

**Representations of Japan in the  
*Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé*:  
A Chapter in the History of Québec  
Catholic Missionaries in Asia, 1925-1973**

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This paper examines the images of Japan contained in the *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* and the perceptions of members of Québec religious orders of Japan during the Showa era (1926-1989).<sup>1</sup> Published under the auspices of the Canadian National Committee of the Missionary Union of Clergy, the first edition of the *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* was printed in Québec on 1 July 1925. This publication sought “[...] to help the holy cause of the Missions, unfortunately too little known, too often forgotten, sometimes badly appreciated.”<sup>2</sup> In 1957, at the peak of Québec missionary action overseas, the bulletin had around eight thousand subscribers from more than thirty countries.<sup>3</sup>

The *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* is an official publication of the Québec Church propagating the work of its missions. It is an authorized publication, which allows the researcher to analyze over a long period the representation of Japan through the eyes of missionaries.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been limited scholarly research on the role of Canadians and Québécois in Asia. Some important works on the subject include: *Serge Granger, Le Lys et le Lotus: Les relations du Québec avec la Chine de 1650 à 1950* (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 2005); A. Hamish Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1872-1931* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990); A. Hamish Ion, *The Cross in the Dark Valley: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1931-1945* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999); Richard Leclerc, *Des Lys à l'ombre du mont Fuji: Histoire de la présence de l'Amérique française au Japon* (Sillery: Éditions du Bois-de-Coulonge, 1995); John D. Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Geoffroy, “Pourquoi ce bulletin,?” *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* 1, no. 1 (1 July 1925): 5.

<sup>3</sup> Adrien Bouffard, “Éditorial,” *Messages de l'U.M.C* 14, no. 2 (April-June 1957): 2.

Its contributors lived all over Japan, and their writings made it possible for Québécois readers to gain an appreciation for the reality of Japan. The *Bulletin* offered an alternative to the vision conveyed by the Anglo-Saxon media, which projected a perception of Japan tinted according to their geopolitical interests, at a time when these interests diverged in several respects from those of the Québécois who were then interested in Asian affairs. This instrument of propaganda of the Québec Church was printed between 1925 and 1973. It changed its name in 1949 to become *Prêtres et Missions, Bulletin de l'U.M.C.*, and then in 1957 it became, *Messages de l'U.M.C.* In the summer of 1973, after forty-six years of publication and 176 editions, the magazine ceased its operations.

For the purpose of this study, all articles published in the *Bulletin* dealing either entirely or in part with Japan were examined. Thirty-three articles met these criteria. With one exception, they were all written by priests or bishops, since this publication was intended for the elite of the Québec's Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup> The years 1930 to 1960 were the most fertile for articles on Japan, while only one article on the country appeared between 1961 and 1973. Three main factors account for this apparent imbalance:

- a) the territorial diversification of missions, with Latin America becoming much more important in later years
- b) the steep decline in religious vocations in Québec, which was one of the symptoms of the Quiet Revolution
- c) the difficulty of converting the Japanese to Catholicism.

Located in East Asia, Japan is a nation which shares its maritime borders with China, Korea, the Philippines, Russia, Taiwan and the United States. Of a total surface of 377,907 km<sup>2</sup>, the country consists of four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.<sup>5</sup> With a diversified geomorphology, it has a mountainous topography with plains and valleys dispersed here and there. The nation is made up of 6,852 islands, most of which are uninhabited.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Hamelin, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois: Le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Tome 2: De 1940 à nos jours (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1984), 199.

<sup>5</sup> Japan. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 2006* (Tokyo: Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2005), 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Throughout its history, Japan's progress hinged on its ability to adapt and integrate technology and knowledge coming from abroad into everyday life skills. Whereas Japanese foreign relations were limited to Asia until the sixteenth century, the rise of the colonial powers of Europe and their maritime explorations brought these countries in contact with Oriental countries, such as Japan. A landmark event was the arrival in 1543 of the first Portuguese explorers, who were followed six years later by the first Jesuit mission in Japan, founded by Saint Francis Xavier (1506-1552). These developments marked the arrival of western civilization to the islands. While those early relations were generally friendly between, on the one hand, European traders and evangelists and, on the other, local rulers, the latter grew alarmed at the threat this foreign influence posed to their power. By the end of the sixteenth century, the persecution of Christians multiplied on the island of Kyushu, site of the first Western establishments, culminating with the expulsion of Catholic missionaries. Religion was perceived as a threat to national security and an instrument of subjugation in the service of Spain and Portugal's economic interests. Daily life for foreigners and Christianized Japanese became difficult. Yet, despite this mistrust, the Japanese were reluctant to completely close the doors of the country as they hoped to maintain or even expand their exports.

However, the growing influence of the Tokugawa, a family clan suspicious of foreign influence which imposed its influence on Japan between 1603 and 1867, led to the progressive elimination of contacts with other nations. From within, events like the revolt of the peasants of Shimabara (Nagasaki) — which began in 1637 and where more than thirty thousand Catholics were killed — contributed to the adoption of an isolationist policy two years later.<sup>7</sup> Wary of Christian ideas, Japan authorized trade only with the Chinese and the Dutch, whose presence was unlikely to undermine the established order. The Dejima enclave, located in the town of Nagasaki (Nagasaki), was the single zone where they had access. For the next two centuries, Japan was almost totally isolated. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when the United States issued a military ultimatum, that this seclusion was reversed, a development that paved the way for the end of the military dictatorship known as the Tokugawa Shogunate. This led to the reestablishment of a monarchy by Emperor Meiji (1852-1912), which was favorable to the modernization of the Japanese state and encouraged the return of the Christian missionaries.

