

Hommage à Christine Kodama

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Senior Associate Professor Christine Kodama has worked at ICU as Professor of French Language and Literature for 36 years. She will retire at the end of the 2014 academic year and begin a new phase of her life. We, her colleagues, along with the many students whose lives she has touched, are grateful for her long years of service in making the vision of ICU into a reality.

Professor Kodama was born in Paris but did not live there, outside of summer vacations, until her high school and university years. She was raised in Algeria until the war and then in Morocco. She attended the University of Paris VII from 1967 to 1979 where she studied English Literature as an undergraduate, and then added French Literature and finally added Japanese Literature. She did her doctoral dissertation in Japanese Literature. She translated and annotated Kajii Motojiro's masterpiece, *Lemon*. Kajii, for those who are unfamiliar with him, is a writer from the early Showa Period who died at the age of 31. The collection of short stories, which Prof. Kodama translated, was the only work of his that was commercially published in his lifetime. She had her dissertation published, and it was awarded the Claudel Prize in 1987.

But it was not just love of Japanese literature that brought Prof. Kodama to Japan. It was love of another kind. One day during her student years she ran into a Japanese student at the Student Dining Room. This man would become her husband, but Prof. Kodama did not just follow him to Japan. She came as "Monbusho [Ministry of Education] Scholar" in 1974. She conducted research at Waseda University. While she was at the Institute Franco-Japonaise someone told her about the availability of a

position in French Literature at ICU. There she would be able to use her Japanese, her French, and her English to teach French Literature. It was a perfect fit.

Just as no life of any length is without the hills and valleys that give it its particular contours, so no career of 35 years is without its light and shadows. While this *hommage* is not the place for delving into personal matters, it is a chance for all of us to reflect on the changes that the past 35 years has brought and to look forward with hope for those who will follow. Although it may seem hard to imagine now, for more than 10 years Prof. Kodama was the only woman in the Humanities Division. It is difficult for males like me to register in an existential fashion the loneliness and anxiety a situation like that can cause. Prof. Kodama kept a somewhat low profile in this situation.

Then, during a period of crisis in her own life she got a chance to do something completely new: she went to Korea and studied Korean language and culture. She was drawn there by an interest in the Korean writer, Kim Sok Pom. She threw herself into these studies in the hopes of beginning a Korean Studies major here at ICU. Unfortunately, she was before her time, and the idea was rejected. Still, the time in Korea was not at all wasted. She gained a love and an understanding of another culture and was able in 2000 to publish a presentation and translation of Kim's *Karasu no Shi: La Mort du Corbeau (Death of the Crow)* in Paris. She was also able to write a novel and have it published.

Writing her own novel deepened her appreciation of literature and helped her to communicate that appreciation to her students. It sharpened her own awareness of what it actually takes to write a novel and she has been able to help students who want to write.

Prof. Kodama was heartened by the coming of Prof. Claire Hughes in English Literature and she has greatly enjoyed working with Prof. Shoichiro Iwakiri, her colleague in French Literature. The changes in ICU have made her last years here more enjoyable. I have had the office next to hers for the past six years and have enjoyed getting to know her, as we share our struggles with new technology and what not.

In November of this year Prof. Kodoma, as is the custom, was asked to give the Chapel Hour talk. This year's theme was "Shalom – Peace" and so she spoke on "How to Be Peace." It was a profound talk about the levels of peacefulness required for us to be instruments of peace in this world. I would like to end this "Hommage" by letting Prof. Kodama speak:

Talking, writing about, and fighting for peace are remarkable activities, but I have often held a kind of suspicion and felt some uneasiness about those activities. The older I get, the more I think that *peace is first to be found inside ourselves*, before we can establish it outside.

How can we be an instrument of peace, if we are constantly at war with our environment, our fellow workers or students, our parents and above all with ourselves?

... I realize that "Being Peace" is related to "Being Happy." It does not matter so much now if I don't embody Truth, Justice and Rightfulness.

What matters is whether or not I can bring peace, hope and joy to others and to myself. The more I go, the more important these things are becoming. Now, "Being Peace" seems to be the main purpose of my life. Sometimes I succeed, sometimes I fail, but "Being Peace" is a kind of base to which I always come back, it helps me tremendously to live, and I know it will also help me to die when my time is up.

Professor Kodama, I, along with all of your colleagues at the Institute for Christianity and Culture, wish you every happiness and peace as you begin this new phase of your life's journey.

