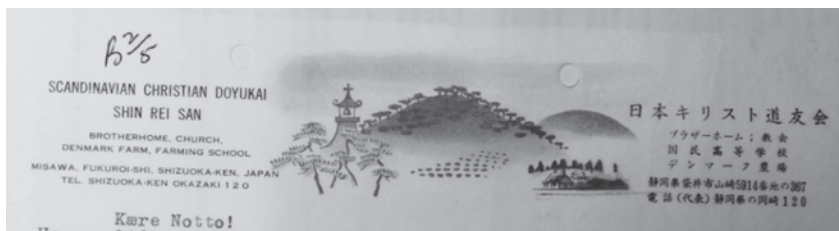


Harry Thomsen and Shin Rei San The Foundation of a Brother Home for Truth-seekers¹⁾

Christian M. Hermansen



CMH: “What did you think of Harry Thomsen’s plans to invite people of various religions to meet at Shin Rei San?”

Suzuki (local farmer): “In that regard, I have no opinion. One had to wait and see. In the end that plan did not succeed, but there were other successes, so isn’t that okay? It often happens that things do not work out as you plan, but the way they work out is good.” (Interview in Misawa, 29 December 2015)

1) This is a partial result of my ongoing research on Danish Christian Mission in Japan, 1898–1998. See also Hermansen 2011 (overview) and 2015 (Portrait of Ene Marie Thomsen).

Denmaaku bokujou (Denmark Farm) is on Google Map if you zoom in on the area south of Fukuroi, a city proud to be located half way between Tokyo and Kyoto. The farm is in Misawa Village. To the Scandinavians who initiated the farm, the place was known as *Shin Rei San*. “San” means “mountain.” Rei means “spirit.” And “shin” can – depending on the Chinese character chosen – mean “God [神],” “truth [真],” or “new [新].” (Thomsen 1961–62, 1–2, Chinese characters added).

Harry Thomsen (1928–2008) was the mastermind of the initiative. In a letter of 7 Oct. 1958, Thomsen wrote to the general secretary of his mission Notto N. Thelle:

“The ‘all-round’ holistic view (till then only bits and pieces) came to me a few weeks ago, while I was down with a minor influenza, and I suddenly saw the possibilities and obligations of the future in a glaring light unlike anytime before. And I felt, I had to let you back home know about the possibilities and my personal ideas concerning this and that as soon as possible, because it may affect the future of our mission.” (u.p.)

From then on the idea that can be summed up as “following the special call to the Christian Mission to Buddhists by making a brother home for



Google map: 1. Gion Shrine, 2. Diakonia Support Center, 3. Denmark farm, 4. Nihon Kirisuto Dōyukai Shin Rei San Church.

truth-seekers, a Japanese Tao Fong Shan” was always on his mind, while other obligations did not permit him to work it out immediately. However, with increasing intensity he focused his efforts on the goal convincing many to make the idea come true. For *Shin* he chose the character meaning *new* and meant 新靈山 to mean *Mountain of the Spirit Renewal*. During the 1960s, Shin Rei San (hereafter SRS) was the focal point for the Christian Mission to Buddhists (CMB), second only to the mission’s work in Hong Kong. Now, the Japanese name is *Denmāku Bokujo* (Denmark Farm)²⁾, but fifty years ago the locals talked about *Tomusen bokujo*, The Thomsen Farm.

Over the winter 1961/1962 Harry Thomsen wrote a master plan for *Shin Rei San* and submitted it to the CMB Home Board in the early 1962. This study includes a full translation of the 18-page plan because it is a focal point in Harry Thomsen’s career as a Danish missionary to Japan. Examining what led up to the plan and how it was implemented tells a story of conviction, persuasion and commitment essential to all mission and it becomes a case study of the movements of a Grand Plan from inspiration through realization to disintegration. The aim is to understand better who Harry Thomsen was in mission and the decision process of a mission

2) In 1983, Mr. Matsuda Masayuki was made the new leader of Denmark Bokujō’s *Kodomo no ie* こどもの家, a free school that serves as a home for teenagers who refuse to go to school. In 2003 *Diakonia* デイアコニア, a nursing home for the elderly, opened followed by *Makibanoie* まきばの家, a home for [abused] children between 0 and 18, in 2007, when *Kodomo no ie* changed status to a “support to reach independence home” (自立支援ホーム) and *Hitsuji shinryōsho* ひつじ診療所, a psychiatric clinic established next door in 2008 (cf. Shirakawa 2013). In 2015, the old school buildings were torn down and *Kodomo no ie* was reformed so it now can care for up to 6 severely neglected youths. Together the five institutions make up the incorporated social welfare body *Denmāku bokujo* 社会福祉法人デンマーク牧場

organization.³⁾

To understand the *Shin Rei San* project these contexts must be taken into consideration: The Christian Mission to Buddhists, the mission situation in Japan in the late 1950s and the personal history of Harry Thomsen.

Background 1 Nordic Christian Mission to Buddhists (CMB)

It all began with Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952).⁴⁾ Reichelt was first sent to China in 1904 by the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) where he realized a need to study Buddhism and know the Buddhist if he were to share the gospel with Buddhists. In 1922, he and Notto Norman Thelle (1901–90) established a Brother Home, Jing Fong Shan, in Nanjing. They visited Buddhist monasteries throughout China and the contacts led thousands of monks to visit Jing Fong Shan. Reichelt strove to demonstrate how Christ was the center of all religions, following what he called the “Johannine approach,” i.e., *In the beginning was the Logos* (John 1:1). “He found further support of his approach in the idea about *logos spematikos* (...) that is, the eternal Logos is spread in non-Christian religions and philosophies as grains of seed; whatever is true originates from the eternal Logos, Christ.” (Thelle 1981:68). To reach the Buddhist monks, he included language and concepts from Buddhism and Taoism in

3) The study was made possible by the funding from Kwansei Gakuin University and the generous help of Areopagos (current name of the CMB) that gave me access to its archives in Oslo, Hans Bjarne Thomsen who has his father Harry T’s archives. It would have been altogether different if the following had not given me of their time in interviews: Rangvald Hemsted (Bergen, Norway), Olaf and Martha Roesgaard (Horne, Denmark), and Mr. Suzuki Hiroshi 鈴木博, Mr. Fujita Hideyuki 藤田秀行, and Mr. Kine Shigeo 木根重男 (Misawa, Japan).

4) This paragraph is based N. R. Thelle’s article “The Legacy of Karl Ludvig Reichelt” (Thelle 1981).

the worship liturgy at the Brother Home, served vegetarian food and looked for “points of contact” and “word vessels,” that is taking an existing word and “fill it with a new meaning,” for example translating Amidha Buddha as “the All-Father” (67-68). His way of meeting Buddhism and the Buddhists was understood by some Christians as syncretism, so the relations with NMS were terminated in 1925, and instead Den Nordiske Kristne Buddhistmission / The Christian Mission to Buddhists was formed in 1926. In 1930, the chaos of the Chinese civil war made Reichelt and Thelle moved their work to Shatin outside of Hong Kong, where they founded Tao Fong Shan 道風山 “Mountain of the Logos Spirit” (66).

Members of the CMB fundraised the money necessary to purchase the mountain and construct the center. Tao Fong Shan (TFS) included a church building, a library, housing for the missionaries, a pilgrims’ hall for Buddhist pilgrims to stay, and a porcelain-painting workshop. The workshop was a source of income for TFS and a place of training of monks who decided to become Christians, but then usually lacked a profession to live by. The Danish architect Johannes Prip-Møller designed all buildings in traditional Chinese monastery style. Incidentally, the first Danish missionary to Japan, Jens M.T. Winther (1874-1970) visited Tao Fong Shan on Friday 3 May 1935 and wrote in his diary that

An interesting tour. I have no doubt God uses this work that otherwise would not be done; likewise, I have no doubt that I have not been called to do it this way. Nobody else seeks to do something for the large crowd of people, who are Buddhist monks; it is no wonder either that they have to be helped in ways different from ordinary ones. Their methods and ways of thinking include elements I would not be happy with, but personally, I could not come up with others; there is so much we do not understand, points unaddressed

by the word of God – there ought to be room for something that is not quite as we are used to. Of course, I fully understand Professor Hallesby’s critique; on the other hand, would he have the courage to voice that critique if he had tried to work here in the East for a few years? I wonder, if he would not say I cannot come up with something more practical. Who am I then, to seek to block the road even with a single straw? May God bless their work and guide the workers that they may not loose track but be used by Him to guide many strayed and hurtful souls to the right way! That is what I would have to say. (Winther, Diary 1935 May 3, translation by CMH)]

Whereas Winther could not identify himself with CMB’s approach, others sympathized with it. Rev. Ragnvald Hemstad (1923–) heard Karl L. Reichelt give a lecture in Oslo in the late 1940s and decided to become a part of his special kind of mission (Hemstad 2015). Danish Harry Thomsen was “converted” by Reichelt’s son, Gerhard. The members of CMB in Scandinavia were organized in circles of friends under national branches with individual budgets. A director headed the joined Home Board (Hovedkomité), which consisted of two representatives from each country and was served by the General Secretary. While never a populous organization, the CMB counted many influential theologians among its members.

Before the World War II Reichelt worked in China, but he also visited the Shingon Buddhist temples on Mt. Kōya along with other religious centers in Japan and established contacts with leading Buddhist figures including D.T. Suzuki. During the war, he and the rest of Tao Fong Shan shared in the suffering of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. When it ended in 1945 Reichelt went back to Norway, but returned to Hong Kong in 1951 where he died 1952.

The success of the Chinese Communist revolution in 1949 made mission work more difficult and it stopped local Buddhists' pilgrimages. It also resulted in years of refugee-issues for Hong Kong. The changed conditions made CMB consider going beyond the Chinese borders (Board meeting minutes 1951, 1952, 1953). Burma and Taiwan along with Japan were evaluated by pastor G. M. Reichelt. The Home Board discussed G. M. Reichelt's report and decided to start a work in Taiwan and in Japan (cf. Minutes, 27 May 1952, reprinted in NKBM 1952 Jun: 4)⁵⁾. Caution was protocolled: "Be patient and modest; we cannot start out by building a Tao Fong Shan in Japan."

So, in 1953, land was bought in the Shūgakuin 修学院 area in the northeastern part of Kyoto. In April came the first missionary Mr. Kung Tien Min (China), a graduate of Tao Fong Shan who knew Japanese, and in September followed pastor Ragnvald Hemstad (Norway) (cf. NKMB 1953, 79 and 118, respectively). They wanted to carry out mission in the CMB style, i.e., visiting religious centers, studying local religions and hosting people of other faiths. Like a brother home, they organized their house as a dormitory for university students and in particular wanted students from Buddhist families. The residents shared meals and the missionaries held devotions and study time in their living room to which the students were invited (Hemstad interview, 2015).

In 1955, Ene Marie and Harry Thomsen (Denmark) were commissioned for Japan.

Background 2, The mission situation in Japan in the late 1950s.

The post-war years of Japan has famously been described as "the rush

5) Pagination of the newsletter *Den Nordiske Kristne Buddhistmission* was individual for each issue until 1953, but from 1953 consecutive for a whole year.

hour of the Gods,” but it might perhaps also be called the rush hour of the missionaries. John W. Dower has argued how the US lead allied occupation of Japan, 1945–52, sought in many ways to rectify Japan, keep it out of communist influence and form the land in the image of the US (2009). The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General MacArthur strongly supported a Christianization of Japan (Hermansen 2016a). This coincided with the purge of missions from Communist China after the revolution, and many mission groups relocated to the surrounding countries, waiting for the tide to turn. The CMB did not leave Hong Kong, but as we saw it began to develop nearby “fields.”

During the 1950s, Japan experienced a wave of urbanization. The rootlessness of the many who moved from land to city has long been understood as a source for the growth of New Religions. From Hoshino Masaoki’s research on Christianity and rural Japan we know that though some Christian denominations had tried rural mission almost since Christianity was legalized in 1873, most had had mediocre success and instead focused their attention on the cities (2005, 11–81). Among Christians concerned with the plight of the farmers was pastor Kagawa Toyohiko (1888–1960). In 1927, he started a Farmers Evangelical School system (農民福音学校), inspired by what he had been shown two years earlier in Denmark by J. M. T. Winther (Hoshino 2005, 102 and Hermansen 2013). As a means to fight the nutrition deficiency of Japan, Kagawa recommended *rittai nōgyō* 立体農業, his translation of Russel Smith’s ideas about *tree crops*. According to Hoshino, Kagawa and Fujisaki Moriichi 藤崎盛一 (1903–98) incorporated *tree crops* in their teachings at Christian Agricultural Schools in postwar Japan, and pecan, along with walnuts and chestnuts, was recommended as a source of nutrition and suitable for the many steep slopes in Japan (2005:105 and 107, note 2). In

the 1950s, as a reaction to what was seen as dehumanizing urbanization and industrialization, some church leaders called for a renewed effort in rural mission (cf. Hoshino 2005, 155~).

We get a different look at the mission situation from the minutes of the “Annual Meeting of the advisory committee to the Christian Mission to Buddhists” held on 19 July 1957 at 18 Yamazoe-cho (Shugakuin, Kyoto), the mission compound of the CMB.

Present: Dr. Vories, prof. Ariga, Rev. Sam Sköld, Rev. Norbö, Rev. Kamegai and Missionaries S. Hannerz, Kung Tien Ming, R. Hemstad and H. Thomsen. Absent: Dr. Kishi, Rev. Yasuda, Dr. Aske.

Chair: Dr. Vories, Secretary: H. Thomsen.

5. The task of the CMB in Japan.

Hemstad introduced the subject, pointing to the fact that the task for the CMB is the same as of all other missions but the scope of the work gives a special character to a mission. In our work we have to distinguish between the so-called religious people (priests, monks, etc.) and the religious-minded people in all walks of life. It is much more difficult to help people who have already steeled down in a religion. We should rather go to those who have not yet taken their decision but are as yet open to other influence.

Norbö: There are lots of seekers all over Japan in Buddhism and the various religions, but how to be able to reach all of them? Each group needs a special method of approach. To be able to do any effective work you must decide what group to concentrate on.

Sköld: The Swedish Covenant Mission has met with great difficulties in Turkestan and India, where it has concentrated on special groups of people. Would it be wise to concentrate on one single kind of people? There is a special danger in concentrating on consciously “religious” people, because they are always “pharisees.” Furthermore it is not possible to build a church

exclusively of Buddhist priests. Former Buddhist priests must go out in society and not become a narrow sect. You must cooperate with the whole Church – for mutual benefit of both. The CMB would be helpless without the trust and cooperation of the other missions – and the best way for the CMB to win the confidence of other missions is to prove the truly evangelistic aim of the mission. Having the confidence of other missions the CMB would be able to serve the other churches by helping them to understand the Buddhists and to find the right means to approach them. The CMB must by all means escape exclusiveness and isolation.

Vories: One of the most important things to remember is to avoid arguing with non-Christians about their faith – we should rather study and live together with them.

Ariga: The CMB ought to specialize in indirect mission while teaching the other missions how to approach the Japanese by understanding their psychology better.

Nordbö: Eventually converted students should be baptized within our mission or introduced to other churches.

Sköld: One of the peculiarities of the Japanese is that they always stick to the man who first brought them to Christ – and are very unwilling to join any other church. This fact may become a problem also for the CMB.

Kamegai: There are two kinds of Buddhists – the ordinary Buddhists who very often don't even know what Buddhism is, and the “die-hard”, the real Buddhists who have a real deep grasp of their religion and are very hard to convert, and among whom no other mission is working.

