JAPAN'S NEW RELIGIONS:
A SEARCH FOR UNIFORMITIES

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One of the more frequently noted characteristics of post-war Japan has been the proliferation of new religious groups. As of 1963 there were 171 New Religions officially registered with the Ministry of Education (Thomsen 1963:11). Since there are legal advantages for a religious body to be registered, this is probably a nearly complete sample of those existing in that year. Religious bodies which are registered are made to fit into one of several classifications by the government. New Religions (Shinkô shûkyô) is one of these classifications, and, although it includes religions founded as early as 1814, I hope to show that there are sufficient reasons for considering them a valid group.

The 171 new religions existing in 1963 were the survivors of several times that number which have been founded even since World War II. It has become a cliche that the Japanese are not a religious people; however, the total membership in religious groups in a nation of 93,419,100 people in 1961 was 133,811,316. This amounts to nearly 150% of all Japanese as being members of some religious group (Offner and Straelen 1963:19). Not all Japanese, by any means, are members of some religion; many are members of four or five different religions. About 18,000,000 are members of the group of religions known officially as New Religions (Thomsen 1963:9).

This proliferation of religions is not a new phenomenon in Japan. Holtom (1947:143) has observed that Shintô in Japan has "what amounts to almost a national genius for diversification." This "genius" sometimes spills over into what, to a Westerner, seems to be a strange form. For example, immediately after World War II there appeared the new religion of Denshinkyô, which worshipped electricity as the main deity and Thomas Alva Edison as one of four lesser deities. Unfortunately,

it has disappeared from the scene (Thomsen 1963:30). Another disappearance has been Boseikyô, which apparently performed curing rituals in which sex played a major role (Thomsen 1963:30). One religion which clearly shows the desperate nature of life in Japan during the earliest part of the Occupation is Banrei Saien, which had

> among its objects of worship Rutherford Alcock, the first British Ambassador to Japan, Townsend Harris, the first American Ambassador, and Hendrik Houskens, the latter's secretary. Perhaps it was hoped that they, with their longer associations with Japan, might intervene to mitigate the wrath of the occupying powers. (Dore 1958:356)

Another group, apparently worried about the invading foreigners, established a branch of the Nestorian Church in Japan -- after establishing relations with the 119th Nestorian Pope in Chicago -- in hopes that this would "contribute to the fostering of American-Japanese relations" (Dore 1958:354).

Thomsen (1963:20-31), in his study of the new religions, found that he could make eight generalizations about the ones which he studied. These factors varied in strength, but were found to some extent in most of the religions.

1. They center around a religious mecca.
2. They are easy to enter, understand, and follow.
3. They are based on optimism.
4. They want to establish the kingdom of God on earth, here and now.
5. They emphasize that religion and life are one.
6. They rely upon a strong leader.
7. They give members a sense of importance and dignity.
8. They teach the relativity of all religions.

Hepner (1935:200) in a study of Kurozumi-Kyô, one of the Shintô-based new religions of the pre-war period, found some other generalizations which he thought would apply to most of the pre-war Shintô groups. Some of his generalizations are peculiar to Shintô, but some are more general:

9. They worship the personal founders of the several groups.
10. Healing and magical practices are utilized as a method of practical propaganda.

11. They are syncretistic in character.

12. They are missionary in character and carry on vigorous propaganda.

Several of these generalizations will be illustrated and/or demonstrated in this paper. Lack of space prevents covering all of them. Other generalizations which do not appear to have been made yet in print will also be discussed.

The sudden rise of a large number of new religions after World War II is not a unique event in Japanese history. A look at the available data shows that this has happened several times in the past. There are far better data available for the more recent occurrences, though there is a bit available for some of the earlier ones. The first period of religious growth for which we have good evidence is the period around 794 A.D., when the capital of Japan was moved from Nara to Kyôto. Eliot (1935:234) writes that

> It can hardly have been mere chance but rather something in the spirit of the time, some new ardour and freedom, which caused two young men, Saichô. . .(767-822) and Kûkai (774-835), who were nearly contemporaries, to have careers so similar in their incidents and their consequences. . . .Each of them studied for a short time in China, and each of them returned master of the doctrines of a great Chinese school which he popularized so successfully that Tendai (T'ien-t'ai) and Shingon (Chên-yen) became the dominant types of Japanese Buddhism until the rise of new sects . . . in the twelfth century. . . .

