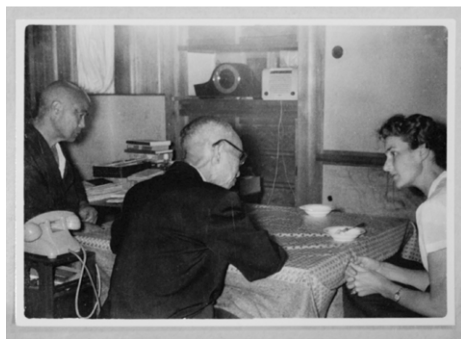


Photo 2 Ene Marie Thomsen at home talking with the founder of the new religion Ittōen 一燈園, Rev. Nishida Tenkō 西田天香 (Areopagos Archives, Oslo).

### *Shopping ...*

Q. Shūgakuin today has its own short shopping mall, many eateries, and some supermarkets down by the station, while the area around the Lutheran Church is dominated by housing of all kinds including farm houses and cultivated farm land in between. What were the shopping options in the late 1950s?”

“The pork tenderloin and other meats I bought at a butcher. Our vitamins and that kind of things we got at our local pharmacy. Then we had a shop in the neighborhood that sold many things. We tried also the Japanese food. Some things were harder to get by. We wanted to give our boys milk, and we could get milk, but it was sold in tiny quantities. So my father sent us a big bag of dry milk from Denmark. Sugar was difficult to get. An American missionary in our area ordered goods from Hong Kong, so we learned how to do it, and got things including Harry’s favorite, fig bars. There was a market near the Mototanaka Station [a couple of stops from Shūgakuin, CMH] where we would buy bigger lots of necessities.”



Kyoto and Hong Kong aside, the American army bases too proved helpful. Harry was invited to preach among the soldiers on more than one occasion, and he used the opportunities to shop there. Once he returned with a nice coat for Ene Marie.

The episode with Ms. Saito and the hen illustrates how neighbors would bring various things. An old lady – *obaasan* – who tended the garden for Thomsens, came with a fig tree. “Can you eat the fruits?” Ene Marie asked. “Oh yes,” the woman answered.

#### *From Kyoto to Fukuroi*

All in all, Ene Marie considers the years in Kyoto the best of her Japan experience. Harry wanted to establish a center for encounters among religious people. His model was the Tao Fong Shan Christian Center in Hong Kong that had a Pilgrims Hall and a “Brother home,” which was a dormitory for visitors, usually monks of other religions. After a long search and even longer negotiations, he and his Japanese assistants managed to buy hundreds of plots in Misawa Village near Fukuroi Town in Shizuoka Prefecture in December 1962. On the ground acquired, the mission built the Shin Rei San that was to be a combination of a center of encounter, an agricultural school and a Danish model farm as mentioned in the introduction. The Thomsens moved there and stayed about four years which turned out to be a time of mixed blessings and in the end rather stressful for Ene Marie. She remembers two main sources of her stress; the educational situation for her children and the other foreigners involved in building up Shin Rei San. The time in Shizuoka was not solely a disappointment, however, thanks to many Japanese supporters and Ene Marie’s own parents. One of her greatest joys during that time was the birth of her daughter.

#### *Buying the land*

The money required was mostly collected among friends of CMB in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. But even if the funds were there, it still required much

patience and perseverance to persuade the many farmers to part with their plots. A well-to-do businessman in Shizuoka City, Mr. Sakurai, was of much help in the negotiations and the further development of the project. The details of this feat will be discussed in a separate article.

### *Two-legged Shin Rei San*

Except for one tiny plot, quite an impressive amount of pasture had been amassed for the Danish pastor. As the entrepreneur in charge, Harry Thomsen oversaw the building of houses for the families to live in and stables and other necessary constructions for the farm. His was the task of building up and maintaining contacts to religious people, who might later come to the center. To assist him in this task, the CMB commissioned and sent more missionaries. Over the following years three families came; Martha and Olaf Roesgaard from Denmark; Gunvor and Aasulv Lande, and Mona and Notto Raidar Thelle from Norway. From Ene Marie's perspective, none of them lived up to the expectations; they failed to understand the unique methods of religious encounters as developed by Reichelt and adopted by Harry. And one person in particular was felt to be intending on creating troubles all the time. Still, for some years Shin Rei San attracted many visitors, sometimes busloads of them.

