Japanese new religions in the age of mass media

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Translated by Norman HAVENS and Carl FREIRE

Main shrine of Kurozumikyō (Okayama prefecture)
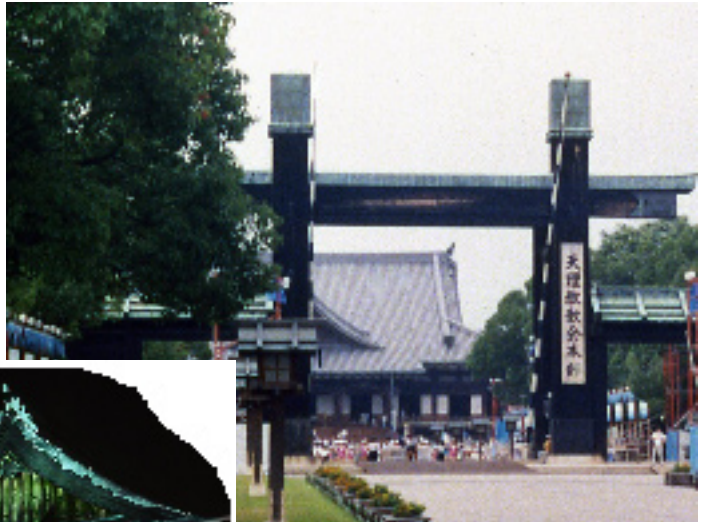
Headquarters of Tenrikyō (Nara prefecture)

Mirokuden of Ōmoto (Kyoto prefecture)

Headquarters of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan (Shizuoka prefecture)

Sōka Gakkai young members' convention in 1989

Asahara Shōkō performing an Initiation ritual

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Preface

The bulk of this book comprises a translation of *Shinshūkyō no kaidoku* (An interpretation of new religions) written by Inoue Nobutaka and published in 1996. Chapters 1 through 12 were first published in 1992, while Chapter 13 was written as a supplementary update to take into account the Aum Shinrikyō gas attack of March 1995.

Norman Havens translated the Japanese original, with subsequent editing and revisions by Carl Freire. The author then reviewed the new English text with the translators to discuss the rendering of technical terms for English readers and make further revisions.

A chronology of significant events, a chart outlining Japan's major new religions, and a glossary have been added for the convenience of English readers. Nishio Takumi, a graduate student at Kokugakuin University, assisted in making the glossary.

Despite the fact that *Shinshukyō no kaidoku* was originally published in the 1990s, the basic tendencies in how Japan's mass media handle new religions in the country remains basically unchanged even in the 21th century. For this reason, I believe the book can still contribute toward understanding the ways in which new religions and Japanese society influence one another, particularly with respect to the role played by mass media in the modernization process.

The chart of Japanese new religions has been added to illustrate the nature of the deep interconnections among these groups, making it easier to see how many of them branched off from earlier groups in organizational schisms, or were influenced by another group's teachings and rituals.

The chronology provides a listing of some of the significant events related to new religions that have had a social impact, including some of the changes to the government's policies on religion since the Meiji Restoration related specifically to the activities of these groups.

The glossary compiles the names of religious groups and significant individuals who have been introduced in this book. The names of Japanese religious groups and their founders are often presented inaccurately in works written in foreign languages, so it is hoped that this will serve as a tool that might remedy this issue in the future.

We hope that this book will help readers to get a broad outline of the activities of new religions in modern Japan.

CHAPTER ONE

Are the New Religions a Menace?

1. Biased Perspective

Japan's new religions represent a provocative challenge to everyday perceptions. Unexpected individuals with unlikely backgrounds appear, founding movements that challenge the ordinary, accepted order of society. A middle-aged man or housewife, or on occasion a young woman who until then has been the subject of no particular attention, is suddenly transformed into a "religious founder" (*kyōso*) capable of mesmerizing crowds. It is this extraordinary or entirely unanticipated aspect of their appearance that elicits the sense of shock, and that may lead to an excessively "scandalous" assessment by others in the society.

These new religions continue to be generally referred to in Japan as *shinkō shūkyō*, the "upstart" religions. When applied to religious groups, the adjective *shinkō* has the meaning of "newly arisen," but it may also include the nuance that such groups are shady, and impoverished in terms of religious value. In more common parlance, they are perceived as "dangerous," "fraudulent," "opportunistic," "greedy," and "shallow." As a result, while there may be favorable aspects to a group being described as a *shinkō shūkyō*, the negative nuances of the term generally outweigh any positive connotations. At the same time, it is also undeniably true that responsibility for that negative image lies principally with the sensationalistic way in which the new religions have been depicted within the popular press.

One can point to any number of examples in which new religions have been the focus of social scandal, the most recent example being the events connected with the activities of Aum Shinrikyō. Only a few years before that, seven female followers of the group Michi no Tomo Kyōkai immolated themselves on a Wakayama beach following the death of their group's leader, and before that, one can recall the media coverage given to the group Iesu no Hakobune ("Ark of Jesus") and their vagrant lifestyle.

Already in the late 1950s and 1960s, Japanese society experienced turmoil in response to Sōka Gakkai's technique of *shakubuku* or "aggressive proselytizing"; other memorable incidents of the era included the "gold bullion scandal" involving Reiyūkai and the charge that its members embezzled money from a public charitable collection campaign, together with real estate problems experienced by Risshō Kōseikai.

In the immediate postwar period, attention was focused on groups like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō—the "dancing religion" founded by the "dancing goddess" Kitamura Sayo—and the events surrounding the "movement of the national capital to Kanazawa" prophesied by the self-styled messiah Jikōson (Nagaoka Nagako) and her proselyte, former sumo grand champion Futabayama.

It should be pointed out that such scandals occurred in the prewar period as well. One thinks of Renmonkyō, which was heavily criticized during the Meiji period for its use of "holy water." Another was the group Taireidō, whose founder Tanaka Morihei attracted attention from the late Meiji into the early Showa periods for his claims of spiritualistic powers. And of course, one must not forget the two great state persecutions of Ōmoto in 1921 and 1935. The doctrines of Tenrikyō were even debated within the National Diet, and the group was subjected to repeated, critical journalistic campaigns.

As this brief catalogue makes apparent, the new religions have excited social attention for quite some time. The uproar has been the result of these new groups' strange behavior from the perspective of everyday society, but the groups themselves likely feel they have done nothing more than act in accordance with their beliefs and their interpretation of prevailing conditions. On some occasions, groups have engaged in their activities with full awareness of the likely social backlash, while in other cases the fact that any social resistance occurs at all appears to come as a surprise to the group.

Still other new religious groups maintain a low profile and innocuous level of activities, even though their doctrines do not appear particularly exceptional: respect the deities and buddhas, don't neglect memorial rites for ancestors, take care of parents, and give earnest attention to your occupation—such entirely conventional ethical norms and values form the central lifestyle guides for many new religious groups. But "conventional" groups like these rarely find themselves at the center of media attention. And while professional scholars study such groups, the resulting research has very little impact on public perceptions of the new religions. To investigate the nature of activities undertaken by such "passive" groups would hardly arouse the natural "news interest" of the typical Japanese journalist—or perhaps more precisely journalists assume their ordinary audience will exhibit little interest in such groups. Based on the standards of popular media, such rationale are only natural, but it must also be pointed out that one result of those standards is that information disseminated by the media regarding the new religions inevitably tends toward considerable bias.

2. *Concealment and Exposé*

While it is true that journalists have played a major role in fomenting the negative image of the new religions, the opposite potential must also be considered. Namely, reports published in the popular media can be thought of as reflections or projections of the vague impressions and fears of ordinary Japanese citizens toward the new religions. The common media portrayal of new religions in sensationalistic and negative tones has deep-lying roots. When one then asks whether the new religions might not possess innate characteristics that function to encourage such negative suspicions, one can indeed suggest the following features:

■ Insufficient Information Disclosure

A general trend among the new religions is excessive reluctance to divulge information outside the group. Some groups are even closed-mouthed regarding their doctrines and principal religious activities—information that one might think could pose no particular threat. While radical secrecy is limited to a few new religions in Japan, social attention is normally directed toward those groups undergoing rapid growth and engaged in particularly active proselytizing, and it is just such groups that likewise tend to display this kind of secretive behavior, thus promoting the impression that new religions are—by nature—closed to the outside. Further, while extreme secrecy may be rare among the new religions, only a minority of groups maintain a completely open attitude with regard to the release of even non-sensitive information to journalists and academic researchers.

■ Erratic Growth

Many new religions display tremendous growth in relatively short time spans. When a group's numbers increase to several thousand or several tens of thousands, however, the leadership is inevitably faced with the need to adjust the group's organizational structure to deal with the burgeoning membership. While the group's attention is captivated by such organizational matters, it may find itself unable to respond adequately to distortions arising within the growing organization and relationships between members of the leadership may become strained. Further, the leadership itself may be unable to adequately assess the currently volatile state of the group and the directions in which it is moving. If the organization evolves into an uncoordinated behemoth, it becomes an obvious target for fault-finding and nitpicking. As demonstrated by groups like Reiyūkai and Sekai Kyūseikyō, when the group's

schisms and internal conflicts lead to the creation of numerous splinter groups, it becomes perfect bait for sensationalistic journalism.

■ Coercive Proselytizing

Some new religions attempt to increase their membership by accosting passersby in public spaces such as train stations or university campuses. Others may use door-to-door sales tactics, or market their publications in the attempt to attract new members. On reflection, such attitudes are not hard to understand. If a believer is convinced that his religion possesses the most wonderful of truths, it is not surprising that he might wish to tell strangers about it. Fundamentally, aggressive proselytizing forms the lifeblood of the new religions.

But methods that rely on deceit—refusals to divulge clearly what religious group is involved, or the distribution of seemingly ordinary questionnaires unconnected to religion, which then skillfully twist respondents' words so as to lead to a religious solicitation—cannot be called "fair." And when, despite repeated refusals, representatives of the group continue to make persistent telephone calls to solicit prospective members, the activity ceases to be merely "aggressive" proselytizing and enters the realm of coercion. It is just such tactics that raise suspicions in the minds of most ordinary people.

Even if proselytization is not coercive in the strict sense, one can be excused for harboring skepticism about a group when its aggressive proselytizing is coupled to a closed posture toward the outside. Members of the group Shinji Shūmeikai, for example, confront passersby in front of train stations with the generous offer to pray for their happiness and good health, yet the group is likewise known for its secrecy vis-à-vis the outside. When a group publicly and aggressively seeks new converts on the one hand while closing its doors to interviews and research on the other, its behavior cannot fail to be viewed as arbitrary.

The foregoing three characteristics can be considered relatively typical of Japan's new religious groups, but other factors are also at play. The weakness or lack of social consciousness that tends to be displayed particularly by small movements does not lend a positive impression. And while not true of all movements, some groups demand enormous donations from members, a tactic that obviously makes them suspect in the eyes of the public.

But it remains their closed and secretive nature that is most responsible for stimulating popular distrust of the new religions. A group active in addressing its

message vocally to the outside while refusing any attempts from those outside to gain information about the group is sure to become the subject of voyeuristic curiosity. When this characteristic is added to the journalistic trends in the commercial media, one has the basic formula for the current situation, namely, the media's exposé-oriented instinct cloaked in the posture of providing objective "news coverage" of the new religions, and a correspondingly acute fear of such coverage by the new religions themselves.

3. Newsworthiness and Individuality

While many journalistic accounts of the new religions are admittedly voyeuristic, the fundamental reason for the media's attraction to the new religions is because each movement possesses what can be broadly called "newsworthiness." In concrete terms, a newsworthy new religion can be described as possessing one or more of the following characteristics:

- Novelty
- Leaders with unique personalities
- Activities or teachings that draw public attention
- Involvement in a "scandal"

The mere fact of being "new" makes a group newsworthy, and each new group that appears has, by virtue of that fact, occasioned a potential news event. At the same time, novelty alone does not represent a substantial degree of newsworthiness, and some other factor is normally necessary to attract public interest in the group. The first such factor that comes to mind is the extraordinary personalities displayed by founders of certain groups. If the founder of a group has an unusual air, or demonstrates unusual speech and behavior, he or she will be sure to draw public curiosity.

Newsworthiness is also enhanced when a group engages in unusual methods of proselytizing or possesses unusual doctrines. Groups such as Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, and Sūkyō Mahikari all engage in faith healing and exorcistic rituals performed by holding the palm of the hand toward the recipient. While this behavior may have begun to lose its bizarre aspect in the context of the recent rush of popular interest in Chinese "aura power" (Ch. chi-gong; Jp. kikō), the appearance of members of new religions accosting passersby on the street and offering to pray for them while bestowing such spiritual hand power cannot fail to draw the curiosity of onlookers. When a group preaches of an impending apocalypse, even more people may find a reason for curiosity in its message.

Finally, when the activities of a group foment a "scandal," the group may well find

itself at the center of media attention, even if short lived. For example, in early June 1974, Ichigen no Miya founder Motoki Kyōson forecast that a disastrous earthquake would strike the city of Osaka on June 18. Motoki distributed some two hundred thousand leaflets warning about the event and then attempted ritual suicide when his prophecy failed to materialize. Likely few people even remember this event any more, but it was the subject of broad press coverage at the time. Although the group had been virtually unknown until that point, this single event brought it suddenly into the public spotlight.

When a single new religion attracts public curiosity in this way, it tends to be portrayed as being "typical" of all new religions, thus encouraging what may be a somewhat distorted image of the new religions as a whole. In truth, the new religions are quite diverse in their traits and the characteristics of a group may also evolve over time. As a result, anyone wishing to make general statements regarding the diverse characteristics of the new religions should be willing to spend a good amount of time in preparatory study; the phenomenon of the new religions has enough social significance to demand that degree of preparation.

Assuming this perspective, it becomes rather difficult to decide just how to approach the new religions. It would of course be easy to give an anecdotal account oriented to the sensationalistic, ready-made image of the new religions found in the popular media, and such an account might even prove popular among readers. But such accounts represent the nutritional equivalent of little more than "intellectual junk food." Even if the writer adopts a critical perspective, if that critique is not joined to an investigation into the deeper social issues lying behind the façade of appearances, it becomes difficult to discriminate criticism from personal prejudice. At the same time, merely diving headlong into the issue of the new religions does not necessarily indicate that one has adequately grasped their social role.

4. *Prejudicial Labeling*

Once it is agreed that the new religions are reflections—in whatever small way— of general social trends, then it is incumbent upon us to discard the categorical label of "immoral and deviant religions" (*inshi jakyō*) that has been applied to such groups in Japan since at least the prewar period. Virtually no researcher of religion characterizes groups in this way anymore, and the label has even appeared less frequently in recent journalistic accounts. At times, though, it would seem that the change is merely superficial, since the former indictment has been replaced by a proliferation of

sensationalistic descriptions, many of which are little more than thin veneers hiding the same basic charge that the groups are "deviant."

The "deviant religion" label first appeared in the prewar period, and was aimed at denying any worth whatsoever to mass religiosity and its values. Contrary to criticism arising from in-depth investigation, this kind of labeling thus represented nothing less than categorical denial. While the use of this kind of prewar labeling appears to have diminished today, media coverage that attempts to provide sensationalistic entertainment can be called little more than negation in the form of ridicule.

The view of new religions as deviant, deeply rooted as it is both in the popular media and public perception, stands out with particular clarity when one compares the situation with corresponding perceptions of Christianity, Buddhism, or Shinto. For example, the tone used by television announcers to describe the architecture of Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines is almost always different from that used when talking about the structures erected by the new religions. Descriptions of Buddhist and Shinto architecture tend to relate the histories of the structures and their role as important cultural monuments. In the case of the new religions, however, descriptions tend to dwell on flamboyant furnishings and colossal dimensions. It is not unusual for NHK's Sunday-morning "Hour of Religion" program to feature Buddhist priests delivering moral homilies, but representatives of the new religions are strangely absent.

In daily conversation, few eyebrows are raised when someone admits to being a Christian, or a parishioner of one of the established Buddhist sects such as True Pure Land or Nichiren, but what kind of response does one receive upon revealing that he or she is a member of Tenrikyō, Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kōseikai, or Shinnyoen? Likewise, protective amulets distributed by well-known Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines are received gratefully, while those from new religions are much more likely to be viewed with suspicion.

In fact, one of the basic patterns followed by the mass media is to argue from a superficially objective and sophisticated perspective that hides far more deeply rooted prejudices. Many journalists have followed this pattern in their discussion of why young people are attracted to the new religions. One frequently sees the problem voiced neutrally as, "It appears that young people are attracted to newly appearing religions; how do we account for this inexplicable behavior?" and the writer then goes on to explore this "pathological" condition. In order not to be misunderstood, I should emphasize that I am not asserting there is anything wrong with the question in itself. That such questions arise is only natural. Only, in too many cases, the

superficial perspective of mature social concern forms little more than a façade for deeper misunderstandings and prejudices, and ultimately for a sheer lack of knowledge regarding religion. If one were to read an article about modern young people who attend Christian churches or display interests in Buddhism, would one encounter there the same hand-wringing, head-shaking attitude of dilemma?

This type of criticism tends to make it difficult to determine just where the perspective of the critic is rooted. No matter how many diatribes are launched and how many metaphors are engaged, the presentation fails to convince. Such complaints would be far more compelling if they were aimed at Japanese society or religion in general, and only incidentally found a target in the new religions. Unfortunately, that kind of dispassionate debate is lacking in far too many cases.

To venture one final comment here, I might suggest that a fundamental problem exists in the Japanese people's attitude toward the intelligent discussion of religion. No one could become a recognized "critic" of politics or economics who lacked the requisite minimum of specialized training and study. Amateurs are persona non grata at public discussions in these areas. When the discussion turns to religious matters, though, it seems that anyone can issue confident statements and critiques, even while lacking a rudimentary understanding of religion. Given this kind of situation, it is not surprising that so many incoherent discussions are heard mixing fact with fancy. And fundamentally, the fact that Japanese people raise few objections to this style of "critique" is a reflection of their broader perception of religious issues.

5. The "Critical Distance" of Research

New religions vary widely in scale. Some are quite small, with memberships of no more than several hundred to several thousand. Others in the middle range claim from several tens of thousands to one-hundred thousand members. Finally one finds the very large groups with anywhere from several hundreds of thousands of followers to those with memberships numbering in the millions. Groups like Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kōseikai, Reiyūkai, PL Kyōdan, Bussho Gonenkai, and Tenrikyō are organizations on the largest scale, while Ōyamanezu no Mikoto Shinji Kyōkai, Reiha no Hikari Kyōkai, Agonshū, and Byakkō Shinkōkai, fall into the middle tier of groups. Newer groups like Aum Shinrikyō are undoubtedly foremost in notoriety, but they tend to be quite small when it comes to how many members they actually have. Fluctuation in membership figures does tend to characterize the new religions, and as generations pass by considerable changes can be witnessed in both the fervor and size of most new religious

groups.

We should also remember that while it is easy enough to speak of a group with a million members, that number represents a tremendous achievement. On reflection it means that, on average, one out of every one-hundred people one meets in today's Japan is a member of that group. Any new religion with a membership in the hundreds of thousands thus represents a substantial social force.

Further, the social impact of the new religions is not a matter of the scale of their membership alone, but rather the fact that many such groups have considerably expanded their range of activity in recent years. A particular mark of new religious activity in the postwar period has been their expansion into such areas as education, medicine, politics, and charitable volunteer work. As shown in Table 1, a large number of new religions now administer their own schools. One group not shown on the list, Shikō Gakuen, does not maintain an officially certified school, but it nonetheless provides remedial middle-school education, based on its own religious ideals, to children who have dropped out of ordinary schools. Other groups have founded hospitals, like the Yorozu Sōdansho of Tenrikyō, Kōsei Hospital of Risshō Kōseikai, PL Hospital of PL Kyōdan, and the Ube Daiichi Hospital of Shizen no Izumi.

In sum, the new religions have succeeded in making their presence felt in significant ways. And while perhaps not a direct reflection of that fact, some recent writers on the new religions have failed to assess their subject with sufficient objectivity and to the contrary have displayed a fawning attitude toward the groups forming their subject. I exclude, of course, those cases in which a religious commentator has deliberately given favorable treatment to a religious group in the hopes that his own publications might be purchased by members of the group. Rather, I refer to those cases in which a superficially dispassionate style of description is used to mask the underlying goal of promotion of the group concerned.

What the reader must be most on guard against are those cases in which the researcher's own value judgments regarding his subject begin to move beyond a certain point toward excessively positive adulation. While not many cases like this have occurred, they do happen from time to time. They may be the result of a researcher's coming to feel sympathy with a group, so that he ends up idealizing it unnecessarily— the so-called "aggressive case"—or the rather more "passive case" in which a researcher is requested to write an article for a religious group's in-house publication and eliminates any serious criticism from his article in order not to hurt the feelings of the group. But it is most difficult to draw any clear-cut line in the matter of what constitutes a "reasonable"

as opposed to an "excessive" level of commendation in such evaluations. In addition, the study of a new religion involves interaction with a "living" subject, making it unfortunately inevitable that non-academic considerations enter into the research relationship. To express the issue in a somewhat self-serving way, it might be called the inevitable price that one pays when performing research on modern religion.

Unlike the case when studying religions of the distant past, the student of current religious movements is always exposed to the danger of retaliation. When a Japanese researcher makes statements regarding ancient, medieval, or Edo-period religions or figures, he may arouse dispute from colleagues or disagreement from theologians, but he cannot be attacked by the direct object of his comments. When one criticizes a present-day movement, however, one must be prepared for an intense reaction from the object of the criticism. And the potential for such reaction is particularly great when the movement involved is a new religious movement. The large-scale, established religions of Buddhism and Shinto are not likely to suffer much injury as the result of academic criticisms, but the new religions may experience severe loss, making them understandably sensitive to such critiques. Groups can be expected to be particularly sensitive toward criticism when they are still at the developmental stage.

Even if one is dealing only with published works on the group, such as biographies of founders or collections of doctrine, research frequently takes delicate turns, making it necessary to obtain surveys of and contact with the founder, leaders, or members of the group. The members of the group may wish to know the purpose of the research, and they may change their responses, based on their attitudes toward the researcher's expressed purpose. It is only to be expected that the researcher's way of thinking about issues will disagree with that of the group, and on occasion it will become necessary to take an overtly confrontational stance toward the movement.

But the group possesses its own logic as well. If it rejects the researcher, saying, "we don't need your kind of research," the outlook for the research project itself becomes bleak. On the other hand, if the scholar makes himself a de facto spokesman for the group, he will no doubt be given open access to a wealth of materials, but his reputation as a scholar will also suffer as a result. Some recent Japanese scholars have in fact shown little reluctance to taking that step, however, and that behavior itself raises thorny issues.

It is only natural that a researcher's viewpoint should differ from that of his subject group, leading to occasional conflict. But the situation would be distinctly unhealthy if many scholars intentionally behaved so as to avoid any such confrontation. If one

is making it one's life work to study a living religion, it becomes necessary to acquire what might be called the professional "knack" that allows one to appreciate the group's worldview even while constantly maintaining a certain reserve vis-à-vis the group; such an ideal relationship might be called the "critical distance" required for effective research.

6. A New "Religious System"

"New religion" (*shin shūkyō*) is the general expression used to refer to a variety of religious movements that have come into being in modern Japan, but it does not mean that all movements that arose in modern Japan are therefore "new religions." The question of which movements to include is difficult to answer, as is the question of periodization, namely, when to recognize the new religions as first appearing. And while researchers have expressed various opinions on the matter, no universally accepted consensus has yet been formed. A minimal degree of agreement does exist, however, with regard to a number of issues. Within the *Shinshūkyō jiten* (Encyclopedia of the New Religions), the category of "new religion" is defined by the following four conditions: (1) a religion that (2) is organized (3) independently of established religions, and which (4) is composed primarily of members of the common classes (*minshū*).

This set of conditions has been selected as a rough aid in distinguishing those groups falling in the category of "new religions" from other groups clearly not in that category, thus allowing us to highlight what specific characteristics might be common to the new religious groups as a whole. Condition (1) attempts to discriminate the new religions from similar groups whose orientation is primarily as moral or ethical movements. Condition (2) is proposed in order to discriminate the new religions from more diffuse, non-organized "folk religion" and "folk beliefs." Condition (3) discriminates the new religions from revitalization or reform movements within the so-called "established" religions (meaning shrine Shinto and sectarian Buddhism), and condition (4) discriminates the new religions from more philosophical movements catering primarily to the intelligentsia.

In practice, however, researchers tend to employ more intuitive rationale when making decisions regarding the definition and scope of the new religions, based on the individual researcher's perception of the personality of the movement's "founder" figure, and the specific character of the organization established as a result. If the various factors were distilled into a single word, it might come down to nothing more than the perception of sheer "newness," and the title "new religion" was likely selected precisely

because it was a concise expression of that novelty. It is too facile to say merely that the new religions are new because they came into being in the modern period; if so, then we must confront the question of just what it is that constitutes the newness of the new religious movement. It is in response to that question that I attempt to understand the new religions as the appearance of a new religious system.

When one considers each movement by itself, the "new" elements in the movement may appear to differ slightly from those in other groups. But when viewed overall, if the movements as a whole do not indicate the emergence of a new religious system, the concept of a new religion itself must lose much of its significance.

When, then, did this new religious system first begin to take shape? Previous research has conventionally proposed the following four time periods and rationale as upper limits in the periodization of the new religions: (1) early nineteenth century; (2) late-Edo period; (3) early twentieth century; and (4) the period following World War II.

Theory (1) seeks the origin of the new religions in the popularization and laicization of mountain cults such as Fuji-kō, which grew rapidly from roughly around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Theory (2) looks to the establishment of major new religions such as Kurozumikyō, Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō, all of which erupted in the late-Edo period. These groups both signaled the sudden emergence of numerous other movements, and also exerted a great impact on the directions in which those movements developed. Theory (3) pays attention to the impact of movements like Reiyūkai and Ōmoto, and also to the social environment created by the mature development of capitalism in Japan. The final theory (4) emphasizes the wide-ranging expansion of new religious movements under the principle of separation of church and state established at the end of World War II.

Each of these theories has its own respective strengths and weaknesses. The embryonic forms of the new religions can certainly be recognized in the religious movements of the early nineteenth century, but those early forms only took solid shape in the era leading up to the Meiji Restoration (1868). Likewise, numerous new religions appeared in the early twentieth century, but they were heavily influenced by the earlier pioneering movements. And the emphasis on post-war movements fails to convince, since it overlooks the continuity between pre-war and post-war movements. Based on these considerations, most researchers today accept a periodization scheme that focuses on the late-Edo era (ca. 1850-1868), since it appears to have relatively fewer limitations than the others (see, for example, *Shinshūkyō kenkyū chōsa handobukku* and the *Shinshūkyō jiten*). While it is impossible to establish any hard-and-fast dating for the

"first new religion," it is easier to explain a number of features of the new religions if we assume that the new religious system represented by these movements took form in this period.

My interpretation of the new religions is based on an assumption that such interpretive activity forms one element in the broader debate regarding the nature of Japan's cultural system in the modern period. As a result, while I recognize the diverse forms and social contexts that characterize each group individually, it is also crucial to consider the common characteristics that allow us to bring these movements together under the single rubric, "new religion."

Chapter Two

The Fate of the New

1. "Happy Science"

For anyone mesmerized by the academic credentialism rampant in Japanese society today, the Department of Law at Tokyo University is the "holy of holies"—the most prestigious department of the most prestigious national university in Japan. Yet a graduate of that university and department became the founder of a new religion that has undergone exponential growth, and his numerous published works can be easily found at virtually any bookstore. What's more, when one learns that the celebration of that founder's birthday was held at the huge Tokyo Dome stadium at enormous cost, it would seem, on the contrary, more strange for people not to be curious about it. As a result, it is not hard to understand why this new religion, known as Kōfuku no Kagaku ("Happy Science") suddenly captivated public attention by the time the Heisei era had begun in 1991.

To someone ignorant of the history and current state of the new religions, witnessing this kind of movement unfold before one's very eyes might seem incredible, strange, or just downright bizarre. To a student of new religious movements, however, the cycle of events surrounding the emergence of Kōfuku no Kagaku was not particularly aberrant, given the context of other scenes that have frequently unfolded throughout the Japan's modern history. At the same time, the way in which a man like Ōkawa Ryūhō appeared and succeeded in founding a religious movement that so quickly attracted such an immense number of followers has the unmistakable scent about it of something uniquely characteristic of contemporary Japanese social trends.

When one analyzes the discrete elements of this movement, it is possible to discern certain features obviously common to earlier religious movements. Some of these include the influence of Takahashi Shinji of the group GLA ("God-Light Association") and the use of the founder's published writings in the activity of proselytizing, a practice reminiscent of methods earlier adopted by the group Seichō no Ie. Such similarities indicate that while it displays certain new trappings, Happy Science is actually the product of a cumulative history of earlier popular and new religious movements. As a result, while a search for elements common to earlier movements might provide a certain degree of interest, it should already be fairly clear from the start

that we will be able to predict a good deal of what we will eventually find.

The real question that should be addressed is the reason why this kind of movement was successful at attracting so many people's interest so quickly. Namely, what is the real "shadow of the age" that falls across this kind of movement? Put in other words, how do such rapidly expanding new religions appear when viewed from their status as unique "products of the age"? It is precisely this question that has been emphasized by those doing research on the new religions—particularly those who study them from a sociological perspective.

When new religions are considered as a product of the age in which they occur, it becomes crucial to consider not only the unique characteristics of the individual groups in question, but also the social conditions that have fomented the groups. This element is vitally important because it remains the characteristics of Japanese society which these groups express, even though they do so in ways that prominently emphasize certain unique situations and features.

From the late 1980s through the first years of the 1990s, Happy Science and Aum Shinrikyō were at the center of attention in Japan's tabloid press, but numerous other new groups—including Ijun, Uchūshinkyō Kōmyōkai, Shinmei Aishinkai, Tendō Sōtendan, and Worldmate—were simultaneously engaged in their own respective activities. All these groups—though to different degrees and in various ways—lie strongly under the shadow of their times, as products of the age.

The history of the new religions now extends over one-hundred and fifty years, from the late Edo period to the present day, but what lies in the background to the various appearances represented by these movements and groups? Let's take a look.

2. The Debut of Research on New Religions

Most people researching the new religions first investigate the unique features of the groups, and on that basis consider the social background and trends out of which the movements arose. There is a very simple reason for this strategy, a reason that becomes clear once one understands when it was that research on the new religions really became popular. Academic research on the new religions first appeared in the postwar period. More precisely, the first pioneering works on the new religions appeared in the 1950s, and in the 1960s these studies gradually took on the shape of a discrete discipline. Rapid growth in both quantity and quality of research has been apparent since the 1970s.

Of course, the prewar period had already seen a limited number of what would now be called studies of new religions, but the individuals actually undertaking the

research most often considered themselves to be studying sectarian Shinto, "quasi-religions," or what were popularly known then as "immoral and deviant religions" (*inshi jakyō*).

Since the study of new religions took the form of an academic discipline only in the postwar period, researchers of the time were unavoidably influenced by the society's general evaluation of the new religions at the time. When one reviews the socio-religious situation in postwar Japan, it is not hard to understand why the new religions were the subject of such attention, and why such focus was placed on the social conditions for the emergence and development of new religions.

With the crumbling of the institution of so-called "State Shinto" in the immediate postwar period, it appeared to outsiders that Christianity and the new religions were most advantageously situated for religious activity. Shrine Shinto, on the other hand, was disestablished and thus obviously disadvantaged. On the whole, the situation of Buddhism was more disadvantageous than advantageous, but in any event, the way in which any religious group grew was by and large dependent on the "missionary energy" that it had amassed.

In the chaotic period following Japan's defeat in the war, the foremost concern was the economic one of survival. At the same time, the defeat also produced a critical change in values, specifically relating to the disintegration of the imperial-nation concept, changes in the status of the emperor, and the crumbling of ideals and ideologies that had surrounded the sacred nature of the state. How would people respond to such momentous shifts? It would have been well had religious groups been agressive in the consideration and implementation of new policies in these areas of cultural change. But in general, the established religions had their hands full merely trying to survive the shock produced by post-war conditions. Facing a potentially critical loss of shrine and temple lands as the result of new laws for the separation of church and state and agrarian land reform, Shinto and Buddhist institutions scrambled to preserve their own economic foundations. For its part, Shrine Shinto was indicted for its earlier relationship to State Shinto and met a particularly harsh reception.

Christianity, on the other hand, was situated within relatively favorable conditions. The combination of pressure from American churches and evangelizing work on the part of Japanese congregations led to remarkable growth for several years following the end of the war. The United Church of Christ in Japan (Nihon Kirisutokyōdan) sponsored a nationwide Christian conference at Tokyo's Aoyama Gakuin College in June, 1946 and announced a three-year plan for the building of a new, Christian Japan. Goals included

the saving of three-million souls, the doubling of the previous number of congregations, and the founding of Bible study groups in every city, town, and village of Japan. Men like Kagawa Toyohiko and Ozaki Michio conducted traveling missionary meetings as part of the effort.

In 1948, twenty quonset-hut churches were donated to Japan by U.S. churches, and 2.4 million Bibles were likewise donated and soon sold out. Bible study groups became a fad in government and company offices, and at one time it was even rumored that the emperor would convert to Christianity. In a 1949 message to U.S. churches, General MacArthur expressed his perception that Japanese Christianity presented an unprecedented missionary opportunity and said that one thousand young missionaries were needed for the task of converting Japan. But this kind of Christian fervor was temporary and church numbers did not swell as expected. Even today, the number of Christian adherents remains at around one percent of the population.

In sum, the groups demonstrating the most dynamic activity from the chaotic postwar period on were the new religions. The Religious Corporations Ordinance promulgated in 1946 and the Religious Juridical Persons Law in 1951 both served to provide broad measures of freedom to the activities of new religions. While the established religious sects were generally floundering, the new religious experienced a tremendous invigoration. Groups like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō and Jiu attracted media attention for their unusual activities, while groups like Sekai Kyūseikyō, PL Kyōdan, Reiyūkai, Risshō Kōseikai and Sōka Gakkai attracted attention for the rapid way in which their ranks swelled with new believers. Various minor religious confraternities, together with numerous organizations that until then had been relegated to the status of a branch church of a recognized religion, were now registered as independent religious juridical persons; the sheer numbers of new religious groups emerging was sufficient to attract public notice.

Against such social conditions, it was only natural that researchers took notice of the new religions and developed an interest in the social conditions from which they sprang. And from this concern with the concrete activities of religious groups flowering with such immediacy, researchers' interests gradually expanded to encompass the broader range of new religious movements that had come into existence since the early modern period.

3. The Danger of the New

An important topic in the postwar study of sociology of religion has been religion

and social change, based on the assumption that times of social change are favorable for the establishment of new movements and for intense religious development. The issue is no longer a subject of much debate, though it has not become irrelevant. It might be that the very expression "social change" is problematic; perhaps it would be more fruitful for our study if we considered instead the relationship of religion to certain social conditions. For example, when one considers situations like that which currently characterizes Japan—namely, where new religious groups are appearing one after the other despite little evidence of general social "change"—directing our consideration instead toward the emergence and development of new religions in relationship to their individual social backgrounds might produce dividends.

One issue that must inevitably be kept in mind regarding the social conditions in which the emergence and development of new religions unfolds is the legal environment in effect at the time. Laws have force at their disposal, and while the force that regulates religious activity may not be so conscious on an everyday level, it can exert decisive influence under certain conditions. If this fact is overlooked, we will undermine our attempt to understand the trajectories taken by modern religious movements.

From the perspective of the society at large, any new movement is basically "dangerous," because to one degree or another, the emergence of a new doctrine and new organization exposes existing order and human relations to various kinds of disruption. As an example, attendance at weekly meetings and the daily recitation of scriptures are entirely ordinary customs within many religious groups. But when one member of a family suddenly changes his or her everyday habits by adopting such customs, some kind of discord is likely to arise in the family. And when such individuals become fervent advocates and attempt to convert others in the neighborhood or at the workplace, their activities are certain to be considered disruptive to those around them. As a movement achieves a larger scale and begins publicly issuing social criticisms, it exerts a considerable impact on the prevailing society.

Further, a new religious movement is also viewed as potentially dangerous by the existing established religions. Religion forms a kind of "marketplace," and the Japanese rites of passage surrounding birth, marriage, and death, together with the annual social events celebrating the traditional calendrical nodes and the summer festival of o-bon are ordinarily under the purview of established shrines, temples, and churches. Faith healing, miraculous intercessions, and services such as personal counseling are areas in which religions take their greatest pride. The appearance of a new movement introduces confusion into the existing marketplace, since it represents an increase in the number of competitors.

When the danger presented by a new movement is contained within certain bounds, the group may not draw much reaction from the society, but this situation changes when the group's influence goes beyond a certain point. And as might be expected, the sources of reaction that present the greatest problem in such cases are those that possess a degree of coercive force. Friction with other family members or criticism from friends certainly may be factors leading to the formation of such opposition, but such sources themselves are not likely to be focused and organized. For example, there are relatively few cases in which parents and relatives of members have formed "victims' associations" like those which were organized in the context of the Unification Church and Aum Shinrikyō.

When one considers the process whereby a new religion comes under focused social criticism, far and away the most important role in postwar Japan has been played by the media. In recent years, reporting by television and weekly magazines have been particularly influential in the galvanizing of public opinion regarding whether a given new religion has been guilty of disruptions of public order or of grossly violating prevailing standards of common sense. The device of conducting "campaigns" against a chosen target, or focused reportage on a selected group is a feature of the media present in the prewar years as well, but the postwar growth and diversification of the media has made for a vast increase in the variety of coverage. In that context, it might be noted that the religious group Sōka Gakkai has received by far the greatest amount of media coverage in this period.

While public curiosity has fed media gluttony, the postwar period has seen very few cases of actual government intervention in the activities of a new religion. Constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and belief mean that groups can proclaim any teaching they want, no matter how bizarre. Similar guarantees of freedom of assembly allow groups to gather large numbers of people and proudly display their organizing prowess. If they register as a religious corporation, they are additionally provided with preferential treatment in taxation, thus getting a virtual underwrite for their activities. And while there have been occasional cases—like those surrounding the alleged violation of the Land Use Law by Aum Shinrikyō—in which legal investigations are clearly out of proportion to the scale of the infraction involved, such instances also exhibit a trait common in recent years: namely, the involvement of the media in their instigation.

4. Barriers to Public Acceptance

The principle whereby state and legal authorities do not interfere in the activities of religious groups is a special feature of the postwar period; things were considerably different in earlier years. Changes in the legal environment in particular, while not representing complete reversal, have nonetheless been substantial, and it is important to understand what kind of impact these changes have had.

At present, when a newly emerging religious movement reaches a certain scale, it normally chooses to register as a religious juridical person or corporation (*shūkyō hōjin*). It first must become a corporation under the jurisdiction of the prefectural governor, and as the group expands so that it has branches in multiple prefectures, the umbrella organization for these branches is usually registered as a corporation under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The present Religious Juridical Persons Law is said to be based on the principle of "authentication." In theory, if a group is determined to have fulfilled the conditions of a religious corporation, it is authenticated as such, based on its application to the proper authorities. In fact, things do not always go quite that smoothly, but in principle the process of becoming a religious corporation is open to all religious movements.

Up through the period of World War II, however, things were different. As early as the Edo period (1600-1867), the basic policy of the Tokugawa government was to refuse official recognition to all new religious practices or "wild rumors" of "uncanny events." If the government judged a group to be a new movement, or a teaching likely to cause public instability, it would move to crack down on the group or teaching involved. However, the nineteenth century nonetheless saw the rise of a number of new movements, including Kurozumikyō, Misogikyō, Konkōkyō, and Tenrikyō. This occurred in part because the Tokugawa government was losing its power toward the end of the period, but also in part due to a certain legal loophole of the period, namely, the fact that a religious founder could carry on his or her activities by becoming licensed as a priest of the Yoshida or Shirakawa schools of Shinto. These two schools possessed the sole authority to grant recognition to Shinto priests during the period, and by obtaining such licensing or recognition groups could formally escape the designation of "new religions."

As a result, Misogikyō's founder Inoue Masakane received ordination from the Shirakawa school in 1834, while in 1866, Konkōkyō's founder Konkō Daijin received authorization from the Shirakawa to wear priestly vestments when performing his rites. Nakayama Shūji, a son of Tenrikyō's founder Nakayama Miki, was likewise granted

ordination from the Yoshida Office of Shinto in 1867. And the founder of Kurozumikyō, Kurozumi Munetada, was originally a priest at the Imamura Shrine.

In the period immediately following the Meiji Restoration, the government's stance toward religion was one of trial and error, and the central government's policies were not always transmitted accurately to the countryside. Official intervention in Konkōkyō, Tenrikyō, and Maruyamakyō occurred during this period, and the leaders of this intervention were local government officials and police. Konkyōkyō, for example, was ordered by the local mayor to cease its proselytizing activities in January 1873. Since Konkō Daijin was not one of the offical *kyōdōshoku*, or "moral-educational lecturers" appointed by the government, he was deemed not properly qualified to proselytize. But just two months later, he was allowed to preach again, the result once more of a judgment by the same mayor.

In comparison, Tenrikyō was prosecuted far more harshly. In 1874, the office of shrines and temples in Nara Prefecture summoned Nakayama Miki for questioning. Since this investigation was undertaken in response to an attempt by Tenrikyō believers to entrap the priests of Isonokami Shrine in a debate, it might be considered something they had brought upon themselves. As Tenrikyō activities became more energetic, however, prosecution of the group took on a more strident tone, and Nakayama was taken into custody and interrogated a total of eighteen times until the year just before her death in 1886.

Maruyamakyō's founder Itō Rokurōbee was likewise the target of government interference because he did not possess the official *kyōdōshoku* qualification. He had gained notoriety through his practice of *miharai*, by which he claimed to achieve instant healings, but in May 1873 he was taken into custody by the police at Mizonokuchi in Kanagawa Prefecture. The Yokohama district court confiscated the donations he had collected, fined him 1.5 yen, and ordered him to cease from his beliefs. Itō did not discontinue his practice, however, and as a consequence he was detained once again by the same police station in April of the next year. This time he was confined for one month before being released. Maruyamakyō finally achieved legitimacy in 1875 by merging itself with the religious confraternity Fuji Issan Kōsha. The latter group, in turn, was led by Shishino Nakaba from Satsuma in Kyushu, a proponent of the conservative "national learning" (*kokugaku*) movement.

It is clear that the institution of *kyōdōshoku* was a crucial element in each of these cases. During the early years folloring the Meiji Restoration, the new government attempted to introduce a system of licensing to the activity of religious proselytizing; its

concrete manifestation was this system of officially licensed lecturers. A newly arising religious movement had to confront the issue of how to accommodate the requirements of this institution. If the founder or one of the central leaders of the group did not obtain the status of a *kyōdōshoku* lecturer, the group would find it extremely difficult to openly continue with its proselytizing activities.

In the late 1870s, the Meiji government began withdrawing from its earlier direct involvement in religious indoctrination. In 1882, the rank of moral lecturer was specifically distinguished from that of Shinto priest, a reflection of the government's desire to draw a clear line between Shrine Shinto and other religions. The institution of *kyōdōshoku* itself was completely abolished two years later, in 1884. Thereafter, each existing religious denomination appointed a director (*kanchō*) who had responsibility for the sect. Given this new condition, new movements wishing to undertake religious activities had virtually only one alternative at the beginning, namely, to become a branch church under the aegis of an existing, approved religious group. If they succeeded in achieving a certain size, they might apply for recognition as an independent denomination, but groups which achieved independence in this way following the abolition of the *kyōdōshoku* system were mostly those which had existed since the last years of the Edo period, e.g., Misogikyō, Konkōkyō, and Tenrikyō. The only group that came into existence after the Meiji Restoration and was granted independence in this period was Shinrikyō, begun by Sano Tsunehiko in Kokura, Kyushu. In contrast, the group Renmonkyō, led by Shimamura Mitsu, initially became a branch of Taiseikyō, and the founder of Ōmoto, Deguchi Nao, first proselytized under the aegis of Konkōkyō.

In July 1899, the Home Ministry issued an ordinance called "Reporting Regulations Regarding the Establishment, Transferal, and Discontinuance of Ministers and Facilities of Worship and Teaching for Religions other than Shinto and Buddhism." This ordinance opened the way for groups to undertake religious activities by submitting the appropriate application forms to the prefectural governor's office and receiving its approval. As a result, numerous movements of various scale became more active in organizing from around this period.

Further, the religious groups which fell under the jurisdiction of the Home Ministry in this way came to be called "quasi-religions" (*ruiji shūkyō*), an expression which first appeared in a notice issued in March 1919 by the Ministry of Education's Bureau of Religions. At that time, the expression was used to differentiate groups falling under the control of the Home Ministry's Police Bureau from the recognized sects and denominations of Shinto and Buddhism, which were under the jurisdiction of the

aforementioned Bureau of Religions. Accordingly, Ōmoto, Seichō no Ie, Hito no Michi Kyōdan, Reiyūkai and most other new religions of the period were referred to under this category of quasi-religions.

This condition basically persisted until the promulgation of the Religious Organizations Law in 1940. Under this law, groups of sectarian Shinto, Buddhist sects and denominations, and Christian churches were together recognized as "religious organizations" (*shūkyō dantai*), while most other groups hitherto known as "quasi-religions" were given the status of "religious associations" (*shūkyō kessha*). This law thus provided for comprehensive regulation of religious groups for the first time.

Under the Religious Organizations Law, religious associations merely had to register with the local prefectural governor's office, somewhat ameliorating the process of achieving recognition, compared to the earlier system of approval for quasi-religions (although no preferential treatment was given in matters of taxation). On the surface of things, the new law would thus appear to have represented an softening of the conditions necessary for the formation of new religious movements. But the Religious Organizations Law was promulgated just one year prior to outbreak of World War II, and the controls existing in other areas were repressive. In other words, it was relatively simple to be recognized as a religious association, but the restrictions on teaching and activities were becoming increasingly strict.

In that sense, when weighing the changing conditions for religious activities in this period, it is more important to recognize the crucial influence of militarism or nationalism, whose shadow steadily lengthened over the span of years from the 1920s into the 1930s. Indeed, the oppression of new religions was concentrated in this period. The Home Ministry issued its order to investigate the religion of Ōmoto in August, 1920, resulting in the "First Ōmoto Incident" in February of the next year. In 1923, Idei Seitarō, founder of the group Shūyōdan Hōseikai, was taken into custody on suspicion of lèse majesté, and Honmichi founder Ōnishi Aijirō was arrested on the same charge in 1928. In 1936, the number of incidents continued to rise, with Amatsukyō founder Takeuchi Kiyomaro and Shinsei Ryūjinkai leader Yano Yūtarō both being arrested. The basis for prosecution in these cases was in most cases the charge of lèse majesté and violation of the Peace Preservation Law. Also, the Special Higher Police—the so-called "thought police"—were established as one branch of the Metropolitan Police Force in June, 1932, and they focused great attention on religious thought and movements. Even a small gathering of believers might attract secret government investigation.

This situation changed radically in the postwar period. New religious movements

suddenly found themselves in an environment where they might expand freely. The new Religious Corporations Ordinance (Shūkyō Hōjinrei) did away with the previous discrimination between "religious groups" and "religious associations," establishing in their place the single category of "religious corporation" that gave brand new religious groups the same legal standing as long-standing Buddhist sects and Shinto shrines.

The legal environment from the end of the Tokugawa period to the present outlined above can thus be characterized by the following progression:

- Late Edo: legal expedient facilitating formation of new movements.
- Early Meiji: framework of the state represents strong restrictive powers.
- Late Meiji to Taisho: organization of new groups is relatively easy.
- Late Taisho to Showa: legal restrictions rapidly become more severe.
- Postwar period: unprecedented religious freedom.

What kind of impact did these changing legal environments have on the appearance and growth of new religions? First, the legal environment possesses a decisive significance in the sense of whether a given religious movement can become an officially recognized organization, or whether it may be subject to official oppression. This fact is indispensable to any explanation of the high level of religious persecution in the prewar period, and of the large number of new religions in the postwar period. As a result, at times when the legal environment was inhospitable, it placed a kind of aggregate restriction on the number of approved religions. It also had a substantial impact on the contents of religious teachings, interfering with the free development of doctrine within existing groups.

At the same time, the strength or weakness of the forces giving rise to new religious movements cannot be evaluated solely by reference to the kind of legal environment existing at the time. Many religious associations have existed even under conditions of severe religious intolerance. Further, it cannot be said that the legal environment is the most important element in determining the character of religious movements, since, for example, religions of diverse character have all come into being under the same postwar conditions of religious freedom.

5. New Religions: At the Mercy of Social Forces

While the legal environment may have a decisive impact on the process of formation and growth, and particularly on the organizational form that a new religion takes, when the question is raised of the dynamics and character of individual movements, attention must be shifted to include other factors, specifically, things like

political and economic changes.

The Japanese Encyclopedia of New Religions groups social factors believed to be related to the development of new religions into the following six-stage periodization scheme, and introduces the elements of new religious development that correspond to each stage :

1. Late Edo - Promulgation of Imperial Constitution.
2. Promulgation of Imperial Constitution - Russo-Japanese War.
3. Russo-Japanese War - Showa Depression.
4. Showa Depression - End of World War II .
5. End of WWII - First Oil Shock.
6. First Oil Shock - End of Showa period.

The first period extends from the unrest of the late-Edo era to the establishment of the modern imperial state; it corresponds to the appearance of the early new religions, most of which were incorporated within sectarian Shinto. During the second period, efforts were made to bolster the imperial state, Japan achieved a foothold on the Chinese mainland and membership in the Great Powers, while great advances were also made in capitalist industrialization. Through these years, a number of new religions achieved spectacular growth and the system of sectarian Shinto with its thirteen sects reached its zenith.

The third period begins at the end of the Russo-Japanese war, a time when agricultural villages became steadily impoverished while social contradictions were also made apparent in the cities. Economically, the period was characterized by radical fluctuations. The new religions that emerged during these years can be described as displaying the influence of a concurrent widespread fascination with mysticism and magic; groups with boldly syncretic doctrines like Ōmoto and Taireidō took form, while others like Ōmoto and Honmichi appeared that also placed heavy emphasis on doctrines of millenarian "world renewal" (*yonaoshi*). The fourth period that followed saw the Showa Depression that resulted in economic devastation, conditions under which the military clique made its appearance in government. During this period, stronger controls were placed on religion.

In the fifth period, Japan started out anew as a democratic nation and achieved its economic renaissance. In this period, a plethora of new religions sprang up and competed for popular attention. But with entry into the period of high economic growth in the 1960s, a process of natural selection occured, and groups could be categorized as those which disappeared, those which stagnated, and those which continued to

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grow. Finally, in the sixth period, political stability was achieved together with an economically abundant society. The popularity of mystical and magical religion in this period was reflected in the growth of a class of what are sometimes referred to as "new new-religions."

