

History of the Church in Japan - Part 18: 1982-1990: Asia Area; Temple Annex; Translation

By R. Lanier Britsch (Author of *From the East: The History of the Latter-day Saints in Asia, 1856-1996*)

Elder Kikuchi Yoshishiko, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy served as Area Supervisor/Executive over all of Japan and Korea until 1982, when Elder William R. Bradford was called to that position. On July 1, 1984 the Church divided the world into thirteen administrative Areas. The Asia Area was created with Elder Bradford called as the first Area President.

Through the years, especially since the dedication of Tokyo Temple, the Japanese Saints have been steady in their temple and genealogy service. The average number of live endowments per year since the Tokyo Temple dedication has been 660. During the 1980s, as the total number of endowed members grew, the annual number of endowments for the dead rose steadily, topping out at 46,801 in 1988.

The Annex to the Tokyo Temple was completed and put into use in July 1986. Through good fortune, the Church was able to acquire another lot beside the temple. On this land the Church constructed a multi-purpose building that included several apartments for temple missionaries and the Japan MTC president and his wife, a small chapel and other facilities for a Tokyo ward, dorm rooms and classrooms for the JMTC, and dorm rooms for members from out of town who were there to do temple work. A small parking area was also added for Church employees and Sunday use.

Since the dedication of the Tokyo Temple, the Church and Church members in Japan have received a considerable amount of media attention. Kent Gilbert and Kent Derricott, missionaries who returned to Japan to work in law and business, respectively, attracted considerable attention. Both Kents surprised Japanese TV audiences with their ability to speak Japanese and with their wit and understanding of Japan. Gilbert even published two or three books of his opinions about life and the world.

In 1985, a Japanese TV corporation traveled to Los Angeles to videotape footage on Mormon lifestyles, etc. In that same year, the Tabernacle Choir made its second tour of Japan and created a good deal of media attention. Other famous Mormons, for example Wally Joyner and Dale Murphy of big league baseball, were also recognized by the Japanese media. These two gave a fireside for the Church in November 1986 that generated considerable attention.

Translation of Church materials has a long history in Japan. By 1982, a well-managed office of capable translators was in operation. The most important project in recent years was the retranslation and publication of the Book of Mormon done by a committee which operated under the supervision of the Quorum of the Twelve. Eugene M. Kitamura, Director of Temporal Affairs, was chair of the committee during most of the process.

(New second edition translations of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were also published in 1996. Other recent publications in Japanese include Elder M. Russell Ballard's "Our Search for Happiness" and President Hinckley's "Be Thou An Example.")

The new version brought consistency between Bible names that appear in the Book of Mormon and the standard biblical Japanese translations of those names. (The standard Holy Bible used by the Church in Japan is the 1955 edition by the Japanese Bible Society. The Church is now the biggest buyer of this conservative version.)

All materials that are provided to the Saints in North America are also translated into Japanese and Korean, including Church Education System materials that are necessary for seminary and institute classes. In Japan, videos of CES firesides that originate in the Marriott Center on Brigham Young University, and other important events, are also dubbed with Japanese and distributed to the Institutes around the country.

The Church provides a magazine in Japanese, "Seito no Michi", or Way of the Saints (Michi means road, path, or way.) In addition to articles provided by the International Magazines office in Salt Lake City, the magazine contains sixteen pages of material dedicated to Japanese concerns and interests.