The next two periods of growth of sects were the period around 1200, when the administrative capital was moved from Kyôto to Kamakura, and the period of civil war from about 1550 to 1600. From these two periods there are about fifty Buddhist sects surviving today, compared with only eight from the entire previous period of Japanese history (Anesaki 1930). Shintô sects are difficult to measure, because it was not until after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that such groups were recognized by the government.

Eliot (1935:258) writes of the nature of the earlier of these two periods. The results of a successful rebellion by the Fujiwaras

> meant a new capital, a new system of government, new social conditions, a new style in art, and it is not surprising if

> religion also found new modes of expression. . . .in the century from about 1160 to 1260 religion was transformed by the rise of four new sects, the Jôdo, Zen, Shin, and Nichiren, which throw into the shade the eight older divisions.

Hammer (1962:137) sees distinct parallels between the situation in this period and that after World War II, in that it was an age of "uncertainty, strife, and suffering and people were looking for a way of life. . . . a time when traditional faiths, despite certain reform movements within them, seem too wedded to the past to give a message for the immediate present."

The only source which I could find on the sixteenth century was Anesaki, who was a Buddhist purist and very much opposed to the new religions of the period. Even so, there are many elements of his discussion which remind one surprisingly of the later occurrences.

> Minor sects arose with a great variety of tenets and practices. Most of them derived their material from Shingon mysteries, and some debased the Shingon theory of the double aspects of the cosmos to an obscene cult of sex. . . .Some. . .ambitious priests organized their own doctrines and methods and endeavored to attract the reverence of the masses. They pretended to have discovered a new mystery or to represent forms of cults handed down to them in secret or directly from the gods. These rites were generally a combination of Shingon occultism and Shinto mysteries. . . . Magic, sorcery, exorcism, divination, these practices swept the whole of society. . . .None of these sorcerers attained personal distinction, yet their ideas still continue to rule popular superstition and to exert influence upon the religious life even today. (Anesaki 1930:233-4)

In the modern period, for which we have much better data, there are three distinctly discernible growth spurts for new religions. These occur about 1870 to 1890, when Japan was first opening up to the West; around 1925, a period of massive inflation and suffering; and after World War II, the first military defeat in Japan's recorded history.

While several of the "new religions" were founded before the Meiji Restoration in 1868, they did not really begin to grow until after it. This was also a period of tension in the country, as people were aware of the West and what was being done to China. Tenri-Kyô, which has published membership figures covering a long period of time (Iwai

1932:248-9) indicates that it had few members from its founding in 1838 until about 1865 and that its major periods of growth were between 1891 and 1897 and again from 1923 to 1925.

There is ample documentation from the modern period partly because of the operation of the great Japanese interest in the written word. Passin (1959) has well documented this factor in modern Japanese society. Thomsen (1963:133-4) has shown its applicability to Ômoto-kyô, as an example of the new religions.

> The Ofudesaki was written during the last twenty-seven years of Nao's life from 1892 to 1918. It is claimed to be direct dictation by the spirit of God. Her writings consist of no less than 200,000 pages. . . .The teaching of Onisaburô is said to have spouted forth from his mouth, and judging from the amount of his work it is a very apt statement. He has written more than 600,000 thirty-one syllable Japanese poems and numerous books, among which is the eighty-one volume Reiyukai Monogatari [sic], each volume of four hundred octavo pages.

This torrent of words provides the doctrinal writings of just one of the new religions. There are several which produce at least one new book per month, which the faithful are expected to purchase, if not to read. This gives us one more regularity which holds for the modern period, though I was unable to find sufficient information for the earlier periods:

