

**An American in Japan:  
William Merrell Vories (Hitotsuyanagi),  
1905-1964**

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During the war with Japan (1941-1945), few Americans apparently remained in that country. Most were forced out by the military government. One who remained, with all the hardships and perils of living in a nation fighting an imperial war and struggling ultimately for survival, was William Merrell Vories.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Leavenworth, Kansas, raised in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Denver, Colorado, Vories attended Colorado College. At a student conference in Toronto he had a vision of Christ which caused him to dedicate his life to Christ, and to a missionary post in the interior of Japan.

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1. I owe much to Tomoyuki Serino, who has furnished me with numerous documents and leads; to Naohiko Okumura, for his biography of Vories; and to Masahiro Matsui for his perceptive comments.

For a summary of Vories' life, with an emphasis on his youth in Flagstaff, Arizona, see William H. Lyon, "Planting the Mustard Seed: The Flagstaff Boyhood of William Merrell Vories, Missionary to Japan," *Journal of Arizona History*, 38 (December, 1997), 257-282; Merrell Vories Hitotsuyanagi, *A Mustard Seed In Japan*, 14th Edition [Printed by the Omi Brotherhood], (Oakland, Calif.: Color Art Press, 1948); Vories Hitotsuyanagi, *Autobiography of a Loser* [in Japanese] (Omi-hachiman: Omi Brotherhood, [1970]); Grace Nies Fletcher, *The Bridge of Love* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1967). Fletcher's biography of Merrell and Maki Vories Hitotsuyanagi is a vanity press, but it is a source of valuable information, based on the recall of Maki in the middle 1960s. See also Tom Serino (T.serino@vories.co.jp). "William Merrell Vories."

There he devoted his life work to evangelization.

By the time war with America began in 1941, Vories had lived in Japan for thirty-six years. In that time his Christian Brotherhood in the small town of Omi-hachiman included outlying rural churches, a tuberculosis sanitarium, an architectural firm with a branch in Korea, the importation of quality building materials for architectural enterprises, the agency for the Hammond electric organ, a Kindergarten and a girls' middle school, a Mentholatum factory with branch offices in Osaka, Tokyo, Mukden, and Peking, a library, and a YMCA. After the war he and Makiko, his wife, established a secondary school. Although he returned to the United States frequently to visit friends and family, and to tend to his rather frail health, Vories settled into the Japanese milieu. He married into the Japanese aristocracy in 1919. Finally on the eve of the war between Japan and his native country, he renounced his American citizenship, as it was required by American law, and adopted Japanese citizenship, assuming the name of his wife's family, Hitotsuyanagi, as was required by Japanese law. Today, his legacy is carried on in the Omi Brotherhood Foundation,

which is organized into five corporations and fourteen enterprises, among which are the Evangelism Office in the Vories Memorial House, the Vories Memorial Hospital, the Convalescent Hospital and Care Center, the Fukudo Medical Center, several Home Care and Nursing Care Centers, the Omi Brotherhood Schools, the manufactory which produces Menterm (Mentholatum) and other similar products, and finally the Ichiryusha Vories Architectural Office (in Osaka), all dedicated to the furthering of the "Spirit of William Merrell Vories."

Vories was a "Man for All Seasons," an evangelist, a poet, a musician, an entrepreneur, and an architect. Although he was not at the cutting edge of these disciplines, he was talented, and perhaps he should be judged, not as a religious devotee, but as an artiste, one whose poetry had some depth to it, who loved to perform on the piano and organ, who composed hymns, who designed an array of stolid buildings with stunning architectural decorations, and who ran a highly successful business establishment based on the radical principle of Christian socialism. Although Vories can be viewed as a dilettante, first and foremost he viewed himself as a Christian missionary.

## EVANGELIZATION

As a young man Vories matriculated at Colorado College, where he bought a copy of John Mott's book, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*.<sup>2</sup> The title speaks for itself; Vories believed that histo-

ry was on the side of Christian conversion, and that perseverance and dedication to this mission would bring success. In 1917, Vories admitted, that he may have set for himself an impossible task, yet he expected phenomenal success as he valiantly strove to fulfill the goals of Jesus Christ. In 1918, Vories ran an article in his journal, *The Omi Mustard Seed*, by A. A. Hyde, an American businessman who later gave Vories the patent for the manufacture of mentholatum, who forecast the righteousness of nations, as expressed in the glorious sentiments of President Woodrow Wilson. The Word of God was at hand.<sup>3</sup>

So convinced was Vories of the inevitability of the Christian message that he sought to serve by example and give gentle encouragement. He rejected moral or rhetorical coercion, and he apparently achieved some success. His belief that the Gospel would automatically attract individuals probably revealed a naivete about his influence over other human beings. His first conversions occurred in 1905, "the greatest day of my life," when many boys through prayers and hymn singing accepted the Bible and Christianity.

On Christmas day in 1905, Otis Cary came down from Kyoto and baptized nine men— "a splendid picture...of bright, strong, young men consecrating their lives

2. John R. Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1900). Merrell autographed the book, now located in the Vories Memorial House in Omihachiman, including his dormitory and room number in the inscription.

3. [Vories], Editorial: "12 Years in Omi," *Omi Mustard Seed*, 10 (February, 1917), 252-258; A.A. Hyde, "Church and State Today," *Omi Mustard Seed* (March, 1918), 287-294.

to righteousness and truth."

Try to picture to yourselves a student of powerful physique and strong personality, who was known to every man present as a sport, a bully, a disturber of the school's discipline, and one of the proudest men in the institution, standing before a roomful of his schoolmates, whom he had delighted to terrorize, whom he had done his utmost to harass,—sobbing out his confession, completely overcome; without a hand having been raised against him, ten days after these students had begun unitedly to pray—in the face of all but impossible probabilities—for his conversion. Imagine the spiritual effect upon both parties.<sup>4</sup>

Vories' converts assisted him at his prayer meetings and Bible study sessions, but Buddhists, and young Japanese boys who employed "fist discipline" terrorized recent converts in the high school. The tension caused a recurrence of what was diagnosed then as intestinal tuberculosis, an ailment which plagued him until he had his appendix (!) taken out in New York City.<sup>5</sup>

In 1928, in his "Platform of Omi Mission," Vories formulated several objectives: to evangelize in new and experimental—and non-denominational—ways, especially in rural, conservative communities; to recruit leaders and workers of diverse ethnic backgrounds; to preach a non-

denominational Gospel; to evangelize only in unconverted communities; to avoid duplication of missionary activity in all circumstances; and to work for social reforms such as temperance, social purity, adherence to marriage customs, physical and sanitary betterment, and alleviation of conditions for the poor.<sup>6</sup>

When mischievous boys disrupted Bible classes, or took over playgrounds of pre-schoolers, Vories and his wife employed love and understanding to resolve the situation. After the war a group of young hoodlums intimidated passengers on the trains, as we shall see, and the couple invited the ruffians for tea and cakes, and accompanied them to church. Such gentle measures established order better than police action, they thought. Such tolerance Vories extended to the dominant Oriental religions of Japan:

Don't try to convert Buddhists, Shintoists, atheists or communists by criticizing their beliefs [he averred]. We must live the better way in our daily rounds. If God himself had to supplement the word of the prophets and priests by sending his Son in the flesh to live among men, how can we convince men today of our sincerity, that Christianity is not only a good ideal but actually works, without being a living demonstration?<sup>7</sup>

In 1938 the government ordered all Christians to visit a State Shinto shrine before attending Christian services. Churches were also coordinated into the Kyodan, the United Church of Christ in Japan, in which Shinto rites must be

6. *Omi Mustard Seed* (1928), 17.

7. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 70-73, 109, 116, 194-197.

4. Vories, "The Japanese Experiences of an American Teacher," *Omi Mustard Seed*, 3 (April and June, 1909), 25-29, 37-44; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 66-73.