The foregoing periodization reflects the assumption that major social changes are sure to have some degree of impact on the generation and growth of new religions. It is against this bird's-eye view of historical periodization that I want to advance my inquiries in the following sections. What, indeed, are the social and historical factors influencing the form that the doctrines, movement, and organization of a new religion take? The most influential view in recent research has been that the wave of "social change" from the late Edo to the present corresponds rather closely to the generation and characteristics of the new religions. But when it comes to concrete details of such correspondences, accounts frequently fall into little more than impressionistic description. Difficult questions confront us: what constitutes the shadow of history? what are the features common to all new religions? and what elements form the unique personality of each movement? Or else, it may be that the way such determinations are made is more accurately a reflection of the researcher's view of society than his or her view of religion. With that much understood, let us delve a bit deeper into the issue of the historical and social factors behind the new religions.

CHAPTER THREE

Those Who Anger and Attract

1. The Press: Champion of Criticism

In general, the fastest growing movements are the ones that tend be to subjected to the heaviest media criticism. The phenomenon of rapid growth itself draws public interest and stimulates the feeding instincts of the tabloids. In short, movements that become the brunt of strong criticism are, virtually by definition, already the objects of strong interest. This relationship, characterized as it is by opposite and equally strong tendencies to repel and attract, serves as a point of departure when considering the historical and social factors influencing the new religions. Why is it that the new religions are so prone to draw both popular interest and ire in this way?

Examples of such polarized reactions can be found swirling about numerous new religious movements, ranging from the late-Edo period until today. Many of the earlier movements can be found in this category, particularly those which, like Misogikyō for example, fell afoul of the feudal military government.. Unfortunately, insufficient evidence remains today to make judgments regarding the mutual effects of the polarization. Even if we assume the presence of some force that attracted people to the groups, the effect of an opposing social concern mediated by a mass media cannot be adequately weighed until the arrival of the Meiji period and the rapid growth of popular newspapers. Accordingly, I will focus here on a series of examples beginning with groups from the mid-Meiji period like Renmonkyō and Tenrikyō and finish by discussing the Aum Shinrikyō and Kōfuku no Kagaku movements of today.

Following the Meiji Restoration, the one-page "broadsheets" or *kawaraban* that had achieved wide circulation in the late-Tokugawa period were rapidly replaced by the newly arrived modern newspaper, which quickly established its status as the dominant popular medium of public communication. Early examples of newspapers can already be found in the last days of the Tokugawa period, and the first daily newspaper, the *Yokohama mainichi shinbun*, was founded in the third year of Meiji (1870), by which time several papers had already begun devoting themselves to specialized topics like political reporting, serialized novels, and general social news.

Finally, two mass-circulation tabloids were launched in the 1890s, the Y*orozu chōhō* and the *Niroku shinpō*, (literally, the"Twenty-six newspaper," so-named due to the

fact that it was established in the twenty-sixth year of Meiji, or 1893). What is striking about these tabloids is that both made a staple out of the issue of the new religions.

The *Yorozu chōhō* launched a ruthless campaign of criticism at the religion of Renmonkyō in the mid-Meiji period. Renmonkyō was the object of attacks by other newspapers as well, but the campaign mounted by *Yorozu chōhō* surpassed all the others in its unrelenting hostility. Renmonkyō no longer exists, and the historical process whereby these sensationalistic assaults forced it into decline has not been well documented. Two or three noteworthy studies have appeared in recent years, however, giving us a much clearer picture both of the group and of the campaign directed against it. Here, I want to consider both the features of Renmonkyō that made it a target of criticism, and the elements that stimulated popular attraction to it.

The *Yorozu chōhō* was founded by Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862-1920), a man born in Tosa Province into a family of local gentry with ties to both the warrior and merchant classes. After studying for a period at Tokyo's elite Keiō Gijuku (predecessor of today's Keiō University), Kuroiwa began working in his twenties as chief editor for a number of newspapers, including the *Dōmei kaishin shinbun*, *Nihon taimusu*, *Eiri jiyū shinbun*, and *Miyako shinbun*. He finally founded the *Yorozu chōhō* in November 1892. The following year, his paper reported on a then-current incident known as the "Sōma family case" in a series of articles with the overarching title, "The Scandal of the Sōma Family Poisoning." Since the newspaper coverage dealt directly with an ongoing court case, the *Yorozu chōhō* was served with an order to cease publication four times within a five-month period.

Not long after it concluded its coverage of the Sōma incident, *Yorozu chōhō* turned its guns on Renmonkyō. The initial article in the campaign of criticism appeared February 22, 1894. The campaign then continued from around the end of March until mid-October, spanning a total of ninety-four installments. Kuroiwa's decision to attack Renmonkyō was no doubt based in good measure on his desire to expand his paper's circulation. And in fact, at the time the campaign came to a close, *Yorozu chōhō*'s circulation had peaked at around fifty thousand, tops for any newspaper in Tokyo and nearly twice that of its nearest competitor, the *Tōkyō asahi shinbun*. That said, it is also likely that some personal conviction entered into Kuroiwa's decision, since he stated proudly, "I believed and acted by myself, and it was my goal to reform society through those beliefs." In any event, it remains true that the third article of *Yorozu chōhō*'s in-house rules stated that the newspaper's contents were to be "entertaining," with the

result that it is logical to assume that the selection of Renmonkyō was in large measure motivated by Kuroiwa's belief that such a series would attract his readers' interest.

Entitled "The Immoral Religion of Renmon," the *Yorozu chōhō* series appeared just at the time Renmonkyō was cresting a wave of growth. While living in Kokura, the group's founder Shimamura Mitsu had been initiated into an esoteric discipline called the "marvelous dharma of phenomena" (*ji no myōhō*) by a former samurai named Yanagita Ichibee. In 1877, Shimamura established her "Center for the Marvelous Dharma of Phenomena and Reverence for the Deities" (Ji no Myōhō Keishinsho). As a result of her practice of holding group meetings called "vigils" (*okomori*) and the use of "holy water" (*goshinsui*) in faith-healing activities, however, Shimamura was investigated and taken into custody by police authorities. In 1882, Shimamura and several followers came to Tokyo, where they obtained affiliation with the newly organized religious umbrella association Taiseikyō in July of that year. Two years later, Shimamura was made director of the "Taiseikyō Renmon Kōsha" (Renmon Confraternity of Taiseikyō).

Taiseikyō was one branch of sectarian Shinto, but as of 1882 it had only just become independent from the governmental Shintō Office (Shintō Jimukyoku). The first director, Hirayama Seisai, had been an official under the earlier Tokugawa government, but following the Restoration he left government service and dedicated himself to religion. After serving as an adjunct bureaucrat in the Ministry of Religious Instruction (Kyōbushō) and as priest at the Hikawa and Hie Shrines, Hirayama organized the Taisei Kyōkai in 1879. It was this association that served as the womb for the religious group Taiseikyō, a sect which Hirayama dedicated to the purpose of inculcating Shinto to the Japanese citizenry.

While organizing the group, Hirayama stated that his policy was "to bring together a variety of different religious elements and, by uniting, to gradually purify them." The name Taiseikyō came from the expression taisei suru, meaning "to compile" or "to organize," and thus forms a concise pointer to the group's eclectic purpose. In point of fact, Taiseikyō served as an umbrella organization for a melange of popular religious groups and confraternities (*kō*), including Misogikyō, Shingaku, and Tōkyū.

Under the umbrella of Taiseikyō, Renmon Kōsha experienced meteoric growth. According to one church account, "around 1889 or 1890, some one-million followers looked up in praise to the works of the holy founder, and she had more than three thousand close disciples." Claims of one-million followers must be exaggerated, but there may well be grounds for asserting that Shimamura had three-thousand disciples. In

describing the contemporary "condition of the Renmon Kyōkai," issue 3 of the group's publication *Fushō* (issued in 1892) lists the names and addresses of a branch church in Nemuro, a main office in Fukuoka, six training centers (*kyōin*), and twenty-one branch churches, in addition to its main facility in Tokyo. In its tenth year of activity in Tokyo, Renmonkyō had already become what can be called a nationwide organization.

2. The Charge of "Immoral Religion"

By the time of the *Yorozu chōhō* series, the public's voyeuristic curiosity had already been whetted by the rapid growth of Renmonkyō and the little-known woman who was its founder. Already in 1891—three years before the *Yorozu chōhō*'s campaign against Renmonkyō—the author Ozaki Kōyō had serialized a novel in the newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun* called *Kōhaku dokumanjū* ("The red and white poisoned dumpling") that took as its target a group modeled after Renmonkyō. Called "Gyokurenkyō," the novel's fictional group is portrayed as a front for illicit prostitution. From this, it appears that Renmonkyō was already drawing a good deal of public attention at this stage, only a few years after launching its activities in Tokyo.

While Ozaki's serialization was modeled after Renmonkyō, it did not attack the group by name. The campaign of attack in *Yorozu chōhō*, however, was undisguised. Since the immense popular response to the initial article in February is believed to have been the spur for initiating the longer campaign a month later, it might be good to review just what that first article reported.

Entitled "Kōtō jigoku—Renmon Kyōkai" ["High-class whore—the Renmon Church"], the first article began by saying that of the countless "immoral" religions now on the scene, "the one oozing its toxins most perniciously" is Renmon Kyōkai. The writer stated that one reason for the group's menace was the fact that it counted among its members a considerable number from the middle and upper classes. Further, the article claimed that the group's headquarters, located in Shiba District's Tamura-chō, was home to activities akin to prostitution. While taking a pose of social responsibility, the *Yorozu chōhō* thus in fact attempted to arouse its readers' response entirely by means of sexually scandalous innuendo. The subsequent series of articles continued by claiming to expose the promiscuous activities of the group's founder Shimamura and her unsavory relationships with believers. Whether the series developed as initially intended by Kuroiwa is not known. At any rate, its contents expanded in a variety of directions, including an investigation into the nature of Renmonkyō's "holy water," which had become popular on the heels of a cholera epidemic, and an indictment of the

umbrella organization Taiseikyō, which was ostensibly responsibility for monitoring Renmonkyō's activities. Readers' responses to the series were also published, and a fierce attack was launched on the *Kaishin shinbun*, the sole newspaper that attempted to come to the defense of Renmonkyō.

For its part, Renmonkyō presented the *Yorozu chōhō* with demands for corrections and retractions, but without effect. During this time, various public gatherings were held and led by speakers who denounced Renmonkyō, and a movement of criticism was also launched by "established" religious sects. Finally, Renmonkyō decided to file suit against the *Yorozu chōhō*, and in the Tokyo Court of Appeals the group won its case for an injunction on further publication by the *Yorozu chōhō*. But this act brought even greater public outcry, and in the end the church decided to withdraw its suit.

The images fomented in the minds of readers by the *Yorozu chōhō* campaign can in part be judged by the letters published in response to the series. On April 6, shortly after the series began, the newspaper published ribald poems from one reader using the theme of Shimamura's doctrines and her use of holy water, for example, "She might find a real *ji no myōhō* if she kept her legs together a bit better," and "The widow has certainly been collecting the water of 'spirits' in her belly." On April 14, another reader's poem was published with similar innuendo, namely, "A woman's belly has gotten full from drinking the marvelous water," a suggestion that that women attending the church had become pregnant as a result of illicit sex in the group. Such letters clearly indicated readers' impressions of a group that was adopting the guise of religion to engage in unsavory behavior.

As the series of articles continued, what fate awaited Renmonkyō? On April 30, about one month after the campaign of criticism began in earnest, the Taiseikyō suspended Shimamura from her post as chief director of Renmon Kōsha. On May 3, the group was presented with orders for internal reform. The use of holy water was banned and services were prohibited after 3 p.m. This chain of events represented a severe blow to members' faith, and Renmonkyō's membership steadily declined. The 90,000 nominal members claimed at the start of the campaign fell precipitously to 50,000 when attacks drew to a close. Measures against Renmon Kōsha were taken at the dictate of the Home Ministry's Bureau of Shrines and Temples, which had jurisdiction over religious groups. Taiseikyō was saddled with responsibility for failure to properly oversee Renmon Kōsha, and the second director of the association, Isobe Yoshinobu, was forced to resign.

This concerted campaign sounded the death knell for Renmonkyō. Shimamura

Mitsu was reinstated as head of the church in 1897, but there was no recouping the losses already suffered. In the midst of such ill fortune, Shimamura died in February 1904. Shortly thereafter, conflict occurred with Taiseikyō over the issue of group independence, and in the wake of that friction Renmonkyō split apart. The faction led by Mitsu's grandson Shimamura Senshū left Taiseikyō and affiliated itself first with Shintō Honkyoku and then Fusōkyō, under which it took the name Shintō Tōitsu Kyōkai ("Shinto Union Church"). Both the schismatic faction and the faction that remained within Taiseikyō continued to engage in a modest level of activity after the Taishō period, but they had both ceased to exist by the 1960s.

3. Popular Enchantment

Even before considering the nature of the vicious criticism to which Remonkyō was subjected, we should ask how the group was able to attract such a large membership in such a short period of time. In this context, Takeda Michio has noted the relationship between Renmonkyō's rapid growth and the recurrent cholera epidemics that had claimed numerous victims since the close of the Edo period.

The first recorded Japanese epidemic of cholera occurred in 1822, when it is believed that the infection spread from India through China and the Korean Peninsula to reach Japan. Next, in 1855, the crew of the American naval ship U.S.S. Mississippi was exposed to an epidemic in Shanghai and brought the infection to Nagasaki. In 1877, cholera once again spread from Shanghai to Nagasaki and thence to Yokohama. From then until the last massive outbreak in 1895, large-scale cholera epidemics occurred at a rate of one every two to five years. The epidemic in 1877 resulted in some 8,000 deaths, followed by one in 1879 that took the lives of some 15,000, then 33,000 deaths in 1882, 18,000 in 1886, 35,000 in 1890, finally reaching a high of more than 40,000 deaths in 1895. Under such conditions, it is only natural that people might cling to Renmonkyō's claim that one of the merits of faith was the ability to use "holy water" (*goshinsui*) to stop cholera.

But while cholera may have represented one element in the background to Renmonkyō's popularity, it was not decisive. Other factors are revealed by member testimonials, a few of which are recorded in the third issue (1892) of the group's publication, *Fushō*, thus providing an excellent key to the group's contemporary activities. The first of the five testimonials recorded relates that the child of a member had developed a seriously high fever. The member diligently recited the group's mantra, *ji no myōhō-sama*, at a branch church and gave the child some "holy water" to drink,

whereupon the child recovered. The second testimonial states that a member's son wanted to start a new business but lacked the capital. The son had previously been a Christian convert, but within thirty days of accepting belief in *ji no myōhō*, he discovered an investor to back his new business. The third tells of how a person was healed of a chest disease after medical doctors had given up hope for his cure. The fourth example relates how a conflagration in Tokyo's Kanda district had approached a church facility and threatened it with destruction, but meditating with undivided mind caused the wind direction to change, and the facility was spared. The final story tells of an earthquake experience in Gifu Province; although the member's house was destroyed, its occupants were unharmed.

None of these testimonials has anything to do with cholera; rather, all deal with gratitude for immediate, tangible miracles resulting from belief in *ji no myōhō*. From this evidence, it seems clear that Renmonkyō was attracting new members through the use of activities promising "miraculous benefits" (*goriyaku*). But it must also be understood that the testimonials found in most of the new religions are of this sort, and that this general trend remains unchanged even today.

While this passion for effective, miraculous benefits is one of the basic sources of energy driving the new religions' growth, it is frequently dismissed as an inferior or unworthy religious aim. Critics often allege that religions focusing on miraculous benefits fail to exhibit deep thought or high-level doctrinal systematization. Any number of examples can be found which indeed fulfill that description, but can all belief in "miraculous benefit" be so easily dismissed? While the individual human being may approach religion out of specific conditions of hopelessness or despair, viewed from a broader perspective these same people can be understood as expressing a complaint regarding the social system in which they move.

The same principle likewise applies to those on the opposite side of the fence. That is to say, the motives of those who criticized Renmonkyō must be analyzed from a macroscopic perspective that transcends the individual critic's conscious intentions. The campaign launched by *Yorozu chōhō*, for example, focused on sexual innuendo and attacks on the suspicious use of "holy water," elements of criticism which likewise form a conventional pattern. For example, the newspaper *Niroku shinpō* published a critical three-part series in the same period as *Yorozu chōhō*'s campaign. It developed its critique from the same perspective, with series headlines that included "Renmonkyō Masquerades as Pharmacy" and "Lovers' Tryst Renmonkyō." One might add that reporting on the new religions has not changed greatly even today.

It is also important to keep in mind that Kuroiwa Ruikō had ancestral roots in a family of country gentry, with an education that included training in the genteel culture of Chinese studies. When one further considers that Kuroiwa's youth coincided with the period in which the Meiji government was promoting its Western-oriented policies of "civilization and enlightenment," it is not difficult to guess how a religion like Renmonkyō must have appeared in the eyes of such elites. Further, it is certain that those readers who sent letters of criticism and mocking banter to the *Yorozu chōhō* were likewise members of the educated class. In 1894, the proportion of Japanese who attended elementary school had barely reached fifty percent, and it is hard to believe that many people had the ability to express sarcastic criticism of Renmonkyō in the literary forms of humorous poetry known as *kyōka* and *senryū*. In short, the aims of these educated elites coincided with the basic orientation of the government's enlightenment policies.

Viewed against this background, there is a strong sense in which the problem of Renmonkyō can be described as public curiosity and criticism focused on what was commonly considered a new, unusual movement. But what was it about that movement that stimulated such criticism? Since the case of Renmonkyō alone provides insufficient material for analysis, let us look at Tenrikyō, which experienced the same kind of massive campaign of media criticism.

4. *The Trump Card of Criticism*

In the mid-Meiji period, the newspaper *Chūō shinbun* launched a tenacious campaign attacking the new religion of Tenrikyō. Under the series title "The Deviant and Immoral Religion of Tenrikyō," this campaign ran from April to November of 1896 spread across one hundred fifty individual installments. The very first entry in the series, published on April 25, proclaimed in brave words that "readers should be aware that we will not rest—even if it requires one hundred or two hundred installments—until we have achieved the goal of eradicating this church." Staking its professional reputation on the campaign, the newspaper emphasized that it was a battle to the finish, testing which side should succumb first.

Continuing sensationalistic exposés followed. Contents of articles ranged from objections to the group's doctrines to attacks on the character of the founder Nakayama Miki and the first leader of the Higashi branch church in Tokyo, revelations of secret propaganda techniques ostensibly used by the Nihonbashi branch church, exposure of the past life of Nakayama Miki's grandson Nakayama Shinjirō (Miki's chosen successor

as first-generation *shinbashira* or "pillar of the faith"), and criticisms of the headquarters church. While the articles attempt to provide a detailed depiction of the group, they are quite sloppy in their facts, and at times cross the line into the absurd, even though the material is ostensibly based on the newspaper's own research. Some of the "facts" provided about Nakayama Miki in particular are simply ridiculous.

Each installment was grouped under a particular topical heading; the segment that began May 1 was titled, "The Real Face of the Hag Miki." Adopting the style of an exposé, the author claimed to uncover "hidden" aspects of Nakayama's life, ranging from events of her birth to the establishment of Tenrikyō and eventually to her death. This single topical segment continued until June 10, and while the information provided is not very trustworthy, the twisted way in which it is presented provides a good reflection of the way in which the new religions were generally perceived by contemporary Japanese society.

Nakayama Miki was born in 1798 as the daughter of head villager Maegawa Masanobu and his wife Kinu in the hamlet of Sanmaiden, Yamato Province (present-day Nara Prefecture). At the age of thirteen, she was married to Nakayama Zenbee of the nearby Shōyashiki Village. She experienced her first divine possession in the tenth month of 1838. On that occasion, she served as a medium for a *Shugendō* priest named Nakano Ichibee, who was performing rituals meant to heal the ailing leg of Nakayama's son, Shūji. Thereafter, Miki underwent a long period of spiritual crisis lasting until around 1854, when she began performing the ritual for easing childbirth called *obiya yurushi*.

Nakayama's biography as depicted by *Chūō shinbun*, however, was rather different. According to the newspaper account, Nakayama was born in Yasaka, Kyoto, as the daughter of a fish-monger, Toyoda Shichibee. The paper claimed that Shichibee had studied the prohibited religion of Christianity from a man named Mizuno Gunki, and begun deceiving people by telling fortunes and performing magical spells. The folk hero Ōshio Heihachirō, however, had learned of Shichibee's activities, arrested him and had him executed, but Shichibee's wife Mitsugi fled with their daughter Miki. When the two reached the region of Yamabe County, Yamato Province, the farmer Nakayama Yohee took pity on the mother and daughter and took care of them, and since the two worked so hard he decided to marry Miki to his son Zenbee.

The *Kōhon Tenrikyō kyōsoden* ("Life of the founder of Tenrikyō"), the official biography of Nakayama Miki as published by the Tenrikyō organization, relates the following incident that ostensibly occurred when Miki was 31. There had been a

poverty-stricken family living near Miki's household that had already lost five children, and its sixth-born child was also suffering from starvation. Unable to ignore the family's plight, Miki took in the child and cared for it. The child, however, caught smallpox and became critically ill, and the physician gave up hope. The story states that Miki was so distraught that she prayed to the myriads of kami (deities), telling them to take the lives of her own two daughters in exchange for sparing the life of the child that had been given into her charge.

This event is also described in the *Chūō shinbun* account. Except, the version it presents reports that the above story—according to which Miki had traded the lives of her own children for the child in her care—was totally false. It claims that the child she had taken charge of in fact died; she found another child to take its place, however, and secretly exchanged the two. The newspaper also reports that Nakano Ichibee was party to this ruse, and it further portrays him as a figure who, together with Miki, worked to deceive people through the religion of Tenrikyō. The transformative divine possession that supposedly occurred to Miki in 1838 was likewise a sham cooked up by Ichibee and Miki.

In short, the *Chūō shinbun* not only attempts to impress on readers a portrait of Nakayama Miki as a fraud, but it also goes even further in transmitting superstitious rumors that Miki was an old "fox spirit" that had taken human form. One rumor from Higashiyama in Yamato reported that Miki suddenly died at the very instant that a farmer shot and killed an old fox he was hunting. Another story from Kōriyama in Yamato reported that a hunter tried to kill an old fox that had been stealing eggs, but the fox begged for its life because it was pregnant; the hunter spared its life for three years, and at the instant he killed it three years later, Nakayama Miki also suddenly died.

While senseless, this reportage is noteworthy for the fact that its "trump card" of criticism—namely, the claim that Tenrikyō was a "deviant and immoral religion"—is chiefly demonstrated by the assertion that Miki was the product of Christianity. Not only is Miki reported to have had Christian parents, but her own activities are said to have been based on Christian precepts. The fact that she insisted on giving away her family's possessions to the poor following her experience of divine possession is thus presented as evidence of her "deviant" Christian origins. Since she received the Christian spirit of patience, she was willing to give away her family's entire estate without regret, no matter what difficulty it might cause, all in order to spread the pernicious Christian doctrine. It goes so far as to claim that the doctrine of Tenrikyō is closely reminiscent of the story found in the Hebrew Bible's book of Genesis.

The practice and dissemination of Christianity was legalized for all practical purposes in 1873, as represented by the removal of the public placards prohibiting the religion that had stood throughout the Edo period. Numerous new Christian churches were quickly established as a result, but the long-standing wariness toward Christianity held by common citizens was not so easily dispelled. It is in this odd context that attacks on Tenrikyō could take the form of accusations that Nakayama Miki was the product of Christianity.

5. The Strategy of Scandal-Mongering

While the alleged association with Christianity represented an important foundation for attacks against Tenrikyō, that allegation was employed concurrently with several other stock charges commonly directed against the new religions. Those charges included sexual impropriety, dubious faith-healing practices, and pecuniary greed. Accusations of sexual impropriety followed a pattern similar to that seen in the case of the new religion Renmonkyō. Miki was variously accused of having charmed Ichibee so as to assure his allegiance, or of having made a common-law husband out of Iburi Izō, a central disciple who succeeded to Miki's charismatic position as divine medium (*honseki*) after her death. In short, she was generally portrayed as a "loose woman."

Repeated charges were also made to the effect that sexual impropriety had accompanied Tenrikyō's proselytizing activities. Those insinuations were directed primarily at the two main branch churches in Tokyo, the Higashi Bunkyōkai and the Nihonbashi Bunkyōkai (currently both classed as "major churches" or *daikyōkai* of Tenrikyō). As first director of the Higashi Bunkyōkai church, Uehara Sasuke had substantial authority over proselytizing in the Tokyo area, and his past was "exposed" in a series of over twenty installments. At the Nihonbashi church, the director Nakadai Kanzō was likewise made a target of attacks.

Tenrikyō's practice of faith healing was described as a complete sham, hinting that the group had introduced "decoy" invalids into its audiences, who would shout out "I'm healed" and thus excite the crowds. For example, in the September 26 edition, the paper introduces the story of how one sham healing was uncovered. The anecdote relates that a horse was loosed inside one of the Tenrikyō meeting places, and when it began running around wildly, a man who had earlier claimed to be lame suddenly jumped up and ran away.

Further, the newspaper's attacks frequently linked such sham healing techniques to sexual scandal. As a result, readers' reactions were much like those occasioned in the

case of Renmonkyō. The newspaper's May 1 edition carried a letter from a reader with the penname of "Ise Ōkamigorō." His letter included four sarcastic poems (*kyōka*), one of which went as follows:

> In the "laying on of hands"
> They rub gently, beneath the navel
> An odd place this—the Tenri Church.

Here, what is rendered as the "laying on of hands" was called *osazuke* within Tenrikyō, a kind of secret ritual of sanctification involving various kinds of physical contact, including giving believers holy water to drink, breathing upon them, and rubbing their bodies while intoning, "Exorcise the evil, purify, oh King of Heavenly Truth!" The poem, however, satirizes the ritual as a matter of sexual contact. The criticism suggests indecent behavior under the guise of healing, and goes on to hint that women believers had even become pregnant as a result.

The paper further presented allegations of how people had been deceived by Tenrikyō and lost all their possessions, and that Tenrikyō had effectively taken over the Shintō Honkyoku—of which it was a member—and even that the Honkyoku's Director Inaba had sold out to Tenrikyō. This is why, it says, Tenrikyō had given huge amounts of money to the Honkyoku and provided a palatial second home for Inaba's use. In short, the group is portrayed as taking money from believers and using it to further its own place in society.

The lengthy campaign of attack came to an end on November 7. Together with a listing of alleged damage caused by Tenrikyō througout Japan, an editorial was published with the title "A Notice to Our Faithful Readers." The editorial stated that "while it [Tenrikyō] has not been completely exterminated, we have delivered a tremendous blow to its very foundations, and we firmly believe that we have succeeded in thoroughly intimidating this flock of demons, so that they will be unable to again raise their haughty faces." With this, the paper conditionally draws its 150-installment campaign to a close, suggesting that it will temporarily relax its excruciating assault so as to give the group a bit of time in which to reflect on its behavior.

6. *"The Peg that Sticks Out Gets Pounded Down"*

Nakayama Miki died in 1887. The next April, Tenri Kyōkai became a church under the direct jurisdiction of the Shintō Honkyoku—in other words, one of the

groups within the fold of "sectarian Shinto." This status meant the group was finally an officially recognized independent religion, and the impetus provided by this recognition helped expand both its membership and new branch churches. Tenrikyō grew rapidly during the 1890s; its membership in 1887 is estimated at around 30,000, but by 1896 newspapers and magazines were proclaiming that the number had expanded to 3 million. Tenrikyō's own *Tenrikyō jiten* [Dictionary of Tenrikyō], Tenrikyō had 1,078 churches and a membership of some 3,130,000 in 1896. The Japanese population at that time is estimated to have been some 42,000,000, so the purported membership of Tenrikyō was about seven percent of the entire population. Even if the membership was not so high as claimed, the group still represented a tremendous social force.

Criticism of Tenrikyō grew harsher with the group's numerical growth. The main pattern of pressure on Tenrikyō in the early Meiji period had come in the form of either legal attacks initiated by local authorities who prosecuted individuals who did not possess the official status of *kyōdōshoku*, or friction stirred up by established religious bodies. In the second decade of the period, however, the attack was led by the new newspapers and their sensationalistic journalism. From 1893, a number of independent tracts were published criticizing Tenrikyō, including Adachi Fumyō's *Tenrikyō shinzuru ni tarazu* ["Tenrikyō isn't to be believed"], Haneda Fumiaki's *Tenrin'ō benmō* [Criticisms of Tenrin'ō], and Matsumoto Tokihiko's *Shinkyō, ichimei Tenrikyō taiji* [The moral mind and the extermination of Tenrikyō]; the subsequent years until 1896 saw a surge in publishing of books critical of Tenrikyō. While newspapers had published only brief criticisms of Tenrikyō in the period around 1880, the attacks become more abusive from 1896, around the time the so-called "secret Home Ministry directive" was issued. *Chūō shinbun*'s full-fledged attack on Tenrikyō, for example, began just after issuance of the directive.

The directive in question was issued to the prefectures in the name of the Home Minister Yoshikawa Akimasa on April 6, a date that immediately followed the observance of the tenth anniversary of Nakayama Miki's death. Although referred to as "secret," the directive's contents became publicly known and led to increasing criticism of Tenrikyō as an allegedly "immoral and deviant religion." The directive was not particularly long, but it raised a number of issues as social evils fomented by Tenrikyō: first, the fact that men and women were assembling in one place was disruptive of public morals; second, the use of holy water and amulets was trickery and an interference with legitimate medical treatment; and third, followers were being forced to provide monetary donations. These official charges were clearly of the same kind as those being

leveled by the popular media. The directive also demonstrated a posture of willingness to engage in undercover activities as part of its prosecution of the group.

Tenrikyō reacted quickly to this challenge. Frequent conferences were held to discuss how to respond to mounting criticisms; in late May, the church issued articles of internal reform. To reject the charge that it was corrupting morals, it changed the way services were held: whereas both men and women had formerly been allowed to attend services, henceforth services could be attended by men only. Likewise, the group indicated that the rituals of *otasuke* (easing of childbirth) would no longer be performed without medical consent, and the amulet called obiya goku for easing childbirth would no longer be issued except to the most devout believers. Finally, the name of the deity Tenri-ō no mikoto would be changed to Tenri ōkami.

The critical campaign by *Chūō shinbun* continued, however, and even after it ended, other forms of harassment continued. From 1899, Tenrikyō moved to establish its independence and separate itself from the umbrella organization Shintō Honkyoku, but the move provoked opposition from many who wanted to prevent such independence. Conscious of the criticisms directed against it, Tenrikyō in 1904 dismissed some 1,400 of its religious teachers, citing three basic shortcomings, including "lack of the Founder's (Nakayama Miki) qualities, and delinquent in both character and conduct." But the campaign of criticism continued even after Tenrikyō became independent in November 1908; that next year, the lower house of the Diet in its twenty-fifth session adopted a resolution calling for "revocation of the authorization for independence by Tenrikyō." While the resolution failed to become law due to incomplete debate by the House of Peers, it indicated the magnitude of social antipathy to Tenrikyō.

7. *Diametrically Opposed Evaluations*

Of all the new religions, Tenrikyō achieved the greatest social influence in the late Meiji period. What was it that attracted such a degree of public interest? The most potent motive that initially brought people to Tenrikyō was its practice of faith healing, a feature that had continued since its very first days. A glance at Nakayama Miki's biography likewise suggests that Tenrikyō's central membership was attracted in the late Tokugawa period as the direct result of faith healings. The fact that physical illness continued to form the primary motive for entrance into Tenrikyō in the late Meiji period can be confirmed through the surveys undertaken at the behest of the second-generation Tenrikyō leader (*shinbashira*), Nakayama Shōzen (1905-1967).

Shōzen became *shinbashira* in 1903 upon his father's death. After graduating from the Osaka Higher School, he entered Tokyo Imperial University, where he majored in religious studies under Anesaki Masaharu. Anesaki was department chairman at the time courses in religious studies were first inaugurated at the university, and he was also known as a literary figure with close ties to the critic Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902). Under Anesaki's tutelage, Shōzen wrote a graduation thesis published under the title *Tenrikyō dendōsha ni kansuru chōsa* [A survey of Tenrikyō missionaries]. Since the research was undertaken by the *shinbashira* of the church, a large proportion of the group's staff gave their cooperation to the survey. Directed to the entire church organization, the mailed survey questionnaire produced close to a ninety-two percent rate of response. (Under normal conditions today, researchers undertaking similar surveys of religious groups have to be satisfied if they receive even a twenty percent return rate. For a researcher, this high rate of response thus represents an incredibly envious return.) The survey was undertaken in 1928, just at the peak of Tenrikyō's growth, and it forms a highly informative portrait of the consciousness and attributes of the class of people composing the church leadership at that time.

According to the survey results, the greatest single factor motivating conversion was illness (sixty-one percent). If one ignores the twenty percent of members who had entered due to parental influence, it means that three-fourths of all members had entered the church with illness as a crucial motive. Of this number, roughly equal numbers had entered due to personal sickness or the illness of a family member, forty-eight percent in the former group, and forty-nine percent in the latter. In Tenrikyō, physical suffering is called *mijō*, while spiritual suffering is called *jijō*; the latter is said to be caused by things like familial discord, economic failure, and social deprivation. Interestingly, only two percent of respondents listed one or another forms of *jijō* as a reason for conversion, a tremendous numerical gap compared to those listing physical ailments.

Further, while this survey was undertaken early in the Shōwa era (1926-1989), the period at which most respondents were converted (calculating backwards from their ages at the time of the survey and at the time of conversion) can be roughly determined to be the decade bridging the 1880s and 1890s. In other words, the histories of these individuals can be taken as a clear indication of the conditions of conversion at the precise time Tenrikyō was suffering its harshest criticism.

This dynamic structure—in which the same practice of healing is viewed by outsiders as deviant and dubious, and by believers as a proof of election—is something encountered again and again in the new religions, even at present. But while it might

appear at first glance that the issue was the one of healing itself, we must note that this was not the real case. What is really at stake here is the question, what kind of person is involved in this kind of healing, and what kind of socio-cultural legitimacy lies in the background?

When Nakayama Miki and Shimamura Mitsu appeared and engaged in faith-healing activities, there must have been people who accepted them without reservation and others who experienced a strong aversion to or rejection of that kind of healing. All the more so for various lesser church leaders who engaged in such activities. The majority of sufferers who came to Tenrikyō and Renmonkyō likely made no initial discrimination between their experience of healing there and the faith healing and intercessory rituals common to other conventional Japanese folk religious practice. In all likelihood, the common behavioral pattern was to express gratitude if their illness was relieved and to go on to another practitioner if it were not. Even among those who experienced a healing, it was likely that some would end their relationship with the healer at that point, while others would become regular followers. And some became believers even if their illness was not relieved.

Why, on the other hand, did the people who heaped criticism on religious healing practices take the stance they did? First, a new religious leader performing faith healing rituals represents a tremendous threat to an established religious practitioner. No doubt, some of those religious practitioners could not stand by idly without issuing some criticism of their new competition. Further, the healing practices of an upstart group presented a tempting target to a nascent institution of mass journalism since sensationalistic exposés can be used to draw attention to the journalistic medium itself. Criticism based on this kind of motive can be included within broadly economic motives. But there were still others who criticized the new religions from motives other than economic interest.

One of the most powerful segments among critics was that composed of members of the so-called intellectual class. Not that the intelligentsia were uniformly critical of the new religions. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that one segment of contemporary intellectuals stood at the forefront of criticism of religion. These people were critical of more than the new religions' healing practices. They understood the popular infatuation with faith healing as a sign of ignorance. Accordingly, they also considered it a sign of ignorance for people to participate in purportedly bogus rituals and to be swindled out of their money. Both *Yorozu chōhō* and *Chūō shinbun* likewise issued frequent warnings to the effect that "ignorant men and women" would be

deceived by questionable teachings and healing rituals. And they expressed shock and outrage that the same "ignorance" might be demonstrated even by fellow intellectuals.

This point becomes clear when one reviews the series of articles published in *Niroku shinpō* around the same time as the *Yorozu chōhō* campaign against Renmonkyō. The *Niroku shinpō* series was carried in twelve installments under the title "A world of persistent error" from March 20 to April 6, 1894. The series specifically raised the issue of four religions, including Tohokami-kō (Misogikyō), Ontake-kō, Renmon Kyōkai, and Tenrikyō. The articles were composed as a series of undercover reports by a reporter using the byline "Tomoeyama."

While taking the basic position that all these groups were deviant religions, the *Niroku shinpō* articles displayed a much greater willingness than *Yorozu chōhō* and *Chūō shinbun* to actually consider what the religions themselves had to say. For example, the reporter Tomoeyama actually experienced the four-day ascetic regimen sponsored by Tohokami-kō, and when describing their meetings, he says, "The majority of the attendees appeared of high discrimination, and their clothing was likewise not at all inferior," thus indicating his surprise at the fact that people of a certain social stature appeared to be mixed in the group. The writer goes on to note that the assembly included members of the military police, civilian police, and junior officials of one of the government ministries. He then describes a performance of the breath control technique called *tohokami emitame*, stating that young women went into a violent trance while intoning *tohokami emitame*, falling down on the floor as though dead. At the end of the series, the writer concludes, "I do not call upon the world of persistent error merely to reform its ways; rather, I would hope that not a single such religion should exist anywhere in creation," thus expressing his wishes for the demise of all such groups.

8. Sources of Discontent

Warnings against religions that would deceive "ignorant men and women" did not suddenly appear in the mid-Meiji period. While their origins are unclear, one source can be found in the policies of civilization and enlightenment pursued by the Meiji government. One of the typical new religions of the Meiji period which was singled out for its practice of healing was Kurozumikyō. From its earliest days, Kurozumikyō emphasized healing rituals called *majinai*, and the religious activities of the founder Kurozumi Munetada himself were said to be centered on the two pillars of sermons and *majinai*. In the first years of Meiji, Kurozumikyō is thought to have possessed the greatest numerical strength of all the new religions, but it was the activity of *majinai* that

was suppressed, largely by local government representatives.

In 1873 and into the next year, the Ministry of Religious Instruction (at that time the government office with jurisdiction over religious matters) was presented with a torrent of requests from the prefectures of Hyōgo, Ehime, Shimane, and Myōtō (the latter composed of parts of present-day Tokushima and Kagawa Prefectures). The requests demanded that the activities of Kurozumikyō be curbed; while using a variety of concrete expressions, they all raised the issue of *majinai* and administration of holy water to the sick without proper medical supervision. They conclude by requesting the ministry to prohibit the proselytizing activities of Kurozumikyō, warning that the group possessed limitless potential for harm by deceiving the "ignorant folk." The Ministry replied that it could not prohibit *majinai* outright, but asked the prefectures to report any occasion on which the religious practice concretely interfered with medical treatment. This suggests that the way in which local government officials expressed concern for the deception of "ignorant folk" should be understood as a manifestation of the spirit of civilization and enlightenment.

But the practice of majinai itself was by no means limited to Kurozumikyō. One likely reason the Ministry of Religious Instruction was unwilling to ban *majinai* outright was because the very expression appeared in the "Books of the Divine Age" (*Jindaikan*), within the earliest mythic history of Japan, the *Nihon shoki*. In short, they could not deny a concept that had already appeared in the classics of Shinto. Further, healing rituals of some sort are in fact performed within many religions. If so, then we must assume that the criticism arose not because it was a ritual of healing per se, but because it was performed by Kurozumikyō. In other words, the ritual was perceived as threatening because it was unfamiliar and because it was performed by a movement that was currently undergoing numerical expansion.

Both Renmonkyō and Tenrikyō were just that kind of group around the period of the 1890s. This makes it easier to understand the technique used by the *Chūō shinbun* when it claimed that Nakayama Miki was the product of Christianity. Namely, when accusing a group of being unfamiliar and therefore dangerous, it is convenient to utilize a code word associating the group with a preexisting and recognized danger. The same technique was employed in 1868 when Nagamatsu Nissen, founder of the new religion Honmon Butsuryūshū, was jailed for five days in Kyoto together with disciples and chief lieutenants. In that case, Nagamatsu was arrested after being accused by sixty-four Buddhist temples in Ōtsu of practicing the deviant religion of Christianity. In short, it did not matter whether a group was Shinto or Buddhist in orientation for it to be accused

of complicity with Christianity.

This was not the first time that members of the intellectual class had felt suspicions and anxiety about new popular movements. But the mid-Meiji period saw an increase in the numbers of popular newspapers and magazines, and it was through the lens of such journalistic media that the already existing sense of unease and apprehension about new religions was magnified. The number of persons attracted by the new religions' promises of "tangible benefits" was increasing, but so was the force of criticism aimed at the groups' overall activities. Such a situation promoted the development of a vicious dynamic in which the more converts that the new religions attracted, the harsher the criticism against them grew.

It might also be noted that foreign interest in Tenrikyō arose around the same time that Japanese criticism of Tenrikyō was growing harsher. The American missionary Daniel Greene began research in 1893 and published an essay dealing with Tenrikyō doctrine in 1895, a work that is considered the first by a foreigner on the group. Thereafter, other research was conducted by the French Roman Catholic priest Balet and the German missionary Hans Haas; all of the resulting works focused on the religious dimensions of Tenrikyō. In other words, while Japanese attention was focused on those aspects of the new religions that appeared most suspicious, these Westerners were expressing interest in the religious features of the groups. Of course, it was perhaps only natural that they, as Christian missionaries, would be interested in the religious elements of such sects, and it may not be entirely fair to compare the perceptions of solitary individuals with the reactions of an entire society as filtered through its popular media.

But even so, this contrasting phenomenon is suggestive when one considers the shock attributed to Japanese intellectuals by the appearance of the new religions. That because even at present it is not at all unusual to find Japanese researchers on the new religions who focus entirely on the negative aspects of the movements. While observing a group from a bit more distance might allow one to see it as a historically noteworthy movement, it tends to be those who consider themselves intellectuals who allow their attention to be excessively drawn by the phenomenon of rapid group growth, and who thus end up pouring their greatest energy into negative evaluation. And the mass media possesses the power to lure just that sort of critic.

The new religions represent a new religious system, yet their origins are deeply rooted in the soil of folk religiosity. And in those areas, they do not display such great disparities vis-à-vis earlier religious phenomena. Viewed from the perspective of their concrete activities in attracting people through faith healing, or their distribution of

things like holy water or rice, the activities of the new religions are intimately linked to those found in earlier Japanese folk religion up through the early modern period. It is likely that the more the leaders of the new religions were perceived as an extension of earlier folk religiosity—namely, as what were previously called *ogamiyasan* or *kitōshi* ("healers")—the less sense of strangeness they would arouse toward their new groups. When physical "benefits" were appearing for large numbers of people, it was only natural that the new religious leaders would attract crowds.

And conversely, people raised in environments unfamiliar with such folk-religious practices were more likely to perceive the new religious system represented by the new religions as something uncannily odd. Forces of criticism are formed after such new movements grow to a substantial scale. Perhaps the critics found it impossible to resist responding to a situation in which large numbers of people were being lured by a religion that appeared foolish. Even more, it would have been hard to accept the fact that members of the intellectual and upper classes were also among those "enchanted" by these suspicious movements, thus magnifying the degree of anxiety. Such things can be considered the fundamental factors lying behind the growing numbers of people who felt an instinctive denial of the new religions. The very magnitude of the anxiety can be taken as a reflection of the fact that these new religious systems had indeed put down deep roots in Japanese society.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Sudden Appearance of a New Mutation

1. *Sōka Gakkai and Nichiren Shōshū*

Many people have difficulty understanding the dynamics involved in the ongoing conflict between the new religion Sōka Gakkai and its parent body, the established Buddhist sect Nichiren Shōshū. Why all the acrimony—and just how are the two related, anyway? Answering these questions is not easy. Part of the difficulty arises from the intricate issues involved in this specific case, but part also comes from what might be called the typical dilemma faced by many Buddhist-oriented new religions that this conflict, too, exhibits. Certain dimensions of the issue are further impossible to understand without some prior understanding of the role played by lay "confraternities" (kō) in Japanese religion and the unique relationship between "clergy" and "laity" within Japanese Buddhism.

One of the most recent episodes in this ongoing drama took place beginning around 1990, in part the outcome of a personal dispute between Sōka Gakkai's honorary president Ikeda Daisaku and the high priest of Nichiren Shōshū Abe Nikken. Depending on whom one asks, the dispute was triggered by either a unilateral demand Nichiren Shōshū issued in March of that year for increased donations (*myōgaryō*) from its members or a complaint Sōka Gakkai voiced in July regarding the personal lives of Nichiren sect priests. While such superficial factors were admittedly at work in this particular episode, most sociologists consider the problematic relationship between the two groups to be fundamentally structural in nature. Aside from the conflict between Sōka Gakkai and Nichiren Shōshū having already flared up earlier, around the end of the 1970s, they also point to the fact that comparable problems can be seen in the histories of other sects. The structural nature of the problem is manifest particularly in the "dissonance" that tends to be generated when any new religious group attempts to advance its own program even while continuing to rely upon its relationship to an existing religious authority and tradition. In any event, that the conflict has managed to achieve the status of a topic subject to intense public scrutiny is a sure reflection of the scale of Sōka Gakkai's social influence.

Sōka Gakkai was first established in 1930. The parent Nichiren Shōshū

organization, on the other hand, is the progeny of a Buddhist sect formed at the Mt. Fuji temple Taisekiji by Nikkō, one of the "six direct disciples" of the medieval Buddhist saint Nichiren (1222-1282). Nikkō had served as high priest of the Nichiren center on Mt. Minobu but experienced conflict with the five other direct disciples and so left Minobu for Mt. Fuji, where he established his own movement.

This movement was originally called the Fuji Monryū (Fuji Branch) or the Kōmon ha (Kōmon Branch). During the Edo period, however, it was affiliated with the Shōretsu ("Superior-Inferior") Branch of the Nichiren sect. In 1876, the temples belonging to this particular Buddhist faction reorganized themselves as the Kōmon branch of the Nichiren sect, subsequently renaming themselves the Honmon sect in 1899. In 1900, the original temple Taisekiji became independent and adopted the name Fuji branch of the Nichiren sect before changing its name in 1912 to the current Nichiren Shōshū, or "Orthodox Sect of Nichiren."

The system whereby Sōka Gakkai members are simultaneously Nichiren Shōshū parishioners is an innovation introduced by Sōka Gakkai itself; Nichiren Shōshū's membership rolls were much smaller prior to the latter's emergence. The "Religions Survey" (*Shūkyō taikan*) for 1932 shows that in 1930 Nichiren Shōshū had sixty-nine temples with fifty-one intendant priests, forty-one other preaching facilities, and a total membership around 80,000. In contrast, the "Religion Yearbook" (*Shūkyō nenkan*) published in 1990 by the Agency for Cultural Affairs reported the sect's current statistics as including 645 temples and 17,730,000 members. During the sixty-odd years between these two surveys, the organization had increased its temple possessions by tenfold and its nominal membership by two-hundred fold. While the real membership may not be so large as the nominal figure claims, the number of temple facilities can be taken as roughly accurate. And since the rate of growth in membership greatly outstripped the rate at which temples increased, it is reasonable to presume that the economic situation of the temples has improved. The rough membership numbers alone clearly suggest the immense impact produced by Sōka Gakkai members' simultaneous identity as parishioners of Nichiren Shōshū.

As a result, Sōka Gakkai is characterized by a kind of dual identity: it is an independent new religious movement, yet simultaneously it is also a lay organization affiliated with a traditional Buddhist sect. This dual structure might be expressed metaphorically as the appearance of a new and independent growth within a preexisting organism. That feature has led some observers to call it an "inhabitant" religion or "inhabitant sect," namely, one that inhabits or lives inside another sect.

Sōka Gakkai's dual identity stands as the primary factor underlying its tumultuous relationship with Nichiren Shōshū; its rapid growth merely served to add fuel to the fire. The personalities of Ikeda Daisaku and Abe Nikken can be thought of as catalysts that encouraged the underlying friction to manifest itself in concrete form.

When Sōka Gakkai is considered in its role as a new religious movement, its status as a group with one of the largest membership rolls is undoubtedly a matter of pride for its members. But when one considers it in its role as a lay confraternity ostensibly dedicated to the support of an established Buddhist sect, it appears dangerously overgrown and thus pregnant with the potential for conflict with its own parent body (the organization of professional clergy composing the established Buddhist sect). While a small confraternity has little chance of threatening the authority of its sect's organized clergy, excessive growth in the lay organization may result in a reversal of the power relationship with its founding body, making it less than certain that the will of the sect will always be carried out. Finally, when a new religious organization—like post-1960s Sōka Gakkai—achieves multinational expanse, the gap in consciousness with its traditional parent sect may become impossible to disguise.

Sōka Gakkai devoted its energies from the 1950s into the 1960s to expanding its membership through the use of vigorous *shakubuku* ("break and subdue") proselytization, but a change in orientation could be detected beginning in the 1970s as the group began directing its energy more into secular social movements. Its youth and women's divisions began strongly promoting anti-war and anti-nuclear protests, and in 1981 it was registered as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Such new orientations were only natural for the group when considered as a new religious movement in the sense that one of the defining characteristics of such movements is their ability to respond sensitively to contemporary currents. On the other hand, in the context of Sōka Gakkai's status as the confraternity of a traditional Buddhist sect, such activities were not necessarily viewed as indispensable to the sect's goals, since historically speaking, the defining criterion of such confraternities has been their reliance on the existence of an established sect and its clergy. Such factors with their multiple, competing aspects make it even easier to perceive the "structural" nature of the dissonance involved.

2. The Burden of Tradition

An inhabitant religion is a type sometimes found among Buddhist-oriented new religions. Since these sects are by definition generated in the context of a

close relationship to specific established religious institutions, they are relatively few in number. Apart from Sōka Gakkai, one might mention groups like Honmon Butsuryūshū, Dainihon Shishikukai, and Nichiren Shōshū Kenshōkai. Further, some such sects should be considered more as "revival" movements within their established sects than as independent new religions.

When the concept of an inhabitant religion is viewed from a somewhat wider perspective, one begins to perceive the broader theme of continuities and discontinuities along a spectrum extending from the established to the new religions. In that light, the dissonance noted earlier in the Nichiren Shōshū-Sōka Gakkai context can be seen as one of the conflicts generated in the process of a new religious system emerging from its established institutional background.

The appearance of a new religious system is inevitably accompanied by various frictions. In the case of Shinto-oriented new religions, the new movement may be heralded by the name of a new kami. Although the appearance of an unfamiliar deity may provoke curiosity in some onlookers, others will feel uncomfortable at the arrival of this new, unknown entity. Likewise, the founder's teachings will frequently appear to be at odds with previous tradition, or as an eclectic hodge-podge assembled from various unrelated sources. The movement has the chance to become a dynamic new religion if such characteristics are viewed positively, but if evaluated negatively the movement will be no more than a flash in the pan. Regardless, discomfort at this kind of reassessment of tradition will inevitably be expressed somewhere.