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<sup>7</sup>The name in parenthesis refers to the prefecture or the state where an entity is located.

The Meiji era (1868-1912) was marked by substantial reforms, particularly in the area of governance. Accountable government departments were created, and there was a strong sense of emulation of the western bureaucratic government system that would lead to the formation of a modern public sector and civil service. In an early version of fact-finding missions, Japanese civil servants were dispatched in Europe and in the United States to identify the best practices which would work well in a Japanese context. These initiatives contributed mightily to bringing about the modern Japanese state. After reforming its institutions, Japan endeavoured to establish itself as a significant actor, deserving of respect from Europe and North America. It achieved that result on the international stage by concluding commercial and friendship treaties with several major countries.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Japan experienced considerable demographic growth, due to the improvement of hygiene and the pro-family policies of the prewar period. The population was distributed unequally in the territory, with the majority preferring the plains to the mountains, which cover 61% of the nation.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Japan evolved into an overpopulated country, with one of the highest population densities in the world. To this day, the majority of the Japanese population resides in urban environments, particularly on Honshu, the main island of the nation. Two-thirds (67%) of the people are concentrated in the Chubu, Kanto and Kinki areas (Tokyo-Osaka megalopolis), a region accounting for one-third (34%) of the total territory of Japan, leaving the remaining land sparsely unoccupied.<sup>9</sup>

When compared with the total number of foreign nationals who lived in Japan after 1867, the influence of the Québécois was moderate in comparison to the Europeans and Americans, who had strong cultural, technological and economic interests in the country. Without large human and financial resources, Québec did not have the levers to exert influence on par with the established powers. As a result of these circumstances, the socio-political choices of its leaders and the primacy of the Canadian government in foreign affairs, Québec's international action in Asia was essentially defined by the initiatives of the Catholic Church until the Quiet Revolution.

By the end of World War I (1914-1918), the Holy See had grown interested in an overall evangelization action that better respected the individual characteristics of each region while being detached from the geopolitical stakes of the colonizing nations (e.g. France, Italy, Portugal

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19 and 36-37.

and Spain). The Vatican felt that this new political position, combined with mass media technology, would make it possible to carry the Gospel to all corners of the world. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, revolutionary improvements in transportation and communication had facilitated access to exotic areas formerly accessible only through the works of science fiction like Jules Verne's (1828-1905), *Around the World in Eighty Days*.<sup>10</sup>

This new approach advanced by the Vatican reflected ongoing social and cultural transformations. In November 1919, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) in his apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*, framed the issue in terms of how to carry out the revival of the missionary action within the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup> Until this time the Holy See had used religious missions as a means to transplant Western values into mission countries, a practice many likened to religious imperialism. As an alternative, the Pope stressed the importance of forming national clergies capable of evangelizing their compatriots freely and continuously. As a true *Great Charter of the missions*, the encyclical directed for several years the action of the Catholic Church in this field. Though he would die shortly thereafter, Pope Benedict XV had thus begun the establishment of structures ready to support this revival.

It was under the impulse of Pius XI (1922-1939), an ardent propagandist of the missionary cause, that the international expansion of Catholicism was launched. His pontificate was marked by the publication in 1926 of the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* which, following in the footsteps of *Maximum Illud*, presented the missionaries' work as an essential instrument in the propagation of the faith.<sup>12</sup> To support the papal will, the majority of the religious communities of Catholic countries contributed to this colossal task.

In reaction to the industrialization of the West and the class struggle that resulted from it, ideologies such as Communism and Fascism emerged as alternatives to unbridled capitalism and socialism. Resting on

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<sup>10</sup> Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873).

<sup>11</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud: Del sumo Pontífice Benedicto XV sobre la propagación de la fe católica en el mundo entero*, 30 November 1919, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xv/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_apl\\_19191130\\_maximum%20illud\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_apl_19191130_maximum%20illud_sp.html). Data accessed on 12 May 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See*, 26 Feb. 1926, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_28021926\\_rerum-ecclesiae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_28021926_rerum-ecclesiae_en.html). Data accessed on 23 March 2006.

materialism and atheism, these doctrines went against the ideals supported by the Catholic Church. On the left, the October Revolution (1917) in Russia, in which the Bolsheviks prevailed over the nascent democratic government of Aleksandr Kerensky (1881-1970), convinced many that an impending Red menace threatened Europe. On the right, the Fascist ideology capitalized on postwar resentment, fear of communism and the socioeconomic dislocations brought about by the war and the Great Depression, leading to the rise to power of Fascist regimes in Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Spain, to name a few. On a more global scale, the Holy See viewed the evangelization of the atheistic people as the rampart against these threats while allowing the Church to extend its influence in remote regions where Protestants had already started proselytizing. The stakes were perceived as quite serious: of the two billion people who inhabited the Earth around 1930, more than half (61%) were not identified with any confession.<sup>13</sup> Within years, Africa, South America and Asia became zones of preference for the missionaries.

Thankful to the Church for protecting it from religious and cultural assimilation, Québec proved to be the basin of recruitment par excellence of the Catholic catechists. In addition to the charitable and religious intentions that justified a vocation, missionary work constituted for the Québécois one of the only means of assertion available to a population dominated since the British conquest in 1760. Missionary activity was a means to affirm Québec's distinctiveness and show its aptitude for contributing to human progress on the international stage.