5. Masahiro Matsui, "A Bridge Over the Pacific," an uncompleted biography of Vories: 24-56. He was misdiagnosed with intestinal tuberculosis in the early 1900s, but that must not have been appendicitis since appendicitis comes to a climax quickly.

respected. Some missionaries regarded this coordination as sacrilegious, others looked upon it as a political gesture which did not affect their basic faith. Vories apparently belonged to this latter group, although he opposed obeisance to another religion. During this time of intense Japanese nationalism, he had no choice but to acquiesce. It is in this context that a controversy arose over his application for citizenship in Japan.<sup>8</sup>

Vories' tolerance for other religions, such as Shinto, resulted in a debate in Christian journals in the United States. To achieve Japanese citizenship in 1941, the state required him to enter a shrine and raise the sacred wine of purification to his lips, allow the Shinto priest to pray with the sacred wand with its banners of white paper *gohei*, and lay a spray of holy *sakaki*, or evergreens, which stand for eternity because the leaves never decompose, upon the altar. Some clerics who knew Vories branded his appearance at the shrine as sacrilege, and protested his action in *The Christian Century* in the United States. Vories replied in the journal, saying that a rite in Shinto shrines was similar to visiting Mount Vernon, and that the Japanese word for "worship" and "prayer" had a much broader meaning than in English, and as he would not "worship" or "pray" to George Washington, but express admiration or respect for him, so he had done in the Shinto shrine. One of his critics, however, fluent in the Japanese language, declared that he had indeed

8. John Caldwell Thiessen, *A Survey of World Missions* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1955), 122-123.

worshiped and prayed at the shrine, regardless of what Vories had said.<sup>9</sup>

Vories' mission and its satellite industries became well-established in Japan by 1940. He faced the competition of other Protestant evangelists, prompting him to complain about too many missionaries. That Japan was overpopulated with missionaries in some places and underrepresented in other places created a chaotic situation for the Christian movement in Japan. A definite master plan or standard should be adopted to eliminate overlapping, he insisted. Mission boards should not send out men and women to the civilized nations, such as Japan, on the same basis as to the backward peoples.<sup>10</sup>

As Vories' easy affability attracted Japanese converts, so also it attracted the generosity of donors. He traveled widely seeking money in Europe and America, and was gone so much of the time, that he neglected his marriage. His wife often felt lonely. He not only was absent from home, but he was absent-minded, often forgetting his pocket book and needing to throw himself on the mercy of train and ship bursars, or to rely on God's good will. He was also adept at generating income from his own endeavors.<sup>11</sup>

9. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 153-160, 209-210; Merrell Hitotsuyanagi, "Shrines and Japanese Christians," *Christian Century*, 58 (November 26, 1941), 1475; D. C. Holtom, "Correspondence," *ibid.*, 1475-1476.

10. Vories, "Are More Missionaries Needed in Japan?" and "Effects of Overlapping in Japan," *Missionary Review of the World*, 57 (October, 1934), 44, 456. As early as 1917, he objected to overlapping by so many missionaries: Vories, Editorial: "12 Years in Omi," *Omi Mustard Seed*, 10 (February, 1917), 254.

11. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 75-76, 106-112.

## MUSIC AND POETRY

As a "Man for All Seasons" Vories combined his Christian devotion with a commitment to the arts. His so-called diaries, which are entries in day-books, are actually daily devotionals, and contain few chronological events. They measure more his depth of religious feeling than an autobiography of the man. But a vital part of his religious environment consisted of music and poetry.

The love of music in his life possibly occurred before his love of religion. In Flagstaff he demonstrated a natural ability to both sight read and play by ear on the piano and the organ. He played for the opening school exercises and for the Presbyterian church service in Flagstaff. He would rather play on the keyboard during the noon hour at school than go outside. He remembered the wind melodies he heard as he wandered through the Coconino Forest. "The compositions of the masters remind me of great trees in an ordered forest," he told his wife, who incidentally liked to play duets with him on the piano, and was a trained singer.<sup>12</sup>

Music was a spiritual moment. A musician should have a "divine urge" to transmit true art to starving souls. Music rendered a person calm in adversity, happy when alone, just, rational, and sane in all his dealings. He often closed his hectic days consulting with architectural clients by accompanying the violinist Goro

12. Vories Hitotsuyanagi, *Autobiography*; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 137.

Takagi to soothe his frayed nerves. With his artist friend Goro, Vories had a fraternity of spirit, a true intimacy, and when they played together they became unconscious of race. When the young Goro died, Vories wrote a biographical tribute to him. Vories laid down twenty principles of music performance, which emphasized the "divine urge," the high spirituality, the innate ability, the therapeutic value, and music for music's sake. He disapproved of technical brilliance; music is important for revealing character rather than for player perfection. He admired the performances of Fritz Kreisler and Ignace Jan Paderewski; he enjoyed the compositions of Mendelssohn and Saint Saens. When in the United States, he traveled around to play organs in large churches. Vories also composed hymns. "Let There Be Light, O God of Hosts" has been set to two tunes (in 1908 and 1910) and was selected for the United Church of Christ *New Century Hymnal*, and another song, "The Hymn of Peace," has appeared in many hymnals.<sup>13</sup>

Vories also experimented with poetry as a young lad. He attempted to capture in words and lyrics the magnificent scenery around Flagstaff--the Grand Canyon, Oak Creek Canyon, the Mogollon Rim, Sunrise over Diablo Canyon. He confessed that he could not capture the

13. Vories, *Goro Takagi, Musician: A Tribute* (Omi-hachiman, Nippon: Omi Brotherhood Book Department, 1934); Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 101, 127-128, 139-141. On his extended trip in the United States in 1930, Merrell played at least three organs. Vories, "Messrs. Vories and Yoshida's Tours," *Omi Mustard Seed* (October-December, 1930), 122-125.

ecstasy of the moment, but he carried the words and the tunes around with him for the rest of his life.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout his life he composed mostly in iambic pentameter and in rhyme. He responded to inspiration on the spur of the moment, writing on scraps of paper which he tucked in various cubby holes. Some he published in his newsletter. In 1960, three years after he suffered a massive stroke that left him mute and bedfast, his wife gathered the scraps of paper and the random publications into a book of poetry. Like his music and like his architecture, it was not *avant garde*. But through his verse, he often expressed a depth of feeling.

What were his primary concerns? Christianity of course, brotherhood, nature and scenery, Japanese civilization, including Emperor Hirohito, puns, and pacifism or an anti-military attitude.<sup>15</sup>

An example of his humor (punning) is found in:

### TO B, BUT NOT 2 B

(With deep apologies I bow  
Before the Unseen Purple Cow)  
I never saw a vitamin  
And never hope to see one;  
But if I must have one within,  
I'd rather C than B 1. [p. 82]

He devoted a good deal of his verse to Japan and the Orient:

14. Vories, *Autobiography*, 50, 52.

15. Merrell Vories Hitotsuyanagi, *Poems of the East and West* (Dayton, Ohio: Omi Brotherhood Foundation of America, 1960).

### TO MY ADOPTED COUNTRY

Though late, O my adopted country, I  
Became thy son by no caprice of chance,  
No accident of birth or circumstance,  
Nor human will, nor force exerted by  
Some star-alignment in the far-off sky--  
But through a ripe, long contemplated  
choice,  
Made final by Heaven's guiding Inner  
Voice,  
Unmoved by pros or cons of hue and cry.  
And therefore is my love for thee  
unfeigned;  
Not duty-born nor of another learned;  
But more a secret fire that long had  
burned  
Beneath the ashes and at last has  
gained  
The upper air and freedom to proclaim  
The living light and ardor of its flame.