In addition to the above factors, some of Japan's Buddhist-oriented new religions in particular must confront the fact of conflict with the established sects that serve as their parent organizations. If the new religions had appeared in modern Japan as religious systems assuming responsibility for the entire gamut of life-crisis rites hitherto managed by the established religious institutions, such conflict would have been savage indeed. In point of fact, however, most new religions do not compete so directly with the established religious institutions (Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines) in the area of traditional rites like *hatsu miyamairi* (dedication of newborn infants at shrines and temples), *shichi-go-san* (festival for children seven, five, and three years of age), weddings, and funerals. It is a commonly observed behavioral pattern for people to come to the new religions for answers to personal misfortune and in hopes of finding a reason for living, even while continuing to patronize the established religions for the traditional "rites of passage." This observation reflects the fact that the new religions and established religious institutions have tentatively settled into what might be called

a division of labor. In that sense, the fact that the new religions did not threaten the Buddhist sects in their proprietary right to perform funerals (which represents the established sects' main source of income) was likely an important element working to alleviate their sense of crisis vis-à-vis those new religions.

Even so, the established Buddhist sects have frequently reacted in an almost visceral fashion to the novel systems represented by the new religions, a reaction which must also be included broadly within the category of the "influence of society." The social criticism of the new religions seen reflected in popular journalism includes some elements that remain the same today as they were in the Meiji Period, while other elements are deeply colored by the specific features of the era in which they occur. The same can be said for the characteristics of the conflict occurring between the established Buddhist institutions and their Buddhist-oriented new religion offspring, although it would appear that the constant elements outweigh those that change from age to age. To help us gain an understanding of what might be called the basic pattern of that conflict, let us consider the case of Honmon Butsuryūshū.

Honmon Butsuryūshū origins go back to the late Edo Period and the early years of the Meiji Restoration. While part of a Nichiren sect, the group—originally the confraternity Honmon Butsuryūkō—was searching from the outset for a new form of organization that would be centered on lay believers. The discordant relationship with the original sect that this produced would eventually lead the latter to take legal action against the new group. The group was founded by Nagamatsu Nissen. Born into a Kyoto merchant family, he was said to have demonstrated prodigious academic abilities from his youth and studied *kokugaku* (nativism) with Kido Chitate, a pupil of the famed Motoori Norinaga. During his mid-twenties, Nagamatsu traveled to Edo for about two years of study, and it was from that period that he began to express an interest in Buddhist discipline, while continuing to advance his secular studies. After returning to Kyoto, he opened a private family school.

Nissen first came into contact with the Nichiren sect Honmon Hokkeshū in 1845 when he thirty years old. Thereafter, he devoted himself to proselytizing Buddhism using the aggressive method of *shakubuku*. Although the term *shakubuku* ("break and subdue") has become best known as a result of its connection to Sōka Gakkai, it originally referred to one of two basic methods of Buddhist preaching, the other being the technique of "gentle persuasion" or *shōju*. In the latter method, the teacher emphasizes the good elements of the prospective convert, drawing the novice gently to the truth. In contrast, *shakubuku* means to convert the student by breaking and subduing

his evil—in actual practice, it is a much more forceful method of proselytization. If one accepts the original Buddhist principle of "preaching to the individual in accordance with individual needs" (*taiki seppō*), both methods of teaching should be adopted, depending on the situation and receptivity of each individual subject. Nichiren, however, placed heaviest emphasis on the method of *shakubuku*, with the result that most subsequent Nichiren-oriented sects emulated that pattern. Sōka Gakai's excessively aggressive attempts during one period to implement the *shakubuku* method of indoctrination in fact made it the subject of intense social criticism.

In 1848, Nissen finally achieved his dream of taking the tonsure and becoming an ordained Buddhist cleric; under the normal scheme of things, he was on his way to becoming a fervent member of the Buddhist clergy. Soon after entering the seminary that was to guide him in specialized religious training, however, he became disillusioned at the situation he found, and his course thus shifted in the direction of establishing a new religious movement.

Around 1850, a major religious controversy occurred, shaking the sect and no doubt influencing Nissen's own orientation. That debate revolved around the issue of whether persons who had died and fallen into one of the three lowest realms of existence (the world of fiery hell, the world of hungry ghosts, and the world of beasts) could be saved through the performance of memorial rites by their living relatives. This controversy, however, was not merely a disagreement over points of doctrine; it involved a veiled criticism of the sect's traditional organization itself and as a consequence could not be easily resolved. Those in the sect who contended that the deceased could achieve buddhahood simultaneously argued for maintenance of the traditional hierarchical clerical structure, since it was the professional priests who supervised the performance of memorial rituals for the dead. On the other hand, those who argued that the possibility of salvation was limited to persons who had planted the seeds of Buddhahood in this life were also arguing for the importance of individual faith. This latter stance represented a challenge to the traditional structure of reliance on memorial rituals for the dead performed by professional clergy.

3. Competition or Persecution?

As it took shape in the late Edo period, the organization and management of the Honmon Butsuryū confraternity had an extremely systematic nature. The basic organizational unit was the *kumi* or "party." Each *kumi* would generally be composed of between twenty to forty households; a *kumi* grown excessively large would split to

produce smaller sub-parties (*kogumi*), somewhat in the way that a cell divides. Each *kumi* was self-regulating, centering on ranks of main representative (*kōmoto*), director (*kōgashira*), and the "steadfast congregation" (*shingyō futaishū*). But the overall hierarchy was clear cut, and the teachings were transmitted and studied in an effective way. When a new confraternity was established, a monthly leader (*tsukiban*) would be chosen by lot, together with an assistant leader (*kaban*), who would then become the following month's leader. Careful attention was also paid to supporting members who might grow lax in faith. As this kind of solidarity and autonomy grew stronger among the laity, it was inevitable that the clergy would come to play a relatively less-important role.

The first clear evidence of a perception of threat in the face of this new kind of movement appeared in 1865 when sixty-four temples in Ōtsu initiated joint legal action against Nissen. At the time, Nissen was engaged in proselytism in the area, and as his *shakubuku* activities began to bear fruit, nearby temples complained to the town authorities of this "suspicious person" in their midst. Their complaint was not based on Nissen's laicist emphasis alone, but because he simultaneously was voicing harsh criticisms of the currently debased state of clergy and sect.

Nissen was subjected to investigation, but the authorities refrained from prosecuting him, allegedly because they were hesitant to prosecute someone of his status at the time. Since losing the support of Matsudaira Yorikane (illegitimate son of the eighth-generation domainal lord of Takamatsu domain), Nissen had recently obtained the status of associate priest (*uchindo*) in the hereditary priestly family of the Kyoto temple Ninnaji. As a result, Nissen had two faces. On the one hand, he appeared to be raising a revolt against and searching for an alternative to the status of the established religious institutions of his society. On the other, he was also skillfully exploiting the religious authority of those established religious institutions. Needless to say, this was the one strategy conceivable for someone placed in the situation in which Nissen found himself. This kind of simultaneous challenge to and exploitation of traditional religious authority is also a characteristic feature of Japan's new religions.

Three years later, in 1868, Nissen was again subjected to legal action and investigation. This occasion is now remembered within the group as the "Ōtsu Persecution" (*Ōtsu hōnan*). Working through a certain court noble, the same sixty-four temples of Ōtsu once again presented Kyoto authorities with a charge accusing Nissen of spreading the deviant religion of Christianity. Nissen had earlier resigned his status as associate priest at Ninnaji, in part due to the changing situation of the priests

there, so it has been speculated that the suit was brought at this time due to desires by Nissen's opponents to exploit his then-defenseless situation. Whatever the case, the investigation vindicated Nissen of the charge of spreading Christianity, and he was thus freed. However, Kyoto Prefecture's then-new governor Nagatani Nobuatsu stipulated as one condition of Nissen's release that he undergo reordination as a Buddhist priest. Since this order in effect provided a way for Nissen to obtain official recognition of his religious activities under the new Restoration government, Nissen gladly accepted.

As a result of mediation by the Kyoto government, Nissen took up residence in the temple Honnōji, but he continued to experience conflict with other nearby priests. In 1869, he moved to the temple Yūseiji, which subsequently became the center of activities for his confraternity Butsuryūkō. This was followed in 1871 by another arrest. This time, charges were presented to Kyoto Prefectural secretary Uemura Masanao by a group composed of Buddhist clerics, Shinto priests, Shugendō practitioners, and Confucianists, alleging once again that Nissen was guilty of disseminating the despised religion of Christianity. While Nagatani Nobuatsu remained the governor of Kyoto, his roots were in the Kyoto nobility and he was known as a diffident personality, with the result that power was effectively wielded by Uemura. Uemura, in turn, was the product of the old Chōshū domain in Kyushu and was dedicated to the modernizing values of civilized enlightenment and pragmatism; he had promoted policies like the one aimed at confiscating land formerly occupied by daimyō mansions and "wasted" by shrines and temples, and using it instead for the growing of tea and mulberry, thereby promoting the development of the tea and silk industries.

This time, the investigation continued at some length. Nissen was released after being held in custody for forty-two days, but he was then subjected to further intense questioning by the Kyoto courts. He was completely stripped of his status as intendant of the temple Honnōji in August of the next year. In sum, this incident should be understood as a repudiation of the new religious movements—not by other specifically Buddhist sects alone, but by the entire world of established Japanese religions.

Nissen was next subjected to investigation in 1875 as the result of legal action brought by medical practitioners. The charge in this case was that Nissen had encouraged believers to refuse legitimate medical care, possibly making it more appropriate to evaluate this case within the context of general social criticism rather than religious beliefs per se. At the time, Honmon Butsurykō was engaging in the practice of distributing a kind of holy water called *okōsui*, which believers drank as part of a ritual of faith healing. The suit, however, alleged that fervent believers were relying

on the *okōsui* exclusively and refusing medical treatment. Coming as it did at a time when the new Meiji government was strongly promoting its policies of "civilization and enlightenment," it was inevitable that such religious activities would be made a target of criticism. The sect was thus subjected to the same pattern of criticism that was being directed toward Kurozumikyō, a group to which I shall return below.

As the upshot of this incident, Nissen was sentenced to home confinement, prohibited from distant travel from his home without permission. A number of other incidents followed. In 1877, some fifty Shinto and Buddhist clerics from Kyoto demanded that the prefecture withdraw its recognition of the Butsuryū confraternity as a place of religious education (*kyōshūjo*), but this demand was rejected. In 1881, Nissen applied for the status of *kyōdōshoku*, but his application was turned down. At this point, it thus appears that his conflict with the established religious institutions was merely intensifying. Within the continuing process of attack and rejection, by both his own and other established Buddhist sects as well as by the society at large, Butsuryū confraternity gradually solidified its identity as an autonomous organization.

From the perspective of the world of established sectarian Buddhism, Nissen's movement represented an unsettling attack on the accepted order; from Nissen's perspective, the contemporary world of established Buddhism was eminently stagnant and corrupt. This contention of views was, in fact, an expression of the clash of two competing religious systems: the early modern system of Tokugawa religion, and the new system coming into being through the process of modernization.

Despite his rigor in matters of faith, Nissen had considerable ability to respond flexibly to contemporary conditions. In 1863—at a time when many Japanese were still fearful of having their photographs taken—Nissen appeared in a photograph together with his disciples. In the fourth month of 1872, the Supreme Council of State (Dajōkan) issued a notice making it henceforth permissible for Buddhist priests to eat meat, take wives, and grow their hair, but Nissen had already married the previous year, and he also showed no hesitation at wearing Western clothes. In short, the atmosphere of "civilization and enlightenment" seemed to suit him well.

4. "Buddhism Should Be Studied"

Honmon Butsuryūshū is usually considered a new religion, but it can also be viewed as a renewal movement within a traditional religious sect. This makes it possible, as I noted earlier, to express its origins metaphorically as the appearance of a new growth that exists in symbiosis with a preexisting organism. Viewed as inhabitant

religions, Honmon Butsuryūshū and Sōka Gakkai are both growths within the same parent group, but when viewed as new religious systems they differ in numerous respects. Of the two, Sōka Gakkai is farther removed from the forms of established Buddhist sectarian institutions. The main reasons for this contrast can be found in the different historical periods during which the two groups emerged. The unique biographies of their respective founders also played a role for—unlike Nagamatsu Nissen—Sōka Gakkai's first two leaders Makiguchi Tsunesaburō and Toda Jōsei were adherents of Nichiren Shōshū who started as teachers in elementary schools and private academies; neither had experienced professional clerical ordination.

The paradigmatic Buddhist new religions appeared slightly later than their counterparts in the Shinto tradition. Figures like Nakayama Miki and Konkō Daijin, who appeared apart from traditional religious institutions, had already begun expounding their unique Shintoistic messages in the late Edo period. But new Buddhist movements only began truly achieving distance from their founding sects with the appearance of personalities like Nishida Mugaku (Bussho Gonenkai) or Kubo Kakutarō and Kotani Kimi (Reiyūkai). In concrete, this refers to the period following the first decade of the twentieth—particularly, in the Taishō and early Shōwa eras (ca. 1912-1930). Of those movements that branched out in new directions while maintaining their identities as revival movements within established sects, most were, like the prototype Honmon Butsuryūshū, generated within sects of the Nichiren lineage after the Meiji period (1868-1912).

In this sense, a noteworthy group is Kokuchūkai, founded by Tanaka Chigaku (1861-1939). Tanaka was born in the Nihonbashi district of old Edo, and like Nissen, developed his own movement from origins within the Nichiren sect. Tanaka's father Tada Genryū was a physician, and is said to have given Tanaka the motto, "One should read haiku poetry, but not to the exclusion of all else; Buddhism should be studied, but one doesn't have to become a monk." Tanaka lost his mother at the age of nine and his father a year later, and in that year (1870), he became a disciple of the Nichiren-sect missionary Chikyōin Nisshin. He was ordained later that year, and in the following year he began studying Buddhology at the Iidaka Danrin, a Buddhist seminary in Yōkaichiba, Chiba. In 1875, he continued his studies at the newly opened Nichiren-shū Daikyōin college (the forerunner of present-day Risshō University). Up to this point, he was firmly within the framework of the traditional Buddhist sectarian organization.

Tanaka first moved in the direction of establishing a lay movement in 1880 when, at the young age of twenty, he moved to Yokohama and there started the "Lotus

Association" or Rengekai. While achieving superior marks at the college Daikyōin, he quit after only one year, in part because he had contracted a serious illness, but also because he disagreed with the emphasis placed on "gentle" *shōju* conversion methods by the college's director, Arai Nissatsu. In 1884, Tanaka broadened his range of activities to include Tokyo and changed his association's name to Risshō Ankokukai (Association for the Establishment of Righteousness for the Peace of the Nation).

Tanaka's main activity during this period was to deliver sermons in a borrowed temple, and it appears that he was conversant with the ways of the world. One tale relates how he lost his purse and was left penniless during a trip to Chiba, so he and a disciple pretended to be famous fortune tellers and collected a considerable amount in fees for "readings." In 1885, it is said that Tanaka participated in a debate sponsored by the Buddhist Youth Association, delivering such a dynamic lecture that his opponent was overwhelmed. This event was seminal in making Tanaka's name more widely known. With fame, detractors began delivering lectures critical of him, and it is even said that Tanaka occasionally appeared unexpectedly at the lecture halls and delivered skillfully convincing rebuttals. Many people joined his group after hearing his powerful sermons; with the increase in followers a physical meeting place became necessary. In 1886, a building was obtained in Tokyo's Nihonbashi district and named the Risshōkaku.

The organization of the Kokuchūkai can be called a new lay-centered sectarian system, based on Tanaka's own awareness of the need for a structure that could respond dynamically to the conditions of the times. He apparently came to believe that given the obligations of military service and taxation required of citizens in a new nation, it was impossible to be a purist regarding the monastic precepts. Instead, he decided to emphasize laicism, utilizing the power of women to further the cause of Buddhism. As a result, by the mid-1880s he had already suggested the introduction of a new ritual for the Buddhist dedication of new-born infants as well as a Buddhist marriage ceremony.

The contents of his teaching, however, had a strong tinge of a "return to tradition," and overall, it might be called an amalgamation of traditional Nichirenism with Meiji enlightenment thought. In that sense, Tanaka's teaching also had the effect of introducing new reform elements to the traditional doctrines of the Nichiren sect. This is related to the fact that Chigaku's movement, while being lay oriented, possessed the nature of what might be called "pan-Nichirenism." In his ideal of "returning to the way of the founder," and his standard of "sectarian revolution" (*shūmon kakumei*), we can see a hint of his orientation toward organizing a unitarian movement under the broad banner of the Nichiren faith.

5. The "Luthers" of the Meiji Restoration

When considering the overall nature of Buddhist-related new religions in Japan, three things should be kept in mind. First, the fact that the movements started by Nagamatsu Nissen and Tanaka Chigaku expanded in the face of substantial opposition from the ordained clergy of their established sects suggests one of the crucial features of these religions. Second, it must not be forgotten that while in one sense groups like Honmon Butsuryūshū and Kokuchūkai were sectarian reform or revival movements, they were likewise forerunners of other movements (like Reiyūkai) that possessed even clearer laicist orientations. Finally, one must remember that men like Nissen and Chigaku possessed a substantial degree of professional religious knowledge.

The reaction of the established sects noted above is the dissonance I have already spoke of that the birth of a new religious system produces. The established religions felt a strong sense of crisis at the imminent demise of their religious authority and the fact that their followers were being drawn away. As a result, criticism of the new religious movements increased in direct proportion to the dynamism of their growth when their "novelty" was exceptionally apparent.

As noted earlier, Buddhist-oriented movements comparable to Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō—that is to say, those in which individuals without direct ties to established Buddhist institutions founded new religious groups—did not arise until somewhat after their Shintoistic counterparts. Both Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō had already begun organizing believers in the form of confraternities by the 1860s. In contrast, even if Tanaka Chigaku is classified as a layman, the organization of a Buddhist-oriented sect like the Kokuchūkai did not begin until the 1880s and thereafter. In other words, it appears that the new religions of Buddhist orientation did not take on an autonomous character as religious systems until somewhat later than those that arose from Shinto roots. This phenomenon is likely related to the fact that the established Buddhist sects possessed more rigorous systems of priestly organization than did Shinto shrines and Shugendō groups. As a result, the search for new systems based on those previous organizations was accompanied by a higher degree of friction and stress than in the Shinto-oriented movements.

It should also be noted that the new religions that appeared in the so-called early or pioneering period of the late-Edo are often said to possess strong characteristics as popular religions, i.e., religions of "the people" or "the masses" (*minshū*). In more general terms, in fact, the usual image of the new religions of any period might be said to be that they are religions "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

That said, if the word "people" is limited in meaning to refer only to those without professional religious training, or those not of the intellectual classes, then it may not be so simple to characterize the new religions unequivocally as "people's religions." This characterization may need particular reevaluation when considering the contexts within which the new religious systems represented by the new religions first took shape, since the leaders of groups like Honmon Butsuryūshū and Kokuchūkai possessed a considerable degree of professional religious training, yet they appeared substantially before lay groups like Reiyūkai.

Considering events in this light, it becomes apparent that a similar evaluation can be applied to the situation among Shinto-oriented groups as well. For example, Shintoistic movements like Kurozumikyō and Misogikyō arose even earlier than Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō, yet those earlier movements had founders who possessed a considerable degree of professional religious training and experience for their time. Kurozumikyō's founder, Kurozumi Munetada was born into a family of hereditary priests at the Imamura Shrine in present-day Okayama. He himself had received ordination from the Yoshida family of official Shinto ritualists, and his followers likewise included a considerable number of the elite. This is clear from the fact that advanced followers who wished to formally enter discipleship were obliged to submit documents called "holy letters" (shinmon) in which they expressed their sacred vow. It is said that more than 1,000 followers had submitted such written declarations by the time Munetada died in 1850. When one considers the socio-historical significance of a requirement to submit formal written declarations of faith in the context of an era of mass illiteracy, it does not seem appropriate to claim that Kurozumikyō was a religion that took its start focused on the masses.

Misogikyō's founder Arai Masakane was likewise possessed of considerable erudition. Born into a samurai family in Edo, he studied imperial-nationalistic ideology and Zen Buddhism, as well as traveling widely and becoming versed in Chinese herbal medicine and phrenology. He further studied Shinto discipline with the Shirakawa family of ritualists and received their certificate of ordination. It appears overall that he possessed a special interest in matters of religious practice. In any event, it is certain that he was an intellectual as one can clearly divine from reading his 1842 treatise *Shintō yuiitsu mondōsho* ("Interrogations regarding the incomparable Shinto"), which he wrote as a means of accounting for his faith in response to a government investigation.

In the context of Buddhist-oriented new movements, it appears that friction with established sects occupied a greater part of their overall experience of conflict than

that which they experienced with the society at large. In a metaphoric sense, men like Nissen were the "Luthers" of the Meiji Restoration in that, while being fully versed in the existing religious system and even committing themselves provisionally to that system, they nonetheless raised cries of protest and set out in search of a new religious system. If one regards religious reformations as reorganizations of existing religious systems, it is only to be expected that the Lutheran type of founder should appear in the early stages of the Buddhist-oriented new religions.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Metapho of Disease

1. *New Arrivals*

Kurozumikyō was officially recognized as an independent sect in 1876. Konkyō and Tenrikyō were recognized as churches (*kyōkai*) in 1885, but they did not achieve fully independent status until later—Konkōkyō in 1900 and Tenrikyō in 1908. Misogikyō likewise became independent in 1894. All these sects maintained relatively stable levels of membership in the mid-Meiji period. The *Dainippon Teikoku Naimushō tōkei hōkoku* ["Statistical Report of the Home Ministry of the Empire of Great Japan"] provides figures for the number of religious ministers in the independent sects for each year beginning in 1884. According to these statistics, Kurozumikyō reached a peak of around 9,000 ministers in the decade of the 1890s, and Konkōkyō possessed more than 1,000 ministers in the first decade of the twentieth century. Misogikyō had 754 ministers in the first year it gained independence (1894), and that number rose to 1,000 the following year. The figure remained approximately the same in the next decade as well.

The appearance of these new arrivals on the religious scene overlapped with that span of years running from the late Meiji period to early Shōwa (the 1890s to the 1930s) when several of their predecessors were achieving steady growth. During those decades, these earlier movements went through institutionalization processes in a variety of ways that led to their becoming "established religions" in their own right. Meanwhile, the gestation of newer groups was spurred by changes in social conditions that unfolded just around the turn of the century.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Shinto-oriented movements tended to appear slightly earlier than their Buddhist counterparts, and such was the case during this epoch as well.. It was in 1899 that Deguchi Nao met Deguchi Onisaburō and established Ōmotokyō predecessor's, Kinmei Reigakkai, in Kyoto. The next year, Takeuchi Kyomaro (later prosecuted for lèse majesté) established his Amatsu Kyōkai as an affiliate of Ontakekyō in Ibaraki Prefecture. In 1902, Rikihisa Tatsusaburō—whose son Tassai would himself later launch his own group, Zenrinkai—established his Rikihisa Kyōkai in Saga as an affiliate of Jikkōkyō. And in 1906, Tanaka Morihei—who a few years later would employ a spiritualist technique called "Reikojutsu" to rapidly make a

name for himself as the founder of Taireidō—founded his "Youth League of the Great Empire of Japan" (Dai-Nippon Teikoku Seinenkai) in Nagoya.

Beginning in the Taishō period (1912-1926), the emergence of new Shinto groups like Renshindō Kyōdan and Shindō Tenkōkyo was paralleled by the creation of several new Buddhist groups. The Association for Buddhist Reform and Salvation (Bukkyō Kanka Kyūzaikai), for example, was founded in 1914 in Nagoya by Sugiyama Tatsuko (later founder of the new religion Daijōkyō), who focused her group's activities on study of the Lotus Sutra and the practice of Buddhist discipline. Yasaka (Kibara) Kakue, whose group Nakayama Shingoshōshū would become independent from the established Shingon Sect of Buddhism following World War II, established his temple Ryūkōtoku-ji in 1921. Four years later, in 1925, Kubo Kakutarō and Kotani Kimi founded their group Reiyūkai in Tokyo. In 1928 after the start of the Shōwa period (1926-1989), Ogura Reigen established his "Miraculous Response of the Buddhas and Kami True Spirit Association" (Shinbutsu Shinrei Kan'ōkai, later Nenpō Shinkyō) in Osaka. (Ogura would go on to make nationwide mission journeys following World War II, and is known for continuing to wear a military field cap throughout the remainder of his life.)

It is also interesting to note that several groups including Seichō no Ie, Sōka Gakkai, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Shinnyoen, and Risshō Kōseikai that would build up large memberships in the post-war period went through their earliest formative experiences around the decade of the 1930s. Further, in an event of great significance in the context of the schisms that Tenrikyō would go on to experience, one of its ministers, Ōnishi Aijirō, split from that movement in 1929 to establish his Tenri Kenkyūkai (later to be renamed as Honmichi). Add to this the rapidly rising levels of mutual influence and competition among the various groups and it would seem that this period should be considered an important milestone in the development of the new religions.

2. The Designs of the State

The state had the capacity since the late Meiji period to curb the rapid expansion of new religions, but it was during the late Taishō and the following Shōwa period when the application of its authority was much more in evidence. The employment of state force in the field of religion thus was in step with the expansion of Japanese militarism during the same period. As the number of new religions grew and the range of their activities burgeoned, social attitudes toward the new groups became more complicated and at times included violent aspects. The fact that the state grew alarmed as the new religions expanded their organizations also points to how attitudes toward them can be

used as a barometer for reading the general tenor of their times.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Japan experienced war first with China and then with Russia. In contrast to the domestic battles fought around the time of the Meiji Restoration, these conflicts with other nations fomented intense nationalistic sentiments. It was perhaps inevitable in that context that the imperial institution came to perform a special function as the country's leaders established the systems of the modern nation-state and Japan began exalting its ethnic identity. The first major steps in this process were the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in October 1890, which was followed the next April by a Ministry of Education ordinance called "Regulations for Ceremonies on National Holidays and Festival Days at Elementary Schools." These regulations prescribed that on National Founding Day (celebration of the mythic founding of the Japanese empire by first emperor Jimmu), the emperor's birthday, the imperial New Year's festival, and the imperial Festivals of Harvest and First-Fruits (Kannamesai and Niinamesai), each school's principal, teachers, and students were to assemble and bow low to the photograph of the emperor and empress, followed by a reading of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Later the same year, the government instituted policies to the effect that classes in ethics and geography should be used to instill patriotism; thereafter, emphasis was increasingly placed in the classroom on emperor worship. In the legal sphere, the penal code newly promulgated in 1907 was equipped with strengthened provisions against the crime of *lèse majesté*, which led to increased attention directed toward acts of disrespect for the emperor, imperial family, and imperial shrines.

The state steadily strengthened its centralized control over thought after the Russo-Japanese War, in part as a means of compensating for the state of overall national impoverishment in which Japanese society then found itself. In April 1925, the notorious Peace Preservation Law was promulgated. This legislation included provisions for the prosecution of any anti-establishment individual or movement that threatened revolutionary overthrow of the national and political polity; the provisions could even be applied to someone who refused to recognize the system of private property. The law was originally formulated mainly with socialists, communists, and anarchists in mind, but eventually it came to be used against new religions as well on the grounds of the revolutionary threat they allegedly posed to national and political institutions. This legislation and the penal code's stiffened *lèse majesté* provisions would together form the two pillars that underpinned state control of the new religions during the quarter of a century extending from the late Taishō period through the end of

World War II.

It is interesting to note that an increasing number of new religions began paying close attention to issues of emperor and nation roughly around the end of the Taishō years and the start in 1926 of the Shōwa period. Most of those movements were subjected to religious control or persecution, with the heaviest pressure brought to bear against the religious group of Ōmoto. Ōmoto would feel the brunt of state oppression in 1921 and again 1935. These two incidents are excellent illustrations of the way in which a group whose claims bring the ethos of an age into sharp relief is bound to attract strong reaction from certain elements of the dominant society.

As noted earlier, Deguchi Nao met Onisaburō—who was to become her adopted son-in-law—in 1899 and established that year the initial iteration of Ōmoto under the name Kinmeikai (which quickly merged with the group Reigakkai to become the Kinmei Reigakkai). Their activities during the its first decade were not accompanied by much in the way of numerical growth. Around 1910, when they changed the group's name to the Purification Society of Great Japan (Dai-Nippon Shusaikai), their membership appears to still have been no more than several hundred. But then its membership rolls began to grow rapidly, particularly from the latter half of 1910. By the time of Nao's death in 1918 when Onisaburō already was its de facto leader, Ōmoto had begun to expand nationally. The group claimed to have 100,000 followers (though that number may have been somewhat inflated) by 1920, around the time of its first persecution. Furthermore, the geographical scope of its activities had grown yet further, with Ōmoto the previous year having commenced full-fledged proselytization efforts in Taiwan.

One reason suggested for why Ōmotokyō was able to achieve this kind of growth in this period was the opening in August 1910 of the new National Rail line from Kyoto to Ayabe. Ayabe was the home of the "sacred garden" (*shin'en*) or "divine mansion" (*kami yashiki*) considered hallowed grounds by Ōmoto. That said, not only Ōmoto but any group seeking to grow would find such new means of transportation to be beneficial. More important and specific to Ōmoto is the fact that the millenarian sensibilities of Onisaburō and other church leaders led them to believe that the time of world "rebuilding and renewal" was at hand and spoke of it in their teachings. The social conditions of the day in turn seemed to lend credence to this view of the world, and that drew members into the fold.

The group made its first attempts to proselytize through the medium of printed materials in 1914 when it issued an in-house publication called *Shikishima shimpō*

("Home-island news") from its own independent printing facilities ("Shikishima" is a local place name in Nara Prefecture with associations going back to Japan's earliest historical period; accordingly, it also serves here as a symbol for "Japan"). Changing its name from Taihonkyō to Kōdō Ōmoto (Imperial Way Great Origin), in 1916 it created an organization called the Naobigun ("Rectification army") as the focal point for its proselytization activities. In 1917, Shikishima shimpō was renamed Shinreikai ("Spirit world"), and the group launched a nationwide proselytization drive; as part of this campaign, Shinreikai was used as the forum for publishing Nao's Ofudesaki ("tip of the pen") writings on "rebuilding and renewal" (although Nao was unlettered, she had begun recording divine revelations received in a kind of automatic writing as early as 1893). The published excerpts of Ofudesaki were not made available, however, in the same form as Nao's original phonetic hiragana script, but as edited and amended by Onisaburō, including the occasional addition of Chinese kanji. Entitled *Ōmoto shin'yu* ("Divine revelations of Ōmoto"), this collection is generally the only form in which Nao's writings can be known, even today.

Onisaburō's right-hand man in the nationwide mission campaign was Asano Wasaburō (1873-1937). Only two years Onisaburō's junior, Asano likewise went through his formative period during the era of "civilization and enlightenment" promoted by the Meiji government. Having become interested in Ōmoto, Asano and his wife moved to Ayabe in 1916. Asano was a graduate of the English department of Tokyo Imperial University and had taught English at the Naval Engineering School. That resume is thought to have had a subsequent impact on the social composition of the Ōmoto membership in that it apparently influenced numerous individuals who were educated or connected to the military to join. This attraction to elites was another aspect of Ōmoto that made it seem dangerous to authorities.

In point of fact, it was the substance of Ōmoto's teachings rather than its growing size that stirred suspicions. Ōmoto's cry for a "Taishō Restoration" that would produce a "restoration of government by the kami" (*shinsei fukko*) was backed by strong religious fervor. That fact alone made it politically threatening, particularly since the call for a Taishō Restoration was a a troublesome concept for those in power in that it tended to uneasily overlap with the realm of nationalistic state ideology. The military police (*kenpeitai*) began surveillance of the group around 1918 when it learned that some naval and reserve army officers had converted to Ōmoto. For their part, the Kyoto prefectural police summoned Onisaburō and Asano for questioning and issued warnings. Finally, in August, 1920 the head of the Home Ministry's Police Bureau issued a call for an official

investigation of the Kōdō Ōmoto group.

The following February 12, Onisaburō and two others were taken into custody by the police. Onisaburō and Asano were indicted on charges of *lèse majesté*, and all three were indicted on charges of violating the Newspaper Law. The *lèse majesté* charges were based on the claim that the two men had published articles disrespectful of the emperor and empress "behind a façade of imperial loyalism, and with the purpose of boastfully proclaiming the greatness of their own possessing deity and the loftiness of their own doctrines." The government also took exception to the content of articles in the *Shinreikai*, claiming that the publication had infringed Article 42 of the Newspaper Act that prohibited the "publishing in newspapers of items that might tend to defame the prestige of the imperial house, change the system of government, or disrupt the imperial constitution." The Kyoto District Court found the defendants guilty on all counts, and Onisaburō received the heaviest punishment of five years imprisonment. However, he took his case to the Great Court of Cassation (Daishin'in) and in May 1927 was given a reprieve in conjunction with the amnesty issued at the occasion of Emperor Taishō's funeral.

3. Reasons for Contempt

The incident marked the first instance of Japanese state religious persecution in the twentieth century, and struck little more than a glancing blow when compared to subsequent attacks made on religious groups. The second Ōmoto persecution incident that came fourteen years later was thoroughgoing by comparison, even for the epoch during which it occurred. Furthermore, of the many cases of religious persecution that took place during this period it was also the most ruthless, for Ōmoto had successfully resumed in expanding its activities after the first persecution incident and this posed a growing threat that the Home Ministry and others in power could not let go uncontested.

In the aftermath of the first persecution incident, several of Ōmoto's leaders had fallen away from the group. Asano Wasaburō, for example, established the Shinrei Kagaku Kenkyūkai in 1923. Two years later, he moved away from Ayabe and thereafter devoted himself to his own research into the spiritual world. Taniguchi Masaharu, who had been centrally involved in editing Ōmoto's publications, became disillusioned when Nao's prophecized "world renewal" did not occur in 1921, and left Ayabe as well. He eventually launched his own movement by founding Seichō no Ie. These figures were not alone. The persecution of 1921 thus had the initial effect of causing a temporary reversal of the group's fortunes. This negative impact did not last, however, and the

group soon began a new stage in its development. One notable feature of these years prior to the second persecution incident was Ōmoto's increasing international expansion. The group's internationalism was typified by assertions of pan-humanism, symbolized by its founding of an "Esperanto Research Society" in 1923. Ōmoto also promoted the equal association of all religions, and gave concrete expression to that stance through its cooperation with the Chinese new religion Kōmanjikai Dōin.

Onisaburō further caused sensation during this period by travelling secretly to Manchuria in 1924 while on parole from prison. He was captured in Bayantala (present-day Tongliao, Inner Mongolia) by the Shenyang (Mukden) army and was on the point of being executed when he received a reprieve. The exploit heightened Onisaburō's popularity in the eyes of Japanese at home. Ōmoto's domestic activities also expanded, and in 1934 its newspaper *Jinrui aizen shinbun* ["Philanthropos news"] celebrated achieving a circulation of over one-million. While the number may not translate directly into a membership figure, it did make it clear that the group had survived its earlier episode of persecution.

This fact stirred up renewed suspicion of the group on the part of the authorities, and the government made preparations for what would come to be known as the second Ōmoto incident with utmost care. It laid the groundwork for this second round of persecutions as it had the first by carrying out undercover investigations and making preparations for arrests in deep secrecy. The wholesale roundup of suspects came on December 8, 1935. The date was precisely six years to the day (Japan time) before Japan's entry into World War II, and upon being taken into custody the group's second-generation leader Deguchi Sumi allegedly prophesied that "Ōmoto is the mold of Japan [and] if the mold is broken, the same will happen to Japan." The day of the roundup, 500 Kyoto prefectural police were called up on the pretext of special year-end guard duty to surround Ōmoto's facilities in Kameoka and its headquarters in Ayabe. Some 500 Ōmoto leaders and members were detained, 27 of whom were arrested. Investigations were carried out at Ōmoto facilities throughout the country over the following year resulting by the following December in the arrests of 987 people, with 61 going on to be formally indicted. The Home Ministry further issued an order in March 1936 that all headquarters and local church facilities be destroyed; the directive was carried out between March and June with police using dynamite to reduce the Ōmoto headquarters to rubble.

The fact that no other new religious group was subjected to such a total eradication effort by the Japanese state is evidence of the degree to which Ōmoto's influence was

felt to be a threat, and of the depth of contempt in which the group was held by the state. Yet the persecution should not be understood as an extraordinary display of legal force in response to the extraordinary nature of Ōmoto as a new religious movement. Several other groups appeared that were fundamentally the same as Ōmoto in character, and the attitude of the legal authorities toward those groups was likewise fundamentally the same. Numerous new religious groups saw their founders and leaders arrested during the final years of the Taishō Period and the early years of the Shōwa. The number of arrests increased particularly after the second Ōmoto incident. This is not to say, however, that all of these cases should be included under the rubric of "religious persecution." For example, Ryūjin Tendōkai was investigated for an incident of fraud and professional negligence leading to death, while charges of rape and abortion were leveled against Rakuteishukyō. Such cases must be treated as ordinary criminal investigations; however, given the preponderance of other cases that involved charges of *lèse majesté* and "disturbing the peace," there can be little doubt that the basic theme to pursuing these arrests continued to be that of the persecution of religion. The charge of *lèse majesté* would also be used to prosecute Ōnishi Aijirō of Tenri Kenkyūkai (1928), Amatsukyō's Takeuchi Kyomaro (1936), Yano Yutarō of Shinsei Ryūjinkai (1936), and Miki Tokuharu of Hitonomichi (1937). In most cases, the criminal charges were brought in connection with comments about the state of the existing emperor system. For example, the teachings of Shinsei Ryūjinkai, according to Tsushima Michihito, were based around "a convoluted structure aimed at overthrowing the actual emperor system through a restoration of an original or ideal emperor system." If the observation is correct, one can well imagine how the authorities at the time might see such a group as posing a danger.

Looking back, it is clear that one of the central policies of the Japanese government from mid-Meiji on was to inculcate heightened imperial veneration and nationalistic sentiments through the medium of public education. Thus, from a broader historical perspective precisely one generation after promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education it is not at all strange to see religious figures appearing here and there who were articulating visions of an ideal emperor system. But if such increased religious discussion about the imperial institution and even national objectives was a natural byproduct of government policies of that time, then it was perhaps doubly inevitable that the authorities might feel fear and loathing for such religious movements. In the first place, they might well loathe the groups based on the latter's incestuous relationship to state ideology, since the groups' interests sprang from the same intellectual roots as

the state's own. Secondly, the authorities would have feared the groups since they were expanding according to principles that were autonomous to those of the state.

4. Wariness of "Quasi-Religions"

The number of new religious movements that restlessly grew nationwide during the early Shōwa period was even greater than is commonly believed. The internal and secret documents of the Home Ministry and Ministry of Justice offer the best window for understanding how these proliferating groups were monitored and controlled by the state. These materials show that the system for monitoring religious movements became gradually stricter beginning in 1936. The activities recorded therein also reflect a new stage in the thought control campaign directed toward religious movements that had begun following the second Ōmoto incident the previous year, as smaller local groups now began to be picked up in the surveillance net alongside the larger ones like Ōmoto and Hitonomichi.

The Home Ministry began issuing its "Monthly Gazette of the Special Higher Police" (*Tokkō geppō*; at one time called the *Tokkō gaiji geppō*) in March 1930. The initial purpose of the gazette was to keep tabs on Japanese leftist movements; specific headings were included for "Japan Communist Party," "liberation movements," "Japan Anti-Imperial Alliance," "second proletarian class," "student movements," "labor movements," "farmers movements," "proletarian party movement," "young men's movements," "proletarian art movement," the "'leveling'" movement" (*suihei undō*, a movement for the liberation of groups traditionally subjected to institutionalized prejudice in Japan, generally the so-called *burakumin*.), and movements by Korean residents of Japan. The gazette expanded the scope of its coverage in December 1935 to include "Conditions in other movements;" under this heading, it took up the "incident involving the Ōmoto church's violation of the public safety law and crime of *lèse majesté*." It wasn't until the March 1936 issue, however, that the gazette finally made religion a specific category of interest with the introduction of the new heading, "Conditions of religious movements."

Similiarly, the Home Ministry's Police Bureau had already begun publishing an annual report on the "Status of Social Movements" as early as 1927. There too, however, it was not until 1936 that items specifically regarding religious groups started to appear with the publication of a discussion about "quasi-religious organizations" (*ruiji shūkyō dantai*) in addition to officially recognized religious bodies. The discussion presented the major "quasi-religions" together with the locations of their branches,

date of founding, names of leaders, and the numbers of followers. The major Shinto-related new religions introduced included Ōmoto, Hitonomichi, Seichō no Ie, Shōroku Shintō Yamatoyama-kai, Shindō Tenkōkyo, and Dōtoku Kagaku Kenkyūsho (later to become known as Moralogy), while major new Buddhist groups included Zen-Nihon Shinri Undō. Other smaller quasi-religious organizations were merely summarized in a single table, though that table went so far as to include tiny groups with single-digit memberships. Overall, most groups listed had few members, and the average group had a membership of ranging somewhere between only several dozens and several hundred. In fact, only the 10 groups in Table 3 had memberships exceeding 10,000 according to the 1936 compilation.

All told, the 1936 article tabulated 746 quasi-religious organizations, including 386 that were Shinto-related, 317 that were Buddhist-related, and 43 syncretic groups mixing Buddhism and Shinto. No Christian-related quasi-religions were included in the 1936 report, but the report for 1937 added 27 such groups to its tallies. Determining the true number of independent organizations based on this data remains difficult, since it is impossible to tell in some cases whether the organization listed is a headquarters or a branch. Furthermore, some of those identified as branches were in fact affiliates of a larger organization while others were de facto independent organizations. Nonetheless, even given such difficulties the reports offer vital data for understanding the general contours of so-called "quasi-religions" at that time.

Regarding their years of founding, the data in the article show that the majority of these groups were established in the second half of the Meiji Period or later; of those groups whose histories dated back to prior to the Meiji Restoration, most were connected with Honmon Butsuryūkō. In the 1920, their numbers begin to increase rapidly, as the following numbers for new foundings suggest: 9 for 1905-09, 29 for 1910-14, 32 for 1915-19, 63 for 1920-24, 119 for 1925-29, and 237 for 1930-34. One might also note that 22 of the 27 Christian-related groups reported in 1937 were not established until after 1926 (the start of the Shōwa Period). Viewed overall, Shinto-related groups appear to have once again been somewhat in the vanguard.

5. *Preventing the Spread of Quasi-Religions*

The Criminal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Justice began issuing a "Monthly intellectual gazette" (*Shisō geppō*) in July 1934. This publication included numerous articles on investigations of religious groups, and also reported on the procedures and findings of preliminary hearings in cases dealing with *lèse majesté* and violations

of the Peace Preservation Law. Beginning with a report on the investigation of the Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei in 1936 (issue 28), the gazette would go on to detail investigations on Ōmoto, Tenrikyō, Honmichi, Shindō Tenkōkyo, Hitonomichi, Tōdaisha, and Amatsukyō. Reports of trials can be found beginning in issue 40 (1937) with details of the *lèse majesté* case against Amatsukyō; they continued with reports on trials involving Sanri Sanfukugen, Tenri Kaminokuchiake-basho (a Tenrikyō offshoot), Tōdaisha [Watchtower Society], Usachigami-kyō, Chūkōyō-no-kyō, Dainichikyō, Mikunikyō, Daishizen Tenchi no Ōkami, the Katsukawa headquarters of Honmon Butsurikkō, Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai (later to become Sōka Gakkai), Isshin Kōbōdō, Seichō no Ie, and Amaterasu-hi Kinjō Kotaishin kyōdan.

The 30th issue of *Shisō geppō* (1936) also contained an article called "Investigations Regarding the Outbreak of Quasi-Religions" that outlined the reasons why quasi-religious organizations had emerged. It cited four factors: (1) lack of adequate medical care; (2) social anxiety; (3) impotence of the established religions; and (4) lack of scientific knowledge. The first two items were particularly revealing of the epoch. "Lack of adequate medical care" according to the article highlighted the fact that the cost of proper medical treatment was prohibitively high for many during this period. "Social anxiety," meanwhile, suggested how the mature development of capitalism had destabilized society psychologically; the working masses were experiencing a sense of devastating oppression in their lives, finding themselves overwhelmed by anxiety and apprehension and afflicted with the sensation that realistic solutions had reached a dead-end. The survey identified 26 groups as falling in the category of quasi-religions.

The Criminal Affairs Bureau in September 1932 also began publishing "Special Issues on Materials Relating to Thought Research." Subsequent issues specifically relating to the new religions included "Research on the Hitonomichi Incident" (No. 54 [1939]), and "Recent Quasi-Religious Movements," (No. 96 [1941]). The latter article briefly describes the concept of the quasi-religions, offering what can be considered the Ministry of Justice's working definition thereof: "The so-called 'quasi-religions' generally proclaim the simplistic and vulgar doctrine of 'immediate miraculous benefits' (genze riyaku), but through the use of unsophisticated and extremely clever preaching techniques, they have penetrated the unstable and insecure masses of society and are liable to interfere with the peace and stability of the nation." The article then goes on to provide a handful of examples. The discussion clearly shows that the government perceived the quasi-religions to be unsafe. Scholars have ennumerated various reasons for this; topping the list is the suggestion that their teachings contained potentially

revolutionary implications for political thought, following by disrespect to the emperor, denial of the system of private property, and other inflammatory thought. The Criminal Affairs Bureau report also noted the dangerous pacifism supported by the Watchtower Society (Tōdaisha), which formed the Japanese branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses at that time. A small group in Osaka led by one Kojima Naka called Daishizen Tenchi no Ōkami was also singled out for its ideas that were liable to interfere with orthodox medical treatment.

The theories of religious historian Furuno Kiyoto were utilized in the articles to provide some analysis of the class structure supporting the quasi-religions. Based on a survey of religion undertaken in Tokyo's Honjo Ward, Furuno suggested that the quasi-religions were supported by people in medium and small industries more sensitive to the threats of economic downturns and social anxiety. Salaried company employees and certain elements of the intellectual classes also accounted for some of their followers. On the other hand, Furuno said, these religions drew few supporters from the very bottom rungs of society—those totally on the skids who had become resigned to their fate. This finding is in agreement with the view generally accepted among sociologists of religion that it is not those of the very lowest economic classes who tend to support new religious movements. The person or persons compiling these materials, however— whether deliberately or because of a misreading of Furuno's argument—conclude with the following statement: "It is precisely the people of this class, most unable to adjust to the changing age and unwilling to forget their previous lives, and moreover most lacking in ambition and unable to submit, who form the hotbed for the quasi-religions." The government authors thus conflated certain negative characteristics that Furuno attributed to those classes that supported the quasi-religions with other negative characteristics assigned to the very lowest social strata—a sector Furuno said were not supporters—to produce the picture of a social sector in such foment that it constituted a "hotbed" for the quasi-religions.

Such perceptions are why the Home and Justice ministries exhibited strong mistrust of the new religions for more than a quarter century. The charges leveled against them were for such serious offenses as violation of the public safety law and lèse majesté, though in point of fact even groups with virtually no social influence were also targeted. Why did they have to be subjected to such controls? The state's basic reasoning seems to have been that these movements were akin to strains of virus, and the only way to prevent a viral pathogen from propagating was to wipe it out. It might be noted that within the 1936 volume of Shukyō kōron, Police Bureau Public Safety

Section official Koga Tsuyoshi states as a personal opinion that "the current religious world has been infected with the pathogens of superstition and deviant religion, and is already in serious condition." He goes on to note metaphorically that it is unfortunate that some people avoid submitting to the police's "diagnostic examination," refusing to take the required "medicine" and in fear of bit of pain shunning the necessary "surgery." Ōmoto is foremost on Koga's mind here, but his way of thinking clearly reflects a way of conceptualizing the issues that has been informed by medical pathology.

6. Abnormal Psychology

The practice of analyzing religious movements as pathological phenomena began to see extensive application in the Taishō period. New movements continued to be painted broadly as "immoral and deviant religions," but led by psychologists such as Nakamura Kokyō and Morita Masatake more commentators also began insisting on their ostensibly pathological features. Nakamura and Morita's suggestion to use this approach was apparently based on an interpretation of so-called fox-possessions as a form of emotional illness, a line of research dating back to the late Meiji period. Indeed, Morita himself was experienced at conducting direct surveys of dog-spirit possessions in his home area of Kōchi Prefecture.

Nakamura Kokyō (1881-1952) was born in Nara Prefecture and graduated from the Faculty of Literature at Tokyo Imperial University. Interested in psychiatry, he then studied at Tokyo Medical College and in 1929 went on to establish the Nakamura Kokyō Clinic in Chiba Prefecture. His interest had also already led him in 1916 to launch both the Japan Association of Psychiatry and the journal Abnormal Psychology (*Hentai shinri*) (published until 1926). One of his goals was to eradicate superstitions and "deviant religions" (*jakyō*), which in his view included the new religions. The essays published in Abnormal Psychology were later compiled in several books. While Nakamura considered the whole gamut of new religious groups to be "deviant religion" (*jakyō*), it was the two Ōmoto incidents which strongly moved him to compile the criticisms he originally published in Abnormal Psychology into monograph form. He published his first two books in the wake of the first Ōmoto incident: The Anatomy of Ōmotokyō (*Ōmotokyō no kaibō*) in 1920, followed by in 1922 by Superstitions and Deviant Religions (*Meishin to jakyō*), in which he attacked Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō alongside Ōmoto. He published two more books following the second Ōmoto incident: a 1936 expansion on the aforementioned 1922 book titled Falling into Superstition (*Meishin ni ochiiru made*) that added Hitonomichi and Seichō no Ie to the roster; and

his 1937 monograph, The Anatomy of Tenrikyō (*Tenrikyō no kaibō*).

Nakamura displays throughout his works a deep aversion to the new religious movements. For example, the preface to Anatomy of Ōmotokyō states, "Whenever I think about Ōmotokyō I can't help wanting to tell how perfectly dreadful superstitions can be." His publications likely appeared in clusters as they did owing to a perception that the two Ōmoto incidents constituted favorable opportunities to develop his criticisms of the new movements. Nakamura used the expression *giji shūkyō* ("bogus religions") to describe the new religions, which together with *ruiji shūkyō* ("quasi-religion") was frequently used at the time for these movements. While the latter term tended to be used in more official contexts, both terms in fact appear to have been used as virtually synonymous. Each suggests a generally negative image of their object, casting the movements as lacking in religiosity and demonstrating the characteristics of "immoral and deviant religions." Nakamura addressed the matter of what social factors lay behind the ability of these groups to attract followers only superficially, confining himself to the observation that the working classes felt realistic solutions to their problems had reached a dead-end and were seeking some kind of spiritual comfort. This formulation is commonly employed even now in analyses of the present-day so-called "religion boom."