The agricultural part was left in the hands of experts. *Mr. Shimaya and Mr. Suzuki* were the Japanese experts and the Danish were first Mr. Fenger and later Mr. Møller, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Kvist and Mr. Sams. Mr. Fenger had been an agricultural advisor of the Japanese government and worked a farm in Hokkaido. Based on those credentials, Harry had asked for his assistance, but he and his wife arrived much too early, before the housing was ready. Given that they had been in Japan before, Ene Marie remembers the astonishment she felt, when one of the local women asked her to tell the Fengers not to enter their Japanese home wearing footwear. Harry, too, was surprised, when he once visited the farm Fenger had managed in Hokkaido

and found it to be much smaller than what he had been led to believe was the case, Ene Marie remembers. She did not explain it in details, but in Fukuroi Mr. Fenger kept demanding this and that, wherefore Harry Thomsen ultimately decided to allot a budget for the agricultural parts of Shin Rei San and leave the day-to-day administration of the budget to Olaf Roesgaard, who was assigned the financial management.

When the Fengers left, Mr. Kristian Møller succeeded him. Ene Marie believes, Møller did a good job but also that he sometimes felt it difficult to be the second in command. He appreciated the arrival of Ene Marie's parents, Sigrun and Charles Jensen. They had transported Danish cattle half way around the globe and stayed longer at Shin Rei San than initially planned.

One reason for the Jensen's delayed return to Denmark was the birth of the youngest Thomsen child. Whether Japanese law like the law in Chicago required an immediate naming of the newborn was not mentioned in the interview. Harry and Ene Marie decided to christen their daughter with the names of her two grandmothers, Inger and Sigrun.

Personal relations aside the schooling of her boys was of concern to Ene Marie.



Photo 3 Shin Rei San water- and bell tower. Ene Marie Thomsen in the middle and next to her Sigrun and Charles Jensen, her parents. 1965? (Areopagos Archives, Oslo).

“The American missionaries would send their children to Tokyo, and the Norwegians had a school in Kobe. When the boys were younger, they had a fine relationship with the Norwegian children they met at our summer cottage in Nojiri, but I observed that once the children had started in school, they seemed to act with a degree of disdain towards the Danish boys and treat them like outsiders. So I did not want to send them to Kobe.<sup>2</sup> It turned out to be a fortunate decision, for later we heard that one of the teachers had sexually abused some of the children. Besides, I did not find the whole idea of sending the children to a boarding school agreeable. It made me think much of Hannah in the Bible [First Book of Samuel, Chapter 1]. I wonder how Hannah was able to part with the son she had been wanting for so many years? Of course, God had told her, he would protect him. He came to a place where they had many children of their own. That cannot have been comfortable for that little fellow. Was I being egotistic, thinking like this?

Mrs. Roesgaard offered to teach the boys, but Harry declined the offer. A final option would have been the Japanese school, but we worried about what options that would leave the children with. We had no examples among missionaries to follow in this matter, nobody send their children to local schools. This issue really concerned us much.”

Eventually, around 1966, Ene Marie’s health made a return to Denmark the best solution. At the request of CMB, Harry went alone to Shin Rei San to make the project work, but it did not. Meanwhile, the family lived in Herning, Denmark. A Japanese from Fukuroi, Ms. Suzuki Fumie, came to assist Ene Marie. She had been a great support in Japan, and helped the boys with the language, but in Denmark they

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2 In a newsletter, Harry wrote that they have decided to send their sons to the Norwegian school in Kobe when they reached the age of seven (NKBM Jan 1962:7).

apparently did not want Japan and Denmark to be mixed for they gave Ms. Suzuki a hard time by refusing to understand Japanese much to the dismay of their mother.

=====Here ends the interview with Ene Marie Thomsen.=====

Harry Thomsen eventually decided to leave Japan and CMB by the end of 1967. After a few years in Denmark the family left that country to resettle in Colorado, USA in 1970.

Many parts of Ene Marie Thomsen's story deserve further research. It goes without saying, that memories of things that happened at least forty five years ago will have been modified by over the years. Mrs. Thomsen suffered a stroke some time before the interview, so the mere fact that she was able to give it at the age of 82 is a blessing. Listening to her voice one senses her happiness for the years in Japan and in Kyoto in particular, and Hans Bjarne Thomsen reported later that his mother had seen delighted to talk about her experiences. She appears full of admiration for her husband and seems to have been supportive of the decisions and actions taken by him, as when she gave up her idea of studying English before going via the USA to Japan; the interview was done in Danish, but after more than 40 years in the US, Mrs. Thomsen naturally mixed in some English as well. One aspect not covered in this interview was her experiences of giving birth in Japan. That would make for an interesting comparison with her experience in Chicago.