13. They produce massive amounts of doctrinal writings.

Another regularity holding across many of the new religions of the modern period is that there is a woman as founder, chief proselyter, or manager in nearly half of them. This is in spite of the fact that Japan is a strongly patriarchal country (Beardsley 1965:342). In Ananaikyô, for example, the male founder, Nakano Yonosuke, has adopted a young woman who will succeed to the leadership of the religion (Thomsen 1963:27). Kitamura Sayo, the foundress of Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô, has indicated that her successor will be her granddaughter. The most interesting case is that of Ômoto, founded by a woman, Deguchi Nao. Nao's adopted son (and husband of her youngest daughter), Onisaburô, became the administrative leader. Nao's youngest daughter, Sumiko, became the

second spiritual leader after Nao's death. After Sumiko's death, her youngest daughter, Naohi, became the third spiritual head of the religion. Naohi's husband Isao (who was also adopted into the family by Sumiko) became the second administrative leader. Another Deguchi, Eiji, of undisclosed geneology in the sources available, is in charge of the missionary activity of the group. Ômoto has now been headed by three generations in a matrilineal line. This gives us one more generalization which can be made:

14. They frequently have a woman in high position: foundress, chief proselyter, or manager.

The typical new religion considers itself to be a result of teachings divinely revealed to the founder. They are not considered to be of human origin. Saunders (1964:267) notes that almost half of all the new religions began with a revelation. All of the new religions about which I found sufficient information to be sure of their sources were founded as the result of a divine revelation of some sort, be it the god speaking or writing through the founder or merely a dream or vision of the founder in which he received the command of the god. In all cases available for study, the truth of the religion is considered to be proved by its divine origin. A frequent occurrence is the possession of the founder by a spirit of some sort. This is a common theme in Japanese religion. Fairchild (1963) has done a thorough study of animal spirit possession, and his oblique references to other types of possession are the best source that I have found readily available. He notes that possession in the Japanese system can be both harmful and beneficial. Shamans who cure through the intervention of their possessing spirit or through information provided by their spirit are found even today in parts of Japan. Dore (1958:33) notes that the wife of the richest man in Shiteyama-chô, a middle-class section of Tôkyô where he did his fieldwork, brought in from the country once every month an old woman with shamanistic powers who afforded her spiritual comfort and who advised her on current business matters. Cases are occasionally reported

in the Tôkyô newspapers of spirit possession being found in some of the northern provinces.

The majority of the founders have had little education. Most have spent the majority of their lives in poverty. A very few have held wealth for awhile and lost it. Frequently the founder has fought disease for long periods. Many have suffered great personal tragedies. Typical founders are persons of great self-confidence who may "equal themselves unabashedly with Confucius, Moses, Buddha and Christ. . . ." (J. Spae, quoted in Straelen 1957:16-17n).

> Mrs. Sayo Kitamura calls herself Ôgamisama, the Great God. Ikigami, the living God, is the epithet applied to the leader of Konkôkyô. One of the founders of Ômotokyô called himself "the Savior of Mankind." "The Godman for whom the world is so earnestly seeking" can be found in the person of Mr. Terumi Fujita, the founder of Shinshû Kai. Tsuki-Hi's Yashiro, the Shrine of God and Mediatrix between God and men, is to be found in the person of Miki Nakayama, the foundress of Tenrikyô. Ikibotoke, the living Buddha, was the term applied to Myôko Naganuma, of Risshô Kôseikai. Meishu, the Enlightened Lord, was the appellative taken by Mokichi Okada or Sekai Kyûseikyô. (Offner and Straelen 1963:29)

This gives us two more generalizations which can be applied to the new religions:

15. The founder has suffered some great personal hardship.
16. The founder claims and/or is accorded almost supernatural position.

Dore's statement on the differences between sects, while made specifically for the traditional sects of Japanese Buddhism, holds equally well for Shintô sects and for the new Buddhist sects.

> It might not be going too far to say that it is generally true of Japanese Buddhism that the general conception of the tie uniting the members of a given sect is less the fact that they share certain doctrinal views in common as that they share the characteristic of being all the followers of a certain sect founder. In the most flourishing of modern sects, the Jôdo, Shin, and Nichiren, the legends of the founders play an important symbolic role and are perhaps the most frequent topics of sermons. If one asked a Japanese the difference between the Shin and the Jôdo sects, the most probable answer would be that the one was founded by Shinran and the other by Hônen. (Dore 1958:346-7)