Nakamura aimed his criticisms at both the leaders and followers of these new movements. In Falling into Superstition, he posited that the founders were abnormal and described those abnormailities in terms of mental illness and quackery. Nakamura said of Konkōkyō's Konkō Daijin that, "viewed positively, he appears to have been a devout believer in the kami, but from my perspective he is merely at one point on the line that runs from delusion and superstition." And while Nakamura later gives favorable marks to Konkō Daijin for teaching that one need not worry about divining lucky and unlucky days and directions, he criticizes the founder for being unable to escape from the superstition of divine possession. Tenrikyō's Nakayama Miki is estimated even more harshly, with her charitable behavior described as compulsive-generosity syndrome, her refusal to dismiss a violent servant as masochism, and her willingness to sacrifice her own children's lives as a pathological emotionalism frequently displayed in patients suffering from hysteria. Her touted experience of divine possession is explained as the result of her being a prisoner to delusions of possesion that led to personality change, while her teaching was said to manifest characteristics of allophasis and dementia praecox, or a related condition appearing in patients suffering from paranoia or delusion. Nakamura likewise diagnoses Ōmotokyō's Deguchi Nao unequivocally as a victim of

mental illness, with her revelatory experiences explained as delusions of possession. He dismisses the more than 200,000 pages making up her voluminous "tip of the pen" (*fudesaki*) writings as a symptom of graphorrhea, and the entire Deguchi family is pronounced as suffering from a hereditary predisposition to degenerate insanity.

Turning his attention to successive other leaders, Nakamura continues his denouncements by condemning Ōmotokyō's Deguchi Onisaburō, Hitonomichi's Miki Tokuharu, and Seichō no Ie's Taniguchi Masaharu as con artists and frauds. Onisaburō is described as a manipulator who defrauded the world by forging divine revelations and fabricating prophecies. Miki is said to be a swindler guilty of great disrespect to the emperor; his ability to attract large numbers of followers is merely an indication of the vulgar and moronic state of modern people's religious consciousness. Finally, Taniguchi is similarly scorned as a "swindling fraud," with Nakamura pointing to a newspaper interview in which Taniguchi allegedly responded to a question about whether someone could really be cured of illness by reading his writings by saying, "That was merely a pretext to help sell my book."

Nakamura's criticisms of these movements' followers can be broadly grouped into two categories: those in which he characterizes their negative attributes as a group, and those in which he relates specific mocking anecdotes based on rumors. His general criticisms tend to follow a certain pattern; here is a typical such passage:

> A study into the true character of the devout believers of religions like Tenrikyō and Ōmotokyō shows that before they joined most were either disposed to severe mental retardation; were natural-born eccentrics; were alcoholics or morphine addicts; or were suffering from hysteria. Even in the case of those believers who were highly educated, one finds that the education involved tended to be excessively biased toward materialistic subjects. Their resulting insufficient familiarity with mental sciences such as philosophy, religious studies, psychology, and psychopathology has made them susceptible to superstitions.

In short, an analysis of believers as a group showed them as generally possessing pathological personality traits. The fact that members of the educated elite had also become believers was explained away as their having been lured in owing to inadequate study of the mental sciences. In his concluding description of Ōmotokyō believers based on his own fieldwork, Nakamura notes that those Ōmotokyō believers who have been called members of the elite tend to be military men, businessmen, independent

physicians, elementary teachers, judicial officers and lawyers—not a single philosopher or psychologist among them. Nakamura's conclusion that businessmen and members of the military are susceptible to superstition because they lack sufficient education in the mental sciences is crude, but it is precisely that level of crude theorizing that tends to be socially influential.

As to Nakamura's use of mocking anecdotes, the way he handles the following tale involving a Tenrikyō believer is typical. Nakamura relates that there was a follower of that group who claimed that it would not matter even if he were to lose all his possessions; this man claimed that he could merely place a pan on the fire and God would naturally place rice in the pan for him. The believer debated this way with his parents, who were opposed to Tenrikyō, and the parents decided to spy on the son quietly to see what would transpire. When the son thought he was alone, he quietly scooped rice hidden inside his sleeve and placed it into the pot. Nakamura concludes his account by saying that "this believer was reduced to eating greens mixed with rice bran or wheat husks as the upshot of having squandered his belongings." However, the anecdote's provenance is not discussed, and indeed such tales themselves are no more than derisive rumors and hearsay.

7. Superstition and Paranoia

Another psychiatrist who authored a series of articles about the new religions in Abnormal Psychology was Morita Masatake (1874-1938). Well-known as the originator of the "Morita therapy" for the treatment of neuroses, Morita is also known for proposing the term *kitōsei seishinbyō* ("occultistic mental illness") for emotional disorders stemming from superstitions, magic practices, and religious rituals. Morita studied under Kure Shūzō at the Tokyo Imperial University Medical School and—according to his "A Record of My Family" (*Waga ie no kiroku*)—was himself diagnosed as having suffered a nervous breakdown in his mid-twenties. When Morita first met Nakamura is uncertain, but he states in "A Record of My Family" that he became a trustee of the latter's Japan Association of Psychiatry on June 16, 1917. That work also relates that in September of that year he and Nakamura witnessed Mita Kōichi's experiments in "psychic photography" (*nensha*).

From 1917 to 1919, Morita published a series of articles in Abnormal Psychology that in 1927 were compiled in the book Superstition and Paranoia (*Meishin to mōsō*). Focused primarily on Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō, the work provides a concise expression of Morita's views on religious founders. His perspective is similar to that of Nakamura.

Nakayama Miki he describes as suffering from paranoia, which he defined as a condition in which a personality already suffering from a genetic mental debility he defined as an "emotional immodithymic tendency" has, as the result of some chance occurrence, also gone on to form an even stronger emotional obsession. The afflicted would uncritically behave according to her beliefs and be unable to escape from that obsession for the rest of her life. Admittedly, this definition does provide a superficially convenient means of describing the process whereby a religious founder comes into being as the result of an experience of divine possession. Turning to Konkō Daijin, Morita describes him as "an uneducated farm boy, devout from childhood toward the kami and buddhas, honest and diligent, yet deeply superstitious." His superstitious belief in divine miracles was confirmed by the fact that he came down with a throat lesion at the unlucky age of 42 (the age of 42 is traditionally considered unlucky for men, since the two numbers can be read aloud singly as shi-ni—a homophone for the word "die"). The "divine revelation"—which Morita interprets as autosuggestion—that followed as he healed led him to believe he was united with the deity Konjin and then to devote the rest of his life to spreading the way of the kami throughout the world. In short, Morita dismissed him as a victim of superstition.

While Morita appears to have made passing study of the biographies of his subjects, it is also clear that his premise from the outset was to explain these individuals away as examples of paranoia. He structured his article in such a way that made it easy to associate the founders of these groups with mental illness by presenting a series of case studies about behaviors that clearly belong to that category. For example, he relates the story of one of his patients, a man who founded a religion called Shakakyō. Around 1906 when he was 66 years old, the man suddenly changed his diet to three meals of buckwheat mash per day and eschewed all other foods except for beans and potatoes. He then abandoned his family and relatives to travel around the country and work as a faith healer. At some point in this process, he decided to apply to the police for a license to perform divinations using two regular tetrahedral pyramids he made from pasted pieces of paper and on the surfaces of which he wrote the numbers from one to eight. For this he was sent to a mental hospital. The man had given his doctrine the name of "Shakakyō" and believed it was his mission to spread it to the world. He also recited several indecipherable incantations such as "Yonone, shito no michi," and "Shakakyō, nayashi yoshi tsukuri ukonko."

It should be clear to anyone what kind of effect Morita produced by having presented several such case studies before going on to describe Nakayama Miki's

experience of divine possession and the content of her poetry (which she called *mikagurauta*). Morita put the founders of Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō in the same category as the ostensibly paranoid, self-styled founder of Shakakyō, and states bluntly that any difference that might exist among them is merely a slight one of degree. Morita and Nakamura from the outset shared the same solid determination to demonstrate a strong affinity between the newly arisen religious movements and mental illness. Their descriptions would be used by the legal authorities as theoretical ammunition in their battle to control the so-called quasi-religions. Nakamura had a particularly deep aversion to Ōmoto, and it appears by the time the first Ōmoto incident occurred he was already strongly recommending that the sect be prosecuted. In fact, rather than saying that his theories were applied to the oppression of Ōmoto, it would be more accurate to say that he offered the authorities a theoretical basis for oppressive acts already undertaken. The entry of psychiatrists to the public debate in this way lent scientific trappings to the criticisms of new religions. The immoral and deviant religions label on its own contained no decisive rationale for why they should be suppressed, but the introduction of a psychiatric standard clarified the matter. Using the scalpel of psychiatric theory to carve into the founders and followers of new religions is a technique that continues to be actively applied even today though in the postwar period it has been almost entirely one segment of the mass media rather than the state that has employed such psychiatric explanations. And if social values are also reflected to some extent in psychiatry and the values of those who subscribe to its theories, then psychiatry's censorious attitude toward new religions is also in part an implicit concern for society as well.

8. Journalistic Reactions

The Japanese state used the first Ōmoto incident in February 1921 as an excuse to launch early in the Shōwa period a wave of religious suppression. This in turn had a strong impact on the way newspapers and magazines evaulated new religious movements. That said, media reaction to the first incident itself was remarkably low-key. Public debate over new religions does not appear to have been stirred up until the second incident.

Owing to a state-imposed media blackout, the first accounts of the initial Ōmoto incident did not appear in newspapers until three months after the fact. On May 11, the Kyoto District Court issued its written decision for the preliminary hearing on the case. The next day, that fact was reported across the media along with the first descriptions of

the train of events that led up to the court decision. The *Tokyo asahi shinbun* printed an editorial May 13 that discussed the details of the court's decision while criticizing the authorities for failing to take action earlier given the "dangerous thought" harbored by a group like Ōmotokyō. The June issue of *Chūō kōron* magazine similarly criticized the authorities for allowing such a movement to go unprosecuted, saying that responsibility for the eight *lèse majesté* incidents that occurred over the preceding two-year period lay with the Home Ministry and the Public Prosecutor General. An editorial printed May 15 in the *Tokyo nichi-nichi shinbun*, however, recommended that the case be viewed with greater dispassion. It suggested that the reason why Ōmotokyō was popular was not the power of Deguchi Nao's *Ofudesaki* or of the group's *chinkon kishin* ritual, nor because its believers were merely foolish, but rather because people simply happened upon Ōmotokyō in their efforts to fill "the void of their forlorn hearts."

One gets the impression that the debate over the "quasi-religious movements" had not been a particularly spirited one until around the start of the Shōwa period in the mid-1920s when it began to gather steam. The July 1931 issue of *Bungei shunjū* ran an article claiming that the Education and Home ministries were baffled over how to respond to the various corrupt sects and deviant religions that had begun to flourish wildly under the cover of freedom of belief. The article stated,

> The first page [in the story] of the corrupt religions of recent years starts with Ōmotokyō of Ayabe in Tanba. It leads next to the lèse majesté incident involving Ōnishi Aijirō's Tenri Kenkyūkai, and then on in more recent times to such cases as that involving the group Myōdōkai headed by the doctor of medicine Kishi Kazuta, the problems with the sacred objects worshiped at the headquarters of Amatsukyō, and the Jindō [Hitonomichi] Kyōdan incident. Such cases are thoroughly revealing when it comes to the true nature of the sham religions.

In the months and years that followed, the magazine and competing monthlies extended their criticisms to other movements under the jurisdiction of the two ministries. Furthermore, groups that claimed larger memberships also became targets. For example, Seikōkyō—an affiliate of the officially recognized group Shinrikyō that for all practical purposes was nonetheless treated as a quasi-religion—was singled out in the September 1934 issue of the magazine *Hanashi* for its alleged devotion to material profit.

Half a year before the second Ōmoto incident, *Bungei shunjū* ran in its June 1935

issue a "roundtable critique of the newly arisen religions." Nine people participated in the discussion, including Asano Wasaburō—who had already separated from Ōmotokyō—and the religious folklorist Uno Enkū. The names of the others were not given, but based on the content of the discussion it appears the balance included people connected to Hitonomichi Kyōdan and the Ministry of Education. As a result, the debate reflected a broad variety of perspectives. The roundtable took up a number of contemporary issues relating to the new religions, including the practice of *ofurikae* (the temporary transference of a believer's illness to the founder) in Hitonomichi and the internal conflicts being experienced by Konkōkyō. The discussion was not particularly biased toward negative criticism of the religions. Asano, for example, spoke about "astral bodies," experiments using spiritualist media, and numerous findings from spiritualist research. He also said with regards to the subject of religious persecution, "There's no sense in being alive if you have to make yourself act in certain ways so that you're not persecuted," to which another participant responded, "It's probably true to say that being subjected to a bit of repression helps strengthen one's faith."

In December 1936—just one year after the second Ōmoto incident—the magazine *Uchū* ["Cosmos"] included a section entitled "A Time for Religion to Reflect," [*Shūkyō hansei jidai*]. The section collected articles from five newspapers regarding the prosecution of quasi-religions, and while the articles included were basically in agreement with the goals of state religious control the agreement was not always unequivocal. The *Yomiuri shinbun* noted that while the persecution of Ōmotokyō was a success, it was irresponsible for the authorities to have allowed it to go unnoticed for so long. Meanwhile, the *Kokumin shinbun* asserted that problems existed not only in the quasi-religions but in the established ones as well, and suggested that religious leaders become more zealous in dealing with them. For its part, the *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō* looked forward to even more aggressive prosecution while simultaneously criticizing the contemporary state of Japanese education. It also suggested that one reason for the association of large numbers of educated elites with bogus religions was the fact that society was not providing educated persons with proper employment. The *Jiji shinpō* discussed the arrest of Hitonomichi Kyōdan's founder, saying in metaphorical terms, "The treatment was the kind of drastic one in which the doctor first cuts open the patient in order to confirm the diagnosis." The paper went on to suggest that if the judicial and police authorities attempted to win popular acclaim by engaging in a casual competition to rout deviant religions, their actions might have the reverse effect of strengthening the sects involved. Finally, the *Hōchi shinbun* argued that "the quasi-religions are

like weeds in new ground—you simply can't eradicate them all, no matter how often you pull them up." Legal prosecution alone would not be effective, the paper asserted, suggesting that faults in the system of education be mended.

In sum, a trend emerged among researchers during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods whereby they attempted to examine new religions in terms of the social role they played. Under the banner of "research in sectarian Shinto," scholars like Nakayama Yoshikazu and Tsurufuji Ikuta spoke in particular of the religious creativity of groups like Kurozumikyō, Tenrikyō, and Konkōkyō. But by and large, the popular media continued to speak of the new religions as "immoral and deviant" and more specifically treat them as pathological phenomena.

CHAPTER SIX

Behind the Scenes of Postwar Transformation

1. "Mushrooms after a Rain"

"Garden of the gods." "Rush-hour of the gods." "Mushrooms after a rain." All of these expressions have been used to describe postwar trends in the new religions in an attempt to convey the rapid appearance of a plethora of newly arisen groups amid the rapid social change that accompanied Japan's disastrous loss of World War II. There in fact may have been a general social perception that new, unfamiliar religions were indeed arising one after the other just as Japanese society found itself mired in the midst of postwar chaos. At the same time, however, it might be more accurate to say that this impression became fixed in the popular imagination precisely because it agreed with the public's preexisting notion of the nature of new religions.

In fact, however, the number of entirely new religions that appeared in the postwar period was relatively low. No matter how much social chaos one attributes to the immediate postwar period, it is not so simple a matter to rely on social disruption alone to organize a new religion. In fact, even those groups often considered prototypical post-war new religions like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō and Jiu actually originated earlier during the war years. Some people likewise think of religions like PL Kyōdan (Church of Perfect Liberty) and Sekai Kyūseikyō as groups that appeared only after the defeat, but these likewise have ancestors in the prewar period. PL Kyōdan is a reorganization of the prewar group Hitonomichi, while Sekai Kyūseikyō emerged from the earlier Dai-Nihon Kannonkai (later called Kenkō Kyōkai). The common assumption that so many new religions appeared after the war has been somewhat abetted due to this very fact—namely, that a considerable number of earlier groups merely changed their names, either in whole, or in part, after the war.

The portrayal of the immediate postwar period as a "religious rush hour" or religion boom-time—despite the fact that relatively few completely new groups actually appeared then—is also related to another factor, namely, the large number of groups which for the first time declared themselves as independent religions following the war. As I pointed out earlier, the increase in independent groups is a result of the evolution in the legal environment that accompanied the change from the earlier Religious Organizations Law to the new Religious Corporations Ordinance (1946) and then the

Religious Corporations Law (1951).

Based on the view of the new religions as new religious systems, it is important to study how postwar changes in the legal and social environments influenced the organizational forms and activities of the new religions. Further, while these years are frequently summed up in the expression "postwar," the social changes that characterize the period actually consist of two kinds: those which occurred as a direct result of the end of the war, and those which represented ongoing changes with continuity extending from the prewar period. It is important to distinguish these categories when considering issues like the impact of society or the influence of the age on the generation of new religions.

It is true that the social confusion of the immediate postwar period encouraged the appearance of certain kinds of opportunistic sects. Most such sects were established for the purpose of tax evasion. In addition to the earlier principle of exempting officially recognized religious groups from taxation, the new postwar Religious Corporations Ordinance provided simplified procedures for the establishment of corporations; under these conditions, it is not strange that some persons established religious corporations for the sole purpose of avoiding taxation. One should bear in mind that this situation is not a characteristic specific to the immediate postwar period alone, since even today some people continue to think that incorporating themselves as a religious group is the ideal way to evade or reduce their tax obligation.

The most notorious of the groups which incorporated for the such tax evasion purposes during this period was Kōdōchikyō. Beginning in 1947, its leader, Kifune Seizen (Jikitarō) used the motto "all life is religion" to encourage a wide variety of businesses, including retail stores, travelers' inns, and beauty parlors, to become corporate members of its religious organization, telling them that they could avoid all income taxes by so doing. While a considerable number of people joined the movement, it was criticized by the press, and some of its churches were prosecuted for tax evasion, leading to its early demise. This group is frequently held up as a prototypical example of misuse of the Religious Corporations Ordinance.

A number of other cases have likewise been pointed out as examples of attempts to use the Religious Corporations Ordinance to evade taxes. But overall, relatively few movements made it their sole purpose to slip through loopholes in the law in this way, and those that did disappeared in short order. Accordingly, this phenomenon cannot be considered a typical example of a religious response to the shock caused by Japan's loss in war. Rather, it should be considered an episodic event that occurred in the context of

a new, yet unstable legal environment.

What kind of reactions, then, did the new religions display in response to the cultural shock accompanying Japan's loss of the war, and subsequent postwar social change? Some movements seem to have been strongly geared toward overcoming the shock of defeat, while others were sensitive to the directions of social change, and carefully selected the most appropriate approaches to proselytization. In other cases, it was an excessive reliance placed on prewar values by some groups that prevented them from adapting to postwar conditions and thus led to their decline. A number of groups that had emphasized imperial-nation ideology or Confucian ethics met this fate.

Of those movements that continued their activity from the prewar period, some flourished in the changing atmosphere, others were unable to buck the head winds of change, and still others advanced in new directions upon the foundation of postwar conditions. In light of such varied responses, we must ask what kind of issues each of these cases represented from the perspective of the new religions understood as new religious systems.

2. "Mobster's Moll on the Divine Stage"

The new religions of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō—the "Dancing Religion"—and Jiu are frequently raised as examples of groups with origins closely related to the shock of Japan's wartime defeat. They certainly do present the strong impression of movements symbolizing the transition from prewar to postwar periods. Both possess aspects that cannot be entirely reconciled with so-called social-reform movements, and yet they also displayed a clear orientation toward reformation. Above all else, they exhibited the clear sense that a new age had begun.

The origins of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō can be pegged to the morning of January 1, 1945, when founder Kitamura Sayo, it is said, began singing, "Next year is Year One, the beginning of the age of the kami." Words also began slipping from her mouth to the effect that it didn't matter whether Japan occupied Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin, or Taiwan—the home islands were enough. Kitamura had continuous religious experiences throughout this period, in which she would frequently converse with the kami that had taken up residence in her "belly" (*hara*). When such words slipped from her mouth in unconscious song, she would sometimes ask the deity in her belly about their meaning, saying, "If that's so, doesn't it mean Japan will lose the war?" and the deity would reply, "Oh, no, you certainly won't lose, because you will become the leader of the world." She interpreted such messages to mean that, "Just as the circulars of

neighborhood associations [*chōnaikai*] go around from house to house, now so, too, has the responsibility for building world peace and the divine land come around to Japan."

Kitamura also experienced self-awareness as a religious leader during these months when the shadows of Japan's impending defeat were growing longer. She began giving sermons at her home in Tabuse in Yamaguchi Prefecture on July 22, 1945; those first sermons had motifs suggesting the end of the war. From June of that year, she suffered recurrent bouts of diarrhea, which she described as passing through the purifying stages of "the belly of human-feces," "the belly of the human-divine infant," and "the belly of the human-divine maiden." Following this, Kitamura finally claimed that she had been divinely elected as the "sole daughter of the absolute god of the universe." This occurred on the night of August 11, the very day on which Japan accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.

Kitamura's sermons immediately following the war demonstrate an attempt to explain the significance of Japan's defeat. She described Japan's loss by saying that "Japan didn't lose the war. That was just the passing of a quarrel between maggots. We've got to fight the real war from now on. The real war is about to begin. Hurry up and return to the state of real human beings. If only you become real human beings, you will win the war." "Pray, pray! Pray for all you're worth. The coming battle will be won with prayer!" Dismissing the recent loss of three-million lives as a "quarrel between maggots," emphasizing the importance of the coming fight to build the land of god, and relying solely on prayer as the weapon in that fight—these were undoubtedly potent sermons in the context of Japan's immediate postwar conditions.

Kitamura's efforts to give a religious interpretation to Japan's defeat began with a bold stroke. Here is how she explained the defeat of the "eternal divine land": "The character for 'land' (shū 州) in the expression 'eternal divine land' (*shinshū fumetsu no kuni* 神州不滅の国) should instead be written using the *shū* of the character *taishū* 大衆 ('the people'). Only the people of god are eternal. The real state of Japan today is one that has sunk from the world of the 'eternal people of god' to the 'world of maggot beggars.'" Kitamura thus used the traditional concept of the "eternal land of the gods" to proclaim the "eternal people of god." Speaking of the *kamikaze*—the legendary divine wind that had rescued Japan from Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century—she went on to describe General Douglas MacArthur as a minister of the gods, using a pun on his name to call him a divine wind that had flown like "pine bark" [literally matsukawa, a play on the Japanese pronunciation of MacArthur's name] from America to Japan. It was just because this divine wind had blown that the mustachioed lords,

the policemen, the dastardly Diet members, and traitorous ministers had all been put into jail, she claimed. Crisscrossing the ambiguous line between the sheer pleasure of punning talk and ruthless social criticism, Kitamura devoted herself to her mission as "a mobster's moll on the divine stage."

This self-description is itself instructive. The expression "divine stage" (lit., *kami shibai* 神芝居) is of course a pun on the *kami shibai* 紙芝居 —a paper-puppet play"—which is a form of children's entertainment, while the expression "mobster's moll" (*onna yakuza*) is a pun using the word for woman combined with the expression yakuza (役 座), which can be taken to mean either a gangster or the "role" taken by an actor. Overall, the epithet is a concise expression of this drama in which Kitamura, a poor "farmer's wife with no more than an elementary education" was playing the sacred role of a medium manipulated by god. This kind of punning was also seen in her use of common Japanese terms like *gasshō* (praying hands), *kekkon* (marriage), and *shinkō* (faith), and extended to the religious interpretation of current events and even to religious terminology itself.

Over March and April 1946, Kitamura's group made their first attempts at proselytizing in Tokyo. It was said that her first Tokyo sermon was delivered on the platform of Takadanobaba Station, and Kitamura used the entirety of her brief stay in Tokyo to engage in energetic mission activities, going so far as to visit the headquarters of the new religion Seichō no Ie in order to debate with the group's founder Taniguchi Masaharu. On the other hand, Kitamura was accorded rough treatment when she attempted to preach to a pioneering group of settlers in the Chiba town of Yotsukaidō. Military veterans among the audience became enraged at her sermonizing critique of the war, and some even attempted to physically attack Kitamura's group. It was characteristic of Kitamura to use her sermons to inflame listeners with direct attacks that went to the heart of current issues; while the technique on occasion aroused negative sentiments, many listeners were converted on the spot.

Kitamura's activities spread quickly, and finally came to be recognized by the media. On the occasion of her third visit to Tokyo in 1948, newsreel cameramen followed her entourage everywhere, preserving on film the image of her followers' "dance of non-self" and Kitamura's unconventional preaching techniques. Kitamura was aware of the effect of such images, and was relatively liberal in granting requests for permission to film.

In 1952, Kitamura made a tour to Hawaii, and there launched her first attempts at international mission work. During this period, a keyword of her teaching was the

admonition to "become real human beings!" (*maningen ni nare*). The admonition represented her criticism of the mental state of those who had brought about the earlier war, even as it simultaneously served to soften the psychological shock of defeat by motivating people to move forward toward a new and different goal. Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō continues today to use a calendar in which 1946 is reckoned as "Year One," with the result that 2000 would be counted as "year fifty-five." With a calendar system that serves as a constant reminder of how many years have passed since the end of the war, it is hard to imagine a group giving any clearer religious expression to the significance of Japan's wartime defeat.

3. Proxy for the Emperor

Compared to Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, the movement known as Jiu had a life as ephemeral as the foam, and it quickly disappeared from the stage of religious history. Although the movement lasted only briefly, it was given a distinctive trajectory by the ability of its founder Jikōson to attract the loyalty of grand champion (*yokozuna*) sumo wrestler Futabayama and, for a period, the fervent devotion of Japanese chess master Go Seigen and his wife. The popular press of the day focused on the apparent contradiction represented by Jikōson's eccentric behavior and her popularity among such well-known personalities. The newspaper reports published about Jiu from 1947 to 1948 that are collected in Watanabe Baiyū's 1950 book *Gendai Nihon no shūkyō* ("Religion in modern Japan") evidence no sympathetic introduction to the religion. The articles employ expressions like "the bizarre religion of Jiu" or "Jikōson is insane," and focus on how the founder Jikōson had been investigated for fraud. If one reconsiders the fundamental character of the movement, however, it is certain that its appearance is related to the psychological and spiritual distress which many Japanese suffered in the wake of Japan's defeat. Some researchers have also suggested that both Jiu and Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō should be interpreted as belonging to the lineage of nativistic world-rectification movements stemming from the prewar Ōmoto.

While Jikōson's movement first came to the attention of the popular media at the end of 1946 in an incident called the "palace removal" (*sengū*) to Kanazawa, she had in fact created a stir earlier that year through another incident that came to be known as "taking the fight to MacArthur." That May, Nakahara Kazuko (wife of Go Seigen) and her daughter twice entered the U.S. Embassy and the general headquarters (GHQ) for the Supreme Commader of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in attempts to meet General MacArthur directly and present him with prophetic revelations composed by Jikōson.

This earlier affair has been pointed to as one factor leading to later police surveillance of Jiu. Subsequently, the recently retired sumo grand champion Futabayama visited the headquarters of Jiu. When Jikōson moved her headquarters ("removed the palace") to Kanazawa that December, Futabayama joined her there. This confluence of events, combined with the group's calls to form a "Jiu Cabinet," her insistence that the Japanese era name be changed from Shōwa to Reiju ("spirit-longevity"), and her prophecies of natural disasters, were together fully sufficient to draw the interest not only of the citizens of the city of Kanazawa but of the entire nation. Fearful of the potential social turmoil that this movement might whip up, the police launched an investigation of the group. They took Jikōson and other leaders into custody in January 1947, an event memorably marked by Futabayama's fight with police officers in an attempt to resist arrest. Jikōson herself was subjected to psychiatric evaluation by the psychiatrist Akimoto Haruo and diagnosed as suffering from delusional dementia.

The arrests and investigation dealt a serious blow to the burgeoning religion. The other members of the group taken into custody were released after a brief time, but in the midst of the investigation, Futabayama took the advice of an *Asahi shinbun* reporter to the effect that his involvement with the group would be detrimental, and he quickly distanced himself from Jiu. The defection represented a great loss to the movement. Go Seigen and his wife Nakahara Kazuko followed suit, leaving the group the next year (1948). Meanwhile, following the incident Jiu continued to be the subject of derisive criticism in the media. Jikōson and her entourage left Kanazawa and traveled to the shores of Lake Yamanaka, then to Hachinohe in Aomori, to Tokyo and Hakone, looking for a receptive place to stay. With each move, the group claimed it was making a "palace removal," but it was in fact doing little more than attempting an escape. The group continued in its peripatetic way until settling down in Yokohama in 1950, by which time the media had lost much of its interest.

More than twenty years following the incident, one of the group's leaders, Katsuki Tokujirō, claimed that Futabayama had continued to pine for Jikōson even after leaving Jiu. The group had attempted contacting him in various ways, but had been frustrated each time, he claimed. Katsuki also averred that Go Seigen and his wife had been evil spirits unavoidably drawn to the group, and it had been the work of these same evil spirits that prompted the group to issue prophecies of natural disasters. From Katsuki's perspective, the entire Kanazawa incident had been the work of the devil.

In sum, Jikōson's movement attracted public attention for a scant two or three years of the immediate postwar period. While not a well-known fact, Jikōson herself

continued to lead it until her death in 1984, and a handful of followers are left even today. Even though her movement was short lived, it has remarkably interesting things to tell us about the times in which it arose. Furthermore, it shares many characteristics in common with Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō. One point of interest has to do with the leadership of the group. The first article of Japan's Imperial House Act (*Kōshitsu tenpan*) dictates the way in which imperial succession is to occur, stating that "a male of the male line shall succeed to the imperial dignity." At a time when the previously divine Shōwa emperor (Emperor Hirohito) had only recently proclaimed his humanity, Jiu emerged as a religious group led by a woman who claimed to be a proxy for the emperor. Born Ōzawa Naka, Jikōson later took her husband's surname Nagaoka and after founding her religion adopted the personal name Nagako. The selection of the name Nagako—which was also the name of Emperor Hirohito's consort (Empress Nagako)—indicates Jikōson's strong identification with the imperial house. Her choice helps one to color in the background to her subsequent claim that she was acting in place of the emperor, and suggests that her movement be understood in relationship to the influence of the prewar emperor system.

Like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, Jiu adopted its own private era names (*gengō*). The desire for the arrival of a new age implicit in the adoption of a new era name is not in itself such a radical idea. Even after the Meiji Restoration, some people continued to call for a "Taishō Restoration" (for the Taishō period, 1912-1926) and then a "Showa Restoration" (Shōwa period, 1926-1989). In short, the concept of changing the era name to one suggesting social renewal was possible precisely because a historical precedent already existed, according to which social renewal was anticipated with each change in era name.

Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō and Jiu were movements that appeared on the historical stage as concrete responses to Japan's wartime defeat. But they demonstrated considerable differences in their subsequent development as movements. The media took notice of Jiu more quickly, while Kitamura Sayo would sometimes be introduced in the press in reference to her counterpart in such terms as "the second Jikōson" or "a new Jikōson." Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, meanwhile, succeeded in establishing numerous regional centers and even had an overseas missions branch, while the sharply rising curve of Jiu's growth came to abrupt halt with the Kanazawa incident; after that event, its star fell rapidly, until faith in Jikōson came to be maintained by only a very few core believers. Even with these differences, however, the two religions share the characteristic of taking root in the hotbed of wartime social conditions and flourishing in the fields of postwar

social trauma.

4. A Change of Attire

Viewed overall, however, the shock of Japan's defeat in World War II did not drastically disrupt the religious systems represented by the new religions. On the contrary, the impact on specific individual movements appears rather to have been characterized more by what might be called "cosmetic" changes—incremental yet sensitive adjustments to the new social environment. Such a development would only seem to be natural if one views the new religions as new social systems characterized by their very ability to adapt easily even to drastic social change.

The fact that many groups changed their names in the postwar period can certainly be interpreted as a trend toward transformation. Some of those which adopted entirely new names include PL Kyōdan and Sekai Kyūseikyō, while others changed only parts of their names—for example, the earlier Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai became Sōka Gakkai, and the earlier Kōdōkai became Kōdō Kyōdan. Even so, however, the changing of a name alone is not particularly remarkable in the context of the new religions. Some groups changed their names numerous times. The group commonly known as "Ōmoto," for example, has gone through the following series of names: Kinmeikai, Kinmei Reigakkai, Jikirei Kyōkai, Ōmoto Kyōkai, Dai-Nihon Shūseikai, Taihonkyō, Kōdō Ōmoto, Ōmoto, Aizen'en, Ōmoto Aizen'en, and once again Ōmoto. The fact that a new religion changes its name may occasionally have momentous significance, but groups have also frequently changed their names for trivial reasons. Even if one recognizes that numerous groups changed their names in the immediate postwar period, such changes do not necessarily imply corresponding changes in substance.

One group that did experience a transformation that went beyond mere cosmetic change was PL Kyōdan. Its prewar predecessor Hitonomichi Kyōdan emulated the spirit of the Imperial Rescript on Education in emphasizing character-building morality, but the postwar PL Kyōdan transformed itself into a modern movement that placed emphasis first on art and new lifestyles. While this transformation may not have involved radical changes in content, it provides a paradigmatic example of how a group can respond to the new currents of an age by quickly modifying its format of expression. The person responsible for organizing the prewar Hitonomichi Kyōdan was Miki Tokuharu, but Miki died in 1938, one year after being apprehended for *lèse majesté*, and only shortly before the Ōsaka District Court issued its decision in his first trial hearing. Responsibility for rebuilding the group in the postwar period went to his eldest son

Tokuchika, who had been arrested on the same charge. Tokuchika, however, refused to accept the guilty verdict issued by the District Court in his case, and he petitioned the court of appeals. Again found guilty upon appeal, Tokuchika appealed to a higher court. In the end, his conviction was upheld by the Great Court of Cassation in 1944, thus confirming his sentence of three years imprisonment. Following Japan's defeat in war, however, the crime of *lèse majesté* was abolished, and Tokuchika walked free from Kosuge Prison in October 1945.

When first released, Tokuchika limited his activities to leading an intellectual movement while testing the new waters of the postwar government's religious policy. The name "Permanent Liberty Club" (PLC) was selected as the title of the new movement. This was changed shortly thereafter to "Perfect Liberty," a name that remained oriented toward the same key concept of "liberty" or "freedom." Achieving liberty may have been the goal of the movement, but it is not unreasonable to read in that name Tokuchika's personal joy at being released from prison. At the time of its establishment in 1946, the PLC issued a "PL Declaration" that began with the now-famous words, "life is art." The first of the "PL 21 Precepts" the group set down following year likewise began the same statement that "life is art." The same year, PL Kyōdan was established in Tosu City, Saga Prefecture; the headquarters would be moved a few years later to the city of Shimizu and then to its present site in the city of Tondabayashi.

One of the unusual features of PL Kyōdan was its attempt to shed the musty taint of "religion" and adopt a more modern orientation. For example, in 1949, while group headquarters were still located in the city of Shimizu, the movement took notice of the current popularity of social dancing, and established its "Church of Perfect Liberty Dance Regulations." These regulations represented the group's attempt to use social dance as a medium for inculcating the proper relations between men and women, and between social superiors and inferiors. Some of the detailed regulations stipulated, for example, that (1) participants must perform a ritual called *oyashikiri* before each dance; (2) before dancing, one must wash one's hands; and (3) clothing must always be clean, so as to not to attribute an impression of sloppiness to one's partner. PL's dancing activities were reported in the press with descriptions such as "a religion that dances before god," and "PL adopts dancing as central ritual." Within the group, however, the dances appear to have caused considerable consternation to older leaders, in particular, and some complained that the dances were like "a procession of the dead."

Activities continued to be pursued in new directions. In 1953, PL Kyōdan began

work on constructing a religious center in Tondabayashi. In memory of the first-generation founder, Miki Tokuharu, a fireworks display was held at the group's holy site. Tokuharu had said in his will that "I am shortening my life by thirty years in the cause of world peace. Since my death means that my teaching will be spread through the world, you should celebrate with fireworks displays after I die." This fireworks display is thus likewise understood within the group as a form of "art." In 1955, the group established its PL Gakuen School, later to become famous for the strong baseball teams it has regularly sent to the annual national high-school competition at Kōshien Stadium in Osaka. The group opened its Habikino Golf Course in 1957, and set up a church headquarters in Brazil the same year. While computers are no longer an unusual fixture in the religious context, PL had already begun using them to maintain its membership rolls in 1966. At that time, for a religious group to introduce computers seemed almost aberrant.

In sum, the PL Church was sensitive to the way in which social morals and customs were shifting with the times, and rather than simply reject those changes, it established its own goals within context of the new trends. PL's stance might be said to represent a redressing of traditional morality in new garb, and it would appear that postwar conditions were judged particularly apt for such a change of attire. Such superficial transformations tend to be easily noticed and make particularly tempting targets for amusing descriptions in the popular press. At the same time, placing excessive emphasis on such apparently superficial alterations may make it impossible to fully grasp the significance that postwar social changes have had for the new religions.

5. Behind the Scenes of Religious Change

While examples of relatively conspicuous transformations as displayed by PL Kyōdan may not be encountered so frequently, the situation is reversed when it comes to minor changes; one can point to any number of postwar religious groups as offering examples of such lesser scale modifications. But whether conspicuous transformation or cosmetic change, the most important issue to consider in the context of the state of evolution of the new religious systems in this period is the kinds of phenomena with which those changes were associated.

Since postwar Japanese society was buffeted by tumultuous sociocultural change, it is relatively easy to assume that new religious movements might appear and that previous movements might undergo a variety of transformations. Particularly in the context of the relationship between religious and social change, postwar Japanese

conditions would appear to represent the perfect opportunity to corroborate the theory that religion represents a "dependent variable" relative to society, in other words, that religious change occurs in response to changes in society. While this formula facilitates an explanation of the activities of religions like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō and Jiu, it also makes it likely that at least one aspect of the situation will be overlooked.

Namely, regardless of how one evaluates the degree of "shock" experienced by Japanese society as the result of wartime defeat, it must not be forgotten that the new religions were already displaying signs of new development. The transformations that the systems of the new religions underwent may appear to have been compelled as the result of postwar social change, but most in fact were not initially provoked by war or defeat. Recall first that numerous religious organizations applied for recognition when the Religious Organizations Law first came into effect in 1939 and that some of those later became postwar religious corporations. The fact that so many applications for recognition were made as soon as the Religious Organizations Law was promulgated means that those organizations already existed in fact. It is this situation—in which so many religious movements of various stripes were coming into being just at the time that control over religion was increasing in severity—that should be considered the true "rush hour of the gods."

Further, the sudden increase in religious corporations following the war must be evaluated against the same background. The Ministry of Education's "Religion Yearbook" (*Shūkyō nenpō*) published in 1950 lists the numbers of religious corporations currently in existence in 1949. Limited to those considered new religions, one finds that the great majority began their activities in the Taishō to early Shōwa periods; only slightly more than ten percent have origins in the postwar period. Further, the majority of the numerous new religious movements of the prewar period actually failed to become religious corporations in the postwar period. Based on these facts, it would seem inappropriate to describe the postwar situation with the metaphor of new religions springing up like "mushrooms up after a rain."

In the postwar period, new religions that displayed features characteristic of mass movements experienced conspicuous rises in membership, and it is clear that postwar Japanese society was endowed with conditions that facilitated the growth of such mass movements. But the tendency for new religions to develop in the manner of mass movements was not something that appeared suddenly in the postwar period. For example, while the membership of Sōka Gakkai did expand rapidly after the war, it had also shown signs of sudden growth just prior to its suppression in July 1943. The group

had been established in 1937; a membership list that was put together in January of that year listed the names of some one-hundred people. Three years later this number had grown to five hundred, and four years later it had swelled exponentially to two-thousand. The fact that postwar new religious movements exhibited the general characteristics of rapidly growing mass movements was possible only because they already possessed a store of energy accumulated from the prewar period.

In short, we must not allow ourselves to be so preoccupied with the superficial appearance of postwar religious transformation that we overlook the earlier, behind-the-scenes preparations for that transformation. We must also remember the dual nature of postwar religious change, or what might be called "primary" and "secondary" change. From the perspective of the organizational evolution of the new religions, the postwar period unquestionably was a time in which such groups displayed new directions of growth. But the way one evaluates the impact of "postwar shock" on the new religions will also be determined by whether one views that shock as having had the immediate effect of a knock-out punch to the head, or the slower-acting, long-term effect of a body blow.

In 1955, Japan entered what has come to be referred to as the period of high-speed economic growth. The country's economy began expanding at an annual rate of around ten percent. From an economic standpoint, Japan's postwar recovery had indeed been accomplished in the period of a mere ten years. The Economic White Paper the Economic Planning Agency issued in July 1956 noted that "it is no longer the 'postwar' period;" that expression became a popular slogan, no doubt due to its reflection of sentiments current then in Japanese society. But the cultural impact of defeat in war should be treated as a shock of a different sort whose effects were felt and recovered from at a pace different than that of the economic disaster produced by the same war. The fact that a generation appeared that took for granted the existence of a new constitution, new educational institutions, and new ways of thinking helps clarify the true impact of that shock. Consideration should be given to the notion that the implications of a shock of defeat would make themselves apparent only with a change in generations. In that sense, the changes in forms of religious organization that occurred in response to the evolution in legal environments from the prewar Religious Organizations Law to the postwar Religious Corporations Ordinance and then the Religious Corporations Law can be called merely temporary modifications. In contrast, the full effects of the slow-acting body blow of postwar shock may not be visible in the period immediate following the end of the war, so much as somewhat later, after

transition to a time described as "no longer the 'postwar' period."

Chapter seven

Reproduction and Normalization in the New Religions

1. Founders and Ogamiyasan

The Japanese term *ogamiyasan* (literally, "seer" or "beseecher") is not part of the academic technical vocabulary, but something about the expression makes it seem particularly apt. Even in today's Japan one can easily find persons who fit this description merely by venturing down a back alley off many major streets and observing carefully. These people are the spiritualist seers who engage in palm readings and physiognomy, and perform various kinds of divination and faith healing. They also frequently provide their customers with lifestyle advice and serve the function of personal counselors.

Under normal conditions, the very existence of such occupations goes largely unnoticed by the general populace. However, people suddenly become aware that there are those who do such work when they must deal with problems they are unable to solve through conventional means. Such problems might include healing for illnesses with unknown etiology or incurable prognoses, coping with the anxiety caused by the death of a loved one, uncovering the reason behind a continuing string of personal disasters, or searching for solutions to personal problems that one finds it difficult to disclose to anyone else.

Such religious mediators are referred to by different names in differing geographical parts of Japan. On the islands of Okinawa and Amami they are called *yuta*; in Aomori Prefecture they are *itako* or *gomiso*, while they are called *kamisama* in other parts of northeastern Japan. The names themselves provide some hint as to what can be expected of the "services" they offer. Keeping this in mind, it may be most appropriate to refer to such persons by a more general term like "spiritualist intercessor" (*reinō kitōshi*).

While I have referred to these people collectively as *ogamiyasan*, individually the actual scope of their activities runs the gamut from those with only a handful of clients who gather via word-of-mouth to those with much larger clienteles of full-fledged "fans." When these clients come to form an organization—no matter how primitive—and hold meetings, the question arises whether they should not be counted among the ranks of

new religions. That question could be rephrased by asking just where the border lies between the individual *ogamiyasan* and the new religious founder. Our response at this point must be that a clear line has yet to be drawn. When one compares the variety of services rendered by the two, it becomes particularly difficult to point to any unequivocal differences. Yet, if one simply surmises that the two can't be clearly discriminated at all, our understanding of the new religions as new religious systems loses some of its force.

Spiritualist intercessors who one may categorize as *ogamiyasan* have existed since before the early modern period. The fact that the government that came to power in the Meiji period attempted to abolish spiritualist occupations called *azusa miko*, *ichiko*, *yorikitō*, *tama-uranai*, and *kuchiyose* suggests that the activities that modern *ogamiyasan* engage in are practices with deep roots in folk-religious belief. If so, they represent patterns of behavior that do not immediately disappear as the result of a mere adjustment in lifestyle or increase in the level of education. And while the opening of a new-age "spiritualist arcade" in the teen mecca of Tokyo's Harajuku district may present the impression of nothing more than a passing fad, lying beneath the façade are contents strongly suggestive of elements of Japanese folk belief.

What kind of novel elements, then, discriminate the new religions from earlier folk beliefs? The two do display obvious if superficial similarities in the media offered, i.e.., faith healing, spiritualist intercessions, and personal counseling. In fact, a few of the new religions provide services that are identical to those found in earlier folk-religious practice. When it comes to the content of the teaching (what might be called the "message"), however, the new religions have added a variety of new elements. Further, they also display new features in terms of organization, a topic that forms a major focus of interest from the perspective of the sociology of religion.

In their early stages, the new religions follow the pattern of *ogamiyasan* in relying on person-to-person communication to attract new clients. So long as believers approach the founder as private individuals without mutual linkage, their situation is little different from that of the individual clients of an *ogamiyasan*. Such followers can be said to have a client affiliation with their leader, similar to the relation between doctors, lawyers, or shop owners and their respective patients, clients, or customers. The doctor will respond to calls from his patients, even in an emergency, but under other circumstances, the two remain unrelated, and no mutual relationship necessarily exists between any individual patients. So long as the clients remain at this stage without further organizational development, they do not constitute a collective entity that qualifies as a "new religion." To label them as such, the establishment of an horizontal

organization linking believers is an indispensable condition. When a group of adherents of an ordinary spiritualist healer advance to the point of periodically gathering together to hold meetings, they have come to exhibit characteristics of a new religion. Such primitive organizations may go no further than that and end as they began, or they may evolve into a more developed new religion. It is this volatile quality that makes it difficult to draw an unequivocal line between ogamiyasan-like figures and the founders of new religions.

2. Vertical and Horizontal Ties

The organizational forms created by new religions may differ from group to group, but considered overall the forms they take on are well-integrated ones, especially compared to those encountered in earlier folk-religious practice. The new religions in fact have been typified since the earliest period of study as "highly integrated mass movements."

When a group's membership exceeds several million, it becomes impossible to continue to expand the movement without some kind of more systematic principles of integration. The remaining problem is what shape will the organization take. In general, the form of organizational connections formed by the new religions are classified as "vertical" or "horizontal" links. A "vertical" form of organization refers, of course, to the principle of organization based on the hierarchical roles of teacher and convert. In the accompanying illustration, individual "A" converts individual "B," and individual "B" converts individual "C," continuing on to individuals "D," "E," and others. The vertical line thus runs

A
↓
B
↓
C
↓
D
↓

In this example, individuals "B," "C," and "D," all have a vertical linkage beneath the first individual "A". Likewise, if individual "W" directly converts the three individuals "X," "Y," and "Z," all three of the latter individuals will possess a vertical linkage under

individual "W," i.e.:

$$W \rightarrow X \ Y \ Z$$
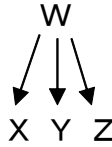
Periodic gatherings and everyday activities are generally oriented around the vertical linkage, which also forms the unit for the establishment of branch churches. In terms of the evolution of the new religions, the vertical kind of organization precedes the horizontal type, an evolutionary history that tends to be recapitulated in the history of each individual group. Further, in some groups such as Reiyūkai, the person responsible for converting another is called the new believer's "guiding parent" (*michibiki oya*). That the notion of the parent-child relationship can be used in this way makes it clear that the vertical principle is well adapted to the organizing principles of Japanese society.

Horizontal ties, meanwhile, refer to the solidarity existing between believers located in relative geographical proximity. The person who converts another is not necessarily someone living nearby; a person from Osaka may convert a resident of Tokyo, and so on. When this occurs, it becomes impossible for the two to engage in frequent mutual activity, with the result that daily behavior becomes detached from the issue of who converted whom, and it becomes more convenient to integrate activities on the basis of members' regional commonality.

As the Japanese population became increasingly mobile with advancing modernization, it became inevitable that new religions would introduce the horizontal principle of organization. Sōka Gakkai was the first to systematically introduce the horizontal organizing principle, pioneering the achievement of a high level of integrated organizational activity among the new religions. In 1955, the group introduced what it called the "block" (*burokku*) system to its Tokyo organization as a means of promoting regional solidarity. The system has since formed the bedrock of Sōka Gakkai's organizing principles, and in fact Risshō Kōseikai followed its example four years later by introducing the system to its own organization.

The new religions also frequently establish organizations based on age and gender, using such categories as "young men's division" (*seinenbu*), "middle-aged division" (*sōnenbu*), and "women's division" (*fujinbu*). Some even go so far as to establish sub-categories such as "young people's division" and "students' division." When the movement is of large scale, each division may possess its own independent orientation

and goals. For example, the brass band of the young people's division may volunteer to perform at local non-religious community events. Such independence is inevitable since, in a case such as this, students and working adults possess differing amounts of time for participation in group activities, and the physical energy of young men may be different from that of more mature middle-aged members. Men and women likewise have different interests and different skills. This mode of organization can thus be called a rational grouping based on a realistic appraisal of such social differences.

When the links among a movement's believers have taken on this complex kind of integration, the resulting organization is clearly of a different dimension from that of the small group of clients who gather around a single spiritualist intercessor or faith healer. In short, the difference between the spiritualist faith healer and the religious founder is demonstrated by the different ways in which they mobilize people. Hence, one of the conditions for calling someone a religious founder is their posession of the ability to lead others in organized group activities. But when one then asks how much organization is required before we can call a group a "new religion," ambiguity admittedly remains. Of the substantial number of borderline groups (what might be called "potential new religions"), the prediction of which ones will eventually develop into full-fledged new religions can only be made in retrospect.

Religious movements that initially attract their adherents through the founder's performance of faith healing under the influence of divine possession or other mystical states are particularly difficult to distinguish at their early stages from similar groups of believers centered on a single *ogamiyasan*. One example should suffice. The Ōyamanezu no Mikoto Shinji Kyōkai at present possesses a substantial membership, but originally it was a small group centered on a leader, Tomomaru Sai, who responded to requests for counseling and personal advice. The operator of a public bath house in Yokohama, Tomomaru was diagnosed with throat cancer after the close of World War II. His disease was cured, he claimed, through his reliance on the kami Ōyamanezu no Mikoto, and he was endowed with power as minister of the kami. The church achieved its status as a religious corporation in 1952, but even then, it lacked the organizational attributes that would ordinarily be required for the status of a "new religion." In fact, there have been any number of movements that have taken on the status of religious corporation even while organizationally remaining at the level of a simple *ogamiyasan* group. In retrospect, it is clear that the organization of the Ōyamanezu group was then at the stage of a budding new religion about to burst into bloom, but it is unlikely that one could have made that prediction confidently at the time.