Mrs. Thomsen also does not bring up the fact that Mr. Thomsen often spent long time away from the home, leaving her with the responsibilities of the home and the mission station. Perhaps, the normalcy of this family situation in Denmark at that time made it acceptable to her.

Her account gives us a good idea of her life in Kyoto, and anyone visiting the city and the Shūgakuin area of today will note the differences but also the still existing similarities with the past. Milk is no longer hard to come by, clothes of

any kind and quality are readily available, but the market at Mototanaka is now an ordinary supermarket. The Lutheran Church is still there as are some of the farms and farmhouses. Like these physical changes with a few remains of older days, the Japanese society has changed so much that it is hard to comprehend the strong reservations over against Japanese food or fear of TB Mrs. Thomsen expressed in her 1960-speech.

Ene Marie Thomsen's warm enthusiasm for Kyoto is audible in the interview. Her affection for her late husband is also evident. Not only in her voice, but also in her loving and praiseful description of how he promised to teach her English and how he, in her eyes, shined above others who envied him his social talents, or those who could not match his way of realizing Karl Ludvig Reichelt's heritage in the Japanese context.

**Table 1 Chronology of CMB's early years in Japan and of Thomsen's.**

Year	Christian Mission to the Buddhists in Japan	The Thomsen Family
1952	Possibilities of work in Japan examined.	
1953	Japan opened as a field of mission. The Chinese Mr. Kung Tien Min and the Norwegian Rev. Ragnvald Hemstad commissioned for the purpose. The missionaries first studied in Kobe then found a place in Shūgakuin in the NE part of Kyoto to build a student home.	
1955	The student home aside, the missionaries involved themselves in visits to places of other religions.	Harry and Ene Marie married and were sent off to Japan via America.

1956		Thomsens' first son, Erik, born in Chicago. The family moved to Kyoto, living with the other missionaries. Colleagues aside, Thomsen was helped by Rev. J.M.T. Winther in Kobe, who by then had almost 50 years of experience as a Danish missionary in Japan.
1957		Second son born and baptized Hans Bjarne by J.M.T. Winther in Kobe (14 Nov) cf. Winther 1957.
1958	Hemstad returned to Norway in June. A Center for the Study of Japanese Religions was proposed constructed under the auspices of the National Christian Council Japan "following an appeal from a group of outstanding Japanese and Western church men." (NKBM 1958,99 & Schröder 1958, 129). A congregation was formed in Shūgakuin.	Harry Thomsen appointed leader of the Center. A letter of 2 October confided his suggestion to make a place for the religious devotees, the fundamental mission of CMB. HT began a search for a proper location meeting his list of five conditions (later 10, cf. Thomsen, H. 1962c for this Japan version of the CMB's center in Hong Kong, Tao Fong Shan (cf. Thomsen, H 1962b).
1959	The Shūgakuin Church is included in Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.	Thomsens left Japan in Dec. on their first furlough.
1960	Leadership of the NCC Center was transferred to professor Ariga Tetsutarō 有賀鉄太郎 (1899-1977), Kyoto U. in corporation with Kobayashi Sakae 小林榮 (1925-), Kwansei Gakuin U. <sup>3</sup> Kung moved with his family to Taiwan to become an Ass. Professor at a Lutheran Seminary in Taipei. The mission board decided it would establish a broderhjem "home of brothers" together with an agricultural institution in Japan (NKBM 1960)	

3 Biographic details on Kobayashi Sakae in Thomsen, H. 1960a

1961		Thomsens returned to Japan in the autumn. HT conducts a survey for a proper location of the new center focused on the Shizuoka area. He finishes his proposal for Shin Rei San.
1962	In April the mission board decided to accept HTs proposal of Thomsen “Shin Rei San”; to commission Martha and Olaf Roesgaards for Japan; to accept Emil Fenger’s offer as agricultural advisor on the project; to employ Shimaya Yasuo <sup>4</sup> as a local expert (NKBM 1962). Roesgaards left for Japan (Blauenfeldt 1962).	HT reported on finding the ideal location for Shin Rei San (Thomsen, H. 1962c), and after long negotiations bought a property in Misawa.
1963	Construction of Shin Rei San began. Frida and Emil Fenger arrived (Mar).	
1964	Cattle bought and shipped from Denmark (Red Danish) under supervision of the Jensens and from Australia (Hereford) (Aug) and arrived at SRS (Oct). Fengers returned to Denmark (Nov). A new church building in Shūgakuin opened on land donated by CMB (Dec). Norwegian theological cand. Gunvor and Aasulv Lande commissioned for Japan.	