December 4 and 26, 1942 [p. 47]

Vories developed an almost worshipful attitude toward Emperor Hirohito, as did indeed General Douglas MacArthur and the staff at Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP). Shortly after the Emperor broadcast his surrender message, Vories wrote:

### TENNO HEIKA BANZAI!

By Heaven guided and by men revered,  
O Sovereign of unbroken Dynasty,  
Since that auspicious hour in history  
When first the bulwarks of Nippon  
were reared--  
O Champion of world-wide amity,  
Who dared decree for Peace when others  
feared,  
Now more than ever to our hearts  
endeared  
As deeper strike the roots of loyalty--  
In chastened awe and through our  
grateful tears,  
At last we see, with late-awakening  
eyes,

The majesty of high self-sacrifice:  
Your scorn of consequence--though  
death or shame--  
To save your People, through ten thousand  
years  
Shall add new lustre to your glorious  
Name.  
September 2, 2605 (A. D. 1945), [p.  
143]

Vories was invited to appear at a certain place in the garden of the Kyoto Imperial Palace on June 10, 1947, "in a morning suit," to visit Hirohito for an informal half hour:

### ON MEETING THE EMPEROR

I held the highest guerdon to be won  
By labors long and oft discouraging  
Would be to stand at last before the  
king  
With One's assignment not too badly  
done;  
But never dreamed I to be summoned  
thus,  
My Heaven-appointed task but half  
complete,  
The august monarch face-to-face to  
meet  
And hear his gracious voice magnanimous:  
There, eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart, I  
heard  
His spirit speaking ere he voiced a  
word,  
While from his presence seemed to  
emanate  
A light both searching and compassionate;  
And from the first revealing glance, I  
know  
He is my sovereign and my brother,  
too.

June 16, 1947 [p. 145]

Just before Vories and his wife moved

to the mountain retreat of Karuizawa in June, 1942, Vories composed a great lament for the dislocations and tension brought on by the war, which formed a backdrop for the sense of failure which consumed him in the post-war period:

### RESURRECTION

Where is the power that once we  
knew,  
The fellowship that made us glad,  
When we were weak and we were few  
And Faith was all the wealth we  
had?--

A dozen men, with hearts as one  
And by the Holy Spirit led,  
May change a world from sun to  
sun

And raise to life the moral dead.

But when by hundreds they encamp,  
With riches hedging them about,  
And plot their strategies, the lamp  
Of love and light and power fades out.

Let us be up and marching on,  
Recoup our spiritual loss,  
Dethrone the reigning soroban  
Restore allegiance to the cross:

Cease mimicking the Pharisee  
Who hungers after fame and power;  
Return to true humility  
And seek God's guidance hour by hour.  
Then, though in smaller groups we  
fare

And though we scatter wide and far  
We shall be one in living prayer  
And loyalty--where e'er we are.  
We shall be one through Christ our  
Lord

And one in fellowship for good,  
With love and light and power  
restored

Within a living Brotherhood.

March 17, 1942 [pp. 116-117]

So depressed was Vories during the bitter war years at Karuizawa, when "in smaller groups we fare and though we scatter wide and far," that he began his *Autobiography of a Failure*. Earlier in 1940, he had seen victory in defeat, as he wrote in a poem:

O thou Sublime Eternal Failure...  
 Yet was it failure? In the world doth  
 shine  
 No victory so slow so sure, as thine!  
 [p. 28]

On the brink of the war, Vories seemed haunted with failure.

From his poems, it is clear that Vories was not politically oriented. The tragic world events of the 1930s and 1940s he ignored. He registered no protest over the murders of Japanese civilian officials in the mid-1930s, showed no awareness of the growing tension between Japan and the United States, nor of the ravages of the war itself. He was a pacifist, and wrote eloquent poems against the American military. Strangely, he regretted that he had no sons to sacrifice in the war:

O sires who mourn your sons in battle  
 slain  
 Scorn not your brothers with no sons  
 to give!  
 Pity us whose hearts have never  
 known  
 The love and loss of offspring of our  
 own....  
 In spite of all the suffering you have  
 borne,  
 Our grief is greater, having none to  
 mourn.  
 June 29, 1942 [p. 154]

In 1909 his "Peace Hymn," which contained the line "Let woe and waste of warfare cease," was republished in *Missionary*

*Review of the World* in 1938. But he saved his greatest criticisms for his native country:

### APPEAL TO AMERICA

America! America! Once home of the  
 brave and free!  
 Awaken to the challenge of the hour!  
 Shake off the shackles of this lust for  
 power;  
 Return to thy first love of liberty!--  
 Of liberty for all the brotherhood  
 Of all the peoples of our common  
 earth,  
 Of every race and color, creed and  
 birth,  
 Beneath one circling Heavenly Father-  
 hood!  
 Join not the giants who would domi-  
 nate  
 The weaker nations, plunder distant  
 climes;  
 Be thou their champion in these preg-  
 nant times,  
 The helping hand and not the hand of  
 hate!  
 Lead thou the host of righteousness,  
 the van  
 Of those who serve to save the race of  
 man!

December 17, 1944 [p. 48]

This last, written as the devastating American bombing began, probably reflected Vories' pain over his own physical and social hardships, and his determination to keep his eye on the main act--the upholding of the spirit of the brotherhood of man. But politics--neither Japan's responsibility for beginning the war, nor the United States' commitment to unconditional surrender--had much meaning to Vories.

### ARCHITECTURE

Vories' reputation as a musician and a poet was not nearly as well known as his role as an evangelist, or as an architect. Of all the enduring legacies of Vories, arguably his architecture is as significant as any of his other artistic achievements, for buildings--schools, churches, hospitals, residences, and commercial buildings--had a permanence which even earthquakes could not destroy. Toward the end of his life, the number of buildings constructed under his auspices--his firm employed many architects--numbered 1,091, and in addition had prepared 392 renderings or designs for others to use.<sup>16</sup>

In his youth Vories had planned to become an architect, earn a large fortune to send out into the world a dozen or so missionaries. He apparently studied architecture at Colorado College as his major, and also as a hobby. He gave up architecture when he went to Japan as a missionary. He began to realize that missions throughout the Far East often constructed uneconomical, inconvenient, and faulty structures, and were at the mercy of incompetent native contractors. Could not he serve other missions while earning support for his own? This proved to be a remarkable idea.<sup>17</sup>

In 1909 he set up his architectural firm in Omi, which soon had offices in Osaka and Tokyo, and business throughout the Empire. His structures withstood

the earthquake of 1923 better than most, and the firm repaired and reconstructed buildings in the wake of that catastrophe. He hired people of many nationalities and creeds, and employed them eight hours a day for six days a week, unheard of in traditional Japanese enterprises. He was able to pour money into YMCA construction, schools, the tuberculosis sanatorium, and the brotherhood buildings. He constructed twenty-four buildings by 1941. Beginning in 1920, he imported superior building materials to withstand earthquakes, which he also sold to other contractors. This construction aspect of Vories' endeavors is unique among missionaries, and undoubtedly was significant in supporting his Christian work, in integrating himself into Japanese culture and society, and in making it possible for him to survive the hardships of a war between his adopted country and his native country.

Vories admitted that many of his building designs were synthetic, and did not adhere to the style of any one architectural period. He modernized old styles. He compared his style to a mule, the product of a mixed parentage; his system was not a racehorse, but not a broken down nag either. His structures were utilitarian, with American conveniences and Japanese artistic lines and proportion, which sought to instill restfulness and balance. Vories learned his architecture in the America of H. H. Richardson, Charles F. McKim, and Louis Sullivan. All three masters were schooled in the Beaux Arts tradition, which they rejected in favor of

16. Summary of Architectural Projects, in Lyon's possession.

17. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 79-86, 125-126.

steel framed, functional buildings, with a de-emphasis on ornamentation. Vories had as examples McKim's Boston Public Library, Richardson's Marshall Field Warehouse in Chicago, Sullivan's Wainwright building in St. Louis, his Columbian Exposition presentations in Chicago (1893), and his Carson, Pirie, Scott department store in the downtown Chicago loop. Vories followed these examples, emphasizing form and function, but adopting Gothic, Spanish, English colonial or Tudor, and Art Noveaux when it suited him, just as did McKim, Richardson, and Sullivan. After the earthquake of 1923, Vories' great achievement, besides the various reconstructions, was the mission school called Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin, built with concrete and iron for permanence, and which was demolished in 1993. Vories' buildings had function--light, ventilation, appropriateness, a sense of usefulness and sturdiness combined with restraint--but impressive ornamentation. On a less grandiose level, he published two tracts, *Designing My Home* (1923), and *The Facilities of My Home* (1924), which emphasized modernization, and perhaps Americanization of Japanese homes. The W. M. (Ichiryushu) Vories Architectural Firm still flourishes.<sup>18</sup>

### A BETTER SOCIETY

Also flourishing today is the educational establishment which his wife, Maki, primarily founded. Trained in America at a Bryn Mawr prep school and in an adoptive home near Yale Divinity School, she

had a grounding in American educational techniques. Under the Omi Brotherhood auspices she established first a kindergarten, then a primary school, where she taught the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and a moral outlook. After the Mentholatum factory was established, she ran an experimental high school for the teen aged working girls, who were given time off from the factory to go to class. After the war began, she made a special effort to teach the "water-level people," children who grew up around Lake Biwa. Forced to give up her schools shortly after the hostilities with the United States began, she returned after the war from Karuizawa and re-established the elementary grades and added a middle school and high school, in which she invested a great deal of time, effort and money.