Seen as a real societal endeavour, missionary work seemed to justify the destiny of the Québécois in North America while offering a means to be a trailblazer in a field where Anglophones were not serious rivals. In order to mobilize the community towards this providential task, an imposing propaganda machine was put at the service of the Church in the months following the publication of Pius XI's encyclical on the missions. It marked the first time that a marketing campaign, resting on a strategy of mass communication, took place in Québec. Through *Semaines missionnaires*, cinematographic lectures, radio programs and the publication of books and magazines, information on the missions reached the public. As a means of enlisting popular support, the campaign emphasized the history, the spirit of sacrifice and the divine mission of the Québécois to justify their predisposition for this type of work.

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the

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<sup>13</sup> Instituts missionnaires canadiens, *La Semaine missionnaire de Joliette — 4 au 10 juillet 1927* (Québec: Imprimerie Charrier & Dugal, 1928), Map in Appendix.

Holy See started to support the work of the propagation of the faith by preaching an apostolate somewhat freed from the influence of Western colonialism. Indeed, in the past, proximity to colonial powers had ruined the Church's credibility in several areas of evangelization subjected to a colonial yoke. However, in spite of this will to diffuse a universalist message, sometimes the clergy displayed a paternalism tinged with a deep chauvinism toward non-Christian people. This attitude, clearly noticeable in propaganda diffused in Québec between 1900 and 1950, was used to legitimate the work of the missionaries who brought Christendom to pagans.

The call for the missions played a key role in the Church and Québec society for more than a century. As early as 1853, the Sœurs de la Providence were established in Chile. A few years later, Québécois missionaries began settling in the remote regions of the planet in order to Christianize the world. Whereas there were 1,595 Québécois missionaries active overseas in 1932, this number had reached 4,984 in 1958.<sup>14</sup> By 1954, Québec was, after Ireland, the Netherlands and Belgium, the place which produced the greatest number of missionaries per Catholic citizen. The evangelical work of Québec missionaries (priests, brothers and sisters) was especially important in Africa, followed by the missions in the Asia-Pacific area and the Americas.<sup>15</sup>

In Asia, the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes founded a mission in Hong Kong (China) as early as the mid-nineteenth century. In October 1898, the will to convert Japan to Catholicism led Sr. Hélène Paradis (1874-1960) to take part with French colleagues in the foundation of the mission of the Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie. After a long journey by land and sea, she was the first Québécois to be established in Japan.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the relative openness of Meiji Japan, Sr. Hélène Paradis lived in a world completely different from her motherland, especially in the prefecture of Kumamoto, where the Meiji reforms exerted little influence on local life. Consequently, Sr. Paradis had to adapt to a society whose ethnological bases were contrary to the milieu in which she had been socialized. However, the support of her colleagues facilitated her adaptation and enabled her to overcome those difficult stages. To

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<sup>14</sup> Jean Hamelin, 193.

<sup>15</sup> Adrien Bouffard, "L'offensive missionnaire du Canada catholique," *Bulletin de l'U.M.C* 12, no. 3 (July-September 1953): 117-123.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Leclerc, *Des Lys à l'ombre du mont Fuji: Histoire de la présence de l'Amérique française au Japon* (Sillery: Éditions du Bois-de-Coulonge, 1995), 11-12.

communicate with the population, she studied the Japanese language while taking care of lepers, which was the *raison d'être* of her presence.

Following the arrival of Sr. Paradis in Kumamoto (Kumamoto), hundreds of missionaries from Québec were disseminated in the country (See Table 1). Except for some areas already under the jurisdiction of European Catholic communities where the Québécois Church did not extend its apostolate, these missionaries from Québec provided a solid foundation in the principal cities on the islands Honshu and Kyushu. Of all the evangelized countries, Japan was the one that attracted the most Québécois. More than one hundred Catholic religious communities, coming mainly from Europe and North America, were established in Japan from the end of the nineteenth century. Within the Japanese ecclesiastical organization, Québec founded twenty-four missions and made significant contributions by its citizens and by its operation of seven international communities (See Table 2).<sup>17</sup>

For a number of years, the Québec Church's envoys to Japan were all nuns. This situation would change, though, in 1907. After an interminable journey by land and sea, Maurice Bertin (1870-1968), a French priest who had ministered in Québec, came to Sapporo (Hokkaido) along with Fr. Wenceslaus Kinold (1871-1952) to establish a mission under the German Franciscans. In view of the size of the apostolate, Fr. Pierre Gauthier (1881-1920), Br. Gabriel Godbout (1881-1952) and other members of the Ordre de Saint-François joined the little outpost in the following months.<sup>18</sup> For more than a decade, the Québécois Franciscans operated under German auspices. Their dream of acquiring their own apostolic region started to come true in 1921 when the Holy See entrusted them with an evangelization area in the Diocese of Nagasaki. This gave them the freedom that they had never previously enjoyed in the missions controlled by foreigners.

Between 1921 and 1936, Québécois established missions all over Japan, and in the areas where they controlled the apostolic work, this activity was the most intense. Their main areas of interest tended to be Tohoku, Hokkaido, Kanto and the island of Kyushu, which was the birthplace of Japanese Catholicism. The first missionaries settled on the islands of Kyushu, a historical centre of Japanese Christianity. However, constraints imposed in the 1930s and 1940s by domestic and international problems, as well as the climate, would contribute to their relocation to more hospitable territories in northern Japan. As one recent study notes:

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Hamelin, "Les missions extérieures," in Jean Hamelin, ed., *Les Franciscains au Canada, 1890-1990* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1990), 126-127.