Sköld: The CMB must widen its scope to include not only Buddhist clergy but Buddhists as a whole - - but on the other hand the scope should not be widened too much. (2, In English as Thomsen originally wrote it.)

Evidently, the advisors to the CMB were not in agreement on whom to

approach or how to do it, as all spoke from their experiences sometimes accumulated over more than fifty years as in the case of famous missionary and architect, founder of the Omi Brotherhood, Dr. Vories, and the equally famous professor of theology, first at School of Theology of Doshisha University [private] and at the moment of speaking, professor of Christianity at Kyoto University [National], Ariga Tetsutarō 有賀鉄太郎. These were some of the opinions influencing Thomsen, who had not yet been in Japan one year.

Background 3. Harry Thomsen



“Harry Thomsen passed away peacefully on Monday, November 10th, 2008 at Pikes Peak Hospice [Colorado Springs, CO]. He was born February 21st, 1928 in the Danish village of Vildbjerg of Thomas and Inger Thomsen, as the youngest of their twelve children.

He graduated as valedictorian from Herning High School and studied at the University of Aarhus, Yale University, University of Chicago, and the Montana State University at Missoula. He graduated with an advanced degree in English literature, specializing in the writings of Christopher Marlowe, and developed a life-long scholarly interest in comparative religions, particularly those of Zen Buddhism, Christianity, and the New Religions of Japan.” (Anonymous 2008)

To flesh out some of the points in this obituary of Harry Thomsen, Thomsen enrolled at Aarhus University in 1946, majoring in English and studying religions for a minor in 1953. From May 1949 to July 1950, he studied at Montana State University at Missoula and at Yale University as an early recipient of a Danish-American Foundation scholarship for graduate studies in the US. He also was active in the YMCA including its

scouts division (HT to G. Reichelt, 3 May 1953). Newspaper clippings in Thomsen's private archive testify to his outgoing personality and strength as a communicator, in that he wrote articles for Danish and American newspapers about his experiences and opinions of the Americans while in the US, e.g. "Dane Offers Foreign Students' Impressions. Harry Thomsen Studies English at University" (Thomsen 1949).

Thomsen first letter to the CMB dates from 3 May 1953 and was sent to Gerhard Reichelt. It relates how impressed he was with the CMB on his first encounter a few days earlier and how this had made him want to join the mission and its work in Japan in particular. He was about to serve his term in the army, so would only be ready two years later. Reichelt replied encouragingly (Reichelt to HT, 15 May 1953). The newly graduate in English and religious studies then did his military service 1953–1954, wrote a book, *Japan, den opgående sols land* (Japan, land of the rising sun) (Thomsen 1954), married his fiancé Ene Marie Jensen in 1955, and in August that year, he was commissioned by the CMB and with special permission ordained pastor for the mission field by the Danish Bishop Noack who was also Chair of the CMB. The couple then went to Japan via Chicago, where Harry Thomsen in preparation for his work had been permitted one year of studies with the famous scholar of religions, Chicago University professor Joseph M. Kitagawa. There he made his first contacts with Japanese citizens. The following year he and Ene Marie continued their journey west-ward together with their new born son, Erik, sailing from San Francisco and finally arriving in Kobe, on August 28, 1956 (On Ene Marie Thomsen, see Hermansen 2015).

Before continuing the story, it should be noted that judged by the exchange of letters between Thomsen and the CMB general secretary, pastor Notto Norman Thelle, the trust and friendship between them was

very important to his work. Their letters have a warm tone from the beginning. Thomsen while often witty, youthful, eager, and insisting in his correspondence always showed trust, respect and appreciation. Whereas his relations with other people sometimes went from very enthusiastic to mistrust (cf. N. R. Thelle 2009), the latter sentiment is nowhere seen in letters to N. N. Thelle. Thelle, the senior by 27 years, advised Thomsen in a parental way. They were cordially on first name and Thelle had a soft approach, which did not prevent him from expressing disagreement or seeking to correct what he deemed to be wrong impressions or misunderstandings on the recipient's side. Much of what follows is based on Thomsen (HT) and Thelle (NNT) letters, so references will be abbreviated to [HT, NNT, date], where the first initials indicate the sender.

The first period in Japan, 1956–1959

Space will not permit a detailed account of the first period. The family settled in a house built for it by CMB in Shugakuin, Kyoto. Besides language studies and studies of religions, Thomsen was introduced to the work of CMB done by his seniors, the pastors Kung and Hemstad as outlined earlier. Co-habitation with university students was not an option for the Thomsen family, but Harry participated in the home activities such as morning meditations, went on temple visits and talked with religious leaders. While he knew language studies to be his main job, he also felt obliged to work along with Kung and Hemstad on a one-year course for Buddhist monks. Thomsen was of the opinion that, like he himself, the other two actually wanted to focus on other things, wherefore neither the course nor that other work went satisfyingly. He suggested reconsidering the future of the course (HT, NNT, November 14, 1956). Work aside, the family established contacts with other foreigners, missionaries in

particular, and Japanese. One year and a month after their arrival in Japan the Thomsens had their second son, born on 28 September. On 14 November, J. M. T. Winther wrote in his diary, “I spoke based on Judges 6: 23 “Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die.” and then I baptized the little chunky boy Hans Bjarne Thomsen.” (Winther, Diary, 14 Nov. 1957)

During 1957 and especially from the summer, Thomsen shifted his focus from mostly language studies to temple visits, sometimes going with Hemstad on weeklong journeys to other areas far from Kyoto. The two also began to offer Bible classes. Kung was mostly interested in studying Buddhism academically and did so at Otani University in Kyoto, Hemstad wanted to pursue meditation more, and Thomsen was still trying to find his place, expressing admiration for but also reservations over against both of the others’ positions. At a meeting in August, they discussed the future work of CMB and agreed to make an effort with work among students while Thomsen advocated a return to more focus on the visits to temples and monasteries (HT, NNT, Aug. 27, 1957). The three decided to name their place the “Kyoto Christian Institute” (Minutes of Coworker Meeting 7 Oct. 1957, reproduced in HT, NNT, Oct. 10, 1957). Thomsen was clearly the most vocal of the three in relation to Thelle when measured by the volume of their correspondences. He had a talent for figures and an economic sense wherefore he took over the bookkeeping by the end of 1957. This was also necessitated by Hemstad’s furlough, beginning in 1958, and Kung’s 2-year study leave for the US that same year, which left Thomsen “alone” on the field.

They had an increasing number of foreign visitors, and probably because Ene Marie Thomsen took it upon herself, such visitors would stay in their home or at least have dinner there. Hemstad was unmarried,

whereas Kung had a family; the Kungs may have entertained guests, but Thomsen did not mention it.

In a letter to Thelle of 27 August 1957, Thomsen noted that the National Christian Council was likely to start a Religious Study Center and that his neighbor, Professor Ariga Tetsutarō, Kyoto University, was interested in becoming its leader after retirement, five years later. This idea was, along with a growing congregation in Shūgakuin, to take up much of his time over the following two years.

1958 was a decisive year for Thomsen's commitments in Japan. The bare bones of it were: A) the church formation of the congregation and its inclusion in Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, completed in 1959, when Thomsen on CMB's behalf concluded an agreement of cooperation with JELC. This in turn made it possible to have the Shūgakuin congregation included in JELC and for JELC to send a young pastor, Koizumi Jun. B) The creation of a Center for the Study of Japanese



Picture 1. Japanese who helped Thomsen in Kyoto. Kobayashi S. (u. left) Ariga T. (u. right). Koizumi J. (standing in short sleeved white shirt). Areopagos Archives.

Religions under the National Christian Council in Japan. Thomsen met with his former professor in Chicago, Dr. Joseph M. Kitagawa in May (HT, NNT, 27 May 1958). Kitagawa informed him that the International

Missionary Council had wanted to establish such a center in 1956 without success (cf. Thomsen's letter to Dr. Glora M. Wysner, IMC, dated Kyoto, Nov. 15, 1958).⁶⁾ Thomsen invested much energy in the project, once it had won the approval of an ecumenical group including Gerhard Reichelt from CMB (cf. NKBM 1958, 128-130; 1959, 67-68; Thelle 2009, 4). The understanding was that CMB would furnish the upstart – providing manpower and the physical facilities at Kyoto Christian Institute with its library for studies until the NCCJ was ready to take over, and in particular Professor Ariga could become the Director. Thomsen published *A Religious Map of Japan*, launched a quarterly, *Japanese Religions*, organized seminars and a study tour in the spring of 1959 to the headquarters of some New Religions in the Kansai area and famous Zen temples in Kyoto – about 130 Lutheran missionaries and others participated. When Thomsen went on furlough in December 1959, he had arranged for the continuation of these activities in the CMB buildings by having a young assistant professor, Kobayashi Sakae from Kwansei Gakuin University, housesit Thomsens' house and do the job in return for a modest monthly salary of 20,000 yen (HT, NNT, 31. marts, 1959). C) Introducing Religions in Japan, especially the New Religions, directly to occasional visitors, formally to students in university lectures, and the world at large in a book of 350 pages commissioned by the American publisher Tuttle Co (HT, NNT, 27 maj, 1958). *The New Religions of Japan* was published in 1963. And yet, as he had been doing since his arrival Thomsen kept thinking none of it was the right way to respond to God's special call to the Christian Mission to Buddhists.

6) In 1952 at the IMC gathering at Willingen, Germany, Glora M. Wysner took the initiative to have IMC sponsor study centers of religions, cf. Fey 2009, 180 "The Creation of Regional Study Centres."

In a letter to Thelle dated “Kyoto, October 2, 1958” Thomsen outlined his ideas:

An institute for “truth-seekers.”

“What follows is something that has gradually dawned on me -- I cannot say exactly when it was clarified, but some time at the end of our summer vacation following many deliberations (with Gerhard Reichelt, among others, who has the general gist), deep reflections, etc., I am now so far that I dare to, and ought to inform you.

While I am interested in the Study Center and in theories as such, I am most closely related to the practical proclamation, xxxxxxxxx. And by practical proclamation, I do not mean xxxx ordinary congregational work but for the group of people, our mission regards as its vocation to work among; ‘the religious devotees’, sandhedssøgerne [as phrased in the original Danish, emphasis added] who we find among Buddhist monks and priests, as well as lay people of Buddhism and the New Religions. This has become so vivid for me that I personally feel that if we do not loyally undertake this task, which xxxx till this day nobody else do, then our raison d’être for being a separate mission society is gone, and joining a bigger unit would be much more economical and administratively effective. If we are to live and grow as a separate mission society, we must be loyal to this our heritage of our mission.” (3 [4-5])

“When circumstances makes it impossible for us to do the real work of the Christian Mission to Buddhists, producing tangible results like congregational work and work among refugees as is now needed and done in Hong Kong, that is what we must do – but now it is possible; on Formosa and in Japan – and at TFS a clear line [of development?] for the future is in the melting pot. Even the study centers (in Hong Kong and in Japan) ought not to be our primary task – xxxx even if the line of theoretical studies is

important and in line with the work of CMB -- at the same time as we concentrate our efforts on this line, our foremost task must be the practical proclamation to the people we regard as our vocation to work among.” (4 [5])

Thomsen went on to argue that now was the time for CMB to return to its root task as it used to be in China (Hong Kong) before the boarders were closed, and that that was possible in Japan. He expressed a need for patience, perseverance and preparation and then discussed details of the necessity of “the right location, a fitting building plan and interior design, sufficient and well prepared personnel, the build up of an extensive network within the world of Christians and non-Christians in Japan, and starting at the right moment.” (4-7 [5-8]), before he ended the letter in three points, that may be summarized as follows:

First, that the current budgetary favoring of Tao Fong Shan, much as he respect history and role of TFS in the mission, ought to change, for Hong Kong cannot provide options for CMB to work according to its vocation.

Second, that he is fully convinced his suggestion will be “the right plan for the future of CMB.” Nevertheless, as any individual Christian should follow the will of God, he is willing to work as the board sees best.

Third, that his proposal requires urgent actions. The board must begin by letting Thomsen go on furlough in 1960 instead of the planned 1961. This would allow him to promote the case at home with the Home Board and the friends’ circles. In that way, when the Study Center is taken over by others three years later, and the congregation in Shūgakuin has become a JELC church, CMB will be ready to devote itself to this new, yet old, task (7-8 [8-10]).

Not a week later, he repeated and expanded his explanation to N.N. Thelle:

These ideas of mine have come to me in a piecemeal fashion -- and they did not begin to move till this summer when I had talks in depth with a variety of insightful people and not at least Gerhard (whom I have come to appreciate very much) and Prof. Kitagawa have been helpful in that respect. The 'all-round' holistic view (till then only bits and pieces) came to me a few weeks ago, while I was down with a minor influenza, and I suddenly saw the possibilities and obligations of the future in a glaring light unlike anytime before. And I felt, I had to let you back home know about the possibilities and my personal ideas concerning this and that as soon as possible, because it may affect the future of our mission. (HT, NNT, 7 Oct. 1958.)

As the letter of 7 October affirms, Thomsen had had a revelation – things apart came together; the letter of 2 October reflects many of Thomsen's characteristics: his dedication to the cause, his enthusiastic certainty of own position yet respect for the (paternal) authority which resulted in a tension between doing what had to be done and [not rushing to do] what he knew to be right. The influenza he suffered from that September was perhaps also a symptom of his enthusiasm, in as much as he happened to get ill on other occasions when he had worked himself hard for a long time.⁷⁾

Practically coinciding with the letters, the November 1958 issue of CMB newsletter had a longer article by Thomsen on the new religions in Japan. It must have been written before the October letters, but one of the paragraphs gave his definition of *truth-seeker* and the task of CMB and as

7) For instance during his furlough in Scandinavia in 1960, when he had been writing on a couple of manuscripts and was about to go to an extra ordinary meeting of the home board in Sweden, he fell ill, and later, while on an intense lecture tour in Norway, he had to cancel all meetings in the latter half due to exhaustion.

such can be seen as one of the pieces that came together with others in his vision.

So far, and especially during the spring this year, I have visited about 40 headquarters of the most prominent new religions. And I am convinced that's where we find many of those people we in the Christian Mission to Buddhists feel we have been called to bring the Christian message. In these religions, we find people who are to the highest degree "truth-seekers", those for whom the barren façade of Shintoism and the empty ceremonies of Buddhism is not enough, those who seek below the surface, those who long to see the Messiah. In those religions too, the majority are surface-people, but it is here more than anywhere else I have met those who are "groping and searching" and who will not rest until they have found their creator. And nowhere else in the religious world of Japan are there more neglected lambs, more hired hands and treacherous shepherds. Quite a few of the new religions are disintegrating, and not at least here, I am convinced we have a task; to gather those who honestly seek the truth and lead them to the good shepherd, the spring of life (NKBM 1958, 113).

The definition of truth-seeker from the CMB newsletter is an example of how Thomsen's convincing others of *his ideas* went beyond personal correspondence. He, and the editor of the newsletter, N.N. Thelle, knew of course the value of communication.

Thelle answered in a letter of 4 Nov. expressing appreciation of the ideas concerning an 'institute for truth-seekers' and of Thomsen's openness to God's guidance, i.e., not to rush to action without reflections and prayers (1). On the other hand, he disagreed with Thomsen's analysis of the work done by Tao Fong Shan in Hong Kong and with his conclusions that it could not be counted as real CMB work. Thelle argued that it had long been a core intension of CMB to have Christianized former Buddhist monks bring

the gospel to their own people (2).