In addition to this educational mission, the Vories family sponsored a publication department, which issued two periodical magazines and a number of books, collected a circulating library, and created

18. *Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin, 1933-1993* (W. M. Vories and Associates, 1993), especially 7, 27, 47, 71, 89, 103, 107; W. M. Vories & Company Architects, *Ichiryusha Their Works, 1908-1983*, especially, 8-11; *Photographic History of Vories* (W. M. Vories and Associates, 1998). These three books are mostly in Japanese. Masaaki Yamagata, "On the Architecture of William Merrell Vories" (Osaka, University of the Arts, 1993). See also the Vories website. <http://vories.co.jp/> Details of the early years of the architectural firm are in Masahiro Matsui, "A Bridge Over the Pacific," 44. Vories, *Let No Man Despise Thy Youth, Colorado College General Publication No. 117*, (May, 1931), 3-4. In this Introduction to Vories' Baccalaureate Sermon, it is stated that the Vories' architectural department by 1930 had completed 659 jobs, which included ninety-nine churches, 163 educational buildings, seventeen hospitals, fifty-nine social service plants, 274 residences, and forty-two commercial buildings.

a correspondence course in Bible study.<sup>19</sup>

To have a mission with several industrial properties of considerable market value was astounding enough. To practice Christian socialism was just as astonishing. One commentator suggested that Vories' industrial organization was a model which Japan ought to adopt, during the time of social and political unrest in the mid-1930s. Christian socialism could be the answer to Japan's abhorrence of communism. Vories' experiment rejected personal gain. In this company all employees received the salary or wage they needed. If a doctor bill came due, the expense was paid out of the central treasury. A larger family received more compensation; some received nothing. From each according to ability and circumstances, to each according to need. The holding of private property was disapproved. Chief executives received no more than the lowly worker. "Dr. Vories and his wife own nothing but the clothes on their backs." Cooperation, social equality, and racial and ethnic equality were the touchstones of the system. Such an outlook remedied the evils of a tumultuous world of the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Vories' Christian socialism stood in opposition to the rigid Japanese economic and social class structure of the time.<sup>21</sup>

19. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 135, 149-150, 186-189; Vories, *Let No Man*, 4.

20. Willard Price, "The Vories Experiment," *Christian Century*, 54 (July 28, 1937), 947-949; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*: 86, 113-114, 126, 128-129, 132-133, 135-136. Students in the industrial high school worked in groups of four; servants ate at the Vories' table; racial and ethnic groups worked together.

Finally, Vories' ideology and psyche can be seen in his Baccalaureate address of 1930 at his alma mater, Colorado College, when an honorary doctorate was bestowed upon him. It was a well-constructed address, showing Vories' ability to convince and engage his hearers. It was entitled "Let No Man Despise Thy Youth," and he quickly laid down his thesis: All humanity is divided into two antagonistic groups, which are forever warring against each other: Youth and Old Age. Vories, who was by then middle aged (fifty years old), announced that youth was the time for launching great adventures. However, youth was not a matter of chronological age, but of attitude. He listed five fundamental characteristics of youth: curiosity, discontent, vision, a will to seek the ideal, and a faith that the ideal is possible. He cited Will Durant's maxim: Progress is the art of doubting. He alluded to Thomas A. Edison, Henry Ford, and Albert Einstein. Vories opposed the dead hand of the past; perhaps agreeing with Henry Ford that history was bunk! Youth looks to the future and what it can accomplish. Once again Vories denied that perfection of performance or the highest standard of accomplishment was desired. Rather the essence, the intent, the purpose of the enterprise is what mattered.

Curiosity, Discontent, Vision, a Will to seek the Ideal, and a Faith in its Accomplishment, said Vories, were needed to

21. Merrell Hitotsuyanagi, "Shrines and Japanese Christians," *Christian Century*, 58 (November 26, 1941), 1475, with a reply to his letter by D. C. Holtom, 1475-1476.

end war, create a new sense of beauty and proportion, improve the distribution of goods to the poor, identify the responsibility for social and business wrongs, regenerate human spirituality, and establish a new and viable role for education. Vories quickly made his point, and then laid down a radical agenda. His agenda emphasized the future and not the dead hand of the past.<sup>22</sup>

### JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP

Vories' integration into Japanese culture culminated with his application for Japanese citizenship. He deemed it necessary to justify his decision to the American religious community. In a letter to the *Christian Century*, he denied that he had genuflected to family spirits in a Shinto shrine, or that he was guilty of apostasy to Christianity or disloyalty to the United States. His assumption of Japanese citizenship occurred because he had spent all his working life in Japan, depended on Japanese sources for support, and needed to become fully identified with the people he had encouraged to believe in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, when he had lived in the United States he had often criticized Europeans who did not take up American citizenship. As he had not lost love for his native country, so he had learned to love his adopted country. He became a Japanese citizen, voluntarily and enthusiastically, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

22. Vories, *Let No Man Despise Thy Youth*, cited in note 18.

### WORLD WAR II

His decision to assume Japanese citizenship came at a time when his business and religious endeavors flourished, but the war wiped out nearly everything. Even in 1948, three years after the war was over, it still seemed like a horrible nightmare. His Japanese citizenship saved him from deportation or imprisonment in a concentration camp. But the Kempei Tai, the secret police, demanded ideological purity, and interfered with every aspect of Vories' life. It expelled his wife from her kindergarten. The local police ripped out the radio antenna in their home, charging that Vories sent secret messages to the American navy. The Kempei Tai demanded that members of the Brotherhood bow before pictures of the Emperor hanging in the schools and in the Shinto shrines. One by one, the government curtailed or closed his various enterprises (except Mentholatum).<sup>24</sup>

23. Vories, "Mr. Vories Explains," *Christian Century*, 58 (January 22, 1941): 126. Later in life Vories explained his decision in: Vories Hitotsuyanagi, *Mustard Seed in Japan*, 58-59; and to General MacArthur in his letter to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, April 27, 1948, Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives, Norfolk. His Japanese name became Hitotsuyanagi Meruru, leaving out the "i" sound which is not found in the Japanese language, and which can be read as "he came from America and stayed here." See Naohiko Okumura, *William Merrell Vories (Hitotsuyanagi Meruru)* (Published Doctoral Dissertation, California Center for Theological Studies--St. Charles University), chapters 3 and 4; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 142-148, 152-169. It might be noted that Vories had married a Japanese national who was ineligible for United States citizenship under the immigration laws of that time. He could not move back to the United States with her.

The army drafted his converts, many of whom sadly perished in battle. The government rigidly controlled the school curriculum, including the teaching of the English language in the middle school. The political arm closed schools, and restricted worship services. Vories had to postpone the construction of a new sanctuary. The military requisitioned the tuberculosis sanitarium for soldiers, ruining the facility. The military conscripted men, women, and children for various kinds of labor, and imprisoned Christian pacifists.

