



SOPHIA 100th ANNIVERSARY  
 SOPHIA JUNIOR COLLEGE 40th ANNIVERSARY  
 SOPHIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE 50th ANNIVERSARY



The Launching of a Small Residence Hall of Learning NO.2

**1.The paths that led to the opening of Sophia University**

The three pioneer priest-educators: Joseph Dahlmann, Henri Boucher, and James Rockliff, set about the preparations for founding a university from their temporary residence in Myogadani in the Koishikawa section of Tokyo. The arrival in February 1910 of the future first president, Hermann Hoffmann, strengthened the needed personnel team. Near this temporary residence was a tragic historical site from the middle years of the Edo period,



This picture was taken just after the agreement to change the ownership of the land in Kioicho was concluded on March 25, 1912. Included in the picture are Count Takashima Tomonosuke, President Hoffmann, and Father Gettelman



The building in the Myogadani part of the Koishikawa city area that was being prepared for use as a private boarding school dormitory

called the Christian Residence. This was a prison and interrogation center where many missionaries were pressured to abandon their faith and where some died. Some examples include the priest Fr. Joseph Chiara (Okamoto Sanemon) whose story became the model for the hero in Endo Shuusaku's great novel *Silence* and Fr. John Baptist Shidoti, who was questioned under torture by Arai Hakuseki. According to Fr.

Vieger, who arrived in 1911, the historical location could symbolize a remarkable linking of the past and the present, of the suffering and the hopes of the Catholics in Japan.

The team in charge of preparations realized the needs for excellent Japanese colleagues and for a large supply of preparation funds. From the Society of Jesus they received ¥580,100 of capital. Based on this funding, the legal person Jochi Gakuin was created on April 6, 1911. A remaining problem was acquiring the land on which to build the

university. After receiving a great deal of advice from many wise persons, the founders decided to purchase the present Kioicho property. The former cabinet minister in charge of the Japanese Army, Count Takashima Tomonosuke, owned the central portion of this property. The mansions and properties of General Oshima Hisanao, Mr. Akaboshi Tetsuma, and Mr. Tanaka Buhee were also to be purchased. After some difficult negotiations about price and deed terms, 4400 tsubo (14000 square meters) of land was purchased for ¥430,000.



Besides the Jesuits who were available to teach, the



Lecturer  
Mizuno Hantaroo



Lecturer Sakaeda  
Taketoshi

potential faculty was improved by the additions of

Professor

Mizuno Hantaroo, a well-known scholar of German, and Professor Sakaeda Taketoshi, a renowned scholar of Japanese classical and modern literature.

The paperwork to apply for permission to open an educational institution was filed with the Ministry of Education on March 14, 1913. The permission was received two weeks later. This was the birth of Sophia University, under the Japanese Law for the Establishment of Specialized Schools. There would be a preparatory course of two years and a regular course of three years. Three departments would be established:



The text of the newspaper announcement for recruiting the first Sophia students

Philosophy, German Literature, and Commerce. This preparatory course would be the rough equivalent of the general education program in present-day Sophia University. Students who had finished the five-year secondary school program (pre-war education system) were eligible to apply for entrance. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, an advertisement was placed in all the city newspapers inviting qualified students to apply.

## 2. “We will begin classes even if we have only five students!”

President Hoffmann had made up his mind to open the university even if there were only five students; however, there were actually twenty applicants for the preparatory course. Fifteen of these actually turned up when classes started on April 21<sup>st</sup>. At the same time, the governor of Tokyo had officially approved a set of evening language classes aimed at residents who were already employed. This was called a private German and English Evening School. The educational program could be completed within two years. Other courses were to be offered on Saturdays in English and German,



This picture shows a class in German language being taught by President Hoffmann. Notice that the students occupy the desks *in the front of the classroom!*

covering literature and the arts. The language courses opened on April 11, with 36 students registered in the German language program and 11 students registered in the English language program. The final enrollment number for the beginning of the language school courses was about 70.

The academic arrangements in place at that time expected that some students who had completed the two-year preparatory course would advance into the three-year regular course. When a student had finished a program there, he could graduate.

All students from three departments took the same classes in the preparatory program. For them, German was the first foreign language and English was the second foreign language. Because so many of the courses in the regular program were taught in German, the students were expected to have mastered German during their time in the preparatory program. Among the teachers offering courses taught in German were President Hoffmann himself, who put a great deal of effort and energy into his classes. This is the basis for the later reputation of Sophia University as the German Language Jochi.



The first classes were held in the Oshima Residence.

However, in 1913, there were no school buildings yet. General Oshima's residence was used for classes temporarily, and Mr. Akahoshi's residence was used for a student dormitory. In September of 1914, the long-awaited three-story redbrick school building was completed. This was a splendid structure with a roof garden. The total area of the property was 750 tsubo, of which the building occupied 232 tsubo. The architect was the Czech Jan Letzel, who also designed the building in Hiroshima (called the Hiroshima Production Exhibition Center) that was the epicenter of the atomic bomb explosion; the remains are now called the Atomic Bomb Dome. The new school building had a Gothic design. The color of the bricks complemented the color of the old pine trees on the embankment along the outside road (Sotoboridoori) of Edo castle, above what is now called the Sophia Ground, where the playing fields are located. One could imagine that one was viewing the site of a medieval castle.



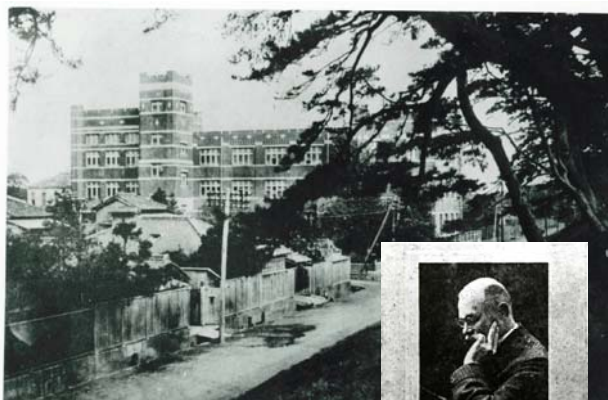
. The Akaboshi Residence became a dormitory for male students; the name was later changed to Aloysius Dormitory.

The book published fifty years ago that was dedicated to the historical details of Sophia University says that, as one entered the hall of the new school building, one found busts of Goethe and Schiller on either side, and one marveled at the height of the

ceilings of the corridors and the classrooms. Sadly, however, only ten years later the Great Kanto Earthquake destroyed a part of



this new school building. The voyage of Sophia University, riding on the dreams of Xavier and the hopes of the Pope, had hit some difficult storms that would continue in the near future.



. The redbrick classroom building that was completed in 1914. The picture on the left shows an interior hallway; the picture in the middle shows a middle-range view of the outside, as seen from the embankment; the insertion on the right is a picture of the Czech architect Jan Letzel.