

SECTION TWO

JAPAN:
RELIGION
OF A
SACRED
PEOPLE
IN A
SACRED
LAND

INTRODUCTION: RELIGION IN JAPAN

The emergence of Japan as a major world power after centuries of isolation has focused world attention on her peculiar combination of old and new, conservative and progressive, particular and universal. A strong historical awareness has been coupled with a sense of the unchanging essence of her people.

Though these characteristics do not differ essentially from features previously noted in Chinese tradition, they have attained remarkable durability as a result of Japan's relative geographic isolation and racial homogeneity. Consequently, Japanese native traditions and spirit have survived waves of foreign cultural inundation from China and the West.

Japanese folk religion, as the piety of ordinary people, shares characteristics in common with other cultures in its this-worldly, communal, pragmatic, magical, and adaptive features. However, the Japanese folk religion also embodies a sense of the sacredness of the land and the people, nourished by the beauty, fertility, and relative security of the environment. As a result of this strong racial sentiment which asserts Japan's central role in the cosmic order, all freely accepted foreign cultural elements are transformed to bring them in harmony with Japanese sensitivities.

This process is clearly evident in the adoption by the Japanese of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist beliefs and practices. Christianity has had great difficulty in gaining broad acceptance, unlike Buddhism, despite popular fascination with and the overwhelming pressure of Western culture in all areas of social and cultural life.

The highly variegated elements of Japanese religious tradition drawn from early native religion, Buddhism, religious Taoism, and Confucianism have been fused into a complex whole. The superstructure of Japanese religious tradition rested on, and was nour-

ished by, folk sentiment and religious piety expressed in the manifold festivals and other spontaneous religious activities. The qualities and attitudes of the Japanese outlook derived initially from the masses who lived close to the soil and reveled in its abundance and glory. While folk piety has sustained the superstructure, manifest social expressions of religion in Japan have played significant roles in the history of the people.

In the interaction of these traditions the Japanese, like the Chinese, did not sense any essential contradiction. In a somewhat simplistic way it has been true that Shinto and religious Taoism advanced human interests in this life, while Buddhism came to be concerned mainly with death and afterlife in addition to aiding endeavors of this life. Confucianism focused upon social and individual morality.

The integration of the various components of Japanese religious tradition can be more easily understood through a brief discussion of the Japanese perspective on religion. We can approach this perspective from three angles: this-worldly realism, communalism, and emphasis on purity.

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PERSPECTIVE ON
RELIGION

The dominant feature of this-worldly realism has manifested itself throughout Japanese history in frank acceptance and enjoyment of life and the world. Japanese landscape with its great diversity and beauty inspired ancient inhabitants with the belief that it was truly a land of gods. This faith was further borne out by the abundant fertility of the soil. The sense of sacredness of the land and its productivity banished any deep disillusionment with existence as implied in the mystical philosophy of Buddhism. The awareness of the goodness of the land stimulated all forms of art and efforts to transform even the most lowly object into a thing of beauty. There has been a conscious attempt to harmonize man-made structures with their natural surroundings, attesting to a sense of kinship and unity with Nature.

The sense of awe and wonder aroused by the creative forces of Nature has also provided the basis for accompanying traits of pragmatism, eclecticism, tolerance, and a more intuitive, sentimental and nonintellectual approach to religion among the Japanese.¹

Ancient Japanese awareness that gods and spirits resided in natural objects which particularly arrested their attention led them to exalt the concrete phenomenon and made them especially open to novelty and influences from all areas of their world. Hence they not only welcomed Chinese culture with its religious beliefs and practices, but they continued the transformation of other-worldly Buddhism which had begun in China. Further, it is clear that eclecticism and tolerance resulted from the need to find alternative effective ways to cope with the erratic and unpredictable aspects of Nature.

1. H. Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1964, pp. 350-406, 531-576.

The Japanese were receptive to claims that Buddhism possessed superior magic powers for dealing with divine forces.

The intuitive approach has expressed itself in the widespread Japanese sentiment that Buddhism and religion in general is mysterious and profound. Concern for the mood and beauty of a ritual outweighs in significance any intellectual consideration in its evaluation. Also group sentiment has played a great role in determining thought.

A good illustration of the predominance of intuition over intellectualization in Japanese thought is the contrast in the ways of understanding the nature of divinity in Japanese and Western tradition. In the West philosophers and theologians attempt to define what God is; then they seek the evidences of his existence in the world. The Japanese, however, regard the impressions of beauty, mystery, awe, goodness, or ugliness which arise in encounters with things in the world as signs of the presence of divinity within those things. Thus the idea of divinity begins with the recognition of the special character of the object which points beyond itself to a more fundamental reality behind and within. There is no need to define or prove divinity in this context as in the Western mode of thinking, because the recognition of the peculiar significance of the object constitutes its quality of divinity. Divinity is not limited to a specific class of objects nor to one set of attributes. Aesthetically, this perspective encourages art and the exaltation of the common and menial. Ethically, it may be criticized that religion becomes morally irrelevant when goodness and badness, beauty and ugliness, are equally divine. However, Japanese tradition emphasizes the aspects of productivity, growth, and creativity in Nature as the prime qualities in life. This stress has moral implications which counter the apparent indifference to values in the awareness of divinity.

Japanese communal feeling began with primary commitment to the clan and family in ancient times. Eventually this commitment extended to the central Imperial clan which gradually grew more powerful as the government transformed into a centralized bureaucratic state on the Chinese model. Supported by similar Confucian principles, the Japanese came to view their country as a great family headed by the Imperial parent.

As the family-nation concept indicates, religion throughout Japanese history has been inextricably interwoven with kinship, group, and national concerns and relationships. On the village level the Dozoku kinship unit (a group of related, nuclear families in hierarchical arrangement involving status and obligations) has been the major religious unit. The concrete activities of religious festivals generated a cohesive spirit as all the members, aware of their common destiny, strove to secure the life of the group through ceremonies designed to stimulate fertility or pacify the spirits of the dead. The centrality of the kinship group was expressed in ancestor reverence, which has been an essential feature in every tradition, native or foreign, in Japanese history.

A significant implication of the importance of the kinship group in social and religious matters has been the priority of the group over

the individual in all vital social matters. As a consequence, religious commitment and belief have not been emphasized, though conscious voluntary adherence to a specific religious system is not entirely absent. In general, one's religion and religious activity depended on his group obligations. The social organization required in food production in ancient times imposed limitations on individual expression, since the good was not sought for oneself but for one's group.

In the sphere of politics and government the Emperor came to symbolize the unity of the people as the supreme mediator between the gods and the people. He was the concrete expression of the divinity of the nation being a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess. Because of the unique status of the Emperor, the Japanese differed from the Chinese in placing loyalty to the Emperor and nation ahead of one's family. The theory of Japanese society gradually crystallized in the concept of *Kokutai* (National Essence), which provided the ideology of modern Japanese nationalism.

Emperor reverence also relates to the tendency of Japanese to form strong bonds of devotion to concrete individuals, whether Emperor, Lord, or teacher. This characteristic contributed to factionalism and sectarianism in later developments of Japanese Buddhism.

Japanese emphasis on purity initially centered on the avoidance of actions giving rise to physical or ritual pollution or uncleanness which could threaten the well-being of the community and the individual. In common with other lesser developed peoples, the early Japanese focused their attention on the external, concrete act. Eventually consideration was given to motivation and inner character.

The Japanese concern for purification was early observed by the Chinese and a central ceremony was the *Oharae*, whose text is contained in the *Norito* (ritual prayers) of the *Engishiki*. From this passage we gain concrete indications of the idea of sin or pollution among the early Japanese. According to the prayer, sins were divided into heavenly and earthly. The heavenly sins were

*Breaking down the ridges,
Covering up the ditches,
Releasing the irrigation sluices,
Double planting,
Setting up stakes,
Skinning alive, skinning backwards,
Defecation—
Many sins (such as these) are distinguished and called the heavenly sins.²*

The earthly sins were:

*Cutting living flesh, cutting dead flesh,
White leprosy, skin excrescences,*

2. Donald L. Philippi, trans., *Norito*, Tokyo, The Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, 1959, p. 46.

*The sin of violating one's own mother
 The sin of violating one's own child,
 The sin of violating a mother and her child,
 The sin of violating a child and her mother,
 The sin of transgression with animals,
 Woes from creeping insects,
 Woes from the birds of on high (sic),
 Woes from the deities of on high (sic),
 Killing animals, the sin of witchcraft—
 Many sins (such as these) shall appear.³*

The performance of the rite of purification caused the gods to take away all the sins recounted above. According to the ritual, the Goddess Se-ori-tu-hime who dwelled in the fast-flowing rivers carried the sins to the briny ocean where they were swallowed by the Goddess Haya-aki-tu-hime. When she swallowed them at a gulp, the deity Ibuki-do then blew them all to the underworld. With the sins gone, tranquillity reigned.⁴

As can be seen in this early listing, sins were primarily social in character. Good and evil were completely distinguished according to whether an act was beneficial for the community or dangerous. The term good (*yoshi*) covered a wide area such as beauty, excellence, good fortune, and nobility. Bad (*ashi*) signified something evil-omened, inferior, and unlucky. In the mythology the polarization of good and evil was expressed in the *Magatsubi-no-kami* (bending Kami) and the *Naobi-no-kami* (straightening Kami). The former were gods of pollution and disaster, while the latter were those who restored things to a normal condition.

Although early Shinto possessed awareness of purity and pollution and good and evil, it did not enunciate a formal value system. Rather than setting up a scale of values, it sought unity with the Kami in each action. To attain unity with the Kami meant to cultivate a bright, pure, correct, and straight mind. The characters *mei-jo-sei-choku* (brightness-purity-correctness-uprightness) provided an outline of the basic values eventually employed to express the Shinto ethic. It also contained the potentiality for a more spiritual ethic of inward purity.

Though the Japanese concern for purity became more inward, it was not guilt-oriented nor ascetic since it believed in the essential goodness of man and was optimistic. Many Imperial edicts stressed purity of heart or the honest and sincere heart. In the fulfillment of vows, an important element was the declaration that one's heart and intention was pure. This perspective in Japanese religion can be observed in the vow ascribed to the divinity Hachiman Bosatsu:

*Though much I see as I tramp back and forth
 Shall I ever forget the heart of a man
 Who is innocent and pure!⁵*

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 48. See also poem of Motoori Norinaga, in Tsunetsugu Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, Tokyo, Japanese Ministry of Education, 1964, p. 152.

5. Muraoka, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Among the symbols of Imperial authority, the mirror represented the pure heart as interpreted by the Shinto thinker Kitabatake Chikafusa:

The Mirror harbors nothing within itself. As it reflects all phenomena without a selfish heart, there is never an instance when the forms of right and wrong, or good and evil fail to show up. Its virtue consists in responding to these forms as they come. This is the basic source of correctness and uprightness.⁶

In addition to the ideals of purity of body and spirit which pervaded Japanese religious tradition, the principles of filial piety, loyalty, gratitude, and sincerity have been key elements in Japanese moral existence. A keen sense of duty and obligation has inspired individuals with serious purpose. These fundamental social values have received support and reinforcement from the religious traditions through the inculcation of ancestor reverence and the teachings of the various religious communities. Confucianism particularly strengthened Japanese moral sentiments and provided the theoretical structure for native morality.

As an outgrowth of the maintenance of purity and correctness, buttressed by the Confucian principle of *li* (propriety and decorum), the Japanese have developed a highly ceremonial and ritualistic culture. The necessities of recognizing status have shaped language, as well as social activities, extending from everyday ordinary affairs to major social and religious events.

The Japanese religious perspective harmonized well with religious-philosophical elements imported from China. Confucianism implemented moral and political tendencies through affirming hierarchy, authority, monarchy, filial piety, and duty. Religious Taoism amplified magical techniques and divination practices, while Buddhism expanded the scope of the Japanese understanding of human life and offered gorgeous imagery, ceremony, and pageantry appealing to Japanese aesthetic sentiment.

The study of the manifold characteristics and tenor of Japanese religious perspective may be further amplified through a brief survey of the basic trends arising from the mutual interaction of the various components of the tradition within the changing conditions of Japanese society.

The indigenous Japanese religion emerging out of the obscurity of prehistoric times faced the subtle complexity and pageantry of Mahayana Buddhism which appealed to many facets of Japanese character. However, rather than fading from history before the pronounced sophistication and practicality of Buddhism, the two religions merged on the folk level, and the native tradition became more self-conscious through the compilation of its myths in the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihonshoki* (abbrev. *Nihongi*, 720) as a result of Imperial demand. Borrowing Chinese terminology, the native tradition came to be known as Shinto (the Way of the Gods).

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Despite the formalization of Shinto, Buddhist perspectives and activity dominated the Japanese religious world on institutional and intellectual levels, as witnessed by the great temples and Buddhist schools of the Nara (710–784) and Heian (794–1185) eras.

However, the national sentiment, grounded in Shinto faith in the divinity of the country and people, never permitted leaders to neglect their obligations to the gods of the people. While on the surface the foreign culture appeared stronger, the folk sentiment nourished the roots as an underground stream. Eventually, the foreign tradition transformed into the national image.

As a consequence of the combination of national sentiment and Buddhist tolerance, Shinto ritual and outlook on life persevered. In the Kamakura era (1185–1333) and in the later Tokugawa period (1600–1867) Shinto tradition became reawakened alongside the flourishing of numerous popular, lay-oriented Buddhist sects. Scholarly exponents of a pure Shinto without foreign accretions and associations appeared one after the other to lay the foundation for the restoration of the Emperor Meiji to political authority by appealing to the ancient Shinto awareness in the people. The modern political use of Shinto as the basis of Japanese nationalism depended on the latent sentiments in the minds of the people. Modern popular religious cults have drawn upon either Shinto or Buddhist traditions, taking advantage of the deep-rooted association of these traditions in the hearts of the people.

Despite tension and conflict in modern times, the two traditions complement each other, corresponding to the tension of universal and particular elements in the Japanese spirit. The universal, cosmic philosophy of Buddhism provides a vision of Japan as the kingdom of Buddha radiating Buddhist wisdom and compassion to the world. Shinto supports that sense of uniqueness and particularity in the Japanese which has prevented them from losing their identity in the midst of floods of foreign influence. It is perhaps not without significance that the Nichiren Buddhist tradition which incorporates both facets has burst forth, nationally and internationally, with some of the most active religious communities.

SHINTO: A DIVINE WORLD AND A DIVINE PEOPLE

The Shinto religious tradition has deep roots going back to the remotest times when the Japanese people established themselves on the islands, becoming enamored with their climate, beauty, and fertility. We have already noted that Japanese native beliefs mingled and fused with elements from China such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and religious Taoism, drawing from them moral, metaphysical, and magical features which supported their inner feeling of the essential sacredness of the land and its people. Traditional Shinto as it has come down in history has become a complex religion, making it difficult to separate native and foreign aspects. In this short summary we simply attempt to focus upon elements of Shinto belief, its thought and history, as background for understanding Shinto influence in modern times and its potentiality for the future.

EARLY JAPANESE
RELIGION

The durability of Shinto religion can be highlighted by calling attention to features of that tradition which have maintained themselves from the earliest times. We gain our first glimpse of the religion in Chinese sources from the third century which describe Japanese religious and political conditions.

According to these texts, a major element in the ancient religion was concern for purification, achieved through water rites and maintaining taboos. The still-existing practice of clapping the hands when summoning or dismissing a deity was noted as well as the practice of divination. An outstanding feature of the religion of this time was the presence of a female shaman, Pimiko (Himeko, Sun Daughter), who acted to bring peace and order to the community after protracted strife. Her activity may have provided the model for

the myth of the central female Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-o-mikami.