3. Expansive Orientation

As new religious groups develop highly integrated organizations with large numbers of believers, the differences between them and typical folk-religious groups become so distinct that it becomes more pertinent to compare them, rather, to the organizational forms of the so-called established religions. A few of the new religions originated as revival movements for one or another of the established religions, and some Buddhist-oriented new religions have been particularly strongly influenced by the organizational forms of the established religions from which they derive. How, then, does the typical organization of the new religions deviate from that of the established religions?

First, one can start from the overall structure. One immediately notes that the headquarters-branch organization of Japanese Buddhist temples, called the *hon-matsu* system, resembles the headquarters-branch organization of the new religions. The *hon-matsu* system was established in the Edo period as a mechanism to allow central temples to control their subsidiary local branch temples. The ruling Tokugawa *bakufu* used the system as part of its own system of religious control—specifically, it exploited the *hon-matsu* system as a means of ensuring that its will was communicated effectively through the main temples of each sect, down to their respective branches. In the sense of its representing a hierarchical center-down structure, it does indeed resemble the headquarters-branch organizations one finds among the new religions.

That said, the headquarters-branch system of the new religions is much more flexible. The status of "branches" (which go by different names, depending on the group involved), is not fixed. The relative status of a branch may rise as it increases its membership, while a decline may result in a drop in the branch's status or even its disappearance altogether. The system in short is characterized by a kind of meritocracy. In that respect, the system clearly deviates from the modern system in Shinto for assigning shrine statuses (*shakaku*) that was in force from 1871 to 1946. Under that system, the status (and concomitant level of official government support) of each shrine was based on its history and pedigree, without specific reference to the number of parishioners or believers at a given shrine.

Next, let's look at the specific organizational forms taken by individual groups. How do the assemblies and activities of the followers of new religions differ from those of the established religions? Among the latter, Shinto shrines are characterized by associations of parishioners (*ujiko*) and worshipers (*sūkeisha*), while Buddhist sects

have similar confraternities (*kō*) such as the *daimokukō* of the Nichiren sects and the *nembutsukō* or *hōonkō* of the Pure Land sects. Many also have associations of all lay members (*danshinto-kai*). Such organizations, however, are frequently closed in two senses. First, they are closed to people from outside the religious sect, and second, they are closed to other parallel groups within the same sect. This does not mean that such groups are specifically exclusionary, but rather that they simply are oriented neither toward expansion of their own membership organization nor toward forming linkages with other similar organizations. Basically, they aim at self-sustenance and simple reproduction based on a fixed membership. What changes in membership composition that do occur do so primarily as the result of birth, marriage, death, and occasional change of residence.

The new religions, by contrast, demonstrate remarkable flexibility in this area. Among the newer movements, rapid membership turnover is not unusual. Overall, the new religions demonstrate a high degree of flux in their organizational composition, both when viewed as a whole, and within each organizational unit. The origins of this adaptabilty can be seen in the strong orientation among the new religions toward the goal of attracting new members, and not merely toward deepening the links between existing members. To borrow a metaphor from economics, this trait might be expressed as an orientation toward expanding reproduction. The established religions in contrast can be described as oriented toward simple reproduction. While a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple may not think it particular undesireable if the number of parishioners they had were increased, the shrines, the temples, and their respective parishoners do not invest a great deal of energy toward achieving that goal. On the contrary, it would appear that such groups prefer the sense of easy-going camaraderie and security produced as they maintain a group composed of the same fixed membership.

In contrast, most new religions place high emphasis on increasing their membership, with the result that they occasionally demonstrate phenomenal growth over a short period of time. Specialized missionaries undoubtedly play a critical role in achieving such expansive growth. At present, movements like Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō do not give the impression of possessing particularly fervent missionary zeal, but during their periods of greatest growth both groups had numerous missionaries. In Konkōkyō, the disciples of founder Konkō Daijin established worship sites called *hiromae* as locations where believers could experience linkage (called *toritsugi*) with god. These were called "Branch Shrines" (*deyashiro*) in contrast to the "Great Central Shrine" (*daihonsha*), which represented the founder's own *hiromae*. Within Tenrikyō,

certain members engaged in lone independent missions in unfamiliar territories, thereby establishing new church centers in numerous areas.

When a group aims at expanding reproduction, its mission activities can have only a limited degree of efficacy if it relies wholly on a limited number of professional missionaries dedicated to proselytism while ordinary believers do nothing. If on the other hand everyone in the group—both professional clergy and common believers—is engaged in proselytism, then it will become easier to successfully expand the organization. The attitude that each and every follower is expected to play the role of missionary can be called the Japanese version of the "ministry of all believers." Of course, some movements emphasize this attitude thoroughly, while others leave proselytism almost entirely up to professional evangelists. Even within one and the same movement, the emphasis placed on expanding group membership may differ from one period to the next. Relatively innocuous varieties of active ministry are demonstrated by groups that encourage members to distribute tracts and pamphlets to friends and acquaintances, introduce sick and disturbed people to a nearby church, and invite others to their own group meetings. On the other hand, groups that insist on its entire membership's engaging in street-corner witnessing, door-to-door campaigns, and the use of personal connections to friends and acquaintances as a means of making repeated invitations to group meetings can be called an extreme expression of the "ministry of all believers."

4. A New Generation

Though the religious group Risshō Kōseikai appears in the media far less than Sōka Gakkai, it has the largest membership of all new religions after that group. In fall 1991, Risshō Kōseikai experienced an uncommon event, namely, the change of its chief leader. That November 15, a religious ceremony called "transmission of the lamp" was held, in which the leadership of the group changed hands. Images of the ritual were transmitted via satellite to 231 Risshō Kōseikai churches nationwide, thus allowing more than 700,000 members to participate in the ritual.

The group was established in 1938 when its first president Niwano Nikkyō and his religious partner Naganuma Myōkō (1889-1957) together left Reiyūkai to form a new organization. One of the chief reasons for their departure was their dissatisfaction over disparaging comments that the first-generation director of Reiyūkai, Kotani Kimi, allegedly made about the Lotus Sutra. Niwano indicates that their initial compatriots numbered no more than thirty, but their membership grew rapidly following the war. In

1956, they were exposed to a four-month campaign of criticism in the major newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun*, an indication that by that time they were beginning to attract widespread public attention.

Niwano led the group up until that day in 1991, when he turned over the reins of leadership to his eldest son, Nichikō. Coinciding with Niwano's eighty-fifth birthday, the ritual clearly symbolized Risshō Kōseikai's official passage into its second generation.

It is noteworthy that Risshō Kōseikai has played a central leadership role in the activities of the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (Shinshūren). Likewise noteworthy is the fact that the Federation observed its fortieth anniversary in services at the Fumon Hall of Risshō Kōseikai's headquarters in Tokyo's Suginami Ward on October 17, 1991. Just as Risshō Kōseikai would do through its own succession ceremony the following month, the Federation's services demonstrated the clear sense of a shift to a second and third generation of leaders.

These various developments highlight the point that in the new religions the people who succeed to leadership are in most cases close relatives of the original founder. Examples from the members of the Federation (see Table 4) show a high proportion of sons, wives, daughters, and adopted children. Most groups not affiliated with the Federation likewise demonstrate the same patterns of succession. Here are a few rather interesting examples:

In Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, the founder Kitamura Sayo willed that her only son be passed over as successor in favor of her infant granddaughter Kitamura Kiyokazu. In fact, Kiyokazu was proclaimed the next leader when presented to the ranks of believers one month after her birth. Kiyokazu received leadership training directly from Sayo, and following the latter's death, she succeeded to leadership of the group, even though she was still only in high school. This might be called an example of "alternate-generation succession."

Some other new religions offer examples in which a married couple serve jointly as founder or leader of a group. In Kōdō Kyōdan, this system of "husband-wife team founder" (Okano Shōdō and Okano Kimiko) has been carried on by their son and his wife (Okano Shōkan and Okano Chikako).

Such cases can be included broadly within the hereditary form of succession; this pattern whereby a successor is selected from among one's close relatives is frequently mirrored in the third and following generations as well. The contrasting pattern of succession practiced to date by Sōka Gakkai can in fact be considered to within the

extreme minority, since no succeeding leader in that group has been a relative of his predecessor (Makiguchi Tsunesaburō → Toda Jōsei → Ikeda Daisaku → Hōjō Hiroshi → Akiya Einosuke).

Leadership succession in a new group may be accompanied by numerous difficult issues, including potential changes in the character of the movement. For example, the succession of a new leader may become the occasion for the transformation of the group into an established religion, a transformation sometimes referred to in Japanese as "normalization" (*kiseika*). Since such normalization or routinization may imply the potential stagnation of the religious movement, some groups view it as an issue that calls for some kind of preventive response. While the Japanese term kiseika has no clear-cut definition, it is generally used to describe the general tendency for the new religions to come to resemble earlier established religions in various ways, as one part of the process of organizational establishment.

A related issue has been studied from the perspective of the life-cycle of religious groups. For a new religion to "normalize" into an established religion can be viewed as an indication that the early energy of the movement is weakening, or as the process whereby the movement's organization reaches equilibrium. As a new religious movement develops, it often goes through a series of stages that start when the early organization is expanding its membership but with little sense of order as a wide variety of individuals come to the founder together with their equally wide range of needs and intentions. With only a superficial understanding the teachings, believers attempt to explain them to whoever will listen. The goals of the movement remain without clear focus, and it may embark on various activities in response to the leader's bidding. In some cases, a movement may be disrupted by new members who attempt to prey on the group for their own ends, or the movement's initial direction may change suddenly at the whim of the founder.

But a group will find it difficult to continue to proselytize and expand its membership if such a loose or disorderly organization is maintained. As membership increases, some kind of hierarchical structure must be implemented, extending from the founder down to the newest member. Intermediaries—branch directors or heads of congregations—are placed between the founder and ordinary members. Various levels of church institution may be established, such as headquarters, branch church, and missions center. Efforts will likewise be made to facilitate the effective study of the religion's teachings. Scriptures and sayings of the founder are collected and published, and creeds are composed. Testimonials are issued frequently through in-house bulletins,

providing model cases for conversion and the deepening of faith. Regular festivals and rites are observed, and many believers gather together for those events. Rites honoring the founder or commemorating the establishment of the movement become especially important. Rituals honoring the founder ordinarily include the founder's birthday when the founder is still alive, otherwise the date of death. In short, the religion undergoes a striking degree of ritualization.

5. *"Founder-Worship" and "Decontextualized Doctrine"*

Most of Japan's new religious movements have undergone the kind of changes noted above. In that sense, these developments are entirely normal. What aspect of the new religious systems can we understand, then, by viewing these changes from the perspective of the "normalization" of the new religions? The death of a group's founder is often the immediate catalyst that triggers normalization of the group. While the founder is alive, most decisions regarding the religion are made directly by the founder and passed down to the ranks of believers. Regardless of whether the group is facing some problem internal to itself or an issue arising from changing social conditions, the group usually responds flexibly at the mere issuance of a pronouncement on the subject from the founder.

Such flexibility of response disappears, however, when the founder dies. Some device is required to take the place of the founder's religious charisma. The concept of charisma is frequently employed in the sociology of religion to refer to the extraordinary ability of certain religious founders to provoke emotions of awe and wonder in their followers. While second and subsequent generations of leaders may not possess the same degree of charisma as the original founder, they must at least become central symbols for the group if they are to continue to maintain their following.

The situation with schismatic groups is somewhat different, but ordinarily, a religious founder must begin building his or her organization from the ground up. The founder's second-generation successor, however, begins from the fact that a large number of believers are already on-board. The successor must immediately confront the host of problems associated with leadership of an established religious group. At this stage, the successor is faced with the problems inherent in maintaining and expanding any movement, but in a form different from those encountered by the original founder. To maintain the centripetal force of the group, efforts are made to deify the original founder and systematize group doctrines. Such efforts are strategies designed to prevent disintegration of the group following the founder's death. In short, one frequently

observes the phenomena of "founder worship" and "decontextualization of doctrine" occurring under these situations.

As the founder continues to speak after death through the memories of followers and believers, close disciples tend to idealize the founder's image. In the "founder tales" created as a result, the founder is transformed into a mystical figure with superhuman powers. Gradually, she or he becomes an individual who was able to perform miracles, foretell future events, and whose life was without error. The fact that the founder is portrayed in this way is not limited to modern new religions, so the specific issue of deification is not relevant here. What must be noted, however, is the effect such deification may have on followers. With deification of the founder, a way of thinking is facilitated, according to which the deeds of the founder were possible precisely because the founder was superhuman. This closed train of logic assumes such deeds are simply impossible for common believers, or assumes the form of an apologetic that states, "We don't have to do such things, since we are not equal to the founder." One can use the expression "founder worship" to describe this process, whereby all those issues with which the founder struggled are relegated to tales limited to the founder's lifetime, and thus irrelevant to present-day believers.

Simultaneous to this process is that of the "decontextualization of doctrine." This might be described as a process whereby the founder's words, originally spoken with respect to a specific historical context, are gradually lifted out of that context to stand alone. The historical context evaporates and doctrinal exegesis comes to the fore. For example, expressions originally used as metaphorical expedients now fail to be interpreted in any way except their literal sense. This phenomenon, too, is obviously not specifically limited to the new religions. Within Christianity, for example, incredible misunderstandings can result when the words of Jesus are subjected to theological debate and interpretation without respect to their social context. When the aforementioned kind of founder worship is joined to the decontextualization of doctrine, the result is what might be called the normalization of the teaching—its transformation into an established religious doctrine.

It frequently occurs that a generational transition occurs in the group's membership around the same time as the death of the initial founder. The first generation of believers had entered the religion as the result of first-hand experience of miraculous faith healing by the founder or his immediate disciples and they thus possessed the conviction of a living faith. With the second and third generations of believers, however, the proportion of those who experienced direct contact with the founder drops precipitously, and the

faith is increasingly passed on as an inherited "religion of the family." That is to say, a child whose parents are members of the group comes to take the religion as a given part of her experience, and it becomes only natural for the child to also become a member. Needless to say, there are also cases in which the child becomes a member out of her own faith and volition, quite apart from the instruction and encouragement received from parents. But it remains a fact that in the second and subsequent generations, the proportion of those who transmit the faith as an inherited religion increases dramatically. This I refer to as the normalization of the membership.

Proceeding in step with the normalization of doctrine and membership is the normalization of the organization. This process can be considered an indication of the stabilization of the movement and is demonstrated in two ways: first, through the stabilization of the group structure itself, and second through the stabilization of the group's status in society. The stabilization of the group structure refers to the establishment of a clear division of labor within the group—the designation of offices for functions such as finance, missions, edification, doctrinal study, and public relations—as well as to the implementation of clear relationships between headquarters and branches. Such a division of labor obviously implies the need for specialized staff, so the group thus hires an increasing number of full-time employees. As a result, this aspect can be also viewed as the "incorporation" of the group. The stabilization of the group's status in society, meanwhile, refers in starkest terms to the fact that it is no longer viewed so much as a threat. The prevailing society comes to understand the group and its aims, and the group comes to view its own actions as contributing to the society, or as having a circumspect role to play within the larger society. Overall, the group tends to be viewed less as an "immoral and deviant religion."

As the foregoing overview illustrates, *kiseika* or normalization possesses a variety of dimensions; however, at the end of the process lies the same religious form generally characterizing the established religions of shrine Shinto and sectarian Buddhism. In the established religions, the doctrine is largely fixed in place and occasionally a matter of formalism. Most of the Buddhist sects continue in existence as inherited religions of the family. They are also characterized by stabilized social functions in their division of ritual labor, as seen in the practice of observing funerals at Buddhist temples or celebrating the festival for children of seven, five and three years of age (*shichigosan*) at Shinto shrines.

In sum, although the new religions appeared in modern Japan to fill the void left unfilled by Japan's traditional religions, it would appear that they have been been

continuously moving toward "normalization" and the status of the established religions.

6. Back to the Beginning

If many aspects of the normalization process are prompted by the death of the original founder, then the movements that began to take shape in the latter part of the Edo and early Meiji periods should be farther along the path to normalization than those like Risshō Kōseikai and Sōka Gakkai, whose highest rates of growth were achieved in the period following World War II. And indeed, there has been a clear-cut transformation of groups like Kurozumikyō, Konkōkyō, Misogikyō, Tenrikyō, and Maruyamakyō into inherited "family religions."

It is likewise most common for these groups to limit the person who can succeed the original founder to one of his or her hereditary descendants. For example, consider the following rules regarding succession:

Kurozumikyō: "The successor to leadership of the group shall be a descendant of the founder [Kurozumi] Munetada who passes on the family tradition."

Konkōkyō: "The leader shall be a hereditary descendant of the founder, and of those teachers who bear the surname of Konkō, a defender of the faith who fully transmits the mind of the founder."

Tenrikyō: "The leader shall bear the surname of Nakayama. The successor to leadership shall be of the hereditary line of the founder who is elected by a convention of headquarters members."

Maruyamakyō: "The leader shall be of the lineage of the founder; successors shall transmit the will of [previous] leaders and shall be selected by the successor selection committee."

A study of the patterns of succession practiced in these groups reveals that in a majority of cases, successors have been the eldest sons of previous leaders. Also, these groups no longer engage much in the kind of aggressive proselytizing generally associated with new religions, with the result that society no longer even appears to view them as new and that sometimes they are even referred to by the labored expression "old new religions." In this light, the concept of normalization is useful as a vehicle for facilitating discussions on the "newness" or "oldness" of movements, and the debate revolving around the concept raises the question of the true nature of change in the new religions.

It might be noted that a goodly proportion of the various new religious movements have already disappeared. Relatively few have disappeared after achieving the kind of

notoriety garnered by Renmonkyō, but any number of small-scale groups have declined and disappeared in a very short time. And since few leads remain regarding their history, there is no way to even provide an accurate assessment of their number. One might begin, however, from the estimate that nearly 30,000 religious groups existed during the years of World War II, following promulgation of the Religious Organizations Law in 1939. A considerable number of these were no doubt "new religions," and a majority of them disappeared following the war. If so, then one can conclude that the movements that remained and achieved a certain scale of growth must have possessed a minimum degree of social adaptivity. Criticism by the popular media ordinarily has the effect of stimulating the normalization of a group, since efforts must be made to achieve a stable organization as a means of weathering the attacks. Renmonkyō withered as a result of the harsh attacks it received, but Tenrikyō confronted its critics, modified part of its administrative policies, and in that way achieved a lasting place in society. While attacks against Kurozumikyō came not so much from the media but from local government officials, in any event the group responded by developing an organization that would provoke less social friction. Based on such examples, it would appear one can say that society possesses a built-in mechanism that encourages the normalization of new religions. If a new religious movement can be transformed from an unknown quantity into a familiar organization with clear contours and characteristics, and its activities and purposes can likewise be adjusted to make them acceptable to the rest of society, then the edge of social criticism will naturally be dulled. In this sense, normalization can be viewed as a response to social pressure.

In sum, no matter what their scale, new religious movements must undergo some kind of normalization if they are to survive. At the same time, normalization does not indicate a uniform process with identical features in every case. It remains necessary to study individual examples to determine the characteristics of the normalization that has occurred if we are to consider the nature of the system that new religions represent. Generally speaking, the mere fact that a new religion has begun the process of normalization does not necessarily mean that its early features as a movement will be immediately lost and that it will come to resemble the traditional established religions in every respect. For example, even if the group is transformed into an inherited religion of the family, the personal consciousness of being a member of the group will not necessarily disappear so easily.

In contrast, it is not at all unusual for a parishioner of traditional sectarian Buddhism to first learn which sect his family belongs to only on the occasion of a

funeral for a grandparent or other relative. Even knowledge of the sect's founder is dismally low. This fact was graphically revealed in the results of a major membership survey conducted by the Sōtō sect of Zen Buddhism from 1976 to 1977. In response to the question "Do you know who founded the temples Eiheiji or Sōjiji?" only 7.3 percent of the 1848 respondents answered in the affirmative. While it may not be so surprising to find that few people knew of Keizan's (1268-1325) founding of Sōjiji, these parishioners of Sōtō Zen did not even know of the famed monk Dōgen. Those responsible for making the survey appeared to be equally baffled by their findings. On the other hand, if the same kind of membership survey were made within Tenrikyō, the results would likely produce few respondents who could not name the founder Nakayama Miki. In short, while both new and established religions may rely on the same family religion format for their memberships, the new religions make more use of the family as a locus of edification and proselytizing, transmitting much more effectively basic information about the group such as the name of the founder, basic tenets, and rituals.

The strong linkage to the original founder seen in the new religions is in large measure a function of time. The eras in which religious founders such as Shakyamuni, Jesus, Shinran, Dōgen, or Nichiren lived are far removed from the present, and few people today likely have the ability to transcend that gulf and reach out to intimately grasp the context in which those persons lived. But the social ambience of the founders of the new religions is not nearly so distant to believers alive today, and many feel it as an intimate reality. Most of the founders lived and taught during the period in which Japan's modernization occurred, and some continue to live and teach today. This sense of the founder's present reality plays an important role in the vitality of the religion. As a result, for the immediate future, the close proximity to the origins of the faith can be counted as a unique feature of the system of the new religions.

7. Farewell, "Religious Boom"

In conjunction with the fact that normalization does not necessarily mean a new religion is transformed into the precise equivalent of an established religion, we must also keep one other fact in mind. Namely, modern history has shown us a repeating spectacle in which one movement begins to show signs of normalization just as another new movement arises nearby. Or in other cases, an existing movement will strongly influence the formation of a new movement, or one branch will split off of an existing group to become an independent new group.

This phenomenon has the effect of allowing each individual group to proceed along the path of normalization to one degree or another, even while maintaining the overall "freshness" of the system as a whole. The phenomenon likely functions across various movements in part as a metabolic replacement of the old by the new, yet it should not be considered a matter of simple generational change. A close study reveals that even entirely new movements are influenced by established ones in a variety of ways, extending from teachings to activities and organizational forms. In short, an invisible thread stretches between the old and the new.

Use of the concept of normalization may also make it possible to evaluate schismatic groups in a way that differs from the conventional understanding. Ordinarily, schisms within a new religion are interpreted as the outcome of internal conflicts, with the result that they tend to be viewed in a negative light. Reasons suggested for the emergence of such new branches range from insufficient abilities on the part of group leaders, to disagreement among central members, to immature organizational development. That said, a schism may also result in the revitalization of the group's original goals. That is to say, it can have the effect of delaying the onset of normalization.

Does history in fact show a recurrent pattern whereby one group of religious movements experienced normalization just as another group of new, vibrant ones has suddenly begun to emerge? This is in fact the implicit assumption lying behind the commonly used expression *shūkyō būmu* ("religious boom"). Observers who use this expression are actually most interested in trends in the new religions, and in the alternation among the leading players therein. The expression has been heard in recent years most often in the context of remarks about a "third religious boom." This expression is based on the assumption that the first such jump in activity occurred in the late Edo and early Meiji periods, followed by a second boom after World War II and a third one that began in the the mid-1970s. This periodization assumes that in each case, social conditions provided the foundation for a spike in the emergence of new religions: the turmoil of the period surrounding the Meiji Restoration, the disorder following Japan's defeat in World War II, and the arrival of the affluent society in the 1970s. Some researchers object and propose that there have been four such periods, noting the wave of interest in religion-and magic in the second decade of the twentieth century. Others divide the boom that more closely post-dated World War II into two waves, one immediately following the end of the war and another a decade later, during the period of high-speed economic growth, in which case the number of "booms" rises to five.

And so on, with the result that the very term "boom" itself loses much of its impact.

It should be noted that the periodization of most of these "boom" periods has been suggested by journalists. Such schemes offer a simple way to explain a complex series of events, but they leave severe doubts regarding the degree of understanding lying behind them, both of earlier history and of the period from the 1970s. At least when limited to the postwar period, what has been referred to as a religious boom has in fact been closer to a "boom" in religious information (a topic I will cover in Chapter 10). A more realistic review of recent history would suggest, first of all, that we need to provisionally discard this theory of religious boom times. Let us suppose that normalization has been advancing among the various sects, and various new movements have been appearing, each according to its own rationale. On that basis, we should consider that if the accumulation of these individual movements does not represent simply a chaotic melange but rather the expression of some kind of systematic development, then what are the social forces lying behind that kind of development? Certainly, the influence of the popular media is a crucial factor in the spike in information about the new religions that we see at present, and political power can have the effect of regulating the emergence and development of movements, as seen in the early Showa period. It is thus important to determine more clearly what kind of forces have acted in what kind of ways on this process. In short, the time is past when one could sanguinely discuss developments in the new religions from the simplistic perspective of a "religious boom."

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Road to Phenomenal Growth

1. The Emergence of New, Large-Scale Religious Groups

Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs issues an annual Religion Yearbook [*Shūkyō nenkan*], which provides data on facilities, clergy, and memberships for various religious bodies in Japan including Shrine Shinto, sectarian Buddhism, and the various denominations of Christianity. The Yearbook represents Japan's only public source of nationwide religious statistics, and in that sense, it is a valuable compendium of information. At the same time, it must be used with caution, since the statistics found in its pages are limited to those provided by the various religious groups concerned and must therefore be taken with a grain of salt. Without such precaution, one may come away with an erroneous impression of the various movements, particularly when estimating the scale of their memberships.

The figures in the Yearbook farthest from reality are those provided for the number of adherents of Shrine Shinto. There is simply too great a gap between the "90 million believers" claimed by representatives of Shrine Shinto and the roughly "three percent of population" that appears on most conventional surveys of religious attitudes in Japan. This gap results from the particular conception within Shrine Shinto that the entire local population of an area can be sweepingly counted as "parishioners" of the local tutelary shrine. On the other hand, the figures listed for the adherents of Christianity are relatively close to the actual situation. The roughly 1.4 million members given as an estimate of the total number of Catholic and Protestant believers is not far from the average "one percent of population" produced by most religious surveys.

What, then about the new religions? The Yearbook includes no specific category of "new religions," relying instead on more general groupings for "Shinto-related," "Buddhist-related," "Christian-related," and "Other" religious groups. This fact makes calculations a bit difficult, but in the end, it appears once again that the numbers reported have been considerably inflated. When membership figures are totaled for those groups that can be loosely considered new religions, the numbers exceed fifty million. Based on the previously mentioned survey estimates of memberships in the range of ten to twenty percent of the Japanese population, however, it would appear that the groups are reporting memberships which are, on average, more than three times higher than the

reality.

In short, the figures of the Yearbook are somewhat unreliable, but they nonetheless can be taken as one reference when estimating the membership strengths of the new religions. Based on these publicly issued membership figures, the three groups with the highest membership levels would be Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kōseikai, and Reiyūkai. In the Yearbook published in 1996 (figures for 1995), these three groups claimed memberships, respectively, of about 17.64 million, 6.49 million, and 3.07 million (Sōka Gakkai has not reported its membership in recent years, however, so the most recent figures—from 1990—are used). Needless to say, the true memberships of these three groups are considerably lower than the numbers reported. In the case of Sōka Gakkai, for example, the actual figure should probably be in the range of some three to five million. Even that figure, however, represents around three percent of the Japanese population, which gives the group considerable social clout.

In the same way, while Tenrikyō now claims a membership of about 1.91 million, it at one time boasted the largest membership of any new religion. The fact that it continues to maintain some 15,000 branch churches nationwide is testament to its fervent proselytizing activities in earlier years. As a result, it is very unusual to undertake a local religious survey even today without encountering members or branch organizations for Tenrikyō and Sōka Gakkai. These two groups can thus be considered prototypical of those large-scale groups that have spread throughout Japan.

The religious system of the new religions is equipped with a built-in mechanism to produce this kind of rapid, large-scale growth. Starting from the group's rebirth in the immediate postwar period, Sōka Gakkai required a bit more than a decade to reach a membership in excess of one million. In the fourth nationwide Lower House election of 1956, the Gakkai-affiliated party Kōmeitō received some 990,000 votes, but by the fifth nationwide election of 1959, its take had risen to 2.47 million votes. These voting figures do not immediately correlate to the membership of Sōka Gakkai, although it is assumed that the majority of votes were cast by Gakkai members.

Risshō Kōseikai became independent from Reiyūkai in 1938, gradually increasing its numbers during the war years, then rapidly accelerating its membership shortly after the end of the war. By 1965, it claimed a membership in excess of 500,000 households, having grown to major size in the rough equivalent of one generation. Starting from around 1925, Reiyūkai likewise grew to a nominal membership of one million by 1943, meaning that it expanded rapidly within a period of less than twenty years. For its part, as noted earlier, Tenrikyō was already described in the late 1890s as having a

membership of three million. This means it achieved that immense size in a period of just forty years, since its real debut as a mass movement was in the period between 1854 and 1860.

The time required to achieve major size as a religious movement as the aforementioned groups did is heavily dependent on differences in historical conditions, particularly factors such as population mobility and the speed of information transmission within society. In that sense, it is likely that the advent of the information age of recent times has operated to the advantage of new religions in their rapid growth. At the same time, Kurozumikyō had already experienced a relatively rapid increase in membership by the close of the Edo period, and Renmonkyō likewise grew rapidly in the mid-Meiji era. Such examples suggest that the religious system of the new religions was equipped from the start with some mechanism that facilitated rapid expansion. Several unique features in the organizational structure of the new religions appear certain to have expedited that rapid growth, as I suggested earlier. Such features include exploitation of the vertical and horizontal principles of member linkage, and engaging in proselytism based on the principle of the ministry of all believers, according to which the entire membership is mobilized in activities to attract new members.

Attention must also be given to other traits related to the way in which the new religions act as reflections of their age or of society. The new religions aggressively exploit phenomena that have their roots in social conditions, and they likewise possess unique ways of expressing some of the common orientations shared by the people living in each age. The phenomenon of fast-growing, large-scale groups provides excellent material for considering just such relationships.

2. "Unveiling the Mystery"

The new religions' traditional focus on faith healing has not changed, even in our present scientific age with its material abundance. Physical illness and death have long had the effect of turning the human mind toward religion, as reflected in the elemental "four sufferings" (birth, growing old, illness, death) described by Buddhism. This claim is easily verified by the merest observance of Japanese religion in practice. However, while Buddhism has traditionally accumulated massive amounts of basic "data" regarding the issue of death, the issue of faith healing was left more open to the introduction of new perspectives. It thus represented an issue which the new religions could exploit as one of their major fields of activity.

Until the appearance of the new religions, the ability to engage in spiritualist

intercessions and faith healing was the exclusive preserve of specific, religiously trained individuals, particularly those who had undergone strenuous ascetic training. By contrast, while the ability to perform healings in the new religions is occasionally limited to the founder and her successors, it is not unusual to find healing treated as a talent that all believers can acquire, in accordance with their own efforts. This situation, which is in fact the general case within the new religions, thus represents an "unveiling of the mystery" to the common lay believer.

The actual procedures used by the new religions rely largely on traditional techniques of faith healing. Most frequently, these techniques involve rituals utilizing fire and water. The water used in such rituals frequently goes by the popular name *goshinsui* ("holy water"). The way in which a founder's charisma functions to transform ordinary water into *goshinsui* is a unique trait of the new religions, but the mystical power of water itself is a product of older, more traditional concepts. Some groups do not merely utilize water as one more element in their healing techniques, but place a relatively large proportion of their overall emphasis on doctrines surrounding the healing power of water. Some groups even pass on their own traditions of miracle tales involving water.

Watanabe Masako and Igeta Midori have undertaken in-depth research on eleven of the numerous Japanese new religions that utilize "holy water" in healing. Some of the groups they covered include Shōroku Shintō Yamatoyama, Shinreikyō, Shinjishūmeikai, Bentenshū, Reiha no Hikari Kyōkai, and Tenshin Ōmikamikyō (currently, Tenshin Seikyō). According to their study, *goshinsui* is most commonly consumed by drinking, though in a few cases the water is rubbed on afflicted parts or blown out on the patient in a spray. A handful of groups employ even more unusual techniques. Tenshin Ōmikamikyō, for example, has established clinics where patients may, upon request, be given injections of goshinsui after it has been heat sterilized and sometimes mixed with medicines.

A number of groups also employ water for healing in somewhat more indirect ways. For example, Ōmotokyō observes a great spring festival (setsubun) each February in Ayabe City, Kyoto. At this festival, followers from throughout Japan either send or personally bring human-shaped paper images (*hitokata*) that are placed into unglazed urns, sealed, and carried to the nearby Wachi River. From a bridge above the river, the urns are then broken and the hitogata allowed to fall into the river. Each paper figure has been imprinted with its owner's name, address, and age; the ritual of casting these figures away in the river represents a prayer for the owners' health and longevity.

Reiha no Hikari Kyōkai observes a ritual called Jōrei Kigan ("supplication for spirit-purification"). Believers wishing to purify their ancestors' spirits, or who have other wishes, cast a special tablet into the sacred pond at the group's headquarters in Noda City, Chiba. By casting the tablet—imprinted with the believer's name—into the pond, it is believed that evil karma and harmful spirits can be eliminated. Such examples can be compared to the role of water in the folk custom of *nagashi bina* (casting doll-shapes adrift after the March "doll's festival"), and various Shinto purification rites. The use of fire, meanwhile, is most frequently based on the format of the *goma* ritual found in esoteric Buddhism and Japanese mountain religion (Shugendō). The new religion of Agonshū, for example, observes an elaborate fire festival called *saitō goma* each February in Kyoto; the celebration is called a "star festival" (*hoshi matsuri*) and given broad publicity as a major event. It is not unusual to find Shinto-related new religious groups that also observe the Buddhist goma rite. In most cases, this phenomenon can be understood as a lingering effect of the Shinto-Buddhist syncretism that characterized pre-modern periods. The Okinawan religion of Ijun is another new group that likewise observes the *goma* ritual. Further, the new religion of Tendō Sōtendan—originally Chinese in origin—observes a ritual in Sanda City, Hyōgo in honor of the seven stars of the constellation Ursa Major, during which *goma* fires are lighted as a ritual of exorcism against illness and disaster. This observance likewise has elements of a major "public-relations event."

While fire and water represent specific elements found in traditional Japanese religion, their frequent use in the new religions can also be analyzed from the perspective of their more universal function as religious symbols. In this context, Mircea Eliade's studies of myth and religious traditions around the world provide suggestive pointers to the significance of these two symbols. Eliade posits that water symbolizes origins, potentiality, and creativity; in its magical uses, it heals, rejuvenates, and preserves life. Fire, meanwhile, represents change, creation, and trial. He writes, "It was therefore the manifestation of a magico-religious power which could modify the world and which, consequently, did not belong to this world."

Applying this interpretation, the use of water and fire in healing rituals by the new religions appears to be related to their power as primal symbols. Of course, such an explanation—and this is in support of Eliade's theory—serves virtually no use when discussing the historical significance played by the new religions in their times. Even so, Eliade's theory remains significant in that it allows us to confirm that concepts and elements common to the rituals, myths, and legends of the world's historical religions

can be found not only in traditional Japanese religion, but in the modern new religions as well.

3. Illness: "Gate to the Path"

While the healing activities of the new religions tend to be based on traditional Japanese techniques and concepts, it is fair to say that their addition of various unique elements results in the creation of forms of practice that are overall new. This generalization is applicable to virtually all the sects, no matter their size. When considering the reasons for the phenomenal growth of the larger groups, however, the specific methods of healing employed are less important than the significance given by the groups to the more general issue of illness and healing. Indeed, the fact that healing can become a matter of religious faith is precisely due to the prior significance given to illness within the culture.

New religions that later grow into groups with great social impact array themselves with a consistent logic relating to the significance of healing and illness. Kurozumi Munetada, the founder of Kurozumikyō, described physical illness as "the gate to the path;" in other words, it is the first step toward the religious life. Munetada's assertion derives from his corollary assumption that the ultimate objective is not bodily healing, but healing of the spirit. When someone becomes sick, he for the first time may see things he previously ignored and feel sensations of which he was previously unaware. If illness serves as the opportunity to awaken to the religious life, its metaphoric description as "gate to the path" is entirely apt.

It is also said that Munetada responded impartially to all sick people and illnesses, even laying his hands directly on the faces of lepers when performing healing rituals. In an age when a strong system of fixed social statuses still prevailed, Munetada transcended such distinctions. He established no order of precedence when seating followers at his preaching services, merely seating each person in the order of arrival, demonstrating again that his principles were based on a firm view of humanity. It is that underlying humanism that must be emphasized when considering his healing rituals.

The concept that illness itself has religious significance can also be found in Tenrikyō. Nakayama Miki's teaching states that illness is a "divine strategy." By this she meant that god may deliberately make a person sick in order to draw her to religious faith. Changes in someone's physical condition are thus encoded messages, notices, or strategic devices from god. In this way, sickness is given significance as an important mechanism used by the divine to attract people to, or maintain them in their religious

faith.

The structure whereby illness is given a positive value is reminiscent of Weber's theodicy of suffering. Weber stated that a positive stance toward the evaluation of suffering is one trait of the prophet. He also claimed that the figure of the prophet is instrumental in the shift from traditional authority to charismatic authority, although careful consideration is required before one can state unequivocally that the founders of the new religions were prophets in that sense. At very least, however, it must be admitted that the founders displayed originality in the way they gave significance to illness as part of the formation of the new religions.

What, then, of the Buddhist-related groups, with their broad linkages to traditional religious practice? Reiyūkai places heavy emphasis on the performance of memorial services for deceased ancestors. The framework it uses to explain misfortune as the result of karma extends to the misfortune of illness; the illness that occurs as the result of evil karma must therefore be overcome by a combination of the memorial services performed for one's ancestors and the practices of mind and body. To this extent, the doctrine might appear to have become relatively focused on the individual, but on the other hand, the object of memorial services is interpreted in such a way that it potentially extends without limit. Kotani Kimi stated that "since even a single lice comes onto our bodies only as the result of karma, it is a matter of compassion to give it a posthumous dharma name and offer memorials to it."

In the case of Sōka Gakkai, healing is woven into a theory of "three proofs" or *sanshō*. The three proofs refers to evidence for the truth of Sōka Gakkai's teachings, namely, the proof of scripture (*monnshō*), the proof of logic (*rishō*), and the proof of actual results (*genshō*). Of these three, the proof of actual results played a particularly important role in the context of proselytization, since the healing of a believer's illness was viewed as confirmation of the correctness of the teaching. Illness is said to result from the karma of sins in previous lives, or from heresy arising from one's refusal to follow the true Buddhist path. In response, healing is sought in the *gohonzon*, a (an inscription of the Lotus Sutra serving as the supreme object of worship), and the actual practice involved is intonation of the daimoku, the invocation to the Lotus Sutra (*Namu myōhō rengekyō*). It is further believed that bringing numerous new people to the faith by aggressive "break and subdue" proselytizing also helps one to accumulate merit.

When explaining healing, most Buddhist-oriented new religions rely on the existing doctrines of the established Buddhist sects. The groups demonstrate a good deal of individuality, however, in the way they select and emphasize the various doctrines

available. More precisely, their distinctiveness from established Buddhism is exhibited in the ways they determine which Buddhist doctrines are essential, and in the ways they link those doctrines to their respective ideals. As a result, considerable differences exist between Reiyūkai and Sōka Gakkai, even though both place heavy emphasis on the Lotus Sutra.

It should be noted that the theodicy of the new religions regarding healing is provided with a fail-safe mechanism. Viewed critically, of course, this fact makes it appear that the group has provided itself with a way to rationalize any outcome. Groups like Tenrikyō and Ōmoto thus employ a principle that might be expressed as "make great calamities small calamities, and make small calamities harmless." Believers are told, for example, that god blesses them so as to lessen the degree of suffering they experience. In the event a fervent believer becomes ill, the explanation is given that an even more serious illness would have occurred but for the grace of god. This "fail-safe" theodicy thus allows the group to respond to any situation with the logical claim that "things are better than they would have been otherwise," even when questions are raised by those who have maintained firm faith. Given the ever-present possibility that things could've been worse, the theodicy allows no possibility of disproof. This kind of theodicy provides a bulwark against illness and every other form of suffering. So long as one maintains one's trust in the theodicy, it is possible to give a religious meaning to misfortune, and in turn, to develop patience in the face of adversities. Needless to say, if one finds the theodicy unconvincing, the vision of salvation that is offered likewise crumbles to dust. That said, this kind of structure is not limited specifically to the new religions, but is a characteristic implicit of the religious worldview itself. If any difference exists in the new religion's version, it is merely one of the degree of polish or detail given to the concept, and the degree of its compatibility to culture and human psychology. The fact that the new religions develop as quickly as they do must be considered a result of the fact that they are equipped with a logic capable of operating realistically.

To repeat, the practice of healing in the new religions differs little from that found in traditional folk religion or the established religions, when considered on the level of the actual techniques employed. In addition to water and fire, some groups use grains of rice and magic emblems as weapons in the fight against illness, while other groups intone the *daimoku* or invocation to the Lotus Sutra. None of these practices, however, are unique to the new religions. The uniqueness of the new religions lies in the way in which they take existing techniques and give them unusually detailed explanations so as

to respond to members' modern doubts. The new religions accumulate a body of data composed of a broad mass of followers' testimonial reports, and on this basis perfect a theodicy that can be used to respond to any eventuality.

4. An Antenna for Detecting Change

What I have discussed above with regard to the place of healing can be generalized further: one characteristic of the new religions is their recycling of tradition—their ability to take traditional religious concepts and rituals and modify them to fit modern needs. However, these religions can also be characterized by their ability to respond quickly to new social conditions. New religions are quick to sense new social currents and trends, and to flexibly integrate the demands of the times into their religious activities. In order to succeed at achieving great size, a group must possess a superior "antenna" capable of sensitively detecting the trends occurring around them in the larger society.

Sōka Gakkai's early attempts at growth involved a considerable element of aggressive proselytizing. In his inaugural speech of 1951, the second-generation president Toda Jōsei stated that "we must not whine for the *gohonzon* to grant this and that blessing; when we really and truly devote ourselves to aggressive 'break and subdue' proselytizing (*shakubuku*), when people revile us and call us fools, when we have truly served the good of the *gohonzon*, then the blessings of true merit will make themselves known in all their clarity." Together with the encouragement of aggressive shakubuku techniques, systematic instructions were composed on how to break down the logical defenses of adversaries, as codified in the 1951 work, *Shakubuku kyōten* [Scriptures of aggressive proselytization] (the group no longer employs the publication).

Toda, who had likened the work of proselytizing to a kind of warfare, died in 1958, leading to the selection of Ikeda Daisaku as the group's third president in 1960. Ikeda followed the same basic line as his predecessor, but he also proposed new programs. The concept that merit could be obtained by intoning the Daimoku and carrying out *shakubuku* proselytizing had something in common with the secular beliefs that supported Japan's period of high-speed economic growth: "work for happiness." In other words, it might be said that the concept that future happiness will be assured if you persevere is a belief characteristic of that period. Around the same time that the Cabinet of Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato proposed its income-doubling plan in 1960, Sōka Gakkai under the leadership of Ikeda Daisaku rapidly expanded its membership with programs meant to shed the earlier age of poverty, illness, and war, and to realize

a "human revolution." While the expression "human revolution" itself had been used earlier by Toda, Ikeda adopted and developed it further. Under President Ikeda, Sōka Gakkai demonstrated a remarkable degree of diversification, launching serious overseas missions efforts, sponsoring culture festivals, and becoming active in the field of education.

In the 1970s, the importance of rigorous *shakubuku* activities was gradually deemphasized as more weight came to be placed on socially oriented activities and the self-expression of members. One of these socially aware activities was the peace movement that Sōka Gakkai began to promote in the mid-1970s. The group in 1974 began to issue anti-war publications that were collections of first-person wartime narratives meant to communicate the horrors of war. Starting in 1976, the group began holding exhibitions oriented toward anti-war and anti-nuclear themes. These activities were organized by the young men's and the women's divisions of the group. The theme of "self-expression," meanwhile, is typified by Sōka Gakkai's "culture festivals." The first large-scale culture festival to be held was the Kansai Bunkasai, which took place in 1963 at Osaka's Kōshien Baseball Stadium. The event became a regularly-scheduled activity in the 1980s. The group also began holding a World Peace Culture Festival in 1981, a series of events that has tended to become more and more flamboyant with each passing year.

Striking changes have also occurred in the Risshō Kōseikai movement. The group rapidly increased its membership after the end of World War II, at a time when its main doctrinal orientation was toward the divination of names, "dharma circles," and spiritualism. All three of these activities were used as means of giving concrete guidance to members. Risshō Kōseikai's co-founder Naganuma Myōkō died in 1959, the year after two incidents had rocked the group. The first was called the so-called "Yomiuri incident," in which the major national newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun* established an investigative bureau and engaged in a four-month campaign of intense criticism of the group. In the second affair, called the "*renpanjō* incident," several leaders of the group signed and circulated a jointly signed covenant (*renpanjō*) critical of Niwano Nikkyō's leadership.

After passing through these external and internal difficulties and the death of co-founder Naganuma, the group displayed a distinct shift in orientation. That shift was symbolized by the issuance of the directive *shinjitsu kengen* ("Manifestation of Truth") issued in January 1958. From the perspective of Buddhist doctrine, the Manifestation of Truth directive involved a switch from an "expedient" focus to a "true" object of

worship; setting aside the doctrinal aspects, the directive signaled a change in the movement toward a more functional organization, with greater emphasis placed on the social significance of its activities. Starting in 1969, the group began promoting its "build a happy society" movement, and Niwano Nikkyō began expressing heightened interest in peace movements. Beginning around 1970, the concept of cooperation between religions began to gain currency and that year saw the General Secretariat for the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) established in Fumon Hall of the Risshō Kōseikai's Tokyo headquarters.

Reiyūkai has likewise gone through a period of substantial change. The first-generation president Kotani Kimi died in 1971, and Kubo Tsugunari (second son of Kubo Kakutarō) was made the second-generation president. Tsugunari received a B.A. and Ph.D. in Indian philosophy at Tokyo University, and his wife Katsuko is a graduate of Tokyo Women's Christian University; the two are said to have first met as members of a joint university chorus circle. Under this kind of modern leadership, Reiyūkai has made substantial changes in orientation. Begun immediately after the death of Kotani Kimi, Reiyūkai's "inner trip" campaign (a slogan signifying a return to the human heart) pointed to a transformation in the group's orientation, one that was even discussed in a series carried by the Mainichi newspaper called "Modern Questions about Religion." Kotani Kimi had herself practiced rigorous ascetic discipline as a young woman, and she had demanded the same kind of devoted practice from her followers. With the arrival of the "inner trip" era, however, the group's earlier emphasis on stringent practice and encouragement of spiritualism gradually gave way to teachings and methods of practice more amenable to a younger generation. For example, the group began providing recreational elements, such as "disco time" during retreats at Izu's Mirokusan. On the other hand, the group also launched out on overseas missions activities in the 1970s, and in 1980 introduced its "spiritual development" campaign, thus indicating a diversification of its social orientation.

Sudden transformations of a large religious organization can in part be explained as the result of changing leaderships, expanding membership organizations, and other factors internal to the movement. In specific cases, an external social incident may act as catalyst to change. It is not enough to seek explanations in such anecdotal conditions alone, however, since the influence of broader social trends can be detected lying behind them all. The heightening of social awareness seen in peace movements and other socio-cultural activities and the decision to begin overseas mission efforts are phenomena that have tended to appear with general synchroneity in a variety of different

religious groups. While it is possible that such coincidence is the result of one group's deliberate mimicking of the original ideas of another group, one must still consider the social factors promoting such deliberate mimicry. As Japan's new religions entered a new time that was no longer of the "postwar period," what kind of changes were developing beneath the visible surface of events?

5. Pragmatic Idealism

To achieve rapid growth, a new religious group must be sensitively in tune with the actual hopes and desires present in the surrounding society, and formulate a concrete program of action oriented toward realizing them. Such hopes and desires include latent, unstimulated, and unconscious, elements; this means not only those wishes that can be expressed socially in an unambiguous form, but also those that society itself is yet unable to express clearly. In other words, the vectors characterizing society as it leaves one state, or orients itself toward another state overlap to a considerably degree with those characterizing the new religions.

A group's enthusiasm for expansion and its systematic missionary stance are necessary—but not sufficient—conditions for rapid membership growth. For example, the Jehovah's Witness organization has carried out continuous, well-organized door-to-door proselytizing activities, but its Japanese membership remains around the level of 160,000. This group was also active in the prewar period, under the name of the Lighthouse Society established by Akashi Junzō, but it experienced government oppression. It resumed its activities just after the war's end, but its subsequent growth has described only a gentle upward curve. One issue may be the group's beliefs. As is well known, the Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions, a conviction based on several passages in Leviticus and Acts of the Apostles prohibiting the eating of blood. Believers also refuse martial arts training out of their conscientious objection to war. They believe in a final battle of Armageddon and a Last Judgment. These kinds of beliefs are rather difficult for most modern Japanese to accept—or, expressed conversely, one can surmise that relatively few Japanese feel a burning need for concepts of "existence without any conflict" and "assurance of eternal salvation."

Movements that quickly achieve large memberships share certain characteristics in their teachings and activities. That commonality might be expressed as a pragmatic idealism. For example, it is frequently said that the new religions attract people through the promise of miraculous blessings in the here-and-now. While that statement is true as a generalization, the new religions also teach why such blessings are received and

what must be done after one receives them. Conventional studies often focus attention solely on the fact that people are drawn to the new religions by promises of miraculous benefits. But when interpreting the new religions, it is much more important to ask about the nature of the overall framework within which the promise of miraculous benefits is expressed.

Also, simply because a group's teaching is thoroughly pragmatic does not mean that it is lacking in idealistic elements. It merely means that the group does not attempt to pour human behavior into an immutable theological mold built on concepts of "god's will" or "eternal law." Instead, first priority is given to integrating the information received by the group's "antennas" directed toward the society at large. If one claims that the new religions are an expression of society's longings, then the theory suggests that social change precedes the religious responses offered by the new religions. On the other hand, the expression of social longings can also include elements that anticipate a social change which occurs subsequently. As a result, even though one may speak metaphorically of the shadow that society casts on the new religions, that shadow does not fall only immediately below or behind social phenomena, but may at times take the form of a shadow cast out in front, even in advance of social change to come.

CHAPTER NINE

Expanding Abroad

1. Services to Overseas Members

Granted, the new religions tend to be viewed suspiciously at home in Japan. When they move overseas and succeed in attracting over one-million foreign members, however—even admitting that such figures are no more than their own nominal claim—it is understandable that observers feel a sense of puzzlement. Of course, the reality lying behind the superficial term "member" is rather complex overseas, just as it is in Japan, and relatively few members of such groups are in fact followers of a single religion alone. But even so, it remains certain the new religions are gradually being accepted by a growing number of people in other countries. The participation of numerous foreign members in ceremonies held by new religions at their Japanese centers is no longer a new or unusual scene.

Employing missionary efforts to attract foreigners is an area that has been left mostly unexplored by the sects of established religion in Japan. During the period before World War II, Japan expanded its colonial control in Asia and the Pacific region, and many Japanese simultaneously emigrated to the Americas and Hawaii. In turn, the established religious sects established centers in those areas to service the expatriate Japanese communities, and in some cases a certain number of local non-Japanese residents were also attracted as followers. Hence, one cannot claim that the established religions made absolutely no attempts to attract foreigners, but whatever success they had was minimal. Rather, the stance of Shrine Shinto and the Buddhist sects toward overseas religious activity can be basically summed up as providing a service to their overseas members.