The rising ultranationalism that led to Japan's diplomatic and economic isolation soon began to hamper missionary work. This was directed first of all against Roman Catholics. In late 1933, a wave of xenophobia led to the persecution of Franciscans at Kagoshima in southern Kyushu. With one exception, these were Canadians, mostly from Quebec, who were the target of an organized newspaper campaign. With the tacit connivance of local officials, Buddhist priests circulated lies about the friars, accusing them of espionage. Without any police protection, the brothers were declared enemies of Japan, their premises ransacked and official documents seized.<sup>19</sup>

*Propos japonais*, published in 1922 by Father Urbain-Marie Cloutier (1890-1965) is the first Québécois exercise of apology for the missionary work in Japan.<sup>20</sup> In this book praised by the religious press, Father Cloutier, who was a Franciscan, offered a personal account of Japanese civilization and expounded on what prompted the Holy See to invest such an amount of energy in the nation. It underscored the need for increasing conversions in a country whose growing influence in Asia could be used as a platform to propagate the Gospel.

The Catholic Church hoped that the creation of a critical mass of faithful within the elite would transform the nation into a launching pad for subsequent missionary efforts in neighboring pagan countries.<sup>21</sup> Through the evangelization of Japan, the Holy See hoped to turn the *Land of the Rising Sun* into an ally and prevent pagan Japanese expansionism in Asia and beyond. In Cloutier's opinion, however, much remained to be done if the Japanese threat were to be blunted: Japanese society had not been fully exposed to Catholicism and the advances in evangelization there were disappointing. This potentially dangerous situation would not change without strenuous work, in very difficult conditions, among Catholic nations, and particularly in territories such as Québec. In this context the missionary to Japan celebrated the earlier embrace of religious life by the children of New France. The missionary's detachment from temporal matters and the need to save the world from paganism were seen as ample justification of the laity's financial sacrifice to meet this great challenge. Despite the acknowledged material privations of missionary life, Church-produced propaganda continued to idealize the missionary vocation.

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<sup>19</sup> John D. Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 110.

<sup>20</sup> Urbain-Marie Cloutier, *Propos japonais* (Québec: Imprimerie franciscaine missionnaire, 1922).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

In a changing world, where materialist values were becoming predominant, the Holy See tried to reassert its presence through a vast missionary project that offered an alternative to atheism. In Québec, where the Church occupied a place of choice within the larger society, its future and status depended upon its success in gathering people around a common objective. From the beginning of twentieth century until the 1960s, the Québec clergy supported missionary work by pointing to the ever present danger of paganism in order to obtain the attention of its flocks. Yet, in spite of this moralizing Euro-centric outlook on Oriental society, Church-educated Québécois missionaries gradually developed an immense admiration for the refinement of Japanese culture.

During the 1930s, the Québécois clergy worked on the propagation of the faith, which it saw as the only valid bulwark of addressing the worldwide threat of Communism. Japan came to be regarded in certain ecclesiastical spheres as the beacon of Asia, which would push back the atheistic ideas of Moscow.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the invasion of Chinese territory by the Japanese Imperial army was justified for it was interpreted as an attempt to neutralize the threat of the Communist insurgency led by Mao Zedong (1893-1976). The rise of Japanese militarism, culminating with the Second World War (1939-1945), would create significant obstacles to the effort of the missionaries. The configuration of the international chessboard, with a strong British presence in Southeast Asia, indicated clearly to the Japanese which camp Canada would choose if war broke out in the Pacific theatre.

Despite the obstacles met in the work to evangelize Japan, the Church was anxious to cast this work in a positive light. In that respect, the Bulletin constituted an excellent means to promote the work of the missionaries already active in the territory, to attract new recruits and to sensitize the Québécois to the financial requirements of such a large endeavour.

In July 1927, a short anonymous text announced that the apostolic delegate of the Holy See resident in Japan, Mgr Mario Giardini (1877-1947), indicated to the Pope Pius XI, that the conversion of the Japanese to Catholicism was evolving continuously and that this phenomenon was recognized in all groups of society.<sup>23</sup> This first article on Japan published in the Bulletin, which discussed the appointment of the new archbishop of

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<sup>22</sup> Jean-Charles Beaudin, *Autour du monde: Rêves et réalités d'un voyage* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1944), 227-286.

<sup>23</sup> "Le catholicisme au Japon," *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* 1, no. 5 (July 1927): 30.

Tokyo and the project to name Japanese national bishops, suggested that a bright future lay ahead in Japan for Catholicism.

One year later, the provincial of the Dominicans, Father Émile-Alphonse Langlais (1872-1962) discussed the state of the missions in its community. In reference to the disciples of Saint Francis Xavier who were persecuted during the sixteenth century, and the century-long prohibition against most foreigners living in Japan, the article justified the need to support the current work of the new missionaries who sacrificed themselves to resume the work of Jesuit missionary pioneers.<sup>24</sup> Quoting Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum (1854-1932), prefect of the Propaganda Fide, Langlais stressed that despite the cultural differences that exist between Japan and Canada, the missionaries adapted well to Japan, whose “[...] fields of apostolate is vast and fertile [...]”.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Japan was presented as an area constituting a territory where several barriers existed to the spreading of the Gospel, but where Catholicism could develop. According to Langlois, young people showed more openness than their elders toward the message of Christianity, because of their willingness to transcend the material values of their social environment to profit from superior spiritual forces. They thus represented the best hope for the Church. As he noted: The zeal of missionary work seems impotent in its battle against materialism without heart and true religious insensitivity, but the divine leaven penetrates the masses [...].<sup>26</sup> To a pagan country, Catholicism offered a means of inculcating “[...] the Sun of justice and truth” to the Japanese.<sup>27</sup>

