

# Traditional Buddhist Sects and Modernization in Japan

Gerald COOKE

## Lay Movements as Responses to Modernization

While social science-oriented studies bearing on the character of religious components in Japanese life since 1945 are many, one of the most recent provides a ready synthesis of much data gathered during this period. Edward Norbeck of Rice University sets out in fairly typical fashion in his documentation of religious decline in the face of the ongoing modernization<sup>1</sup> of Japanese society. In Norbeck's view religion as a component of man-made culture served originally to symbolize and effect the integration of the community's life in terms permitted by the social structures of the culture. Rapid social change through industrialization, urbanization and technologization has rendered the old structures useless; so religions find themselves undercut, old needs now being met by new structures of secular, scientifically oriented

- 
1. "Modernization" is, of course, one of those key terms that call forth a plethora of diverse definitions. My own efforts have related to a composite conception of *modernization* as the full range of structural changes which are effected in a society through the wide acceptance and progressive development of industrialization, urbanization, technological refinement; *secularization* of life-orienting attitudes in the root sense of seeing the present world as the focus of most desired values is a correlate of great significance for the question of religion in modern societies; *Westernization*, while providing both stimulus and "transport" for the entry of this manifold process into traditional societies of the developing areas of the globe, is a somewhat antiquated term today and is not to be taken as synonymous with modernization in the case of Japan.

society.<sup>2</sup>

From the outset, then, a sociological prognostication for any investigation of the traditional Buddhist sects in relation to modernization phenomena is hardly encouraging. The established sects frequently have been pronounced moribund, a term sometimes used with the implication that it is ironically appropriate to a religio-social tradition which has degenerated to little more than a funeral parlor association.

The figures on large surveys of religious affiliation and/or attitudes toward religion among the citizenry of Japan reinforce the dim expectations of some that (as many of our social science brethren have gleefully claimed for generations) religion in modern societies must be taught to number its days if it is to move into a perilous future with wisdom and composure enough to even survive. From a wide array of studies and survey reports by private, sectarian, and public agencies a picture emerges which at first is rather confused. If one assumes that governmental studies are least likely to harbor distorting biases in their observations and classification of information, however, one cannot escape the conclusion that the level of interest in religion in Japan is very low indeed. Official surveys in 1958 and 1963 show in the category of declared non-membership in religion the figures 65% and 69% respectively. Norbeck deems these figures to be a roughly accurate characterization of the dissociation-disinterest factor in the current state of religion in Japan.<sup>3</sup> Support from non-public sources may be represented succinctly for our pur-

---

2. Edward Norbeck, *Religion and society in modern Japan* (Houston: Tourmaline Press, 1970), pp. 106 ff.

3. Norbeck, *Religion and society*, pp. 1-10.

poses in a survey of 980 persons: in the mid-1960s a Tokyo sample showed that 82% claimed no religious affiliation, while one-third of the sample were unable to identify the traditional religions of their families.<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of data which indicate such a drastic change in traditional patterns of popular association-identification regarding religious traditions and institutions, Norbeck states the prospects for religions' future in Japan in very gloomy terms. According to the principles of cultural anthropology nothing remains important in a culture—i.e., “living” in more than a vestigial and lingering form—unless it demonstrates congruence with other aspects of human life. Therefore, religions are doomed in their “supernaturalistic forms” unless a major transformation in doctrinal and social aspects is carried out within these communities of faith and tradition.<sup>5</sup> Even this offers little hope, since in Norbeck's view the role of dogma or doctrine in religion has seldom been demonstrated as relevant to a contemporary situation. The work of theologians, we are apprized, has always been separated by a wide gulf from the practical everyday needs and experience of persons; the common man is poorly informed and even less concerned with the theological and philosophical dimensions of religious life, for he sees religion as a system of action. This characterization of the common man's religion (recall Freud in *Future of an illusion*) accords fully with Norbeck's understanding of the nature of religion: he works from an “assumption that religion is a part of the whole way of life *from which it is derived, a part of the whole of man's learned behavior* that changes in congruence

4. The work of J. A. Dator, cited by Norbeck, *Religion and society*, p. 146.

5. Norbeck, *Religion and society*, chapter 8.

with other changes.... Religion may be called *a reflex of social experience*, deriving its form from man's social experiences and playing variously important roles in those experiences."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, while Japan has shown remarkable capacities to adjust effectively to new conditions, we must, in Norbeck's judgment, expect that traditional Shinto and probably also "some aspects" of Buddhism and Christianity are doomed by the processes and effects of modernization. This does not mean, of course, that the human needs, which are taken to be the essential components of religion, will also disappear. There is abundant evidence that the "instrumental" and "expressive" social roles no longer effectively filled by religion are assuming secularized forms. There is the more intimate nuclear family, developed in the context of industrialization and urbanization; there is the *kō* or common interest association of equals; and perhaps most important is the business firm or corporation into which the *sarariman* ("salaried man") is inducted upon graduation from college: here indoctrination in loyalty accompanies training for a specific job; opportunities for intimate association and recreation serve to counteract the anomie of rootless urban life. This leaves only the less educated and less skilled sectors of society in the lower and middle classes which continue to turn to the established religions or to the new religions for these functions.

What has been attempted in these introductory paragraphs is hardly a comprehensive review of sociological research bearing on the religious situation in Japan at present. Rather, a point of departure is sought which will set us within the problem of religion and modernization in Japan. Despite reservations and criti-

6. Norbeck, *Religion and society*, chapter 8.

cisms from the standpoint of a religionist (for example, a predictable and unwarrantable narrowing of the conception of religion to the need-functional and the observable-quantifiable aspects of religious data; and judgments on the role and relevance of doctrinal elements in a religious tradition which oversimplify a complex picture), the social scientists' effort to gather and organize as much empirical data as possible puts us in their debt. They systematize and generally confirm (though overzealously at times) an assessment of religions in post-World War II Japan which observers of various types—including scholars and sectarian leaders within the religions themselves—have been noting for many years. Indeed, many knowledgeable religionists, both Western visitors and Japanese, have for some time deplored not only a *decline* in the vitality of the established Buddhist sects (to take the sector of religious topography with which the present study is primarily concerned) but the virtually defunct state of these classic bodies of Buddhist teaching and practice in Japan. Not only have Western scholars felt justified or required to describe the place in life of Buddhist temples today in such terms as “little more than funeral parlors”; this and similar judgments are taken to be supported by polemics of Japanese Buddhists as well. A case in point is Watanabe Shōko's *Japanese Buddhism: A critical appraisal*.

Watanabe presents a picture of Buddhism in Japan which neither disregards strengths nor avoids features regarded as evidence of decline. He articulates for the non-Japanese inquirer the now commonly voiced judgment on “funeral Buddhism.” His reformist position is that of an able scholar of Indian Buddhism who draws strength from a return to the his-

torical Buddha and who repeatedly calls Japanese Buddhism to task by this standard for its alleged degeneration of discipline. The impact of his work has been felt in Japanese lay circles, as we shall note later more fully.

It is no cause for wonder, then, that the combined forces of first rank Buddhist scholars of Japan and data-collecting sociological researchers have persuaded knowledgeable Western scholars (residents in Japan as well as regular visitors) that the older sects do not warrant study in terms of their present condition. It is true that great cultural forces do die out. Their institutional embodiments wither as new directions are taken up by movements more adaptive to changes in the *Zeitgeist* and patterns of organization in a society. Yet it seems worth asking, in the face of the general agreement about Buddhism's approaching demise, "What is the character of attempts which do exist inside or alongside the traditional sects to stay or reverse their ebbing of life?" Surely, with able Buddhist scholars of Watanabe's stature at work in a modernizing society whose intellectual elite has a full century of enthusiasm for change behind it, there must be persons and groups who are actively engaged organizationally to bring forth viable responses to the forces which seem to bring destruction on rigid traditional forms. Initial inquiry along these lines suggests that judgments about the morbid state of the older Buddhism have been based on general impressions or on fragmentary concrete observation, or they have been outdated by the furious pace of Japanese life. There is need for a direct investigation of evidence across the range of major Buddhist sects.