Vories lamented the submissiveness of his Christian converts when the military invaded their privacy or appropriated their property. He believed that he had not converted them fully in their new faith. Many Japanese church leaders agreed with the government's Co-Prosperity Sphere program, and believed that Japan had a mission to control the Far East, to extend the Japanese Empire. Vories and his wife became virtual prisoners in their home; even the Union (or United) Church was closed down. Although he blamed the military for persecuting Christians, who believed that Shinto was superior to Christianity, he declared that the civilian government bore no animosity to Christianity. It was a great relief when the Emperor's brother, Prince Takamatsu, personally visited the Brotherhood on November 18, 1942, which softened the terror which stalked them.<sup>25</sup>

The Mentholatum factory survived

24. Hitotsuyanagi, *Mustard Seed in Japan*: 59-63; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 161-176. Vories refused to bow before a false god.

confiscation, unlike the fate of most of Vories' other enterprises, because members of the Japanese armed forces carried in their packs a small jar of the salve. What some called the "Jesus salve" survived the rigors of wartime. Eighty per cent of the factory's production went to the armed forces, which saved the livelihoods of four hundred workers.

Finally, Vories determined that he, his wife Maki, his mother Julia, and a sturdy peasant female assistant should go to the mountain retreat of Karuizawa. There they suffered much from starvation and cold, made even more gruesome by the growing senility of Julia, and by Vories' heart attack, which laid him up in bed for many months. There they were joined by other refugees from persecution and the bombing of the large cities.

Even there, however, they were not entirely secluded, and traveled into Tokyo, Omihachiman, and Kyoto. At times Vories and his wife spent three days a week in Tokyo, eighty miles away. His wife advised the operation of a nursery school, and Vories lectured on English literature at the Tokyo Imperial University. Once a month they returned to Omihachiman for an executive committee meeting of the Brotherhood, and where Vories spent two days to teach at nearby Kyoto Imperial University and Doshisha Univer-

25. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 161-163; Thiessen, *World Missions*: 122. Takamatsu had a reputation as a confidante to his older brother, Emperor Hirohito, and as one who reformers could approach. See Otis Cary, ed., *War Wasted Asia: Letters, 1945-46* (Tokyo, New York, and San Francisco: Kodansha International Ltd., 1975), 272-285, 305-311.

sity. His diary entry for January 31, 1942 contains the cryptic entry: "Returned to hometown [Omihachiman?] but couldn't rent a house--had to buy--but without money!"<sup>26</sup>

### APPROACHING MACARTHUR

With the sudden end of World War II Vories unexpectedly participated in the Japanese surrender and American occupation. Prince Konoe enlisted his aid in behalf of Emperor Hirohito with the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur. Although apparently in the end he did not assume a primary role, Vories pursued an important relationship with MacArthur over the years.

His diary for September 7, 10, and 12 tells an intriguing story:

Yesterday--September 6, 1945--was marked by an amazing and challenging experience [...] Mr. Wikawa (long connected with the Foreign Dept. of the Govt[.], especially in Konoe Cabinet Japan, a Christian and protege of Mme. Asako Hirooaka,<sup>27</sup> was sent to Karuizawa to call me to Government Service!--to try to help in the Reconstruction of the Nation (not particularly buildings). Such an honor and such a responsibility seems to put iron into my system, and I set out, with W., by morning train.

[Three days later he wrote] A great day of guided meetings with important friends. At Hotel, Murata, with

26. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 136, 163-176; Okumura, *Vories*, chapter 6 and Conclusion.

27. Vories and his wife stayed with her in Tokyo.

Saburo Yamamoto, And, later, Okawauchi, were waiting and I ran directly into them. While talking in that spot, Father Birnes<sup>28</sup> appears--who was on the point of going to Yokohama on Red Cross business. I took him in the car, and he helped me a lot. At Yoko, ran into young Bartlett,<sup>29</sup> now an Aide of General MacArthur. Thru him got my Message to the General and some invaluable data for the Prince [Konoe]. Hoping to see Wikawa, return to [illegible] Hotel in Tokyo, and ran into him in the D. R. [dining room]! Everything in order and beyond our plans.

Bartlett hardly recognized his old friend, because Vories was emaciated from harsh living conditions and his poor health. He fed him coffee and cookies. Bartlett realized that his old friend was a Japanese citizen, and the American naval commander must be wary of divulging intelligence to him.<sup>30</sup>

[Two days later, on the twelfth, Vories wrote:] Between 4 and 5 this a.m., I got the suggestive wording for a Rescript or Declaration that would provide the "single word from the Emperor" which General MacArthur would accept as worth more than anything else in restoring full confidence in Japan. I took it to Prince Konoe at 10 a.m., as appointed, and he seemed satisfied with my full report including that part. Says I may run up to Karuizawa subject to call by telegram.

28. Vories and his wife attended Father Birnes' mass in Karazuiwa.

29. Lieutenant-Commander Samuel C. Bartlett, the son of Congregational missionaries, in Kobe and/or Kyoto, now an aide to General MacArthur.

30. The diaries (daybooks really) are located in the Vories Memorial House in Omihachiman. Vories' journey to MacArthur's headquarters is also recounted in Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 173, 176-180. On the frontispiece, Fletcher thanks Bartlett for proof reading the manuscript.

At noon, met Wikawa at YMCA lunch room. We went by auto to Yokohama (Murata-san with us), saw Lt. Commander Bartlett (my friend; born in Japan), and found he had reported to General MacArthur, who agrees to meet the Prince--offering to furnish transportation and a military guard for the Prince to come for the conference. Now, everything seems arranged. Again, Guidance [or God] saw to control it all.

Bartlett reported that:

Merrell said he had an important message from Prince Konoye [sic] to General MacArthur. I knew he had no chance of seeing the General, but I reported what he said to my superior officer and he to his. The answer came back, "Tell Prince Konoye that if he has anything to say to General MacArthur, let him come here himself. If he is afraid to come, we will send a military escort to bring him here."<sup>31</sup>

Bartlett recorded the message which Vories brought to the General on the tenth of September, 1945, and it was recently found in the MacArthur Archives in Norfolk, Virginia. He noted that "Merril [sic] Hitotsuyanagi (Vories)' was an American born naturalized Japanese, who came at the request of Prince Konoe to deliver an oral message to the Supreme Commander."

### SETTING UP THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Konoe said--through Vories--that he did not feel it safe to appear in public so long as Tojo was abroad. Though he was

living in the premier's residence, he had declined the premiership because of Tojo's hostility. But he declared that he was the power behind the throne. Konoe believed that the vast majority of the country, with the exception of the military, desired peace and reform. The average Japanese considered the Americans more the deliverers than the conquerors. To avoid American bombs, the Empress Dowager had been living in a dugout on the palace grounds. The Emperor did not know of the dire state of military affairs until his mother and Konoe informed him. After Hirohito drove out of the palace grounds and saw the destruction in the city, he prepared for a peace offer. The Emperor was almost kidnapped to prevent his radio broadcast, and had to secretly record the surrender message. Several suicides of military personnel resulted. Konoe reassured MacArthur of complete Japanese acquiescence, and placed himself at the disposal of the general.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of Vories' liaison efforts, and the initiative of Lieutenant-General H. Harigutchi with General Robert L. Eichelberger, Konoe scheduled two meetings with the Supreme Commander. On September 12, the day before Konoe met with MacArthur, Vories gave Konoe the wording for the Imperial Rescript, which presumably (the document is not known) renounced the Emperor's divinity. He also drove down to Yokohama, and met again with Bartlett, who told Vories that MacArthur had agreed to meet with

32. S. C. B. [Samuel C. Bartlett], on Merrill [sic] Hitotsuyanagi (Vories), 10 September 1945, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk.

31. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 181.