Advocating the need to train an indigenous clergy through the creation of a seminary in Kagoshima, Father Henri Langlois (1901-1968), Franciscan, stated in January 1932, that this project could be achieved because Japanese society held educational institutions and educated people in high regard. From this point of view, it became imperative to form “[...] educated and distinguished priests,” who would have the trust of their compatriots in their work of conversion.<sup>28</sup>

The country was seen as the place par excellence to ensure the blossoming of Catholicism because of the cultural values that dominated Japanese life. From this perspective, Father Hilarion Boulay (1883-1967) argued in 1932 that the Japanese seminarists had conscience, devotion and

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<sup>24</sup> Émile-Alphonse Langlais, “Mission dominicaine au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 1, no. 7 (July 1928): 18-21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Henri Langlois, “Il faut un séminaire à Kagoshima, Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 2, no. 8 (January 1932): 227.

a love of work well done.<sup>29</sup> Yet another writer alluded to the will of the Japanese to learn foreign languages, and to assimilate western habits and manners, a fact which impressed missionaries. Education offered by the Catholic schools met the needs of those who intended to pursue careers in diplomacy, science and business.<sup>30</sup> However, “it is obvious that a country whose civilization is so advanced like Japan will never adopt completely the principles of Catholicism if its youth does not receive initially an education which is in harmony with the spirit of Christ.”<sup>31</sup>

It appears with the reading of these texts that the discourse of the missionaries evolved according to the domestic and international events which were transforming Japan. The Church never hid its favorable leanings with regard to Japanese values and to the extension of its borders in this part of the world. For several missionaries, Japan could be used as a bulwark against materialism and Communism, while offering to Catholicism a hospitable environment. Still, in spite of these ambitions and the apparent ideological communion between the Holy See and Tokyo, most Japanese remained indifferent with regard to the Church and its teachings.<sup>32</sup>

As the Japanese nation grew more suspicious of foreigners and foreign influences from the late 1930s, it is not surprising to note at the dawn of the Second World War a modification of the Catholic thought toward Japan. In April 1940, the Japanese parliament, anxious to unify the nation and to reduce foreign influences, enacted a law stipulating that all religious organizations were to be controlled by Japanese nationals. In response, foreign religious communities transferred their assets, properties and management functions to the indigenous clergy. The attack on 7 December 1941, of the Japanese Imperial forces against the naval base at Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) marked the beginning of a dark period for the missionaries. A few hours after the offensive, Canada declared war to Japan and the Québec missionaries were held in their residences. Meanwhile, the Church had embarked on a campaign of appeasement vis-à-vis Japanese authorities, even before Pearl Harbor. In October 1941, Mgr Égide-Marie Roy (1894-1947), former apostolic prefect of Kagoshima, published a long text entitled *Hommage pontifical au système familial japonais*, where he

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<sup>29</sup> Hilarion Boulay, “Nos missionnaires à l’œuvre: Une école séraphique à Nagasaki (Japon),” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 2, no. 9 (April 1932): 281.

<sup>30</sup> “Le développement de l’enseignement catholique au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 2, no. 10 (July 1932): 317.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>32</sup> Sœurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et de Marie, “La fête des morts au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 2, no. 12 (January 1933): 365.

praised the morals and family values of his adopted country, despite the existence of certain divergences.<sup>33</sup> This praise coincided with recent instructions from the Holy See seeking to appease Japanese nationalism and to reconcile the duties of Japanese Catholics with their civic obligations.<sup>34</sup>

In order to spare the susceptibility of reactionary elements, the Church engaged in the japanization of its structures and of its activities. In March 1942, Japan and the Vatican established diplomatic relations, resulting in the official recognition of the Church in the islands. By this gesture, the Holy See hoped to obtain the indulgence of the Japanese in order to preserve its assets in the Japanese Empire. Japan's motivations for seeking a rapprochement with the Vatican were twofold: first, as a result of the war, the Japanese now occupied territories where Catholic influence was deeply entrenched, such as the Philippines. To facilitate its occupation of those areas, Tokyo wanted to have an official channel to facilitate discussions with the Vatican. Secondly, Emperor Showa (1901-1989) hoped that this new partner could be used as an intermediary to negotiate peace with the United States and the United Kingdom since they had ambassadors to the Holy See.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of restrictions imposed during the first months of the war, several missionaries maintained a certain freedom of movement and religious practice in their detention centre. In Sendai (Miyagi), captive missionaries kept in the bishopric could walk in the adjacent garden and celebrate mass.<sup>36</sup> In retrospect, the missionaries, even if they preferred not to reminisce about this period, felt they shared the same sacrifices as the Japanese. Suffering was a part of everyday life, with prayer serving as their only means of consolation. Lack of food and hygiene, compounded by the explosive atmosphere, inflicted them with physical and psychological scars.

There were some instances of exchange of enemy nationals that involved missionaries. In Yokohama (Kanagawa), in June 1942, after long negotiations between the United States and Japan, nearly five hundred

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<sup>33</sup> Égide-Marie Roy, "Hommage pontifical au système familial japonais," *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* 6, no. 4 (October 1941): 149-162.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Marella, "Directions très importantes de Son Excellence le Délégué apostolique aux missionnaires du Japon," *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* 3, no. 11 (July 1936): 392-399.

Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, "Document concernant le Japon," *Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé* 4, no. 2 (April 1937): 80-84.

<sup>35</sup> Masami Tanida, "Quelques épisodes dans les relations diplomatiques entre le Japon et le Saint-Siège," *L'Osservatore Romano* 16 November 1993, 10.