It goes without saying, perhaps, that a first stay of nine months in Japan by a non-specialist hardly promises fulfillment of such an

undertaking. What can be said here must inevitably take the form of a preliminary report, a preface to continuing inquiry into both the movements treated here and phenomena which came to light as lying beyond my ken and calendar. Further study and field work are required to do justice to men and movements of stature in contemporary Japanese Buddhism.

What follows, then, must be called merely "signs of life" in Japanese Buddhism. "Life" is a broad category, subject to characterization all the way from the infant's boundless energies to the waning rhythms of the infirm. But the angle of approach demands that evidences of life, whatever one's preconceptions and whatever one's immediate impressions of their degree of vitality and viability, be examined as fully as possible. If preliminary judgments seem warranted on the basis of this approach, they can be stated in suitably tentative and circumspect form at the conclusion.

"Japanese Buddhism" is also a broad category, within which the present article attempts to deal with a certain type of evidence drawn from only three of the major classical "sects": Zen, Jōdo Shinshū, and Shingon. This selection has the virtue of embracing two major contrasting emphases of Buddhist piety in Japan—the way of *jiriki* ("self-power"), so prominent in Zen; and the way of *tariki* ("other-power") as followed in Jōdoshū and Jōdo Shinshū; it also includes a type of Buddhism which goes further than the other sects in reaching back beyond the immediate historical bases in China to Indian prototypes: Shingon centered at Kōyasan (south of the Kansai triangle of Osaka-Kyoto-Nara) combines an emphasis that is on the one hand very close to *yoga* and *tantra* in their Hindu, Indian, and Tibetan Buddhist forms and on

the other a Mahāyānist metaphysics which could provide the underpinning for a powerful universalism and world affirmation. Yet at the same time much evidence of religious vitality which embraces large numbers of lay persons in the Shingon sect is essentially traditional and cultic in character.

One further limitation within which my investigations have been carried out needs mentioning. I have dealt primarily with what can be called "lay movements" in these sects. I proceed on the hypothesis that in so far as the older sects mount any observable responses to their radically changing and modernizing environment, these responses must make a significant appeal to lay followers. This hypothesis is grounded in three self-evident observations: (1) it is the lay believers rather than the *sangha* who live in the midst of the pressures and confusion of modern life in Japan, and it is they who must test any responses to modernization that may be devised within traditional Buddhism; (2) for it is families of lay persons who, since Buddhism's disconnection from state patronage at the beginning of the Meiji era (1868), constitute the sole common source of support for all the Buddhist sects; (3) the survival motivations just mentioned, nitty-gritty as they are, do not replace that doctrinal-confessional emphasis which many social scientists readily pigeonhole as essentially irrelevant to everyday issues or as wholly derivative from and dependent upon more "real" functional factors; this emphasis is in the present case the cardinal ideal prized by all the sects as an irreplaceable sign of their Mahāyāna heritage: the vision of the bodhisattva, who vows to "save" all sentient beings. This doctrinal wellspring of at least two thousand years of Buddhism has been both the preeminent guide of monastic and lay life and an



assurance to the layman that he will be an object of priestly and monastic concern, whatever forms that concern may find in a given period.

With these considerations in mind "lay movements" in (or associated positively with) the older sects would seem to be a fairly firm handle to take hold of in trying to locate Buddhist responses to modernization.

### **Zen**

In discussing responses to modernization from within the Zen sect, with particular reference to lay movements, we shall examine representatives of three types. Each has its peculiar emphases and thrusts as well as certain common motifs rooted in the Zen base. The first is D.T. Suzuki, who demands treatment, however brief, as a departed and unreplaced "great" in the twentieth century Zen world. The second is a type of movement which has received some recent publicity, an outreach of the old tradition into the very heart of Japan's modernization, namely, the upper levels of Japan's business world. The third is a group, relatively unpublicized in the West, which began during the Pacific War among university students and professors in an attempt to relate Buddhist insights and disciplines directly to the existential anguish of a world at war.

*D.T. Suzuki.* As the doyen of Zen scholars of the last generation, Suzuki shows in his work a rhythm of response to modernization that is almost a paradigm of the continuing efforts within the Zen community of Japan. The rhythm of these efforts consists in a movement outward in affirmation of Buddhist treasures and a looking inward in self-criticism. The initial

movement—without trying to be historically accurate at this point regarding sequence of phases in the rhythm—became manifest in commendation and irenically polemic defense of Zen practice and insights as relevant to the Western world. No one compares with Suzuki in carrying out this task in terms of solid scholarly grounding plus personal experience of Zen plus productivity in the medium of English. Here was the Commodore Perry of Japan's opening of the West to a first extensive exposure to Zen—bold, affirmative, persistent.

Dr. Suzuki's response to the challenge that Buddhism is "unable to regenerate, cheerless, cold, dead, and deplorably barren of results" is sketched further in Margaret Dornish's discussion, "Aspects of D.T. Suzuki's early interpretations of Buddhism and Zen."<sup>7</sup> Here Suzuki as modernizer of Buddhism is treated primarily in terms of his early experience while resident in America in the first quarter of this century. Under the tutelage of Abbot Shaku Sōen and of the German-American publisher and religious enthusiast Paul Carus, Suzuki began to absorb into the structure of his Buddhist-based outlook nineteenth century Western values of reason, progress, and above all the uncompromising search for "truth itself."<sup>8</sup> It was the combination of these values with his Buddhist background that formed a continuity through his long career in the "enlightened" view of religion as "a quintessential core of truth and experience quite properly divested of its accidental trappings."<sup>9</sup> These trappings, even early in this long career of three-quarters of a century were seen to

---

7. *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 47 ff.

8. Dornish, "Aspects of D.T. Suzuki," p. 52.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

include logic, which Suzuki's growing interest in Zen as the apex of Buddhism clearly subordinated to living and intuitive experience of truth.

The second phase of this Zen rhythm in response to modernization is seen in Suzuki's own relationship to established Zen in Japan. There is, we might observe parenthetically, an inherent division between an institutional expression of a culture's life and the scholarly investigation and exposition of the bases and forms of that institution. And while it would be rash to say that this division is always activated—that is, that the scholarly arm of a cultural institution is at all times aware of and acting upon its critical independence from the institution—the potential for critical evaluation and reform which is implicit in the scholarly (as opposed to the merely scribal) function readily comes to the fore. Church or *sangha*, synagogue or *ashrama* leaders are frequently conscious of this division of spirit and function, often looking on the scholar as a danger to the tradition and community by virtue of his critical distance and generally open attitude toward change of established forms; or, the scholar is often commended in one breath but put down in the next, the latter on grounds that he is primarily an intellectualizer rather than an experiencer-doer. This has sometimes been the comment of Hindu swamis with reference to the Indian counterpart of Suzuki, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Suzuki, too, has at times received criticism for both a too philosophical and a too journalistic bent in his presentation of Zen.<sup>10</sup> This characterization sounds strange to the English reader of Suzuki's works, in which the experiential

---

10. The former point is treated in Tamaki Kōshirō, "An evaluation of Dr. Suzuki," *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 99 ff.

and supra-intellectual character of Zen awareness is endlessly reiterated. Yet Suzuki's open engagement in philosophy and his crediting of philosophy as having a necessary role alongside practice once again made explicit this inherent division between the scholarly and the "priestly" functions in a religious institution.<sup>11</sup>

It is just this locus of division that carries significance for our concern with Zen responses to modernization. One can say that D.T. Suzuki was in effect—perhaps consciously—manifesting the second phase of the rhythm we have noted by maintaining his critical distance from established, sectarian commitments in Zen. Though a practitioner as well as philosopher of Zen, he refrained from seeking the status of a monk. To borrow a Tillichian figure, he remained on the boundary of clerical and lay life in Zen Buddhism. In this he elicited at once the reserved appreciation of institutional Zen and the enthusiastic appreciation of lay circles and of non-Buddhists. He thereby laid out a bridgehead which might support his inquiries into and commendation of Zen tradition and experience in forms not tied to the established sectarian point of view. In an era of swift modernization of life in all industrially advanced societies this stance adopted by Suzuki was well designed to escape the main force of the accompanying waves of skepticism and disenchantment with institutional religion.