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4 Shimaya Yasuo studied economy (or jurisprudence, cf. NKBM Feb 1960:16) at Doshisha University and during his student days he lived for a couple of years at CMB’s Shugakuin Center. There he was baptized at the age of 28 on 13 Dec. 1959 (Thomsen, H. 1960b). Married in Oct 1962 he began to work fulltime with Harry Thomsen and the proposed Shin Rei San from Nov, and proved to be an invaluable negotiator and help in other ways (Shimaya 1962). He assisted the project even before employment (Thomsen, H. 1960d). Until he left SRS in Nov 1967, one of his many functions was to be interpreter for the Danish agronomists in charge of the agricultural parts of SRS.



1965	Møller new head of SRS agriculture (Apr). Later joined by Kvist. Agricultural school Oct 1965. Gunvor and Aasulv Lande arrived.	
1966		The Thomsens on their second furlough.
1967	Møller and Kvist left in Mar/Nov, Mr. Sams new director of the farm and the agricultural school. Roesgaards returned to Denmark (5 Apr).	Thomsen returned to Japan (21 Mar) but left again for good at the end of the year.
1969	Inauguration of the Shin Rei San Church. Leadership of the farm and agricultural school taken over by Mr. Nozaki, who had trained in Denmark. Notto Raider Thelle and Mona Thelle arrived.	
1970	Notto R. Thelle evaluated the SRS and concluded it the wiser to conduct dialogue in Kyoto or Tokyo, rather than wait for people of other faiths to arrive in Misawa (Thelle 1970), and let Mr. Nozaki carry on with the agricultural parts. Roesgaards returned to Japan and SRS.	
1974	CMB terminated its commitments in SRS for the lack of students at the farming school and the lack of finances. Roesgaards returned to Denmark.	

### *OUR FIRST PERIOD IN THE EAST IS NOW BEHIND US*

Speech held at Fiskumstevnet by Mrs. Ene Marie Thomsen

Reprinted in Den Nordiske Kristne Buddhist Mission Aug-Sep 1960: 82-83 and translated from Danish by Christian M. Hermansen. The layout follows that of the original.

Five years have lapsed since Harry and I participated in Fiskumstævnet. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then. At that time we were two, now we are four – we have celebrated our wooden anniversary – and last but not least; our first period in the East is now behind us.

We are happy to be home, and to be able to be together with family and friends

– while we also are happy that we already long for Japan – as a matter of fact we began to long for Japan the very first day on board the ship that moved us away from our many friends over there. We feel, we now have two homes, one in the Nordic area and one in the East – and when you have a home on either side of the Globe, it does not matter which direction you head – you are always on your way home, either in the Northern area or in Japan. It has been

A BIG CHANGE TO COME TO JAPAN, where almost everything is upside down. Moving from Vildbjerg to Kyoto has been like doing a super somersault. All customs and habits are new to us and very often opposite of ours; we are given a name when we are born, whereas the Japanese only get personal names when they are dead – and when a Japanese is having their photograph taken, they always look somber, though they are otherwise all smiles, whereas we at home in the West usually look somber but always remember to show a smiling face when we are about to have our portrait frozen in time. We had a particularly funny example of how our customs are the opposite shortly after we had arrived in Kyoto – we had visitors and could not get rid of our visitors – we would bow deeply and repeatedly at the door, where upon our guests went down the road – where it turned we waved at them as a last gesture of goodbye, but then to our surprise they came running back to us – you could tell our surprise, but again we bid them kindly farewell with the usual deep gymnastic bowing, and they left, but as they reached the turn of the road, and we waved or last goodbye, they rushed back to us again – finally, it dawned on us that our way of waving goodbye means come in Japan.

Next, we have to learn how to greet in Japanese. It is quite a galla event and we sometimes suspect that deep down the Japanese, too, enjoy the funny aspects of the situation. One must bow deeply and many time – and the idea is that the higher ranking person should straighten up first after several bows, while the other shows respect by straighten up last – therefore it happens that one straightens up too soon

after a bow, in which case one must bow immediately again in order not to offend the other party. This style of greeting is typical of a people and a religion for whom time means nothing – we westerners find it a waste of time, and if one meets too many familiar people it actually takes too much time to walk down a street.