<sup>36</sup> "Les Japonais traitent bien nos religieux," *La Presse* 27 August 1942, 1.

foreigners, including seven Québécois, embarked on the Asama Maru for the port of Lourenço Marques, located in Portuguese East Africa. Thousands of kilometres from Japan, the Swedish motorship Gripsholm left New York with Japanese nationals on board. The exchange took place in the Portuguese colony in July. After a trip of one week, the travelers arrived in New York on 25 August. The same evening, the missionaries boarded a train bound for Montréal.

In October 1943, a second exchange took place. Over two hundred Canadians, hoping to return to their country, were exchanged for about sixty Japanese from Canada. Leaving from Yokohama on 13 September, the passengers sailed initially on the Japanese ship Teia Maru, which stopped in cities of the Japanese Empire to take on more foreign nationals. In Goa (Portuguese India), they were transferred to the Gripsholm, which sailed the Indian Ocean with stopovers in Port Elizabeth (South Africa) and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) before finally reaching New York (United States). The missionaries arrived in Montréal on 2 December. Like the previous year, a crowd gathered at the Bonaventure Station to welcome the returnees. Mgr Joseph Charbonneau (1892-1959), Archbishop of Montréal, superiors of religious communities and a hundred journalists were among those who greeted the travellers.

In order to keep contact with the Japanese reality and to continue their apostolate until the end of the war, some of the repatriated missionaries were assigned to the Japanese missions of British Columbia and South America. The comments of the missionaries to Japan were of a different nature than those from allied propaganda, which was virulent toward the Japanese. Although all agreed that the life of an internee was not particularly pleasant, under the circumstances, the majority of the missionaries thought that they had been treated reasonably.<sup>37</sup>

Father Émilien Tétreault (1899-1965), who was forced to return to Québec because Canada was at war with Japan, made some observations, which contrasted with the Canadian propaganda of the time. For the Franciscan, war with Japan was the direct result of the years of imposed humiliation by the colonial nations of the Occident. Though supportive of Canada's war effort against the right-wing extremists who had devalued Japanese society, Tétreault denounced the malicious anti-Japanese attacks by the propaganda services of Allied governments often presented in the media. He made favourable comments about the Japanese Empire, even though he supported Canada during the war. This missionary felt that propaganda, while necessary, should not ignore standards of morality,

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<sup>37</sup> "Émotion délirante à l'arrivée de 217 rapatriés du Japon," *La Presse* 2 December 1943, 11.

honesty and humanity.<sup>38</sup> He did not hesitate to describe the Japanese as a: “[...] great modern people, up to now victorious in all the wars, endowed with an economic power which challenges the great powers of the west, participating in all forms of intellectual, artistic, sporting life and, in these fields, achieving remarkable results.”<sup>39</sup> Looking to the future, Tétreault sought to prepare for the postwar period, which he hoped would be marked by an important expansion for his faith. In a pre-emptive way, he tried to shape the opinion of the people of Québec and reduce the antipathy which could potentially arise among the Québécois with respect to the resources that would be allocated by the clergy for the rebuilding of Japan after the war.

From the Catholic missions’ standpoint, the most traumatic event of the war was probably experienced by the seven Sœurs de l’Enfant-Jésus de Chauffailles who were imprisoned in Nagasaki. On the sunny morning of 9 August 1945, the noise of powerful engines broke the precarious silence of the Japanese sky furrowed from weeks of American bombing. Accustomed to this stratagem, the sisters did not pay attention to a plane that was going to precipitate the end of the war. A few minutes later (11:02), a luminous flash struck down from the sky and diffused an intense heat in the atmosphere. The second atomic bomb to hit Japan in three days crashed close to the mission. Fear seized the city: striking in the heart of Catholicism, the explosion on the Urakami district of Nagasaki killed 10,000 faithful, or 10% of the Catholics of the country.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival of the American troops ended a conflict that had a severe impact on the population and the religious communities. An imposing challenge lay ahead as “50 churches, 25 convents, 30 dispensaries and various institutions were destroyed, and more than half of the schools in the important cities.”<sup>41</sup> It would be of the utmost necessity to quickly put behind the horrors that invaded the collective memory in order to rebuild the nation.

With the end of the Second World War began the most effervescent period of the evangelization of Japan. Never had Catholicism benefited from such favourable conditions. Privileged by the Vatican, Japan became the country of mission in Asia, and boasted the greatest number of

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<sup>38</sup> Émilien Tétreault, “L’Église catholique au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 7, no. 5 (March 1944): 224-228.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Marie Dionne, “Espérances catholiques au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 9, no. 2 (June 1947): 78.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Québécois missionaries.<sup>42</sup> In the ecclesiastical community, which saw the dawn of a new successful era for Japanese Catholicism, a phenomenal growth of the mass of faithful was anticipated. However, this anticipated growth was by no means certain to last, as religion often becomes a transitory refuge during periods of distress. History has shown that when the Japanese find confidence in themselves, they see the spiritual support of the Church as less necessary than its temporal contribution in the education field, which meets the desires of performance and excellence for rebuilding a nation.

The United States, concerned with eliminating militarist symbols, supported the arrival of missionaries, who contributed to the introduction of a more pacifist and Occidentalized society. The legal obstacles, which once limited the activities of the Church, were eliminated and the religious buildings requisitioned during the war were returned to their previous owners. In a country disillusioned by patriotism, the message of the Catholic Church seemed compatible with the harmonious ambitions of an emerging new society. Confident that Christian enthusiasm could triumph soon, the majority of the missionaries that had been repatriated during the War, returned to the islands to continue their work. To answer the papal call, eleven Québec missionary communities were established in Japan between 1947 and 1960 (Table 2). Based on past experience, the efforts of these workers of God were focused on education, social and parochial works, sectors which made it possible for the Church to be well established in the society.

