

**2013/2014 Graduate Research Grant Report**  
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**Prison Chaplaincy in Japan from the Meiji Period to the Present**

This summer, with the help of the Religion and Diversity Project's Research Grant, I travelled to Kyoto, Japan to conduct preliminary dissertation research at Ryukoku University. My dissertation deals with prison chaplaincy in Japan- a rich field of inquiry at the intersection of criminal law and religious proselytization that remains untouched in Western research literature. My work entails a historical study covering the period from 1872, when modern prisons and chaplaincy were introduced to Japan, until the present day. Over the summer, I surveyed the relevant academic literature and compiled the foundational bibliography using the materials of Ryukoku University's Ōmiya Library. This archival research builds on site visits to prisons and interviews with chaplains that I began conducting last year. Last year's anthropological research delved into the present conditions of chaplaincy in Japan, and now, thanks to this summer's archival research, I have pieced together a historical narrative that elucidates themes which have been constant since chaplaincy was introduced to Japan. An important preliminary finding is that throughout the complex history of chaplaincy there exists a constant give and take between the secular and religious authorities as they compete and collaborate in attempting to manage crime and mold moral subjects. The further implication of this work is that the untold story of chaplaincy can help us to understand how religious vocations become involved in the management (and construction of) crime in a secular society. In what follows, I will briefly outline the history of chaplaincy in Japan, discuss the major sources I found this June, and then close by proposing my plans for future research in this area.

**Historical Outline**

It is important to note that although the new religious movement Tenrikyō and the Jōdō Shinshū sect of Buddhism have each produced official histories of their chaplaincy activities, non-sectarian research perspectives on chaplaincy in Japan are lacking even in Japanese scholarship. However, even given the biased nature of some of these sectarian studies, it has been possible to generate a picture of the key moments in the history of Japanese chaplaincy. The first chaplains were Christian grassroots social reformers working in Hokkaido in the 1870s. By the 1920s, a national network of Buddhist chaplains had developed, and the Ministry of Justice relied on them to reprogram leftists, communists, and others deemed thought criminals. The postwar period saw chaplains collaborating with the Occupation regime while ministering to war criminals like Tōjō

Hideki, and at the same time there was a broadening religious freedom, allowing new religions like Tenrikyō to begin vigorous chaplaincy programs. In the present day, one of the main issues for the chaplaincy is that many chaplains oppose Japan's controversial death penalty, and this brings them into conflict with the Ministry of Justice.

### **Primary Sources Found at Ryukoku**

To trace the history of chaplaincy, there are a number of archives available only in Japan that must be consulted. During archival research this summer, I was able to spend time at the Ōmiya Library of Ryukoku University. This library is perhaps the best single source for materials about chaplaincy because Ryukoku University has historically been involved in the training of chaplains. After some digging, I located pre-war research journals dealing with chaplaincy-- an untapped goldmine of primary sources. Scholarly journals such as `Criminal Law and Government` (*Keisei*), published from 1881 onwards, and `Chaplaincy Studies` (*Kyōkai Kenkyū*), published in prisons from 1925 until 1943, illustrate pre-war conceptions of chaplaincy and the role of religion in the management of crime. Based on the indexes I have compiled, approximately 20 percent of the latter journal's 1937-1943 run is devoted to methods for dealing with thought criminals. These rich resources—more than ten-thousand pages of data-- have never been explored. I am currently in the process of reading and translating articles with titles like, `Interview with the Wife of a Thought Criminal` and `On the Particular Difficulties of Dealing with Taiwanese Thought Criminals.` These articles provide access to the unadulterated opinions and proposals of members of a chaplaincy wedded to the imperialist projects of the militarist government during the 1930s and 1940s.

### **For Further Investigations**

The next phase of my research will be to consult doctrinal works as well as instructional manuals for chaplains. These are housed in the sectarian collections of Tenrikyō at Tenri University, Jōdō Shinshū at Ryukoku University, and Shintō at Kokugakuin University. These resources help to reveal how these organizations view their involvement in chaplaincy activities and also the nature of their teachings regarding transgressions, crime, and justice. These documents will be important for piecing together a nuanced history of chaplaincy that will accurately represent the perspectives and motivations of the agents involved. Finally, I intend to supplement this research by study of the National Diet Library's Library of Corrections special collection in Tokyo. This collection provides comprehensive access to the relevant Japanese scholarly literature on social justice and also the history of the Japanese criminal and penal laws.

I am grateful to the *Religion and Diversity Project* for a generous grant without which my archival research this summer would not have been possible. I would not have been able to make any of the research findings outlined above, nor to construct the plan for the next phase of my research, had I not had the opportunity to engage in intensive archival research. I would also like

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