In his "Evaluation of D. T. Suzuki" Tamaki Kōshirō delin-

- 
11. As a coordinate of this aspect of Suzuki's outlook may be mentioned his own affirmation of a conscious stress on the need for activism in Buddhism as a balance to the principle of *sono mama ga yoroshii* ("all is well just as things are"), which taken alone means that "Buddhists accept everything as it is, perhaps. That is bad. They don't go out of their way to do good." See Tucker N. Callaway, "Dialogue: Christian and Buddhist," *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 109 ff.

eates this independent position of Suzuki when he recalls the meaning of the scholar's chosen appellation, "Daisetz." "He called himself 'Daisetz' ('Great Unskillfulness') and seemed like a monk at one time and like a layman at another; he never enrolled in the monkhood, and engaged in secular professions. While a layman, he appeared to be above the mundane world. He invariably criticized institutionalized Zen Buddhism, and never ceased emphasizing the experience of Transcendental Wisdom."<sup>12</sup>

One can readily acknowledge that it is still too soon to assess properly the work of Suzuki as a response to modernization, even though it is impossible to ignore him in a study of Zen and modernization. It must be said in any case that on the one hand the ferment over Zen in America and Britain today is virtually the work of this one man, with a train of adept and active assistants. Tamaki uses very strong—perhaps overstated—phrases at this point: "Zen was directly transfused into the modern Western consciousness..." by Suzuki, whose "works exerted a revolutionary and extremely comprehensive influence upon Western minds."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Tamaki himself raises the question of what can now be said about the result—or at least the next development—of Suzuki's influence in the West. For Suzuki appears not to have been an innovator in the religious life or in philosophy.

---

12. Professor Tamaki, however, may well have reversed the actual sequence when he observed that Suzuki's rejection of "the outward form of Zen Buddhism"—all the while seeking and realizing *prajñā* through *samādhi*—"might of necessity lead him to experience intercommunion with Western mystics and Lao-tze and Chuang-tze of China." Tamaki, "Evaluation," pp. 101 ff.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

He was rather a practitioner of *prajñā* or highest wisdom-freedom. He did not himself appear to be involved in or interested in the creation of new forms out of this formless wisdom-freedom, said to be the highest (or "deepest") experiential level accessible to human life. Thus it remains an open question whether and, if so, what novel structures can emerge from Zen's penetration of fully modernized societies in the West as well as Japan. In Tamaki's words, "this creation must be modern and must be relevant to modern problems. It is only at this point that Zen Buddhism will start beating wings of its own."<sup>14</sup>

Still another indication of the possible significance of Suzuki's work as herald of modernized forms of Buddhist faith and practice in Japan itself is his interest in Buddhism outside Zen. Suzuki undertook a long and serious study of Jōdō Shin or True Pure Land Buddhism, seeking to discover common ground between the great popular tradition of devotion to Amida Buddha and Zen. Facing the formidable distinction between *jiriki* ("self-power," stressed in Zen) and *tariki* ("other-power," relied on in Shinshū), he nevertheless articulated a sophisticated interpretation of the Pure Land in terms of that central and transforming experience of Zen, *prajñā*. What this amounts to, if one may risk a comparison from the history of Christian thought, is something like demythologization of traditional doctrines of the Pure Land sects, plus an assertion that "works righteousness" and salvation by faith alone are fundamentally the same! Suzuki saw that doctrines and the mythological pictures from which they are constructed tend to take on a fixity and objectivity with the passage of time and under systematic elaboration. In his view,

14. Tamaki, "Evaluation." p. 103.

therefore, the commonly accepted mythological (my category, not his) character of the Pure Land, whereby Jōdo and Jōdo Shinshū piety tend to regard this abode of Amida Buddha in spatial terms, is misleading. For him, the Pure Land concept and faith can have saving power only if its personal or existential dimension is kept clearly in view: the Pure Land is here, now, and Amida's saving light and life is that of Highest Wisdom or *prajñā*—uncoverable in the depths of one's subjectivity; rather than a destination, it is a present moment of awakening.<sup>15</sup>

The matters discussed here raise the question whether a basis has not been laid for a contemporary form of Japanese Buddhist faith representing the largest single sectarian group today. The Pure Land form of Buddhism in Japan has wielded great influence since Hōnen and Shinran (twelfth and thirteenth centuries respectively) as that form of teaching and practice which is most fully adapted to the needs and interests of a simplified devotional piety of the masses. Perhaps it is exactly the personal immediacy of Suzuki's interpretation which can take Jōdo Shinshū religious life beyond its recent quiescence and provide a thrust into new vitality and relevance under conditions of rapid change in Japanese society.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention the scriptural resource

15. See the remarks to this general effect in Tamaki, "Evaluation," pp. 103 f.

16. It would be an egregious error to leave the impression that the here-now emphasis is a unique contribution of Suzuki. In Shinshū it goes back at least seventy years to Kiyozawa Manshi; and it has been represented with vigor and eloquence in the preaching and writing of such men as Kaneko and Sōga at Otani University. I hope to discuss at a later date their work and their role in the move of several major sects in the past ten years to a dominant emphasis on personal rather than family identity in Buddhism.

center for Suzuki's understanding of "essential Buddhism." He, of course, proceeded to expound Buddhist teaching in the context of his own experience within Rinzai Zen. And although his scholarly work of translation and exposition of ancient bodies of tradition ranged widely, he did give special attention to the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. Here is expressed in perhaps its fullest form in Mahāyāna classical texts the viewpoint made familiar in the Zen declaration, *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra* and *saṃsāra* is *nirvāṇa*. In seemingly endless profusion is articulated the radical interdependence of all fundamental elements of the universe and the affirmation that the totality of this dharma-world includes persons, things, ideas, matter, etc. That Suzuki saw in this sutra a stable base and a rich resource for expounding a world-affirming view is unquestionable. His work was to establish this base firmly.<sup>17</sup> The execution of its full application to modern life—for example, to the assumptions and implications of science—remains to be accomplished.<sup>18</sup>

*Murase Genmyō*. We turn now to a distinctly different aspect of contemporary Zen. In the summer of 1967 the *New York times* provided coverage on our second type of Zen lay activity which qualifies as a response to modernization. This was an account of a program at Enkakuji (one of the Rinzai head temples in Kamakura, some forty-five minutes train ride from Tokyo). By that year business firms in the Tokyo area had sent five thousand

---

17. That such a project was not left to Suzuki alone is seen in Nishida's use of the same concept and source for his "Towards a philosophy of religion with the concept of pre-established harmony as guide." See D. Dilworth's translation in *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 1 ff.

18. Note Tamaki's brief suggestion of comprehending science as the "body of the present time" within the *Avatamsaka* world view. "Evaluation," p. 110.



staff members to the Zen temple for a three-day training course.<sup>19</sup> To all but puzzled readers of Zen this seemed incongruous. Such a development, however, was not without considerable background of Zen's experience in training laymen in regular programs. Already in his *Japan and Zen*,<sup>20</sup> Van Meter Ames had ten years ago observed small groups of laymen coming voluntarily to various temples all over Japan to acquire some experience of Zen practice. He praised warmly these laymen as carriers of the spirit of Zen from their weekly *zazen* sittings and discussion with qualified *rōshi* (Zen masters) into daily life in the world.

