

**‘A Band of Evangelists, Native and “Foreign”’:
The Story of Japanese Initiatives in Indigenizing the Japan Evangelistic Band
1903-1940**

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OCMS, Ph.D.

March 2017

ABSTRACT

Most research on indigenization in missions concentrates on missionary achievements of church planting and handing them over to nationals. This is a historical reconstruction of the indigenization of a mission organization, the Japan Evangelistic Band (JEB), from 1903 to 1940. I argue that in a period when missionaries led mission organizations in the mission field, the JEB was led by the Japanese. The indigenous nature of the JEB was a Japanese initiative. The Mission was also distinct because women, both foreign and Japanese, were an important workforce in the Mission. They actively contributed to all aspects of the JEB ministry and gave the Mission a holistic nature. Japanese male and female initiatives and female missionary influence on the JEB ministry are assessed by their participation in establishing the Mission, their leadership in administrative councils, their contribution to evangelism and church planting, and their influence in changing Mission policies.

The internal story of the Mission is reconstructed by reading the correspondence between the individuals and the councils in Japan and England, published and unpublished literature, and the archives of their ministry partners in the light of the Japanese socio-political environment of the period researched. Six internal voices add different dimensions to the story to reveal reasons for indigenous leadership and the effects of the growth in Japanese nationalism on the members and ministry of the Mission.