As with other ancient societies, the early Japanese were concerned with securing food and maintaining the continuity of the group, or otherwise prospering their lives. As means to achieve these ends, the Japanese early came to revere mountains, worship spirits, and resort to shamans.

In relation to mountains, Japanese religious tradition reveals three types of beliefs concerning their sacredness. Conically shaped dormant volcanoes, supremely represented by Mount Fuji, have been objects of reverence. Mountains have also been associated with fertility as the sources of the vital water. They have also been conceived as either residences of the dead or the way the dead ascend to heaven.

The belief in mountains as the abode of the dead or the meeting place between this world and the other can be seen in the ancient practice of burying kings in natural or artificial mounds (*yama*). In the poems of the ancient classic *Man'yo-shu* some fifty-one view the dead as living on a mountain, while twenty-three place the dead in the sky or clouds.

Ancestor worship and concern for the spirits of the dead became especially prominent in Japanese religious life from the eighth to the twelfth century and appeared in the literature of the age. As Hori points out:

*All social and personal crises such as political changes, civil wars, epidemics, famines, droughts, earthquakes, thunderstorms and typhoons, as well as difficult childbirth, diseases, and deaths, were believed to be the result of revenge by the angry spirits of the dead. Sometimes they were believed to be caused by the angry or jealous souls of living men and women.*¹

Such beliefs have persisted to the present time and ceremonies must be held to pacify spirits of people who have suffered untimely death.

The origin of such beliefs and their gradual penetration to all levels of society perhaps lies in the interaction with early beliefs in shamans whom a deity had possessed, the deification of nobles after death, and the beliefs in spirits of the dead and the belief in the essential equality of all people transmitted through Buddhism and Taoism. The association of the spirits of the dead with Kami of ancient Shinto was a gradual development brought about through linking the activities of reverence for the dead and worship of Kami as a result of political interests. Initially the worship of the souls of the dead and ancestors was not really central to Shinto. When it appeared, it was promoted by political leaders rather than by popular religious feeling. In Buddhism the belief attained its strongest expression.²

1. Ichiro Hori, "Japanese Folk Beliefs," *American Anthropologist*, June, 1959, pp. 61-63, 419.

2. Delmer M. Brown, "Kami, Death, and Ancestral Kami," in *The Proceedings of the Second International Conference for Shinto Studies*, Tokyo, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, n.d., pp. 169-182.

The reason for the eventual predominance of Buddhism in such matters can easily be understood in the light of its development in India and China. The myths of India concerning the hungry ghosts, *Preta*, became the basis by which Buddhism enforced and stimulated practices of filial piety on behalf of the dead as a way of accommodating Buddhism to Chinese and Japanese outlook. These practices with their pageantry and variety also appealed to the Japanese imagination.³

Like mountain worship and worship of spirits, the phenomenon of shamanism has deep roots in Japanese religion. The earliest evidence from outside sources concerning Japan indicate the presence of shamanesses as in the case of Queen Pimiko (see p. 343). Though it has never been institutionalized, it has persisted to the present, appearing even in contemporary religions. Lacking institutionalization, it has also penetrated and combined with alien traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism.

Shamanism in Japan has generally centered upon shamanesses, though shamans are also present. In addition, the Emperor possessed a shamanic charisma both through his descent from the Sun Goddess and as the head of the Imperial clan. Although the Emperor himself might receive divine words through dreams or ecstatic experience, he frequently received communications through other shamans and diviners.⁴

The Shugendo system of religious practices, carried out on mountains and generally associated with Buddhism, functions on the popular level as the virtual amalgamation of all the elements of early Japanese religion. The practitioners, who devote themselves to ascetic exercises on the mountains, combine Japanese reverence for mountains and beliefs in spirits, Buddhist esoterism, and Taoist wizardry and magic. Since the Heian period the movement has largely become associated with Buddhism because of the monasteries located on mountains.

The complex of Shinto tradition with many forms and nuances has emerged from the stream of Japanese religious and social history and can be studied from a variety of angles, none of which are sufficient to elicit a full understanding of its outlook and function in Japanese society. One may view it in terms of the various types of cults in the Japanese environment, such as an agricultural-fertility cult, local cults of mountains or other features of the natural environment, or aversive cults centered on attempts to appease the spirits of important personages whose death was considered unfortunate as illustrated in the cult of Sugawara Michizane. In addition, forms of Shinto can be classified as Shrine Shinto, Sect Shinto, Folk Shinto, Imperial House Shinto, or Domestic Shinto.

3. The comprehensive study of the use of Buddhist texts in ancient Japanese Buddhism by M. W. De Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 2 vols., Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1935, illumines the character of early Japanese Buddhism and provides ample illustration of such magical use of texts. Also, Shoko Watanabe, *Japanese Buddhism: A Critical Appraisal*, Tokyo, Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1964, pp. 82-99, discusses the background and development of Buddhist ceremonies for the dead.

4. Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, New York, Columbia, 1966, pp. 17-19.

The term "Shrine Shinto" is a relatively modern one for that aspect of Shinto which was supported by the state in its efforts since the Meiji period to provide a basis for national integration and feeling. In earlier times it was simply called Shinto.

Over against the political use of Shinto to reinforce national sentiment, "Sect Shinto" refers to individually founded modern religious orders based on Shinto beliefs and practices. "Folk Shinto" is applied to the magico-religious beliefs which are the substratum of beliefs and sentiment in all other aspects of Shinto. These folk beliefs serve individual or communal purposes. Through Folk Shinto practices the individual attempts to satisfy his various needs for health, wealth, and security in life, while the communal cult is the focus for harmonization of the local society, politically and culturally. "Imperial House Shinto" refers specifically to those rites carried out by the Emperor and his family, while "Domestic Shinto" signifies the worship centered on the god-shelf in the ordinary home.

Further, as a consequence of the intimate relation to society and its needs, we find that Shinto, as the religion of natural groupings, has functions connected to blood-related groups such as the *Dozoku* and represented by the *Ujigami*, or Clan deity, land-related groups such as the village community and symbolized in the tutelary deity of the area, age-related groups in which young and old have various responsibilities in the cult, and occupation-related groups in which deities care for the interests of various trades and crafts. In addition, groups termed "Ko" have a more voluntaristic character in which people become associated for some spiritual purpose such as a pilgrimage to a famous shrine like Ise. The influence of location remains strong in the relationship of people to Shinto shrines. A distinction is made between the *Ujiko*, who are believers living in the general area, and the *Sukeisha*, who are believers from outside that region.

Beside the various structural forms and practices which can be discerned within Shinto, its mythology and beliefs reveal the nature of the folk beliefs and also provide the basis for the cult of the Imperial house and national self-understanding. A history of Shinto thought results from interaction with many influences in Japanese history. Because of the multiplicity of factors in this development, it is difficult to uncover the precise nature of early Shinto, since even its mythology, given in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* (abbrev. *Nihongi*), was organized and recorded under foreign influence. Though the popular religion is very conservative and is perhaps a good source for viewing what may have been the ancient Japanese outlook on the world, it is difficult to isolate foreign elements.

Although the various elements of ancient Japanese religion have become associated with Buddhism as well as Shinto on the folk level, it is Shinto which, through all changes, has continued to provide the foundation of the Japanese religious consciousness as a sacred people in a sacred land. As the basis of their awareness of being a particular people, Shinto has evolved into a complex system paralleling the transformation of the people from a motley group of clans to a modern industrial state. Just as the Japanese became

more self-conscious through the impact of Chinese culture, so also Shinto became awakened and sought formulation of its tradition distinct from the foreign systems permeating the culture.

In view of the many aspects of the study of Shinto, rather than being exhaustive we shall simply attempt to survey several significant aspects of Shinto tradition which may enable the student to better appreciate this oft-misunderstood and inadequately known religion.

We shall first give an account of the conception of deity and the character of mythology which set the direction for the tradition. Second, we shall observe the way in which the foreign traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism came to terms and appropriated Shinto. Third, in the face of the prestige of foreign religio-philosophical traditions, we shall inquire into the struggle for a pure interpretation of Shinto. Finally, in modern times we witness the expression of Shinto as a patriotic cult and as the basis of religious communities. Through the study of Shinto in interaction with its environment we become aware of its profundity and its strength, refusing merely to be absorbed into more highly articulate traditions.

In approaching the discussion of Shinto we must rely mainly on the materials provided by the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, though we recognize that they were the product of a specific class of people pursuing special interests. In addition, we gain important insight from the ritual prayers called *Norito* in the *Engishiki* and such texts as the *Kujiki* and *Kogoshui*. In all probability the great deities depicted in the texts had little relation to the popular masses, but they do reflect something of awareness and understanding of deities among the people. It is also necessary to recognize that Shinto was not consciously cultivated in early times nor systematically organized. Such religious activity and thought as were present constituted the Japanese response to their surrounding environment. Wonder at the mystery of the universe inspired the Japanese from earliest times. It is this awe of the suprahuman powers in nature that penetrates all areas of religion and is the basis of their conception of deity.

The central core of Shinto lies in its peculiar awareness of divinity which, from the ethnological view, points in the direction of a mana-like conception common to the Polynesians, and from the religio-philosophical view, is the basis for the more pantheistic tendency observable in the development of Shinto theology as it is elaborated in interaction with Buddhism and Confucianism.

Unlike the conception of deity in Western tradition, the concept "Kami" in Shinto does not refer to an absolute being who stands distinct from the world and beings he has created. Rather, "Kami" refers more to a quality in things, persons, and forces, whether good or evil, which raises them above the ordinary level of evaluation through the sense of awe, wonder, fear, attraction, or repulsion which the object arouses in the person. The Shinto scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) summarizes most clearly the understanding of "Kami" in Japanese tradition:

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AND RITUAL IN
TRADITIONAL SHINTO

I do not yet understand the meaning of the term, kami. Speaking in general, however, it may be said that kami signifies, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits of the shrines where they are worshipped.

It is hardly necessary to say that it includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains, and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power or which was awe-inspiring was called kami. It is needless to say that among human beings who are called kami the successive generations of sacred emperors are all included. . . .⁵

Further included in this category by Norinaga are not only spirits of emperors or people of the past, but some people in villages in the present. Among nonhuman Kami are dragons, echoes, foxes, tigers, wolves, peaches, rocks, stumps, leaves, and thunder. These all may awaken awe and wonder in the human mind.

The permeation of the cosmos by deity even to the lowest form of life has made the division between divinity and profane existence difficult to draw in Japanese experience. Not only the spirits of the dead may be treated as divine, but living persons may also manifest divinity. An outstanding illustration is the Emperor himself who is termed *Arahitō-gami* or "Manifest Kami."

The awareness of the divine activating Japanese religiosity has been crystallized in the mythological tradition in the conception of the *Yao-yorozu-no-kami*, the eight hundred myriads of deities (eight million deities). This conception embodied the sense of the Japanese of the abundance and pervasiveness of the divine power through the whole of the cosmos and life. According to Holtom, the number of deities, many nameless, reached untold numbers, while at the time of his research 214 deities were acknowledged in state shrines.⁶

Though Shinto is a clear polytheism, its belief may be positively evaluated in the light of its awareness of the creativity and abundance in life. As one scholar of Japanese religion states:

Life, by its very nature, tends to be infinite. Historians of religion, by penetrating more profoundly into the religious reality, have come to recognize that former generations have misjudged polytheism. What they understood to be "idolatry," was never practised in this manner by any religion. Religious people, by worshipping a variety of objects, always intended one thing, the SACRED, which they expressed in many forms.⁷

From among the superabundance of divinity acknowledged by the Japanese, the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* focus on a modest

5. Quoted in D. C. Holtom, *National Faith of Japan*, New York, Paragon, 1947, p. 23.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Heinrich DuMoulin, "The Aspect of Creation in the Shinto Concept of Kami," in *The Proceedings of the Second International Conference for Shinto Studies*, Tokyo, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, n.d., p. 26.

number of deities significant for Japanese religious tradition. In general, two groupings are important in the development of Shinto: (1) a triad of deities who are responsible for the creation of the cosmos and who initiate the cosmogonic process; and (2) deities directly related to the creation of Japan and the Imperial line.

The three deities—*Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi-no-Kami* (Kami Master of the Center of Heaven), *Taka-mi-musubi-no-Kami* (High Sacred Creating Kami), and *Kami-musubi* (Sacred Creating Kami)—began creation when there was still nothing but primordial chaos and no shapes had appeared. Unlike many other deities, they had no genealogy but appeared spontaneously and later disappeared. From the young earth which they had originated there eventually appeared a whole host of deities who make up the genealogical succession resulting in the creation of Japan and the Japanese people.

The very abstract and remote character of these deities made it possible in later times to employ them as more philosophical principles. Thus Hirata Atsutane in his interpretation of Shinto placed *Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi-no-Kami* as the central divinity, existing before Heaven and Earth. The elevation of this deity to absolute status, supported by the two assisting deities, had repercussions in the modern attempt to promote Shintoism politically.

The deities who initiated the process of creation or production of growth and life in the universe do not have highly concrete imagery reflecting the folk consciousness. However, the subsequent stories concerning the sexual activity, death, births, and conflicts of deities possess a vividness suggesting that originally those deities were once centers of cultic life. The myths were important in ancient Japanese attempts to secure food and the continuity of the group through ritual action. Analysis of various myths in the cycle in the light of myths of other cultures suggests that they reflect the conditions of the environment through their symbolism.

While these myths had their original locus in the cult concerned with food and sex, as they appear in the ancient texts of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, they have a different function. In this context the original nature deities are transformed into ancestors and made the basis for the faith in the divinity of the Imperial house and the associated nobility. The narratives of the Age of the Gods lead to the history of the Age of Man which is carried almost to the point when the texts were composed.

As the society developed, the originally unorganized cult took firmer shape with more concrete conceptions of deity, formation of priestly functionaries, and establishment of shrines and rituals. In time various distinctions and nuances have grown up.

In the sphere of the divine a variety of classifications appeared. There were those Kami who represented the spirits of heroes or emperors of the past. These have had political and moral significance in the education of the people. There were deities which symbolized natural phenomena. Another category stressed functional deity. The creation deities could be viewed as the divinization of the power in growth. Certain objects came also to have the value of deity as the body of the deity (*shintai*). There were also divinities which resisted classification as illustrated in the head of the Idzumo

pantheon, *Okuni-nushi-no-Kami*. Some deities were classified in terms of the region they oversaw, such as the *Ubusuna-Kami* or *Chinju-no-Kami*. Classifications also appeared in the types of spirits recognized in Shinto:

Traditionally, Shinto acknowledged four kinds of spirits—ara-mi-tama, those which rule with authority and power; nigimi-tama, those which bring about union, harmony, and recollection; kushimi-tama, those which cause mysterious transformation; and sakimi-tama, those which impart blessings. There are suggestions that one and the same kami might have more than one tama. Spirits of enemies and those who might have met an unfortunate death, later known as go-ryo, were also believed to have potency. Moreover, the mono or mononoke (sometimes spirits of animals) were widely feared and venerated. All those kami and spirits could “possess” men and women, and those who were thus possessed were called kami-gakari (kami-possessed) and mono-tsuki (mono-possessed), respectively.⁸

Originally priesthood was controlled by the head of the clan in group worship. Hence, initially there was no special priesthood. At a later time, now unclear, four classes of functionaries appeared. These were ritualists called the *nakatomi*, abstainers termed *imibe*, diviners or *urabe*, and musicians and dancers or *sarume*.⁹ As early as the eighth century A.D. the control of the priesthood was located in the *jingi-kan* or office of Divine affairs.