As already outlined, Thomsen was juggling with three big tasks during 1958–59, but this did not prevent him from working towards the realization of his vision. He began looking for the right place. In January 1959, he asked for Gerhard [Reichelt] to be sent to Japan [from Hong Kong] for the first period after Thomsen's furlough when *the "Japanese TFS" is founded*. That time will be full of risks and "I feel (and am) young and in many ways inexperienced and equally immature and would make many costly and unnecessary mistakes." So the presence of Gerhard Reichelt would make the difference between a possible and a certain success for CMB in Japan and the realization of K. L. Reichelt's ideas, so desperately needed, according to Thomsen (HT, NNT, 19 January 1959). Then, on 7 February, he reported that he had identified Shizuoka Prefecture as an appropriate area, because land was cheap – free perhaps – and would have convenient access to the big cities and two central places of pilgrimage. Besides, a smaller piece of land could be bought to grow tea, which would give the students a bit to do and generate an income. For the sake of the work a small printing office and a hospital or medical clinic should be considered. Thelle answered, on 19 February, "It would be a great joy if we construct a new Tao Fong Shan in Japan in the future. We must build it so the Japanese can take it over and maintain it in the long run. [...] I find it very important that we do not rush, but spend time in silence to think it through and pray to God for guidance" (2).

The following months, Thomsen kept referring briefly to the matter, sometimes indicating the interest in the Japanese Tao Fong Shan others have (HT, NNT, 21 August 1959) and often stated how much he was looking forward to meet with Thelle in person and get the chance to discuss the details. Then in a letter of 1 November, a short paragraph headed The

Future TFS in Japan reiterated Thomsen's sincere wish to work directly among the 'truth-seekers'. "Most of the details are ready, including three Japanese who are prepared to make it their life-work" [...] "so it will be possible to create such a center with caution, patience, and deep considerations." [...] "I also want you to know, I have a long list of people from all sorts of religions, who want to visit '*Shinreisan*' ('*Det Nye Ånds Bjerg*') [original text, Italics added] "The New Spirit's Mountain," as I would like to call such a possible future center." (HT, NNT, 1 November 1959)

That was the first time *a* name, and *this* name, was proposed for the place.

In other words, from October 1958, Thomsen's writings, newsletters included, pushed for the decision to follow his ideas and gradually made it more specific with a list of criteria for the brother home location, with an area and name. He was fully aware that nothing had been decided, and so asked the home board to meet extra ordinarily in April with him. For the meeting he summarized his proposal for a *broderhjem* ("*truth-seeker's Institute*, Thomsen's phrasing) to be constructed over 8 years starting 3-4 years in the future. It was very important, he noted, to plan it along with an agricultural center (cf. HT, Proposal of 17 March 1960 to the Home Board's Meeting in Stockholm). As noted Thomsen fell sick wherefore he could not be present at the meeting.

In the minutes of the Home Board meeting in Stockholm, 8 – 10 April 1960, it was concluded that Thomsen's ideas were fully in line with the mission view of K. L. Reichelt, wherefore the meeting decided to ask Thomsen to work out the plan for submission at the ordinary board meeting in September.⁸⁾

8) Present at the meeting were: From Denmark: Bishop C. W. Noack

Thomsen did as he was asked to do, and submitted his plan dated 29 August 1960 and with the headline “A Tao Fong Shan in Japan”. It is less elaborated than his “master plan” of November (1961–January 1962), but contains most of the ideas, wherefore only three points will be highlighted here: a) The *raison d’être* of CMB is the work among the truth-seekers, the religious devotees, this group of people not addressed by anybody else, the group we have been called to (p. 1); b) “It should be noted that unlike the Chinese truth-seekers, the Japanese do not go much on pilgrimage” (2), c) A mountain of equal size with TFS can be bought in Shizuoka at 60,000 to 120,000 kroner (3~6 million yen) (2), d) There are three “isolated islands” in the ocean of the Japanese masses, not reached by the gospel – and as such the strength of Buddhism – the world of the monasteries (the professional Buddhism), the core of the New Religions (the modern Buddhism), and the villagers (the tradition bound Buddhism) (6); e) A farming center is very important (7–8).

The first element is unchanged since the 1958 vision. The second is worth noting, for later on, when the plan did not work out, one recurring point of criticism was the absence of pilgrims and decades later, I have heard people speaking of Thomsen as if he had not been aware of the differences between traditional Chinese monks and modern Japanese ones. He clearly was aware of that. The claim about the “isolated islands” is reiterated in the later plan, though reduced to two.

(chairperson), professor dr. theol. Regin Prenter, section manager Vilhelm Schröder. From Norway: Mrs. Caro Mowinkel, sub-manager Birger Natvig, and pastor N. N. Thelle (secretary); from Sweden: Vicar Johann Hoff (vice-chairperson), vicar Simon Admund (4/8), manager director of mission dr. theol. Carl O. Diehl (4/9) and economy secretary O. Ewall. Extraordinarily representative of the Church of Sweden’s Mission Agency Mrs. Elsa Tilander; Missionaries: Pastor Stig Hannerz and Sister Birgitta Thorman.

The Home Board discussed the plan and decided that, “A brother home should be build in Japan, preferably with a farming institute” (Minutes of Home Board meeting in Oslo, 23.-25. September 1960, item a).

A year later, requests for support from the Study Center and a proposed Ecumenical Institute in Japan (Letter from Kobayashi to CMB 7 May 1961), was rejected by the board as it decided that: “HT’s main task is in the direct work of the Christian Mission to Buddhists, the preparations of our own brother home and the work in our current study center” and it referred the new task to the denominations in Japan (Minutes of the Home Board meeting in Copenhagen, 22-24 September 1961, item 1). At the same meeting, the Roesgaard couple was preliminarily accepted as missionaries to Japan on two conditions: “1) that Harry Thomsen can specify the kinds of work he finds they can be used for in Japan and 2) that the couple, based on that information, will be willing to acquire the skills necessary for that work and then go to Japan. Mr. Roesgaard (teacher) is also told that in case the work does not require theological qualifications, the mission will not seek an exception from the rules of ordination as pastor [of the Danish Ev. Luth. Church]” (cf. minutes item 4).

The next two, or three, steps in the process was Thomsen’s plan of 1961/62, an inspection visit to Japan by general secretary pastor Notto Norman Thelle (Norway) and chairperson Dr. C. G. Diehl (Sweden) in early Spring 1962, and an extra ordinary meeting of the Home Board in Missionsgården, Uppsala 25-26 April 1962. From the minutes of the said meeting, the following items are important here:

“9. Japan, the Shin Rei San Project

a) The Home Board (HB) has received Harry Thomsen’s report on the Shin Rei San project including plans and maps. HB has deliberated the

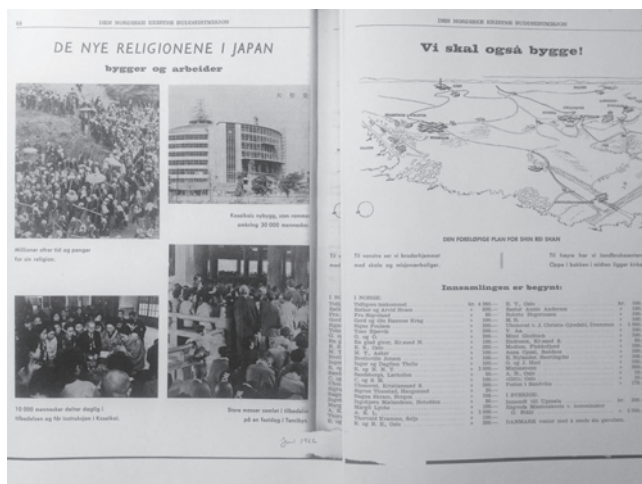
plans and made the following decisions:

a) HB accepts the construction of a Shin Rei San – a brother home with a farm center – along the lines Thomsen have proposed, though we do not commit ourselves to all the details in that plan. It is our condition that we will have the full rights of dispositions for the land that we buy or lease, and that we are free to carry out our task as a Christian mission.

b) HB decides to start a fund raising for the realization of the Shin Rei San project immediately.

c) HB has concerns when it comes to selling all our properties in Kyoto; as of now we agree to postpone the final decision on this matter. Harry Thomsen is authorized to sell the Torii-land when necessary.”

The board also decided to appoint Mr. Shimaya for a trial period of one to two years from 1 Nov. 1962 (10.a) ; to employ Olaf and Marta Roesgaard for the work at the brother home and agricultural school (10.b), to accept the



Picture 2 “The New Religions are constructing; We are also going to construct.” Launching the fundraising for Shin Rei San. NKBM spread, June 1962.

offer from Agricultural Advisor Emil Fenger to build up the farm for 1 to 2 years, only obliged to provide him with room and board (10.c). It followed HT's proposal for future commitments to the Study Center in Kyoto, providing it with room (Kung's House), lending it books for its library and letting HT work for it as far as other obligations would permit (11); and finally it accepted the name of the mission in Japan to be *Scandinavian Christian Doyukai* (12).

These decisions were based on Thomsen 1961/1962 18-page report see appendix, letters from Thomsen of 9 March, 27 March, and 31 March as well as the visits to Japan by Thelle and Diehl.⁹⁾

Thomsen's 1962-report

Except for the last page, the report is fully translated in the appendix to this article. In the text below, I will refer to the original's page numbers reproduced in the translation as [1], [2], etc.

A comprehensive analysis of style is beyond the scope here. The reader will note the move back and forth between clinical analyses of the situation and enthusiastically argued solutions sometimes with a lyrical touch, e.g. ([3]) first paragraph. S/he may find the emphatic style overwhelming, e.g. ([5]) with heavy use of underlining and a piled-up phrase like "we find the far majority of the truth-seekers, 'the religious devotees,' 'the bone and marrow of the religions'" shouts the message.

As for the content, on one hand, the author's goal is clear: "Christ to the Japanese truth-seekers in Japan" in a non-aggressive way that will result in "a Christianity that wants to be Japanese ("dressed in kimono")" ([9],

9) The decisions were reported in NKBM 1962, 51 (May). Diehl's impressions were published in the same issue pp. 52-53, and Thelle's on pp.41-43 (April) and pp. 62-63 (June).

3rd paragraph and [11] 3rd paragraph) by applying his mission's method to the local conditions. On the other hand, while some of the means he recommends had been tested by Thomsen and his colleagues during their first years in Kyoto, others – such the pecan nut tree ([7], fifth paragraph) – appear more speculative. Here, as in the letters discussed earlier, we find examples of his attempt to remain realistic where he moderates his presentation of an idea with a variant of “that can hardly be determined in advance – our experiences must guide us as we get them.” ([9], third paragraph under Daily life at Shin Rei San; also [11], paragraph 3). The last page [18] spells out his awareness of the plan being daunting, when he argues how it can be implemented little by little, but also why NOW is the time to demonstrate courage and faith and move.

Though the plan addresses many issues and appears holistic in scope, one cannot help wonder why past experiences of others have generally been left out. As discussed below, Harry Thomsen was not the first missionary who tried to dress Christianity in Kimono. Again, though he was right in the meager results the churches had had in the villages, the claim that others had not been aware of the connection between the village and the monastery (or rather the temple) implies a lack of common knowledge among Japanese church leaders that at least ought to have been substantiated if correct.

The second term, 1961–66.

For the CMB, buying and establishing the brother home Shin Rei San along with agricultural elements was the main thing in Japan. However, it should not be forgotten that in a report of 4 June 1962 Thomsen could inform the Home Board that the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religion was fully transferred from the CMB (4), and that the Shūgakuin

Church was established under JELC – the CMB paying for the building lot and some of the building (5).

Buying the land

When Thomsen was back in Japan, many groups asked Yhim to lecture on New Religions, including a United Church of Christ conference for 400 missionaries, and the New Religion Risshō Kōseikai invited him to speak on behalf of “other religions” at its big convent (cf. NKBM 1962, 54).

While thus strengthening his connections, Thomsen first worked out the plan discussed above, and searched for land, a search he vividly described in the mission’s newsletter to stimulate the fundraising (NKBM 1962 (pp. 33 (Mar); 54 (May); 75 (Jul); 84-87 (Aug-Sep); 100 (Oct); 114 (Nov)). In a letter of 27 March 1962, he reported on meetings with the prefectural government of Shizuoka that had clarified it would be impossible to buy state land without strings attached, and in particular that no religious propaganda would be accepted. The letter included Thomsens prospectus sent, in English, to the governor summing up the project in six [selling] points:

- 1). Dairy farm of up to 200 cows. Preferably based on Danish cow types not yet introduced to Japan. Starting experimentally with ten cows in 1962, gradually expanding to 200 cows by 1970.*
- 2). Production of cheese and butter by Scandinavian methods. Machinery for this purpose is to be introduced from Scandinavia.*
- 3). Planting of mikan- trees and experimenting with pecan nut trees and Scandinavian fruit trees.*
- 4). Establishment of a Danish-style Grundtvigian Folke High School for the training of young farmers.*

5). *Building a church and a Christian institute for truthseekers.*

6). *A library and study facilities for religious as well as agricultural purposes.*

(Harry Thomsen to The Governor of Shizuoka Prefecture. Kyoto, March, 1962)



Picture 3 H. Thomsen's map of the plots he bought for Shin Rei San and list of their owners. Thomsen's archive, Zurich.

It was impossible to get the cheap public land he had planned with. Despite the fact that the place had yet to be decided on – Kyushu was a vague option – and going against his earlier warning that architectural planning could only start once the location had been fixed, he contacted the Omi Brotherhood architectural firm for drawings and plans (HT, NNT, Kyoto, April 16, 1962).

From the summer of 1962, Thomsen started negotiations with private property owners of a small mountain in Misawa, near Fukuroi that matched all his criteria for Shin Rei San. With the generous support of the major of Fukuroi and of an influential businessman from Shizuoka city, Mr. Sakurai, plus language support by people from the congregation in Shūgakuin, Thomsen tried to find common ground for his purchase. In the newsletter he recounts the experience of sitting through hour-long mosquito-dense meetings and bringing nice Scandinavian cheese but the farmers could not agree among themselves on a uniform price per *tsubo*. On 9 December, they offered to sell, if Thomsen's party would negotiate the prices individually, and this finally settled the matter. The night before Christmas by Scandinavian tradition, on 23 XII 62, Thomsen wired Thelle: LAND CONTRACTS SIGNED PRAISE GOD BLESSED CHRISTMAS HT.

The details followed in Thomsen's letter to Thelle (Norway), Diehl (Sweden) and Nøjgaard (Denmark) :

"[The farmers] used all the tricks on record, and so many tricks that they could fill a book, but we were equally stubborn (vestjyder og mulddyr "people from West-Jutland and mules") (...). Their last offer was to sell at 200 yen per tsubo (3.5 meter square), which I turned down as I had done so many times before. (...) Shimaya, our loyal employee without whom I should not have been able to do anything, and I then began our visits to all landowners on the night of December 9. As I have told you, there are 274 plots of land,

each with its price and special conditions. They are owned by about 100 individuals, but fortunately in many cases younger son, older son, father and grandfather owned a bit each, so we “only” had to visit 47 households. Between 9th and 22nd of December, we visited each of them, and then, one and a half day before Christmas it was done. We are now the owners of the biggest plot of land on foreign hands in Japan. The cheapest piece cost 70 yen and the most expensive 150 yen and the rest somewhere in between, 110 yen on average. According to the records, the plot measures 85 tønder but actually it is much larger probably about 100 tønder or 50 ha. This place is unique, and every time I see it, I like it more and more. We can build a Shin Rei San with the best of chances for success under the perfect physical conditions. As for the inner conditions, I have no doubt that God has been in it all the time and that He will remain so in the future.”