This precedent or prototype for business executives in the *zendō* can, of course, be pushed deep into the history of Zen, just as the stature of the layman in Japanese Buddhism finds its sheet anchor in its first royal patron, Prince Shōtoku of the eighth century. For example, Shidō Munan Zenji, the seventeenth century fountainhead of Rinzai Zen's renewed vitality, is best represented in current Zen tradition by one of his pupils' pupils, Hakuin Zenji. Munan himself is said to have been a layman until the age of fifty-two. Yet he is given a large share of credit for rescuing Zen from "formalization, aristocratization, and attachment to literary pursuits for their own sakes," features which had fastened on the sect during the Kamakura to Tokugawa (twelfth to nineteenth) centuries of government sponsorship.<sup>21</sup>

With this background we may turn to just one concrete case of Zen's services to the business world of present day Japan in the figure of Murase Genmyō *rōshi*.

19. *New York times*, 26 July 1967, pp. 49, 57.

20. Cincinnati, 1961.

21. A brief biography of Munan is translated by Kobori Sohaku in the *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 3 (1970), pp. 122 ff.

Murase Genmyō *rōshi* is a man of about seventy years, slight in physical stature and of frail appearance. Yet in twenty-five years he has managed to build a remarkable organization, including opening in the spring of 1971 a tastefully modern version of the *dōjō* (“practice hall”) for training lay persons in Zen arts. A man of some scholarship, he has published on Zen, including a work on the famous *kōan* source *Mumonkan*, a book on the interchangability of Zen and the meaning of the tea art (*sazen ichimi*). By the mid-point of the Pacific war he had begun to demonstrate a balance between scholarly life and active social concern by setting up an organization for the training of children.

In the year after the war’s end a lay training organization began to take recognizable form in a group set up to learn and practice Zen through the art of tea (*sadō*). Like all the Japanese *dō* (“disciplines” or “arts”) this deceptively simple activity requires years of training and practice, has its own tradition-history of masters and styles, sets canons both for the “performer” who prepares tea—from vessels with their own art-historical significance—and for participants or “guests,” whose handling of treasured objects and verbal comments are subject to artful refinement. This group attracted mainly business heads in the Kobe to Nagoya urban chain. It soon became essentially the preserve of these executives, whose seriousness in their pursuit of culture and self-culture during the most trying years of Japan’s post-war recovery is signalled by their record of 230 monthly meetings under Murase’s leadership until the group disbanded about 1965.

The legacy of this association of business leaders centered in the Kansai area is a rich one. Almost at its inception a monthly

journal was begun under the direct title *Zen*, serving to sustain interest in and commitment to the values of training in tea and in *zazen* ("seated meditation"). It continues to maintain a subscription list of some two thousand persons even since the cessation of monthly meetings. In the same period of the life of this growing *kyōkai* (association for a particular purpose) of business leaders Murase was active at home and abroad. He was one of sixteen priests from various sects in Japan to tour China for forty days in 1950 on a "Buddhist Mission of Friendship"—an interesting combination with his strong business contacts. At home, the next year saw the beginning of an effort to keep pace with the growth of his tea and Zen training program. Over the next eight years no less than five *dōjō* were built in the neighborhood of his own sub-temple of the Ōbaku Zen headquarters, less than an hour's ride from Kyoto. Energies and material resources were more than enough for these expansions of physical plant along with a growing program; before these years ended the *rōshi* added a tour of sacred sites in Southeast Asia and India, began a separate group for the care of ill orphans (clothes and other needed items being sent to these children monthly), and the erection of a peace pagoda or tower in the same temple complex at Ōbakusan. Finally, still another tour by the *rōshi* caps this list of involvements in a changing world—a trip to Europe and the Soviet Union to observe the situation of religion as of 1968.

The best publicized aspect of Zen responses to modernization changes, however, is the training of younger corporation executives and salaried men. This business-related type of lay movement is found in all three sub-sects of Zen. In recent years this activity has been taken up by headquarter temples of Rinzai in

Kamakura, as also by Myōshinji, Tenryūji, and Nanzenji in Kyoto, not to mention the head temples of Sōtō Zen in Tokyo. The innovator, however, appears to have been Murase and his high executive followers within the tiniest of the three Zen sub-sects. The business heads whose company responsibilities grew over twenty years until their schedules no longer permitted them to meet regularly as a training *kyōkai* are said to have been concerned from the outset about their younger employees. In the wake of the war, confusion about attitudes, values, social and life goals was widespread and deep. Murase's friends and followers became convinced that their own newly found ordering of life around Zen and tea would serve equally not only their own needs but also the needs of young persons whom they took each year into positions in their business. Thus, beginning with a small group nearly twenty-five years ago, this aspect of lay training in Zen at Ōbakusan has grown until groups of from fifteen to a hundred young college men, newly graduated and newly employed, receive training for two or three days under the guidance of Murase *rōshi*. Their regime for the training period includes (on a trim Zen monastic diet!) two daily periods of *zazen*—the first from 4-6:30 a.m.—chanting of sutra passages, group labor projects on buildings and grounds, and *teisho* or sermon-lecture by the *rōshi*. The giant new facilities opened on 1 April 1971, and between 20 March and 10 April of that year some five hundred persons underwent training.

Such is an example of the “new look” in one sub-sect of Japanese Buddhism today, Ōbaku Zen. It is open to debate—at least by those inside Zen—whether this represents real Zen or only a faddish aberration or superficial manipulation of Zen tech-

niques for worldly benefits, but extended discussion of this issue lies outside the scope and intent of the present article. Whatever Buddhists may claim or charge in internal controversy, two things can be noted by the outside observer: (1) if this is a worldly manipulation of Zen which is likely to remain far from the goals of classical Zen for ninety-nine percent of the participants, it is nonetheless thoroughly Japanese; it has abundant historical precedents in the career of religions in Japan—at least among the “majority traditions” of Confucian, Buddhist and Shinto communities; (2) if this phenomenon is thoroughly (but by no means exclusively) Japanese, it is also a response to the modernization of Japanese life from within an established Buddhist sect; it shows a lively awareness (from whatever motives) of social needs and a conviction of the applicability of ancient modes of discipline in a modern framework. If it does not have the depth one might want to see in such responses, that is not a ground for disregarding it but for classifying it appropriately—perhaps in Paul Devanandan’s category of “revival” rather than the category of “renaissance.” Moreover, a response to modernization-induced challenges to established religions requires *at least* viability; if modernization brings to society a general confusion regarding traditional values and life-forming conceptions to the point where the total society is in danger of becoming dysfunctional, then a *relatively* shallow response (and I use these terms without pejorative intent but as descriptive terms which even a proponent of the “response” in question would surely accept) may be the only measure at the time which promises viability, the only re-presentation of old patterns in a “mix” that suggests the strength and willingness of the tradition to come out of its shell

and adapt itself to what has become the "real world" of laymen.

The real question for evaluating Buddhist responses to post-World War II modernization in Japan lies in two frameworks: time and breadth. Temporally speaking twenty-five years is not long in the life span of a cultural phenomenon now twenty-five hundred years old; quite as important as the degree of depth of a certain response for the larger view of Buddhism's health and viability in modern Japan is the dialectic over the next twenty-five years within the Buddhist community: does the particular response in question release the best and deepest resonances in Japanese Buddhism to engage and influence a modernization drive which seems to go all out to merit the coveted slogan "We're number one"? So, too, with respect to breadth: the real question is whether there is a *range of types of response* within the whole of Japanese Buddhism (or at least within each major sect) which takes the measure of the full variety of needs of Buddhists who no longer live fruitfully with old forms and foundations. The question becomes: is the relatively shallow response complemented and balanced by relatively deeper ones which suggest vigor and vision to carry beyond revival to renaissance?