Pillars of apostolic work, the sisters came in great numbers to support the priests' work. The Clarisses (1947), the Rédemptoristines (1950) and the Petites Filles de Saint-Joseph (1951), whose work is praised in the Church, arrived in Japan full of hope. The Sœurs de la Présentation de Marie (1948) and the Sœurs de la Charité de Québec (1953) were called in as reinforcements to apply their teaching talents in the service of restoring the Catholic school system. As for the Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame des Anges (1949) and the Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa (1960), they invested their energies in social work. Fewer male communities settled in Japan. However, the newcomers originated from the most dynamic groups that Québec could provide. In 1948, the Clercs de Saint-Viateur, the Rédemptoristes and the Société des Missions-Étrangères du Québec founded missions. Three years later, the Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne arrived in the Kanto region.

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<sup>42</sup> "Où sont nos missionnaires canadiens?" *Prêtres et Missions* 10, no. 8 (October-December 1950): 439-440.

Mgr Marie-Joseph Lemieux (1902-1994), former Bishop of Sendai recalled in a 1948 article the pains undergone by the Japanese and by the foreign missionaries, such as the explosion of the two atomic bombs, which destroyed “[...]Nagasaki, the Rome of Japan[...].”<sup>43</sup> According to Mgr Lemieux, the Japanese because of their “[...] fortitude and will to rebuild their nation, which is explained only by one great force of soul [...]” could constitute “the flag bearer of Christian civilization in the Far East, if only we do all in our effort to spread the message of Christ there.”<sup>44</sup> The Japanese possess qualities of “[...] courage, tenacity, endurance [...]”, which constitute bases for the development of Catholicism, in spite of the last ambitions of imperialism “[...] of a proud nation [...].”<sup>45</sup> In Mgr Lemieux’s opinion, the Québécois had to forgive Japan for its militarist faults, while denouncing the wrongs of a nation that the propaganda of the conquerors continued to publicize. The Church had to counter this negative image in order to support the rebuilding of the islands on a Christian basis and Japan’s openness to the world.<sup>46</sup>

A few months later, Father Sylvestre Pierre Juergens (1894-1969), superior of American Marianists, published a relatively long article entitled *Aperçus sur le Japon*.<sup>47</sup> This text took the form of a mission report written following a tour of his community’s establishments in Japan. In spite of the miserable living conditions which confronted the Japanese, the author spoke about “[...] the ruin of a pleasant people, progressive, but overwhelmed, whose territory [...] is as beautiful as Switzerland [...].”<sup>48</sup> However, the urban and industrial landscape of the country offered the image of a disadvantaged nation, where the productivity, in particular in the coal mining sector, was weak and the land was overpopulated.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of the war, Juergens noted that there was good morale among the Japanese, which would allow a fast rebuilding of the economy. He noted their attraction to the United States and argued that the country had to play an important role as a shield against the propagation of Communism in Asia.<sup>50</sup> In conclusion, Juergens judged that the nation had

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<sup>43</sup> Marie-Joseph Lemieux, “Les espoirs de l’Église au Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 9, no. 6 (June 1948): 305.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 306-307.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-309.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>47</sup> Sylvestre Juergens, “Aperçus sur le Japon,” *Bulletin de l’Union missionnaire du Clergé* 10, no. 1 (January-March 1949): 3-22.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

the foundations in moral and family values to be a fertile ground for Catholicism.<sup>51</sup>

Four year later in a review about the principal mission countries in Asia, Adrien Bouffard (1917-1974) presented a short outline of Catholic activities in Japan. He described the islands as being overpopulated with a poor land base and with many large cities. For Bouffard, the presence of legal abortion to counter overpopulation constituted a reprehensible manner to counter this problem.<sup>52</sup>

It is in the field of education that Québécois made their mark within the Church and in Japanese society. With their emphasis on the training of the whole person, they attracted the admiration of the people. It is the most tangible heritage and benefit offered to Japan, especially as the development of these schools was made possible through generous financial contributions from the people of Québec. In the fall of 1984, the Prime Minister of Québec, René Lévesque (1922-1987) visited the renowned Rakusei secondary school in Kyoto (Kyoto) that the Clercs de Saint-Viateur had founded in 1952. It was the first Catholic boys' school in the old Japanese capital. This model institution is renowned in Japan for the quality of its education, which puts young people at the heart of society's concerns and prepares students for admission to the best institutions of higher learning. Lévesque was so impressed by the school that he asked his hosts why it was so successful among the Japanese. François Allard (1925-1997), the principal, replied that it used educational methods that had been abandoned in Québec at the time of the Quiet Revolution. The Premier was dumbfounded by the frankness of his host.<sup>53</sup>

Although the educational work of the missionaries reached few Japanese, because of the elitist character of their institutions, several personalities of the economic, political and religious sectors received diploma from these schools. Though the first establishments of Catholic instruction were founded during Meiji era, their reputation within the Japanese society increased especially in the 1950s. The postwar context and the popular will to rebuild the country quickly, favored the development of these schools.

In a country where education was and remains a priority, the Church founded institutions answering the aspirations of the Japanese. In large cities, the demand was so high that many had to refuse candidates. It is

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>52</sup> Adrien Bouffard, "L'Asie," *Prêtres et Missions* 12, no. 2 (April-June 1953): 98-99.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with François Allard in Kyoto in 1994.

clear that to enhance its reputation with decision-makers, the clergy relied on an elitist approach to education, which proved to be a sound strategy for the future in the islands. The discriminating choice of the best elements of the society and the quality of the teaching helped the schools gain recognition, which promoted a good image of Catholicism.