In prewar Asia and the South Pacific, Shinto shrines were constructed in virtually every area under the umbrella of Japanese administration. Taiwan Jinja ("Taiwan Shrine"), which was ranked as a *kanpei taisha* ("major imperial shrine"), was constructed in that territory in 1900. Several dozen Shinto shrines of lesser or no rank would go on to be constructed in Taiwan during the period of Japanese control. One unusual characteristic of the shrines on the island was the frequent inclusion of the imperial prince Kitashirakawa no Miya Yoshihisa as one of the enshrined kami. As commander of the Konoe Division of Japan's imperial army, Prince Yoshihisa led the

Taiwan Expeditionary Force immediately following the Sino-Japanese war, but he fell ill and died during the expedition, leading to his enshrinement as a kami. Today, a famous hotel stands on the site of the earlier Taiwan Jinja.

On the Korean Peninsula, the shrine Chōsen Jinja was established in Seoul in 1918. Its rank was upgraded in 1925 to that of *kanpei taisha* Chōsen Jingū. More than fifty shrines would subsequently be established throughout Korea. In Sakhalin, the *kanpei taisha* Karafuto Jinja was constructed in 1910 in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, and several other prefectural-class shrines were also built there during the Taishō Period. Shinto shrines were also established on a number of South Pacific islands—including Saipan, Palao, Yap, and Truk—that were mandated to Japan following World War I.

The first Shinto shrine in Manchuria—the Antō Jinja—was constructed in 1905, following the Russo-Japanese War. The construction of shrines there would rapidly accelerate in the wake of the Manchurian Incident of 1931. Shrines were also constructed after the Portsmouth Treaty was concluded in 1905 in Dairen, Port Arthur, and other parts of the old province of Guandong. The first of these to be finished was the Kansui Jinja in Dairen in 1909, while the *kanpei taisha* Kantō Jingū was built in Port Arthur in 1938. Elsewhere in China, the Daitōchin Jinja was established in Tsingtao in 1925 and the Tenshin Jinja in Tientsin. The majority of shrines established in China enshrined Amaterasu Ōmikami, followed by Emperor Meiji.

The established Buddhist sects were the same when it came to launching missions in support of Japan's policy of colonial expansion. From the Meiji Period on, the sect most active in overseas proselytism was the Honganji Branch of Jōdo Shinshū. This sect first began its mission activities in Taiwan in 1895, in conjunction with the dispatching of priests to serve with the army during the Sino-Japanese War. These activities officially began with the establishment of a missions center in Taipei in 1896. In 1901, the center's temple status was upgraded to Taiwan Betsuin (a regional center), and in the years thereafter around sixty temples and missions centers would be established throughout Taiwan. Sect activities in Taiwan included the training of Japanese priests and providing religious services for Japanese expatriates, and they were reported as having had some level of success.

The Honganji Branch's mission work to the Korean Peninsula likewise began on the occasion of service with the military. In 1902, a provisional missions station was established in Pusan. Mission work expanded following the Russo-Japanese War with the establishment of a General Korean Missions Center, followed by the 1907 establishment of the Chōsen Regional Betsuin temple in Seoul. The number of temples

and mission centers established throughout Korea in the prewar period reached more than 130.

Mission activities to Manchuria were focused in Dairen during the first decade of the twentieth century. In addition to regional, *betsuin* temple centers, more than fifty smaller missions offices were established in the provinces of Mukden, Andong, and Beilin, two-thirds of which were established after the Manchurian Incident. Proselytization in Siberia was small in scale, but a regional *betsuin* was established in the city of Korsakov on Sakhalin; all together, more than thirty temples and missions centers were established throughout the island. Mission work to China, meanwhile, began after the Sino-Japanese war, with *betsuin* being established in Beijing, Tsingtao, Tientsin, Shanghai, and Nanjing. Most of the forty-plus missions centers there were established after 1937—in other words, in conjunction with the advance of the Japanese military.

Central focus for proselytization to the South Pacific region was placed in Singapore. The Manila missions center was raised in status to *betsuin* in 1943, and the following year the Singapore center was similarly promoted to Shōnan ("Singapore") Betsuin. In other areas of the South Pacific, more than ten missions centers were established on islands such as Tinian, Palao, and Yap, but almost all were only established after 1935.

Mission activities to Hawaii and South America, meanwhile, followed on the trail of émigré Japanese. Full-scale emigration to Hawaii dates from 1885 with the beginning of "treaty immigration" to Hawaii from Japan, which was based on agreements concluded between the government of Japan and the kingdom of Hawaii. Shortly after the beginning of immigration, in 1890, the Jōdo and Jōdo Shin sects launched out on formal mission activities; they were followed in 1900 by the Nichiren and Sōtō sects. A number of Shinto shrines were likewise built in the years around 1900.

Mission activities in North America began around the same time, with the most energetic activities being undertaken by the Honganji Branch of the Jōdo Shin sect. Two or three Shinto shrines were also constructed in this period. As to South America, most Japanese immigrants to that region went to Brazil. Immigration to that country began in earnest from 1908 on the heels of the "Gentleman's Agreement" concluded that year between Japan and the U.S., which decreed that no new Japanese immigration was to be permitted to the United States; as a result, the would-be immigrants turned away in the north instead headed south to Brazil and elsewhere. Interestingly, in deference to Japan's Foreign Ministry Buddhist sects and Shrine Shinto abstained from official

mission efforts to Brazil in the prewar period out of consideration for the country's Catholic orientation. The most vigorous of the Buddhist sects—the Honganji Branch of Jōdo Shinshū—did not begin mission efforts there until 1950.

Japan's defeat in World War II was devastating to the religious activities of Shrine Shinto and the established Buddhist sects in Asia and the South Pacific, proof positive of the fragility of missions that had relied entirely on colonial rule and military power. In contrast, mission efforts elsewhere oriented toward Japanese immigrants continue actively even at present; though some having experienced reductions in scale, still others are actually undergoing revivals. This situation demonstrates the resilience of the established social base provided by the Japanese immigrant community.

2. The "Overseas Assignment" and "Multinational" Models

In a broad sense, establishing Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in Japanese colonies, in regions under Japanese military administration, or in Japan's immigrant communities can be called "overseas missions." With but few exceptions, however, these efforts were not directed toward non-Japanese. Several of the new religions, on the other hand, have devoted great energy in their overseas mission work to not only converting Japanese immigrants, but also attracting non-Japanese. This trend becomes striking in the postwar period, but one can see traces of it in the prewar period as well. Here, too, we are given additional material for considering the unique features of the religious system of the new religions.

The overseas missions efforts of most Japanese religions in the modern period can be broadly classified into two categories: those directed toward Japanese immigrants and expatriate Japanese, and those directed toward non-Japanese foreigners living in the target country. Since a number of differences in purpose and method accompany these two categories, to distinguish between them I refer to the former as the "overseas assignment model" and to the latter as the "multinational model." While some Japanese new religions engaged in the multinational model of missions during the prewar period, their overall effort was directed mainly at the overseas assignment model. In the postwar period, however, Sōka Gakkai would pioneer the multinational model, and various elements of the model became more strongly apparent in the activities of numerous other groups, including PL Kyōdan, Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, Sūkyō Mahikari, Church of World Messianity, and Seichō no Ie.

Turning, meanwhile, to the various social conditions that made it possible for Japanese religions to advance into the Americas and Hawaii, it is clear that the presence

of an immigrant Japanese community played a large role. This category of religious missions can be called the "immigrant-dependent type." In the prewar period, most Japanese religions' mission efforts in Asian areas relied upon the presence of the Japanese expatriate communities consequent upon Japan's territorial expansion and colonial rule. Such "national-policy-reliant" mission efforts naturally disappeared following World War II. In their place, various religious groups emerged in the postwar period that began small-scale efforts at overseas proselytization based on no particular community in the target country, efforts that can be referred to as a "universal type" of missions.

To reiterate, missionary activities in Asia by the new religions, like those of established religious groups, tended to be based on the "overseas assignment model." Konkōkyō first began its overseas mission activities in Taiwan in 1901, moving on from there to Korea and Sakhalin. Kurozumikyō launched out on missions to Sakhalin in 1907, as well as establishing a presence in Manchuria. Of the Buddhist-oriented new religions, Honmon Butsuryūshū and Kokuchūkai attempted mission work in Korea, Sakhalin, and Taiwan. The priest Fujii Nittatsu also established his temples called Nihonzan Myōhōji throughout Manchuria and China from 1917 on. Other groups of sectarian Shinto broadly encompassed by the category of new religions including including Shintō Shūseiha, Shinrikyō, Izumo Taishakyō, and Shinshūkyō likewise engaged in mission activities in Korea, Sakhalin, and Manchuria.

It should also be noted that a few groups within Tenrikyō engaged to some degree in the multinational model of missions. Tenrikyō had attempted individual overseas activities in certain parts of Korea, Taiwan, and China even before it achieved its independence as an autonomous religious body in 1908, but once it became independent its efforts became more systematic. The second generation shinbashira Nakayama Shōzen was particularly interested in overseas missions, establishing the Tenrikyō Institute of Foreign Languages in 1925 as a center for language study in preparation for foreign proselytism.

Turning to missions to the Americas and Hawaii, among the new groups that set out in those directions were Tenrikyō, Konkōkyō, Seichō no Ie, and Honmon Butsuryūshū. Tenrikyō established centers in Hawaii, the U.S.A., Canada, and Brazil. Konkōkyō set up centers mainly in Hawaii, the U.S.A., and Canada. Seichō no Ie became active in Hawaii, the U.S.A., and Brazil. Honmon Butsuryūshū concentrated its energies on Brazil alone.

Another new group that involved itself with overseas mission was Ōmoto, but

the style it practiced in the prewar period was, compared to these various other groups, somewhat unusual. They began by affiliating themselves with overseas religious movements, both through evangelism and through various projects of religious cooperation and association. For example, starting around the end of the Taishō Period Ōmoto began deepening its relationships with the new religion of Bahai, included within Shia Islam, and the Chinese new religion of Kōmanjikai-Dōin. In 1923, the group opened its Ōmoto Esperanto Research Institute, which symbolized the fact that Ōmoto's exchange aimed at egalitarian cooperation with other groups.

In general, the new religions began their overseas missions efforts by servicing communities of expatriate and emigrant Japanese, but before long, they launched out on the multinational style of evangelism. Given that Japan previously had one-sidedly imported religious culture from China or Europe, this new development marked Japan's first real experience of exporting its religious culture. That Japan's new religions have oriented themselves toward the multinational type of overseas religious activity displays one of their features as new religious systems, while simultaneously raising the issue of the Japanese culture that has supported that activity. This phenomenon becomes even more intriguing when situated in the context of Japan's internationalization as well as the ongoing process of globalization.

3. Steadily Increasing Overseas Missions

It has only been in the postwar period that the multinational type of proselytizing has been promoted in earnest. However, the renewal of proselytizing to Asian areas was not easily accomplished, particularly given Japan's prewar history. Tenrikyō's postwar ability to continue its prewar Taiwan mission successes—even by the thinnest of threads—was a rare exception. In Hawaii and the Americas, on the other hand, new developments began to unfold at a relatively early point in time thanks to the pre-existing base of Japanese immigrants and expatriates. Overseas efforts that start out with the immigrant-dependent type of missions sometimes find that same immigrant society proves a fetter to their further expansion. Immigrant communities frequently show themselves to be resistant to the multinational style of proselytism. On the other hand, those new religions that began their work in the postwar period have found the multinational approach to be the easier mode to adopt. It is also typical of the postwar period that new religions have made advances in Europe and Australia, although this is primarily a characteristic of the universal type of mission effort.

The postwar activities of the new religions have been the subject of more intensive

research thanks to three surveys of Japanese-American communities conducted in Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast beginning in 1977. This series of joint studies supervised by Yanagawa Keiichi has stimulated similar research in Brazil and Asia. Given that materials are relatively more abundant for Hawaii and the Americas, I will discuss primarily those examples here but developments in the regions of Asia, Europe and Africa will undoubtedly become a focus of attention in coming years.

Following World War II, Japan regained its sovereignty through the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty that came into effect in April 1952. A succession of religious bodies immediately launched new overseas mission efforts to add to those that earlier new religions previously embarked upon. Already a sensation in Japan, Kitamura Sayo of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō began a mission tour of Hawaii in May 1952. As soon as she set foot in Honolulu, she astounded the local people by beginning a "singing sermon" and "dance of non-self" right on the docks. From 1954, Kitamura extended her tour to the American mainland, delivering sermons at universities like Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago.

Following in the steps of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, the Church of World Messianity began missions activities in Hawaii and the mainland U.S. in 1953. At first, two missions workers would operate as a team, one giving lectures in Japanese and the other in English. Their practices of faith healing, natural agriculture, and exorcisms of evil spirits attracted audiences and produced a growing membership, but most people drawn were of Japanese ancestry. According to a survey undertaken by Yamada Yutaka in 1981, only a bit more than ten percent of the roughly eight-hundred members in the Los Angeles area were non-Japanese, with most of those being Korean, Thai, or Mexican. The group would also establish a foothold in South America in 1955 as it began proselytizing efforts in Brazil.

PL Kyōdan began its overseas missions in 1957, when the group's first missionary was sent to establish a Brazilian headquarters. At first, the group attracted new members primarily by promulgating the "mundane worldly benefits" that could be had by performance of its unique ritual called *oyashikiri*. The group next established a Los Angeles church in 1960, and sent missionaries to Hawaii in 1964. Risshō Kōseikai, meanwhile, established branches in Hawaii and Los Angeles in 1959, against the background of its growth in Japanese membership that began in the mid-1950s. The group did not begin mission efforts in South America until somewhat later than the other groups, however, establishing its first Brazilian church only in 1971.

Sōka Gakkai officially began its overseas mission efforts in 1960, establishing

branch organizations in Hawaii, America, and Brazil. This move similarly came against the backdrop of the group's steady growth in Japanese membership during the 1950s. Sōka Gakkai went on to establish branch centers in the Southeast Asian countries of Vietnam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Indonesia, while at virtually the same time also establishing branches in Europe. This kind of simultaneous, multifaceted activity reflects the extremely systematic nature of Sōka Gakkai's mission efforts.

Shinnyoen began looking abroad in the late 1960s. It began mission efforts in northern Europe in 1967 and in America in 1970. The next year, a mission tour through Southeast Asia was also undertaken.

Okada Kautama, founder of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, went on a missions tour of Europe in 1973, and followed this by beginning missions efforts to Hawaii and Australia in 1976. From the mid-1970s, Reiyūkai began official mission activities to Canada, Brazil, Mexico and England, and continued by establishing centers in Europe, Asia, and America.

Relatively smaller groups have also set their hand to overseas missions, a trend that is becoming even stronger at present. Typically, a group begins its overseas efforts with the "overseas assignment" type of mission; this is the pattern followed by Shūyōdan Hōseikai (headquarters in Tokyo) when it expanded to Brazil, the Tenshinkyō (headquarters: Hakone) when it expanded to Hawaii, and the Tenshōkyō (headquarters: Muroran) when it expanded to Hawaii and Brazil.

Some groups exhibit rather unique traits in this respect. The group Ijun with headquarters in the Okinawan city of Ginowan (which it calls its Central Temple Ashagi), possesses branches in Hawaii and Taiwan. The Hawaii branch had the strong characteristic of an "overseas assignment" type of project, but the one in Taiwan is more complicated. While an Ijun branch organization exists in Taiwan, it also has a sister shrine called the Chintōgū Sekitōkō. The relationship with the Chintōgū closely resembles that of a joint corporate business arrangement, a tieup that is possible in part due to the religious affinity existing between Taiwan and Okinawa. The form of proselytism adopted by Aum Shinrikyō in Russia represented another rather unique case.

4. The Trend of Internationalization

In sum, the new religions have avidly engaged in overseas missions during the postwar period, although generally speaking most such efforts have commenced from what I have called the overseas assignment model of proselytism. The basis for

conversion continues to be the Japanese expatriate community, including those Japanese who emigrated during the postwar period. That said, in countries with an expatriate Japanese community—and even in those without—there also is clearly an increasing proportion of new religious groups oriented toward—and indeed attempting—the multinational type of mission. In that sense, we can say that overseas proselytizing by the new religions has followed a new course of development in the postwar period, particularly since the 1950s.

Why did the new religions pursue this course in this period? Sōka Gakkai is prototypical of the multinational model of missions. The group established its international organization Sōka Gakkai International (SGI) in 1975. Beneath this umbrella, various national Sōka Gakkai groups maintain a relationship as sister organizations like, for example, that which exists between the Sōka Gakkai organizations in Japan and America. Sōka Gakkai officially established a branch organization in America in 1960, but its success was based on the preexistence of an important strategic factor. That was the presence of Japanese-born female believers who had married Americans and immigrated to America. It was those women, their husbands, and the husbands' acquaintances who formed the foundation for Sōka Gakkai's initial mission activities to America, a fact which Sōka Gakkai itself acknowledges.

The increasing number of international marriages in the postwar period occurred against the unusual circumstance of the presence of the Occupation army in Japan, and in any case they functioned to promote the internationalization of the Japanese people. Relatively few marriages had occurred between Japanese and non-Japanese during the prewar period within the immigrant communities of Hawaii and California. In fact, the tight-knit nature of such communities was not based merely on Japanese identity; in some cases, a condition for marriage was that the candidate be not only from Japan, but from the same Japanese prefecture. Emigrant Japanese in general tended to form closed societies, but the situation changed following World War II. By the third generation, Japanese-Americans had melded deeply into American society, and their religious affiliations likewise showed a clear tendency to shift from Buddhism to Christianity.

The activation of overseas mission activity by Sōka Gakkai and other new religions must be considered in the context of two factors: the social transformation of the Japanese community both in Japan and abroad, and the fact that the new religions were fundamentally well-suited to adapt to such social transformation. The new religions constitute religious systems whose basic traits facilitate the development of the multinational kind of proselytism, and conditions that allowed those systems to evince

an even greater display of their unique characteristics were to be found in postwar Hawaii and North America. This applies not only to Sōka Gakkai in North America, but to the multinational kind of missions engaged in elsewhere as well such as in the work of Church of World Messianity, Sūkyō Mahikari, and Seichō no Ie in Brazil.

The expansion of the new religions overseas has also been supported by burgeoning Japanese economic power. In fact, the growth in overseas missions by the new religions has basically paralleled Japanese economic growth and the expansion of Japanese corporations overseas. The new religions are thus relying on the overall economic power of Japanese society for their own economic foundation. While it is true that groups which have accumulated financial largess tend to aim for even greater market penetration by attempting greater overseas expansion, it must also be understood that the establishment of overseas branches is not necessarily a group's optimum course of action, considered from the perspective of economic efficiency alone. Though it may not be possible to acquire a clear understanding of the precise "balance sheet" involved, when one considers the number of overseas members and the likely investment required to produce those members it becomes apparent that the establishment of an overseas branch represents a gamble. A long-term perspective may produce a different evaluation of the cost benefits, but when one limits consideration to current group finances, it is certain to be more effective for a group to devote its energies to proselytization efforts within Japan.

At the same time, a religion's activities are not ruled by economic principles alone. When the path to expansion overseas is opened, that expansion is supported by a religious goal, the nature of which differs from group to group. Apart from that factor, a group accrues certain benefits by the acquisition of foreign members, and those benefits can be assumed relatively the same for all groups. For example, it may be linked to the confidence of knowing that one's faith has international viability. That, in turn, may contribute to a rise in status for the group within Japan. Particularly for those new religious groups that have tended to be viewed with disdain in Japan, the ability to claim Western members represents no small feat.

In 1973, the Sōka Gakkai's American organization NSA held its tenth All-America General Conference in its new large Shohondō hall at its Head Temple in the city of Fujinomiya. Called the Shōhondō Convention, this conference drew 3,000 participants not only from the United States, but from all parts of North and South America, including Canada, Mexico, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. Then-California governor Ronald Reagan even sent a message of greeting to the conference.

That October and November, many Japanese weekly magazines ran articles covering the event that appeared under such headlines as "Blue-Eyed Members Fill Head Temple" (*Asahi geinō*); "From Hippy to Happy: 3,000 Blue-Eyed NSA Members Gather at Temple Taisekiji" (*Shūkan Yomiuri*); "3,000 Blue-Eyed Members Gather at Big Rally for Sōka Gakkai Head Temple" (*Shūkan myōjō*); and "The Secret of 'Tears and Light' Capturing the Souls of 200,000 Blue-Eyed People: George Williams, NSA General Director" (*Sandei Mainichi*).

It is striking that these sources almost as if by mutual agreement uniformly adopted the key expression "blue eyes" to describe the attendees at the meeting. Needless to say, since they actually came from all parts of the Americas, the participants were not literally all blue-eyed, but overlooking that point, the expression "3,000 blue-eyed members" unintentionally reveals the complex that Japan's media have when it comes to the West and Westerners. Likewise, immediately prior to the Sōka Gakkai convention the weekly Shūkan gendai carried an article about foreign members of the new religion Reiyūkai, the title of which adopted the same key expression, proclaiming "Blue-Eyed Believers Arrive to Experience Religious Practice." Given that kind of perception of foreigners, it would not be an unnatural strategy for a new religion to pour energy into foreign missions out of the unspoken aim of enhancing its social status.

5. *The Impact of Globalization*

While the success of a group's overseas proselytization has an impact on its domestic growth, the two are not necessarily in direct proportion. Too, even if a single group gains large numbers of new members in one geographical region, it may be a failure elsewhere. The mere fact that a group has been engaged in proselytization for many years does not necessarily prove an advantage. It is not easy to discuss the factors that go into the success of overseas missions. Attempts have been made to consider the issue both from the perspective of the conditions of the receiving society and the characteristics and attractiveness of the advancing religious group, but the analysis promises to be a relatively complex undertaking compared to the analysis of developmental factors for new religious groups within Japan.

Rather than arguing why the overseas mission of a given group was or was not successful in a given geographical area, it is more interesting to adopt a macroscopic perspective and ask why so many different new religious groups suddenly became enthusiastic about overseas missions soon after the end of World War II. The answer would seem to be that the shock experienced by Japanese defeat in war fostered the

globalization of Japanese religion in the same way as it did internationalization of the country as a whole. But stepping back to view the accelerated overseas expansion by Japanese religions even more broadly still, one can suggest that Japan has entered into an era of free competition in religious propagation, a phenomenon that has been accelerating since the nineteenth century. Needless to say, the growth of a religion or religions beyond the borders of state, culture and race has been observed since ancient times. It was precisely this process that resulted in Christianity's growth to the status of a world religion, for example, and other cases that predate Christianity can be found in the religions of Zoroastrianism and Mithraism. In that sense, the multinational type of proselytization is not unusual, and for that reason there are some who argue that it is unnecessary to even suggest it as a distinct type. Despite such criticism, however, I have elected to preserve the concept here because of a perception that the current phenomenon represents a qualitatively different aspect and includes elements at variance from previous kinds of religious propagation. The concept's significance lies in the mechanism that situates individual religions in a condition of free competition and the people who select them in a situation where they can act in response to genuine consumer desires. Admittedly, it is hard to assert that this mechanism itself only appeared with the modern period, but it is certain that it has become much more remarkable during these times and that in turn due to its close relationship to the advent of the so-called "information culture" and to the overall rise in education levels.

In turn, it is the concept of "globalization" that has formed the background for the appearance of this type of proselytism. This concept is not usually invoked in discussions of religious phenomena, but it is likely to become increasingly important to them. Here it must be emphasized that globalization is being used in discrimination from the common concept of internationalization. Internationalization implies a deepening relationality between discrete systems of state or nation. In contrast, the uniqueness of globalization is found in its effective transcending of such frameworks of state and nation.

When one thus rethinks the issue of overseas proselytism in light of the advancing process of globalization, it allows us to propose three proselytism ideal types: (1) the multinational type; (2) the networking type; and (3) the "stateless" type (a type with little or no national identity). At the present stage, overseas missions of those new religions not of the overseas assignment type tend to be basically of the first, multinational type. But some also exhibit elements of the networking type, and the "stateless" type may appear in the future as well.

As an example of a religion featuring aspects of the networking type, one can consider the "world peace ceremony" and erection of "peace poles" by the Byakkō Shinkōkai (and its offshoot, the World Peace Prayer Society). The peace ceremony achieved global scale from the mid-1980s, with flags being displayed from countries around the world, and a ceremonial chanting of the expression "May peace prevail on earth." The peace pole movement likewise involves the erection of wooden poles around the world, each bearing the same prayer for global peace. Movements such as these do not necessarily correspond directly to organizational expansion, and they have been continued by Japanese and foreign believers with the additional aid of outside volunteers. While keeping the central role of the Byakkō Shinkōkai on a low key, the movement attempts to enroll a wide range of people interested in peace, giving it potential characteristics of a networking-type movement.

As to the "stateless" type of religious propagation, I mean that the original homeland or national and cultural origins of the religion are not specifically noticed or raised as particular issues by followers, with the result that this type tends not to appear until globalization has progressed to a substantial degree. The stateless type has not yet appeared among Japan's new religions. It may be, however, that the forms of proselytism employed by the Zen centers in America and Europe can be viewed as falling into this category.

Needless to say, globalization occurs everywhere, but it occurs at differing rates depending on the area involved. It seems certain, however, that the wave of globalization has deepened in postwar Japan, and it is the new movements and groups that represent the leading edge of that wave in the sphere of religion. This fact may be easier to understand if one considers it in the context of the activities of foreign new religious movements in Japan, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Hare Krishna, Unification Church, Pure Gospel Church, and other more recent groups like the Family of Love, all of which have become the center of media attention in recent years. With origins overseas, these new religions are expanding their activities in a situation of market competition with locally produced Japanese new religions.

CHAPTER TEN

The Age of Religious Information

1. An Inverted View

Even a very small religious movement can become the subject of intense media attention if it fulfills certain conditions. This fact was underlined in 1992 by the case of the new religious group Ai no Kazoku ("Family of Love," known earlier as the "Children of God" and later as "The Family"). Charges made against the group included engaging in free sex and the kidnapping and sexual molestation of children. Soon thereafter, attention shifted to the Unification Church when it became known that two popular figures from the entertainment world, Yamazaki Hiroko and Sakurada Junko, had expressed a desire to be married in one of the Unification Church's mass wedding ceremonies. The Church had been the focus in several spates of critical media coverage since the late 1960s, and from the start its mass wedding ceremony was one focal point for that criticism.

There is at least one point in common to these criticisms and those directed at other such groups as Iesu no Hakobune and Aum Shinrikyō: each group was perceived as posing an assault on the traditional Japanese family system. Individuals often joined these groups despite direct opposition from family members, and what's more they would neither return to their families nor respond to their inquiries. In some cases, they did respond, but only to lodge reverse criticisms of those families. Some parents view drawing young people into religious movements in this way as a dangerous instance of "religious kidnapping" or brainwashing. Furthermore, many ordinary people are sympathetic to the sense of danger that those parents feel, since it is widely accepted in Japan that religion should not disrupt family ties.

The strong backlash to religious movements that challenge the traditional Japanese family system has been especially noteworthy in the postwar period, particularly since the years of high-speed economic growth that began in the late 1950s. Few attempts have been made to consider the origins of this reaction, however, perhaps because it seems all too obvious at first glance that anything that challenged family ties would provoke a harsh response. But upon consideration, it seems possible that the backlash is also drawing energy from the fact that the family in Japanese society in fact has effectively already been breaking down. The fact that new religions can be described

as being popular among young people would seem to indicate something beyond an expression of interest in religion by the young. There is the sense that these young people have turned to religion in ways entirely unanticipated by their parents. For an uprising to take place that involves children who forsake their parents and homes to run after religion suggests that there are parents who have had almost no influence over the spiritual development of their children. Naturally, when such children reach the age of independence, it does not seem likely that they will listen to their parents' warnings to not be "deceived by religion."

The fact that the influence of families on the formation of values and views of life is being steadily eroded in Japan is undeniable. Already by the elementary and middle-school level, the cascade of information available to students makes it difficult for teachers to assert their superior position when it comes to the knowledge they possess, and parents are even more vulnerable. Being only a few years younger or older can make it harder to share the same knowledge. A reversal is occurring particularly in the area of access to information, whereby it is the younger generations that excel when it comes to handling information. Given this reality, it is becoming more difficult than ever for parents to transmit values and views of life to their children. The mechanism that appears to be work appears to be one in which the growing unease of parents unable to understand their children is getting channeled into a violent backlash whenever a religious moment emerges that evinces elements challenging familyism.

Might it be possible to view not just the backlash against the challenges that new religions pose for the family system but also most of the criticism of these movements in general as merely the obverse side of the vague sense of unease that society has felt toward them? The tenor of religious criticism from the Meiji Period through quite recent times contains a number of noticeably recurring elements, particularly with regard to the rationale for the frequent application of the label "immoral and deviant religion" (*inshi jakyō*) to suspicious religious groups. Specifically, there are repeated accusations that such groups are involved with or engage in (1) sexual improprieties, (2) conspicuous financial abuse, or (3) fraudulent healing practices, separately or in combination. Accusations of sexual impropriety typically take the form of allegations that the religious founder or leader has engaged in immoral acts, or that there is a sexual component to gatherings of believers. Imputations of financial abuse include allegations concerning enormous sums of money being directed to the construction of religious edifices, the coercion of donations from believers, the lack of financial accountability, and transparency in the handling of funds, with overall emphasis being

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placed on the sheer volume of the sums involved. Charges of fraudulent healing practices usually involve allegations about the deceptive nature of "spirit purification" and other techniques employed by new religions, the large number of people who have suffered harm owing to their reliance on such, and the fact that such practices tend to be aimed at deceiving the poorly educated. In sum, the generic criticism of an "immoral" and "deviant" religion might be to allege that it "uses the pretext of healing to engage in deception, encourages sexually immoral activity, and seeks to defraud people of as much money as possible."

To answer why it is that these three elements have been the focus of so much of the criticism, we might begin by reversing those criticisms to see what set of values are implicitly being extolled as positive. The proposed "proper" form of religious activity implicitly being suggested is one that combines sexual asceticism or purity, honorable poverty, and ritual activities that do not violate common sense.   One might note that the values that this image endorses somewhat resemble those of Confucianism, as well as those of Protestant Christianity as brought to Japan in the Meiji Period. Does this allow us to then conclude that Confucianism, which has effectively lost its power in modern Japan, or Protestant Christianity, which claims no more than one-percent of the Japanese population as followers, in fact have a disproportionate influence on the Japanese people? It would appear difficult to make such a bold claim, and suggests that we should investigate this point a bit deeper.

2. The Heyday of Religious Information

New religions frequently get brought up as an issue in the press at times when there is a perceived surge in interest—a "boom," as such developments are often labeled in Japan—in religion. Talk of the country being in the middle a "religious boom" has been bandied about considerably since the 1980s. In its early years, the talk was that the country was experiencing a "return to religion" that ostensibly began in the 1970s. The justifications for making such claims usually came from the results of surveys of Japanese religious attitudes undertaken by the Education Ministry's Agency for Cultural Affairs and public broadcaster NHK. Those surveys showed that beginning around 1973 there was a turnaround in rates of personal religious faith, with figures that had once been in steady decline now reversing themselves (NHK Survey Section: Japanese Religious Attitudes).

The expression "return to religion" eventually fell out of use, but the theory that

Japan has been experiencing a "religion boom" has persisted. That said, as I noted earlier this "boom" should more properly be understood as a surge in the breadth and depth of religious information. People are not being attracted in increasing numbers to religion itself so much as religion is becoming increasingly popular as an item to include among the information that gets distributed on a mass basis. The criterion for whether a movement is going through a boom is thus not membership growth but instead the degree to which that movement has become a popular topic of conversation or the subject of media coverage. Furthermore, it must be noted that the nature and tone of the information that the media purveys about religion tends to encourage the public to view religion with a jaundiced eye.

While the notions of "religion boom" and "religious information boom" may be mutually related, they must be treated as fundamentally different phenomena. The former may be characterized by a rising interest in actual matters of religion and by increasing numbers of people taking a personal interest in the religious life. In contrast, the latter is differentiated by the fact that religion merely constitutes a frequent topic of discussion in the popular consumer media. One can assume that a surge of information about religion being delivered generally occurs in response to rising levels of genuine interest in religious issues; however, in the present information age this sequence can be reversed or both booms may occur simultaneously without specific relation to the other.

It is not particularly unusual for a minor movement to become the sudden focus of media interest. Once a group is recognized for its value as a popular news topic, the amount of information distributed about it usually multiplies. Furthermore, popular media attention during these moments tends to be concentrate on only movement even if there are other similar groups, since presenting information about multiple entities tends to dilute the information value of any one movement on its own. In turn, the cycle of information consumption becomes shorter and shorter, with new groups and movements quickly becoming the focus of popular attention, and just as quickly forgotten. The topical nature of the news likewise has a strong tendency to be mocking and critical. It is difficult to label such characteristics as indicative of a surge of interest in religion qua religion.

A new religious movement's social influence also has a significant role to play in making it the focus of attention on the information level. For example, the popularity of Sōka Gakkai as a topic of information interest is only natural given the considerable social impact it has had in the postwar period. In fact, reportage on Sōka Gakkai accounts for the greatest share of all media coverage of religion in the postwar

period. One could even say that it is only when a numerically unsubstantive group does something "newsworthy," as touched on above, that it becomes the focus of heavy media attention.

In this regard, the pace at which news gains a life of its own has accelerated in the information age. Once a new religious group becomes the object of media attention, it remains subject to that scrutiny solely at the level of interesting copy until every last piece of information with any value has been wrung out of it. A movement's original goals or religious ideals are of little interest; the media will exploit it strictly as a source of "information" grist for the mill and expand and blow out of proportion any feature that can be made to appear amusing. These entertaining details are then reported at every opportunity, with the cycle stopping only when consumer boredom sets in. The tendency for the media to operate in this fashion could already be seen to a certain extent around the time when groups like Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō and Jiu were objects of interest, but as the media industry has grown and developed it has become particularly striking. The 1950s was a period during which new weekly magazines appeared one after another, while the circulations of old standbys rose to one million readers. By the late 1960s, television had taken on the central role in broadcast media. Thus, it could be said the trappings of the information age were already well in place by 1980 when the "Ark of Jesus" (Iesu no Hakobune) case occurred, an affair saw a religious group with no more than twenty or thirty members become the focus of media attention for upwards of a year. The episode symbolized an age in which new religions have been turned into playthings by and for the information society.

3. Text and Image

The reportage on the new religions has been gradually changing owing to the fact that television now leads the charge when it comes to providing media coverage. The differences in quality and effect between the text-based reporting found in newspapers and magazines and the image-based reporting that characterizes television are considerable. With print media, the perspective and tone of the party providing the information is delivered in a relatively set way. One could characterize it as having a strong "fixed opinion" dimension. The information delivered by television in contrast carries with it the strong sense that it is being presented live and undigested. The apt characterization here may be to say the "raw data" aspect is strong.

When print media undertake a campaign of focused coverage on a topic such

as the emergence of a new religion, their readers have few means of discerning the degree to which the articles contain deliberate falsifications or fabrications. Since such campaigns are designed to achieve a set purpose, any information that does not support it is eliminated when producing the final product. The series of critical articles the newspaper *Yorozu chōhō* ran against Renmonkyō readily demonstrated this tendency, as did the similar effort the *Chūō shinbun* later undertook against Tenrikyō. Fewer instances of overt fabrication have occurred in the postwar period, but publications still have run any number of articles that relied on groundless speculation. It remains basically true even today that the perspective an author chooses to discuss any given religious movement sets the general tone for the article or articles that follow.

This principle played out vividly in the media coverage of the aforementioned Ark of Jesus movement. Articles in the Sankei shinbun newspaper about the group and its leader Sengoku Iesu (Takeyoshi) took a critical stance from the outset, while the *Sandei Mainichi* weekly opted for a more defensive posture. As a result, there was a clear difference in the content of each newspaper's reportage. Articles focusing on the Ark of Jesus began appearing in each publication in 1980, and their coverage continued through the next year. The titles of their pieces alone are sufficient to convey the publications' different perspectives. Sankei titles typically ran along the lines of "The Bizarre Lifestyle of Ten Women in the Ark of Jesus," "Self-Centered 'Founder' Abducts Others' Daughters While Offering Reward for Runaway Adopted Daughter," "'False Prophet' Sengoku Iesu Sits Pretty on Women's Labor," and "Answer Our Doubts, Sengoku! Our Daughters Have Completely Changed!" The *Sandei Mainichi*, meanwhile, offered articles with such titles as "A Confession of Suffering: 'Ark' Adrift for Two Years," "Confession of 7 'Runaway Women': Why We Went Aboard the Ark," and "[Celebrity writer/poltician] Nosaka Akiyuki Interviews Sengoku Iesu: 'How Do You Save People from the Hell of Loneliness?'" Such titles suggest a perspective that was more sympathetic to the founder Sengoku Takeyoshi (then known as Sengoku Iesu) and his followers. In all likelihood, people who read only the articles in *Sankei shinbun* came away with a strong disgust for both the Ark of Jesus movement and Sengoku himself. Readers of the *Sandei Mainichi* articles, on the other hand, likely came away with feelings of sympathy for Ark of Jesus members. It is worth noting here that the same *Sandei Mainichi* adopted a harsh reportorial stance from the start when it later covered the Aum Shinrikyō group. In short, the approach taken in a newspaper's coverage tends to be decided at the outset, and there is little chance that a newspaper will change its perspective midway through a series of articles. People perusing these articles, of

course, are left with the choice of whether to believe or disbelieve the coverage, but it is difficult to expect the average reader to discern the truth of the matter based solely on their personal judgment.

Television coverage tends to be less opinionated by comparison, with viewers having increased latitude to make their own judgements. Granted, elements such as the angle from which a television camera films an individual can have a strong impact on viewers, but the latter still can potentially receive far more information from an image than a program producer might intend. For example, despite the fact that most of the programming showing the Unification Church's mass wedding ceremonies took a critical perspective, the coverage nonetheless resulted in some numbers of sympathetic or at least interested viewers directing inquiries to the group. The images presented by the television camera are seen by some viewers in a different light from that intended by program directors and producers. Furthermore, some viewers have sharp powers of observation. Consequently, there is a fundamental difference between how television viewers and how readers of print media react to coverage of a given story or event.

The frequency with which stories relating to new religions have appeared on television has rapidly risen since the start of the 1990s. Television specials with titles like "Women Founders of New Religions in the Heisei Era" have been popping up on one or another network. While some have taken a critical perspective, the fact that one television's selling points is "entertainment" has led most productions to emphasize that aspect in their programming. Even so, audience reaction is still not uniform in such cases. Some may merely laugh at an amusing scene and give it no second thought, while others may take such programming as an opportunity to reconfirm their routine suspicions that the new religions are fraudulent. Still others may have their perceptions changed and conclude that the activities of the new religions are not so unusual after all, while some may even become sufficiently interested in a group's founder to wish to hear more about his or her teachings.

It is too early to predict what effect such presentations will ultimately have on the new religions as a cultural system as these opportunities for the faces of their founders and followers to be presented unembellished increase. At very least, the effects of television programming promise to be much more diverse compared to those coming from the highly opinionated coverage of the print media, and we are likely see more instances where the impact of the reportage follows a vector at variance with what a program's producers intended.

If video-based information does indeed have this property, then religious groups

are likely to hasten with adding the use of this visual medium to their proselytizing tactics. Filtering their image through the mass media produces effects that go beyond— or at least create a different impression than—that of the raw, unfiltered image of a new religious movement on its own. Even the existence of those new religions of relatively large scale will go unnoticed by most citizens if the mass media does not cover their activities. Conversely, the sense that even the smallest group really does exist is multiplied when its activities get such coverage. It therefore follows naturally that new religions would themselves want to attempt to exploit the mesmerizing power of the media. Further, the groups may come to the conclusion that the negatively slanted impression that the mass media has conventionally gotten across may be reoriented in a more favorable direction by providing visual images of their own.

While word-of-mouth remains the main method of proselytization adopted by the new religions, auxiliary means have evolved with the times. They have already added approaching people directly, using printed literature, offering street corner religious demonstrations, and utilizing radio broadcasts to their proselytization toolkits, and conditions are now emerging wherein performances fully conscious of the programs about religion shown on television can be thought of as another tool. Someone like Kitamura Sayo (of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō) seems to have been fully cognizant of this aspect of her performance when she stood before television news cameras, even though the medium had not yet fully matured in her day. The emergence of the information society appears to be encouraging new religious to make themselves newsworthy, as it were, a development particularly noticeable in the performances of Aum Shinrikyō leaders.

4. New Religions in the Age of Television

The nature of the religious information boom becomes all the more clear when one looks coverage of Kōfuku no Kagaku (Happy Science) and Aum Shinrikyō, two groups that became topics of great interest in the early 1990s. Kōfuku no Kagaku had been known to some for several years already, but it was not until 1991 that it was bathed squarely in the spotlight of media attention. Yet, one year later, we see that the frequency of such coverage had dropped off dramatically. One could cite any number of reasons for this sudden drop off: the group changed the orientation of its activities; it backed off from its previous esoteric nature, a shift marked by founder Ōkawa Ryūhō making his television debut; and reports came of the group losing members. But bluntly

speaking it all came down to the group having lost its "newsworthiness." Coming up with glib labels like "bubble religion" (a reference to the speculative asset price bubble that developed in the Japanese economy in the late 1980s) took precedence, while the religious significance of such a group's emergence went uninvestigated as the media quickly shifted attention to finding its next target. Such a trajectory was typical for the religion information boom.

With Aum Shinrikyō, on the other hand, the media remained interested in the group for a long time relative to its size due to the fact that information deemed newsworthy emerged about it in successive waves. Initially, the media seems to have decided Aum had news value and issued report after report about it, but in time the group itself came to aggressively make itself an object of media attention. Public distrust and contempt of Aum manifested itself suddenly, when allegations emerged regarding possible group connections to the disappearance of Yokohama lawyer Sakamoto Tsutsumi and his family in November 1989. Earlier trouble between the group and parents of members was not so well known. Right when the official investigation into Sakamoto's disappearance had faltered and rumors about the case were outstripping facts, group leader Asahara Shōkō announced he would stand the following February in the elections to Japan's House of Representatives. The catchy campaign song his party created could be heard in many Tokyo streets and his followers made themselves a visible presence (in the end, Asahara received only a miniscule number of votes and lost). Aum further showed signs that it would continue to provide fresh news copy when it was investigated that October in the village of Namino, Kumamoto Prefecture, on suspicion of violating the National Land-Use Act. A pattern then developed wherein the group would step up its activities in some place, the local community would rise up to oppose their presence, and the news media would cover the entire affair.

Aum Shinrikyō appears to have developed an aggressive policy toward promoting itself through the media from an early date in this overall sequence of events. When Kōfuku no Kagaku was becoming the center of media attention, Aum's Asahara attempted to raise his own profile by publically challenging the group. Asahara and his lieutenants were likewise aggressive in their appearances on popular television programs, clearly demonstrating that the televised visual media had taken its place as a mode of proselytization. This author personally asked Asahara about his decision in 1991 to appear on a popular television program hosted by the comedy duo called "Tonneruzu" and he replied that it was "another means of forming an affiliation," by which he meant attracting converts. Of Aum's entire range of activities, only those of

a "socially disturbing" nature have been made the focus of public discussion; as such examples show, however, more attention should be paid to how fully the group took into account the kinds of things that spark interest in today's information-based society in developing its proselytization strategies.

By way of illustration, more than a few young people found some aspects of Aum to be interesting even before the incidents that made the group notorious were known. I personally recall occasions in the classroom where student interest would suddenly perk up when I showed them an Aum-produced animated film. The video depicted the way in which Aum understood supernatural powers, and appeared to simulate the curiosity of many of the young viewers. Of course, in purely numerical terms the majority of them also formed a critical, negative opinion of Aum from the video, but the fact that so many students seemed to find something of interest is suggestive for when considering new religions in the age of television.

In contrast, most people from older age cohorts reacted to Aum almost from the start with what might be described as instinctive rejection. While Asahara's phiyscal appearance was part of the reason for this, the most substantial reason was in fact their dread of the value system the group promoted that appeared rather foreign to those of everyday society. That fear can be readily seen in the opposition movements that arose in each place where Aum settled. One gets the sense that, aside from the challenge that Aum posed to the traditional family system as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the group in some sense also posed ones to the local community that were perceived as threats to existing human relationships.

The very fact that Aum's ideal of a religious community has stirred up such insecurities in modern Japan can be fairly called a reflection of modern society. When the debate was based on religious issues, the group insisted that their way of life represented a return to the original form of "home-leaving" found in primitive Buddhism. But when viewed from the perspective of the "reflection of society," the most important factor was not whether the Aum way of life matched that of primitive Buddhism but rather how this orientation had the effect of heightening the insecurity of families and local communities. Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution proclaims freedom of belief, but the real attitude of society as expressed through the media appears to be that such freedom of belief should be recognized only so far as it does not represent the slightest threat to the secular order.

5. Criticism from Intellectuals

Criticism of the new religions would actually be a good deal easier if it were being made from the perspective of a general rejection of religion. There is no life after death; things like "spirit power" and the "spirit world" do not exist; gods and buddhas are no more than the fanciful inventions of human beings; churches and other religious organizations would be unnecessary if the government merely worked harder on its social service policies; and so on. Even the harshest critique of the new religions would gain in consistency if the debate were being advanced from this kind of more general criticism.

However, such a theoretical perspective would also make it impossible to limit criticism to the new religions alone. For example, in this scientific age how convincing is it for adherents of Pure Land Buddhism to argue for the existence of such a paradisical place? Isn't the Zen sect's concept of *satori* nothing more than a form of psychological therapy? Isn't it really too simplistic to think that sins and impurities can be swept away by two or three flicks of a Shintō purification wand (*heihaku*)? What logic lies behind the claim that the death of Jesus Christ serves to redeem the sins of humanity? In short, when one starts from the perspective of a general critique of religion, doubts and suspicions come to be directed equally toward all religions. Furthermore, many practices falling into the class of quasi-religious traditional custom like funerals and seasonal observances cannot avoid being exposed to the same kind of critique.

But criticism of the new religions did not arise as part of such a general critique. Indeed, comment on those lines has been almost non-existent, and the foundations for engaging in such are surprisingly flimsy. One common pattern since the prewar period had been for members of existing major religions to lodge criticisms of the new groups while exempting their own. They generally did so based on the assumption that the object of their attacks will not respond in kind, a suggestion corroborated by the fact that one sees such criticism less frequently in present-day Japan as the new religions gain a more powerful voice. Most of the "religion commentators" in the media who make a living off their critiques of the new religions, together with those professional scholars who likewise align themselves with the media, usually do not provide much in the way of firm foundations for their complaints.

An examination of the religion information boom shows that derisive and negative perspectives on the new religions are in the mainstream. The critical views conveyed deviate little from Meiji period portrayals of the new religions as immoral and deviant. The use of the mass media to criticize the new religions was pioneered by the intellectual

class of that era. While the very notion of such a class is somewhat dubious today, during Meiji times a stratum of higher-educated intellectuals unquestionably took the lead when it came to forming social opinion in discussions of the new religions. Little detailed study has been done regarding the grounds those intellectuals used for their charge that the new religions were "immoral and deviant." Still, at least two rationale can be perceived as having been used to justify their criticisms. The first is what may be termed social "common sense." This holds that criticisms of one or another movement as being "anti-social" or "violated common sense" were based on the assumption that the critic's sense of values was generally equivalent to that of society at large. The other rationale is that they consciously or unconsciously identified with the conventional values of Japan's established religions (sectarian Buddhism and shrine Shinto). Such a stance easily leads to the line of argument that the movement at issue does not transmit the "genuine" form of what religion should be.

It is interesting to contrast the common sense argument with the fact some business leaders held in high regard even those movements that were still little known to society at large, seeing them as potentially beneficial to industry. A major part of this was the hopes entrepreneurs had for those movements that claimed to be useful when it came to enhancing individual ability. The facts of a movement being new or having religious elements were of little concern. So long as it was not perceived as fundamentally anti-social, its more dubious elements could be overlooked.

Perhaps surprisingly to modern Japanese, critics relied on Confucian ethics and the existence of Christianity to support conventional norms and the image of established religions in their censuring of the new religions. However, the fact is that when Japanese social "common sense" is distilled down to its essence, the product that remains is something akin to Confucian ethics. These ethics might appear antiquated and obsolete when enumerated as the traditional "five ethical relationships" (i.e., those between lord and vassal, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend) and the "five constant virtues" (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and good faith), but their status as the broad ideals that underpin social common sense remains unassailable. Likewise, the ascetic ideal of Christianity was without doubt held in high regard in that it was seen as fostering public order and morality. Furthermore, both Confucian ethics and Christianity were easy to rely in that they represented existing systems of ethics and religion that were accompanied by clear standards of value.

While people are usually not consciously aware of a society's "common sense,"

they do experience insecurity when actions are being undertaken to drastically erode it. The reaction is swift particularly when an open challenge is directed toward values that formally are treasured but in fact are in the process of collapsing. It is difficult for family and local community to take the leading role in value formation in the age of the information society, yet resistance remains strong to the idea that new religions might play that part instead.

The social information that the new religions collect at their lowest organizational levels is living and vital, and touches on all kinds of issues that people believe can be solved by religion. Given their opportunities to come into contact with large numbers of believers and visitors, there is no doubt that the new religions can get a clear view of the problems confronting society. Of course, their perceptions may be lacking when it comes to the kind of statistical precision or analytical acumen wielded by a sociologist, but the experiential insight that such groups possess has a heft that is impossible to replace by other means. In short, the new religions are intimately familiar with what people worry about and are attempting in their own way to address those concerns.

Meanwhile, little has changed when it comes to the critical stance toward the new religions that emanates from the popular media. Criticism may be the expression of a certain system of values, but that which has been aimed at the new religions appears to have borne little fruit. That fact, too, is not hard to understand when one considers how difficult it has been historically to reach a point where the new religions are straighforwardly regarded as simply another religious phenomena. The religion-information boom has exposed the limitations of the so-called intellectual class when it comes to matters of religion.

Chapter eleven

A New Model?

1. "New New-Religions"

If one emphasizes the fact that the new religions are reflections of each era and society, then one must ignore the differences between those religious groups founded in the period from late-Edo to the Meiji Restoration, and those established in more recent years. But not all movements reflect their society equally; at one end of the spectrum are those movements that precisely reflect the social conditions of their time, while at the other end one may find groups that do not appear to do so nearly so closely. It is quite difficult, therefore, to distinguish differences that arise from dissimilarities in historical context, say, from those resulting from dissimilarities inherent in the movements themselves.