The festivals of Shinto represented the people's active response to environmental changes in the quest for food and group survival. Many were thus seasonal. The major seasonal festivals of official Shinto were the Kinen-sai on February 4 with the object of praying for the year's crops, Niiname-sai on November 23–24 which was the harvest festival, and the Rei-sai or festival of the local shrine. Many of the national holidays celebrated in the system before the war were closely related to Shinto tradition.¹⁰ According to Sokyo Ono the purpose of the festivals was:

to ward off or ameliorate any misfortune and secure or augment the cooperation of the kami in promoting the happiness and peace of the individual and community. They include prayer for divine protection, communion with the kami, praise of the kami's virtue, comfort for the kami's mind, reports to the kami on the affairs of daily life, and pledges offering the whole life to the kami.¹¹

The major elements of the shrine ceremony were purification, carried out by both priests and devotees. Offerings, prayer, and a symbolic feast composed the *matsuri* or service to the deity. In the

8. Kitagawa, op. cit., p. 14.

9. Holtom, op. cit., pp. 27–29.

10. Ibid., pp. 157–158.

11. Sokyo Ono, *Shinto the Kami Way*, Tokyo, Bridgeway Press, 1962, p. 50.



The creation of Japan. Izanagi and Izanami, Shinto gods, standing in the clouds creating islands out of sea water. Late nineteenth century. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

deepest sense *matsuri* enveloped all life which was lived in awareness and communion with the gods. It also referred to specific occasions when the individual or community sought blessings from the gods or the prosperity of the people.

The more than eighty thousand shrines were formerly integrated into an overall system of classification. The status of a particular shrine depended on its national, regional, and local significance and received support accordingly. Presently, without government control or support, the shrines have become independent, though priests and shrines are generally related through the Association of Shinto Shrines.

Shinto mythological narratives and understanding of the nature of Japanese society have provided Shinto tradition with several theological themes which have been the subject of discussion in the development of Shinto thought. These were the distinction between the hidden and the manifest, the concept of *musubi* (growth, productivity), and the principle of *saisei-itchi* (union of religion and government).

The distinction of the hidden and manifest was important in the political and religious spheres of thought. On the political side, it suggested that the deities resided in the hidden world but gave the visible world over to men to govern. In religion it related to the contrast between the visible world of this life and the hidden world of the dead.

The concept *musubi*, generally rendered "creativity" or "productivity," has significant philosophical and ethical aspects as a basic value in the Shinto interpretation of life. Its fundamental importance is evident in the fact there are a number of deities whose name includes the term. The two assisting deities of *Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi-no-Kami* are *Taka-mi-musubi-no-Kami* and *Kami-musubi-no-Kami*. These three are considered the source of all creation according to the mythology. In addition, there are *Ho-musubi-no-Kami* (Fire-Creating Deity), *Waku-musubi-no-Kami* (Young-Creating Deity), *Iku-musubi-no-Kami* (Life-Creating Deity), *Taru-musubi-no-Kami* (Plentiful-Creating Deity). Further, the prolific generation of the gods depicted in the mythology directs our attention to Japanese awareness of growth, productivity, and vitality as the essential feature of the surrounding Nature.

The awareness of the productive goodness of Nature is the basis for the Japanese ethical recognition of *on*, the obligation one has to his benefactor and the gratitude which expresses it. To repay *on* is central to Japanese ethical outlook. Japanese concepts of purity and pollution are also related to the awareness of *musubi* in Nature. Emphasis on life and productivity leads to the identification of pollution with death as dramatically presented in the horrified flight of *Izanagi* from the decayed corpse of his wife *Izanami* in the land of *Yomi*. Life wins out over death and pollution. When *Izanami* declares she will strangle one thousand people every day, *Izanagi* promises that he will cause fifteen hundred children to be born every day.

Drawing upon these implicit themes within the tradition, contem-

porary exponents of Shinto have attempted to show that it can provide modern man with a viable view of life. Beginning with the affirmation of the life force, they hold that it becomes embodied in history through man's work and effort. There is frank recognition that religion cannot ignore the existential anxieties of modern life and it must seek voluntary commitment.

Another important theme which Shinto thinkers drew from the mythical tradition was the principle of *saisei-itchi* (union of government and religion). Forming the basis of the self-understanding of the nation, this concept teaches that the religious and political dimensions of life are essentially one, because the leader of the nation and its high priest before the gods is the Emperor. Commitment to the nation is an ultimate commitment and has manifested itself in modern times in the extremes of patriotic sentiment and sacrifice for which Japan has become famous in the reputation of the *Kamikaze* pilots of World War II. It has been manifested in traditional thought concerning religion and government in the word *matsurigoto*, which refers both to actions performed toward the gods (*matsuri*) and civil affairs. The term *miya* also means shrine and Imperial court.

Although this principle was not strongly enforced during the periods when the Shogunate (military dictatorship) was operative, during the Meiji period the principle was stressed and attempts were made to establish Shinto as the state religion. The object of the effort was to develop national consciousness and cohesion in face of the transitions needed to industrialize and modernize the state. The principle was enunciated in the proclamation defining the relation of Shinto and the state as the basis for a broad effort of indoctrination:

We solemnly announce: The Heavenly Deities and the Great Ancestress (Amaterasu-Omikami) established the throne and made the succession sure. The line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession thereof and handed it on. Religious ceremonies and government were one and the same (saisei-itchi) and the innumerable subjects were united. Government and education were clear to those above while below them the manners and customs of the people were beautiful. Beginning with the Middle Ages, however, there were sometimes seasons of decay alternating with seasons of progress. Sometimes the Way was plain, sometimes, darkened; and the period in which government and education failed to flourish was long.

Now in the cycle of fate, all things have become new polity and education must be made clear to the nation and the Great Way of obedience to the gods must be promulgated. Therefore we newly appoint propagandists to proclaim this to the nation. Do you our subjects keep this commandment in mind.¹²

This principle has had to be set aside as a result of the Shinto directive issued in 1945 declaring absolute separation of Church

12. D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, New York, Paragon, 1947, p. 6. Quotation taken from Imperial Rescript of February 3, 1870.

and State in Japan. Despite the abuses of the concept in modern times, it does hold the ideal that human society is not only an organized secular arrangement, but a spiritual reality in which mundane and divine affairs are completely integrated and harmonious.

Shinto religion has displayed through the centuries a capacity for adaptation and a potentiality for philosophical and religious development, stimulated by interaction with Confucianism and Buddhism. It is this factor which has given hope to adherents that it will adapt to the necessities of the modern age.

BUDDHIST
AND CONFUCIAN
ACCOMMODATIONS

When Buddhism and Confucianism entered Japan from China, they gradually came to terms and fused with the Shinto awareness of Japan as a sacred people and sacred land headed by a divine Emperor. The Buddhist accommodation to Shinto was perhaps more outstanding because of the cosmic, metaphysical, and other-worldly character of Buddhist tradition. Confucian morality with its own hierarchical, social theory harmonized easily with Japanese sentiments. Some differences between the Confucian outlook and the Japanese appeared in their rejection of Mencius' implicit principle of the right of revolution in his concept of the Mandate of Heaven and the Japanese tendency to place the interest of the nation, ruler, or lord above the family, though it was generally viewed that these elements would never be in conflict. Also, Confucianism was not theological or speculative. However, it was chiefly among Buddhists that more detailed theories of the relation of Buddhas and gods had to be worked out.

Though Buddhism has easily adapted itself to native traditions in other lesser developed countries, in Japan it faced a problem of a more profound nature in attempting to harmonize itself with the deep-rooted sentiment of the sacredness of Japan. On the popular level of folk piety, Buddhism merged with the life of the people much as in other places. The latent awareness of the more fundamental issue of the true superiority of the Buddha over the gods was reflected in the development of more sophisticated and philosophical theories, grounded in Mahayana metaphysics, which attempted to demonstrate the essential equality of the Japanese deities with the Buddhist divinities.

In order to spell out the relationship of the two traditions, two theories gradually grew up within the major schools of Buddhism in the Heian period and attained full expression in the succeeding Kamakura era. The system of *Ryobu Shinto* (Double Aspect Shinto) was formulated on the basis of the Shingon esoteric doctrine promoted in Japan by Kobo Daishi (Kukai, 773–835). *Ichijitsu Shinto* (One Truth Shinto) or *Sanno Shinto* (Mountain King Shinto) embodied the theory of the Tendai school established on Mount Hiei by Dengyo Daishi (Saicho, 766–822).

The essential idea contained in both theories held that Shinto deities were fundamentally manifestations in the world of the universal Buddha-nature. Although the Buddha-nature was the source of fundamental reality (*honji*), and the deities were trace manifestations

(*suijaku*), the relationship was virtually an identification, since the essence of the manifestation is the original source and the two could never be separated. On the practical and concrete level the theory maintained that specific deities such as the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu-o-mikami) and Toyo-uke-o-mikami of Ise shrine were identical with the great Sun Buddha Mahavairocana (Dainichinyorai). It was not without significance that the concept of the Sun Buddha was used as the symbol for the unity of the people in the construction of Todaiji in Nara as Japan grew into a centralized state.

Confucian Shinto refers to the interpretation given to Shinto by the exponents of Neo-Confucian philosophy during the Tokugawa period. In a similar fashion with Buddhist thinkers, Confucian teachers maintained the harmony of Shinto and Confucian thought. The most outstanding advocate was Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), a counselor to numerous Shoguns and an outstanding figure in promoting Chinese culture.

In maintaining the harmony of Shinto and Confucianism, Razan was continuing the work of his teacher Fujiwara Seika. According to Seika, Confucianism was but another name for Shinto, since in their respective countries both were teachings expressing mercy and compassion for all the people.

However, Hayashi Razan carried the ideas forward in a more positive way. He criticized both the Buddhist views based on honjisuijaku and teachings which attempted to set forth pure Shinto. His version of Shinto emphasized one's obligation to principle (li) or sense of duty. He interpreted Shinto as the Imperial Way along Confucian lines whose essence lay in conformity to the rule of the Emperor. He identified the virtues present in the three sacred regalia in accordance with the virtues of the Confucian classic of the *Chung-yung*: the mirror was wisdom; the jewel, humaneness; the sword, courage. His theory had great influence on all Confucianists despite their varying tendencies.

Concurrent with the assimilation of Shinto in Buddhism and the unification of Confucian morality and political theory with Shinto beliefs in the divinity of the Imperial line and sacredness of the nation, there were exponents of pure Shinto who wished to keep the national traditions free from alien influence. In their interpretations they utilized ways of thought borrowed from foreign traditions but always in the name of Shinto itself. The effort to express a pure Shinto reached its culmination in the teachings of the National Learning (*kokugaku*) scholars, particularly Kamo Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane.

The reason for the emergence of a self-conscious Shinto polemic and apologetic may stem from what was believed to be remarkable interventions of the gods saving Japan from the Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281 through great winds (*kamikaze*). As G. B. Sansom points out, Shinto religion flourished in times of danger when the

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rulers called upon the national deities to aid the nation.¹³ The clan-centered character of the Kamakura regime also contributed to strengthening of Shinto clan cults. Additional influences came later from the development of historical studies by Confucian scholars and the increasing dissatisfaction with the Tokugawa leadership and its failure to solve pressing political and economic problems.

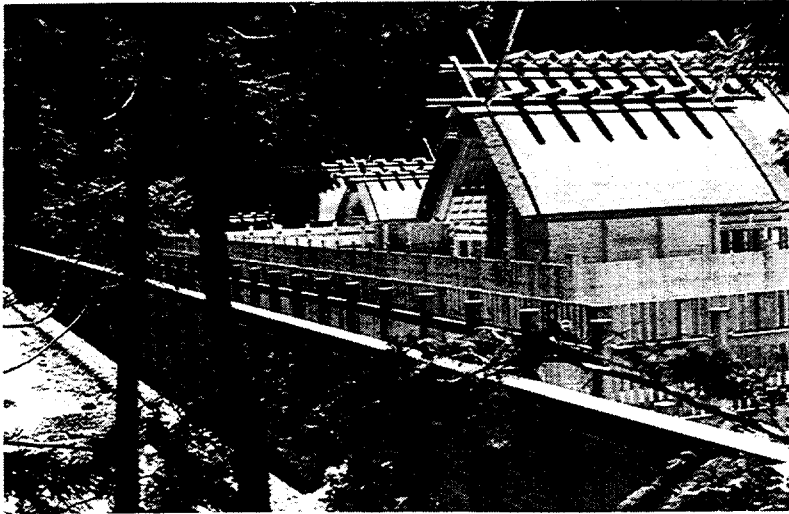
A variety of schools of thought attempted to give a pure Shinto interpretation to Japanese tradition through relying on Buddhist or Confucian philosophy for the exposition of Shinto theology. Buddhism contributed to the development of pantheism in Shinto thought, while Confucianism provided an ethical orientation and reinforcement for patriotic themes centering on reverence for the Imperial house.

In the background of the struggle for a pure Shinto, there were a number of contributory streams. *Ise* Shinto, developed by Watari Tsuneyoshi (d. 1339) and Watari Iyeyuki (d. 1355), aimed to purify Shinto of Buddhist influences, based on the *Shinto Gobusho* (*The Five Books of Shinto*, forged texts represented as ancient classics) which exalted the Sun Goddess as supreme. The famous Shinto scholar Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354) continued this work in his important text: *Jinno Shotoki* (*The History of the True Succession of the Divine Emperors*). Though applying Confucian virtues to the interpretation of the three sacred Imperial regalia, he maintained the superiority of the Japanese way to the Indian and Chinese. The *Yuiitsu* (Unique, One and Only) Shinto was a reaction to the Double Aspect theory of Buddhism and reversed the relationship of gods and Buddhas. Buddhas became manifestations of the absolute Kami. *Suiga* Shinto, set forth by Yamazaki Ansai (1618–1682), employed Neo-Confucianism in order to exalt the nation and give a basis for patriotism. Ansai stressed strongly loyalty and reverence for the Emperor. The basic virtue advocated by Ansai was *tsutsu-shimi*, defined as “a circumspect attitude; an attitude carefully obeying precepts and rules; an attitude careful not to be guilty of disrespect or failure.”¹⁴ Other lesser trends directed attention to the practical application of morality, rituals, divination, or ceremonies for the dead.

The most important development for the evolution of Shinto thought was the emergence of the National Learning school which, as seen in the parallel term “Restoration Shinto,” aimed at reawakening and purifying the national consciousness based in Shinto against Buddhist, Confucian, or Christian influences which had penetrated Japanese culture. Not only does the movement reveal the intellectual potentialities of Japanese thinkers and Shinto theology, but its patriotic fervor also sets the stage for the modern employment of Shinto as the ideological basis for nationalism and national cohesion.

13. G. B. Sansom, *A History of Japan*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1958–1963, vol. I, p. 445.

14. *Basic Terms of Shinto*, compiled by Shinto Committee for the 12th International Congress for the History of Religions, Jinja Honcho, Tokyo, Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, 1958, p. 75.



Portion of the Shinto Ise Shrine, dedicated to the Great Sun Goddess. (Courtesy of the Japan National Tourist Organization.)

In the development of this tradition of scholarship there were several important individuals whose accomplishments built one on the other, leading to greater refinement of thought. Keichu (1640–1701) developed philological studies in connection with the classic *Man'yoshu* and turned attention from Chinese ancient learning to Japanese ancient learning. Kada Azumamaro (1669–1736) developed the concept of National Learning (*kokugaku*). He was particularly concerned with the lack of interest in Shinto studies in his time. Kamo Mabuchi (1697–1769), as a poet, attempted to grasp the ancient spirit in the *Man'yoshu* and strove to clarify the Japanese outlook before Buddhism and Confucianism came to obscure it. He turned the anti-intellectual and intuitive perspective of Taoism to use in criticizing Chinese tradition. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) were the key figures in the background of modern Shinto thought and scholarship.