*The F.A.S. Society.* The sharp contrast between Murase Genmyō's group and the third type bespeaks the radical freedom which Zen by its intrinsic nature promotes. It is true that the traditional type of training still to be found in a few Zen monasteries in the Tokyo-Kamakura and Kyoto areas demands that the novice surrender freedom of thought and action to his *rōshi* or preceptor to a degree rarely comprehended by western Zen enthusiasts. Nevertheless, the teachings of the non-two-ness of reality-as-it-is and the "voidness" (*śūnya*) of self-being of all enti-

ties whatsoever promote a rejection of specific historical forms, both doctrinal and institutional. Furthermore, the extremely loose and decentralized character of institutional authority, whereby, for example, some thirteen head-temples operate as denominations (*ha*) of the Rinzaï sect, in effect constitutes an association on the basis of certain patterns of emphasis in teaching and practice of virtually autonomous traditions. This structure ramifies down through the sub-temples of each sub-sect or denomination with the effect that the head priest or abbot of a sub-temple becomes hereditary possessor of that temple. In each sub-temple it is the line of abbots of that particular temple whose records and writings are usually carefully stored in the temple and whose memorial plaque is prepared by his successor and placed in the "sanctuary" (altar area) of the *sōdō* or *zendō* of the temple; it is not the masters of the head temple to which sub-temples "belong" who receive this special attention. The abbots of sub-temples are free to develop their own disciplines and outlooks in accord with their particular experience and predilections. They may or may not become *rōshi* or "masters" of Zen practice, active in guiding groups of novices in discipline, meditative practice, and the wisdom lore of Zen tradition.

With such an organizational and doctrinal context the highly individualistic character of both the use of classical texts and the adept's development are in complete accord. Ancient texts are studied with a high degree of subjectivity in interpretation. This is not just permitted, it is structural—structural in the sense that the Chinese language in which great compilations such as *The blue cliff records* and *The transmission of the lamp* are preserved is inescapably indeterminate in nuance and connotation; structural

also in the sense that texts are seen to be meaningful and fruitful (i.e., capable of advancing one along the path of self-awakening) primarily in terms of the individual's stage and style of spiritual growth. Similarly, the *rōshi* is often seen to fulfill his role quite properly by *not* "instructing" and guiding so much as simply watching his students' self-disclosure of who and where they are and nudging or shoving them at the necessary moment so as to avoid a disastrous fall. In effect the student is radically on his own even as he is radically subject to his mentor. The master, *rōshi*, preceptor, mentor cannot do for his "children" what Gautama Buddha could not do for his. As Sakyamuni at his death counselled monks to be lamps unto themselves, so the guides and perpetuators of the Zen tradition push, push their students back to their own resources as the only effective means to awakening. "Bring me your original mind," said Bodhidharma, supposedly some fourteen hundred years ago in China. "What was your original face before birth?" "What is the moment which lies between your vision of the red flower and the thought 'redness?'" These admonitions and scores of *kōan* have become essential tools of Rinzai Zen, all pressing the initiate to exert himself to the utmost in order to break the hold of discriminative thought and living passion upon his awareness.

The radical freedom which is intrinsic in Zen manifests itself vividly for our present interest in the F.A.S. Society. (The F.A.S. Society is also known as the F.A.S. Zen Institute.) It is a lay movement which practices and offers Zen to the people, ultimately to all mankind, in a form which ignores certain classic features of Zen practice but seeks to develop a stance and outlook so fully universal and modern as to make dispensable such labels



as "Buddhist" and "Zen" even while returning to the very root concepts of Buddhist understanding of self and reality. It is a movement which appears to respond directly to Paul Tillich's critical comment that Buddhism is plagued by "its lack of a vision of history as a 'movement in which the new is created and which runs ahead to the absolutely new'...Unless Buddhism shifts its traditional emphasis, 'no belief in the new in history, no impulse for transforming society, can be derived from the principle of Nirvana'."<sup>22</sup> F.A.S. has sought to elaborate a rationale for a creative response to modernization in the form of a universal humanism capable not only of bringing each individual to reality by awakening him to the original nature of each being but also of changing the world within the arena of history.

The F.A.S. Society (its rather complex acronymic title will be clarified shortly) took shape with Dr. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi at its center twenty-eight years ago in Kyoto.<sup>23</sup> Though its spokesmen believe the group is not essentially—and certainly not intentionally—an elitist association of intellectuals, it has in effect functioned mainly in university circles. Whatever its defects may be as a result of this feature, it may claim to represent the "best" of academic tradition in seeking to embody and implement four motifs. Significantly for our purpose, these motifs represent as well much of the ideological-spiritual burden of moderniza-

22. *Christianity and the encounter of the world religions*, pp. 72-73, as cited and supplemented by Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese history* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 337.

23. See the statement of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, "Zen: Its meaning for modern civilization," *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. 1 (1965), pp. 23 ff.

24. See H. Dumoulin's categories of the general character of modernizing movements in Japanese religion in "Buddhismus im modernen Japan," in H. Dumoulin, ed., *Der Buddhismus der Gegenwart* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970).

tion.<sup>24</sup> They are: universalism, individual self-awareness, critical spirit, and the will to reformation.

These four motifs occur in the opening remarks of one of the founders of F.A.S., Professor Abe Masao, on the occasion of a twentieth anniversary commemorative lecture in 1964.<sup>25</sup> Abe first pointed out that the fundamental concern of F.A.S. was not that of the society alone but of all his listeners and, indeed, of all mankind. For this concern is grounded in the fundamental problem of man at all times and in all places. It is articulated in the classic questions of Everyman: What, essentially, is man? what is man's true life and true way? In this question, perennial since the beginning of human history, the answer is found in the very asking. As will be seen below in a historical sketch of the movement, however, this self-answering question is validated only when the questioner asks it in the context of his own real problem and seeks to work out its answer fully in terms of his own experience, his own individuality, his subjectivity. Thus, the way or course taken toward the realization of this universal concern is inherently varied. Yet it is precisely here at the juncture of universal and individual motifs that Abe sees the necessity of the third, the critical spirit. Plural ways of response in seeking a full answer to man's question are based on the varied experiences of men, while the ultimate truth toward which they all point demands what we might call "fittingness." Therefore, an open and critical spirit is required as a means of discerning more fitting from less fitting ways to work toward fullness of truth. No arbitrary decision from tradition, from a single individual, or

---

25. *F.A.S.*, nos. 35/36 (1964), pp. 3 ff. The author is indebted to Ninomiya Kimiko, Osaka, for her assistance in translating the Abe lecture.

from one group is permissible. All ways must be constantly subjected to severe criticism. Finally, in this spirit of open dialogue and mutual criticism Abe completed his opening remarks by sounding a call to implementation: F.A.S. Society seeks to reach beyond its own boundaries, join with other like-minded groups, and show the way to the "true way of living in this world" and reform it "into a true world on the basis of the fundamental realization of man."<sup>26</sup>

A brief review of the rise and development of the F.A.S. Society will indicate more concretely ways in which these principles have been embodied in the group's life. From the very outset critical and reformatory elements were at work. Some students and professors at Kyoto University in 1942-43 sought (not for the first time) to reform the stagnant YMBA (Young Men's Buddhist Association) chapter at the university. While the initial urging to action came from a retiring professor, the students who accepted the challenge carried through largely on their own initiative. Furthermore, they began work on the condition that they be allowed to do so according to their own ideas. In seeking first an explicit standpoint on which the organization and Buddhist life could be formed, an enlarged consulting body of students surveyed several possibilities. One was to adopt the viewpoint of "Common (or General) Buddhism" (*tsū bukk'yō*), thus affirming their freedom from any particular sect. This option seemed to point, however, only to the greatest common denominator of all sectarian Buddhisms, which the students feared would be devoid of vital religious spirit. "Original Buddhism" (*konpon bukk'yō*) with the emphasis on "Back to Sakyamuni Buddha,"

26. *F.A.S.*, nos. 35/36, pp. 3-4.

was considered as an alternative because it is historically the original form of Buddhism; but the prospect of neglecting long centuries of development of Mahāyāna Buddhist experience in order to take the historical Buddha as the fundamental standpoint was also unsatisfactory. At this point the students could not identify and articulate where they should find the basis for some new expression of Buddhist life. They thus sought out Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, then Professor of Buddhist Studies at Kyoto University, who had ignored earlier invitations to consult on the long range task of reforming or replacing the YMBA because of his previous experience of students' lack of dedication on similar occasions. Hisamatsu finally became convinced that this time the students were fully involved and seriously committed to change and to finding the real ground of Buddhist life; he agreed to join them and share with them his own conception of what a truly vital Buddhist association should be.