Kurozumi Munetada was an extremely pious and filial son. His family had furnished Shintô priests in Okayana-ken for generations. His father was the priest of Imamura Shrine, near Okayama City. In 1798 he embraced the ideal of becoming a god while yet alive. This ideal became the major goal of the remainder of his life. The ideal came of a desire to make a name for himself for the honor of his beloved parents. In 1800 the Sun Goddess appeared before him and told him to live according to his conscience and in filial piety. During the night of October 3, 1812, his mother died very suddenly of dysentery at the age of sixty-nine. Seven days later his father, aged seventy-two,died of the same disease. Munetada became grief-stricken. He refused to be comforted and continued to mourn their deaths. He began to weaken physically from grief and mourning, and finally developed tuberculosis. Even though he received all available medical aid, he continued to become weaker, and by the fall of 1813 his family gave up hope for his recovery. Finally, in March of 1814, he decided that it was not proper filial piety to die of grief for one's parents. He put away all grief and decided to practice cheerfulness. While still recovering from his illness, on the morning of the winter solstice of 1814 -- December 22 -- while he was worshipping the sun as usual,

> in spite of himself he opened his mouth so wide as if to swallow up the sun, and felt in the same moment how his breast became filled with life-giving warmth and light. At this moment a sudden inspiration flashed into his mind, by which he experienced within himself that God and Man, heaven and earth, within and without, were one and undivided. The whole universe became a living being in him. He called this profound experience tenmei jikiju, that is "the direct reception of the will of heaven." (G. Tanaka, quoted in Thomsen 1963:62)

In this way Munetada felt that he had become one with Amaterasu-Ô-Mi-Kami, the Sun Goddess. He had at last realized his ambition of becoming a god while yet alive. After this experience, he taught and performed various miracles, mostly curing. The sect of Kurozumi-Kyô was officially recognized in 1846 (Hepner 1935; Thomsen 1963:61-3).

Konkôkyô was founded by a poor, middle-aged farmer, Kawate Bunjirô,

who in 1859 claimed to have had a revelation.

> After years of earnest seeking and praying he at last found God, Parent of all men, the Parent-God of the Universe, who revealed himself to [Kawate] as Tenchi-Kane-no-Kami. It was on November the 15th of 1859 that the words of God came upon the Founder, calling him to the sacred mission of saving men, and revealing at the same time that the prosperity of mankind is the ultimate purpose of the Parent-God of the Universe, and that without the realization of that purpose, God Himself is morally imperfect. (Sato 1958:4)

For the next twenty-four years Kawate acted as "mediator between man and God." After his death he was succeeded by his son and eventually by his grandson (Offner and Straelen 1963:64; Thomsen 1963:69-71).

Of the many religions which first came to prominence in the 1880's and 1890's, Tenri-Kyô is by far the most influential today, with a membership of well over one million, an active international mission, and one of the finest universities in Japan, which is used for the education of ministers and missionaries as well as being open to non-religion students. Tenri-Kyô was founded by Nakayama Miki, the wife of a well-to-do farmer. She was deeply religious as a girl and a lay member of the Jôdo sect of Buddhism. She experienced many domestic and emotional difficulties in her married life, including demanding in-laws, an unfaithful husband, and the sudden deaths of two daughters within a five year period. In 1836, her son suffered from a strange disease, which the doctors were unable to treat. Finally a mountain priest came, and, using a local woman as a spiritual medium, was able to cure the boy. A year later, the son suffered again from the same disease, and the same priest was called. The local woman was not available to serve as the medium and so Miki herself was called upon to perform the task.

> Suddenly she entered a trance and presently said, "I am the True and Original God. I have been predestined to reside here. I have descended from Heaven to save all human beings, and I want to take Miki as the Shrine of God and the mediatrix between God and men." Miki's husband asked the deity to withdraw, but it refused. A family council was held, and after much deliberation they decided that it would be necessary to accept the deity. Only then did Miki awake from her trance. (Thomsen 1963:34)

Miki began to give away all of her possessions and all of the belongings of the family. Her husband and family tried in vain to stop her, but after the death of her husband she was able to give away everything that she owned, save only a very small house and a small field, barely sufficient for her family. About 1872 she began propagating her teachings and began practicing various faith-healings, especially a method of painless childbirth.