Motoori Norinaga brought the National Learning school to its highest development in purging Japanese and Shinto thought from its Confucian and Buddhist influences. In his attempt to revive ancient Shinto, he employed the studies of philology and concentrated his attention on interpreting the ancient traditions in the *Kojiki*, *Nihongi*, and *Norito* in the light of linguistic study and on the basis of their internal thought. He also studied deeply the *Man'yoshu*. Though he was scholarly in his method, a pious faith inspired his devotion to study. This faith resulted from his contact with three intellectual movements penetrating his time, namely *Dazai Learning*,¹⁵ *Suiga Shinto*, and Pure Land Buddhism.

Building on the foundations of earlier scholars of National Learning, Norinaga explored every sphere of that study and wrote prolifically in prose and poetry. His most important writing was his commentary on the Age of Kami period in the *Kojiki* (*Kojiki-den*).

15. A more independent trend of Confucian studies set forth by Dazai Shundai (1680–1747) in the tradition of Confucian Ancient Learning was developed by followers of the Wang Yang-ming wing of Neo-Confucianism.



Itsukushima Shrine, dedicated to Ichikishimahime Goddess, niece of the Great Sun Goddess. Located on "Shrine Island" in Hiroshima, this shrine is part of the Shinto nature worship. (Courtesy of the Japan National Tourist Organization.)

Norinaga particularly focused his attention upon the *Kojiki* for understanding the Japanese spirit, where earlier scholars drew from the *Man'yoshu*. Despite its limitations as a spiritual document, it provided Norinaga with a basis for cultivating spiritual sentiment in the adoration of the Sun Goddess and the elevation of the deities Taka-mi-musubi-no-Kami and Kami-musubi-no-Kami as symbols of the life force.

Norinaga gave expression in a telling fashion to the intuitive, emotional side of the Japanese spirit in his attempt to displace the dominant Confucian rationalism. Appealing to the myth of creation in the *Kojiki*, he emphasized the mystery which lay at the heart of creativity. On the same basis he asserted the superiority of Japan over other nations, pointing to the unbroken line of emperors as witness to the fact. He suggested a messianic destiny for Japan, because she possessed the ancient way of the Sun Goddess. His sentimentalism was expressed most clearly in his claim that the Buddhist monastic discipline was in contradiction to man's natural disposition and essentially insincere, though correct from a Buddhist standpoint. According to him, truth lay in the expression of human feeling and sentiment. Hence, Buddhist rejection of sexual relations was erroneous. The spontaneous outpouring of love and compassion in the Ancient Way contrasted with the formalized, external ways of the Chinese. The primary value for Norinaga was sincerity (*magokoro*):

*The heart that can be moved
Is a Sincere Heart.*

*Those who boast
That they cannot be moved—
Are they made of stone and wood?*

*To veil and hide
The Sincere Heart,
To put on airs
To pretend—
Such are the ways of China* ¹⁶

Hirata Atsutane represented the more intellectual side of the Japanese mind. He was unusual for his knowledge of Chinese thought and contact with Christianity and Western knowledge. His Shinto theology was influenced by ideas drawn from the writings of Matthew Ricci and Didacus de Pantoja, both Jesuit theologians. In general, his notions of creation and eschatology were derived from Christian sources.

Despite the Christian influences in his thought, Hirata was committed to the revival of Shinto and at the grave of Motoori he made a vow to be his disciple and to strive for the Ancient Way. He wrote numerous works including "treatises on maritime defense, Chinese philosophy, Buddhism, Shinto, medicine, and the art of poetry as well as elaborate commentaries on the Japanese classics and discussion of Japanese political institutions and history."¹⁷ All his knowledge was permeated and woven together by his exaltation of Shinto as the highest knowledge. His major works were *Koshi Seibun* (*Composition of Ancient History*) and *Koshiden* (*A Commentary on "Composition of Ancient History"*).

Like Norinaga and other Shinto scholars before him, Hirata was an exponent of the superiority of the Japanese people in all areas, whether material, religious, moral, intellectual, or dynastic.¹⁸ Particularly, the unbroken dynastic succession evidenced the superiority of the Japanese and their destiny to rule over all others.

Historically, Hirata's thought was of great significance as the basis for the establishment of Shinto in the Meiji era and a major influence in modern Japanese nationalism. This approach to Shinto did not differ greatly from his predecessors, except perhaps in the intensity of antforeignism and nationalism. Though despising the West, he appreciated the value of Western science and the influence of Christian thought was evident in his concept of deity and afterlife.

According to Hirata the deities of Shinto were universal gods. Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi-no-Kami was the highest personified deity. The deity Taka-mi-musubi-no-Kami was the supreme creator of all. He used evidences from other religions concerning the existence of a supreme creator to support his contention of the truth of the Shinto teaching of creation. He wrote:

16. Tsunetsugu Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, Tokyo, Japanese Ministry of Education, 1964, pp. 158–159.

17. Holtom, *National Faith of Japan*, p. 50.

18. *Ibid.*

*Thus, in all countries, as if by common consent, there are traditions of a divine being who dwells in Heaven and who created all things. These traditions have sometimes become distorted, but when we examine them they afford proof of the authenticity of the ancient traditions of the Imperial Land. There are many gods but this god stands at the center of them and is holiest of all.*¹⁹

He took great comfort in advocating his position from the Copernican revolution which recognized that the earth revolved about the sun. According to Hirata, Japanese tradition had always recognized the centrality of the sun.

Hirata revealed his own independent thought in his conceptions of the afterlife. Stimulated by Christian conceptions, he went beyond his teacher Norinaga to give a comparable Shinto view. For him, the concealed and mysterious Kami world, which Norinaga had identified merely with the amoral Yomi or the land of darkness, was a world of souls where individuals who had become Kami on their death resided. Kami possessed various capacities and powers to reveal the future. This world was a place of testing, and all accounts would be squared in the world of souls. He also believed that souls lived in the vicinity of their graves and the spirit of Motoori Norinaga lived at Mount Yamamuro.

His contribution to the establishment of Shinto as a patriotic and national cult in the Meiji period lay in his interpretation of the genealogies given in the mythology and the association of the general ancestor worship of the Japanese to the worship of the deities of the Imperial House. He gave some attention to the problems of rites and ceremonies.

In summary, the National Learning school of Shinto provided the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual foundation of modern Japanese national consciousness. It involved elements of sentimentalism, rational criticism, a logic of its own based on faith in the uniqueness of Japan and her people, antforeignism, and chauvinism. Though penetrated by a religious faith, it was political in centering devotion on reverence of the unbroken Imperial line, believed to be divine in origin.

When the intention of the scholars of this tradition is seen in the light of their nationalist faith, their scholarly capacity is more readily appreciated despite its distortions. They excelled in philology, classics, and literature. They frequently combined a wide knowledge of Chinese and Japanese tradition, and in the case of Hirata, knowledge of Western religion and science. The most pertinent criticism of their endeavor lay in the subordination of their scholarship to the goal of exalting the supremacy of a particular national and cultural tradition. This effort often resulted in the distortion of historical and religious understanding. Nevertheless, when viewed within the context of the changing fortunes of the Tokugawa era, they believed deeply that they were restoring the truth of their tradition which had been obscured through foreign influence resulting in

19. William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, New York, Columbia, 1958, p. 546.

the social decline then becoming more and more evident. The later fortunes of Shinto in the Meiji period suggest, however, that nationalist and particularistic fervor were no real substitutes for a foundation in universal truth supported by sound scholarship in the solution of problems facing the nation.

In modern times the most significant outcome of the National Learning movement which stirred Japan during the Tokugawa period was the restoration of Imperial authority under Emperor Meiji and the establishment of Shinto as the official ideology and expression of patriotism. Japanese leaders responsible for preparing Japan to take its position in the modern world politically and industrially sought in Shinto the basis of national cohesion. They proclaimed that the restoration of the Emperor was the revival of the ancient Imperial way and the continuation of the creative work of Emperor Jimmu. Success in the effort depended on the citizen's revering the Emperor and worshiping the Kami and ancestors and on uniting religion and government.

To realize the goals of the new regime, Shinto was proclaimed the state religion, and Buddhism was purged from any association with Shinto shrines and ceremonies. The motto was *shimbutsu-bunri* (the separation of Kami and Buddha). The antiforeign and anti-Buddhist feeling which the restoration engendered appeared at times in violent ways. Temples were burned and destroyed and the slogan *haibutsu-kishaku* (abolish Buddha, cut down Sakyamuni [icons]) was heard through the land.

Doctrinally, official Shinto did not go beyond that already preached in the National Learning school, and it was based largely on the thought of Hirata Atsutane.

With the establishment of the Office of Shinto Affairs there was set up a Board of Shinto Missionaries to propagandize and indoctrinate the people concerning Shinto and patriotism. It aimed also to check the spread of Christianity, particularly in the area of Kyushu. Eventually Buddhists also came to participate in the effort of indoctrination centering on three major points: (1) Compliance with the spirit of reverence for Kami and love of country; (2) Clarification of "the principle of Heaven and the Way of man"; (3) Exalting the Emperor and obeying the Imperial Court.²⁰ Various teaching institutes for indoctrination on a variety of religious and political themes were set up throughout the country, with the central one being the Dai-kyoin in Tokyo.

This effort was a history of failure for numerous reasons, symbolized in the successive governmental bureaus charged with responsibility for Shinto affairs. The propaganda effort also went through repeated changes which indicate the problems encountered by the government, until finally the whole effort was abandoned in 1882.

Numerous factors led to the collapse of the endeavor. Among them was the growing dependence on Buddhist priests to carry out

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20. Muraoka, op. cit., p. 206.

the teaching of essentially anti-Buddhist doctrine. Also, the existence of numerous Shinto bodies which sought more independence as separate churches revealed the fragmentation of the Shinto world. Other more fundamental reasons centered on the fact that this attempt to institutionalize an ancient religious tradition uncritically was not in harmony with the demands of modernization and the need for Japan to measure up to the West as indicated by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901). In addition, there was the theological weakness of Shinto itself.

Fundamentally, such Shinto theology as had developed could not be entirely free from dependence on foreign modes of thought in order to meet the challenge of those systems. Buddhist, Confucian, and even Christian influences had been turned to the defense of Shinto. However, in the period of the establishment of Shinto this factor ultimately worked against it, particularly in that Hirata theology was the basis of the political effort to ground patriotism in Shinto. Hirata's views of creation and afterlife became focal points of attack in demonstrating that Shinto was a religion which lacked an adequate theology. Further, Hirata's theology was not without criticism within Shinto itself.

Progressives and conservatives among Shintoists also disagreed. It was also realized that it was unwise to subject religion to political control. The attempt to establish Shinto religion politically led to a cry for religious freedom and the separation of Church and State. Buddhists were outstanding in this effort to establish religious freedom, since they were forced by their promotion of Shinto often to contradict their own basic Buddhist convictions. Representatives sent abroad to observe conditions in modern nations informed the Japanese government that establishment of a state religion contradicted the trend in modern nations to separate the political and religious aspects of life because of the conflict between those areas.

A leader in the effort to achieve freedom of religion was Mori Arinori (1847–1889) who had studied in the United States and put his thoughts on religious freedom into a text, *Religious Freedom of Japan*, which he presented to Prince Sanjo. His basic point was that religious freedom and freedom of conscience was a prerequisite to human progress and civilization. He predicted the failure of government policy in compelling religious belief and activity. Another was Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911), a Buddhist of the Jodo Shinshu school, who noted that while the government might feel a threat to the National Polity (Kokutai) in modern thought, one could not actually compel belief.

Despite the fact that religion and government were officially separated in the Meiji period, Shinto, defined as a patriotic cult rather than a religion, continued to play a part in the government's efforts to inculcate national feeling. As a consequence of defeat in World War II, the new Constitution made it explicit that the government must henceforth refrain from any religious involvements. The Shinto Directive set forth by the allied powers demanded that the militaristic and ultranationalist doctrines, supposedly found in Shinto, be abolished.

The problems of Shinto within the modern development of Japan have raised the question whether it is a religion or merely a patriotic cult. In the postwar period since 1945 voices claiming a non-religious status for Shinto similar to that applied in the Meiji era have attempted to secure revision of the Constitution and financial support from the government for Ise and Yasukuni shrines, both shrines central to nationalistic concern.

Other Shinto thinkers have maintained that the future development of Shinto as a factor in the construction of a new and modern Japanese society lies in deepening the faith and theology of Shinto following the true intentions of Norinaga and Hirata. They have welcomed the loss of privileged status because it opens the door to free and voluntary commitment to the ideals of Shinto and is the only way to harmonize Shinto with the needs of contemporary Japan.

Although on the official levels of government and scholarship, Shinto was artificially established as the state cult in the Meiji era, during the Tokugawa period and into more recent times there have appeared numerous explicitly religious movements inspired by charismatic individuals and based on Shinto beliefs and outlook. The sociological and religious characteristics of these popular movements are important as part of the background of post-World War II movements commonly termed "New Religions."

The social background of these sects was the political and economic decline of the later Tokugawa period. Internal problems arose from economic and political conditions within the feudal system. Rising taxation and higher prices pressured the peasants and exacerbated the continuing economic decline of the samurai class. Increasing dissatisfaction with the Tokugawa regime was expressed in local uprisings. Confrontation with the West symbolized in the appearance of Commodore Perry's black ship off Japan in 1853 complicated the problems. Eventually a royalist movement succeeded in abolishing the Shogunate and restoring the Emperor to power in 1868. He set about reorganizing the government and meeting Japan's many problems.

The disturbed political and social conditions reflected themselves in religion in the emergence of sects emphasizing morality, nationalism, or ways of salvation. Some sects criticized contemporary conditions and issued proclamations of a coming age where all evils would be corrected.

The Japanese appear to respond religiously to times of crisis. This tendency can be observed at the time when the Shamaness Queen Pimiko was made the ruler in ancient Japan. It appears also during the Kamakura period in the revival of Buddhism, at the end of Tokugawa in the sects presently under discussion, and after World War II with the New Religions. Recent studies of mass movements represented by the Communist-Socialist movements and the Buddhist Soka Gakkai movement reveal clearly the religious orientation of Japanese in their approach to problems. Although the Leftist movement confronts problems in Japanese society, it is highly intellectual and divorced from the feelings and needs of the com-

mon man, where the many popular religious movements not only attempt to deal with current problems, but also provide for the emotional and spiritual needs of the people.

In the later Tokugawa period the most significant of the popular movements which have maintained their existence to the present, such as Tenri-kyo and Konko-kyo, originated with people of peasant origin. In the cases of Tenri, Konotabi, and Omoto-kyo the founders were sensitive women sharing characteristics derived from the shamanistic tradition of Japanese folk religion. While these movements were purely religious, they instilled in the pious devotee a sense that his faith would sustain him during upheaval, and they prepared people to accept the changes in society. Through advocating a broadly altruistic morality, emphasizing loyalty to the nation and Emperor and instilling confidence that one could better his life situation through the cultivation of one's spirit, these sects contributed to the orderly process of modernization which enabled Japan to confront the West with minimum disruption to her own way of life.

The most detailed analysis of these sects is provided by D. C. Holtom who classifies the thirteen officially recognized sects of Shinto into five categories. In addition to those thirteen, Anesaki adds the Konotabi sect founded by the peasant woman Kino (1756–1826), while Kitagawa mentions Omoto-kyo, Seicho-no-ie, and Hito-no michi which developed later in the Meiji and Taisho periods.