This factor alone forms one reason for the confusion that has arisen over the significance of the term "new new religions" (*shin shin shūkyō*) itself. The term was first used by a certain segment of sociologists of religion in Japan around the end of the 1970s. It was quickly seized upon by the media, however, and its original meaning substantially distorted. In time, the misused term became generally accepted, and was thus adopted by an increasing number of researchers as well, a development distinctly characteristic of the information age.

Nishiyama Shigeru, a sociologist of religion, is generally credited as the first proponent of the term. In the beginning, Nishiyama defined "new new religion" as "new religious that, while of small scale, have recently and rapidly expanded their numbers by picking up the detritus and excess baggage left behind by the large-scale new religions in the process of adapting to society." He adds that these new groups tended to be of two kinds, namely, those of a "sectarian" nature characterized by millennial fundamentalism, and those of a more "cultish" cast, whose doctrines were characterized by mysticism heavily imbued with magic. In concrete, the former were typified by groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, while groups like Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan (World Divine Light Association) fell into the latter group.

In 1978, the year preceding publication of Nishiyama's article, the magazine *Kokusai shūkyō nyūsu* issued a special edition devoted to "new new religious movements." The issue introduced such groups as GLA (God Light Association), Sekai

Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, Yamagishikai, and Jehovah's Witnesses, evidence that a certain number of researchers at the time possessed the impression that a new type of new religious movement was growing at phenomenal rates. At the same time, this does not mean that it was believed at that point in time that all those new religions which were established or came to prominence after the 1970s belonged to the new type. From around the mid-1980s, however, the notion that any new religion that had appeared was to be known as a "new new religion" became widespread through the mass media. The interpretation took hold that new new religions were simply the newest incarnation of the new religions. The mistake was inevitable, given the fact that the significance attending the expression had been understood literally.

The history of the new religions now extends over a century and a half, and on repeated occasions during that period groups have incorporated new forms of teachings, methods of proselytization and principles of organization. Even one and the same group has often exhibited "minor design changes" in response to changing times. It seems to be particular characteristic of the new religions that they never tire of modifying the form of their activities in response to changing conditions or the stage of their development. However, it remains to be asked to what degree particularly momentous changes are mixed in among all those other changes of a more minor nature. If the concept of new new religions was suggested as one step in that process, the addition of another "new" to the existing "new religions" may have significance. Unfortunately, few people seem to exhibit that grasp when they employ the expression new new religion as is most commonly done.

Since religious movements are continually coming into being, it is understandable that people should have the impulse to give a new name to the newest movements. But the mere fact that a movement is the newest to arrive does not automatically mean that its contents are also new. In fact, even those groups that some recent journalists have collectively called the "gods of the Heisei era" exhibit very little of a new nature when compared to previous new religions. For example, the Shinmei Aishinkai, with headquarters in Tokyo's Ōta Ward, is a group which garnered considerable attention beginning in the early 1990s. The founder Komatsu Shin'yō began undertaking religious activities centering on the practice of "purification" after undergoing a mystical experience. The wife of a factory manager, Komatsu had an unexpected religious experience in 1976. The stages of her experience proceeded roughly as follows: first, the spirits of her ancestors descended into her hands which were held up for prayer. Riding upon a dragon, the bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokitesvara) entered her body.

Accompanied by music called the "dance of prosperity," the *kami* Amaterasu ōmikami appeared. As a result of this experiential process, Komatsu came to understand her own religious mission.

Komatsu's mystical experience itself is intriguing, but it does not go beyond anything found in the experiences of earlier religious founders. Her subsequent religious activities likewise stay within the range of activities demonstrated by previous new religions. The "procession of the age of the gods," in which Komatsu's followers arrayed themselves as *kami* from the earliest Japanese myths and paraded through local parts of town, was unique and had the strong tinge of a publicity stunt, but the activity itself should be understood as a characteristic of the movement's individuality and not something radically new. The group's distinctive "purification ritual" had as its primary objective the purification of domestic Japan, but it occasionally included elements aiming at the solution of international issues such as the "east-west cold war" and "return of the northern islands." That breadth of vision suggests the influence of the information society, but the group's main everyday activities were centered on the dispensing of practical aid to the individual.

 Other movements adopt foreign words such as "aura" and "channeling" in the terminology of their teachings and ritual. Such foreign terminology is symbolic of the "modern," futuristic, and "exotic" emphases in these groups. But while such terminology appears radically new on the surface, the actual specifics are for the most part little more than the refurbishing of concepts in circulation since long ago. The practice of channeling, for example, is, in fact, little different from the traditional Japanese practices of spirit possession and mediumship. Other new groups claim to perform counseling by calling forth the spirits of dead ancestors and relatives. These activities are not only the basic stock-in-trade of the earlier new religions, but they also have links that go back farther to Japanese folk religion.

2. An Elusive Concept

In contrast to Nishiyama's more narrow usage, Shimazono Susumu has suggested that "all new religious groups (movements) that have experienced phenomenal expansion and growth since the 1970s and 1980s are 'new new religions.'" In short, Shimazono deemphasizes the actual age of the group in favor of emphasizing the era in which the group actually underwent expansion. In this group he includes movements ranging from the Jehovah's Witnesses (founded in nineteenth century America), to Shinnyoen (founded in 1936), to the much more recent Worldmates and Kōfuku no

Kagaku (Happy Science). Shimazono suggests the use of the term "new new religion" in contrast to the "old new religions." I have earlier discussed how the religious system represented by the new religions has been characterized by the periodic handing on of the baton to a new generation. From that perspective, Shimazono's classification does no more than to focus attention on the most recent of these generational transitions. Further, even though it is claimed that all of the groups in this category have shared the same kind of expansion, there is substantial difference between groups in the significance of that expansion. Among the new new religions listed by Shimazono are some whose numbers are already on the decline, and in some geographical areas, the groups did not expand as the result of a generational change.

At the time the expression "new new religion" first began to gain currency, the category was typically used to refer to groups like Agonshū, Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, Sūkyō Mahikari, and Shinnyoen. These groups certainly underwent rapid expansion from the 1970s on, and little by little they began to incorporate new elements as well. But the fact that newly appearing movements gradually incorporate new elements is no more than a fundamental characteristic of the religious system represented by the new religions, and not a feature which became particularly noteworthy in the 1970s.

Under its founder Kiriyama Seiyū, Agonshū is a new religion with links to esoteric Buddhism, a natural result considering Kiriyama's earlier experience at receiving ordination within the Kongōin Branch of the Shingon Sect of esoteric Buddhism. One common characteristic of Buddhist-related new religions originating in the prewar period such as Honmon Butsuryūshū, Kokuchūkai, and Reiyūkai is their connection to established Buddhist sects of the Nichiren (Lotus) lineage. New religions formed under the influence of Shingon esotericism represent a minority, though they are not entirely unknown. The new religion of Gedatsukai, for example, with its spiritual headquarters in Saitama Prefecture was founded by Okano Seiken after undergoing ordination in the Daigo Branch of the Shingon Sect early in the Showa period, with the result that the group continues to exhibit some degree of influence from esoteric Buddhism. The group Nakayama Shingo Shōshū can likewise be included within the Shingon lineage.

The esoteric practice proclaimed by Kiriyama was said to lead to the acquisition of supernatural powers, and its high popularity among young people should be considered a reflection of current times. But the fact that alleged supernatural powers are a focus of popular interest is not a characteristic particular to the postwar period. From the late Meiji into the Taisho eras, interest in subjects like clairvoyance reached a high peak and

led to what might be called a "boom" in fascination with supernatural powers. In the process, people like Hamaguchi Yūgaku, a well-known "breath control" mentalist, and Taireidō founder Tanaka Morihei were widely popular. And one should also consider the way in which religious rituals have been raised to the status of publicity event. The Star Festival observed each February by Agonshū, for example, is planned by a major advertising agency, with advertising posters even displayed on the platforms of public train stations. The festival allows participation by non-members, and it evinces strong characteristics of a public gala.

The transformation of religious ritual to public entertainment has been a noteworthy feature of postwar new religions, a trend going back to the 1950s. It was in 1953 that PL Kyōdan introduced its grand exhibition of Fireworks Art. The same year, Kōdō Kyōdan began its "Kōdōsan Flower Festival" including a parade through the streets of Yokoyama. Tenrikyō, meanwhile, inaugurated a Kodomo Hi no Kishin Dansan (Children's Pilgrimage of Everyday Service) in 1954, but the observance took on the increasing nature of a public festa from around the third year of its observance, when its name was changed to Kodomo Ojiba-gaeri or Children Return to the Jiba (the jiba is the central sacred locale in Tenrikyō). In short, the trend toward the transformation of ritual into public event was already beginning to appear in the new religions as Japan stood poised to enter its period of high economic growth.

Although Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and Sūkyō Mahikari are well known for the imposing edifices they have recently erected in Naka-Izu and Takayama, they by no means represent a new type of movement. The strong resemblances in both doctrines and activities that these groups bear to the Church of World Messianity (Sekai Kyūseikyō) makes it entirely unconvincing to call them "new" new religions if one considers Sekai Kyūseikyō to be one of the "old" new religions. Aside from the fact that the two have undergone expansion in recent years, there does not seem to be any solid basis for calling them particularly "new."

Founded by Itō Shinjō and his wife Tomoji, Shinnyoen can also be called a new religion with links to esoteric Buddhism, since in the prewar period Shinjō practiced at Daigoji, head temple of the Daigoji Branch of Shingon Buddhism. This group is unusual for the systematic way in which it manages its spiritualists. Members undergo special training called *sesshin* and other practices in order to advance through a programmed series of stages called *Daijō*, *Kanki*, *Daikanki*, and *Reinō*. Even after reaching the stage of "spiritualist" (*Reinō*), members engage in special *sesshin* training. It is said that Shinnyoen currently recognizes several hundred "spiritualists" among

its members, but the system presents a unique form of training and supervision of those with special spiritual powers. The problems that most new religions face are related more to the supervision of people with spiritual power, than to their training and nurturing. People who are claimed to have special spiritual powers attract large numbers of believers to the group, but they also represent the potential for internal schisms and factions.

Another group with a relatively systematized means of training spiritualists is Ennōkyō. Founded early in the twentieth century by Fukata Chiyoko, this group features the presence of spiritualists who perform a unique ritual called *shūhō*. The supervisory aspect of the system, however, is less well developed than that found in Shinnyoen. The system of spiritualist training and supervision implemented in that group should likely be considered first an outcome of the particular form of organization found in the new religions, rather than as the inevitable product of specific social conditions.

In sum, even those groups said to be prototypical of the new new religions do not demonstrate elements that can unequivocally be called "new." Certainly, they may have expanded their memberships from the 1970s, but the reasons for expansion differ from group to group. It is difficult to understand just what momentous significance is wrapped up in a single group. And rather than suggesting they uniquely reflect their society or the times, the "new" elements should more likely be viewed as mere expressions of what sets a specific group apart.

Further, groups like Reiha no Hikari Kyōkai and Ōyamanezu no Mikoto Shinji Kyōkai likewise demonstrated growth in this same period, yet they also fall into the same prototypical format—in terms of both founding and activity—as the earlier "conventional" new religions. Hase Yoshio, the founder of Reiha no Hikari, undertook ascetic training in Shikoku, achieved faith-healing powers and with them won the trust of followers. Likewise, Ōyamanezu no Mikoto Shinji Kyōkai founder Inai Sadao (Tomo marusai) was said to have received the power to heal from a goddess who appeared to him during his own illness. Whether received suddenly or as the result of extended practice and training, discovering the power to heal can be called the standard pattern that leads someone down the path toward founding a new religious group in Japan. Followers likewise discover new courses in life as a result of the founder's healing activities and the solutions he or she offers to their problems. And it is those healing rituals that continue to be the driving force drawing people to these groups.

3. New Religions in Okinawa

While numerous religious groups have expanded since the 1970s, the social implications of that expansion are not identical in all geographical areas. For example, the Okinawan new religion of Ijun has grown since the 1970s, but it is highly questionable as to whether it can simply for that reason be categorized as a new new religion. More simply, it is the first Okinawan new religion that has been successful in achieving a significant level of growth.

Okinawan forerunners of Ijun include Seitenkō Shinmeigū founded by Tokashiki Shizuko and Mirokukyō founded by Higa Hatsu. Tokashiki claimed that Seitenkōshin—the chief deity responsible for the origin of the world, according to the old Shinto religion of the Ryūkyūs—descended into her in 1954. Following this experience, Tokashiki began to undertake religious activities based on the revelations she claimed to receive. She attracted a certain number of followers for a period, but the group failed to achieve systematic organization and at present demonstrates few of the energetic characteristics of a new religion in its activities. Strikingly, Hika Hatsu likewise underwent her first experience of divine possession in 1954. Also like Tokashiki's group, Mirokukyō has failed to produce a very large organization.

In contrast, Ijun built up its organization gradually starting around the 1980s. After a period of activity within Okinawan local society, it established a branch in Yokohama, and also made attempts at overseas mission work. Do these traits then make Ijun worthy of the term "new new religion"? Viewed from the perspective of Okinawan religious history, it would appear to the contrary that Ijun's growth should be viewed as being in line with the developmental process that the earlier new religions follow. Certainly, the groups does exhibit the features of a movement that was produced in the context of internationalization and the information society, with elements borrowed from Christianity and Indian Yoga. However, the true character of this movement should be sought in its deep connections to Okinawan folk religion and its attempts to universalize the principles implicit there.

Ijun speaks of a deity called Kinmanmon, which is considered a deity with both local, Okinawan and universal, cosmic significance. While its teachings are based on traditional Okinawan religious culture, the group goes beyond that to present religious ideals in a form amenable to modern society as well. Founded on a folk religious culture centered on female shamans called *noro* and *yuta*, it transcends that framework in both organization and beliefs, a pattern of development comparable to conventional new religions like Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō. That is to say, Ijun demonstrates many of

the features characteristic of movements that formed in the period in which the religious systems of the new religions first developed. It is likely that this phenomenon appeared in Okinawa when it did due to the crucial role that folk religion continued to play there even in the postwar period.

The treaty returning Okinawa to Japan from postwar American jurisdiction was signed in 1971. Okinawa officially became a Japanese prefecture in May the following year, and in that same year Ijun's founder Takayasu Ryūsen began her religious activities. To wit, the Ijun movement developed against the background shaped by the social changes attending the reversion of Okinawa to the control of mainland Japan. The new religious movements of Okinawa, which will likely continue to be worthy of attention, serve as a clear reminder that regional characteristics need to be taken into consideration when discussing the stages of development of new religions in Japan. For example, one theory holds that a characteristic of the teachings of new new religions is "a consciousness of impending catastrophe and the promotion of messianism." In Okinawa, however, such features appear more prominently in the earlier religion of Seitenkō Shinmeigū than in Ijun. Claiming to receive prophecies that "the earth is on the verge of annihilation," Tokashiki Shizuko emphasized in her teachings the "protection of the earth and saving of human and other life." She claimed that while scientific advances had resulted in great blessings for humans, activities that destroyed and ignored nature would be a factor in the destruction of the human race.

In Okinawa as elsewhere, it is virtually impossible to make a distinction between "old new religions" and "new new religions" based on the content of their doctrines. Needless to say, the doctrines of the new religions display certain variations with each change in era, but attempting to categorize the new religions based on such features is fruitless. In addition, from the perspective of believers, the question is not whether a new religion is "old" or "new," but rather which group's teaching is successful at penetrating his or her own heart and mind. If one is going to speak of new trends, the researcher should first question whether any new trends can be observed in those who are entering these groups.

In sum, I conclude that the category of "new new religion" has very little academic significance. Anyone working in the field of new religions obviously must be attentive to any new trends and, when one has been observed, find ways to conceptualize and express it. But if one tries to advance the debate when he has allowed his sight to be blinded by changes occurring in the society around him, and while neglecting the obvious task of considering how those changes compare to changes produced in earlier

periods, it will open the door to a succession of new terminology, such as "new new new religion" and "new new new new religion." If that is all that is involved, it would be preferable to merely call any movement a "newly arisen religion" (*shinkō shūkyō*) from the moment it emerges, and be done with it.

4. Classification by Descent

Since social change has a great bearing on the growth of a new religion, it is only natural to use such change as a gauge for periodizing the new religions. When it comes to type categorization, however, a different perspective may become necessary. One method is to attempt categorization based on an emphasis on differences in the movements' attributes. This method provides the easiest grasp of the movement's historical place and its particular features. A typical example of this method can be seen in classifications that base their categories on what is viewed as the main religious tradition from which the new movement has derived. Murakami Shigeyoshi's system of classifying new religious groups on the basis of their origin in Shinto shrine faith, Buddhist temple confraternities, mountain-worship, Shugendō, Lotus-faith confraternities, and sectarian Buddhism is a well-known example of this approach.

A similar system might adopt vaguer categories based on a group's origins simply in Shinto, Buddhism, or Christianity. Focusing instead on the strength of a movement's ties to its original source would give us categories telling whether a group is more oriented toward innovation or reform. One might also be able to combine the categories of innovation and reform with origin-related ones such as "Buddhist-related" and "Shinto-related." The point to bear in mind is that the system represented by the new religions did not appear from within a vacuum. The religious systems that existed in Japan's early modern period—from folk religion to sectarian Buddhism and Shugendō—had a broad influence on the formation of each new religious movement. This fact leads inevitably to the concept that the genealogy of new religious movements might be constructed by focusing on the degree of that influence from existing religions.

Another strategy would be to focus on schisms and internecine struggles. Many new religious groups have been influenced less by one of the established religions than by other earlier new religions. In fact, other than those few that came into being in the very earliest period most groups are of this nature. The new religions formed an autonomous religious system at a relatively early date, meaning a system that was capable of reproducing itself by spawning similar other movements. Accordingly, understanding how a recent movement is related to preexisting groups makes it easier

to grasp the features of the new movement's doctrines and activities.

It is possible to classify new religious groups according to their original relationships to Tenrikyō, Ōmoto, Reiyūkai, GLA, Soshindō, Nakayama Shingo Shōshū, Tokumitsukyō and Hitonomichi, Honmon Butsuryū-kō and so on. One can go on to further subclassify Tenrikyō-related groups as those related to Honmichi and Tenrisanrinkō, just as beneath the larger category of Ōmoto-related groups, one can suggest a sub-category formed by those groups which stem from Sekai Kyūseikyō. At the same time, one must not think of these groups as mere branches or segments of their founding organizations. In general, they can be understood as peer groups evidencing complex mutual relations as the result of various historical vicissitudes. Here are a few of their more important features, based on the group of origin:

● Tenrikyō: in general, these groups can be considered branches of Tenrikyō. These groups normally continue to transmit the basic teachings of Nakayama Miki, and Nakayama is usually included within the objects of worship. In some cases, Nakayama's husband Nakayama Zenbee is also venerated. Basic special terms such as *kanrodai* and *jiba* are also emphasized with much the same meanings.

● Ōmotokyō: the situation here becomes a bit more complex. Shindō Tenkōkyo and Ananaikyō can be seen as being in midly competitive relationships with Ōmoto. As to Seichō no Ie and Sekai Kyūsekyō, Taniguchi Masaharu and Okada Mokichi were each influenced intellectually by Deguchi Onisaburō but later parted ways to form their own new organizations. Ōmoto's intellectual influence also extended to numerous other movements, but the degree to which each was influenced varies. Be that as it may, the concept of *reishu taijū*, or "the body is subject to the spirit," is central to the Ōmoto movement and most sects that have come from its parentage share the same general emphasis on the existence of the spirit or spirit world. Most likewise share the corollary belief that the future state of this world can be predicted by understanding the true nature of the spirit world.

● Sekai Kyūseikyō: most of these were originally branch churches that split off from Sekai Kyūseikyō, so many of them continue to revere Okada Mokichi as "Meishu-sama." Many also continue to use the transmission of spirit power through the hands (*tekazashi*) as a means of faith healing, spirit cleansing, and purification. Groups like Sukui no Hikari Kyōdan and Shinji Shūmeikai place particularly heavy emphasis on this transmission through the hands. While not actually offshoot groups, the

Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and its offspring Sūkyō Hikari were both strongly influenced by Sekai Kyūseikyō. In turn, the group Subikari Kōha Sekai Shindan was influenced by Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan; all these groups give a central place to the use of the hands in transmitting spirit energy.

Further, the specific name given to this practice of using the hands to transmit healing spirit differs depending on the group involved. In Sekai Kyūseikyō it is called *jōrei* (purification of spirit); in Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and Sūkyō Mahikari, it is called variously *tekazashi* or *okiyome* (purification) or *mahikari no waza* (lit., "act of divine light"; the group itself refers to it as "spiritual purification" or "spiritual art of divine light"). In Subikari Kōha Sekai Shindan, it is called the *honoo no waza* (lit., "act of flame").

● Reiyūkai: Reiyūkai has been the source of numerous offshoot groups, particularly during two phases referred to as the first schism (prewar period) and the second schism (postwar period). Since most of these breakaways occurred in units of whole branch organizations, they tend to transmit Reiyūkai's same original teachings and patterns of activities to a considerable degree. Rites for ancestors are emphasized, and ancestors are venerated together via a "collective *kaimyō*" (the posthumous religious name given to a deceased person in Japanese Buddhism). Sects of the Reiyūkai lineage include Risshō Kōseikai, Myōchikai, Kōdō Kyōdan, and Kishinkai; all share the belief that the buddhahood of ancestors is intimately tied to the happiness of descendants.

Most other groups with strong ties to earlier entities are not generally so well known, but I will introduce some of them here nonetheless since they reveal how strongly such earlier groups have influenced later arrivals.

● Honmichi-Tenrisanrinkō: Honbushin, Kamiichijōkyō, and other groups in this lineage were strongly influenced by Honmichi, and frequently share a strong emphasis on eschatological themes. Originally, most of these sects were categorized as offshoots of Tenrikyō, but this revised classification is the result of a more detailed review of Tenrikyō influences. In addition to the Honmichi-Tenrisanrinkō lineage, the suggestion has been made that another classification be made to consider groups stemming from Tenri Kaminokuchiake-basho (founded by Yamada Umejirō) as another category.

● GLA: While not itself forming such a large group, the GLA founded by Takahashi Shinji was the influential source for the origin of Kōfuku no Kagaku (Science of

Happiness). It is typified by the fact that the founder uses what are called *reigen* ("spirit words") to communicate with the spirit world while in an ordinary conscious state. GLA is also believed to have influenced the ideas of Asahara Shōkō, founder of Aum Shinrikyō.

● Soshindō: This category refers to the group Soshindō (headquarters in Tamana, Kumamoto Prefecture) founded by Matsushita Matsuzō, and the collection of groups formed by his disciples. These include Shidaidō, Shinri Jikkō no Oshie, Soshindō Kyōdan, Ten'onkyō, and others. Characteristics of these groups include the teachings of the "four great ways" (loyalty, filial piety, reverence for deities, and reverence for ancestors), and the ritual of salvation called *otekazu*.

● Shingo Shōshū: This group developed mostly in Kyushu and has received relatively little notice. Founder Kihara Matsutarō (Kakue) began a religious movement in Saga Prefecture in the early Showa Period that spawned other groups, including Nakayama Shingo Shōshū, Kōmyō Nenbutsu Shingo Shōshū, and Mitsugonshū.

● Tokumitsukyō-Hitonomichi: In addition to being the predecessor to PL Kyōdan, this tradition exerted influence on other postwar self-cultivation groups such as Rinri Kenkyūsho and Jissen Rinri Kōseikai.

● Butsuryūkō: This lineage includes such groups as Honmon Butsuryūshū, Genshōshū Nichirenshugi Butsuryūkō, and Zaike Nichirenshū Jōfūkai. These groups originally had the character of reform movements within Honmon Butsuryūkō, making their organizational relationships somewhat complicated. They have close similarities in terms of teachings and activities, however, and share a characteristic emphasis on demonstrating the truth of religion through the receipt of physical blessings in this world.

5. *The Reflection of Society*

Categorizing new religious groups based on their founding background or relationships of influence represents the historical perspective in our study, but it is also possible to include a sociological angle to the approach. Nishiyama Shigeru in fact had proposed the category of "new new religion" with this sociological perspective in mind. When the term "new new religions" began to be misused, he then began to use the concept of "religion of spiritual technique" in an attempt to approach the issue of the typology of the new religions as they responded to temporal and social changes. Asserting that modern Japan had undergone two periods of modernization, Nishiyama

suggested that a "religion of technique" (in contrast to "religion of faith") had appeared in each of these periods of modernization. The religions of spiritual technique that appeared during the first period of modernization were Taireidō and Ōmoto. During the second period of modernization, the religions of spiritual technique were the Mahikari groups, Agonshū, and GLA-related groups.

The variety of sociological classification schemes that can be suggested depending on the perspective employed makes the situation rather complex. If one focuses on the relationship between headquarters and branch, a classification can be proposed based on a distinction between centralized and localized power structures. Groups like PL Kyōdan and Shinnyoen would be centralized types, while Konkōkyō would be a more localized type. If attention is placed on the geographical concentration of members, then one could propose categories of nationwide type, eastern Japan type, western Japan type, Kyushu type, and so on. Sōka Gakkai and Tenrikyō would be nationwide types under this scheme, while a group like Risshō Kōseikai would likely be classified as an eastern Japan type, Konkōkyō a western Japan type, and Zenrinkyō (formerly Zenrinkai) a Kyushu type. This kind of classification could be extended to other areas as well; indeed, since it is generally divorced from considerations of temporal and social change, the work of classification is relatively easy.

On the other hand, the debate becomes much more difficult when the issue turns to the degree to which individual movements and their differences in character or forms of expression represent reflections of larger social trends. The apparent differences in content and form of activities exhibited by various groups represent the constant interplay of two elements: reflections of incremental changes in historical periods and the unique individuality of the movements themselves. Accordingly, when the claim is made that a new type of movement has appeared, it must based on a distinction between novelty arising from innate individuality and that coming from a more general current of the times.

Comparing the teachings of various founders reveals a significant degree of variation and individuality from group to group. Founders express their teachings using the religious vocabulary of the times in which they live. That this characteristic is a fundamental prerequisite to motivating listeners becomes immediately evident if one studies the group in the context of its original founding stages. Doing so should allow one to use that data to detect differences in the tenor of the eras involved as the group evolves. If one's concern is with the formation of the group's doctrine, then the most important era would appear to be the one in which the founder is believed

to have established the core of her or his teaching. For those interested in how the group's teaching has been disseminated, the most important period would be that during which the group demonstrated the greatest growth. Thus, in the case of Shinnyoen, for example, while the teaching itself took shape in the early Showa period the group experienced its most dynamic surge in growth from the 1970s.

Groups differ as well with regard to the specific contents of their activities, and these differences likewise include some elements that are molded by social conditions and some that are not. The vast majority of people who join one or another new religion are seeking concrete, realistic healing of mind and body. Faith healing is something whose importance does not change much as social conditions change. The fact that a number of groups view sickness as the "entry to the way" is as true today as it was in their earliest days. The influence of vague feelings of anxiety and social difficulty, on the other hand, is something that may wax or wane depending on surrounding social conditions.

Changes in organization rely to some degree on changing conditions in the surrounding society, but preexisting historical forms of organization are a more important influence. This is because the prototypical features of the new religions are revealed most strikingly in their forms of organization. Principles of organization that involve both vertical and horizontal lines are most common, and the forms of organization taken by new religious movements do not have a wide range of alternatives. The scale of the group tends to be a bigger factor when deciding what organizational form to adopt; as a group grows larger, it tends to adopt the same form of organization found in earlier large groups.

The attempt to establish a classification scheme based on historical eras corresponding to the larger developments in modern Japanese society is based on the assumption that new religious movements respond rather quickly to social change. Social change, however, is not uniform and involves both highly visible forms of change as well as other less-visible changes that may be overlooked without careful attention to details. Revolutionary political change and radical economic shifts are changes of the highly noticeable sort. Improvements in educational level, Japan's gradual progress toward internationalization and globalization, and the introduction of computerization and the advent of the information society, on the other hand, represent changes that are less obvious in the nature of their influences on the new religions.

If one assumes, however, that the system represented by the new religions today has evolved slowly since its initial origins, then it is likely the less-visible factors that

take on importance. Assuming the new religions are movements that have developed based on a foundation of mass support, one must therefore consider which factors are have produced changes in the most fundamental areas of the masses' consciousness and behavior.

Chapter twelve

Behind the Façade

1. A Bewitching Leader

What is the object of worship for the followers of new religions? In the same way as for the traditional, established religions, the new religions likewise publicly claim a variety of gods and buddhas as formal objects of worship. Gods with unique names appear among the Shinto-related groups, while the objects of worship in Buddhist groups tend to remain traditional subjects like Shakyamuni Nyorai and graphic mandala. Some new religous groups will have a single god or buddha, while others maintain multiple gods, buddhas, or a combination of the two. Shionkyō is an extreme case, claiming ten central objects of worship, including Shakyamuni, Jesus Christ, Confucius, Mohammed, Tenri, Konkō, Kurozumi, Ōmoto, and Hitsuku. Since this group is in the Ōmoto lineage, their eclectic selection is likely based on the Ōmoto concept that "all religions flower from the same root."

While the foregoing paragraph outlines some of the deities and buddhas selected as objects of worship, one should remember that these do not serve as the objects of faith on an everyday basis. In most cases, the actual everyday object of worship is the group's founder. It is probably more appropriate to say that deities and buddhas tend to serve in secondary, supporting roles. Founder worship continues even after the founder's death. Following the death of Zenrinkyō founder Rikihisa Tassai, for example, the bones of Rikihisa's right hand were embedded in an life-sized image of the deceased leader. On the occasion of rites dedicated to his memory, the doors of the case holding this image are opened displaying him with his hand outstretched in his familiar posture of salvation and the hall fills with the sound of raised voices. Tassai died in 1977, but the sense of his genuine presence continues to live on today within the group.

The founder may represent a priceless existence to the believer, but the term "founder" itself in general doesn't have a very good ring. Describing someone as a "founder-type individual" may excite some people, but it also has a bit of the nuance of a rather suspicious or shady character. If one manages to get past the favorable images held by believers and the more cautious or even negative ones held in society at large to attempt an objective assessment of the numerous individuals who have founded new religions, what is the impression that one takes away? One quickly realizes that

the individual biographies of these founders are diverse in the extreme. From personal educational background to previous employment, from the process of their entry into the religious life to the specifics of their religious experiences—each area is varied and full of unique details. Some are men and some are women. Some underwent mystical experiences while still youths, while others only heard the divine call after they had entered middle age. Some have been barely literate, while others have graduated from top Japanese universities. (Of course, when speaking about differences in educational background, one must also consider the differences in social conditions and the place of education at different points in history.)

The more one learns about these various religious founders, the more one realizes just how impossible it would be to construct a unitary image of the typical founder. Just as different individuals relate to religion in various different ways, the founders likewise display varied patterns in their experiences in that role. Some had expressed interest in the religious world since childhood, undergoing ascetic practice and inquiring of various religious teachers. As such, it is hardly surprising that some of these individuals suddenly heard the voice of a god or deity and after a difficult internal struggle entered the path of the religious founder. At the other end of the spectrum are those founders who think of religion as a business enterprise.

One thing they do share in common is that they are viewed suspiciously by the public at large, thanks especially to the leading role the popular media have played in fomenting a negative image of such individuals. More fundamentally, however, religious founders are alike in possessing the ability to captivate large numbers of believers, an important factor to bear in mind when considering the characteristics of the system the new religions represent. The process whereby one person is attracted by another is truly a drama, and each of those dramas is unique. At the same time, it is also probably safe to assume that those stories will exhibit certain commonalities. The religious founder becomes one only by virtue of the existence of people who follow him. Accordingly, while the ability to attract followers may not be a sufficient condition for a religious leader, it is a necessary one. That is to say, while it may not be certain that a person will become a religious founder simply because of his ability to attract people, it is a certainty that he will not become one if he fails to attract others.

What is the source of a religious founder's powerful ability to attract people? A collation of impressions provided by followers includes the following characteristics: a father or mother figure who demonstrates an adroit combination of gentility and severity; a leader who offers new ideals, a counselor willing to listen to any personal problem;

and a paranormal healer able to treat even difficult and unusual diseases. These kinds of features constitute the main force of attraction some people have for religious leaders in modern Japan, but one could also use psychological or sociological theory to flesh out such descriptions. It might be possible, for example, to suggest that such leaders provide a compensatory function for the loss of parental authority, or to point to the lack of autonomy on the part of believers. One might even postulate that such personalities have a compensating role to play with regard to insufficiently developed medical institutions in Japan.

But prior to seeking out such explanations, we must first understand how indispensable the founder's ability to attract people is to the religious system represented by the new religions. The element of a powerfully attractive leader is less crucial in those established religions where one receives membership as a matter of birth. This is easy to understand if one considers those countries where Christianity is a state religion, or Japan under the Edo-period Buddhist parish (*danka*) system. In contrast, when membership in a religion is dependent on one's personal decision, the human attraction one feels toward a founder or missionary plays a much more important role. One frequently finds individuals among the evangelists for the new religions who possess charisma approaching that of the founder him or herself. Such leading evangelists often play the role of establishing new centers in Japan and abroad, and of pioneering new activities and doctrines at the change of helm that follows the founder's death. In some cases, the evangelist may defy the founder and become the founder of her own new secessionist group. Whatever the case, this aggressiveness in making contacts that the founder and such evangelists share is a clear sign of their confidence in their teachings and activities; such conviction is obviously necessary to spreading any religion. Any new religion characterized by formalistic ritual and dull, listless sermons should in fact be considered an exception. If religious teachings and activities can be compared to commercial products, it is the new religions that have had sufficient conviction of the value of their "wares" to market them aggressively. In contrast, since the start of the modern period, the old established religions have tended to be complacent with their fixed clienteles and neglected to improve their "product" or reform their methods of "marketing." To their detriment, it has taken many years for the established religions to even become aware of this structural difference.

2. The Position of Women

The ranks of the founders of new religions in Japan include a substantial number

of women. In addition to the well-known Nakayama Miki, Deguchi Nao, and Kitamura Sayo, such lesser-known women as Ōmori Chiben (Bentenshū), Fukata Chiyoko (Ennōkyō), and Miyamoto Mitsu (Myōchikai) are also the objects of deep devotion in their respective groups. In more recent years, such individuals as Ajiki Tenkei (Yamato no Miya), Komatsu Shin'yō (Shinmei Aishinkai), Myōhō Ōshiin (Uchūshinkyō Kōmyōkai), and Yoshizawa Myōgaku (Shugen Maka no Kai) have also appeared to found new religious groups. The appearance of so many female founders is another important element to bear in mind regarding the system of the Japanese new religons. It would not be so unusual if women were merely acting as *miko* or shamanistic mediums who transmitted the will of their deity. That kind of traditional female role has existed at least since the days of the ancient shaman Himiko, who was said to have "used wizardry to bewitch the people." The women who have founded new religions, however, cannot be seen merely as a variety of shaman. Nakayama Miki (Tenrikyō) and Aida Hide (Sekai Shindōkyō), for example, are venerated as Oyasama ("Divine Parent" or "Mother") by their followers. Kitamura Sayo is likewise called Ōgamisama ("Great Kami") by followers in her group (Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō). Used in addition to the ordinary titles of "founder," "leader," and "president," such appellations indicate that they are viewed not merely as founders of their respective groups, but as exalted teachers of humanity. Granted, not all women founders are venerated to this degree, but the point is the structure of this religious system is filled with the potential for founders to be worshipped in this way.

Women have filled leadership roles within new religions outside of Japan as well. One finds among the new religious movements that began in nineteenth-century America, for example, such figures as Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) and Ellen G. White (Seventh-day Adventists), both of whom played leading roles in the formative periods of their movements. While Japan and the United States differ considerably when it comes to their sociohistorical backgrounds, they share in common the fact that numerous new religious movements have been spawned in each since the nineteenth century. That being the case, we might conclude that the emergence of women leaders is closely related to the basic social conditions that support the appearance of new religions.

Women comprise a high proportion not only of founders, but of ordinary believers as well. It has long been said that the new religions are built upon the support of women. Given that women also represent a high proportion of membership in other religions, the difference between the new and traditional religions when it comes to

female involvement may be easier to grasp by studying the issue at the leadership level. Statistics found in the Religion Yearbook issued by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs show that women clearly hold a larger share of leadership positions in new religious groups than they do in the established religions. Within Shrine Shinto and the established denominations of sectarian Buddhism, women generally occupy no more than about ten percent of leadership positions. In contrast, in the new religions with their expanded organizational structures, women are found to hold from one-fourth to one-half of all such positions. In some exceptional groups such as Risshō Kōseikai, Ennōkyō, and Shinnyoen, fully seventy to eighty percent of all leaders are women.

The high proportion of women among founders, leaders, and followers of the new religions is, first of all, a reflection of the current reality of Japanese society, in which women are more likely to use religion as a means of solving personal problems. At the same time, it also reflects the fact that the new religions in particular have consistently operated as mechanisms for providing these solutions. The most common tendency in this regard is for new religions to offer practical advice regarding the very kinds of problems that women frequently face, such as conflict with mothers-in-law, marital discord, rebellious children, and general family conflict. A typical example of this advice might be the lifestyle philosophy of "strategic retreat." The woman is told that by paying more attention to her husband, she will inevitably be treated better herself and the family will become more cheerful and happy. Group publications frequently contain testimonials from individuals expressing how this method has allowed the family to find their way out of distressing circumstances. Such stress on practical responses to familial relations has the ultimate effect of encouraging a conservative environment of male-female relations within the society. That is to say, it is an extremely "realistic" response based on an experiential reading of the current structure of Japanese society.

The women founders of new religious groups must have been particularly sensative to the unvarnished reality of the roles allotted to men and women in Japanese society. As a result, their groups did not make a frontal assault on the male-centered Japanese social structure. Most of the core executive and church-head posts tend to be assumed by men as a group expands its organization. If one focuses most heavily on this fact, then it is not hard to conclude that the way new religions are organized is simply another reflection of modern Japanese social structure. The same might also be said in one sense for their practical approach to problem solving in that they appear to have done little more than adopt a technique already being practiced by some people and raised it to the status of doctrine.

On the other hand, even if they did not mount a frontal attack on traditional Japanese social structure the new religions undeniably have had a positive influence when it comes to enhancing the status of women and thus possess the characteristic of those religions that deal with tangible issues. In that sense, the new religions share with the typical independent *ogamiyasan* faith healer the characteristic use of "symptomatic treatments." At the same time, the new religions do not necessarily limit their efforts to the treatment of symptoms; they also suggest a normative response to issues facing all humans. Many women founders, for example, express high ideals and goals, such as the realization of a "cheerful life" for humanity (Nakayama Miki), the "rebuilding and renewal of the world" (Deguchi Nao), and the "battle to build the country of god" (Kitamura Sayo). Indeed, one of the characteristics of the new religions is their capacity for simultaneously emphasizing the mundane concerns of everyday life and grand goals for all of humanity. At first glance, such breadth may appear little more than a mishmash, since it is admittedly incongruous to find mundane problems of relationships with mothers-in-law, delinquent children, and family discord mixed in the same pot with "world rebuilding and renewal" and "world peace." But the reason such eclectic goals can be placed side by side may be better understood when one recalls the emphasis new religions place on the real world. If one recognizes that the concerns faced by a single family and the problems faced by humanity as a whole are both directly related to everyday life in this world, then finding them together in the same category appears less strange. One might simply see this as the diverse ways in which such groups express realistic concern with the world.

3. New Human Ties

The group Shōroku Shintō Yamatoyama uses a unique form of church management. Some three-hundred followers live communally on the group's grounds, which are snowed in during the winter season. The church administers its own high school on the grounds, with all students living in dormitories. The group adopted this communitarian lifestyle after World War II based on the concept of second-generation leader Tazawa Yasusaburō. Tazawa graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1938 and advanced to graduate school, where he was given the post of departmental assistant in the Department of Religious Studies. As successor to Ōkawa Shūmei, Tazawa taught classes at Hōsei University, but in the year after the war's end, he abandoned his life as an academic to take on the job of successor to leadership of the religious group. He subsequently established this self-supporting community in the mountains, based

on his own communitarian vision. In the early days, the group even produced their own electricity. The group's practice of self-sufficiency has lessened in response to socioeconomic changes but the spirit lives on, as can be seen in the practice of burying deceased group members together in a collective tomb facility based on the Buddhist concept of *kue issho* ("meet together in one place").

Groups that place emphasis on communal living arrangements can be classified as "commune" type movements. One of the most elemental of these groups was Ōyamatokyō, founded by Yaoi Nisshō. Immediately following the end of World War II, Yaoi organized the group Ajisaimura to provide care for war orphans and other economically distressed people. That group then developed into the religious corporation Ōyamatokyō. Another such legally incorporated foundation with an organizational structure similar in nature to the commune type of new religion is Ittōen. Founded by Nishida Tenkō, the movement first developed in the early decades of the twentieth century and continued to grow following the end of World War II. Currently, about 3,000 members—called *dōjin* ("comrades")—live communally at Kōsenrin in Kyoto's Yamashina Ward. Aum Shinrikyō likewise possessed elements of the commune-type religion with its communalistic center on the foothills of Mount Fuji.

New religions of the commune type are unable to develop into very large organizations; viewed overall, there are relatively few such groups. There appears to be a limit to the scale such movements can achieve, and social pressure tends to be directed against the large-scale expansion of their organization. The very existence of such movements nonetheless illustrates in brief how the new religions are oriented toward seeking new human ties. Even when not explicitly taking the form of a communal organization, the relationships between members in the new religions frequently exhibit characteristics of a community of faith.

The early modern (Edo-period) Buddhist parish system relied upon the ties of geographical proximity—i.e., membership in the same village or neighborhood—and consanguineous relations—i.e., membership in the same lineage group. The sect and temple parish to which one belonged were secondary issues determined by the simple facts of where and to whom one was born. This arrangement was adjusted to some degree as Japan entered the modern period, but it remained unchanged in the essentials. The principle whereby individuals were included as parishioners in their local Shinto shrine was likewise entirely a result of geography and family membership.

The new religions, on the other hand, have introduced principles of association not limited to ties of geography or lineage. They adopted a style of proselytization that

relies on a model of expanded reproduction, allowing new and unique social links to be forged. One must bear in mind that Japan experienced rapid and spectacular social change as it entered the modern period. That change was characterized by a qualitative shift in human relations. Populations in agricultural villages declined and urbanization advanced, the capitalist system expanded, earlier forms of familialism deteriorated and the local community experienced a breakdown of solidarity. Without question, the forms of human interconnectedness underwent radical change. The faster the tempo of social change the more nimbly religions must respond, and the various new religions and their spawn were able to smoothly adjust their functional divisions of labor in response to these changes.

Particular note should be taken of the fact that people in modern Japan have come to be linked increasingly not by principles of lineage and community, but rather by personal individual-to-individual ties. Individualization has become a pronounced social phenomenon, and in the religious sphere it is in the new religions where responses to this change can be seen most clearly. Anecdotal examples of this might include (1) strong interpersonal ties based on the relationship of new follower to the person who led him or her to the faith; (2) functional linkages between churches or branch organizational units; (3) relationships formed through meetings among fellow members for gathering and exchanging information, as typified by Seichō no Ie's "house meetings" (*shiyūkai*); (4) casual salons or friends' groups; and (5) loosely structured, free-participation groups.

The first three examples were already observable in the prewar period. Numbers 1 and 2 in particular were new forms of basic interpersonal relationships introduced by the new religions. Seichō no Ie may have introduced the original model for example 3, but it remains a popular form within groups that include a high proportion of individuals with higher educations. The latter two forms became particularly common in the postwar period. The confraternities (kō) within Agonshū are based on the concept of a casual "circle" (*saakuru*) of peers, and one senses that the names given to the groups are likewise the product of a lighthearted attitude. Said to attract large numbers of young members, the group Worldmate advertises its own "free-participation" format of association.

Whatever the case, the point to emphasize here is the fact that the new forms of association exist alongside rather than displace the earlier forms. The general pattern is one of building upon the foundation of older forms and adding new elements as necessary. This kind of syncretism or flexibility itself represents the way that the new religions have responded to times of chaotic change. Some observers have suggested

that movements characterized by the informal "circle" kind of mutual association in particular have been growing in numbers in recent years, but in fact the ways in which members associate with one another are closely related to the overall scale of the organization involved. Small groups can operate even within a highly liberal atmosphere, but this becomes less possible as a group grows larger. In any event, the larger point that new religions may be characterized by their orientation toward these various kinds of organic kinds of internal ties remains.

4. A "Reflection of the Age and Society"

As I indicated in previous chapters, the new religions have been subjected various criticisms in the modern period. They have been labeled dangers to the state, attacked by established religions, and made a derided object of society's curiosity through the popular media. Also as noted, there is logic behind the desire to make these criticisms, since people who have interests at stake or feel insecure when a new movement appears that is felt to disrupt the existing order are obviously going to respond with measures of some sort to oppose it.

The response of the established religions has been the most straightforward. Since the appearance of the new religions represents disorder in the established religious market, the new religions have for the most part been treated as newly arisen rivals in a competition. Some groups such as Honmon Butsuryūshū and Sōka Gakkai were formed while maintaining intimate relationships with certain established Buddhist sects. Conflicts in these cases may easily arise over such issues as the proper interpretation of the religious tradition. The criticisms that established sects aim at new religions may include reactionary elements that are the product of the early modern religious system with roots in the temple parish institution, or may focus on the fact that a modern religious system is being born.

The state has also been relatively straightforward in its response. Any entity that challenges the state's authority and threatens to disrupt the social order will become a target for suppression. Since the prewar emperor system was strongly imbued with religious characteristics, the state reacted with particular sensitivity to threats to its control. While I have not had time to discuss the issue fully here, the authority possessed by the modern emperor system occasionally clashed with the authority assumed by the new religions. This issue has been conventionally understood as a conflict between the state and popular religion. However, the emperor system and the system of the new religions were both products of modern Japan, and given the effort by Japan's modern

political system to create modern myths one should go beyond a consideration of the elements of conflict to also take in those areas where the authority of each overlaps.

In the present work, I have given considerable space to the concept that the new religions are reflections of their times or of the society that they inhabit, and that this is particularly revealed through their depiction in the popular media. That approach results in a somewhat complex depiction of reaction to the new religions. The reason the media has steadily wielded a heavy sword with respect to movements containing elements that threaten or challenge society's values is because the media has assigned itself the role of protector of those established values. The popular media's portrayal of new religions as unsavory, pathological phenomena that challenge traditional values can be read as a tacit claim that their own reporting is based upon "correct" social values. And since some movements in fact are "unsavory," the media might be said to be providing real news value by alertly exposing them. Unfortunately, recognizing that this may be the case alone cannot fully explain the media's stance when reporting on the new religions.

While it might appear that the media target specific religious groups, they in fact tend to raise the issue of certain narrowly defined themes. I noted earlier that criticism of the new religions tends to focus on the key themes of sexual impropriety, financial greed, dubious faith-healing practices, and challenges to the traditional institution of familialism—these are all issues that Japanese society as a whole has been forced to confront in the modern and postwar periods. Sexuality has become increasingly liberal, profit-making has become a topic of intense interest, modern rationalism has failed to be fully accepted, and individualism has made increasing inroads on the traditional Japanese family system. This is the shape of things widely visible throughout Japanese society, and naturally while some people accept the situation as is there are others who rebel against or or feel guilt about it. Even though these groups are labeled "new religions," if they indeed belong to the more general class of religions, then as such people wish them to maintain a core of the holy. While that wish may be a selfish longing that ignores the reality of everyday life, it nonetheless possesses its own rationale.

Despite attacks from the established religions, the state, and the media, new religious groups continue to appear, and some have succeeded in attracting memberships in the hundreds of thousands, or even millions. This situation has continued for more than a century and a half, and the fact that no momentous social change can be posited for the foreseeable future that would alter this can be considered testimony to the relatively secure foundation possessed by the new religions' religious system. This

system did not come into being as the result of coincidental chance; it is a phenomenon whose emergence corresponds to changes occurring at the roots of society during this period. It is precisely that fact that makes these "shadows of the era and society" so interesting when considering them as a religious system.

5. Response to "Tectonic Change"

The new religions' religious system did not take shape as the result of political demands, nor was it a rebellion fomented by a small coterie of religious elites. It can be considered both a direct expression of immediate social change and simultaneously a response to "tectonic change" in society occurring at a deeper, more fundamental level. As such, the characteristics of this system can be revealed by drawing comparisons to the essential nature of the changes modern Japan has experienced.

In general, a religious system can be analyzed from the following three perspectives: (1) by focusing on those elements having to do with people (subject); (2) by focusing on the organization or structure (network or medium); and (3) by focusing on teachings, doctrines, and rituals (information or message). Assuming the new religions represent a religious system equipped with new characteristics in terms of subject, network, and information, it should be possible to map the background to that new system against the following basic social changes in modern Japan: (1) the qualitative changes in the Japanese intellectual environment observable throughout the modern period provide a map for exploring subject; (2) structural changes in interpersonal relationships form the backdrop for network; and (3) the changes generated by the overall advance of the higher-order information society and globalization provide a focus for the element of information.

The first factor—changes in the intellectual environment—refers to the overall level and standardization of Japanese education. The leaders of the new religions are not members of a specialized religious elite who have accumulated a standardized religious education. While exceptions exist, most of the founders and core leaders of the new religions have been ordinary farmers, housewives, and company employees. In groups that espouse the "ministry of all believers," ordinary followers also simultaneously play the role of active proselytizers. This is possible due to the existence of a popular base intellectually capable of supporting the growth of a new religious system.

This suggests that two necessary conditions for the new religions' religious system to have developed are, first, the existence of people (religious founders) other than specialized, religious professionals who can give birth to a religious message, and

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second, the existence of a certain number of people who understand and are capable of spreading that founder's message. In the Edo and earlier periods, society was composed of a small number of literate intellectuals and a preponderant mass of illiterate commoners. The new religions began emerging at a time when that structure was changing. Basic literacy began to spread widely among the Japanese masses in the 19th century. The overall intellectual level of the people rose and also became more uniform in content, and the population of people with a standard level of education increased rapidly. This development was likely an important factor that aided the functioning of the system represented by the new religions. The appearance of women can also be understood as part of the context of rising education.

The second factor for comparison is the collapse of the early-modern principles of interpersonal relations and the shift to their modern forms. The collapse of the early modern feudal system loosened the linkage between people and the land. The introduction and advance of capitalism helped spur on the process of urbanization. Postwar revisions in Japanese civil law had the effect of easing the ties between the individual and traditional family structure. Combined, these factors led to the number of nuclear families to increase and to further urbanization, trends that in turn have brought about what has been called the diminution of human relationality—that is that say, that human relations have shifted to a new level of structure. Individual identity has become more unstable within this new structure. But since it remains true that interpersonal ties are the basis for human society, various new kinds of relationship corresponding to the new conditions such as school factions and company cliques (relationships formed through membership in a certain company) have been formed. In the religious sphere, these new ties and relationships are represented by the organizations and structures of the new religions. Organizational structures that involve both vertical and horizontal lines certainly help to improve the efficiency of proselytization, but they also represent new forms of interpersonal linkage. If this point is overlooked, it is easy to fall prey to the kind of thinking that "explains" the strength of interpersonal ties on things like "brain washing" or "mind control," or assume it is characteristic only of an unusual kind of group.