Some indication of the shamanistic influence on this particular new religion is evident, as the sect has preserved the house of the priest who officiated at the session in which Miki became possessed. The house contained "bamboo sticks for divination, several manuals on incantation, tracts on divination which include passages dealing with portents that indicate and explain illness, and a book on diet" (Bownas 1963:136). A late eighteenth century document of the ascetic sect to which the priest belonged summarized its work as "To pray to Inari, Fudô, Jizô and so on [a mixture of Buddhist and Shintô deities], to divine about good and bad fortune and to dabble in medicine" (Bownas 1963:136).

Kitamura Sayo, the foundress of Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô, practiced various sorts of asceticism and self-mortification from youth to her fifties in an attempt to become a righteous human being. She was the wife of a poor farmer and for many years was under the complete domination of an overbearing mother-in-law. Finally she was "adopted by Tenshô-Kôtaijingû, the Absolute Almighty God, and His Holy Daughter, and became His Holy Mediator to redeem mankind at the end of this world as has been prophesied" (Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô 1952:10). Sayo's religion shows some of the neatest examples of syncretism among the new religions.

> . . . .Thus, on the midnight of August 11th, She was definitely adopted as the Only Daughter of the Absolute God. God in Her body explained that, "The male God, Kôtaijin, who descended into your body on November 27 of last year, and the female God, Amaterasume-okami, who descended on August 12, have united together as one God, making Your body a temple, and thus forming a Trinity." (Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô 1960:3)

Offner and Straelen summarize very neatly the occurrence of this sort

of behavior in Japanese religions.

> Kannon appeared to Shinran when he was twenty years old and Nichiren was a visionary [two of the thirteenth century sect founders]. The foundress of Tenrikyô repeatedly received heavenly visits; the foundress of Dai Hizenkyô, Mrs. Nami Orimon, claims that the highest deity of the universe had descended upon her, and Kiyomi Miyaoka, the founder of Sei Kyôkai, experienced twice a divine descension upon him. Two deities, Konjin and Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami, took possession of Itoko Unigame, the foundress of Shintô Shinkyô. The founder of Nembô Shinkyô, Geigen Ogura, claims that Amida Bosatsu spoke to him directly and ordered him to start a new religion. . . . Kadushin Baba, the founder of Issai Shû, received necessary direction from Buddha himself. The list of examples could go on and on. To prove their divine mission, they often received prophetic knowledge and great healing powers. (1963:28-9)

Though it currently has only about 100,000 members, Ômoto-Kyô is one of the most influential of the new religions; several others, including some of the larger ones, split off from it at various times and continue many of the Ômoto beliefs and practices.

Deguchi Nao, the foundress of Ômoto, was the daughter of one of the poorest farmers of her village. She had to become a maid at the age of eleven and her eventual marriage sent her to an even poorer home. Even food was scarce. She had eight children, but two girls went insane, two boys ran away from home, and three died soon after they were born. When she was thirty, her husband died and she had to earn her living by selling rags. When her favorite daughter went insane in 1892, she had come to the limit of her strength.

> On January 1, 1892, Nao felt herself possessed of a god and sensed her calling to a peculiar mission of world reconstruction. From this time on, her behavior was strange. She saw visions periodically and would hold conversations with God, using a changed intonation for God's voice. At times she cried out and shouted in a loud voice, warning people to repent. It is no wonder that people considered her mentally unbalanced and forcibly confined her. However, stories circulated of her powers to heal the sick, and she began to gather a following of believers. Furthermore, although lacking education and illiterate, upon divine command she began to write crude hiragana characters [Japanese syllabic script]. This inspired writing continued for the remaining twenty-seven years of her life, and by the

> time of her death there are reported to have been some ten thousand volumes of her written revelations which comprise the Ofudesaki [Ofudesaki is the name of the Holy Script of several of the new religions], the basic scripture of Ômoto. (Sakurai 1955:5-6)

The vision which Nao had was of Ushitora-no-Konjin, the god of Konkô-kyô. During her difficulties, Nao had sought help from various gods and buddhas. Eventually, she had become a believer in, and later a teacher of, Konkô-kyô. There are many parts of Ômoto which show distinct influence from Konkô. It was not until 1897 that Nao finally broke from Konkô, and it was only in 1898 that Ômoto was founded. (Offner 1963:64; Thomsen 1963: 128-34)