Whether indeed the land for Shin Rei San was the largest amount on foreign hands or not is not of our concern. Thomsen stated the facts in his usual emphatic style and humor. Any reader would understand that on behalf of CMB, Thomsen had made a good deal thanks to his own native stubbornness and his native assistant. He got more land than was recorded at half the price wanted.

At one point in my investigations I learned that some of the farmers back in the late 1960s had had misgivings about the developments of SRS, because they felt the promises they had been given of local development had not been fulfilled. I therefore wanted to hear more about the SRS project viewed from within the community of Misawa. On 26 Dec. 2015, thanks to Mr. Matsuda Masayuki 松田正幸, head of the Denmāku Bokujō institutions since 1984, I had the opportunity to interview three farm neighbors of SRS, who knew of the earliest days of Denmāku Bokujō. The three were Mr. Suzuki Hiroshi 鈴木博, Mr. Fujita Hideyuki 藤田秀行, and Mr. Kine Shigeo

木根重男.¹⁰⁾ Asked about the land trade, Mr. Suzuki remembered:

“First, all of us were gathered, and Thomsen gave us an explanation of this and that. We met in the town hall and were told how they wanted to produce dairy products such as cheese. Each of us was given a sample of real cheese you couldn’t buy at that time. It was smelly, not a cheese anybody wanted. Nothing came of that meeting or the following one or two meetings. Then, the head of education in the prefecture and Mr. Sakurai from Shizuoka strongly supported the project. So in the end we sold the land. At that time one tan (= 300 tsubo or 991.736 m²) of flat land in our area would normally cost 10,000–15,000 yen. In this case the price went up so in the end some flat land was sold for 100,000 yen per tan.”¹¹⁾

By Mr. Suzuki’s calculations, one *tsubo* would normally had been traded at 33 to 50 yen, but Thomsen had paid up to 333 yen, or three times as much as Thomsen reported. The normal price would have been 10~15 JPY=0.2~0.3 DKK per m².¹²⁾ In a summer article for the CMB newsletter 1962, Thomsen had told the friends in Scandinavia that the normal price outside Misawa was 3~4 kroner/m², but thanks to local authorities he might get Misawa land for down to 0.5 dkk. By Thomsen’s account, he ended

10) Also present during the interview were Mrs. Matsuda Mamiko 松田麻美子 and Mr. Okubo Hideki 小久保秀樹, both co-workers of the Makiba no ie, a part of Denmāku Bokujō.

11) The information compare well with HTs reports in NKBM 1962 (pp. 33 (Mar); 75 (Jul); 84–87 (Aug–Sep); 100 (Oct); 114 (Nov). Regarding the cheese, Thomsen wrote, “After a short break [in the talks] where I showed [the participants] a number of picture books about Scandinavian nature, daily life and agriculture, and where I gave everybody a share of a giant cheese from Denmark, bought in Kobe, the questions and answers continued till the meeting had lasted exactly eight hours.” (NKBM 1962:100 (Oct)).

12) Calculations of the prices are based on the exchange rate On 22 December 1962 10000 JPY = 191.38 DKK // 10000 DKK = 522 512 JPY (cf. <http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php>)

up paying an average of 110 jpy/tsubo=32jpy/ 0.61dkk /m². The point here is that ultimately both parties felt they had made a good deal.

Money aside, the farmers told me the SRS came with some benefits for the community, such as the road. Because the project was a social institution 福祉施設 it had the blessings of Shizuoka Prefecture, and so the dirt road, leading to and past the farm, was paved all at once by the prefecture. “It would normally had taken thirty years by the town’s norm of a hundred meter a year,” Mr Suzuki laughed. Fukuroi town counted on this kind of support, wherefore it endorsed the building of the farm.

Funding the Shin Rei San Project

In the years after the initial purchase, more land was bought, paid for in part by selling off the mission’s properties in Kyoto.

To pay for it all, Thomsen and the CMB had started a special fundraising for the SRS. For most of the 1960s, the CMB newsletter included lists of contributions and contributors in every issue. Outside the CMB circles, Thomsen approached friends in Japan and the USA – I have found the presentation materials he sent in archives both countries. Probably the most unusual and spectacular contribution was the Danish cattle.

Once the plans for Shin Rei San included a farm element Thomsen had emphasized a Danish or Scandinavian profile, knowing the status of Danish agriculture in Japan. Consequently, bringing in milk cows from Denmark made good sense, except for the long distance and the legalities. Responsible for this particular cause was Kristian Møller (1894–1984), agronomist and the first head of Hammerum School of Agriculture and Housekeeping (1938–1962) (cf. Bjørn 2011). Møller’s 1974–autobiography “Sælsomt slynges de tråde” (*Those threads are mysteriously twisted*)

includes his Japan experiences. His relationship to the SRS project began, when Harry Thomsen, likely during his furlough, appealed to him to come and assist building up the farm and the agricultural school (193). While Møller did not accept the invitation immediately, he involved himself later when he organized the fundraising for buying and shipping Danish Red cattle to Japan. “At some big Christian Farmers Meetings, I got permission to introduce the project and raised money – altogether about 40000 Danish Kroner. *Bredania*, an exporter of Danish breeding animals, donated the single largest amount, while four farmers gave a heifer each. In July 1964, I bought 15 heifers and two bulls for about 2000 DKK each. They were shipped from Hamburg harbor on 19 August.” (194).

The parents of Ene Marie Thomsen, Charles and Sigrun Jensen, volunteered to escort the live stock to Japan. The quality of Danish cattle aside, the story about them made good press (Østen og Vi, Feb. 1965, 16-17). They all arrived safely in Yokohama on 17 October 1964 and the animals were released from quarantine some weeks later (HT, NNT, Yokohama, 13 okt. 1964 and Shin Rei San, 26 okt. 1964). Besides the Danish milk stock, SRS also imported some beef cows from Australia.

We have so far been looking at what led the Christian Mission to Buddhists to build a brother home in the countryside of Shizuoka Prefecture. Harry Thomsen, the sole missionary of CMB in Japan after 1958, firmly believed it was the answer to God’s special call to his mission and fully in line with the pioneering work of Karl Ludvig Reichelt and Notto Norman Thelle. He worked and argued vigorously for his vision, and the Home Board, consisting of seasoned missionaries and well-trained theologians, the friends’ circles in Scandinavia as well as Japanese bureaucrats and others were convinced by various parts of his arguments. We have also noted that between October 1958 and January 1962, the

brother home plan was added a layer of income; first some fruit and tea cropping, later an agricultural center with a model farm and a farm school, plans cautiously accepted by the Home Board and with the understanding of all parties that the project was big and would require many resource investments, but also with the belief it would be worth to reach the neglected truth-seekers in monastery, temple and village.

Building Shin Rei San

Much happened over the remaining years Thomsen was in Japan. Some of it continued the successes he had achieved in his first six years, but some of it went against him ultimately making him leave the country in 1967 and the mission in 1968. With this in mind, let us briefly review what happened to the individual parts of the plan.

The Agricultural Center

The land had to be cultivated, before cattle could be raised. The farmers I interviewed told me, that before SRS was established some of the land had been used for sericulture in the early 20th century and some of it for private fields but most was pine forest. It was therefore strenuous work for the men and women employed to remove the stones and shrubs. I mentioned Thomsen's plans of growing pecan nut tress. They had never heard of *carya illinoensis* or ペカノ in Japanese, and it had certainly not been attempted grown on SRS. They explained how the area was very fit for growing tea and *mikan* (mandarin orange), whereas the quality of the soil was unsuited for onion, spinach and garlic (Interview 29 Dec. 2015). Aside from cleaning the land, the soil had to be prepared for producing fodder for the farm. The first agricultural advisor on SRS, Emil Fenger, calculated that it needed 18 tons of calcium/ha and 1600 kg super

phosphate/ha (NKBM 1963:60).

Kristian Møller was 71 years old and his wife Thea Møller 72 when they arrived at Shin Rei San on 23 Feb 1965 to replace Fenger who had left some months earlier (Møller 196). Møller mentions that when he left SRS in 1967, 25 hectares land [of the 55 ha total] were cultivated (208). This was made up of 4 ha of flat land, former riverbed, 4 ha of undulating land where it was still possible to drive a tractor, and the remaining land was slopes that could only be worked by hand. As for the quality, the prevalence of stones made plowing hard even on the flat land. Analyses made in Denmark indicated that 16 metric tonnes of calcium/ha plus 1600 kg of super phosphate 18% would make the ground productive, and experiments proved the calculations were correct (208). The meadow of green grass for the animals became and still is one of the attractions of Shin Rei San.

Besides dairy and beef cattle the idea of raising pigs was followed as well. The Danes built a pigs' stable of 9x25 meters (209), which served as a model and was copied by many visiting farmers. Some farmers came to study for shorter terms. They would take classes in theories and work in the fields for practice, and also extend their help to local farmers (interview 29 Dec. 2015). Møller knew English, and German even better, but no Japanese, of course, so he worked through an interpreter.

When groups of farmers visited us, they wanted a lecture and asked many questions. Sometimes they would ask, why we were making a farm in Japan. When they did, I would quote the Bible, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27). I then said, that as we now travel across the North Pole, we are neighbors and the Christians' Book tells us we shall love our neighbor. We are here to serve. (Møller 216)

While he was motivated to serve as a Christian by the most powerful of all God's commandments, as an agronomist and farmer, he was a professional whose observations on the differences between Danish and the Japanese farmer are of interest. "Japan is not a developing country, neither when it comes to agriculture. The Japanese science has all the same facts as we. However, the facts are used differently." (211). At a party, farmer with a cow had asked him for advice on how much fodder it needed. When Møller had done his calculations, he told the man that four kilograms of the specific fodder mix was necessary. The farmer replied, "Oh, she gets a lot more. She is a good cow and deserves as much as she likes." This led to his conclusion that where a Danish farmer must think in economic terms, the Japanese farmer thinks of his single cow as one of his family (211). While he also observed the Japanese punctuality (205), their strict school system that ensured everyone could read and sing a musical score (213), and their business habits such as bringing gifts (202), he on the other hand found they had "counter-efficient cultural habits" as when the farm women, in March, started a day of clearing the fields of stones by lighting a fire and warming their hands – where they might get the hands warm by working (202).¹³⁾ Still, Møller admired the farmwomen's diligence and found their working conditions harsher than those of farmwomen in Denmark (215-6).

The farm school students stayed in the biggest building on the area, not far from the stables and well below the homes of the missionaries and the SRS water tower.

13) By contrast, Harry Thomsen had observed the habit some years earlier while still living in Kyoto. He explained, that these bonfires were lit both on farmland and in front of stores, and "that as soon as they wake up, the Japanese *slowly rush* to the fires from their homes" because the houses lacked any source of heat (NKBM 1962:54 (May)).

The Water- and Church Bell Tower and the Church

The water tower was, like the Danish cattle, a first of its kind and similarly used for public relations. The fact that the water tower also served as bell tower was what made it special. And the bell itself was an old village church bell imported from Denmark, donated by the Danish YMCA scouts and the Norwegian Christian High School Student Association plus some individuals in the USA (Letter from Thomsen to donors, Shin Rei San, Sept. 30, 1964). Thomsen had designed the town with the help of a local architect, and incorporated elements from the traditional Japanese

Buddhist temple architecture, cf picture 4. The construction was finished in 1964/65.



Picture 4 SRS combined water and church bell tower. Crowned with the Nestorian / CMB symbol, the lotus-cross. (Areopagos archive)

The church, on the other hand, only materialized after a long time.¹⁴⁾ As can be read in the section “Buildings” in Thomsen’s plan he had a good idea of what he wanted, see p. [16] and [10], paragraph 3. The minutes of every one of the Home Board’s annual general meetings records the discussion going on in Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen. The issue was, in accordance with Thomsen’s proposal, to make it a dignified and not too big building,

14) Thelle repeatedly reminded Thomsen of how Reichelt had first of all made a prayer room from the very beginning in Nanking.

designed to merge Christianity with Japanese-ness and at a cost affordable to ordinary congregations copy the building, much like the pigs' stables. The board members also discussed the best location of the church. The role model for board and for Thomsen was no doubt the church Prip-Møller had designed in Chinese temple style for Tao Fong Shan. Thomsen's proposal was, in this respect, misguiding for other denominations, especially the Episcopal Church in 20th century and the Jesuits in the 16th before them had built churches à la Japonaise. One would also like to learn, if Thomsen had discussed his ideas with the Omi Brotherhood architects? After all, the founder and old advisor for CMB, William Merrell Vories (1880–1964) probably had designed more churches in Japan than any other by the time Thomsen arrived, and the integration of western ideas with Japanese climate and culture had been an interest of Vories. I have yet to find traces of their possible negotiations. What he did was to design a church with the help of a Kyoto architect (HT, NNT, 6 Oct. 1965), but the Home Board objected to his inclusion of too many non-Christian elements (NNT, HT, 27 Sep, 1965)¹⁵. The church was only inaugurated on 5 October 1969, and did not come with a crypt for meditation, but the view from the church hill over the farm and the valley is beautiful.

The Brother home

The brother home was the starting point for the Shin Rei San project. It is described and discussed in seven of eighteen pages in the proposal. It was never built. SRS has no Zen-monastery like building, no lotus ponds and no special study facilities. Some of the rooms at the

15) Similarly, Thomsen planned a torii-gate at the entrance to SRS that was rejected for being confusingly Shinto (Letters back and forth between HT, NNT April 13, 1964 and HT, NNT, 2 juli, 1964)

agricultural school were meant to serve as interim brother home facilities (LANDBRUGSSKOLEN [Agricultural school] document received in Oslo on 11 April 1964). What happened?

Thomsen had early on observed that the Japanese monastics do not roam from temple to temple like they used to do in China. He had, however, referred to a long list of people who would like to come for retreats. Besides, Misawa, as an isolated village, might have housed some of the unreached truth-seekers he had in mind.

I asked the farmers Suzuki, Fujita and Kine about the religious situation in Misawa and vicinity. There are, of course, a local shinto shrine Gion Jinja, and the well-known Hattasan Son'ei temple not far from the village, besides now the Shin Rei San church. Suzuki explained that the Japanese are basically non-religious, no matter which religion they belong to. They are disinterested in religion. Once they die they want to be in *gokuraku*. When I quoted Thomsen's analysis (pp.[4-5]) and pointed to the vicinity of Minobu (Nichiren Shoshu) and the Nichiren Buddhist lay-movement Sōka Gakkai, and that people belonging to those groups seem to be very committed, Suzuki agreed and explains that for instance at funerals of Sōka Gakkai they don't have an ordained priest but one of the friends leads the ceremony. Everybody knows the sutra and recites them, though he suspects they are repeating some phrases over and over again. This is unlike funerals of other religions where the priest must recite it in solitude while everybody else will merely press their palms together in respect. Because they organize the funerals themselves, Sōka Gakkai's are cheaper than ordinary Buddhist ones and that makes them attractive. I asked about the activities of local religious institutions, but Matsuda simply concluded they do not do much. "The most dedicated believers are members of SG," Suzuki said and added that people dislike Buddhism because it is so

expensive – a million yen for a funeral service. Shinto, on the other hand, is attractive because “you don’t need money” to participate.

The men belonged to different religions, and though they professed ignorance, Mr. Suzuki had a solid knowledge of the history of religions in Japan, while Mr. Fujita explained that his family belongs to Tenri-kyo, but during the illness of his mother, he had felt it better also to set up a Buddhist altar for worship in his home, though he wasn’t sure which one if any of them worked for the cure of her illness. As for the SRS church the three farmers said they appreciated the style of mission adopted by Shin Rei San: that there was no strong proselytization but one was always welcome in the church and the farm.