Needless to say, the final factor—increasing exposure to information and globalization—is heavily predicated on the prior existence of the first (rising intellectual level). Modern Japan has steadily introduced or developed various new information media, each of which has been adapted for mass consumption. If one ignores the regressive interruption represented by the World War II years, Japan's modern period

has seen a steady and exponential increase in the quantity of information available to the public. Naturally enough, that information has also included details about religion. People now have more chances to learn about religions other than those their own clergy or parents pass down to them. This fact has promoted the growth of consumer choice when it comes to selecting religious membership. That is to say, one can now select whatever religion that matches one's own tastes, in the same way a consumer selects goods in a supermarket.

Such an increase in the flow of information has promoted not only an internationalization of proselytization, but a globalization of doctrine as well. From the perspective of the Japanese new religions, internationalization means an increase in missionary efforts by Japanese religions abroad, in the same way that Western Christian churches have sent missionaries to Japan. Globalization, on the other hand, can be seen in the increasing expressions of a new form of syncretism in doctrine and activity. One example of such would be the way that new religions of foreign origin like the Unification Church and Jehovah's Witnesses have been accepted in Japan with little consciousness of how they differ from their Japanese counterparts.

To speak of "a new form of syncretism" refers to how new religions have deliberately attempted to adopt what they consider to be the superior features of various non-Japanese religions. For example, it is not strange for a Japanese new religion to also introduce elements from Christianity alongside those derived from Shinto and Buddhism. Some like Ōmoto may base their syncretism upon an explicit doctrinal claim, such as "all religions spring from the same root." More generally, however, this syncretism is based on the idea that a good teaching is a good teaching, no matter what religion it originates in. As a result, use is made of the "superior" teachings and forms of activity from many existing religions, no matter whether Christian, Buddhist, or Confucian in origin. Since the new religions also introduce their own unique new doctrines and activities, the resulting syncretism might be called "neo-syncretism."

Also noteworthy is the fact that, in addition to adopting elements from other religions, the new religions also have the tendency to actively introduce scientific information. The common theme elsewhere of "science versus religion" is not much heard in the new religions. On the contrary, they tend to prefer basically scientific explanations. Setting aside for a moment the issue of whether they are actually based on scientific principles, groups emphasize that their doctrines do not contradict scientific explanations and frequently claim that their own teachings have discovered the same reality uncovered by science.

6. Further Research Steps

The appearance of the new religions has been a revolutionary development in Japanese religious history. It has changed the place that religion has in daily life, and the way that life is lived. The question of how each individual movement was spawned, developed, and the impact each has had on society is an intriguing one, but my focus in this book has been not on the histories of individual movements but rather on the trends and characteristics of these movements as a whole. The underlying goal of this approach has been to emphasize the social significance of the new religions.

The new religions have played a relatively steady role in modern Japanese society, even as they gradually change the patterns of their activities in response to social trends. This fact makes them an extremely important phenomenon from a life cycle of religion perspective, and constitutes a crucial piece of data for any researcher who wishes to study religion as a living entity. What the new religions talk about so freely is the fact that the religious life cannot be summed up in fine sentiments and ideals. It is easy to pay lip service to prayer, virtuous poverty, and the obligation to be compassionate to others, but everyday life is not so easy. There, people are faced with the reality of having to survive in the frenzied economic environment required to sustain life, the highly competitive work-a-day society, and highly stressful relationships with other people of differing dispositions and ways of thought. Religion's true efficacy is tested in the face of that kind of contentious environment.

Psychological burdens and distress are conceptualized as being caused by "spirit curses," "ancestors who have failed to achieve buddhahood," and "the weight of karma," all of which rob individuals of hope and inhibit them from viewing society in a positive light. The vague anxieties thus aroused lead to life without hope. Even if this description applies to only a limited segment of the populace, it remains true that the new religions have adopted the role of resolving problems like these, and it is because their solutions have had a certain efficacy that they have, as a religious system, grown so successfully.

If one fails to recognize this basic fact and instead allows attention to be monopolized by the superficially strange activities of a few groups spotlighted by the media, the activity of the new religions will continue to appear nothing but inexplicable, aberrant, and suspicious. I have repeatedly emphasized that it is time we gave up the simple view of the new religions as abnormal religious phenomena, and continue to do so precisely because it is the new religions that in fact have represented the main current

of religious activity in Japan's modern period.

It is clear that guides drawn from the religious activities of established Buddhist monasteries and cloisters can no longer serve as leading principles for members of our secularized society. Under today's conditions, the form of activities engaged in by the new religions represents a challenge to the future state of religion as a whole. While a certain critique can be directed toward our fixation on economics, it is inconceivable that its importance will disappear. In short, it is unlikely that the tendency for capitalism and commercialism to broadly regulate everyday life will substantially diminish. Given the present-day context, what kind of voice will be left to religion, and what role can it play? The vitality exhibited by the new religions is testimony to the energy and boundless curiosity of contemporary Japanese, as well as a reflection of their boundless anxiety. Another important key to interpreting the make-up of the new religions in their manifold appearances is to look closely at the ways in which people have experienced conflict through the system of the new religions. A combination of "macro" and "micro" viewpoints should produce an additional element helping us to understand the new religions.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Aum Shinrikyō and the Age of Confusion

1. Collapse of the Myth of Japanese Safety

On March 20, 1995, highly lethal sarin nerve gas was released in the subways of Japan's capital city of Tokyo. Eleven people died, and some 3,700 or more suffered a variety of effects. After it became clear that the attack was the work of the founder and central leaders of the new religious group Aum Shinrikyō, the shock of it and a longer series of incidents that together comprised the ongoing "Aum affair" spread to every corner of Japanese society. While the fear of indiscriminate terrorism has gradually subsided since the arrest of the group's founder Asahara Shōkō and his main lieutenants, it remains impossible to measure the complexity and depth of the impact these events had on Japan.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake that struck Kobe and Osaka that January 17 vividly showed how natural disasters can occur in any time and any place, and how they can bring about terrible effects particularly in urban areas. In contrast, the Aum Shinrikyō affair brought to the fore the ever-present potential for primal human insanity and violence in "normal" young people, even during what otherwise appear to be ordinary times. The enusing nonstop sensationalistic coverage by the Japanese press produced a situation wherein it sometimes seemed that everyone in the country had been assigned the status of amateur religion critic. The reportage stretched out for roughly a year, and it is possible that exposure to the ongoing stream of various images connected to the events may have caused some long-lasting trauma among the younger generation. Popular infotainment programs at times injected an unnecessarily graphic level of detail to their broadcasts as they revealed the horrifying depths of evil latent in the human mind, the ultimate effect of which may have been to increase mutual human distrust. The events themselves were bad enough, but the manner in which the media chose to cover them in some cases had an even greater social impact.

The fact that it used indiscriminate terrorism is by itself enough to have made the Aum Shinrikyō group a most unusual new religion. As I pointed out earlier, the new religions have fomented any number of social problems in modern Japan, but never before has there been a group whose members—composed of adults who should have known better—given themselves over to repeated and escalating violence and criminal

conduct at the command of the sect's founder. As each of Aum's crimes—ranging from incarceration to kidnappings, from LSD production to murder and terrorism—have been revealed, the strange thing is that many people have come to view Aum not as a religious group at all, but rather as merely a criminal group cloaked in religious garb. For that reason, virtually no one—outside of the group's remaining members—has opposed revocation of the group's corporate status under the Religious Juridical Persons Law. On June 30, 1995, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Tokyo District Public Prosecutor's Office submitted a petition requesting dissolution of the group; the petition was processed quickly and the group was ordered to disband on January 31, 1996. Proposals were also made to prosecute the group under the Antisubversive Activities Law, even though the law has been opposed as a fundamental violation of human rights ever since its promulgation in 1952. Granted, the proposal to apply the law came amid agency infighting over the continued existence of the Public Security Investigation Agency, but the fact that it was made nonetheless showed how widely Aum was perceived to be a criminal group.

Meanwhile, other new religious groups frequently and all too easily found themselves painted with the same brush as Aum. Associating them with the Aum problem was possible due both to the machinations of politicians who sought to use the affair to their own ends, and to the deep-seated image of the new religions among the general public. Evidence of the former was concisely expressed in the bill to revise Japan's Religious Corporations Law, which passed the Diet's Lower House in December 1995. While the bill was originally proposed in response to Aum Shinrikyō, Diet debate shifted to the bill's role as a countermeasure to the political clout of Sōka Gakkai. In short, reasonable debate over legal measures to prevent a reoccurrence of the Aum incident quickly devolved into politicians' wrangling for votes, instantly exposing the low opinion that modern Japanese politicians have for religion. For its part, the general public's view of the new religions was merely reaffirmed by the Aum incidents, fostered again by the ambiguous suspicion of all new religions to be found in most media coverage. Aum Shinrikyō proved itself to be an all-too-powerful detonator for this kind of explosive reaction.

2. What Was So Unique?

The incidents surrounding Aum Shinrikyō not only destroyed the myth of a safe Japanese society, but also had a very negative effect on the Japanese people's image of religious groups. At the same time, it must also be remembered that this

religious movement was itself a product of modern Japanese society. Accordingly, to analyze what makes Aum unique one means one must simultaneously also analyze the distortions in Japanese society that produced the group and the events it caused.

The first unique aspect of Aum Shinrikyō is its use of violence and criminality. Even if it is claimed that the group used religious doctrines as the rationale for such behavior, finding where ultimate blame should be placed is not easy to do. For example, reference is often made to the theories of Vajrayana (the tantric wing, or "Diamond Vehicle" of Buddhism) in relation to the group, and it is clear that these theories were used as a justification for criminal acts. But one cannot then taint this doctrine with guilt by association and claim it inevitably results in violence. History has shown that human beings frequently have been able to interpret originally peaceful doctrines in such ways as to validate their own violent purposes. Indeed, religion, like patriotism, can easily be adopted as a rationale for killing; some religions such as Islam are even equipped with a concept of jihad or "holy war." Such factors make it all the more important to determine who is responsible—and for what reasons—when religion has been channeled into violence. In the case of Aum Shinrikyō, no complete answer is possible without shedding more light on the dark recesses of Asahara's mind or those yet-to-be-illumined aspects of the group itself.

From a larger macroscopic perspective, however, we must note that the period in which we live is one that has facilitated the kind of organized violence in which this religious group engaged. Approaches were made to undergraduate and graduate students in the hard sciences, and to members of the Japanese military. An indoctrination manual was prepared for new members. The group procured a wide variety of chemicals, drugs, mechanical and electronic devices, and computers and software. That Aum accomplished such varied tasks suggests that much is possible if a group merely has someone basically conversant in each of these areas, and stands as a grim example of what can emerge from the cracks between the increasing inefficiencies of democratic society and the rapid growth in the sophistication of information society.

At the same time, Aum's criminal conduct was not characteristic of the behavior of all members of the group. To get at what characteristics made Aum unique in a broader sense, we should first note that certain elements that at first glance may appear to be "unique" should in fact be regarded rather as adroit responses to the contemporary trends. This fact is particularly true with regard to the group's methods of proselytization and indoctrination. For example, Aum produced a large number of animated videos aimed at members of the younger generation. While the older generations may feel a

mismatch between religion and animated cartoons, the fact is young Japanese of today demonstrate a sharp aversion to the printed word but are entirely at home with comics and animated features (*anime*). The use of animations or comics, at least at the early stages of conversion, can be categorized as what Buddhism would classify as *hōben* or "expedient means." Indeed, the use of animated materials is not confined to the new religions, for the older conventional religious sects have also begun to fix them in their sights.

Likewise, the fact that Aum's leader Asahara frequently appeared on television or in magazines in discussion with famous personalities was a strategy designed to take advantage of modern people's tendency to be easily influenced by the images portrayed in the popular media. People tend to make judgments of public personalities in the present era far less on the basis of personal meetings with the individual, or by taking the time required to seriously read and consider the things he or she has published. Rather, it has become far more common to make evaluations of personalities—good or bad, likable or not—largely on the basis of photographs carried in magazines or on television as well as other primarily visual images presented by the media. The real personality behind the face becomes secondary—what is important is exposure. Persons who appear frequently in the media tend to win more attention and popularity. Religious leaders should not be blamed merely for taking advantage of this fact in their strategies. While some commentators seem to think that people will innately be attracted to "good" religions, it is hard to keep telling that to young people who, faced with the flood of information in present-day society, lack the leisure to develop their own powers to discriminate on the basis of content.

Aum shared a number of other characteristics in common with other new religions. For example, it emphasized that "Armageddon"—humanity's final, apocalyptic war—would occur in the near future. As a group claiming Buddhist origins, Aum was widely ridiculed for using Christian-oriented terms like Armageddon. Be that as it may, numerous other new religious groups that have appeared since the prewar period—and some that have even been conspicuous in recent years—have proclaimed apocalyptic messages of their own claiming that the world, humanity, or Japan would soon be visited by a calamitous situation.

On the other hand, Aum also possessed features that made it unique in the context of other religious groups in Japan. First was its insistence that members take the Buddhist monastic status of "home-leavers" (*shukke*) and dedicate themselves entirely to the religious life. Second was the group's use of scientific methods—what

might be called an excessive reliance on computerized data—to verify the correctness of their faith. These features should be considered quite novel, and demand further consideration.

3. Why the Emphasis on "Home-Leaving"

Around the time Aum Shinrikyō was first established in the mid-1980s, it assumed the relatively loose form of a circle of people with common religious interests. That association quickly evolved into a closed organization whose members were forced to practice a harsh degree of ascetic training, and that began legitimating its own criminal activities. The group murdered lawyer Sakamoto Tsutsumi in autumn 1989, and allegedly had murdered some of its own members even earlier than that. The dates indicate that the group—and Asahara—had corrupted itself within a very short period of time.

The crucial point of change was likely around 1987. That summer, the group changed its name from Aum Shinsen no Kai ("Aum Mountain Wizard Association") to Aum Shinrikyō ("Aum Supreme Truth"). Following a regimen of severe ascetic practice, a number of believers were recognized by Asahara as "accomplished ones." The group began to publish its periodical *Mahayana* and started to widely advertise its secret "initiation" rituals, the performance of which required large financial donations. Yet, at the same that it aggressively sought converts, Aum also closed its doors more tightly vis-à-vis society at large. It advanced this position in a physical sense by enforcing the traditional Buddhist monastic practice of home-leaving. Aum's version, however, demonstrated features that set it apart from the monastic system of the primitive Buddhism that the group ostensibly espoused. In primitive Buddhism, home-leavers devoted themselves to the monastic precepts while avoiding economically productive activities. The system presupposed receiving charitable donations from large numbers of lay believers in the secular society around it.

Aum, however, shunned secular society and formed an organization of monastic home-leavers, which fostered enmity with society at large. The monastic system the group adopted was also disadvantaged in economic terms. Since it could not assume that it would receive broad and continuing support from lay society, the group relied for its sustenance primarily on the donations of new converts. This structure inevitably led it to demand greater and greater donations and made the group's financial collapse merely a matter of time. (Granted, their conviction that Armageddon was imminent may also have made such economic concerns irrelevant.)

Generally speaking, most new religions do not attempt to separate themselves from an "evil" secular society, or adopt a position of enmity towards it. The pattern among most groups is to affirm secular society, accept the standards for happiness that secular society conveys, and then attempt to realize their own religious ideals upon that foundation. In that sense, Aum Shinrikyō represented a great departure from the main stream of new religions in Japan. The question that arises is why did the group's members turn their backs on secular society and choose the monastic path of home leaver? In the period immediately preceding the police investigation into the group, Aum had over 1,500 "home-leavers," most of whom were in their 20s and 30s. In the society they left behind, they had had plenty to eat, abundant entertainment, and free access to a wealth of information. When they adopted the path of the dedicated *samana* (a Pali term for ascetic that Aum adopted to refer to its home-leavers; in Sanskrit called *Sramana*), though, they, for example, faced a poor quality of food called "Aum meals." I personally experienced this food when studying their main practice center in Fujinomiya in autumn 1991; comprising a dish of whole rice (rice with rice germ) and boiled vegetables, and provided once or at most twice a day, such meals were not, in quality or quantity, the type of food that most modern young people would willingly endure.

Members did not engage half-heartedly in the religious practices involved, and living by Aum's religious precepts meant that their activities were strictly regulated. What was it that attracted these young people to such a life? Some must have entered the group without knowing the true state of affairs, but there must also have been many who consciously chose to join with foreknowledge of what it entailed. The group is said to have received applications for membership even after the sarin gas incident on the Tokyo subways.

Some observers believe that the sensual and sensory aspects of Aum's religious practice were highly attractive, particularly the experience of so-called "awakening of *kundalini*." For example, it is said that after the pain of ascetic practice passes a certain threshold, it turns into pleasure. The brain apparently will manufacture endorphins that produce pleasurable sensations if people practice meditation virtually to the limit of their endurance. If followers truly were attracted by such experiences, they should be called "hedonistic pleasure-seekers," "hedonistic" in the sense that they seek something that transcends normal degrees of pleasure. However, while this aspect of Aum's appeal cannot be entirely denied, attempting to simply define its members as a group of pleasure-seekers would be unreasonable. A more reasonable approach would be to

seek out the sources of Aum's attractiveness through a consideration of problems in the secular dimension, namely the "deadlock" and "suffocation" that some go through in modern secular society and the loss of meaning experienced there. Pursuing this tack should make it easier to see why one group of young people accepted Aum Shinrikyō during this particular period of time. Though a minor episode, in this context the way in which Aum Shinrikyō exploited the image of rock singer Ozaki Yutaka in proselytizing to young people should not be ignored. Ozaki sang insistently of young people's sense of alienation until he himself met a self-destructive end. Seeing instinctively through modern society's shallow veneer of comfortable existence to its deadlocked core, members of the younger generation perceived Ozaki as a kind of religious founder. Aum's leaders not only attempted to exploit his popularity in their proselytization efforts among the young; without realizing it they may have even begun to echo his message.

4. The Transformation of Reality

Many people have expressed puzzlement over the fact that a large proportion of Aum Shinrikyō followers were university graduates in the hard sciences. The image of scientists working hard in a laboratory, peering into computer monitors or handling flasks and test tubes, somehow seems incongruent with that of people typically attracted to religion—and to a new religious movement at that. Given that the presence of so many scientists in the group was related to its deft efforts to deliberately attract such individuals to serve its own special ends, it is perhaps only to be expected that some degree of discomfiture be felt at the results Aum achieved toward that end. Still, doubts regarding science being associated with a new religion—or more broadly science with religion in general—are based on a biased perception. The notion that religion and science are not incompatible has been a commonplace of modern Japan. One theory argues that Japan's modernization proceeded so smoothly precisely because religion and modern science did not stand in opposition to one another. Indeed, it goes without saying that many noted scientists within Japan and without have been linked with religion. One famous example of recent vintage is that of the American astronaut James Irwin, who became a Christian minister after returning from his space flight on Apollo 15. Religion and science possess broad areas of connection in the sense that both entail an experience of mystery before the universe.

Yet Aum Shinrikyō also contained ostensibly scientific elements that were sure to stir disbelief among those above a certain age. The group's claim, for example, that Asahara's DNA had special properties in itself was not inconceivable from a genetic

perspective. That much was possible, even the group's attempts to prove it appeared reckless at a time when the entire model of the human genome had not even been clearly confirmed. But the intensive way in which the issue was pursued was bound to be puzzling for outside observers. Paraphernalia for conducting experiments were brought in for attempts to generate numerical data that would prove the operation of paranormal powers in such practices as "underground *samadhi*" (a kind of meditation) and "underwater *kunbaka*" (breath control). The group was clearly fixated on the idea of showing that one of their own could survive in an underground sealed box for longer than other "normal" humans, or that they could stay submerged in water for ten minutes or more. In 1991, a core member named Jōyu Fumihiro practiced underground samadhi at the group's center in Kammikuishiki Village. As he was undergoing this ascetic activity, several other members kept their eyes glued to computer monitors from a small hut. The computer screens displayed continuously updated information about oxygen and carbon dioxide concentrations in the underground chamber. Even given my substantial experience of watching the activities of new religious movements, the spectacle that day represented a first.

Many of the new religions claim to have cured cancer or eliminated cancerous cells through religious faith, so at first blush Aum's activities may seem to be little different. Most ordinary members of secular society probably hold negative opinions regarding the scientific basis for faith healing. For example, the Association for Religion and Society (Shūkyō to Shakai Gakkai) conducted a survey on religious attitudes from April to June 1995 that targeted 3,700 students at universities and technical schools. In response to the statement "Cancer and other serious diseases cannot be cured by religion," roughly three out of four participants answered with either "I agree" or "I tend to agree more than disagree." Since the question was limited to "serious diseases," and the survey participants were all young people around twenty years of age, it would be dangerous to attempt to apply any generalized conclusion to the entire Japanese population. Even so, it is difficult to believe that a majority of Japanese think that faith healing has any scientific basis. At the same time, it is also unlikely that most people feel so strongly about the issue that they believe it would be pointless or a waste of time to study the scientific evidence for faith healing. Health and healing from illness have a direct impact on human existence, and are generally understood to be important to the leading of a "happy life" in the ordinary secular sense.

What sets Aum apart is its aforementioned interest in the paranormal. In contrast to the power of faith, finding scientific proof of paranormal powers has much less

relevance to everyday life concerns. Popular television programs frequently raise the topic of scientific verification, but talk of the paranormal remains basically within the realm of entertainment. In Aum Shinrikyō, however, young people who had taken university and post-graduate degrees in the natural sciences engaged in serious experimentation regarding paranormal phenomena. This is a strong indication of the influence of the era in which these young people lived. As I will discuss shortly, one must take the pitfalls of the information age into account to uncover why large numbers of youths strongly believe in the reality of things that previous generations mostly held to be unreal.

5. A Generation without Natural Resistance

Since the public revelation of Aum Shinrikyō's activities, the enduring question has been why so many young people with high levels of education accepted the teachings of such a religion. Some point to the current poor conditions for research in Japanese universities, arguing that the research facilities provided by Aum were far more attractive for doing research. It is true that this may have been a factor to some degree, but it would be applicable only to a very limited number of core members like Endō Seiichi, Tsuchiya Masami, and Murai Hideo. The simple fact of entering Aum did not give the majority of members the chance to do a broader range of research than what they had experienced at their universities.

Other observers have invoked concepts of "brain washing" and "mind control," but these, too, are only partial explanations at best . The concept of mind control in particular can be used to explain not only religion but virtually any culturally prescribed behavior. One could claim, for example, that television is the greatest weapon of mind control, for it is the perfect medium for transmitting a repetitive message so that the recipient naturally comes to believe it. The announcements that Japan's Imperial Headquarters issued during World War II likely represent the biggest scale attempt at mind control that the Japanese people have ever experienced, while arguably the smallest is the education given within the household. Given such scope, the ethical debate over the concept must focus on the contents of the attempt and not the method itself. Furthermore, any debate over the method should be voiced in terms of the its effectiveness, that is to say, whether it is more or less efficient than other ways of achieving the same end.

Even before they joined Aum Shinrikyō, members must have had some degree of understanding of what the group was doing, otherwise they would not have developed

such an interest in it beforehand. It thus is precisely the way they experienced that interest that reflects the current state of today's society. This in turn leads to the question of why it is that members of the generation to which many of those followers belong could be so attracted to a set of teachings that, plainly put, are nonsensical, simplistic, and even irrationally incoherent. The answer, it would seem, is that today's young people have not developed any natural "resistance" to religion. The metaphor may not be entirely adequate given how it likens religion to a kind of pathogen or virus, but it may not be altogether inappropriate, either, if one considers the way the human body lives in symbiosis with a range of microorganisms benign and otherwise. To say that these young people have not developed a natural resistance to religion does not mean that they merely have not yet developed the basic factual knowledge to allow them to judge right from wrong as regards religions. Rather, the real problem is that they have had too few opportunities to make experiential, practical judgments, even though it is precisely that kind of ability that is most necessary.

Primal forms of human religiosity continue to exist in today's Japan, as seen in the petty magic used to avoid misfortune, pleas made to *kami* and buddhas, and memorial rituals offered to the dead. Under the rubric of "folk religion" or "folk faith," such religious activities comprise a persistent element of Japanese culture. Once, they were accompanied by specific narratives or explanations; the family or the local community would explain the origin and significance of the ways in which ancestral rites were observed or provide the rationale for various taboos. The recitations of prayers for fertility and invocations for the preservation of the local community could all be observed and experienced at community festivals, and religious sensibilities developed naturally as a part of everyday life experience. That structure through which traditions were handed down, however, has been thoroughly uprooted in present-day Japan; today, the roles of the family and local community no longer include the transmission of such traditions. The times are no longer propitious for cultivating religious sentiment through the medium of everyday life experiences. Fundamentally, the family and local community are shedding their religious aura, while religious customs themselves are less and less a topic of conversation. Even the deaths of loved ones—once events that provided the occasion to seriously contemplate the nature and significance of human existence—are now handled entirely at the pace of professional funeral directors. The channels for the transmission of traditional customs are becoming narrower and narrower.

Meanwhile, as these developments have unfolded the media has been irresponsible

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in continuing to present a vast spectrum of information about magic and religions of every stripe, riding on an ongoing wave of fascination that peaked in the 1970s. Those publishing such articles may do so in the spirit of lighthearted amusement, but those exposed to this welter of data then have to contend with and try to make sense of a chaotically accumulated stock of disordered "information." Young people raised in an environment filled with such ambient noise cannot be expected to display a sure sense of judgment when exposed to real religious movements. The behavior exhibited by members of this age cohort—peering into their computer monitors on the one hand while on the other becoming increasingly devoted to a "master" out of the conviction that he or she has paranormal powers—seems to express the sensibilities of a generation raised on a level of exposure to information that is out of proportion to that of actual experience.

6. Blind Spot of the Information Age

If this picture is accurate, then it is apparent that—even though at first glance it may appear to be a particularly aberrant religion—Aum Shinrikyō has in fact imbibed deeply of the sensibilities of the times in which it and its members grew up. In this light, the affair has also exposed some of the dangerous aspects of the rapidly developing information society. Most of the group's members were in their twenties and thirties, which means that the subcultural influences current during crucial years of their development correspond to those of the 1970s and 1980s. Interest in magic, the occult, paranormal powers and mysticism was considerable during those years. A key year was 1974, when Uri Geller appeared on television and caused a sensation with his "spoon bending" act while the occult movie *The Exorcist* played to packed movie theaters. Such developments reflected a transformation in Japanese culture as the country entered a period of affluence. Interest in magic and the occult gradually expanded and took on a variety of forms as it spread to the younger generations. For example, a Japanese version of the Ouija board game known as "Kokkuri-san" was wildly popular among elementary and middle-school aged youngsters for a time, and similar games have continued to be popular under such variant names as "Angel-san" and "Cupid-san." Japanese have long been infatuated with various forms of fortune telling, and new forms of divination such as variations utilizing crystals and tarot cards have achieved solid followings in recent years. Rising interest in personal health has also seen Chinese qigong (Jp. kikō) become a hot topic. A highly popular "spirit world" movement also made its appearance in Japan, influenced by the New Age movement in the United

States.

To one degree or another, the younger generations were baptized by these trends as part of their adolescent growth. Whether they grew out of them quickly or maintained a long-term interest in them may have been an individual matter, but such movements without doubt comprised a subculture that covered a considerably broad spectrum. The fact that photographs of Asahara Shōkō's alleged "levitation" could be used as proof of paranormal powers and that claims of that ilk could supply the spark for some believers' interest in the group arose out of the background that such shared generational influences provided.

Members of the earlier generations who had already passed through their teenage years by the early 1970s appear to find these phenomena difficult to understand. They tend to disdain such movements as simply odd fads and do not give much thought to their social impact. Surveys of members of the preceding and following generations have even suggested clear differences when it comes to degrees of awareness of and familiarity with such fads as the aforementioned kokkuri-san. Such paranormal themes have become a standard feature of the plots of recent animated films and comics. The concept of Armageddon may be a central element in Jehovah's Witness' theology, for example, but what currency it has among today's Japanese youth comes from Hirai Kazumasa's novel *Genma taisen* (Battle of the demons) and the animations based on it, both of which were popular during the 1970s and 1980s. Plots featuring a human being with paranormal powers who acts to save a world in danger are accepted virtually without question by this young generation. That Aum Shinrikyō understood the sensibilities of the generation that had been raised on the spiritual fodder of 1980s subculture is evident. And that, too, is entirely natural when one considers that the people who conceived Aum's methods of proselytization were of the same generation as those they were trying to convert.

Notably, large numbers of people gave serious consideration to the defenses used in relation to the various Aum incidents that such central leaders of the group as Jōyu Fumihiro, Aoyama Yoshinobu, and Murai Hideo presented when they appeared on television. Even if the excuses were soon disproved or abandoned, the leaders still retained a certain degree of influence that owed more to their attitudes rather than their thoroughgoing denials of any wrongdoing. They insisted that they could not commit murder since they were Buddhist disciples. The mice and cockroaches that infested Aum's places of practice offered seeming proof of their dedication to the principle of non-violence. Further, they were highly educated and had been placed in positions of

trust by the secular society. What's more, their arguments themselves did possess at least some power to convince. Consequently, it is not all that surprising that people did pay them at least some heed.

But was that all there was to it? The issue facing us is accounting for the leaders' complicity in such cruel crimes on the one hand and their expressions of total innocence on the other. Can this gap be explained away as simply part of the aberrant psychology and behavior of an aberrant group? Here, too, we see however faintly a link between the problems of Aum and those of modern society, for we are left to wonder how realistic a grasp these people had of what they were actually doing. Those of us who watched the events unfold through television reportage in some sense can also be said to have suffered distorted view of reality. Much of the viewing public seem to have been more interested in the dramatic circus surrounding the incidents than in the incidents themselves. The murder of Murai Hideo, head of Aum's so-called Science and Technology Ministry, occurred as television cameras were rolling and played out like a real-life drama. The tendency for viewers to get wrapped up in the media circus became increasingly pronounced as broadcasters stepped up their live, on-site coverage of ongoing events. Such a tendency is apparent in regard to other matters as well. Even disasters like the 1995 Kobe earthquake were viewed as little more than immense dramas by those not personally involved, and television reporters were fully aware of that fact when they searched for the most dramatic possible stories to transmit. In an age when images can be transmitted and viewed live, the network of psychological reactions that our minds are by turns constructing differs from those of earlier times.

These developments are also reflections of an age in which even evil is relativized. The information age does not merely reveal that which is beautiful on the surface—the dirty underbelly is unavoidably exposed as well. The old moralistic universe where good always wins is little more than a nostalgic dream. Concern over the declining morality of Japan's younger generation has led some to reevaluate Confucian ethics or suggest an increase in religious education. While such attempts may have some positive effect, the broader problems are not so easily resolved. People may talk about teaching Confucian ethics, but who will teach them, and in what way? How will religion education help explain the contradictions of our modern society? The reason Confucian ethics have fallen out of favor is not because they are no longer taught, but because their underlying supports in the social structure have been lost. Some in legal circles have expressed the opinion that laws should be toughened to prevent a reoccurrence of an Aum-type incident. Such views have attracted much notice, and it is certain that legal

measures are to a degree necessary. But there is a limit to what they can accomplish, because people's sensibilities and behavioral patterns have changed.

The information age has thrown a host of certainties into question. Even something like religion, which presents itself with what seems to be a sure and imposing structure, has been steadily relativized and made an object of consumer behavior. Into that situation, a religious movement appeared with coercive techniques of indoctrination, secretive activities, and an intolerant doctrine, all of which ultimately brought catastrophic consequences. More than just the religious world, society itself has been shaken to its roots as it confronts the reality of its own inability to present young people with a meaningful and optimistic narrative for their lives. Taking greatest possible warning from these events and what they tell us about society today may well prove the meager consolation we can derive from the Aum affair.

Chronology

1868	Meiji Restoration.
1872	Mar.14: Ministry of Religious Education established.
1874	Nakayama Miki and others called to offices of Nara prefectural government. She would be arrested and investigated more than 10 times through 1886.
1877	Jan 11: Ministry of Religious Education abolished.
1882	May 15: Izumo Ōyashirokyō, Fusōkyō, Jikkōkyō, Shintō Taiseikyō, and Shinshūkyō established as independent Shintō sects.
1882	Sept. 28: Ontakekyō breaks away from Shintō Taiseikyō.
1894	Aug. 1: Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895.
1900	June 16: Konkōkyō severs its affiliation with Shintō Honkyoku to become an independent sect.
1904	Feb. 10: Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.
1908	Nov. 28: Tenrikyō separates from Shintō Honkyoku to become independent sect.
1912	July 30: The Meiji Emperor (Emperor Mutsuhito) dies. Era name changed to Taishō.
1914	Aug. 23: Japan declares war on Germany (enters the First World War).
1921	Feb. 12: First Ōmoto Incident (Ōmoto jiken).
1923	Sept. 1: Great Kantō Earthquake occurs.
1925	Feb. 17: Tenri Foreign Language School (later Tenri University) established.
1926	Feb. 26: February 26 Incident (an attempted coup d'état) takes place.
1926	Dec. 25: The Taishō Emperor (Emperor Yoshihito) dies. Era name changed to Shōwa.
1930	July 13: Reiyūkai established.
1930	Nov. 18: Sōka Gakkai established
1934	Nov. 25: Seichō no Ie establishes Kōmyō Shisō Fukyūkai for publishing missionary documents.
1935	Dec. 8: Second Ōmoto Incident occurrs.
1936	Sept. 28: Osaka Special Higher Police arrest Miki Tokuharu, founder of Hitonomichi Kyōdan (later to become PL Kyōdan), on criminal charges.
1938	Mar. 5: Risshō Kōseikai established.
1938	Oct. 3: Shinnyoen established.

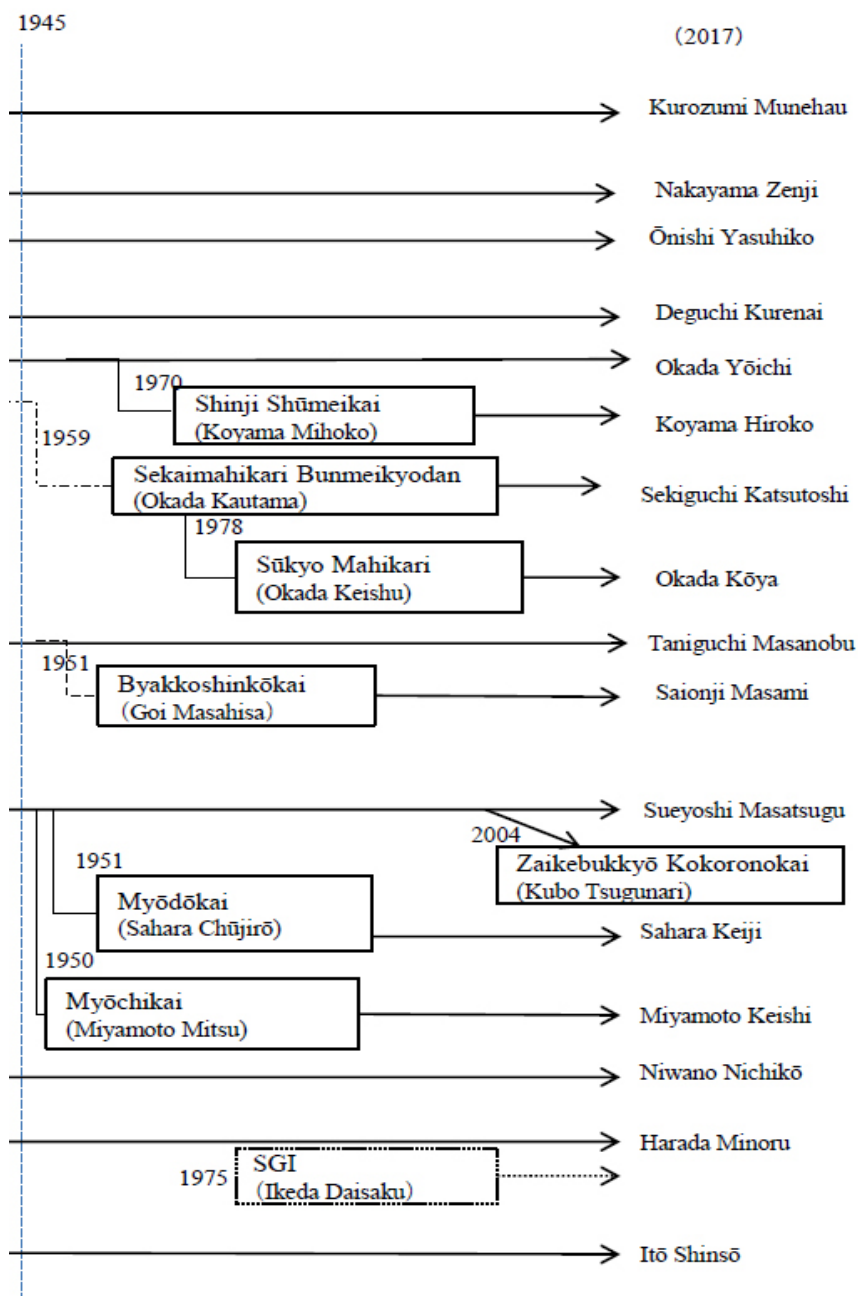| 1938	Nov. 21: Ōnishi Aijirō and other members of Honmichi arrested.
1939	Apr. 8: Religious Organizations Law promulgated.
1939	June 21: Akashi Junzō and 130 members of Watch Tower arrested.
1941	Mar. 10: Peace Preservation Law revised.
1941	Dec. 8: Imperial proclamation issued declaring war on the U.S.
1943	June 20: Sōka Gakkai suppressed.
1945	Aug. 15: Broadcast at noon of emperor's speech that brings the Pacific War to an end.
1945	Dec. 28: An imperial rescript revokes the Religious Organizations Law. Religious Corporations Ordinance promulgated.
1946	Mar. 8: Kitamura Sayo makes first Tokyo visit and engages in street preaching for more than one month.
1946	June 2: Shintō Kyōha Rengōkai (Federation of Shintō Sects) established.
1947	Jan. - : Jikōson arrested in Kanazawa City.
1946	Jan. 1: Emperor delivers his "Declaration of Humanity" address.
1947	May 3: Constitution of Japan goes into force.
1949	Feb. 21: Tenri University opens.
1949	Apr. 20: Sōka Gakkai begins publishing *Seikyō Shinbun*.
1951	Apr. 3: Religious Corporations Law promulgated.
1951	Aug. 23: Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan established.
1952	May 5: Federation of New Religious Organizations begins publishing *Shinshūkyō shinbun*.
1955	Period of high-speed economic growth begins.
1958	Aug. 5: Risshō Kōseikai founds Kosei Hospital.
1960	Oct. 2: Sōka Gakkai leader Ikeda Daisaku and followers make first visit to the Americas to establish overseas branches of the group.
1964	Nov. 17: Sōka Gakkai establishes Kōmeitō political party.
1965	Nov. 20: PL Kyōdan establishes Hōshōkai Hospital (name changed to PL Hospital in 1970).
1968	June 15: Ministry of Education's Cultural Bureau disbanded. Religious Affairs Division Section established in the Arts and Culture Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs.
1970	Apr. 30: Tenrikyo secedes from Kyōha Shintō Federation.
1971	Apr. 2: Sōka University opens.
1973	Oct. : First oil shock.

1974	Uri Geller's demonstrations of alleged spoon bending attract national interest this year, while Goto Ben 's book *Nosutoradamusu no daiyogen* (Prophecies of Nostradamus) becomes a bestseller.
1975	Jan. 26: Sōka Gakkai International established.
1980	Feb. 7: Sankei Press inaugurates series of articles criticizing Iesu no Hakobune.
1982	Jan 11: Sekai Kyūsekyō opens the MOA Museum of Art in Atami City.
1986	Nov. 1: Female followers of Michinotomo immolate themselves on the seashore of Wakayama Prefecture.
1989	Jan.7: The Shōwa Emperor (Emperor Hirohito) dies. Era name changed to Heisei.
1989	Aug. 16: Aum Shinrikyō establishes Shinri-tō political party.
1990	Feb. 11: Twenty-five members of Aum Shinrikyō, including leader Asahara Shōkō, stand as candidates for Lower House general election. All are defeated.
1991	Sept. 2: Kōfuku no Kagaku floods publisher Kōdansha with faxes protesting critical article about the group's founder in one of its magazines.
1992	Aug. 25: Well-known Japanese female singer participates in Unification Church mass wedding ceremony in Seoul. Japanese media run reports critical of the practice.
1993	June 26: Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society established.
1995	Mar. 20: Aum Shinrikyō carries out sarin gas attack in Tokyo subway system.
1995	May 16: Asahara Shōkō arrested.
1995	Dec. 8: Religious Corporations Law revised.
1995	Dec.19: Aum Shinrikyō loses juridical standing as religious corporation.
1998	Nov. 1: Religious Information Research Center established to collect and analyze domestic and foreign information about religious affairs.
2000	Feb. 4: Aum Shinrikyō changes its name to Aleph.
2000	May 9: Hōno Hana Sanpōgyō founder Fukunaga Hōgen arrested.
2006	Sep. 15: Supreme Court finalizes Asahara Shōkō's death sentence.
2007	May 7: Former core Aum Shinrikyō member Jōyu Fumihiro establishes Hikari no Wa.
2009	May 25: Kōfuku no Kagaku establishes Kōfuku Jitsugen Tō political party.
2012	Dec. 21: Japanese Public Security Investigation Agency announces that 255 persons newly joined either Aleph or Hikari no Wa in 2012. The number is the highest since the law restricting the groups' activities went into effect.
2014	Oct. 29: Kōfuku no Kagaku's application to open a university rejected.

1868 1926

1814

Kurozumikyō
(Kurozumi Munetada)

1838

Tenrikyō
(Nakayama Miki)

1925

Honmichi
(Ōnishi Aijirō)

1899

Ōmoto
(Deguchi Nao & Onisaburō)

1935

Sekai Kyūseikyō
(Okada Mokichi)

Shinto origin

1930

Seichō no Ie
(Taniguchi Masaharu)

Buddhist origin

1930

Reiyūkai
(Kubo Kakutarō &
Kotani Kimi)

1938

Risshō Kōseikai
(Niwano Nikkyō &
Naganuma Myōkō)

1930

Sōka Gakkai
(Makiguchi Tsunesaburō)

1936

Shinnyoen
(Itō Shinjō & Tomoji)

—————— divided

·—·—·—·—· influenced

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1945

(2017)

Kurozumi Munehau

Nakayama Zenji

Ōnishi Yasuhiko

Deguchi Kurenai

Okada Yōichi

1970

Shinji Shūmeikai
(Koyama Mihoko)

Koyama Hiroko

1959

Sekaimahikari Bunmeikyodan
(Okada Kautama)

Sekiguchi Katsutoshi

1978

Sūkyo Mahikari
(Okada Keishu)

Okada Kōya

Taniguchi Masanobu

1951

Byakkoshinkōkai
(Goi Masahisa)

Saionji Masami

Sueyoshi Masatsugu

2004

Zaikebukkyō Kokoronokai
(Kubo Tsugunari)

1951

Myōdōkai
(Sahara Chūjirō)

Sahara Keiji

1950

Myōchikai
(Miyamoto Mitsu)

Miyamoto Keishi

Niwano Nichikō

Harada Minoru

1975

SGI
(Ikeda Daisaku)

Itō Shinsō

Glossary

Organization

Agonshū	阿含宗
Aum Shinrikyō	オウム真理教
Bussho Gonenkai	佛所護念会教団
Byakkō Shinkōkai	白光真宏会
Daijōkyō	大乗教
Ennōkyō	円応教
Fusōkyō	扶桑教
Gedatsukai	解脱会
Honmichi	ほんみち
Honmon Butsuryūshū	
	本門佛立宗
Ichigen no Miya	一元の宮
Iesu no Hakobune	イエスの方舟
Ijun	いじゅん
Jiu	璽宇
Kōdōchikyō	皇道治教
Kōdō Kyōdan	孝道教団
Kōfuku no Kagaku	幸福の科学
Kokuchūkai	国柱会
Konkōkyō	金光教
Kurozumikyō	黒住教
Maruyamakyō	丸山教
Misogikyō	禊教
Myōchikai	妙智會教団
Nakayama Shingo Shōshū	
	中山身語正宗
Nenpōo Shinkyō	念法眞教
Nihonzan Myōhōji	日本山妙法寺
Ōmoto	大本
Ōyamatokyō	大倭教
PL Kyōdan	PL 教団
Reiha no Hikari Kyōkai	
	霊波之光教会
Reiyūkai	霊友会
Renmonkyō	蓮門教

Risshō Kōseikai	立正佼成会
Seichō no Ie	生長の家
Seikōkyō	誠光教
Seitenkō Shinmeigū	生天光神明宮
Sekai Kyūseikyō	世界救世教
Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan	
	世界真光文明教団
Sekai Shindōkyō	世界心道教
Shikō Gakuen	紫光学苑
Shindō Tenkōkyo	神道天行居
Shinji Shūmeikai	神慈秀明会
Shinmei Aishinkai	神命愛心会
Shinnyoen	真如苑
Shinsei Ryūjinkai	神政龍神会
Shinshūren	新宗連
Shinrikyō	神理教
Shionkyō	至恩郷
Shōroku Shintō Yamatoyama	
	松緑神道大和山
Sōka Gakkai	創価学会
Soshindō	祖神道
Subikari Kōha Sekai Shindan	
	ス光光波世界神団
Sūkyō Mahikari	崇教真光
Taireidō	太霊道
Taiseikyō	大成教
Tendō Sōtendan	天道総天壇
Tenrikyō	天理教
Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō	
	天照皇太神宮教
Uchūshinkyō Kōmyōkai	
	宇宙神教光明会
Worldmate	ワールドメイト
Zenrinkyō	善隣教

Person

Aida Hide	会田ヒデ (1898–1973)
Asahara Shōkō	麻原彰晃 (1955–)
Deguchi Nao	出口なお (1837–1918)
Deguchi Onisaburō	出口王仁三郎 (1871–1948)
Fujii Nittatsu	藤井日達 (1885–1985)
Fukami Tōshū	深見東州 (1951–)
Fukata Chiyoko	深田千代子 (1887–1925)
Goi Masahisa	五井昌久 (1916–80)
Hase Yoshio	波瀬善雄 (1915–84)
Hirayama Seisai	平山省斎 (1815–90)
Iburi Izō	飯降伊蔵 (1833–1907)
Ikeda Daisaku	池田大作 (1928–)
Inai Sadao (Tomomarusai)	稲飯定雄 （供丸斎）(1906–88)
Inoue Masakane	井上正鐵 (1790–1849)
Itō Rokurōbee	伊藤六郎兵衛 (1829–94)
Itō Shinjō	伊藤真乗 (1906–89)
Itō Shinsō	伊藤真聰 (1942–)
Itō Tomoji	伊藤友司 (1912–67)
Jikōson (Nagaoka Nagako)	璽光尊 （長岡良子）(1903–84)
Kawakami Teruhiko	川上照彦 (1936–2000)
Kiriyama Seiyū	桐山靖雄 (1921–2016)
Kitamura Kiyokazu	北村清和 (1950–2006)
Kitamura Sayo	北村サヨ (1900–67)
Komatsu Shin'yō	小松神擁 (1928–)
Konkō Daijin	金光大神 (1814–83)
Kotani Kimi	小谷喜美 (1901–71)
Koyama Mihoko	小山美秀子 (1910–2003)
Kubo Kakutarō	久保角太郎 (1892–1944)
Kubo Tsugunari	久保継成 (1936–)
Kurozumi Munetada	黒住宗忠 (1780–1850)
Makiguchi Tsunesaburō	牧口常三郎 (1871–1944)
Matsushita Matsuzō	松下松蔵 (1873–1947)
Miki Tokuchika	御木徳近 (1900–83)
Miki Tokuharu	御木徳一 (1871–1938)
Miyamoto Mitsu	宮本ミツ (1900–84)
Miyamoto Takeyasu	宮本丈靖 (1917–2015)
Motoki Kyōson	元木教尊 (1905–81)
Myōhō Ōshiin	明峰黄紫院 (1947–)
Nagamatsu Nissen	長松日扇 (1817–90)
Naganuma Myōkō	長沼妙佼 (1889–1957)
Nakayama Miki	中山みき (1798–1887)
Nakayama Shinnosuke	中山眞之亮 (1866–1914)
Nakayama Shōzen	中山正善 (1905–67)
Niwano Nikkyō	庭野日敬 (1906–99)
Ogura Reigen	小倉霊現 (1886–1982)
Okada Kautama	岡田光玉 (1901–74)
Okada Keishu	岡田恵珠 (1929–2016)
Okada Mokichi	岡田茂吉 (1882–1955)
Okano Kimiko	岡野貴美子 (1902–76)
Okano Seiken	岡野聖憲 (1881–1948)
Okano Shōdō	岡野正道 (1900–78)
Ōkawa Ryūhō	大川隆法 (1956–)
Ōnishi Aijirō	大西愛治郎 (1881–1958)
Rikihisa Ryūseki	力久隆積 (1943–)
Rikihisa Tassai	力久辰斎 (1906–77)
Saionji Masami	西園寺昌美 (1941–)
Sano Tsunehiko	佐野経彦 (1834–1906)
Sekiguchi Kaichi	関口嘉一 (1897–1961)
Sekiguchi Sakae	関口栄 (1909–94)
Sengoku Takeyoshi	千石剛賢 (1923–2001)
Shimamura Mitsu	島村みつ （1831–1904)

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Shishino Nakaba　　宍野半 (1844–84)

Sugiyama Tatsuko　杉山辰子 (1869–1932)

Takahashi Keiko　　高橋佳子 (1956–)

Takahashi Shinji　　高橋信次 (1927–76)

Takayasu Ryūsen　高安龍泉 (1934–)

Tanaka Chigaku　　田中智学 (1861–1939)

Tanaka Morihei　　田中守平 (1884–1928)

Taniguchi Masaharu

　　　　　　　　谷口雅春 (1893–1985)

Tazawa Seishirō　　田沢清四郎 (1884–1966)

Tazawa Yasusaburō 田沢康三郎 (1914–1997)

Toda Jōsei　　　　戸田城聖 (1900–58)

Tokashiki Shizuko　渡嘉敷シズ子 (1927–)

Tomokiyo Yoshisane

　　　　　　　　友清歓真 (1888–1952)

Yano Yūtarō　　　矢野祐太郎 (1881–1938)

Yaoi Nisshō　　　　矢追日聖 (1911–96)

Yasaka (Kibara) Kakue

　　　　　　　　八坂（木原）覚恵
　　　　　　　　(1870–1942)