In December 1943, the third year of the Pacific War, students gathered in an air-raid curtained room to hear Hisamatsu's exposition of *kongen bukk'yō*, which might be translated as "Fundamental Buddhism" or more simply, "Root Buddhism." He spoke of a "fundamental realization of man" or "man's fundamental awakening to Reality," which not only had been realized by Gautama Buddha but is in fact the very source of our humanity beyond the limits of Buddhism itself. To take the standpoint of *kongenbukk'yō* would be to return not only to the foundation of Buddhism but to the trans-Buddhist basis or principle which makes man man.

Those who heard Hisamatsu that cold dark night did not fully grasp his central conception, yet they were convinced that at last

the needed note had been struck and that this must be the basis on which a new start was to be made. Despite some opposition they were even persuaded to drop any explicit reference to Buddhism in the name of the new association, in keeping with the central universalistic thrust of *kongen bukk'yō*. As Abe Masao comments, this evening saw not just the start of renewal in an old organization but an entirely new departure.<sup>27</sup>

The several months of meetings with Hisamatsu which followed demonstrate the elements of critical spirit and individual self-consciousness or existential awareness which have been formative of the F.A.S. Society's character. The traditional aloof and aloof position of the professor in relation to students was abandoned. Hisamatsu listened more than he spoke in many of the evening consultations. A fully dialogical, mutually critical process emerged, compounded on the one hand of student anxieties in probing the perennial questions of man's nature and destiny in a context of imminent military service; on the other hand there was Hisamatsu's intense concentration on the students' opinions and questions, seeking to make them his own and to respond to them with great care. Long and vigorous arguments were waged as personal crises like having studies interrupted by a call to the front and facing one's own death brought the participants to confront critical issues on a more comprehensive scale: What is the destiny of the nation, and what is the true life and true death of man—including the individual men we shall be ordered to kill for our country?

Out of such wrestling with existential truth came the choice of the association's name: Gakudō Dōjō. Drawn from a work of

27. *F.A.S.*, nos. 35/36, p. 5.

the founder of the Sōtō Zen sect in Japan, Dōgen, it again points up the concern with both universal and individual dimensions of the new outlook. Taking the general term *dōjō* to mean a place or way for disciplined effort toward realization of individual spiritual or physical goals, the more substantive term is *gakudō*. *Dō* (or Tao) here is that fundamental awakening to Reality in and through man already alluded to; *gaku* means generally "to learn," here with particular reference to self-learning, self-forgetting, and confirmation by myriad *dharma*s ("entities" or "things"), following Dōgen's usage.<sup>28</sup> The idea of *gakudō* as these words taken together is more clearly shown in Article I of the "Main Principles" of the association which reads "This *dōjō* studies and practices the Absolute Great Way and will try to contribute to the holy work of the renewal of the present world." The "Absolute Great Way" in this article refers to the fundamental realization of man (beyond even the framework of Buddhism) as source and goal of all being and becoming, the base to which we are always returning and from which we are always coming; it is not objectively locatable except in individual total realization; and its experience intends nothing less than a fundamental criticism and transformation of the world.

The goal, so understood, required that the particular style of practice and study be innovative, if not revolutionary. Starting, to be sure, from the traditional base of formal *zazen* practice the

---

28. *F.A.S.*, nos. 35/34, p. 6. Cf. the *Genjōkōan* fascicle of *Shōbōgenzō* in which Dōgen says: "To learn the Buddha Way is to learn one's own self. To learn one's self is to forget one's self. To forget one's self is to be confirmed by all *dharma*s. To be confirmed by all *dharma*s is to effect casting off of one's own body and mind and of the body and mind of others as well." (Reference kindly supplied by Abe Masao.)

avowed motive for this was not deference to the tradition but functional: they took *zazen* as the best way for self-awakening. Furthermore, the pattern of effort decided upon did not neglect the present day's learning and clearly affirmed the interrelation of these activities with the larger world of humanity. In this the break between Gakudō Dōjō and traditional Zen became sharp. *Gaku* ("to study, learn") and *gyō* ("practice") had to be kept together. *Zazen* in and of itself had often produced indifference toward the living problems of individuals and social life. So, first, some intellectual inquiry and understanding of the problems concerning practice and enlightenment were necessary to place *zazen* in the proper perspective and to promote its effective working from the basis of realization. It was, they believed, possible to have an intellectual understanding without disturbing the sincerity of *zazen* practice. The traditional form of Zen practiced had simply emphasized concentration in *zazen* but did not lay a foundation for "oneness of practice" and its indispensable companion, learning. Secondly, today's world of ideological rivalry and momentous human and international problems could not be evaded by persons fully conscious of living in the midst of these influential forces. They were seen as an aspect of the reality which is within modern man as well as in which modern man finds himself. To avoid confrontation with them in the life of *zazen* practice would therefore falsify any fundamental awakening to reality by Dōjō members. Studies of contemporary affairs and learning should not be neglected by Zen students. A "oneness of practice and learning" approach was needed to enable persons to confront the powerful ideologies of the world as part of the endeavor to reach that basic trans-Buddhist realiza-

tion which is the primary goal of the Society: to meet the world at its deepest level, where fundamental attitudes and insights and aspirations give form to world views and ideologies.

Thus, if practice without learning risks blind action, learning without intimate relation to practice risks powerlessness. Study was not to be a quietistic escape from the world. It was to serve as a way of encounter with the world of men; it was also to probe the full depths of the perennial issues of man's nature and destiny. In contrast to traditional academic learning with its distance and objectivity, learning in the *gakudō* style was to be fully existential. In other words, study of religion and philosophy and ideologies is incomplete if it lacks engagement of the self, awakening of the self to the very necessity of studying them, that is, opening the self to the fundamental reality in man.

*Gakugyō ichinyō* ("oneness of study and practice") was implemented by a combination of *zazen* weekly sittings and a following period of discussion. In the remaining war years and early postwar years the existential questions of life and death, person and nation, killing and defeat easily fed discussion sessions and produced heated and prolonged dialogue. In the midst of social disorder caused by the unprecedented defeat a serious search and practice for true realization was promoted even more. The non-traditional character noted in Hisamatsu's relations with the students continued in the regularized weekly meetings of the Dōjō. Without regard to status or rank each individual participated as a seeker of that realization of the Absolute Great Way which was the group's *raison d'être*. Give and take of opinions and criticisms in full candor was the order of each meeting. Each person was regarded as on his or her way to truth; engaged



in a common struggle and sharing a common humanity, each deserves equal respect; and each may contribute something to other's realization as well as to his own.

If traditional patterns of Zen training were abandoned in Dōjō meetings, it should not be assumed that the universalism of the new movement meant a complete divorce from traditional Buddhist identity. Professor Abe recalls how Professor Hisamatsu ministered to his fellow *dōnin* ("members of the Way") when they received their draft notices. They were invited singly to his hermitage in Myōshinji temple, where he chanted lines from the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra* and read before the *tokonoma* ("alcove") the "Main Principles" of the Dōjō. Some were given a copy of Hisamatsu's favorite book, *Rinzai roku*, the recorded sayings of Lin-chi, the founder of the Rinzai Zen school, or small picture albums. Each was inscribed on the opening page with *dokudatsu-mue* ("self-sustaining independence") or with *makumōzō* ("don't be deluded!"), both typical Zen phrases.