The influence of the Christian Mission to Buddhist’s respectful approach to *the religious devotee* is also evident, when Møller recounted how Thomsen took him on visits to and had dialogues with leaders at the headquarters of Tenrikyō, Ittōen and Sōka Gakkai. These three religions would have been familiar to the supporters of CMB. Thomsen had introduced them in his articles to the newsletter Nordisk Kristen Buddhist Mission in the late 1950s, e.g., Ittōen in 1957:132 (Dec) and Sōka Gakkai in 1958:54–55 (May). Like Møller, other visitors from CMB had been taken along to those headquarters and reported on their visits, e.g., Notto Norman Thelle 1962:41–3 (Apr).

Right after the inauguration, Thomsen could record visits by religious leaders like Tenko-san, founder of Ittōen (HT, NNT, July 28, 1963). Later, they are at least not mentioned in his correspondence to Thelle.

There was not a lack of visitors to SRS in general. Prominent people like the Scandinavian ambassadors to Japan or the heir presumptive of Denmark came by (HT, NNT, 31 Dec. 1964), and so did school children and adults who in the seasons made the most of the meadow on a sunny Sunday

afternoon. The missionaries sought to accommodate the guests by making pamphlets with a message and offering English classes after the Sunday service. But among the guests, how many were truth-seekers? That is not discussed.

The lack of specialized facilities and the meagerness of truth-seeking visitors could perhaps have been compensated for and a brother home / community atmosphere built up, if enough permanent residents had been around. As it were, in the beginning the Thomsens were the only missionaries. Fairly early on the Fengers joined them but their chemistries apparently did not match well. The Roesgaard family arrived in Japan in 1963, like Fengers, but as planned Olaf and Martha R. spent most of their first years in Kobe on language studies. On one hand the community was strengthened by the arrival of Ene Marie's parents in 1964 and the departure of the Fengers. And again, in 1965 when the Møllers arrived. However, these elderly couples had other commitments and qualifications than developing work among and a community for truth-seekers. 1965 was also the year the Roesgaards were ready to move to SRS. Olaf Roesgaard told me in an interview that he had joined the CMB because he was interested in religions and mission to the truth-seekers. Teacher by profession, he had meant to study theology before going to Japan, but Thomsen had told him that would not be necessary. However, once in Japan, Thomsen had then told Roesgaard he was needed as a teacher and bookkeeper but not qualified to engage in dialogues with religious leaders, because Roesgaard was neither a theologian nor ordained. For Olaf and Martha Roesgaard this attitude had been a disappointment, though in other ways they admired Thomsen's creation of SRS and liked Japan and the people. The couple returned to Denmark in 1967 and for personal reasons had to remain there for some years. Their commitment to Shin Rei San

became evident, when they were asked by the CMB to go a second time in the early 1970s, and they did, this time staying till the mission decided to withdraw from SRS in 1975. During that time, they worked to ensure the Japanese employees as far as possible, they told me (Roesgaards, interview, 2009).

1965 was, again, the year Gunvor and Aasulv Lande, a Norwegian couple of theologians, were commissioned by the CMB Home Board to go to Japan and work at SRS. Like the Roesgaards, the Landes first needed time to study Japanese in Kobe. Though there are about 300 km between Kobe and Misawa, this did not preclude contact between the missionaries, and they did get together occasionally. However, the Thomsens went on their second furlough in 1966, wherefore there was hardly any transition time let alone time for a thorough transfer of experience from the older to the younger pastors. And though Harry Thomsen returned to Japan in 1967, he was distracted by the fact that his wife had to stay back in Denmark due to illness together with their three children, so again little was done to ensure continuity or the build up of a welcoming atmosphere for truth-seekers. On a visit to Kyoto with Lande they learned of the plans to move the Study Center into new facilities belonging to the Episcopal Church next to the Imperial Palace (HT, NNT, 23 Nov. 1967). All in all, Thomsen had apparently been right when he, back in 1959, had asked that Gerhard Reichelt be sent to Japan and become his senior colleague in order to reduce the risk of mistakes (HT, NNT, 19 January 1959). At the end of 1967, family circumstances made it necessary for Thomsen to return to Denmark permanently. On that occasion, Thelle wrote, "It is a big disappointment to us that you must terminate your work now, just as you were about to begin the real part. You are the one who could visit temples and establish contacts with the temple world." (NNT, HT, 22 January

1968).

Conclusion

After Thomsen had left, SRS continued for another seven years, before the CMB withdrew. The chairperson of the CMB made a two-month visit to the mission fields in 1969. In his evaluation report he concluded that the SRS project was half finished and pointed out the needs to be met if the project was to succeed. The SRS Church building was inaugurated in October 1969. Various efforts were made to keep it up, but the new missionaries Landes and Notto Reider Thelle son of NN Thelle, had a different approach to the mission's ideal than Thomsen, so for them it made better sense to move into Kyoto again, working with the Center for the Study of Japanese Religions (Thelle) and The Kansai Seminar House (Landes).

When Møller authored his autobiography, he was a member of the Home Board, and knew the agricultural school at Shin Rei San was in its dying throes. Møller identified several circumstances that might explain its failure to continue; the fact that Danes had started it, but none of the leaders had been able to stay for a long time resulting in a lack of continuation; the fact that Japanese farmers in the latter half of the 1960s with increasing speed left farming as a fulltime occupation or all together [21.5 per cent were fulltime workers on their own farm in 1965, in 1970 only 15.5 per cent; 42.5 did not work their farm at all in 1965, in 1970 50.8 per cent did not. Møller 198]. In other words, it was the dramatic demographical change that made Shin Rei San obsolete not the quality of the farm or its school (212). Regarding the quality, he believed that what the Danes did was of help to the Japanese.

What Møller called "a lack of continuity" in the agricultural branch of

Shin Rei San, my analysis has indicated in the brother home branch as well. Any organization with very few people is susceptible the lack of manpower unless it quickly learns to focus. While Thomsen in his vision saw just that – reaching into the isolated islands in the masses of Japan “the monastery” and “the village” – the road he chose to get there ended up consuming all resources. There is no telling how much he pursued the deep talk with truth-seekers in the last years of his stay, for he did not mention them in his letters back home. The lack of continuity in the brother home branch might have been avoided, had Thomsen had someone he would prepare for taking over the evangelization in the temple-world. Perhaps, at the age of 40, he believed himself to have enough time left to that end and therefor in no hurry? There is no telling. But it would seem a lesson for small organization that transmission of its art to the next generation must be prepared early on, before the need is felt.

Coming back to the character of Harry Thomsen, Notto Reidar Thelle described him as a pioneer type not a patient researcher in his obituary (2009). My impression from reading Thomsens many letters is more that of a perfectionist, a person of superlatives and emphases. Many times in his newsletter letters, he introduced people he had just met as the best, the most ... and the plot of land he bought was the biggest on foreign hands, for example. As I have attempted to replicate in my translation/transcriptions, underlining words – or setting them apart --- one way or another were parts of his style. If not patient in a scholarly way, it should be clear that he was persistent and persuasive like a salesperson or a preacher. His book on New Religions in Japan is still worth reading as a good introduction to some of the main players in the late 1950s, clearly but not disrespectfully viewed from a Christian perspective. Entertaining and fully committed also seems to have characterized him. Altogether these

qualities probably paved the way to the heart of many people he met. On the other hand, they also invited for conflicts. When others did not go along, they were perceived with negative superlatives or at least ignorant of what he understood. Perhaps, as has happened to many of us, the certainty and perfection of his religion made him feel certain and perfect in his own actions?

The only time I met Harry Thomsen, he lamented the way SRS had grown so differently from what he had envisioned. Then, as now, I said and would say with Suzuki, the farmer: “In the end that plan did not succeed, but there were other successes, so isn’t that okay? It often happens that things do not work out as you plan, but the way they work out is good.” Denmāku Bokujō of today meets the need for protection of many, and the meadows and animals are sources of soul care. None of that would have been there, were it not for Harry Thomsen and the mission that supported his vision. I think I can say that is true.

Appendix

Harry Thomsen

The Shin Rei San Project (Shin Rei San Projektet)

Dated “Kyoto nov.1961 – jan. 1962” (p.18)

Proposal sent to the board of Christian Mission to Buddhists, 18 pages plus an index page and an appendix of one page, all typed in Danish. Bound in stronger green paper.

[Translated by Christian M. Hermansen, Feb. 2017. Believing the words, phrasing and typographic layout reveal much about Thomsen’s views and character, they have been rendered as literally as possible.]

Content

Introduction [1-2]

The core principles of the Christian Mission to Buddhists. Truth-seekers. The village and the monastery. Our name of the mountain and mission in Japan.

The Place [3-4]

A “workshop.” The area. Location. To buy or to rent? The quality of the earth. The risk of typhoons. Pilgrims’ center.

The Work

Village-monastery. Buddhism. The Seven New Religions. Christianity in Japan. [5]

1. The agricultural center.

- a) Why [6]
- b) The kind of agriculture [7]
- c) Agricultural school [7]

2. Brother home.

- a) What is meant by Brother home [8]
- b) The aim is to bring Christ [8]
- c) Daily life at Shin Rei San [9]
- d) The truth-seekers who have been made Christians [11]
- e) A potential work among women [12]
- f) Further work [12]
- g) A study center [14]
- h) Friends of Shin Rei San [15]

3. The village [15]

The Buildings

[16-17]

Church. School. Pilgrims' Hall. Lotus cross.

Lotus pond. Teahouse. Homes. Agricultural facilities.

Architecture. Materials. Illustrations (Architectural drawings?)

Closing remarks.

[18]

Appendix.

[19]

[1]

Introduction.

The plans concerning a Shin Rei San in Japan, a continuation of our Tao Fong Shan in Hong Kong, goes all the way back to the beginning of our work here in Japan. They have been changed many times as a result of countless conversations, conferences, fact-finding missions etc. They are likely to change yet again, but overall they represent what we hope will be the future of Mission to Buddhists in Japan.

It is important to be keenly aware of our goal, wherefore this report seeks to give as many details as possible about the plans, and along with the plans inform our board at home about various issues related to them, – ideas and problems, which we may not have been able to present as clearly during our furlough as might have been desirable.

The CMB's task in Japan must be to follow the guiding principle of the CMB's history, the vision we have inherited from Karl Ludvig Reichelt: to reach the truth-seekers in the crowd [lit. *ocean of people*] of all religions, primarily Buddhism. To reach “the religious devotees” that nobody else reaches. Without looking to the right or to the left, and letting us get distracted by other tasks no matter how much we would want to deal with

them, we must aim for those truth-seekers in Japan and do our outmost to bring them to the Light and the Life.

Thus aiming for these truth-seekers, the next question will be: where are they? Here, it is very essential to remember that KL Reichelt never defined “truth-seekers” in such a narrow sense that they would only be living in Buddhist temples and monasteries. He and other pioneer missionaries of the CMB sought “the religious devotees” in Buddhist monasteries, among the syncretic societies (that closely corresponds to Japan’s New Religions), and among the religious laity (especially in connection to Ching Fong Shan). In Japan as well, we ought to aim for all three groups, the Buddhist monasteries and temples, the Shinto shrines, the New Religions, and the profoundly religious lay Buddhists. In present day Japan, by many religious observers considered an irreligious country as far as the cities are concerned, one finds the most profound piety and purest religious longing in the villages – where 80 percent of the members of Buddhism and the New Religions live – as well as in the worlds of the monasteries and temples (whose monks and priests, however, are far from all to be regarded as pious and profound religious people). It so happens that as of now the Christian mission in Japan has not reached exactly those two worlds: the village communities and the monks in the monasteries.

The third question will then be: how do we reach them? The finer details will be discussed under “Works at Shin Rei San” – here it will suffice to mention that this kind of pioneering work is best done at a place, purely dedicated to and organized for that purpose. That leads to the idea of a center like Tao Fong Shan, a direct continuation of the CMB’s work, as it had been done in China, though adjusted to the Japanese conditions, of course.

A work on “the two isolated islands” in the ocean of Japanese [lit. *det*

japanske folkehav – crowd] : the monastery and the village, takes not only a special “workshop” – it also takes a long tradition that sees the brother in every truth seeker – it takes intensive studies into the depths of Japanese religion and culture – and it takes an “approach” resulting from decades of experiences. Consequently, having held these principles high for decades the CMB has, like no other mission, the potential to do a pioneering work among Japan’s truth-seekers.

A future center on a mountain in Japan might for instance be named Shin Rei San. San means “mountain.” Rei means “spirit.” And “shin” can–

[2]

depending on the Chinese character chosen – mean “God,” “truth,” or “new.” Shin Rei San thus will mean “Mountain of God’s Spirit,” “Mountain of the Truth Spirit,” or “Mountain of the Spirit Renewal.”¹⁶⁾ It will be of special interest to our Nordic friends to learn that this name was proposed by Jinsen-san, or “Jensen” as we call him in Danish, the Buddhist master we hope one day will become a Christian coworkers. – The name has not yet been settled on, because it is very important to choose the right name here in Japan.

Related to this, it should be mentioned that our name here in Japan – in English as well as in Japanese – does not sound well to the Japanese. “The Christian Mission to Buddhists” is not a fortunate name – and the Japanese is even worse. The name induces confusion, and it offences. In

16) At the beginning of this paragraph, *mountain* translates Thomsen’s choice of the Danish word *bjerg* and, when listing the possible meanings of Shin Rei San, his choice of *fjeld*, which is closer to the commonly used term in Norwegian *fjell*. His choices may reflect a wish to appeal as familiarly as possible to all the mission’s board members. (Translator’s note)

this case as well, it is important not to rush but to examine all options. In 1962, some proposals will be forwarded to the board.¹⁷⁾

Regarding the work of the CMB in Japan, I would like to end with these quotations :

“All missionaries have a calling – in the CMB you have an additional calling.” (Professor Kitagawa of Chicago University at the CMB Advisory Committee Meeting, 1959)

“One should not argue with non-Christians about their faith, but study them and live with them.” (Dr. Vories of Omi Brotherhood at the CMB Advisory Committee Meeting, 1957).

17) The Japanese name we have used for our mission till now is ‘Toa Kirisutokyo Doyukai,’ “Society of Friends of the Way in Eastern Christianity.” This version seems a bit unhandy, but the shorten version is perhaps the best name we can get: ‘DOYUKAI.’ ‘FRIENDS OF THE WAY’ ‘VENNER AF VEJEN.’ The name gains particular weight when we remember that ‘DO’ is equivalent to the Chinese ‘TAO’: The Word, and that ‘DO’ in Japanese in the sense of ‘way’ and ‘word’ points towards Christ. DO YU KAI would then be a direct continuation of our Chinese Tao Fong Shan. Another advantage of the name Doyukai is that it sounds well to the Buddhist and the Shinto followers. ‘The way’ is a word (‘michi’) used by all Japanese religions and it is a ‘word-vessel’ and a ‘point of connection’) that can become most valuable.

Another option would be ‘KOYUKAI’: ‘Friends of the Light,’ a word that sounds well and leads us to the mighty words in the prologue of John, to the LIGHT, Jesus Christ. ‘Friends of the Light’ may sound a bit like the Quakers’ words. Ittoen, one of our very close contacts, frequently mentions The LIGHT, which is actually the word for God used by Tenko-san, and Ittoen means ‘The Garden with the Sole Light’.