Konoe. However, neither on September 13, when Konoe visited MacArthur with Harigutchi, nor on October 4, the date of the second meeting, was the Emperor's status discussed by Konoe and MacArthur, as Vories thought it would. Brigadier-General Bonner Feller's office diary of these two meetings, which summarized the conversations, recorded Konoe's charge that the militarists and Communists were responsible for the war, and that the royalty and capitalists were overwhelmed by their strong armed methods, but nothing was mentioned in the notes on the Emperor's status.<sup>33</sup>

MacArthur, in a typical pontifical fashion, lectured Konoe on the necessity for reform: to liberalize the constitution, grant woman suffrage, hold elections, and eliminate the militarists from power. MacArthur demanded that a strong Minister of Education be appointed to revise the curriculum in the schools, to raise up worthy leaders, who would restore Japan's reputation in world opinion. The commander advised Konoe that SCAP would deal with the militarists; it was the Japanese government's task to supervise the civilians. They must be told the truth about atrocities, and about the shortcomings of officials, and the American military would handle the rest.

33. Vories Diary, September 12, 1945; Office Diary of the Military Secretary, 1945, Range 44A, Box 5, Folder 27, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk. Naohiko Okumura has provided me with the information from General Eichelberger's Diary. Okumura also contends that Konoe sought an audience with MacArthur to save himself (in vain), and not to save the Emperor. Okumura to Lyon, April 29, June 29, 1998.

Konoe protested that he lacked the authority to do all of this. MacArthur replied that the entire government lived by his sufferance, and that he would authorize all of these changes. Konoe should get busy.

The policy of unconditional surrender enunciated at the Potsdam Conference presumed the emperor's abdication, but the Allies decided to retain him.<sup>34</sup> However, a change in his status did occur: the renunciation of his divinity, and in a more cosmic sense, this led to the furtherance of democracy in Japan.

Hirohito renounced his divinity, not actually a revolutionary act since he was not thought of as a god, on January 1, 1946. Vories and his wife always thought that they had played a role in that renunciation, and believed that a new era for Japan had begun. Vories was grateful that he had contributed a slight service to his adopted country.<sup>35</sup> Most histories of the Occupation and of constitution making in Japan do not credit Vories with the divinity renunciation proclamation.<sup>36</sup>

David Bergamini, however, who indicts the Emperor as a war monger, con-

34. Barton J. Bernstein, "The Perils and Politics of Surrender: Ending the War with Japan and Avoiding the Third Atomic Bomb," *Pacific Historical Review*, 46 (February, 1977), 1-27; Judith Munro-Leighton, "The Tokyo Surrender: A Diplomatic Marathon in Washington, August 10-14, 1945," *Pacific Historical Review*, 65 (August, 1996), 455-473.

35. Hitotsuyanagi, *Mustard Seed in Japan*: 64-65; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 181-182. Fletcher specifically declares that Vories devised the concept of renunciation "to deny publicly that he [the Emperor] was divine," reflecting Maki's version of the affair as she told it to Fletcher several years later.

tends that Vories played a stellar role in the proclamation. He describes Vories as a millionaire, and identifies him as the most eminent American in Japan in 1945. He alleges that Vories had met Hirohito in 1941, in one of those arranged chance encounters, which was the only way a commoner could converse with the Royal Figure.<sup>37</sup> Vories respected Hirohito, and he had friendly connections with other members of the royal family. His wife was a member of the Japanese nobility. Bergamini believes that he transmitted to Konoe his idea of the Emperor as a secular ruler, who would thus encourage democracy in Japan. Konoe then consulted the Emperor and MacArthur, and after they cleared away some political obstacles, Hirohito issued the proclamation.<sup>38</sup>

Other forces than Vories favored secularizing the Imperial Office. First of all,

36. See Shoichi Koseki, *The Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution*, Edited and translated by Ray A. Moore (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 7-9; Kyoko Inoue, *MacArthur's Japanese Constitution*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 160-220; Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 19. Perhaps here it would be worth noting that MacArthur and SCAP did not choose to utilize American experts, such as Vories, to direct policy in Japan.

37. Grace Nies Fletcher, a later biographer, says Vories met the emperor four times: in 1947, 1948, at an unspecified time, and in 1954. Indeed, Vories courted the royal family during and after the War, which protected the Vories family and the mission at Omihachiman.

38. David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971), 162-164; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 200-204. Masahiro Matsui to Lyon, October 27, 1999, makes the point about the imperial family protecting Vories. Bergamini's version of how the origin of imperial renunciation occurred is not accepted today.

MacArthur quickly grew fond of Hirohito. He thought him shy, nervous, democratic, and perceived him as a major factor in the spiritual regeneration of Japan. Americans soon removed the Emperor from the list of potential war criminals. Hirohito, the General said, "moved me to the very marrow of my bones."<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, within the first five days of Hirohito's surrender communication, i. e., even before the public announcement of the end of the war, American officials in Washington determined to keep the Emperor. Within the State Department, various experts thought the Imperial office was a hedge against chaos in defeated Japan. Chief among the defenders of the imperial office was former Ambassador Joseph C. Grew, who at a crucial time more or less ran the State Department, and Edwin O. Reischauer, soon to become the Ambassador to Japan. While in the early years of the war, American public opinion denigrated the Japanese, Grew won his point finally.

Thirdly, the Americans found allies among Japanese leaders for secularization. A Japanese leader has written in his journal: "At the drafting stage, one might call it a Japan-U. S. joint production, but on the whole it is clear that GHQ took the initiative."<sup>40</sup> Japanese leaders even drafted some of the language of "ningen sengen," as the Imperial Rescript is called. Hirohito also insisted on adding the Imperial Oath of Five Articles, which emphasized democratization of Japan, and later

39. Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 287-288; Koseki, *Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution*, 71-72.

in 1977, the Emperor said this provision of the Declaration was more important than his renunciation of divinity.<sup>41</sup>

When Vories recommended to Konoe on September 9 that the Emperor declare his humanity, he might have participated in some distant way in the renunciation of Imperial divinity, but certainly he did not participate in the preparation of the new Constitution. Politics and constitution-writing were just not his forte. Professor Frank Sackton, an aide to MacArthur, has written me that Vories accurately stated to Bartlett that all Japanese except the military welcomed the Americans in 1945, and that Vories encouraged Konoe's and the Emperor's support of the objectives of the occupation, which MacArthur greatly appreciated. In return for Vories' support, a MacArthur aide, Colonel Laurence E. Bunker, addressed Vories' petitions con-

cerning the Japanese prisoners of war. But his influence was limited, and he does not believe that Vories was the most influential American in Japan at that time.<sup>42</sup>

Konoe interpreted MacArthur's remarks in those very first meetings to mean that he should head a committee to write a constitution. But Konoe carried too much baggage, not only among the Americans in SCAP and the State Department, but among other Japanese as well. He was unceremoniously repudiated, and when he was cruelly designated a war criminal suspect, he took potassium cyanide. It then appeared that Joji Matsumoto would prepare a draft, but he was repudiated also, and SCAP drafted a document which was then pushed through.<sup>43</sup> Vories for all his talents as a poet, a musician, an evangelist, an architect, or a businessman, was not a politician or a political scientist, and drafting a constitution was alien to his nature.

### MACARTHUR

Although Vories' relationship to MacArthur foundered in the early days of the Occupation, the General nevertheless appealed to him because he actively supported the Christianization of Japan. MacArthur fulfilled Vories' expectation to "evangelize the world" which had inspired him at Colorado College, when he purchased the book by John R. Mott.<sup>44</sup>

42. Sackton to Lyon, Arizona State University, Tempe, July 23, 1999.

43. Koseki, *Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution*, 7-25, 98-110; Finn, *Winners in Peace*, 41.

41. Nakamura, *Japanese Monarchy*, 109-112.

40. Nakamura Masanori, *The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Making of the Symbol Emperor System, 1931-1991*, (translated by Herbert Bix, Jonathan Baker-Bates, and Derek Bowen (Armonk, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), 3-112; Morris-Suzuki, *Showa: An Inside History of Hirohito's Japan* (London: Athlone Press, 1984), 197. In addition to Vories' reference to the Emperor's declaration of humanity in his diary, he briefly described this and his mission to MacArthur--"consummating two or three confidential errands" (!) in *A Mustard Seed in Japan*: 64-65. John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 308-309, 600 n12 and 13, in a much less meticulous and undoubtedly incomplete account of the origin of "ningen sengen," credits Reischauer, as mentioned in the text, and the third generation missionary, Otis Cary, grandson of his namesake, and who was known to Vories, with crafting the Emperor's Declaration. In consulting Cary's account, written in letters in late 1945 and early 1946, it is not clear to me that Cary did have a direct influence on the preparation of the Rescript. See Cary, *War-Wasted Asia*, 272-285, 305-311.