Not unrelated to this continuing Buddhist identity of the membership is a crisis which arose shortly after the war. The attractiveness of Gakudō Dōjō had communicated itself beyond the original group during the first three years of its existence, and persons whose religious orientations were varied—for example, Jōdo sect or Christian—began to attend weekly meetings in numbers regularly reaching fifty. The association was opened to other universities, lay persons, and to alumni, so that school teachers, nuns, Zen novices, and even communists were found at the meetings. Such a group, however, while deeply involved in a common endeavor, did not share a common background in which *zazen* played a prominent part. The members of longer

standing, on the other hand, felt a growing need to deepen the *zazen* side of *gakugyō ichinyō* by adopting the week-long *sesshin* typical of traditional monastic training in Zen. (In *sesshin* the normal twice-daily periods of *zazen* are intensified to a total of more than ten hours for seven days running, an exposition of a Zen text being offered by the master or *rōshi* every day.) This led to long discussion and disputation on the advantages and disadvantages of such a policy. Once in the silence following a long debate, a member suddenly stood up, struck his breast with his hand and shouted, "What can I do about this hopeless fellow!" By this outcry, all participants were moved, and it was decided that the Dōjō should adopt the form of week-long *sesshin* as a part of its own practice. Therefore *sesshin* was adopted by the Dōjō, not because it is a traditional way of Zen practice but because of the spontaneous demand for this practice by its members, that is, because the existential demands of the current situation could only be met by this way of plumbing the depths of self. Since 1947 week-long *sesshin* have been held three times each year during vacation periods of universities in a sub-temple of Myōshinji, one of the head temples of Rinzai Zen in Kyoto.

Although the interest in and commitment to the world and its transformation had been present since the formative discussions of Gakudō Dōjō, a balancing of the introspective concern for full self-awakening with a concern for the world became prominent only several years after the end of the Pacific War. It was a time of immense physical distress, social dislocation, spiritual lostness in the society at large; disillusionment with old structures and the full impact of the new from the West produced reform movements, calls for revolution, and vigorous peace efforts. The

Dōjō's response to the widespread feeling of a need to act if a third world war was to be averted was circumspect. Political and social measures for peace, while rightly intentioned, were seen as deficient, in so far as they were not rooted in that radical awakening to reality in man without which all action remains superficial and devoid of real transforming power. On the other hand, it was clear for the members of the Dōjō that mere concentration on introspective practice without paying attention to the world of affairs is unacceptable. The "religious" dimension and the "worldly" dimension, like study and practice, had to be kept in balance. Just at this time the outbreak of the Korean War seemed to intersect with an accumulated awareness in the Dōjō that in Buddhism as a whole social responsibilities had been neglected for the sake of the inner pursuit of peace and realization of ultimate truth. Buddhism's lack of influence in the everyday world of men and history was a mark of this imbalance which should be erased.

In July 1951, therefore, Gakudō Dōjō proclaimed a public vow called "the Vow of Mankind" designed at once to express a commitment to peace among peoples, to insist on going to the roots of peace in self-awakening, and to reaffirm the traditional Buddhist source for active social responsibility. "The Vow of Mankind" is as follows:

Keeping calm and composed, awaking to our true Self, turning ourselves into human beings full of compassion,

Developing our nature according to our respective missions in life, discerning the agony of society as well as the individual, and tracing it to its fountainhead; pursuing the right direction in which our history should proceed,

Holding hands all together as brethren without distinction of race, nationality, or class, and attaining to the full our heart's desire for the

emancipation of mankind,  
Let us establish a world which is true and happy.

The first two lines, namely, "keeping calm and composed, awaking to our true Self, turning ourselves into human beings full of compassion," re-states the "Absolute Great Way" in the first article of the "Main Principles" of the Dōjō. The remaining portion states how to work in society, history and the world from that most fundamental Way. That is, efforts for opening the self to reality and for transforming the world are inseparable from each other at the depth of human existence. Far from a hastily devised manifesto of that moment in history, this understanding of the intersection of self and world stems from the first two of the "Four Great Vows" of the bodhisattva in Mahāyāna tradition. The first vow is to save all (innumerable) sentient beings, while the vow to extinguish the passions which blind one to reality-as-it-is comes second. The rupture of inner problems of self from world history and the problems of history's meaning had to be healed in the name of both man's essential integrity and Buddhism's influence in the world.

The last watershed, so to speak, of the F.A.S. Society's history stands late in the 1950s when the name of the Gakudō Dōjō was changed. This change made more explicit the interrelationship of self, world and history. The root of our being, the point of origin and return of all things, is precisely this point of intersection and unity of self-problem, world-problem, and meaning-of-history-problem. This view was brought to full clarity through Dr. Hisamatsu's world tour in 1957-58. This new clarity in the form of the F.A.S. idea had long germinated in the experience of Gakudō Dōjō, but it crystallized now in Dr. Hisamatsu's

conviction that the movement should identify itself with three basic principles: "F" would represent the need and goal of awakening to *formless* Self, true Self prior to the subject-object dichotomy; "A" represents the unreserved affirmation of the standpoint of *all* mankind; while "S" represents the obligation to create *suprahistorical* history, meaning that history should be promoted from a transhistorical basis. The first and second principles express quite clearly the problems of knowing the true nature of self and of world respectively, problems which are mutually interdependent in terms of achieving the solution to each. And in so far as the standpoint of *all* mankind should be taken, it cannot remain only within the world of present time but, going beyond it, must refer to the whole *history* of mankind covering the remote past and the far-off future. In the context of the present discussion of the movement's aims, however, the reference is quite clearly to what Tillich called a vision of history which runs ahead to the absolutely new; that is, according to F.A.S., even the experiential understanding of self and world is incomplete without understanding the meaning of history as something that stands beyond or is not limited to the present situations of history.

Contacts with foreigners, especially during the past decade, have served only to reinforce the members' conviction of the propriety of F.A.S. principles as a basis upon which to reach out for cooperative effort with all who share these concerns, regardless of race, religion, or field of special competence.

In closing his lecture on the first twenty years of the F.A.S. Society, Professor Abe acknowledged candidly the criticism sometimes directed at F.A.S.: it is accused of elitist attitudes and

aloofness from the world and from non-F.A.S. persons. The motif of critical spirit becomes evident in Abe's brief reply: any conduct which provides support for such impressions is against the intent of F.A.S.; members must always be active in self-criticism to determine whether they are entitled to even call themselves the F.A.S. Society, where the problems of self-world-history are pursued in a life combining limitless self-awareness with inquiry and involvement in history. It is on the basis of such a life that Abe hopes to enlist the cooperative efforts of others. Convinced that the idea of man's "fundamental awakening to Reality" or "awakening to formless Self" is a trans-Buddhist insight which is available to all, he hopes to engage others in direct discussions where self-criticism and mutual criticism have full play, arriving thereby at "essentially open ground." The set of problems which constitutes the central stimulus of F.A.S. can then be taken up "free of conventional divergent standpoints—social, racial, ideological or religious positions."<sup>29</sup>

Whatever the arguments pro and con regarding the F.A.S. ivory tower image, the *intent* as stated by Professor Abe is borne out by two events. Separated by a decade, two public appeals for the radical transformation of the existing historical situation were issued by Dr. Hisamatsu as the de facto principal spokesman of F.A.S. The appeal in 1960 for an "Ethic of All Mankind" came at the time when M.R.A. (the movement for Moral

---

29. *F.A.S.*, nos. 35/36, pp. 11 ff.