We suggest a final decision on our name in Japan should wait another couple of years, and that we meanwhile use the name DOYUKAI. ‘Do’ (also ‘michi’) means ‘way’ – ‘Yu’ (also ‘tomo’) means ‘friend’ (very close friend) – and ‘kai’ means ‘society’ or ‘group’.

“The CMB must widen its scope to include not only Buddhist clergy but also Buddhist Japan” (Sam Sköld at the CMB Advisory Committee Meeting, 1958)

And one more addition :

“It was not said ‘Love your neighbour’s soul’ – but ‘Love your neighbour!’” (Dean Brewer of the Federsted Theological Faculty at Chicago, 1955).

[3]

THE PLACE

As mentioned in the introduction, our center must be a special ‘work shop,’ suitable for bringing us in touch with the truth-seekers of Japan in the temple, the monastery and the village. It is therefore obvious to think of a mountain (including its low lands or not too steep slopes) like they initially did in China. Mountains have a special quality that has attracted human beings everywhere since the dawn of time, but especially religious people, who have seen the mountain as a symbol of their heavenward ideas, who have robed it in divine clothes and who with the deepest sincerity have sought the truth in the mighty and peaceful nature of the mountain.

A mountain of sufficient dimensions – for the brother home and the agricultural center including the buildings and fields – probably cannot be found in the area of Kyoto. On one hand, the prices are so high that we probably cannot afford them. On the other, state owned land is sparse and most of it is protected as ‘kankochi’: ‘sightseeing area’ which does not allow construction. Finally, the climate of Kyoto is far from being fitting with our purpose. Besides, Kyoto is very touristic – and will likely become even more so – that we would find it hard to focus our efforts on the core of our work.

Our mountain – let us for the moment call it Shin Rei San – if possible, must be located in an area not too easily accessible to tourists and ‘rice-Christians,’¹⁸⁾ while on the other hand it must not be so inaccessible that the truth-seekers cannot reach it. Shin Rei San ought, therefore, to be on Honshu, the main island, approximately midway between Tokyo and Kyoto but somewhat at a distance from the main railroad and the highway – ideally 5 to 25 kilometers. The growth of Japan is so forceful now that in 10 to 15 years, a belt of 2 to 5 kilometers along the main thoroughfare will be developed with factories etc. The growth also means that the Japanese will get more money (the Ikeda government has promised a wage doubling in eight years) and will spend it – wherefore summer cottage colonies and residential neighborhoods will pop up within a radius of 10 to 30 kilometers around the major cities and 2 to 10 kilometers around the minor ones. Outmost care must be taken to ensure that our Shin Rei San will be a place that for many years to come remain suitable to our purpose in terms of natural beauty and a peaceful atmosphere.

I have searched many places and have found the strongest candidate to be the Shizuoka area located almost halfway between Tokyo and Kyoto. Within 2 to 5 years, a new railroad and a new highway will connect Tokyo with Kyoto via Shizuoka, and then it will be a one-hour journey by train and 2 ½ hours by car from the middle of Shizuoka to Tokyo, and about 2 hours by train and 4 hours by car from the middle of Shizuoka to Kyoto.

The Shizuoka area stretches from the top of Fuji-san to the North and includes the Izu peninsular to the South. A significant part of the Japanese tea, lemon and orange is grown here, and the climate is the most gentle and constant all the year. Uncountable hot springs are found here. The nature

18) In the post-war years *Rice-Christians* denoted those who converted in return for food and other immediate benefits. Translator's note.

is some of the best in Japan including many rivers, big forests and the Japanese sea.¹⁹⁾ Of course, nothing is deduced from the impression by the fact that anywhere in the Shizuoka area one can – as far as weather permits – see the majestic Fujisan.

A major part of the soil contains ash and lava, souvenirs from the volcanic past of Fujisan. It is therefore necessary to pay much attention when choosing land, examining the soil etc. By contrast, the climate is ideal for agriculture as well as the brother home – we should not forget that about 15 per cent of the Japanese monks have or have had TB [tuberculosis]. It is particularly significant that the soil and the climate is particularly suitable for ‘pecan nut trees’ [sic] that will be of great significance to the profitability of the agriculture in the future.

A ‘snake in the paradise’ is the fact that the Shizuoka area – located by the sea as it is – is much exposed to typhoons and experience tells us that every year it gets its share of the typhoonerie (typhonny) [sic]. It is therefore a precondition that our Shin Rei San must be protected towards the South and the East.

[4]

Shizuoka-ken [sic] houses the only two real pilgrims centers in Japan, which will, of course, be of great importance to our work in the future. Minoby-san,²⁰⁾ the big Nichiren-Buddhist mountain, is climbed by about ½ million pilgrims every year. And Taisekiji, the center of the fanatic Soka

19) “og så det japanske hav.” An ambiguous expression in the context for Shizuoka Prefecture borders The Pacific Ocean, not the Sea of Japan though Thomsen may well have thought that the part of Pacific along Shizuoka belongs to Japan and thus is her sea? Using lower case letters in Danish makes it clear that the words do not denote a proper name. Translator’s note.

20) Minoby-san ... a typo for Minobu-san 身延山. Translator’s note.

Gakkai sect, perhaps the strongest religious movement in Japan.

The Shizuoka area is, by the way, a prefecture with profoundly religious people and Buddhism as well as Shintoism and the New Religions regard it as one of their main areas. About 80 percent of the prefectural inhabitants are farmers, and the spine of all Japanese religions is in the villages.

The newsletter for our circles of friends sent this month (January 1962) – and likely reaching the circles about February 5th–15th – carries the news that we have found a place that would be ideal for our future Shin Rei San. The name of the place is Misawa, located almost in the middle of Shizuoka-ken, about 5–6 kilometers from a small town called Fukuroi, and almost at the same distance from the highway between Tokyo and Kyoto. One of the real advantages of Misawa is its location in a hollow, surrounded by a ring-shaped mountain range on all sides, about 100–300 meters above sea level, and therefore completely shielded from typhoons and storms and also from external expansions. In the middle of the hollow is a 100–200 meter high mountain with not too steep slopes – on that mountain, currently called ‘Ogasayama’ but which we will rechristen ‘Shin Rei San,’ we hope to build our brother home for the truth-seekers of Japan.

It is far from certain that we can buy the Misawa place. It is ‘kokuyurin’ or state property and only on certain conditions can it be bought. We can expect long negotiations with the prefecture and the government – under the best of circumstances half a year – and it is far from given that we will get the place. As a matter of fact we have found a number of other places that can be used, if we do not get ‘Ogasayama,’ so we do not to have start our investigations from scratch again.

I refer again to the February edition of the newsletter for more details about the Misawa place. Later, I will send photographs of it and samples of

the soil to the laboratory for agriculture in Copenhagen.

When they visit Japan, Thelle and Diehl will be shown the Misawa place and more of the other places. We are very grateful that the board has sent Thelle and Diehl that they can give their opinions on the details of the Shin Rei San project based on their own observations.

[5]

THE WORK

In order to understand the frame of our work and its methods, proposed here, it is of the highest importance to emphasize that ‘the marrow and the bone’ of the religions in Japan is the world of the village. That this is where Buddhism and the New Religions have more than 80 percent of their members more than half their income (lit. budget). That the monastery and the village are organically connected to the degree where the monastery would not exist without the village and village not without the monastery.

In this connection one should remember that only in a geographical sense has Christianity reached Japan. By far the majority of Christians live in the cities, and a mere 2 percent of the Japanese Christians are in the villages (and mostly the intellectuals in the villages at that), whereas 46 percent of all Japanese live in the villages. – The two ‘isolated islands’ in the ocean of Japanese, not yet reached by Christianity, are the monastery and the village, where also we find the far majority of the truth-seekers, ‘the religious devotees’, ‘the bone and marrow of the religions.’

From what has been stated above it follows that our work of bringing the gospel to the monastery and the village is not two different works, but is a holistic task among the Japanese truth-seekers. Based on this holistic approach must the frame and the methods of the work be formed. After much deliberation, I am convinced that the frame can be shared generally

but that the methods must be generally different.

Still, it is absolutely essential to emphasize that for our work to succeed we must be aware that it is a holistic approach and a holistic task. Christian work in the Japanese villages has seen such very meager results perhaps in part because one used improper methods, but absolutely certainly because one has forgotten the monasteries that easily could neutralize the Christian mission efforts. On the other hand, if we were only to focus on the monasteries, we would address a group of people that does not exist in and of themselves but only in tune with the village.

Before discussing the frame and methods of the work itself, it will probably be good to realize that it will not be an easy work. If we are aware of the difficulties, we will be so much better prepared to face them. We have to realize that the strange situation of Japan is that Buddhism as well as Christianity is stagnating. Buddhism in its old form is definitely dissolving and only exists thanks to the religious practices, which is upheld, especially the spirit festival in the summer, the new years festival, together with funerals and contacts to the deceased – Buddhism only lives by being a connection between the living and the dead. However, the practices have vitality. And like the Phoenix, Buddhism has resurrected in a new form in the New Religions, though it has been fundamentally transformed – mostly due to the influence of Christianity – that it is no longer Buddhism but syncretism with a strong element of Christianity. – The percentage of Christianity is still only about 1 percent of the population, and in terms of figures we are stagnating or slightly declining. The strength of Christianity today can not be demonstrated by figures or statistics, but appears in the extent to which it has permeated the New Religions and thereby provoked a constantly increasing social concern among the Japanese. In this connection, let not the results of one hundred years of Christian work in

Japan make us lose our spirits; it took 230 years for Buddhism to succeed in Japan. It is dangerous to be 'a prophet,' but is it not conceivable that the presence of Christianity in the New Religions – many of which worship Christ (along with Buddha) – is the first phase of a development that in a century will see the breakthrough of Christianity? In a Japanese shape. I have no proofs, yet I am gradually thinking that is perhaps where the development is heading. Anyway, in a few years we will find ourselves in

[6]

the situation, where Christianity will face two 'religious' main groups; The New Religions with the emphasis in the villages and atheism (religiously indifferent and communism) in the cities. And it is by and large to be expected that a Christianity, which in that situation has emphasized the conversion of individuals, will – due to its no-Eastern form and method – be in big and partially self-induced troubles. It is imperative for the work of Christianity in Japan, including ours, that the frame and the methods from now on will be characterized by, no permeated by, the East – and to 'rush slowly'; to work goal oriented and with all our might, but also with the faith that we are in no hurry. As for the commitment let us think of today and tomorrow, but as for the results, let us 'think a century ahead.'

The frame of our work can be dealt with under three headings; 1) The Agricultural Center, 2) The Brother home and 3) The village (which combines the first two into one).

1. The Agricultural Center.

a) Why an agricultural center? The principle background for the wish for an agricultural center has been described above. The holistic approach aside, the following reasons can be given:

An agricultural center, properly organized, will in a few years be self-supporting, and in 10 to 15 years it can shoulder all expenses of our Shin Rei San (except the missionaries' salaries). Surplus permitting, it would be good if a percentage were to be allotted to those hit by typhoons, the sick and other distressed people in the prefecture.

Government land is not for sale to a 'religious purpose only.' In contrast, 'Kokuyurin' can under certain circumstances be allotted to 'agricultural purposes.' Thus, the Anglican church has been allotted a wider area of land in the center of Yamanashi Prefecture, which includes agriculture as well as a church etc. Kokuyurin can either be rented for 99-years at a low cost – after which the contract must be renewed – or bought at a nominal price, usually at 50-100 times cheaper than the price on private property. The area we have in mind in Misawa would cost about 12 million Danish kroner, were it privately owned – as kokuyurin it would, if our application is accepted, cost 150,000-300,000 kroner, or the annual rent would be 1,000-1,500 kroner. Furthermore, we would not pay land taxes, which are otherwise not insignificant here in Japan.

An agricultural center of the kind we have in mind is meant to create a favorable relation with our surroundings and the authorities (village, city, prefecture and country), which will be of the outmost importance to our work in the future.

An agricultural center will help the Japanese in the overpopulated Japan, where the lack of space within has induced expansion overseas in the past. It will become an example, possible to emulate, of cultivating the slopes, so far little used because the Japanese agricultural products (rice etc.) have been lowland crops. A Scandinavian agriculture – based on milk, butter and cheese – will flourish well on the hillsides of much of Japan (where only 17 percent of the land is cultivated, and where another 7-8

percent could be used for some kind of agriculture). This will help the Japanese learn modern farming methods etc.

Japanese circles, not at least agricultural circles, already have much interest in and admiration of Scandinavia and Scandinavian agriculture, and an agricultural center will create the closets connections between Japan and Scandinavia. The high level of interest in Scandinavian agriculture would enable us to attract elite-farmers from all over Japan for education at our center – and thereby we would get in touch with the villages to a degree, impossible to reach through ordinary mission work.

[7]

With an agricultural center our mission would gain a bigger surface of contact and stability far into the future. We would not end up in a situation similar to Tao Fong Shan when the stream of pilgrims stopped. A similar situation is not unthinkable in Japan where, as mentioned before, Buddhism definitely has entered a period of decline.

An agricultural center will be a healthy antidote [counterweight] to the intellectual trending work among monks. In Japan as well as in Norden we tend to be ‘stuck in the air’. Undoubtedly this work would increase our interface in Norden where this kind of work would arouse interest in wider circles, farmers’ circles in particular.

For the Japanese, it will mean a lot, when they see how our center grows from the Japanese soil. They will feel it is more Japanese when parts of the expenses are covered by the efforts of the farm. In the long run, too much ‘external help’ is far from healthy.

Finally, let me remind us of the saying: ‘Love your neighbor’ (not ‘the soul of your neighbor’). Love for our neighbor will immediately make us take an interest in his body as well as his soul. Here again we may talk

about a holistic approach: to assist the Japanese in life as well as learning²¹⁾ (completely in line with the Eastern way of thinking, where form and content, external and internal, life and doctrine are not understood to be contrasts, but coexisting, yeah in fact one entity.²²⁾

b) The form of the agriculture itself: the core will be the estate, cattle husbandry, based on Japanese (and hopefully Danish) cattle. The milk will in the first hand be sold to a dairy group (it is our 'luck' that the daughter of Ariga²³⁾ has married the only son of the owner of one of Japan's large dairy concerns). In the future we might establish a small dairy and produce butter and cheese, for instance. The reason for this estate is partially the economic benefit, partially because it can be emulated by cooperative societies in the villages. Equally important, though, will be the small farms we plan – each of the size of an ordinary Japanese 'farm' – that can be emulated by individual farmers. The small farms are meant to be experimental farms, each of which will be specialized: Scandinavian fruit trees (unknown in Japan till now), Scandinavian root crops, Scandinavian grasses and clover, Scandinavian poultry, Scandinavian pigs (though the Danish ones probably and unfortunately are unobtainable!), etc. Finally, we might have a little tea garden, a mandarin garden (small Japanese sweet oranges), besides 'pecan nut trees,' which will be one of the most important economic factors of our agricultural center, as they have just recently been 'discovered' in Japan (imported from the USA) and will be one of the most profitable agricultural products in Japan from now on.

21) The lack of a reflexive pronoun obscures whose life and learning is meant, but it could be either or both parties.

22) There is no end to the bracket begun before "completely," but logically it is missing after "entity."

23) Ariga refers to professor Ariga, cf. p.185 above.

Shimaya-san (see below) is one of the few Japanese who has studied these trees that till now only has been possible to study at a single agricultural center in Japan (Mukomachi near Kyoto, where Shimaya-san was for one year).