Vories' grand plan to convert the populace hit a stone wall in 1941, although the wartime government respected the 300,000 Protestant and Catholic Christians. Rebuilding his Christian movement after the devastation of the war years proved difficult, and he saw in MacArthur a means of salvation.

The General in the first days of the Occupation encouraged religious reform, which pleased Vories. MacArthur dismantled Shinto on December 15, 1945, shortly before the Emperor's Declaration of Humanity, and he fostered scores of missionaries in Japan. To take "Japan for Christ" was not exactly Freedom of Religion or Separation of Church and State which was the preferred policy of the White House and the State Department, but Washington decided not to challenge the General on that issue.<sup>45</sup> Vories apparently supported MacArthur, communicated with him, finally conferred with him, and bestowed on him the greatest laurel at his command, a poem.

44. See note 3. Vories also owned a copy of Fred Eugene Hagin, *The Cross in Japan: A Study of Achievement and Opportunity* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), which contained a brief sketch of the Omi Mission (five Americans and sixteen Japanese; nine buildings) in 1914, on pages 218-219.

It is generally understood that MacArthur, as a favor to Vories, ordered the express train from Karazuiwa to stop to discharge the ailing Mother Vories on her return to Omihachiman. Matsui to Lyon, October 27, 1999.

45. Finn, *Winners in Peace*, 62-63, 167-169; Lawrence S. Wittner, "MacArthur and the Missionaries: God and Man in Occupied Japan," *Pacific Historical Review*, 40 (February, 1971): 77-98. In the MacArthur era, the evangelization idea was expressed in Thiessen, *World Missions*, a volume which Vories possessed, and which mentioned the Omi Mission on page 119.

Vories' entree began when he recommended Masazo Ikeda to the General, attesting to Ikeda's sterling character, who would request inscription of a silver loving cup with MacArthur's name to present to the Osaka Tennis and Ping Pong Association. MacArthur agreed to this worthwhile project and wished them success.<sup>46</sup>

Responding to the entreaties of his fellow Japanese citizens, Vories sent several letters to SCAP concerning Japanese prisoners of war in British Burma, Manchuria, Siberia, and the Dutch East Indies. The Burma and Siberian prisoners suffered pitiable and unsanitary conditions, insufficient food, and inadequate housing. Vories cited the need for immediate amelioration, and ultimate repatriation. Colonel Bunker replied that MacArthur lamented these poor POW conditions. The British were cooperating, but he deplored the Russian treatment in Manchuria and Siberia. Shipping for transport of the prisoners to homeland seemed to be a problem. In the East Indies the Dutch tried Isao Hashimoto as a war criminal. Vories praised the upstanding family, one of whom he had taught years before. No one believed that Hashimoto could deliberately cause the death of any prisoner under his charge. We do not know the results of Vories' petition in behalf of Hashimoto. In all these letters to Colonel Bunker, Vories was diffident, appreciative, grateful, and compli-

46. Vories Hitotsuyanagi to the Secretary of the Supreme Commander, March 24, 1947, and Memorandum for the Record by L. E. B. [Laurence E. Bunker], 2 April 1947, both in Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives, Norfolk.

mentary to the General.<sup>47</sup> He had enlisted himself in the cause of fellow Japanese citizens.

His unstinting admiration for MacArthur moved him to request a personal interview. "Before sailing for America to undergo an operation upon my eyes, it is my earnest desire to have the privilege of personally voicing my gratitude to you for your historic Christian leadership in reconstructing Japan." He then gave a brief autobiographical sketch: his ancestry, attendance at Colorado College, coming to Japan in 1905, and his evangelistic, educational, and architectural work. He noted the establishment of the Omi Brotherhood, the tuberculosis sanitarium, and the Mentholatum factory. "Every activity is intended to demonstrate Christian and democratic principles --even those which produce income." Since the war, he contended, the influence of his "small venture" had increased rapidly, and his staff of three hundred and their dependents, consisted of a "family" of one thousand.

He explained the reason he wanted to see the General. After an eye operation in America, he and his wife intended to lecture at colleges, universities, churches, and other institutions, as he had done in previous trips, and he trusted that they could further Japanese-American under-

standing. For that reason he should truly appreciate any suggestions or cautions MacArthur had to offer. He expressed many thanks for himself and his many friends.

General MacArthur also received reassurances about Vories' character. Colonel Bunker learned from Colonel Nugent (?) that his staff respected him and regarded Vories as the most influential Japanese-American in Japan, which perhaps confirms Bergamini's assessment that Vories was the most prominent American in Japan. Bunker recalls that "Vories Hitotsuyanagi" had vouched for Ikeda, who had proposed the MacArthur Cup for the tennis and ping pong tournaments. Bunker predicted that "Vories Hitotsuyanagi" would favorably influence the understanding of the Occupation to American audiences. Bunker also attached an article concerning his work with the gangsters who had been causing so much trouble on the rail lines out of Kyoto.<sup>48</sup>

#### CALMING THE UNTOUCHABLES

One of Vories' greater postwar achievements was the pacification of the "outcaste minority groups," the Untouchables, as Vories described them. They lived in segregated communities, where they performed the most menial occupations: slaughtering cattle, working leather, and performing other servile labor. Equal under the new law, but still

47. Merrell V. Hitotsuyanagi to Col. L. E. Bunker, April 15, 30, May 5, 1947, January 20, 1948; Bunker to Hitotsuyanagi, 17 April, 27 May 1947, *ibid.* Vories was only one of many who expressed adulation of MacArthur: Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 226-233. For a general account of the problem of repatriation of Japanese prisoners, especially from the Soviet Union, see Dower, 52-53, 570 n27 and 28.

48. L. E. B. to Commander in Chief, 11 May 1948, Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives.

discriminated against, they believed the new democratic constitution of 1946 released them from all restraint and social responsibilities. The young men of seven segregated communities organized into that many gangs.

Vories had addressed the problem of the hooligans even before the war by establishing a Sunday School for them, and he had planned a social center in their community. After the war the villages were incorporated into Omihachiman, thus losing their autonomy, arousing opposition to their loss of independence, even arousing hostility toward Vories for his effort to smooth over the problem with diplomacy. To terrify their victims, the boys carried a basket full of snakes on board the trains to rob the passengers of their valuables.

Vories hesitantly resolved to deal with this dangerous situation. Acting as president of the Omi Peace Preservation Society, he informed the police and railway officials that he would apply the "Platform of the Omi Mission" to solve the problem. He and his wife invited the leaders to their home for tea, where they reassured them of the Brotherhood's good will and dedication to absolute equality. All people belonged to the brotherhood of man under one Creator, they were told. The leaders were asked if they would like to join the Omi Peace Preservation Society, and thus become enforcers of civil order on the trains. The leaders then agreed with the railroad officials to end the robberies and harassment. Vories supervised the unification of the youth organization in the

various communities, which ended segregation. He believed that he had presided over an historic day at this astonishing meeting in raising a minority group to equality. Unfortunately, the problem of gangs persisted.<sup>49</sup>

#### MEETING MACARTHUR

Vories' enlistment of the young hooligans to become peace advocates and supporters of civil order gratified MacArthur and his staff. In the margin of Vories' letter to the General of April 27 is the notation, in MacArthur's or Bunker's handwriting, "Will see-just before departure."

Vories later told his wife about their meeting, "The General was sitting crossways in a big armchair with his legs dangling over the arm. When I thanked him for what he was doing for Japan, giving it back its self-respect, MacArthur replied, 'I am just trying to follow the Sermon on the Mount. I didn't invent that, you know.'"<sup>50</sup> Presumably they talked about Christianization.