In 1956 the magazine published a message from Pius XII (1939-1958) to the people of Japan which had been released on 13 April 1952. It summarized the perennial image of Japanese values as perceived by the missionaries:

We greatly appreciated the Japanese nation, its past glories and its remarkable merits. We highly appreciate the significance of its generous kindness, its tenacity in action and its courage in suffering, its scrupulous devotion to duty and the common good, its admirable attachment to arts and culture, and its reverence for the family as an institution [...].<sup>54</sup>

In spring 1962, in the last article on Japan that was published in the Bulletin, the French Jesuit Jacques Bésineau, professor of French Literature at Sophia University (Tokyo) discussed *La pensée japonaise*. According to the author, the Japanese were eager to learn and increase their knowledge, due to their artistic, scientific and technical aptitudes. They had emotive and delicate nuances that their language expressed well. It was a nation where the social bonds and the principles of courtesy, collective interest, deference, loyalty and integrity were well established.<sup>55</sup>

In conclusion, conceptions of Japan in the Bulletin de l'Union missionnaire du Clergé show clearly that the Catholic missionaries always perceived this country positively. In spite of the difficulties encountered by the Church during the Second World War, they remained deeply respectful of Japanese society. This attitude is related to the fact that Japan was a modern nation with a social foundation which they felt could be compared advantageously with many Western countries. Moreover, interests and values shared by Japan and the Holy See were often symbiotic, in particular with regard to Communism, which had begun to make major inroads throughout Asia, in particular China, Korea and Vietnam. Japan, with its thousand-year old civilization, thus constituted for many missionaries anxious to continue the work started by Saint Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century, a place where Catholicism had historical foundations that could make Japan particularly receptive to the Gospel.

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<sup>54</sup> "Message au peuple japonais," *Prêtres et Missions* 13, no. 6 (April-June 1956): 266-267.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Bésineau, "La pensée japonaise," *Messages de l'U.M.C* 16, no. 6 (April-June 1962): 288-295.

Although the Québécois missionaries had a specific objective, their legacy extends beyond evangelization. They contributed to the internationalization of Japan, particularly after the Second World War. Through their philanthropic works they discreetly supported the resilient Japanese who arose from the horrors of war and nuclear cataclysm to rebuild their country.

**Table 1: Québécois Missionaries in Japan (1900-1990)**

Year	Sisters	Priests	Brothers	Total
1900	1	—	—	1
1905	7	—	—	7
1910	7	5	1	13
1915	7	2	—	9
1920	9	3	—	12
1925	10	11	4	25
1930	25	29	2	56
1935	71	49	10	130
1940	99	52	13	164
1945	55	37	13	105
1950	145	75	24	244
1955	185	112	45	342
1960	191	121	55	367
1965	211	122	56	389
1970	189	116	55	360
1975	158	107	55	320
1980	132	91	47	270
1985	106	81	41	228
1990	77	74	30	181

Source: Richard Leclerc, *Des Lys à l'ombre du mont Fuji: Histoire de la présence de l'Amérique française au Japon*, 167-168.

**Table 2: Catholic Religious Communities in Japan with Québécois Members**

Communities and Country of Origin of the Mission	Foundation of the Mission	Québécois Presence
<b>Women</b>		
Sœurs de l'Enfant-Jésus de Chauffailles (France)	1877	1928-1980
Sœurs de Saint-Paul de Chartres (France)	1878	1935-2001
Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie (France)	1898	1898-2005
Religieuses du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus (France)	1908	1932-1985
Sœurs Missionnaires de l'Immaculée-Conception (Québec)	1926	1926-....
Congrégation Romaine de Saint-Dominique (France)	1931	1931-1969
Sœurs des Saints Noms de Jésus et de Marie (Québec)	1931	1931-1940 1979-....
Congrégation de Notre-Dame (Québec)	1932	1932-....
Sœurs Missionnaires du Christ-Roi (Québec)	1933	1933-....
Sœurs Adoratrices du Précieux-Sang (Québec)	1934	1934-1989
Sœurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte-Vierge (Québec)	1934	1934-....
Sœurs de Sainte-Anne (Québec)	1934	1934-1943
Sœurs Auxiliatrices (France)	1935	1951-2003
Sœurs de Notre-Dame de Charité du Bon-Pasteur (Québec)	1935	1935-....
Ursulines de l'Union Canadienne (Québec)	1936	1936-....
Clarisses (Québec)	1947	1947-....
Sœurs de la Présentation de Marie (Québec)	1948	1948-....
Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame des Anges (Québec)	1949	1949-....
Rédemptoristines (Québec)	1950	1950-1997
Petites Filles de Saint-Joseph (Québec)	1951	1951-1957
Sœurs de la Charité de Québec (Québec)	1953	1953-....
Sœurs de la Charité d'Ottawa (Ontario)	1960	1960-....
<b>Men</b>		
Jésuites (Italy)	1549	1951-....
Franciscains (Québec)	1921	1907-....
Dominicains (Québec)	1928	1928-....
Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes (Québec)	1932	1932-....
Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice (Québec)	1933	1933-....
Clercs de Saint-Viateur (Québec)	1948	1948-....
Rédemptoristes (Québec)	1948	1948-....
Société des Missions-Étrangères (Québec)	1948	1948-....
Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne (Québec)	1951	1951-....

Source: Richard Leclerc, *Des Lys à l'ombre du mont Fuji: Histoire de la présence de l'Amérique française au Japon*, 19.