For the sake of convenience, we shall follow the general categories given by Holtom in depicting the significant aspects of these movements. The group designated as Pure Shinto includes Shinto Honkyoku (Main Bureau of Shinto), Shinri-kyo (Divine Reason Teaching), and Taisha-kyo (Teaching of the Great Shrine). These sects were called Pure Shinto because they worshiped deities central to ancient Shinto Tradition and were devoted to the realization of the ideals of Shinto religion. Based on a pantheistic interpretation of divinity, they all promoted a universal ethic regarded generally as the fulfillment of the divine will in man and the expression of the true nature of man. In some cases it was claimed that the ills encountered in life, physical, social, and mental, were all due to the failure to cultivate the true spirit. They also included elements from folk religious practices and ceremony. Though the teachings were altruistic and universalist, all groups were committed to cultivating nationalism through adherence to the three principles set forth by the government's propaganda.

The sects described as Confucian also followed the basic tenets of Shinto, but they buttressed these teachings with moral and social concepts derived from Confucian tradition. Representative of this trend were the Shusei-ha and Taisei-kyo. Shusei was a term derived from the words *shuri*, meaning to repair, strengthen, or improve, and *kosei*, meaning to consolidate and make secure. These terms, taken from the myth of the creative actions of Izanagi and Izanami, set the perspective for moral cultivation in the interests of the development of Japanese society. *Taisei* meant Great Accomplishment

and combined Confucian teaching, Shinto religion, and encouragement of science in the service of the nation.

The Mountain sects consisted of Jikko-kyo (Practice-Conduct teaching), Fuso-kyo, and Mitake-kyo. These sects were based on traditional Japanese reverence for mountains. The two former sects had Mount Fuji as their object of worship, while the latter had Mount Ontake. Their aim, like others, was the security and prosperity of the nation.

The Purification sects, which include Shinshu-kyo (Divine Learning) and Misogi-kyo (Purification), emphasized ritualism as the means to attain the goals of national, individual, and human existence. Particularly, they supported the practices of ancient Shinto.

The Faith-healing groups such as Kurozumi-kyo, founded by Kurozumi Munetada (b. 1780), and Konko-kyo (Metal Luster Teaching) were distinguished by their stress on material and bodily welfare through cultivating the spirit. They were significant also in that their founders believed they received their teaching through divine inspiration or were possessed by deity. The revelations put in writing have become the sacred texts of the sect.

In the case of Mrs. Miki Nakayama (1798–1826), who founded the Tenri-kyo sect, and Deguchi Nao (1836–1918), foundress of the Omoto-kyo, a prophetic quality was present. Through her revelations Miki foretold the coming of a new age when the world would return to the paradisiac conditions of the age of the Kami, while Nao proclaimed the coming transformation of the world and a new age of eternal peace.

The Sect Shinto religious organizations have maintained their existence down to the present time. Some of them have split into subgroups so that they now total about seventy-five groups. Those with the largest following are the Taisha-kyo, now known as the Izumo Oyashiro-kyo, and the Tenri-kyo, which is the most active of all. However, their development since the war has been affected by the formation of other "New Religions" which have many similar traits but are less conservative than the older groups.

In the postwar period after 1945 and the granting of complete religious freedom, there was another outburst of religious activity stimulated by the anxieties, upheavals, and turmoils of the war. In their overall character the new groups resembled those religious societies which originated in the earlier period. However, the freedom of the postwar age permitted the flowering of such groups in unprecedented numbers reaching several hundreds and including many fraudulent groups. An early listing indicates 735 sects. After some sifting of fraudulent organizations, the number was reduced to 377 as of 1956. Among this large grouping, those of Buddhist orientation mounted to 170, while Shinto-oriented sects reached 142. A miscellany of others had Christian (36) or other (29 unclassified) background.

It has been pointed out that though many groups are incorporated as independent sects, they are really subdivisions of the three traditional religions and only about twenty-nine can be accepted as

"New Religions." ²¹ According to one recent study, 171 groups are potentially religiously significant, and the author describes twenty-two of the most important organizations.²²

Apart from the sects of primarily Buddhist derivation among the "New Religions" we may simply take note that the Tenri-kyo, which was earlier placed among the Shinto sects of the Meiji era, also continued to expand with vitality in the most recent period. The Omoto-kyo, also a Shintoistic organization developed in the early part of this century, continued to attract attention. Several sects developed out of Omoto-kyo and attained widespread notoriety. Among these were the Seicho-no-Ie, Sekai Kyusei-kyo, and P. L. Kyodan. A widely known group of mixed background was Ittoen.

The phenomenal growth of religious mass movements has attracted the attention of scholars in view of the slow, plodding growth of political mass movements such as Communism and Socialism which in actuality have not been very successful. The religious mass movements are a combination of ancient and modern themes. Five common factors which have led to the appearance of these organizations are (1) a social crisis, or upheaval in the cultural situation; (2) a charismatic leader or inspired personality; (3) performance of miracles and wonders; (4) forms of ecstatic behavior as trance; and (5) syncretic doctrines. The combination of these elements in the modern context has led Margaret Mead to describe the phenomena as "the ferment of the half abandoned old and the half understood new." ²³

In contrast to the highly intellectual, alien, and radical pronouncements of political mass movements which are out of touch with the feelings of the majority of people, the "New Religions" have been very successful in concentrating attention on the concrete needs of the people for health, wealth, and security in the highly competitive mass society. A major element in the appeal of most groups is the promise of benefits through magical practices and faith. In addition, they support popular aspirations for democracy and peace. They emphasize youth and attempt to win the minds of people through comprehensible indoctrination and publishing efforts. This element contrasts sharply with traditional endeavors in religious education and with the abstract and intellectualistic approach of the political ideologies. Further, they cater to the need of individuals for recognition and status through offering means of mobility within the organization for ordinary people of devotion and zeal. A quasi-intellectual cast is frequently given to the organization by titling leaders as lecturers, professors, and assistant professors. A democratic flavor is often present in the society through discussion groups where believers may raise questions and witness their faith. However, in many instances the charismatic leader is the final voice of authority. De-

21. *Japan's Religions: New Religions: Directory No. 4*, International Institute for the Study of Religions, February, 1958, pp. iii-iv.

22. Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*, Rutland, Vt., Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1963, pp. 11-12.

23. H. Neill MacFarland, "Japan's New Religions," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, December, 1960, 1-4, p. 60.

votion to the leader and loyalty to the group frequently supply the necessary ethical guidance for individuals whose family relations have weakened in the modern context. The modernity of such organizations is often symbolized through the construction of enormous centers for worship or administration.

Despite the use of all forms of modern media to reach people, the basic teachings of most groups are reconstitutions of traditional Japanese values drawn from Shinto and Buddhist background and reformulations of the general metaphysical outlook largely derived from Buddhism. The traditional characteristics of such societies often lead critics to regard them as reactionary, retrogressive, and fundamentally conservative. Nevertheless, it is clear that they have functioned to provide the individual with a stable and familiar basis on which he may stand to cope with the pressing problems of contemporary existence.

Our survey of Shinto tradition reveals that the ancient religion had a durability and vitality through the ages, and though permeated by various influences such as Buddhism and Confucianism has been able to provide spiritual orientation in the face of perplexing problems on the level of intellectual leadership as well as on the popular level. Its close association with the Imperial political institutions as the basis for their sanction created a situation in which the permanence of the Imperial line was supported by its religious foundation, and the religious ideology persisted through the prestige gained in the recognition of the unbroken line of emperors. Consequently, in recent times Shinto became the spiritual and ideological vehicle for the expression of nationalism. While this was consciously cultivated on the part of government, it was not unnatural in the consciousness of the Japanese. In the present postwar period Shinto has suffered from the shock of defeat, but as a whole it was more than a cult of nationalism and through its symbolism it could be reinterpreted to provide a philosophy of life adequate to attract modern intellectuals. The spiritual tradition also displayed great potentiality as a resource for the emergence of new religious communities, which could orient men and women in a difficult world and constantly renewed their sense of being a sacred people in a sacred land.

BUDDHISM IN THE LAND OF THE GODS

INTRODUCTION Though Buddhism initially entered Japan from the Asian continent by way of Korea and later through transmissions from China, it did not remain merely a foreign religion. Rather, it became absorbed into the Japanese way of life, adapting to the spiritual needs and social demands of the Japanese people, and became the second major religious tradition in Japanese culture.

The attitude of the Japanese toward Buddhism differed considerably from the Chinese who already possessed a highly developed and articulated cultural system. In China, Buddhism was always regarded as a foreign religion, at times subject to political persecution or criticism by Confucianists or Taoists, as well as favor by rulers. Buddhism, however, came to Japan as part of Chinese civilization, and its acceptance was thought to be a mark of a progressive nation. While Chinese Buddhism remained throughout its history institutionally weak, Japanese Buddhism developed firm organization and institutions which sometimes became formidable threats to the established order.

A key to the understanding of Japanese Buddhist history is the recognition that the Japanese awareness of being a sacred people in a sacred land eventually placed its stamp on the universal tradition of Buddhism itself. Our present study will attempt to trace Buddhist involvement in the political affairs of the nation, its fusion with the indigenous folk religious and magical perspectives, and the emergence of Buddhist schools or sects dominated by the Japanese spirit.

These various aspects of Buddhism have been interrelated and interdependent. The construction of temples, dissemination of Buddhist texts, and ceremonies of national Buddhism contributed to the spread of Buddhism among the people and supported the var-

ious technical schools whose leaders and teachers often functioned as the personnel of the national Buddhism. Popular Buddhism provided means of support and basis for the further development of the popular Buddhist schools, while the various schools and their associated temples provided the context for the development of Buddhist insight and experience and the maintenance of Buddhist tradition within Japanese society.

In contrast to the emphasis on ideological issues present in the development of Buddhism in China, our study of Japanese Buddhism will concentrate on social-cultural relations in order to provide a background for understanding the state of Buddhism in modern Japan. A survey of the various facets of Japanese Buddhism reveals the conditions which have contributed to the passivity and detachment of the Buddhist communities in the face of modern problems and the resultant criticisms by nonreligious intellectuals as well as by thoughtful devotees. The exploitation and political manipulation of Buddhism by the ruling classes in history as they attempted to unify and control the people, the magical and otherworldly outlook of traditional Buddhism, and the pronounced divisive sectarianism which dominates the tradition have created doubts in the minds of many modern people concerning its ability to contribute to the modernization of Japan or to turn back the growing secularization of the society.

According to the account recorded in the *Nihon Shoki*, Buddhism officially entered Japan during the reign of Emperor Kimmei in 552, though it may actually have been 538. On this occasion the king of Kudara (Paekche) in Korea presented the court with Buddhist images and texts. He declared that Buddhism would benefit the Japanese people and that it had been accepted by such leading countries as China. Though Buddhism had earlier infiltrated Japan carried by Chinese and Korean immigrants, its spread was greatly facilitated by the recognition of its political utility for promoting national interests.

NATIONAL BUDDHISM

Immediately upon its introduction it became involved in the political rivalry between the Soga and Mononobe clans, though neither side understood the true nature of the religion. The Soga, who supported Buddhism and adopted it as its own clan religion, represented the more internationalist and progressive leadership among the Japanese, while the Mononobe represented the particularistic interests of the clans.

The first major figure to appear in the formation of national Buddhism was Prince Shotoku (573–621). He implemented the Soga aim of establishing a strong central authority as the regent of the Soga-sponsored Empress Suiko (592–628). Admiration of China and a desire to restore Japanese fortunes in Korea also motivated him.

Because the Prince was deeply devoted to the teachings of Buddhism and recognized its spiritual role in the development of a unified nation, he was credited in history with the promulgation of a seventeen-point constitution which advocated reverence for the



Horyuji Temple, an early Japanese Buddhist temple. (Courtesy of the Japan National Tourist Organization.)

three treasures of Buddhism by all the people as the basis of social harmony. In addition, the Prince was thought to have composed commentaries on three major Mahayana sutras which reflected his critical and independent thought as he transformed Buddhism from an other-worldly religion to one promoting social harmony in this world. His emphasis on Buddhism as a religion of laymen greatly influenced later generations.

The Prince also encouraged Buddhism by inviting visiting priests to lecture, cultivating Buddhist scholarship, and commissioning the construction of numerous temples and works of art. Most prominent of the temples established by the Prince were the Shitennoji, which included social welfare facilities, Horyuji, and Chuguji.

Though Buddhism was supported by the court after Shotoku, it was subjected to greater control as a result of the Taika reform in 645 when the Tang law codes were adopted in Japan. Private temples were prohibited, and monks had to be licensed. In addition, they could not work among the people.

A more positive approach to the Buddhist Order appeared, however, in the provincial temple system set up in 741 by Emperor Shomu who devoted himself to the prosperity of Buddhism. Symbolic of his efforts was the construction of the great Buddha of Todaiji (consecrated in 752). The Buddha selected for representation was Mahavairocana Buddha (Dainichi Nyorai), the great Sun Buddha. This Buddha symbolized the philosophy of the *Kegon Sutra* (Sanskrit *Avatamsaka*, Chinese *Hua-yen*), which taught that the essence of each thing contained the essence of every other thing. All reality was interdependent and mutually permeating. Hence, the world manifested the Buddha nature combined in a grand harmony.

The symbolism of the image and its many surrounding Buddhas carried a political message of the interdependence of the Japanese people and the Imperial house.

Emperor Shomu viewed Buddhism as a magical religion founded on the belief that the proper recitation of various nation-protecting sutras would bring prosperity and security to the nation. It was not the principles of Buddhist philosophy which brought harmony, but the use of Buddhist texts and institutions which granted security. According to these "nation-protecting" sutras the divine heavenly kings protected any country that materially supported Buddhism or copied and recited such texts. Eventually a whole system of provincial temples equipped with sutras, monks, and nuns was constructed with Todaiji as the head temple for the purpose of benefiting the nation through spiritual protection.

As a result of the efforts lavished on the construction of the system of national and provincial temples, corruption appeared when the official temples acquired great properties and wealth. The situation reached a climax when the monk Dokyo became the Prime Minister with apparent designs on the throne. However, at the death of Empress Shotoku (764-770) he was banished and the Buddhist Order was subjected again to strict regulation.

Another stage in the political relations of Buddhism opened when the monks Saicho (767-822) and Kukai (774-835) attempted to free themselves from the influence of the Nara temples after studying in China. The establishment of the Chinese Tendai and Shingon schools of Buddhism were in some measure attempts to reform and reestablish the true principles of Buddhism in Japan.

The reforming aspect was particularly strong in Saicho who asked the court for permission to set up his own Tendai ordination platform on Mount Hiei, which would then qualify his monks to serve in the provincial temples. Because the temples in Nara only followed the Buddha's instruction in words, Saicho maintained that Tendai Buddhism would provide monks who would be true national treasures and that the nation would be better protected spiritually. The court granted approval soon after his death in 822.

With the removal of the capital from Nara to Kyoto (794), Mount Hiei became continually involved with national politics. As its own economic and political power grew, organized warrior monks fought in the interests of the order. The problems of violence and corruption created by these militant monks became notorious in Japanese history. The *Heike Monogatari* depicted numerous instances of the terror which the monks of Hiei aroused in the people as they preyed upon the religious sensibilities of the people and court.

Kukai, who introduced the Shingon school to Japan (Sanskrit *Mantra*, Chinese *Chen-yen*), was at first allied with Saicho, but later they separated when Kukai taught that the esoterism of Shingon was really superior to the exoterism of Tendai. In addition, Kukai did not strongly oppose the temples of Nara and soon attained high rank in the official organization, becoming the abbot of the Toji temple in Kyoto. Here he performed the rite of *kanjo* (a form of ordination), as well as ceremonies for the pacification of the nation. Sup-

ported by the court, Kukai and his order attained wide influence. Even emperors received instruction in Buddhism under the tutelage of Shingon monks.