It goes without saying that in order to build all of this up we need a Scandinavian agricultural adviser. We were very happy to learn the offer by former Public Adviser Emil Fenger to assist us with the establishment of our agricultural center from the spring of 1963. He has already established two agricultural centers in Japan – both with success – wherefore his assistance will be invaluable.

c) The agricultural school: Emil Fenger first started an agricultural school on Hokkaido that initially had ten students and now has 300. It is not yet possible to outline the size or final format of it, but it is our hope that our Shin Rei San can include a small agricultural school almost from the beginning. The students, young famers from various parts of Japan, would stay at the agricultural

[8]

center for one year at the time. They will on one hand participate in the farm work and thereby acquire the necessary practical skills and on the other hand study at the agricultural school to acquire the theories. They will pay for their stay partially with a minor fee, partially with their work.

Teachings will include farming techniques, social studies, English, Christianity etc. To that end we need both Japanese as well as Scandinavian teachers.

Through these students, mostly 'chonan,' 'the oldest sons,' who will inherit the family's farm, we get a wealth of opportunities to establish

contacts with villages throughout Japan. These contacts can then also be expanded by other missions and churches in those areas mainly JELC, the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.

A journal, an annual gathering at Shin Rei San, a Scandinavian-Japanese Farmers Society etc., etc., will be means for staying in and strengthen the contact with these farmers.

As far as it is possible we will seek to assist young Japanese farmers – our future coworkers first of all – to get a study visit in Scandinavia. To that end, the students can usually count on their family, town and prefecture to cover the travel expenses – so the task is first of all to find farmers and agricultural schools in Scandinavia willing to accept these farmers.

2. The Brother home.

a) The word ‘brother home’ may not be quite exact, as a number of very different activities will take place in and origin from our center. The core remains, nevertheless, the fact that all our work within and from the ‘brother home’ is aimed at our brothers, the Japanese truth-seekers, in particular the monks in Buddhist temples and monasteries, together with the leaders of the New Religions, with whom I expect us to get undreamed of possibilities to reach in the future.

b) Our aim it to bring Christ to these truth-seekers, to the ‘religious devotees’ of Japan. And one of the most important means to that end will be the regular annual course on introduction to Christianity. It is yet too early to decide, if an annual 2-month course, or two 1-month courses, if not 3-4 shorter courses, will be best. The Japanese Zen-monasteries have a special meditation course between the first and the eighth day every month

about 7 times a year. I am of the opinion that the best solution will be – also considering the habits of the monks and the rhythm of the monasteries – to emulate that system with about 3-7 annual courses each lasting one week. As a minor detail will be noted that the Buddhists have their ‘sesshin’ in a way so they end on the 8th every month (in particular in December), because the Buddha is said to have reached the superior enlightenment on 8 December and to have been born on 8 February – we could then have our courses begin on the 24th every month, as Jesus was born on the 24th and the three wise men from the East (the first truth-seekers mentioned in our New Testament) found the star, the Way, the Truth, and the Life on the 24th. It is only a minor detail – but this kind of symbols is immensely important here in the East. It will also make it much easier to handle the issue of teachers, and for the rest of our widely diversified work through out Japan, if we make this kind of short courses.

These courses would be taught in part by ourselves, the missionaries and Japanese staff at Shin Rei San – in part it would be fine to invite an outstanding Japanese Christian figure for every course (this would be possible for the week-courses but not for the month long courses). From an ecumenical concern it would be important that these Christian figures

[9]

represent all major Christian missions and denominations in Japan – at the same time it would also be important to emphasize the Lutheran representatives because our background is Lutheran. Among our suggestions so far are the famous Shiina Rinzo²⁴⁾, a Christian author, with whom we have had a good deal of contact already – Professor Ariga –

24) Rinzō Shiina (椎名麟三 1911–1973) is discussed in Williams 2010. Translator’s note.

Professor Sakae Kobayashi, etc.

The curriculum of the courses could vary. One year we might emphasize a gradual reading of the Bible. Another year we could focus on selected Scriptures. A third possibility would be build up the say six courses of a year on a theological topic such as ‘faith,’ ‘sin,’ ‘reconciliation,’ etc. Or on social or commonly shared human issues. Or on ‘comparative religions.’ Or rather a combination of the options mentioned above – yet with each course focused on a specific topic.

It will be important to be clear on our guiding principle: Christ to the Japanese truth-seekers – resulting in a Christianity that wants to be Japanese (“dressed in kimono”) – a Christianity that will respect Japanese culture, see the brother in the members of other religions, not involve itself in controversy or fight, but dauntlessly proclaim Christ and him crucified. Our brother home – and our guest lecturers – must stick to this guiding principle, if our work is to succeed.

c) Daily life at Shin Rei San; The regular courses aside, our brother home must be open all year to all monks and other truth-seekers, who wish to come. They will then take part in our daily life, joining our everyday rhythm – and we shall seek to assist the individual in his special problems and difficulties.

Every day will be divided into work, studies, meditation, and worship besides other kinds of community. The weekly highlight will be the Sunday service towards which the gatherings during the week will point.

Work. It will be important to remember the body – ‘mens sana in corpore sano.’ In other ways as well is partnership and joy in work important. We are thinking of the work it takes to maintain and keep the whole place nice and tidy on one hand, on the other hand of participation in

the day-to-day work at the agricultural center (teagarden, orchard, etc.). Care must be taken to ensure everyone gets to do work suitable to him in his particular situation. Anyway, practical work of one kind or the other ought to be a part of the daily program, as far as possible. – It must be emphasized, though, that ‘work’ is one of the issues that hardly can be determined in advance – our experiences must guide us as we get them.

In this connection, let me mention a practice, I believe could become important if implemented – but again it must be mentioned that experience only will tell us if it can be implemented in reality and if it has the desired effect. I am referring to the practice of ‘giving a seventh’ (to give 1/7 of ones time, day) to a neighbor. It could be done literally, if all of us leave Shin Rei San one day every week, and spend it on assisting various people in the surrounding villages, who need help of various sorts; bring medicine and comfort to the sick, lend a hand for fieldwork, etc., each according to his and her abilities (along this line of thinking, Ene Marie and I are considering teaching Scandinavian cooking and English for free in the village schools). Even if the practice of giving a seventh is not carried out literally, it will be of decisive importance to our center – and to our visiting truth-seekers – not to isolate ourselves on our mountain, but think of our surroundings by practicing neighbor love.

Studies. By studies is for one thing meant private studies, for which a well equipped library is needed, for another the week-courses mentioned above,

[10]

for a third the irregular lectures and special study themes throughout the year. The last mentioned three points will primarily take place in rhythm with guest lecturers and occasional visitors, upon whose arrival a

special lecture or a round table discussion will be organized.

Meditation. One of our most important tasks for our everyday rhythm will be to find a suitable form of Christian meditation. For us, for the visiting truth-seekers, and for other Christians in Japan meditation will mean much. It can be one of two forms: individual personal meditation performed by the individual as he or she pleases – and planned common meditation.

In the Buddhist monasteries are meditation halls as well as the master's private meditation chamber. The latter is a small room with bare walls and absolutely nothing on the floor – except for a single 'kakemono' a scroll on the wall with a Buddhist word, most often the word 'mu' ('nothing'). In our case, the meditation ought best to take place in a crypt under the church. We imagine the church build on top of the mountain (though sheltered towards south and east due to the typhoons), and the crypt would then have a single window (round, for instance, with or without glass), wherefrom one can see the mountain slopes, the valley and the other mountains afar. It means the world to the Japanese to be in harmony with nature, and a view of the grandiose nature before and after the meditation will also help tuning the mind for worship. It is of course a condition that the 'nature' (which is also a Shintoist and a Buddhist term) must be filled with Christian content – again a 'word-vessel,' which can become an important 'connecting point.' The crypt might then, as its only content, have a scroll (kakemono) with a word from the Bible on one wall. Our idea is to ask every Christian leader visiting Shin Rei San to write a Bible word (especially meaningful to that person) on a kakemono. Handwriting is very significant in Japan, to a degree we do not have in the West, and a powerful word from the Bible in a beautifully executed calligraphy on the wall in the crypt might perhaps make a stronger

impression on the Japanese truth-seekers than the longest of sermons. Gradually, we will have sufficiently many kakemono that we can change them in accordance with the seasons, with the courses, with the Bible readings that year or perhaps with the individual – as a regular element of the daily meditation.

As one of many details, in connection with meditation, let me just mention that a quite moment of meditation in the crypt will be the most natural way of parting with the individual truth seeker (perhaps also upon arrival). It would likewise be natural, in case of problems and disputes between two parties at Shin Rei San that the two parties bring their conflict in front of the face of God in a meditation hour in the crypt.

The format of the meditation will only be finalized after several years of experience have passed. But maybe the best form will be the one Shimaya-san and I were happy with every morning in our little church. We met in the church at 6 – whoever came first lit the candle on the altar, whereupon we would sit in the Japanese fashion on the tatami floor. One of us would read a Bible word, usually a single verse, whose power and blessing one of us had experienced, whereupon we would sit quietly in front of the altar for 15–20 minutes – while our thoughts took off from the word we had heard and gradually transferred the word to this or that situation. The mediation could be an ‘experience’, whereby a word gained quite a different depth than before, or whereby one began by letting the word be the object, but gradually realized that one self became the object. However, more important than this experience aspect of meditation is the daily start of the day in front of the face of God, whereby all the events to come (or those of the past) are given the right perspective – whereby everything is seen from the vantage point of eternity,

[11]

whereby eternity gets into the everyday, and every day becomes a NEW DAY, right, every day becomes THE LIFE.

Meditation, which played quite a different and more important role in the first church, has all but been lost today. Participating in the renaissance of meditation in Christianity in the East as in the West could be one of the great tasks for the Christian Mission to Buddhists.

Devotion. For our own sake but especially for the sake of the truth-seekers, the meditation ought to be followed by a daily devotion, to ensure it does not remain 'up in the air'. The fact is that most truth-seekers, monks in particular, already do meditations, Buddhist meditation that is completely different from ours in content. Exactly because we by and large take over the form from the Buddhist monasteries, we must make sure that the content is stressed. A Buddhist monk could sit in our meditation and do his Buddhist meditation, if we only did meditation. Every day, preferably in the evening, we should have a short devotion on the theme of that day or the coming days, in harmony with the word from the Bible on the scroll in the crypt.

The peak of the religious life during the week will then be the Sunday service, that in a great many ways will be as it used to be on Tao Fong Shan. We will search for a form in liturgy, symbols, etc., that is also subject to the 'law of life', changes induced by experiences of several years. The form must to a high degree 'borrow' 'word-vessels,' forms of ceremonies and symbolism from Japanese religions for otherwise it will 'stand out' as strange and foreign. We cannot get further into the issue here, but would like to send a separate report on the matter to you later. Under all circumstances this is something that must be developed gradually over several years. Our main principle must be to keep Christ and Japan in

mind – consequently there will be no syncretism or distortion of the content, but when it comes to the form instead of introducing something new we may certainly use the existing ‘vessels’ and fill them with the Water of Life, with Christian content that in turn will feel Japanese. ‘Christianity in kimono.’

Community. In multiple ways will we have to stress the community on Shin Rei San. This goes for work, devotion and recreation. The former two have been discussed above. As to recreation, the options are plentiful – we might organize an annual joint ascent of Fuji-san (from the top of which we observe the sunrise and remember the symbol we use so often; the sunrise where the rays of the sun forms a cross above Fuji-san; “the cross is the sunrise in the land of the sunrise”) – or an annual excursion to the beach (merely 15 kilometers away from Misawa) – etc. We can imagine yet multiple ways of recreation. It is important that in work and devotion we should not forget that healthy and joyful distraction is needed also in our everyday.

d) The Christian truth-seekers:

If our work succeeds, some of the truth-seekers (monks especially) will become Christians, and groups of Christians will be formed in the villages around us and throughout the country.

As for the Christianized monks our hope is, of course, that many of them will become pastors and evangelists – while, keeping realities in mind, we do not expect most of them to become that. If they want to become pastors or evangelists, it will be best to send them to the Lutheran pastoral seminary in Tokyo (whose president is Kishi) or the Lutheran Bible School in Shizuoka (whose head is also a Kishi and one of our good friends). – The Christian Mission to Buddhists should, as far as possible, support them to get this education – but most of them will be supported by their family. --

When they are employed after their graduation, they will, except for the few we need for our work at Shin Rei San, be employed by other missions and churches. – As for those monks

[12]

who do not become pastors or evangelists, we are in a better position here in Japan than back in China, for most monks have got an education of sorts (usually as teachers) before they took over the temple obligations after their late father. It will therefore be easier for them to find a job once they have left their temple or monastery, so our mission will not have to keep them up financially. Besides, here in Japan we have connections with most churches and missions, and a number of large Christian companies (such as the Omi Brotherhood, who employs 2000) – thus the options for employment will be good. And as already mentioned, most of their families will feel responsible – financially as well – as long as they do not have a serious break with the family when they become a Christian --- for this and for many other reasons, we must do our outmost to ensure good relations between the Christianized monks and their family.

Through our work with farmers – see above – groups of Christians will be formed in the villages in the vicinity, if our work succeeds. It will probably be advisable to wait with church formations until the whole village or the majority in it has become Christian; this will ensure that the churches are self-supporting from the beginning and that the community of the village is preserved. This is an interesting topic that I would like to describe in details when I find time – and also something that must be decided by the development. Under any circumstances, these ‘spiritual ripples in the sea of religions around Shin Rei San’ should belong to the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), as the Christian Mission to

Buddhists cannot shoulder such a task financially or in any other way.

e) A potential work among women:

A work among women will probably have to wait in the first place, but can come up later. In part among women in our vicinity, in part among the 40,000 nuns in Japan, whom nobody works among.

A work among the women in the vicinity could take off with teachings in Scandinavian cooking, sewing, etc., in which Japanese women take a great interest.

A work among nuns could also financially be build ‘on basket and kneading trough.’ We are often thinking of Bishop Noack, whose words of departure to Ene Marie were the Scripture “Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading throughs!”²⁵⁾ – A Catholic convent on Hokkaido with 70 nuns is completely financed by selling ‘Trappist cheese’ and ‘Trappist cakes’ both of them based on French recipes all over Japan. – It would definitely be possible for us to do a similar thing in Japan, selling Scandinavian-like cheese, butter and cakes that could finance a potential work among nuns. With our current network we could sell such products widely. And such products could be used as ‘standard gifts’ by our employees throughout the country, whereby we would support our work among women and at the same time make it known. We could also consider a production of things for our Nordic bazars: pilgrims’ staffs, bamboo crafts, fans, wood works, etc.

If a work among women were eventually started, it would naturally have to be modest at the beginning – and then let us see in which direction the development would take it. Still, it is salutary to take all possibilities into consideration now, that we may not be taken by surprise of the development, but include as much as possible in our plans.

25) Deuteronomy 28:5 (King James Version). Translator’s note.

f) The work henceforward:

Our brother home will not be restricted to what is going on on Shin Rei San. In many ways, our work will be going on beyond [the mountain], if we are to reach our goal: to find the truth-seekers in Japan. This can be done by one of the following three methods.

Visits: We must ceaselessly visit temples, monasteries and centers of New Religions

[13]

throughout Japan, including the isolated places. The personal contact is indispensable, and it is important to us to face their situation in order to understand them. However, the most important part of our encounter with the truth-seekers is of course the encounter on Shin Rei San – and therefore should every contact made throughout Japan include the words “come and see”!