Nao provided only one of the two streams of thought which culminated in modern Ômoto-kyô. The other stream of thought begins with a spiritualist known as Master Honda, author of Kami no Mokuji (Divine Revelation), in which many ideas now popular among Japanese spiritualists can be found. His disciple, Nagasawa Katsutate, was the teacher of several people who eventually founded new religions. Among these was Ueda Kisaburô. Kisaburô was a precocious child who became an assistant teacher at a primary school at the age of twelve. He became a student of Chinese classics at the age of seventeen and was the winner of all literary contests which he ever entered. After the death of his father, which affected him greatly, he went into the mountains for ascetic practice. There he had visionary experiences in which he later claimed to have left behind his physical body while his soul soared into the spiritual world. Afterwards he studied under Nagasawa Katsutate. In 1898 he went to the village of Ayabe seeking the messiah who had been promised to him in a vision. There he met Deguchi Nao, who convinced him that she was the messiah of his vision. He was adopted into the Deguchi family, taking the name of Deguchi Kisaburô. Shortly thereafter he married Nao's youngest daughter Sumiko. Together Nao and Kisaburô founded the new religion of Ômoto-kyô. By 1934, when the religion was banned by the government and all its leaders imprisoned, it had between two and three million members (Offner 1963:63-5; Thomsen 1963:127-34).

Under Kisaburô's administrative leadership, Ômoto grew rapidly. In 1921 came the "First Ômoto Incident." Kisaburô often criticized the government. He had been arrested several times previous to this incident. The major problem seems to have been that he began to feel that he himself should take over the throne, even changing his name to Onisaburô, using characters which had previously been reserved for the names of emperors. Finally, Onisaburô was arrested on charges of lèse majesté and violations of the newspaper law. He spent four months in prison, and his trial dragged on for six years until he was granted amnesty on the accession of a new emperor. During this period temples were destroyed and pilgrimages to Ayabe (the mecca of Ômoto) were prohibited (Offner and Straelen 1963:69; Thomsen 1963:129-31).

The official Ômoto explanation of the "First Ômoto Incident" runs a bit differently from the government's official explanation.

> At this time a part of the scriptures appeared in a magazine with a series of dots in certain places. Because of this, the police believed the meaning to be of a secret nature and so disloyal to the emperor. The Master had to bear the brunt of the insults and jeers made by journalists and later persecution by the government itself. (Ômoto Headquarters 1950:4)

Following this experience, Onisaburô began to dictate the Reikai Monogatari, which, along with Nao's Ofudesaki, forms the doctrinal writings of Ômoto. He also began promoting the use of Esperanto and the sending out of missionaries. The missionary activity was very successful and eventually there was amalgamation with the World Red Swastika Association, a Chinese religious body having a large number of members.

In 1934 came the "Second Ômoto Incident". Again the charge was lèse majesté, but this time it was not only Onisaburô who was arrested, but also his wife and fifty of his chief followers. All of the buildings of Ômoto were completely destroyed and the religion was banned. Onisaburô was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released on bail in 1942, but there was no further activity for the religion until 1946, when it was formally revived. At its height in 1934 it had between two and three million members in Japan and several hundred thousand more

in various parts of the Empire, Manchuria, and China. Since the war, it has acquired only about 100,000 members. However, several of the followers of Onisaburô went on to found their own new religions immediately after World War II.

These are the new religions on which the best documentation was available. Several of the others are partly documented in the available literature, and the significant features very much resemble those described.

Generalization 10, made at the beginning of this paper, and having to do with faith-healing practices, can be easily illustrated with data available.

> The word of "sickness" (byôki) in Japanese is made up of two characters meaning "sick" (byô, also read yamai when not in compound words) and "mind" or "attitude" (ki), and an oft-quoted Japanese proverb states that "Sickness comes from the mind" (Yamai wa ki kara). Almost without exception the New Religions accept the literal meaning of the word byôki and take this proverb seriously. Religions. . . which place primary emphasis elsewhere, are generally in agreement that sickness may and often does have a mental or psychological cause. (Offner and Straelen 1963:162)

A recent study by the Ministry of Education showed that in times of sickness, 17.4% of all Japanese rely on traditional medical practices and on faith-healing, rather than on doctors. This percentage appears not to vary significantly according to place of residence -- city dwellers are no less prone to the use of faith-healing than are farmers -- but rather according to level of education attained, with over a quarter of those not having graduated from primary school believing in faith-healing (Offner and Straelen 1963:37-38).