The relation of these schools to the Imperial house in the Heian age took a special form called Insei (Cloister) government, which involved the monasteries more deeply in politics. It became the custom for emperors to retire from active rule and to enter a monastery. This system was based on the principle that men of responsibility might retire to devote themselves to religious concerns, transferring their worldly burdens to others. In the political sphere it might also mean an escape from conspiracy. The purpose of the retirement was thus not always religiously motivated. In some instances the retired Emperor had more political power in this status than he had as actual Emperor. The involvement of Buddhism in political conflicts during this period tended to degrade it and to stimulate those forces of reform which later appeared in the Kamakura period.

The Buddhist schools of Nara and Heian held little concern for the ordinary person. Although individual monks engaged in social welfare and religious work among the people, the various official schools were more concerned with promoting their power and influence through the manipulation of spiritual forces and catering to the demands of the aristocracy.

Against the background of the corruption and spiritual decline of Mount Hiei and Mount Koya as well as the earlier Nara temples, a number of sects emerged during the Kamakura age which differed in their views of the relation of Buddhism and society and its function in providing spiritual protection for the state. On the one hand the Pure Land schools of Ryonin, Honen, Shinran, and Ippen were other-worldly and designed chiefly to bring birth in the Pure Land for individuals. On the other hand Eisai, who introduced the Rinzaï (Lin-chi) Zen (Ch'an) tradition from China, maintained in his treatise *Kozengokokuron (Treatise on Spiritually Protecting the Nation through Prospering Zen)* that the nation could be spiritually protected only through promoting the true practice of Zen.

Dogen, Eisai's disciple and the founder of the Soto Zen sect, asserted that Buddhism was superior to the state. According to his view, human laws were merely based on precedents and ancient laws whose origins were uncertain. However, Buddhism had a clear transmission from the beginning. Thus the state was not absolute. Claiming extraterritoriality for the monk who did his duty by performing his discipline, Dogen refused to associate with the government and established his temple in a distant province.

Perhaps the most important expression of the relation between the nation and Buddhism in the Kamakura era was the teaching of the Buddhist prophet Nichiren. According to his basic work *Rishoankokuron (Treatise on the Attainment of Peace in the Country through the Establishment of the True Teaching)*, the security of the nation depended on strict adherence to the true form of Buddhism. The true Buddhism was the Tendai school based on the *Lotus Sutra* as interpreted by Nichiren himself.

Insisting on the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra over all other teachings of Buddhism, he demanded that the government establish it as the national religion to the exclusion of all other forms of Buddhism. His intolerance was the result of his conviction that the many natural disasters and political upheavals which Japan had experienced had been prophesied by the Buddha as punishment for not adhering to the truth. Very soon, he taught, the final punishment would come with the invasion of the Mongols. He pointed to the prosperity of Pure Land teaching, Zen Buddhism, the use of Shingon practices, and the fame of Ritsu priests as evidence that the people had ignored and were blind to the truth originally declared by Saicho. Even traditional Tendai teachers had strayed from the truth by adopting Pure Land teaching and Shingon practices into their own system.

Although Nichiren employed traditional concepts of the relation of state and Buddhism, he held strongly to the primacy of Buddhism over the state in contrast to the traditional political subservience of Buddhism. His outspokenness and uncompromising attitude brought him persecution and banishment.

The period of civil wars and strife following the fall of the Kamakura Shogunate in 1334 until the establishment of the Tokugawa regime in 1615 frequently involved Buddhist orders as they carried on sectarian rivalry or attempted to protect their own interests. As Sansom points out: "Although most of the numerous sects of Buddhism in Japan were tolerant to the point of indifference in matters of doctrine, they were very jealous of their rights, and would fight hard on a point of privilege."¹

The various dictators engaged in armed struggles to reduce the political and military threats of the great Buddhist institutions. While Ashikaga Takauji (Shogun, 1338–1358) had to retrench before the militant reaction of the forces of Mount Hiei, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) was eventually able to subdue the hosts of the Ikko (Single-minded sect of Pure Land devotees) and Mount Hiei. He even encouraged the propagation of Christianity to counter the influence of the Buddhists. Hideyoshi (1536–1598) pursued the monks of Kumano and Mount Koya. As the monks turned from warlike activities to works of piety, Hideyoshi began to restrain the Christians, ordering missionaries to leave the country in 1587. Oppression of Christians mounted under Hideyoshi and reached its peak with the martyrdom of twenty-six persons at Nagasaki in 1597. The persecutions and martyrdoms of Christians increased under the Tokugawas, reaching a climax in the Shimabara revolt which precipitated the policy of total isolation from foreign relations for the next 250 years.

The importance of the Christian persecutions lies in their relationship to the political control of the Buddhist Orders during the Tokugawa era. As a measure in the abolition of Christianity, Buddhist clergy began to function as police. In 1640 an investigating agency was formed in Edo and extended throughout the country. In

1. G. B. Sansom, *A History of Japan*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1958–1963, vol. II, p. 153.

order to seek out Christians, citizens were made to trample the cross, and local Buddhist temples were required to register all persons in their district on such matters as their personal history and activities.

The Buddhist religion declined because of the earlier attacks on its institutions and its reduction to a mere political tool in the Tokugawa effort to achieve total social stability and harmony. The dominant ideologies of the Tokugawa age were Confucianism and a re-nascent Shintoism, both of which were critical and negative to Buddhism. Buddhist institutions continued to function, and members of the government associated with it through their families as a matter of custom. However, it exerted little control or influence over the intellectual outlook or personal conduct of the national leaders.

Buddhist scholars regard the change brought about in Buddhism, resulting from the activities of Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and the later Tokugawas, as a turning point in Buddhist history. During this period Buddhism completely capitulated to secular authority. The establishment of the parish system (*Danka Seido*) irrespective of doctrinal convictions, as well as the imposed clerical control, effectively cut Buddhism off spiritually from the people. Despite the fact that Buddhism had permeated daily life or that scholarship had developed within the monastic communities, the real vitality of Buddhism was lost when compared with its impact in the medieval periods of Heian and Kamakura. The position of Buddhism in the feudal period resembled only externally its role in the earlier period when the state was institutionalized. The important difference was that rulers in the earlier ages believed in Buddhist spiritual experience, and revering the three treasures (*Buddha, Dharma, Sangha*) prayed for the welfare of the nation. In the later period the Edo warriors, dominated by Confucianism, regarded Buddhism simply as a useful instrument of social control.

When the Tokugawa regime ended with the restoration of Imperial rule under Meiji in 1868, Buddhism was rudely awakened by the shout of "Expel Buddha, cut down Sakyamuni." The re-nascent Shinto sentiment held by leaders of government quickly overthrew the trappings of state support of Buddhism, and the new nationalism claimed it was merely a foreign religion. The attack failed because of the faith of the ordinary people in Buddhism which had given them some hope for their meager existences.

As we have seen in the study of Shinto, Buddhist leaders joined with Shintoists in promoting the new nationalism and thus linked themselves to the political absolutism of the new regime. Government officials welcomed the assistance of Buddhist clergy, since they had traditionally the closest relation to the people. While promoting religious freedom in order to gain its own autonomy, Buddhism was soon faced with the new threat of a spreading Christianity. In modern times in numerous ways, the various Buddhist Orders have attempted to commend themselves as supporters of the national destiny reinforcing the awareness of the sacredness of the land and people. However, institutional lethargy has inhibited serious grappling with the problems of modernization and social prog-

ress. Thus a major issue confronting the Buddhist sects has been their own relevance in a rapidly changing and more highly sophisticated, complex, industrial society.

Merely recounting the history of Buddhist institutions in Japanese society would be insufficient to convey the significance of Buddhism in the life of the people. The description of formal and external relations cannot replace an understanding of the impact on the people which has sustained the religion through periods of great social change. Buddhist influence, widespread in all areas of culture, is readily evident in the arts and literature. It is apparent in language where colloquial terms reflect Buddhist background. For example, "to drop dead" is *tachiojo-suru*. Literally it means to attain rebirth while standing. Rebirth refers to the Buddhist belief in transmigration. *Kara-nembutsu*, which means "vain talk," refers to an empty mouthing of the recitation of Buddha's name. The common phrase *jigo-jitoku*, which means "it's your own fault," summarizes the Buddhist karmic principle that what one sows one reaps.

POPULAR BUDDHISM

Buddhism infiltrated into Japan when immigrants from China or Korea carried their faith with them. However, official recognition of Buddhism also spurred the spread of Buddhism among the people as the more wealthy families built private temples in their domains. They tended to view the Buddhas as analogous to their ancestral and tutelary deities. From the death of Prince Shotoku in 622 when there were 46 temples in the country, the number grew to 545 in the time of Empress Jito (687–697).

As a rule, the growth of Buddhism was largely concentrated within the ruling class who displayed their social power through building temples, sponsoring images, and copying sutras. However, a few monks traveled about the country and preached Buddhism to the common people, despite government restrictions on such activity. In their alliance with the people such unauthorized and shamanistic priests naturally became critical of political exploitation and religious corruption,² having deep concern for the spiritual and material welfare of the common man.

Representative popular priests in the Nara period were Dosho (629–700) and Gyogi Bosatsu (670–749). Dosho was highly regarded as an ideal Buddhist monk and scholar of the Hosso school. Among his many contributions, he is credited with the introduction of cremation as the proper Buddhist way to dispose of the dead. During the later years of his life he gave himself to the welfare of mankind by constructing wells, bridges, almshouses and ferries, as well as monasteries.

Gyogi's efforts on behalf of mankind were so outstanding that he was given the title *Bosatsu* (*Bodhisattva*), which testified to the depth of his compassion for man. Although he was learned in Buddhist philosophy and meditation discipline, he engaged in works

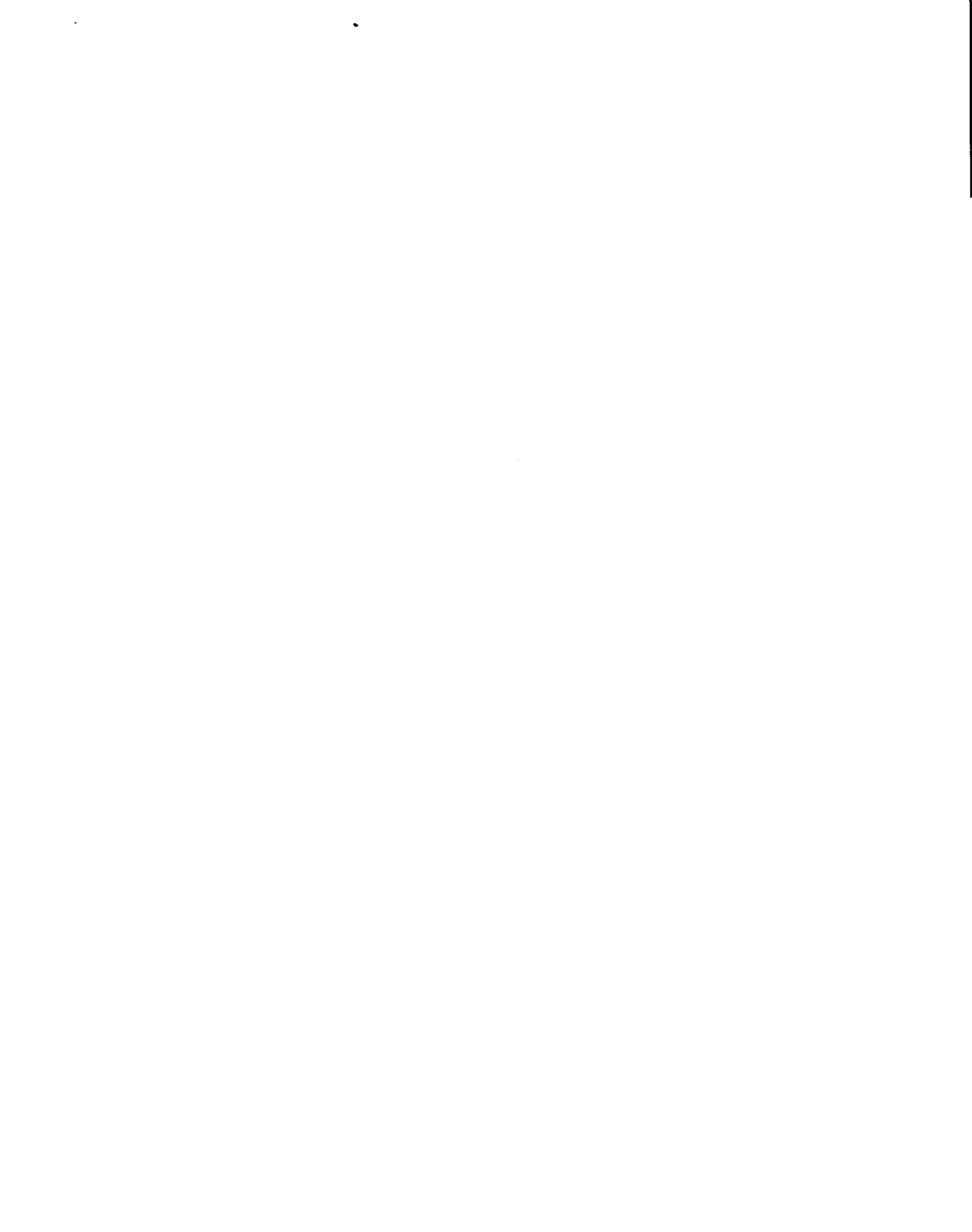
2. Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, New York, Columbia, 1966, pp. 40–41.

of mercy by building bridges and river dykes, planting fruit trees, and constructing way houses for travelers, reservoirs, irrigation canals, ferries, and harbors. In addition, he was credited with opening thirty-four monasteries and fifteen nunneries. His popularity grew to such dimensions that the government prohibited his activity and banished him. However, because of his great influence the government sought his assistance in soliciting funds to construct the great Buddha of Nara, and in 745 he was elevated to the rank of *Daisojo* (Great High Priest).

In the succeeding Heian period several noted compassionate monks traveled through the country offering the hope of salvation to the common man through the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha. The simplicity of the Pure Land doctrine appealed to ordinary people and influenced all levels of society. The attraction of the other-worldly faith increased along with the social turmoil and upheavals at the end of the Heian era. During this period the popular preachers laid stress on the fact that it was the Last Age (Mappo) of corruption and strife, dramatizing the anxieties of the age.

Several priests drew particular attention in promoting the spread of Pure Land doctrine during this time. Kuya Shonin (903–972) was called “the Saint of the Market” as he went about proclaiming Pure Land faith and using a melodic form of recitation. The preaching of these priests was augmented by the work of Genshin (942–1017), a high-ranking monk and scholar on Mount Hiei, through his treatise on the essentials for rebirth in the Pure Land (*Ojoyoshu*). The text became a handbook for preachers by bringing together all scriptural passages relating to the Pure Land and Hell. The monk Ryonin (1071–1132) taught a doctrine of mutual salvation (*Yuzu-nembutsu*) which gave a social dimension to efforts for salvation. During the later Kamakura period, the priest Ippen (1238–1289) taught a distinctive interpretation of Pure Land doctrine which advocated reciting the *Nembutsu* at six specific times during the day and emphasizing that one should regard each moment of life as his last in reciting the sacred name.