Radio program:

In Japan, radio is not owned by the state but is commercial (in connection with the big newspapers) like in the USA. Time at each radio (and television) is for sale. Of course it is expensive between 7 and 24 o’ clock, but in the morning before 7, it is possible to get it at a surprisingly low cost. At the same time it happens that the people we want to reach (monks and other ‘religious devotees’) mostly get up around 3-5 in the morning. A weekly program of 5-7 minutes starting at say 5:30 in the morning would cost us about 2-300 kroner @ month. Besides, it would be possible to have the cost for this broadcast covered by an American if we so wish – we have received an offer. The radio program should be organized in such a way that we focus particularly on the problems of the truth-seekers – and every broadcast will be ended with the words “come and see”. – The

radio connection is of special importance to our plans, for the radio reaches the most deserted and isolated valleys and islands, we would otherwise not reach. It might perhaps be possible to connect our program with the Lutheran Hour program that is followed by millions of Japanese, but more about this later.

Publication work: One ought to consider two occasional periodicals: one in Japanese for the Japanese truth-seekers, targeting them in style, tone and format (a potential name could be 'UNSUI' – literally translated it means 'cloud-water,' a word the Buddhists use to denote all pilgrims who drift like the clouds in the sky or the water in the rivers in search of truth) – and one in English targeting the missionaries and pastors in Japan, and people with an interest in mission in the USA and the Nordic countries, in which we will report on our work and relate what is going on within the religious world of Japan. --- Finally, we might think of occasional pamphlets. -- The publication work could perhaps be related to the Lutheran Literature Society of Japan, whose general secretary has expressed his interest in this kind of co-operation.

A Bible to every monk in Japan: This is how we might fittingly label the plan for which professor Paludan has aroused interest in the Danish Bible Society and which will likely be approved. The plan is that we (the Danish missionaries in Japan) personally should initially bring a Bible or a New Testament to every abbot of the main temples in Japan (about 300), then to every temple and monastery in Japan and eventually to every monk in Japan (about 300,000). This should be done in the long run, in 30 to 50 years, and would also depend on the number of missionaries we get to Japan.

It will be of special importance that these Bibles are handed over in

person, and in a way that they will be kept and used.

If this tremendous task 'The Word of God in every temple in Japan' is to be accomplished, a cooperation of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Bible Societies will probably be necessary perhaps including one of the American Bible societies.

The New Religions are dying: Another task outside Shin Rei San is the closest possible connection to the New Religions, 171 in total, with about 20 million members. Here we find some of the most genuine religious among the Japanese people, and in many cases they are serious, pious truth-seekers.

The contact with the New Religions is perhaps particularly important in the cases where the New Religions die out and disappear. Almost every year one of the New Religions disappears for various reasons, most often due to corruption (moral or economical) in the leadership. And there is reason to believe that the main part of the 171 New Religions will die away within a life-span

[14]

(and at the same time will others be strengthened). When this situation occurs – with the departure of each New Religion – will those, who take their religion seriously, be in a difficult situation and in most instances turn in the direction where they found sympathy and understanding and seriously religious friends. To me, this is one of the biggest possibilities for the Mission to Buddhists – perhaps for all the Christian mission in Japan – that we have this near and real connection with these people, the religious core of the every New Religion, that they will turn to us, and later to Christ, when their religion collapses. That they may come and build on the Rock.

-- Through this, it will be possible for whole bunches of people to find Christianity.

Confused at the Crossroad: Another of our future tasks (or rather another aspect of our task) will be to assist people, who are doubting and confused by their position between Buddhism and Christianity. I have in mind people like Dr. Misaki, who are influenced by Buddhist groups as well as Christian ones, and who do not know what to do. Such people are often without a guide, for the Buddhist priest as well as the Christian pastor all too often does not know anything about the religions besides their own. This is where we in the Christian Mission to Buddhists can be of assistance and ought to be available for anyone anywhere in Japan who stands at the crossroad of religions. Another aspect of the same task is to assist former Christians, who have become Buddhists, coming back to Christ – in part through our own connections, in part on the recommendation of others; this does not mean we want to carry out propaganda aggressively towards the former Christians, but that we will be there with advice and support if desired.

A spiritual home: Shin Rei San should be a spiritual home for the truth-seekers in Japan, who will always be welcome. It should not be a refuge where one 'hide', but must be a domicile the truth-seekers can come to and return to – for scheduled conferences, studies, as well as in the moments of crises in life. It must be a power center; one does not seek to avoid problems but to be filled with power that gives strength to live in the middle of the problems of life and still have more to assist others. The Rock is Christ not Shin Rei San, but God can use SRS as a tool for his plans.

g) A 'STUDY CENTER':

In its own way, our brother home will be a part of a study center work. The study centers must, according to their task (which is the task of the whole church), have a theoretical emphasis and therefore be a little detached from direct evangelization, which is our main task. However, our brother home will in its own way be a 'practical workshop', where the theories and ideas of the study centers on Christianity's relation to non-Christian religions can be tested in reality in the relationship between the Christians and the non-Christians on Shin Rei San and in the outreach from our brother home. Our contribution to the study center work in Japan would then be that via our brother home we are doing a direct evangelizing work among the truth-seekers in Japan who belong to a non-Christian religion. Furthermore in that we henceforward will publish periodicals and other literature meant specifically for this group. --- Our participation in the academic study center, created mostly with our effort, will be on an equal footing with any other church and mission in Japan. That center seems, by the way, to be going to be set up in Nara in the near future in relation to the Evangelical Academies of Germany.

Our 'workshop' will be open at any time to anyone working at the academic study center. It also seems right to take a positive approach to the proposals we have received from Doshisha University, The Lutheran Pastoral Seminary and the Lutheran

[15]

Bible School in Shizuoka, asking for permission to send their students of theology to a course on Shin Rei San (one week or one month) that will introduce them to our methods in particular and on how to do work of Christianity among non-Christians. This would be a unique chance for the

ideas and views of the Christian Mission to Buddhists to influence the future young pastors in Japan. -- It goes without saying that such courses are not a matter of the immediate future – it will take several years before they can be given.

We must also prepare ourselves to continue what we have already begun, to give lectures about our work and the relations between Christian and non-Christians in general at universities, bible schools and pastoral seminars within Japan. Lectures and speeches at institutions and centers of other religions can also become a reality.

As a ‘study center’ Shin Rei San ought also to have a library and other facilities to serve as a retreat, where individuals can come to study, write and rest.

We should organize conferences and round table discussions (like the one we held for 130 missionaries in the spring of 1959), on Shin Rei San and throughout the country. They should be for missionaries, pastors and other Christians on one hand, and for Christian and non-Christian leaders on the other, who thereby will confront with each other. We should also consider inviting groups of non-Christians once in a while, such as student groups from Buddhist universities, who would like to study Christianity on a week-course.

As a ‘practical workshop’ for the study centers, we on Shin Rei San ought to study Japanese culture and be sure to include it in a Christian context. We must constantly work on the ‘word containers’ and ‘connecting points’ etc. In our church architecture, we should work out a Japanese ‘model church’. In our Japanese teahouse we can attempt to participate in the efforts to work out a beautiful and dignified Japanese form of the Holy Communion, which in its current form offends most Japanese vehemently, and puts it in contrast to the dignified and beautiful tea ceremony. Quite

certainly several forms [elements?] of the tea ceremony can be borrowed for the Holy Communion in its Japanese shape. By being up-to-date on Christianity, non-Christian religions as well as Japanese culture we will at Shin Rei San have all the prerequisites to participate in the assistance of the efforts to find the right 'kimono' for Japanese Christianity.

h) 'Friends of Shin Rei San':

As there used to be a 'Friends of Tao Fong Shan' in China, we will try to start a 'Friends of Shin Rei San' in Japan, a countrywide group of people with an interest in our project and who wants to support it. These will mostly be missionaries and Japanese pastors, but will also include other Japanese and likely quite a number of leaders of Buddhist denominations and New Religions. There can be no doubt of the importance a 'Friends of Shin Rei San' would have for the proliferation of our work, for the employment of Christianized monks, for our cooperation with other missions and churches in Japan and in manifold other ways. We imagine a committee could be elected from this group, who would then be in charge of fundraising activities and could invite the 'Friends of Shin Rei San' to an annual gathering on Shin Rei San.

3. The village:

So far we have been looking briefly at the two points 'the agricultural center' and 'the brother home'. In the following we will attempt to view them together, from a holistic perspective. There is no reason to 'get them mixed up' with one another, as they are two separate entities, each with a function. It is, nevertheless, essential that, as examined in details above, both are aimed at the flock of 'truth-seekers,' – and that this flock belongs organically

[16]

together in the monastery-village and the village-monastery.

From a holistic perspective it is therefore possible to assume a Christian village, where the farm and the brother home each has its own place, in a relationship like the tens of thousands of non-Christian villages in Japan. Obviously, this kind of village will not be available in the first years, but if our plans succeed it might be possible work it out in 8-10 years.

From this perspective, the differences between the agricultural center and the brother home do not matter. And we do not have to take great pain to unite the two in terms of teaching, studies, etc. They have each their place in the total plan, that seeks to create a place which can be emulated in any of the villages of Japan, as they like, a place fully and solely dedicated to bring Christ to the village-temple and the temple-village, to the two isolated islands in the Japanese folk sea, to the religious core of Japan, – to truth-seekers of Japan.

THE BUILDINGS

The Church should be built in a style fitting with the Japanese village. It must be simple, graceful and dignified. It must be cheap because most Japanese congregations are small, and because our church should contribute to solve the issue of identifying a Japanese church architecture. As mentioned above, it would be good to have a crypt built under the church. The first year or two we better celebrate our service in the home or in the school building, – – among other reasons because it will take much preparation to work out the church style.

The School Building is made in preparation for the courses of the brother home as well as the classes for the young farmers, and also for

future conferences and meetings. It must be constructed in a way that makes expansions possible – initially just one room, which (in line with our financial capacity and the development of our place) can be enlarged to for example four rooms that, with sliding doors, can be combined into one big hall, two lesser halls or four classrooms. The outside should be in the Japanese village style with curved roofs – the inside preferably rational and modern. --- Rather than building a separate library it would be rational to have one of the end walls completely outfitted with build-in bookshelves, which would contain our library. One could also have both end walls outfitted this way and then have a library of agriculture at one end and a library of theology at the other end. – In this connection let me mention that the books belonging to the mission here in Kyoto are only on loan to the Study Center and will be returned to the mission when the Study Center had developed its own library. We therefore already have a fairly big library of a couple of thousand volumes. Here, we should, by the way, like to ask that our friends in the Nordic countries be told we really would like to get books for this library (especially in English), once the building project has been commenced.

The Pilgrims' Hall: This building should be in the village-temple style with a curved roof in black tiles. Initially can a wing with room for 10–20 be built, and then later expanded until we have a three-winged building, organized around a typical small Japanese garden with a lotus pond. The pond could be cut out in the shape of the Japanese character for 'kokoro' (heart) – again bear in mind the importance of symbols in the East. Another idea would be to have the three planned lotus ponds (see below), of which this would be one, cut in the shape of the three Japanese characters for 'the Way', 'the Truth' and 'the Life'. The pilgrims' hall should be laid

out on the pattern of the Zen Buddhist monastery with its sober, dignified esthetic sense that the monks will feel ‘at home’. This will among other things include a roofed ‘roka’, a corridor with sliding doors should be running alongside the three-winged building on the outside.

The Lotus Cross: One can imagine a big lotus cross (perhaps 20 meters in length) laid out in green tea bushes between the pilgrims’ hall and the church. To me, this symbol is one of the most beautiful one can imagine – and as one of the most unique Christian symbols, as far as mission is concerned, if only it is correctly understood: that it is shall not connect the two religions (Christianity and Buddhism), but that it shall connect God with the human being, God with the truth seeker. The human heart that opens up to the light and through the cross – only through the cross – receives the Way, the Truth and the Life. To me, it is obvious we should use this beautiful symbol and that it can hardly be more beautiful or more Japanese than if we use tea bushes as ‘the material’.

Lotus pond and teahouse: On the slope of the mountain, right under the church and the crypt, we could establish a bigger lotus pond with ‘stepping stones’ that lead to a small island with a genuine Japanese teahouse. The teahouse will be an important element in our attempt to include Japanese culture in the Christian context – and it will also be used for meditation and visitors, – and for tea ceremonies, of course! As for the shape of the lotus pond, see above.

Homes: The exterior of the homes for the missionaries and the Japanese employees should be in the Japanese village style, whereas the interior can be adjusted to the conditions of the individual. It is important

that the homes will match the other buildings to ensure the architectural style is not broken.

The agricultural center: This center must initially consist of one or two buildings for the leaders of the farm, a building for the students (initially with room for 10–20), made so it can easily be expanded, a stable for cattle, and a smaller storage for fodder. Later on, it will be expanded in line with our economic capability and the growth of the farm.

Other potential buildings, we might consider build later, includes a small printing house and a minor outpatients' department, as the development and our economy permit.

The architecture can with advantage be entrusted the architect office of the Omi Brotherhood.

Materials: A millionaire in Shizuoka, a 'contractor,' who is very interested in our plans, can provide us with most of the building materials, wood, cement etc., at cost price whereby we can save substantially on the construction of our buildings.

Sketches and plans: These can only be made once we have decided on the place, because one cannot make plans before having the place as the starting point. As soon as the place had been arranged will the sketches and plans be send.

[18]

FINAL REMARKS.

A beginning. Some may have felt daunted when reading through these big plans. It is therefore necessary to emphasize that initially we are only going to start with what we can afford and manage with the manpower we have. Not every single plan outlined here is predetermined to be carried through. On the other hand, this describes that even a very diminished center can handle the essential tasks outlined. All we have to do is to start that we can initiate our work – and then it will be up to the development, our economic means, the increase of new missionaries (that will be very much needed), etc., to what degree the plans can be realized.

Now. It would be tempting to wait another few years before we set to work on our project. Three major factors make us out here dare to suggest starting now nevertheless: The prices are soaring scarily in Japan – the land we bought here in Shugakuin was 3,500 thousand yen a tsubo three years ago – today it costs 20,000 yen!²⁶⁾ If we wait even a few years, we cannot afford a bigger piece of land – and it will be more and more difficult to be allotted the state land. Therefore we ought to buy as much land as we expect to need now, and not merely what we need immediately – later it will be practically impossible to expand. –

Shimaya (and Koizumi) have joined us right now, and they cannot be at our disposition infinitely for undefined work. I regard Shimaya in particular as our most important Japanese employee in years to come – and we cannot put him off forever. I believe, we can see Shimaya as God given –

26) The Danish original has “3,500 tusinde yen per tsubo – I dag koster den 20,000 yen!” Here *tusinde* (thousands) must be a mistake. Translator’s note.

it will be difficult perhaps impossible to find another Japanese of his quality and cast. That we got him right now makes it our duty to commence our project now without further delay. – –

Fenger. The Danish agricultural adviser Emil Fenger has volunteered to help us start our agricultural project – and will be at our service for a couple of years as long as he gets room and board. – – As Fenger has already launched two agricultural projects successfully in Japan, his offer is unique, and likely not a coincident. Fenger will travel through Japan in the spring of 1963, and if we have not started by that time, he will have to travel on to Denmark.

Courage: A Shin Rei San project is such a work that it may seem impossible. It will result in economic and work related loads that will require strong and patient shoulders. The outcome is not given in advance, and it will take the courage of faith to venture into this work. It is one thing to be foolhardy, it is something else to be over-protective --- and a completely third thing to have the faith which moves mountains, let alone buy one that does not move and make it an instrument for God's Kingdom.

Kyoto, November (1961- January 1962)

Harry Thomsen

[19]

APPENDIX

Harry Thomsen has added a “special paper” to the preceding report concerning financial calculations and time plan and it is mostly intended for the members of the board of the Christian Mission to Buddhists.

(...)

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