> It has been pointed out by Professor Takagi that although between 60 and 70 per cent of the believers in the New Religions enter the faith due to sickness, it is not merely sickness in and of itself which provides the motivation. It is sickness which is due to and allied with other pressing problems, whether financial, domestic, or moral. (Offner and Straelen 1963:243-4)

This use of faith-healing has already been noted with regard to Tenri-Kyô. One of the strongest selling points of the religion in its

early days was its practice of a method of painless childbirth which had been taught to Miki by the deity who possessed her.

> Among Miki's miraculous healing powers, the granting of painless childbirth was the most prominent.When she was fifty-eight years old, she granted this for the first time to her third daughter. From this time on until the present day we often hear about. . . painless childbirth, which has played an important role in the propagation of the Tenrikyô faith. . . . Soon her fame spread and many women came to her house, asking for miraculous delivery. This was the way in which Miki became known, even to such an extent that people called her "the goddess of childbirth." (Offner and Straelen 1963:49-50)

Painless childbirth was only one of the aspects of faith-healing in Tenri-Kyô. One of the basic doctrines in Tenri is that everything which man possesses, including his body, has been lent to him by God. This is extended to a belief that God has placed limitations on that which he has given in trust to man. Anyone who tries to make selfish use of that which has only been borrowed will become ill. All of the miseries of mankind are eventually explained in terms of the misuse of that which has been given in trust. The only cure is to have faith and to perform right actions.

Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô believes that not only the living, but also the dead, suffer from evil which can be best defeated by proper faith and actions.

> The peoples in the shadowy world are all enslaved by the evil spirits with which they had undesirable relations in their past lives. All the agonies of the body and the heart are caused by spiritual reasons, and therefore, without severing the said relations through redeeming them there is no other way for everyone to be freed from their misfortunes. . . .The soul of ancestors should be saved first and then ourselves, and thereafter the souls of the family, neighbors, and lastly all the human creatures of the world. (Tenshô-Kôtaijingû-Kyô 1952:15)

Okada Mokichi, the founder of Sekai-Kyûsei-Kyô [also known as Mondo Mesianismo or World Messianity for missionary purposes], together with Nakano Yonosuke, who later founded Ananaikyô, was a co-student with Ueda Kisaburô (Deguchi Onisaburô), the co-founder of Ômoto-Kyô, of the spiritualist Nagasawa Katsutate. Both Okada and Nakano became members

of Ômoto immediately upon its founding by Onisaburô and Nao. Nagano stayed with Ômoto until 1935, even going to jail with Onisaburô in the Second Ômoto Incident. Okada split with Ômoto to begin his own religion in 1934 after a dispute over what might be termed the "amuletic use of words." Okada claimed that it was revealed to him

> . . .how spiritual vibrations could be translated to others through something written. Handwriting is a most mysterious force. Everything written carries the writer's vibration, for a portion of his aura is impressed there, and between what is written and the writer a spiritual cord is formed through which his vibrations reach out spiritually, influencing all who come in contact with it.
>
> Also, he learned that, independent of the writer, each word has its own vibratory rate -- some higher, some lower. Especially some of the Japanese characters carry a strong spiritual vibratory power. The Japanese character which means "light" emits a most wonderful and powerful vibration. . . .(World Messianity 1963:18)

The character for "light", written by the master on a piece of paper and applied to the body, is used to cure all sorts of diseases. Such amulets are sold by the religion for up to twenty thousand yen ($55.00), and are a major source of revenue for the group. (Offner and Straelen 1963:125; Thomsen 1963:143-4; World Messianity 1963)

Okada has even come to a spiritual explanation for delinquency and criminal behavior.

