

OBITUARIES

DR. KENSUKE MITSUDA
1876-1964

Dr. Kensuke Mitsuda, the oldest of the modern leprologists, died on May 14, 1964, at the age of 88, of complications of arteriosclerosis. Since 1961 he has been bedridden in the Okayama General Hospital because of encephalomalacia. This information, and much of that in the following note, was supplied by Dr. Taiji Nojima, director of the Oshima National Leprosarium; certain additions by the writer to Nojima's notes will be evident. A brief list of important events begins with a heading in Japanese characters written by Mitsuda himself in July 1957. The characters are said to mean: Shisei Kami no Gotoshi (Sincerity Communicates with God). Mitsuda became converted to Roman Catholicism in his late years; other members of his family were of the same faith.



DR. KENSUKE MITSUDA (taken September 1952)

Dr. Mitsuda was born in January 1876 in Bofu City, Yamaguchi Prefecture. In October 1896 he graduated from the private medical school called "Saisei Gakusha," where he completed clinical studies in one year. He passed his preliminary examinations in 1895, and the required second examination in 1896, when he was only 20 years old. In June 1898 he studied at the Pathology Institute of Tokyo University, and in July became attached as physician to the Tokyo City "Yoikuin," the old Tokyo City Hospital, which took care of orphans and aged persons, and, after 1899, a certain number of leprosy patients.

He began his work on leprosy there in that year. He continued that work until 1909, when he was attached to the Zenzei-en Leprosarium, of which he became Director in 1910. In May 1923 his travels took him to Europe (where he attended the Third International Leprosy Conference in Strasbourg), the United States, and the Philippines, where he spent several days at Culion. Later, in January 1944, he visited China.

In March 1931 he was made director of the first of the national leprosaria to be established, Nagashima Aisei-en, newly built on Nagashima Island near Okayama. (He left behind at Zenzei-en his English-speaking first assistant, Fumio Hayashi.) Mitsuda held the position at Nagashima until he retired in August 1957; later he was made Honorary Director of Nagashima.

Of the honors and awards given Mitsuda, the following are listed. In May 1942 he was named "Sho 4 i," a Japanese Court rank, and in June 1943 "Kun 3 tō," which carried a decoration. In January 1950 he received an award from the Asahi newspapers; in November 1951 the

Cultural Decoration was given him; and in 1961 the Damien-Dutton award. In November 1957 he was made an Honorary Citizen of Bofu City, his birthplace. In the following year he received similar recognition from Oku Town, and in May 1964 from Okayama City. His title was raised at that time to "Sho 3 mi, Kun I tō," a high grade of governmental court ranks and honors. These honors represented the court rank and order of merit of field marshal or admiral.

Two Catholic funeral services were held, the first at the Okayama City Hall on May 25, sponsored by Okayama City, Bofu City, and Oku Town, and the other at Nagashima Aisei-en on May 26. The Chief Mourner was Mitsuda's oldest son, Mr. Hitaro Mitsuda, a professor in the high school of Osaka City. Many high officials, leprologists, professors, doctors, medical officers, and other prominent people attended. Among the speakers, Dr. Nojima represented all of the national hospitals and sanatoria, and Dr. Yoshinobu Hayashi represented Mitsuda's students. Hundreds of telegrams of condolence from local sources, and from foreign leprologists and organizations were read.

Mitsuda is survived by four sons and two daughters, of whom three (1 son and 2 daughters) are physicians, all connected with leprosy work, Mitsuda's wife, whom Nojima describes as a kindly and gentle woman, and to whom he credits a good deal of Mitsuda's accomplishments, died in 1948. Mitsuda did not remarry.

One son, Dr. Tokuzo Yokota, is the chief physician of Nagashima Aisei-en. The fact that he does not carry the Mitsuda name is explained by the fact that, as is a frequent custom in Japan, he took the family name of his mother when he was a young boy, there being no boy in that family. It is said that Mitsuda himself took the family name of his mother when he was young. To show his long relationship with Mitsuda, Nojima relates that he was the "go-between" when Yokota married, twenty years ago, and also when one of the daughters married four years later. He was at the bedside when Mitsuda died.

Dr. Mitsuda's body was cremated at Okayama City. A skeletal part was buried at the grave of his native Boju City, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Another part was kept in the mortuary at Aisei-en.—H. W. WADE