

Care Under Empire: Catholic Orphanages and Colonial Welfare in Korea, 1888–1945*

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This article examines the evolving relationship between the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres and the Japanese Government-General of Korea from the late nineteenth century through the end of colonial rule in 1945. Focusing on the operation of Catholic orphanages, it traces how the Sisters' charitable work transitioned from relative autonomy—supported by ecclesial networks and lay Catholic philanthropy—to strategic incorporation within the Government-General of Korea's social welfare system during the Cultural Rule period (1920–1931), and its negotiation with the colonial state's wartime mobilization in the 1930s and 1940s. While colonial authorities increasingly sought to regulate and instrumentalize religious organizations, Catholic actors navigated these structures to pursue their social welfare aims. Drawing on missionary reports, colonial sources, and Korean Catholic publications such as *Gyeonghyang japji*, this study argues that Catholic social welfare in colonial Korea cannot be reduced to a binary of collaboration or resistance. Instead, it was shaped by the fluctuating priorities of colonial governance and the internal dynamics of religious orders. Through the case of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, the article shows how orphan care served as a contested site of negotiation between Catholic mission, social welfare, and contingencies of colonial rule.

Keywords: Catholic social welfare, Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, Japanese colonial Korea, colonial governance and religion, Catholic orphanages

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