> Delinquents and criminals, according to [Okada], are spiritually sick people. He observed that they usually have tension or clouds around the neck. Thus the head is in a spiritually weakened condition and the individual tends to lose the power to judge between right and wrong, which is one of the main causes of delinquency and crime. (World Messianity 1963:11)

Okada has become so convinced of his power to cure through his religion that he has come to believe that he is the greatest doctor in the world. He even went so far as to send in an application for the Nobel Prize, an honor which has somehow escaped him.

Even more extreme in spiritual healing is Seichô-no-Ie. Its founder, Taniguchi Masaharu, was also a member of Ômoto. He was one of the first of the scribes to take down the Reikai Monogatari from Deguchi

Onisaburô. He eventually became the editor of two of Ômoto's publications and also one of their chief theologians. When the police clamped down on Ômoto, he left to found his own religion. Not only, according to Taniguchi, is disease the result of spiritual problems, but specific diseases are the result of specific spiritual difficulties.

> . . . Specific instruction is given as to the particular mental attitudes which tend to give rise to particular illness. "Cancer is the embodiment of a mental condition." Uterine cancer may be the result of a lack of true love between wife and husband. Tuberculosis of the spine is said to be caused by argumentativeness. The causes of consumption are varied. "However, generally speaking, consumption is the shadow of a narrow, severe, judging and sharp cutting mind reflected on the mirror of the flesh." The cause of having left-handed children is a home where the wife is in charge rather than the natural order in which the husband rules. For Seichô-no-Ie, sickness does not exist. It is a mere figment of the imagination, a quirk of the mind which is out of tune with reality. (Offner and Straelen 1963:165)

One of Seichô-no-Ie's means of curing, the "spiritual wave," seems somewhat similar to Sekai-Kyûsei-Kyô's "spiritual cords" although Thomsen (1963:156-7) seems to think that it is a unique feature of this religion. These spiritual waves tie people together and have the power to influence others.

> The thought waves are far more delicate than those of the radio, and distance will not be a hindrance to receiving them. We have an example of a patient in Manchuria who could neither walk nor sit with his legs folded. He was healed instantly by practicing meditation at the same time that we were praying for the benediction of all the members of Seichô-no-Ie. You require a delicate radio set to receive radio waves. Likewise, you must keep your mind peaceful by meditation on the perfectness of the Reality of Life in order to receive the benedictory waves broadcast from the headquarters of Seichô-no-Ie. We are praying for your health, prosperity and world peace from 5:10 to 5:40 A.M. daily. (Quoted in Thomsen 1963:156-7)

The most unusual case of curing through amuletic use of words which I have been able to find is quoted in Offner and Straelen (1963:201). A cow which had been bothered with stomach trouble for fifteen days and which had been given up by the veterinarian is reported to have been cured when the entire nineteenth volume of the Reikai Monogatari of Ômoto was read to it in an all-day and all-night session.

Along with these sorts of spirit healing, there is also belief in spirit possession as illustrated in the founding of Tenri-Kyô. Mediums become possessed by various sorts of spirits and then speak the way to cure the illness. This is a long tradition in Japanese belief. Nakamura (1960:516) has even suggested that the relatively large number of nuns in Japanese Buddhism immediately after its introduction into Japan was a result of the operation of this belief. Traditionally, mediums have been female. There has been some equalization of the roles of the sexes in the new religions. Seishôdô-Kyôden has men who go into trances in which they receive revelations in answer to problems set before them. These revelations are then explained to the person seeking advice (Watanabe 1957:162). Ômoto, however, while it permits men to be mediums, feels that "women are more fitted to be mediums than men, because they have stronger feelings, better intuition, and more sensitive emotions. With a good medium the dead often appears so clear, that a living person can perceive it with their eyes" (quoted in Offner and Straelen 1963:124).

As well as using possession by spirits to cure or diagnose illness or to give advice, there is also the belief that evil spirits (especially animals such as foxes, toads, snakes, and badgers) can possess the body, causing illness. This is found both in traditional Japanese folk belief (Fairchild 1962; Visser 1908) and in some of the new religions, notably Ômoto and several of its offshoots.

This paper illustrates several of the common features which are to be found in a number of the new religions of Japan. A more complete and analytical statement of the regularities will have to await further research and more space.

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