In our home we also strive to take into account that we are in Japan and must be

#### “A JAPANESE TO THE JAPANESE.”

On the other hand we also must take into account the demands made by our western background. We have two livings, one in Japanese style with hardly any furniture – and one in the Nordic fashion with chairs etc. If we only have Japanese visitors, we will, of course, be in our Japanese living room sitting on cushions on the floor, a very exhausting way of sitting, but if Norwegian friends are visiting or we are alone we prefer the cozy living. When one has tried a full hour of sitting in the courteous Japanese style where ones legs soon will be numb, one really learns to appreciate the great invention a chair is.

One of the most difficult things to get used to is

#### THE JAPANESE FOOD.

It is our principle that “our stomachs are Danish” when we are at home and do not expect any Japanese visitor. But of course when we are visiting someone, we have to eat the Japanese way, if we are to be well accepted. It is the strangest things one is offered, so one often suffers a shock in silence when lifting the lids of the bowls served. Among of the most exciting is octopus, served sliced, pickled or salted – the taste is alright but the meat is SEGJE that it sometimes feels like chewing on a bicycle tire. One is also often served raw fish – mackerel, gold fish, carps, etc., served in slices after the head, intestines and bones have been removed. It actually tastes very well, but the “but” is in a few instances the fish is not fresh and then one is risking ones life eating it. Another Japanese delicatessen is omochi, cakes of rice produced by ponding

raw rice with a big wooden mallet – the rice cakes are sometimes so sticky that when one finally manages to bite into one, it is absolutely impossible to free ones teeth from it again. If one has a filling or dentures it is particularly problematic. Fortunately, these cakes are only made around New Year, wherefore, if only this once a year, one is careful not to accept invitations for the first days of January one does not risk being served *omochi*.

All in all, Japanese food is not tasty, though the Japanese know how to serve it in a very beautiful and exquisite way – the only really delicious dish is *sukiyaki*, which on the other hand is incredible delicious. Do to the monotony of the food, rice three times a day with vegetables and fish – meat and milk only occasionally – the Japanese health has not been very well, but in the last few years, the Japanese have begun to study the kitchen of the west and even the rice has begun to relent to bread and potatoes. Consequently,

#### JAPANESE WOMEN

are very eager to study the foreign cooking, and that was the occasion for starting a women's group at our church in Shugakuin. We learned that quite a number of women, who would not come to church to listen to a sermon, were interested in a women's group that offered lessons in western cooking. We meet every fortnight. We begin with a hymn or two, then our young Japanese pastor Koizumi-san or Harry gives a simple talk on a Bible verse and then I teach cooking – when the food is prepared we eat together, chat together for a while and then split up. This has connected several neighbor women with the church and they attend the services. Thinking of our women's circle<sup>5</sup>, it makes me recall Bishop Noack's words of farewell to me five years ago: "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading trough!"—

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5 *Women's circle* literally translates the Danish *kvindekreds* that E.M. Thomsen used here in her speech; the Japanese equivalent would probably be *fujinkai* 婦人会. In the first part of the quotation, E. M. Thomsen used *kvindeforening* = women's association or –gathering.

he likely meant me to be a good housewife for my husband and children, and guests, but the basket and the kneading through have in fact also become the entrance to the church for some of our neighbors out there.

### OUR CHILDREN

too have indirectly participated in the mission work – the Japanese so love children, and foreign children even more, and many doors that would have remained closed to us have been opened for Hans Bjarne and Erik; the Japanese fall for them straightaway. Every time we go on a trip by bus or train or if they are out door, it is gorgeous to see how a crowd of elderly Japanese women flock around them. Sometimes they almost rub noses or chin with the children – a habit we do not always appreciate, for many elderly Japanese have tuberculosis. The children are therefore often at the risk of TB-infection, and we are aware and thankful for how the intercessory prayers of our friends at home have been our children's guardian angles.

One of our neighbors is an old great-grandmother, more than 80 years old, who starts every morning by worshipping the sun at 6 am. She walks across the yard and bows down many times to a small deity dressed in red, which is placed exactly below Harry's office window – she then claps her hands as many times, bows again and then commences on the work of the day. Thinking of her, I would like to end by telling you that we sincerely hope that our Mission tot the Buddhists may soon get more missionaries in Japan – there are so many Japanese who are seeking, and we so wish they may find.

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