Although the Pure Land teaching based on faith in Amida Buddha became the dominant Buddhist belief among the common people during the Heian era, other Buddhist divinities also were objects of devotion. Jizo (Sanskrit *Kshitigarbha*, Chinese *Ti-tsang*) assisted men in the afterlife and helped them to avoid going to hell. Merging with beliefs of folk religion, he was also regarded as a savior for those in trouble, particularly women in childbirth and children. Kannon (Sanskrit *Avalokitesvara*, Chinese *Kuan-yin*), the Goddess of Mercy, was widely revered. Tradition held that even Prince Shotoku was an ardent devotee. Emperors sponsored lectures and ceremonies on the *Kannon Sutra* and promoted the popularity of the cult. According to this text, Kannon symbolized the depth of Buddha's compassion. She promised to save men from all forms of calamity and to grant them health, wealth and security in life. Other popular deities were Kangiten (Sanskrit *Ganesa*), the elephant-headed deity dispensing wisdom, and Kishimojin (Sanskrit *Hariti*), a goddess of childbirth.



Together with the beliefs in great Buddhist divinities there were numerous practices designed to gain desired benefits. Most popular and easiest was the recitation of magical phrases such as *Namu-Amida-Butsu* (*Hail Amida Buddha*) or *Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo* (*Hail Lotus of the Wonderful Law*). Shingon teaching became very influential because of the potent magical *Dharani* spells and incantations of Indian origin which it offered for every possible contingency. There were also mystic ceremonies such as the fire ritual, *goma*, which was thought to burn away impurity and to remove curses of demons. The ceremony was much used in the Heian period.

During the period when the manifold Chinese religious beliefs and practices spread into Japan with Buddhism, religious Taoism also came, though not in an institutional form. Whereas the teachings of Confucianism were first regarded as the required learning for rulers and politicians, religious Taoism had a wider influence and import, offering various methods for advancing one's life in this world and attaining longevity or good fortune. In addition to religious Taoism, yin-yang magic and divination, astrology, geomancy, and calendrical computations were combined with Buddhism. Taoist belief in sage-hermits contributed also to the formation of the Shugendō movement of Buddho-Shinto mountain ascetics. The practitioners of Shugendō functioned among the people as exorcists and shamans.

Ceremonies for the dead were also a prominent aspect of Japanese Buddhism. Not only was there the fear of dead spirits which emerged in the Heian period (see pp. 344–345), but there was also reverencing of the dead in filial piety. Masses for the dead helped to assure the good destiny of the departed. A calendar of memorials provided the dead with periodic assistance until they faded from living memory to become part of the general host of ancestors.

An important annual festival was the Urabon-e (Sanskrit *Avalambana*, *Ullambana*), based on the story of Buddha's disciple Mokuren (Sanskrit *Maudgalyayana*) who saw that his mother had become a hungry ghost. Thereupon began the rite of offering food for one's parents and ancestors. Related to the Urabon-e but of different origin was the Segaki ceremony of feeding the hungry ghosts. This ceremony is still regularly performed.³ Other ceremonies connected with the dead occurred at the spring and autumn equinox and were called Higan-e.

Ancestors are venerated through masses and entertainments. Most important are visits to the grave which, despite the decline in religious activity among modern people, are still commonly carried out even by those of no specific religious commitment. Considerable criticism has been directed to Buddhism because of its predominant association with death. Watanabe states:

It is clear that funeral services were not the work of monks in Sakyamuni's Order. They were the task of hereditary Brahmins. In

3. S. Watanabe, *Japanese Buddhism: A Critical Appraisal*, Tokyo, Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1964, pp. 88–91.



Jizo Bodhisattva, patron of the world of death, late twelfth century. (Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

East Asia such was not the case. When Buddhism came to act as agent for the folk religion, it became responsible even for funeral rites. . . .

If one considers that Buddhism has a living road in the future, there is probably nothing else to do but to advance in the direction of rejecting the cloak of funeral rites which is satisfied with mere form, and both to have confidence itself concerning life and death and to indicate it to others.⁴

The elements of popular religion have penetrated all sects to secure support from the masses. The Shugendo movement was very instrumental in carrying these beliefs and ceremonies to the people, particularly in the Tokugawa period when the traditional sects had largely been deprived of their spiritual influence among the people.

In the modern era a gap frequently exists between critical intellectual priests and the ordinary persons in relation to the magical and pragmatic features of Buddhism. Despite the calls for reformation and modernization within Buddhism today, the great source of support and strength in the orders still derives from the magical and pragmatic faith which, for lack of a better alternative, supports individuals in dealing with the problems and anxieties of modern life.

DOCTRINAL BUDDHISM

Though Buddhism has functioned in the social and political sphere as a support for the state and ruling class, and on the popular level has fused with native folk religion with stress on magic and pragmatic, this-worldly interests, it also established its own thought tradition in which Japanese monks studied and researched Buddhist texts and principles and applied themselves to the practice of Buddhist disciplines in the effort to achieve their own enlightenment. Thus, while it is easy to criticize Buddhism for its political exploitation and superstitious elements, it is necessary to balance these judgments with the recognition of serious efforts to understand Buddhism and to realize its own distinctive ideals.

The development of Buddhist thought in Japan follows largely the major historical periods of Nara (710–784), Heian (794–1185), and Kamakura (1185–1333). In general we may describe each period as a step in the gradual assimilation or Japanization of Buddhism.

In the Nara period the highly scholastic and philosophic schools current at the time in T'ang China (618–907) commanded the center of interest. The schools in this introductory period had little relation to the common man and were little more than academic trends, representing the various alternative Buddhist perspectives which had developed in India and then China. Commonly referred to as the Six Schools of Nara Buddhism, they were Jojitsu (Sanskrit *Satyasiddhi*), Kusha (Sanskrit *Abhidharma Kosa*), Hosso (Sanskrit *Dharmalakshana, Yogacara*), Sanron (Three Treatise, Sanskrit *Madhyamika*), Kegon (Sanskrit *Avatamsaka*), and Ritsu (Sanskrit *Vinaya*). They were introduced at various times by Chinese or Japanese monks from about 625 to 754.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

Of greater religious and historical significance was the introduction of the Tendai (Chinese *T'ien-t'ai*) school by Saicho and the Shingon (Sanskrit *Mantra*, Chinese *Chen-yen*) by Kukai. The doctrines and scholarship within these traditions laid the foundation for the flowering of Japanese Buddhism in the Kamakura period. Stressing the idea that there was really only one truth among the diversity of teachings in Buddhist tradition, they opened the way for greater sectarianism as later teachers asserted that they taught the "One Vehicle," or one truth necessary for salvation. In addition, they taught the universality of salvation based on the theory of mutual interpenetration of the Kegon school. The development of Pure Land teaching, particularly within the Tendai school, and the increasing emphasis on mystic rites and pageantry contributed to the broadening impact of Buddhism on all classes in the Heian era. These trends assured that Japan would be a Mahayana Buddhist country.

Against the background of dramatic social change and the deepening penetration of Buddhism into Japanese life, the flourishing of novel and creative movements in Buddhist tradition mark the Kamakura era in Japanese history as one of the most significant periods in the history of religion. While Buddhism reflected native aspirations and needs, closely identifying with the common man, it also offered universal paths of salvation unique in Buddhism.

With the rise to political dominance of the warrior clans, headed first by the Taira and then the Minamoto who established their center of power at Kamakura, a new virile and martial ethos displaced the formalistic and aesthetic outlook of the Heian nobility. The life of delicate beauty, peace, and ease of Heian changed to a way of life based on bravery and loyalty.

The repercussions of the transformation reverberated through all aspects of culture, whether art, literature, or religion. In religion the new era expressed itself in the emergence of several Buddhist leaders: Honen (1133–1212), Shinran (1173–1262), Dogen (1200–1253), and Nichiren (1222–1282). Their critical spirit and search for truth enable us to view them as reformers, much on the order of their European counterparts.

Each of these individuals attempted to achieve the ideals of Buddhism through the study of traditional doctrine and discipline either on Mount Hiei or in Nara. The general decline of studies and discipline and the activities of turbulent, warlike monks did not provide an atmosphere conducive to sincere religious pursuits. In each case, religious dissatisfaction stimulated the search for a new approach to Buddhist enlightenment. As a result of their various quests, these men were inevitably led to reject the traditional ecclesiastical system which had become formalized, sterile, ritualistic, doctrinally sterile, superstitious, and inwardly corrupt. Each found his solution in some aspect or tendency within Buddhist tradition which he elevated to a supreme position and proclaimed as the superior or true way to reach the goal of enlightenment.

In contrast to earlier Buddhism which was largely dominated by the interests and outlook of the nobility and Imperial house, the new

movements appealed to the common man. Aristocratic support and outlook were rejected. In offering Buddhism to the common man, each of the major teachers strove for a simplified doctrine and religious discipline within the capabilities of the ordinary person. Drawing on the tradition of One Vehicle Buddhism which had developed within the Tendai tradition, out of which all these individuals had come, there was a strong tendency to sectarianism based on the conviction that each teacher had discovered the one fundamental truth of Buddhism.

As illustration of these various tendencies, there was Honen who wrote his "Testament on One Sheet of Paper" just before his death, and Shinran who asserted that only faith was required for salvation. They represented the ultimate perhaps in the simplification of the abstruse and complicated systems of Buddhist philosophy and discipline. The rejection of the aristocratic life and political connections was portrayed in Dogen's rejection of favor with the Shogun and the construction of his monastery far from centers of power in distant Echizen province. He is said to have excommunicated the monk who brought him the message of the Shogun's gift of land. The sectarianism of the new Buddhism of Kamakura appeared most decisively in the four denunciations of Nichiren concerning the other contemporary schools. He declared emphatically that believers in the Pure Land teaching would go to hell; that the Zen sect had been created by devils; that Shingon was the ruination of the state; and that the Ritsu sect betrayed the country. Only the teaching proclaimed by Nichiren would save the nation from destruction.

It was the teacher Honen who, slightly before the onset of the Kamakura period, first gave himself to the attempt to discover in Buddhism a solid foundation for the spiritual life. According to his biography, his religious dissatisfaction was expressed in anxiety for his future destiny. Though having studied at the great Japanese centers of Buddhism, he had no spiritual peace until he happened on the Chinese teacher Shan Tao's Pure Land doctrine. Struck by this teaching, he abandoned religious life on Mount Hiei and eventually established his own school in 1175, later known as Jodo-shu.

The main characteristic of his school was the rejection of manifold practices of Buddhist tradition and the selection of the single practice of recitation of Amida Buddha's name as the only means of salvation. When he published his major work, *Senjaku hongannembutsushu* (*Treatise on the Nembutsu of the Select Original Vow*), for the regent Fujiwara Kanezane in 1198, the true nature of his doctrine became clear and eventually resulted in persecution and banishment.

Through analyzing traditional Buddhist doctrines in the light of the dawn of the Last Age in the decline of Buddhist teachings, Honen made it clear that the only certain way for ordinary persons in this age to achieve salvation was the recitation of the Buddha's name alone. Implicitly, the exaltation of this practice rendered all other Buddhist disciplines meaningless.

Apart from the theoretical foundations of his teaching, Honen was also motivated by a deep compassion for the common man, and he

eloquently attacked the aristocratic Buddhism of his time which made salvation contingent on wealth or learning:

And so Amida seemed to have made his Original Vow the rejection of the hard and the choice of the easy way, in order to enable all sentient beings, without distinction, to attain birth into the Pure Land. If the Original Vow required the making of images and the building of pagodas, then the poor and destitute could have no hope of attaining it. But the fact is that the wealthy and noble are few in number, whereas the number of the poor and ignoble is extremely large. If the Original Vow required wisdom and great talents, there would be no hope of that birth for the foolish and ignorant at all, but the wise are few in number, while the foolish are very many.⁵

The essence of his faith and practice were given concisely in the famous "Testament on One Sheet of Paper":

The method of final salvation that I have propounded is neither a sort of meditation, such as has been practiced by many scholars in China and Japan, nor is it the repetition of the Buddha's name by those who have studied and understood the deep meaning of it. It is nothing but the mere repetition of the "Namu Amida Butsu," without a doubt of his mercy, whereby one may be born into the Land of Perfect Bliss. The mere repetition with firm faith includes all the practical details, such as the three-fold preparation of mind and the four practical rules. If I as an individual had any doctrine more profound than this, I should miss the mercy of the two Honorable Ones, Amida and Shaka, and be left out of the Vow of the Amida Buddha. Those who believe this, though they clearly understand all the teachings Shaka taught throughout his whole life, should behave themselves like simple-minded folk, who know not a single letter, or like ignorant nuns or monks whose faith is implicitly simple. Thus without pedantic airs, they should fervently practice the repetition of the name of Amida, and that alone.⁶

Shinran was a disciple of Honen and followed him in promoting Pure Land doctrine (Jodo-shinshu, true sect of the Pure Land). After a period of exile as a result of the persecution of Honen's band, Shinran taught in the eastern province of Kanto. In his latter years he returned to Kyoto and lived in retirement. During this period he produced various texts which are major sources for his thought. Among them are *Kyogyoshinsho* (*Treatise on the Doctrine, Practice, Faith and Realization*), various groups of hymns, some interpretative texts, and letters to his disciples. In addition, his disciple Yuiembo wrote the popular little text *Tannisho* (*Deploring the Heresies*), giving the essence of Shinran's thought.

5. Harper H. Coates and Ryugaku Ishizuka, *Honen the Buddhist Saint*, Kyoto, Society for the Publication of Sacred Books of the World, 1949, vol. II, p. 344.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 728–729.

While Shinran was in harmony with the spirit of Honen's teaching and motivation to aid spiritually the common man, his Pure Land doctrine went beyond Honen's in several important respects. Honen had concentrated attention on the adequacy of the practice of vocal recitation to bring salvation in comparison with traditional Buddhist disciplines, while Shinran directed attention to the foundation of the efficacy of this practice. He found its effectiveness rooted in the transfer of merit made by Amida Buddha as the result of his arduous effort to create a way of salvation for all beings. The transfer of merit gave potency to the name, and it also was the basic cause for the resultant faith in the Buddha's Vow and Work within the person. Shinran placed major emphasis on the experience of faith. He criticized all forms of Buddhism, including those advocating the repetition of Buddha's name, as expressions of man's egoism through attempting to achieve salvation by his own effort.

Since the experience of faith reveals that one's salvation has been assured by Amida Buddha, one may attain spiritual peace in contrast to the self-powered disciplines which always involve an anxiety of not knowing whether one has sufficiently purified himself in order to gain salvation. Consequently, the religious life undergoes a dramatic reinterpretation in which our lives and religious practice are to be viewed as expressions of gratitude for the salvation already assured rather than as desperate attempts to achieve spiritual security.

The life of gratitude had several social implications which eventually became clear in the history of the tradition. In contrast to traditional Buddhism Shinran rejected the magical principle of performing Buddhist practices in order to gain benefits in this world and salvation in the next. In the doctrines of Bodhisattvic return to this world after death (*Genso*), Shinran made the goal of religion the salvation of others. In rejecting self-powered, egocentric religious attitudes, all superstitious practices which had such a prominent role in popular Buddhism were cast aside. Further, with the assurance that one's status in the next world was already determined, one might give more attention to developing himself in this world. Abandoning the disciplines and precepts regulating the lives of monks in earlier Buddhist orders, Shinran's clerical followers were noted because they ate meat and married. Believers could also engage in occupations of their choice. With the decline of magic and a more ethically oriented interpretation of faith developed later by the patriarch Rennyō, Shinran's teachings assisted in the development of the merchant class in the Tokugawa period.⁷

Although Eisai is credited with introducing the Zen sect into Japan, it was the aristocratic and highly intellectual form of Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen which employed the rigorous, demanding Koan or riddle method of revealing one's attainment of enlightenment. The characteristics of Kamakura Buddhism appear more within the Soto (Chinese *Tsao-tung*) tradition of Zen which Dogen introduced to Japan after his study in China.

7. Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, New York, Free Press, 1967, pp. 117-122.

Like other Kamakura Buddhists, the priest Dogen had become dissatisfied with the religious discipline he encountered on Mount Hiei and at first went to study under Eisai. Because this did not meet his need either, he went to China where he studied under the master Ju Ching. There he discovered a form of Zen, which was based not only on monastic existence but also could be expanded to allow men of all walks of life—great ministers, woodsmen, hunters, and even women—to gain enlightenment. He rejected the Koan practice, enabling his form of Zen, based on the meditation practice itself, to spread more easily among the common people. While the popular spread of Zen could not compare with that of the Pure Land, it gained the name "Farmers' Zen" because of its greater adaptability to ordinary life.

Dogen inherited his master Ju Ching's insistence on the centrality of the practice of *Zazen* over all other Buddhist practices. According to his interpretation in such works as the *Shobogenzo* (*The Repository of Buddhist Teaching*), *Zazen* was the process wherein Buddha himself had attained the bliss of enlightenment. There was no temporal, cause-effect relation between meditation and enlightenment. To perform *Zazen* was thus in a mysterious manner to participate in the enlightenment of the Buddha. Practice and realization were identical.

The identity of the practice and attainment led Dogen to criticize other approaches to Zen which made the practice secondary and instrumental, merely a means to the effort to attain Buddhahood through perceiving one's true nature (as Buddha). He also rejected the Zen principle of a special transmission beyond scripture. He criticized the dichotomy this view implied between the Buddha's mind and his teaching as represented in the sutras. Thus Dogen was more scripturally oriented than the Zen of the Rinzai tradition. Further, because the doctrine of the Buddha's "one mind" did not allow dualities, everything was embraced within his enlightenment. The world, as it is, was Buddha's mind.

In addition to criticizing other Zen teachings, Dogen also denied the theory of the three periods in the decline of Buddhist teaching (Mappo) as emphasized in the Pure Land tradition. Buddha's enlightenment and the possibility of realizing it were not affected by time.

The attitude toward life and the world generated in Zen discipline of whatever school has made it significant in the development of Japanese society and culture. It has been the basis of such military arts as Kendo (swordsmanship) and Judo. The discipline and traits of character it cultivated made it attractive to the samurai (warrior) class. It influenced broadly such arts as architecture, gardens, literature, drama, painting, and calligraphy. Its experience was expressed profoundly in such activities as the tea ceremony and flower arranging.

Perhaps the most fiery and striking personality among the Kamakura Buddhist reformers was Nichiren. Unlike the other thinkers who appear to have had aristocratic or warrior background, Nichiren was the offspring of a fisherman's family in the eastern province of Awa. Impressed early by the impermanence of life, he decided to

enter nearby Kiyozumi-dera monastery which belonged to the Tendai sect. While studying, he visited Kamakura, Kyoto, Hiei, and Nara. At first he became attracted to Pure Land teaching, but soon began to doubt its efficacy to assure salvation. Other doubts also began to assail his spirit and motivate his study. He was concerned about the problems of peace in the country, particularly in relation to the death of the boy-Emperor Antoku, whose divine personage should have assured him assistance from the gods. He knew also of other Emperors, such as Go-Toba, who had been exiled by the Hojo regents. He was also perturbed by the numerous Buddhist sects existing in the country. He believed that just as there may be only one rightful ruler in a country, there could be only one true teaching of Buddhism. After studying all the various schools, he concluded that only the *Lotus Sutra (Hokkekyo)* taught the supreme truth of Buddhism as Saicho had earlier proclaimed.

In a unique manner he connected the fortunes of the country with the nation's lack of clear support for the true form of Buddhism. Rather than the *Lotus Sutra* being the center of faith, the land was overrun by Pure Land teaching. In his work *Risshoankokuron* he pointed out that Japan had already suffered numerous penalties for failing to adhere to true Buddhism, but a final major one, namely invasion by a foreign country, would bring an end to the nation unless she adopted the true teaching. Implicitly Nichiren advocated the abolition of all other sects and the establishment of his own doctrine. He characterized himself as "the pillar of Japan." Although Nichiren claimed merely to be restoring the truth of Tendai, since the age of Mappo had arrived and the successors of Saicho had themselves perverted the tradition, he did not simply desire a return to an exact replication of traditional Tendai Buddhist teaching.

Nichiren, who believed he was the *Jogyo Bosatsu* promised by Buddha Sakyamuni in the Last Age in the *Lotus Sutra*, brought his missionary zeal to bear in challenging the government, people, and contemporary religious institutions, now including Zen, Shingon, and Ritsu, as well as Pure Land. As he began to win supporters, he soon experienced persecution. He was attacked by mobs, chased from temples, banished several times, and even once nearly met death. These events only strengthened his confidence that he had the truth. In addition to street preaching and other varied activities, Nichiren wrote voluminously.⁸

Nichiren's teaching embodied a response to a time of crisis in Japanese society. Though his predictive powers are not entirely clear, his admonitions concerning the invasion of the country as a final punishment by the Buddha and the gods appeared to be borne out when the Mongols attempted to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281. These events provided him with a greater following, though the nation did not turn as a whole to his teaching nor was it destroyed.

8. Five texts are basic for Nichiren's thought: *Risshoankokuron (Treatise on Attaining Peace in the Country Through Establishing True Buddhism)*, *Kaimokusho (Treatise on Opening the Eyes)*, *Hoonsho (Treatise on Requiring Gratitude)*, *Senjisho (Treatise on Selection of the Time)*, and *Kanjinhonzonsho (Treatise on the Meditation of the True Effect of Worship)*.

Although along with other Buddhist schools Nichiren was concerned with providing a way of individual salvation, he was also moved by a strong national feeling. Buddhism was not purely an individual matter but of utmost importance to the life of the whole society. In relating Buddhism and the state, he differed from traditional thinkers in placing Buddhism above the state. He believed the destiny of the state depended on its adherence to the true form of Buddhism. In contrast to Pure Land other-worldly indifference to the state, and Dogen's rejection of the seductive influence of political connections, Nichiren sought to influence state policy through his religious views.

In view of the importance of maintaining true Buddhism, Nichiren's intolerance went beyond that of other schools in seeking the abolition of all other schools. The method of *Shakubuku*, forced conversion or a way of aggressively conquering evil, was widely employed by Nichiren, and by his later followers to the present day. His personal involvement in his teaching and his sense of divine mission gave greater intensity to his teaching so that the tradition stemming from him bears his own name.

Though he is doctrinally related to the Tendai tradition, he modified it by establishing his own Mandala (sacred symbolic diagram) based on the view of the eternal Buddha presented in chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*. This is the ultimate Buddha who stands behind the historical Sakyamuni Buddha. The true Buddha is the timeless reality, not a person who at a specific time and place attained enlightenment. That mode of expression was only to accommodate men and guide them to deeper faith. In the Last Age in the decline of the Buddhist teaching the most profound teaching must be given just as a very ill person must be given the most effective and powerful medicine. On this point Nichiren differed with the Pure Land tradition in that the means of salvation must be correlated directly with the capacities of the people of that time. As it was a corrupt age, an easy way to salvation was necessary. Nevertheless, the religious practice of Nichiren was the recitation of the title of the *Lotus Sutra*, *Namu-Myoho-Renge-kyo*. This practice was probably influenced by the development of Pure Land, though the supporting philosophy differed.

Like Saicho, Nichiren wanted to establish the true ordination platform based on his teaching. Within the context of Japanese Buddhism this would signify state acceptance of his doctrine as a recognized religion and a participant in the effort to maintain the spiritual security of the state. In this case the ordination platform would represent official adherence only to Nichiren's interpretation of Buddhism, rather than the mere inclusion of his teaching with others.

With the acceptance of the Tendai philosophy of "Three thousand in one thought" by which all things in this world express the Buddha-mind itself, his interpretation of human existence is this-worldly rather than other-worldly in emphasis. One's mystic unity with the reality within things is achieved through the recitation of the *Daimoku* (title of the *Lotus Sutra*) rather than the elaborate meditations

in Tendai. Nichiren is significant for the way in which he adapted the abstruse Tendai philosophy to the needs of ordinary men. As a result, his tradition has revitalized today with the outcropping of a multitude of sects drawing on his fervor and his thought in attempting to deal with modern problems.

The new impetus given to Buddhist thought by the Kamakura teachers determined the direction of Buddhist tradition down to the present day. Because of social circumstance, it became increasingly separated from the life of the people and largely functioned to attain health, wealth, and security, to dispense one's duties toward the dead, or become an instrument of the state in the pursuit of its ends. Nevertheless its fundamental insights were preserved in the scholarly, priestly traditions.

In the postwar period Buddhism shares significantly in the religious fermentation, with statistics indicating the establishment of some 170 Buddhist sects in contrast to the 56 prewar sects distributed within the thirteen traditional schools. The statistics are deceptive because the increase is largely due to secessions resulting from the freedom of religious competition granted by the new Constitution. Whether there is really a revitalization of Buddhism or religion in general may be questioned when one compares studies concerning the actual participation and interest in religion with the official statistics recorded by religious organizations. According to a recent study of religion in the urban context, hardly one third of the adult population expressed interest in religion, while the remainder affirmed the need for religion but would not presently join any group.⁹

Nevertheless, within the shifting urban situation of the postwar period, two Buddhist organizations have shown phenomenal growth corresponding to conditions of rising urban populations. The Rissho Koseikai and Soka Gakkai, both derivative from the Nichiren tradition, have attracted the attention of social scientists as well as religionists.

There are numerous reasons given for the striking progress of these sects. A major reason is that they have addressed themselves aggressively to meeting the needs of the new urban dwellers and their problems. In contrast to the traditional Buddhist organizations whose foundations are largely rural and familial, the new sects attempt to provide a personal ethic and sense of meaning for people released from traditional bonds of community and family. They provide a focus for positive dealing with the sense of frustration and dissatisfaction that attends the competitive life of the city. Where other sects wait for people to come when there is need, the newer groups reach out and contact the socially disorganized urbanite. The method of their spread emphasizes the personal aspect in that believers contact prospects and draw them into fellowship. Through educational programs and frequent meetings loyalty to the group

9. Fujio Ikado, "Trend and Problems of New Religions: Religion in Urban Society," in *The Sociology of Japanese Religion*, Kiyomi Morioka and William H. Newell, eds., Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1968, pp. 101-117.

and solidarity develop. These less tradition-bound groups have benefited from the experience of other organizations in propagandizing for they have borrowed tactics from such diverse sources as the Christian Church and the theories of Saul Alinsky.

Despite the roots which Rissho Koseikai and Soka Gakkai have in Nichiren tradition and in the *Lotus Sutra*, the styles of the groups contrast sharply. As a consequence they also appeal to different segments of the urban population. The former relies upon the rural middle class and the small businessman of the city for support, while the latter attracts laborers and the urban lower middle class.

The approach to the problems of contemporary life of these supporters helps to account for the differing attitudes represented by the sect. Rissho Koseikai is more tolerant, striving for a Buddhist ecumenicity as well as positive interfaith relations. Great emphasis is laid on filial piety as the prime ethical value. Soka Gakkai embodies the dogmatic and intolerant attitudes of the prophet Nichiren himself and holds itself aloof from any compromise with other forms of Buddhism. For individuals strongly dissatisfied with the prevailing social conditions, this form of religious outlook provides a rationalization that social ills are due to a failure to follow the true religion. Its zeal for bringing about change in society in conformity with its own ideals has led the Soka Gakkai movement to enter into politics by forming the Clean Government party (Komeito), whose name symbolizes its reformist attitudes. This party's meteoric rise to prominence and importance in the various local and national elections has led to apprehensions among other religious groups which fear its religious intolerance.

The Rissho Koseikai in its general orientation tends to be more individualistic in its emphasis on the development of one's personal life through faith in Buddhism and practice of filial piety. It is also interested in society at large and has developed numerous social welfare projects such as hospitals, schools, old age homes, and cemeteries. The Hoza group meeting is significant in bringing believers into active participation in a religious and social gathering of mutual fellowship and assistance.

The Soka Gakkai provides for the satisfaction of individual needs through the emphasis on the benefits which the devotee receives from the concentrated practice of reciting the *Daimoku; Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*. It is most renowned for the practice of *Shakubuku*, which refers to the forceful exhortation and strong insistence on the truth of Soka Gakkai teaching. It is the obligation of each member to win his family and friends to this faith.

The effort is inspired by an eschatological perspective based on the doctrine of the Last Age in the Decline of Buddhist Teaching at which time the strong medicine of the *Lotus Sutra*, as taught by Nichiren and further elaborated through the recent teachers and leaders of Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda, is required for the solution of modern social problems of peace, justice, and social welfare. The quasi-political concept of the true ordination platform (*Hommon Kaidan*) advocated by Saicho in Tendai Buddhism and Nichiren in his time symbolizes the perfect

union of religion and the state for the promotion of universal human good. It is this theory imbedded in the doctrine of Soka Gakkai that arouses the fears of a religious totalitarianism and intolerance should it become the dominant political force in Japan. Each devotee is to work for realization of this ideal. This theory has not only motivated the political activity of the group, but recently has caused it to turn attention to the fields of labor and education to achieve its goals in society.

It should be noted also that its universalist goals extend beyond Japan. Soka Gakkai has experienced a rapid spread among Americans, first among servicemen with Japanese wives, but in more recent times on the basis of its own religious appeal. In the missionary context the political implications of the doctrine are muted.

While the development of Rissho Koseikai and Soka Gakkai has commanded the major attention of students of the Japanese religious world in recent years, the efforts of the traditional schools to adapt themselves to contemporary conditions should not be overlooked. In the many schools supported by these sects scholarly study of Buddhism in all aspects has rapidly progressed. The education of clergy has attained higher standards. Lectures, publications, and broadcasting bring the claims of Buddhism to a wide audience. Nationwide Buddhist organizations of lay persons and clergy attempt to unite the sects of Buddhism around common projects. There are also efforts to engage the interest of young people.

Despite the wealth of activities carried on in the various sects and chronicled in the many religious papers and periodicals, the traditional organizations are hindered in making an impact by the general stereotype that Buddhism is only for funerals and by the lack in the past of a concerted effort in religious education. Since intellectual commitment was never an essential part of the mode of religious belonging in the community or family, the average lay person understands little of the essential teachings of Buddhism. Statistics indicating that Shinto claims some seventy-nine million followers and Buddhism about seventy-eight million in a nation of ninety million people reveal that most Japanese appear not to sense any contradiction between the two traditions, and they show little consciousness of belonging to a particular religion.

In an age when customary and familial foundations for religion are weakening, the traditional Buddhist sects are at a disadvantage in maintaining social and economic support. With decreased income priests must often work as teachers or run kindergartens to maintain their livelihood. The result is that they lack adequate time for religious cultivation and evangelism.

Further, a hereditary clergy and a hierarchical organizational structure has tended to work against needed reforms urged by scholars and younger priests. As a consequence of these various factors, the older orders cannot match the vitality of the newer groups.

Although facing great difficulties, as the religious world stabilizes, the older organizations may benefit from their greater maturity and scholarship, as well as from the prestige that attends a lengthy his-

tory in Japan. A new age may be dawning when Buddhism will attain intellectual leadership as it comes to more adequate terms with the forces of secularism and modernization. In this connection, the understanding of Buddhism in the newer sects does not go beyond the traditional insight, though a greater attempt may be made to make those doctrines relevant to the contemporary situation. Thus from the intellectual standpoint the new and old sects are on much the same footing. The clash of claims, however, will encourage the refining and clarifying of views which will benefit the entire Buddhist tradition in Japan.

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