Several days later (May 2, 1948), the Far East Command dispatched a routine request to the Department of the Army in Washington, asking for approval for a compassionate sojourn in the United States for Vories, who was nearly blind, and for his wife to accompany him as guide and caregiver. SCAP reported that it had received a certified letter from the

49. Hitotsuyanagi, *Mustard Seed in Japan*, 67-70; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*: 194-197; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 141-144. For the "Platform", see above, note 6.

50. *Bridge of Love*, 211.

Mentholatum Company in Buffalo, which guaranteed all expenses. Unfortunately, the Department of the Army, enmeshed in bureaucratic entanglements, delayed the permission and the Vories missed the boat on May 24, 1948. Finally on June 8, Washington cabled authorization, and they finally sailed for America.<sup>51</sup>

While they waited, Vories sent one more letter to Colonel Bunker on May 22, 1948, in which he opposed SCAP's imposition of the death penalty. This criticism of SCAP might have jeopardized the permission to travel, but at the same time he praised the General in a poem. He had promised not to intrude further on the General's time, he said, but he could not forbear making a Christian appeal to a Supreme Commander who held power and responsibility beyond any man in history.

By one stroke, he can win the Victory of Peace, the adoration of the Japanese people, and an immortal niche in history--while dealing the Communistic threat in Japan a knockout blow, on a general amnesty or at least reduction of penalties which would prevent all death sentences being carried out.

The reaction of such an act [to commute the death sentence] on his part would shake the world. It would remove the last trace of bitterness in Japan--which is the hope of the Reds for enticing recruits, and so insure the permanence of the Occupation's efforts for Democracy in Japan.

It would remove the possibility of the tragedy of an Imperial suicide--which is feared by the best people of

the Nation and hoped for by the anarchists.

It would be the crowning demonstration of Christianity--the ultimate argument.

Then Vories inscribed a poem to MacArthur, which he typed in his letter of May 22, but which he also wrote out in long hand in June, with some additional unpoetic lines, and which also found its way into the MacArthur Archives:

### LOVE CONQUERS ALL

Love conquers all,  
However late its victory;  
Invincible, eternal is its rise.  
Love is of Life,  
Love is of GOD:

But hate must fall,  
However strong it seem to be,  
Destructive, self-destroyed it wanes  
and dies:

Hate is of the knife,  
Of death, and of the clod:

[The following was added on the manuscript copy.]

CHRIST is the living lens through  
whom we see

Our FATHER-GOD in His infinity  
And learn the truth--which challenges  
and calms--

That LOVE is mightier than all the  
bombs.

Inscribed--in deep appreciation and  
gratitude--

to General Douglas MacArthur,  
first Conqueror in history who  
dared

employ the super-bomb of LOVE  
which shatters no single city into tragic  
ruins,

but is shaking the whole world into a  
new realization

that the greatest force for a complete,

constructive, and permanent  
Victory is LOVE.

Tokyo, June 1948 Merrell (Vories)  
Hitotsuyanagi<sup>52</sup>

After a very difficult recovery from the cataract operation in the Woodlawn Hospital in Chicago, Vories lectured on Japan, Christianity, and the Occupation. At his alma mater, Colorado College, he gave two evening lectures entitled "My Experiences in Japan During and Since the War," and "What's Ahead for Christians in Japan." He also spoke at the chapel service and in religion, history, and government classes. His wife spoke before education classes as well.<sup>53</sup>

Vories tried unsuccessfully to interview MacArthur in 1950. He had made an architectural trip to Kyushu, and had spent Easter Sunday in Hiroshima. There were many things he wanted to tell the General, but one thing he could not delay in saying:

in Hiroshima (as you doubtless already know) they are putting a splendid wide boulevard through the City, which they are naming MacArthur Avenue. I asked a prominent citizen if this was a gesture of political significance, and he replied that it was, on the contrary, an

52. Hitotsuyanagi to Bunker, May 22, 1948, Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives. The manuscript copy of the poem to MacArthur, which also found its way to the MacArthur Archives, is located in a different place there: "Love Conquers All," Range 10, Box 15, Folder "June 1948." MacArthur's commitment to Christianity is noted in Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 189.

53. Two clippings dated February 13, 15, 1949 in Colorado Springs newspaper, in Colorado Springs library, copied by Tomoyuki Serino. MacArthur was hoping that the Republicans would nominate him for President that year, and must have thought that Vories and his wife would give him much favorable publicity, which they undoubtedly did.

expression of the real gratitude of the people for what the General is doing for Japan's reconstruction--physical, moral, and spiritual.

Vories hoped that Bunker would share with MacArthur that such a sentiment existed in the "very spot which suffered most from the late War."<sup>54</sup>

### DENOUEMENT AND CONCLUSION

Vories and his wife did not see MacArthur again, but they did have several audiences with the Emperor in 1947, 1948, once sometime later, and in 1954, and also met with other members of the royal family. Perhaps the royals wanted to keep their fences mended with the influential American. While the two were in America in 1954, the Emperor conferred on Vories the Blue Ribbon Medal for Social and Spiritual Services to Japan (in absentia), and at Vories' funeral the Emperor granted him the third Order of the Sacred Treasure. His wife received the Fourth Order of the Sacred Treasure. When they attended a dinner party given by Elizabeth Gray Vining, a tutor in English to Crown Prince Akihito, she also invited two of the royal princes. They all had a good time as Vories and his wife told of their experiences bringing Christianity to the Japanese. Vories reminisced in Japanese about his early days in his adopted country.<sup>55</sup>

54. Merrell to Col. L. E. Bunker, April 12, 1950, Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives.

55. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 200-204, 209, 210, 215, 218. There is some confusion about the dates or the frequency of the meetings with the Emperor. Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Windows for the Crown Prince* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1952), 290-291.

51. CINCFE to Dept. of the Army, 2, 17, 29 May 1948, CSCAD PG to CINCFE, 8 June 1948, Range 5, Box 28, Folder "Hi-Ho," MacArthur Archives; Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 204-208.

SCAP appointed each of them--Maki to a committee to re-write textbooks, and Vories to a local screening committee on war criminals. But punishment and execution of citizens devastated him; he opposed the death penalty, and he resigned. In other postwar activities, Vories sponsored institutes for farmers who now owned land under the new constitution, and he cooperated with the well-known Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa's agricultural education program and evangelization. He and his wife advocated the separation of church and state, civilian control over the military, woman equality, and the rejection of the ancient myths in favor of scientific facts. Vories still adhered to American ideals.<sup>56</sup>

Vories suffered a debilitating stroke in late 1957, and lay mute and paralyzed, slowly deteriorating until his death on May 7, 1964. Soon after, his wife visited the United States, renewing friendships, seeking funds for new school buildings, and looking for an author to write a biography of her husband.<sup>57</sup> She undoubtedly commissioned Grace Nies Fletcher to write *The Bridge of Love* in 1967.

Vories transcended the role of missionary in Japan. He was a man of considerable artistic interests, wrote poetry, composed hymns, played musical instruments, designed a variety of buildings, established libraries, practiced Christian socialism in business enterprise, and promoted

public health. He boldly supplanted his American citizenship with Japanese citizenship, but never lost his "Americanness" in his adopted country. He disapproved of American militarism during the war, but his motives were apparently above suspicion in the United States.<sup>58</sup> He was never guilty of ethnocentrism, and married into Japanese society. He was a constant advocate for equality, tolerance, democracy, reason, pacifism, and Christian ideals. Politics seemed alien to him, and perhaps he fawned too much before Hirohito and MacArthur. But he left a number of monuments in Japan, a hospital, a library, a Christian Church for converts, a Brotherhood, an architectural firm, and a Mentholatum factory, which are still visible today. He bridged two cultures, American and Japanese, and stood for good will in both of them.

56. Fletcher, *Bridge of Love*, 186-193.

57. Newspaper clipping from Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 1964, in Vories Architectural Office, Osaka, and copied for me by Tomoyuki Serino.

58. His anti-war poems are found in *Poems of the East and West*, 154-156. I have inquired of every agency in Washington, D.C., under the Freedom of Information Act, where a dossier might have been kept on Vories during the war years. No government agency investigated him as a disloyal American.