30. *F.A.S.*, nos. 67/68, p. 85 in an Editor's Note by Kitayama Masamichi. This and following references to Hisamatsu's recent statements are based on tentative translations of passages from the Institute's journal by G. Tokiwa, staff member of the Institute, and on communications from Professor Abe.

Re-Armament) was being revived in Britain; like the latter, Hisamatsu's statement was regarded by critics as "an idealist's pronouncement."<sup>30</sup> Several considerations have been advanced, however, in defence of the appeal. They point to what are termed the realities of history and of human awareness. Since 1960 world events and rapid historical changes have validated the appeal as pointing up the central need of our time; the "college conflict" phenomena on university campuses in recent years have shown the aspiration to actualize the standpoint of "All Mankind" to be a realistic sentiment as well as the logic of the times; and considered in terms of sheer self-interest for survival, the appeal offers a solution to the dilemma of: (a) widespread paralyzing depression over the difficulties of reforming the State sovereignty system, and (b) the nihilist view that the only likely "solution" lies in self-annihilation.

Dr. Hisamatsu's call in October 1970 was called "The 'A' Appeal—to Change Clothes." It ran as follows:

"The ethic, polity, and economy of the modern states' sovereignty have proved no longer able to bear the burden of solving the new, urgent problems of the world-historical reality. Naturally the states should radically yield and transfer their sovereignty to All Mankind and establish the post-modern system of the Sovereignty resting with All-mankind, i.e., Ethic, Polity, and Economy of Allmankind, by Allmankind, for Allmankind."

For five hundred years

31. *F.A.S.*, nos. 67/68, p. 65. Two poetic reinforcements of the same theme occur on pp. 43 and 44 of the same issue: "No Barrier: the Four Quarters passed through, The Eight Directions reached free. New Year's Day-1970. Hōseki." "The resources the big countries monopolize. Be emancipated. Only to Allmankind, As their common properties. Hōseki."

the modern clothes have been worn out;  
now let us dress ourselves in post-modern clothes.<sup>31</sup>

This second appeal is seen by Kitayama Masamichi as deriving at once from F.A.S. logic and the necessities of a tragic historical reality. While it is in a sense a prophecy of religious character, it is in another sense less religious than logical. "In other words, prophecy has shifted, as it were from a religious to an intellectual realm, from the faith of a man of religion to the logic of a man of intellect. It is considered to have become of such a character as appeals to the intellectuals who in themselves bear the whole burden."<sup>32</sup> This shift, seen in terms of Dr. Hisamatsu's sense of history, is likened to "an utterance on the horizon of Awareness' which is based (since Nietzsche) on a change in Man. While Nietzsche has Zarathustra ask himself whether the 'force and wings to go beyond' " actualities are gifts coming from "the very hatred of the actualities," Hisamatsu's appeal is seen as a conclusion brought forth from tragic realities by his sense of history.

It is evident in all this that Dr. Hisamatsu does not want these judgments to be construed merely as the utterances of an individual who is senior spokesman for the movement. He consistently signs his contributions to the journal as "Hōseki" or "F. Hōseki." That is, these statements represent the true Formless Self, which is the stone at the base of all or embracing all. "There is no authority, no center but that which lies in the Allness of 'Allmankind.' In other words, the 'individual' in 'solidarity' is the center; the 'solidarity' whose center an individual is is the authority." When this individual in solidarity with all mankind sees the need which is grounded in reality itself (that is, becomes aware of

---

32. *F.A.S.*, nos. 67/68, pp. 85-86.



the gap between fundamental reality and the world as it is), the necessary changes in the world will be brought about.

Again, the universalistic status of this appeal is seen in the claim that it comes forth because no other idea has been presented to guide history; coming from reality itself, from awareness of solidarity with All, it cannot be regarded as agitation or propaganda for some particular viewpoint or ideology. Although the appeal is made by an individual, that individual claims no authority of his own but simply speaks out of awareness of solidarity with Allmankind; in doing so he brings Formless Self to concrete actuality. From this point on, from the articulation of the *idea* which accords with fundamental reality, problems of bringing and maintaining peace are solved not in terms of religion but in terms of the logic of history. Reality, on the horizon of history, will unfold itself.

The historical move which will manifest itself once reality becomes aware of this utterance in answer to the demand of history will not be a move of ordinary historical change or revolution. For this awareness brings a metamorphosis from modern to post-modern consciousness; this consciousness is awake to the Allness which grounds and sustains the human race, breaking through the self-isolation of the individual.

If the modern-age's "revolution" means scrambling for power, what takes place here is a move on the horizon of "man who negates such a manner of being." In respect of its not seeking any power, the move is no longer a "revolution." Not because eyes are closed but because they are wide-open to the contradictions of the states and classes; and, further, because of being most severely ethically critical of those contradictions, it demands a form radically new politically as well as economically. Nevertheless, the formula of recovery of the original "human nature" from the reality which is based on the awareness of Allmankind is neither a "war" nor a "strife" poisoned by the ordinary modern-age conscious-

## Traditional Buddhist Sects and Modernization in Japan

ness. A clear and distinct logic exists in the center of that awareness. In that sense it is intellectual. The motive of movement toward revolution lies not in hatred but in "love." This ought to be something that causes the "war" and the "strife" as ordinary means to revolutionize reality to appear as a bad dream. Furthermore, what is intended here is the radical negation of the modern age, to be achieved from a horizon different from the "modern age." It is the most momentous historical event that can be expected in the modern age. It is necessary not only to release mankind from opposing classes; the release must be achieved basically in mankind's way of being. In the sense that "post-modern consciousness" unfolds itself on the basis of awareness of the standpoint of "Allmankind," this historical event ought to have an essentially different character than that of all the modern age events. Not demanding powers, it takes the form of "the movement to negate all the modern age powers"; awareness of this historical necessity leads things to actuality.

Economically, "common properties" means common possessions of mankind, including cultural properties. As a political form, on the analogy of the abolition of clans and establishment of prefectures at the time of the Meiji Restoration, it is, according to Dr. Hisamatsu, "the abolition of states and establishment of homelands," that is, the dissolution of the states into a world government which has its bases of activities in cultural spheres. The sovereignty rests not with the individuals or the groups but with the Allmankind organization, which in turn is controlled by Allmankind citizens. In the sense that it is neither allied governments nor an assembly of protecting powers, it differs in quality from the present "United Nations." The "world" to be established, based on the standpoint of Allmankind, is not the world as an aggregate of states or races; it is the Self-awakened world of mankind. For the beginning of "world history" (in the true sense of the term) to be firmly established requires a truly new form in its ethical, political and economic system. Both capitalism and communism must necessarily cast off their respective systems and let only what is truly human actualize itself by a self-unfolding process. Because here the original "self-originated nature" of "man" established "reality" in a "solidary" manner. The newness is also exceedingly, and as if "for the first time," truly "human." While this insistence sounds idealistic, its idealism is, as what is "original" to man, essentially human, that is, even realistic. It is more realistic in the sense that it is more essential to us than the modern age society where we now are....

The *F.A.S.* editor closes his commentary with a remark bearing on the question of implementation. Dr. Hisamatsu, he says, has

here expressed in words “the voice of Allmankind, which, not yet distinctly verbalized, remains whirling at the base of modern society—in accord with the essential nature of language, this is supposed to bring the world to be what has been described above. This will be realized when the voice becomes the words of all people of the reality [*sic*].”<sup>33</sup>

### **A Shinshū Lay “Reform” Association**

One of the most active and widespread movements with roots in Shinshū is the Zaike Bukkyō Kyōkai (“laymen’s Buddhist association”). Z.B.K. was in its gestation period by 1950, becoming a formally declared organization in 1952. It took its rise in two basic sources, one primarily scholarly-critical, the other a concerned lay piety. (The combination and compromise of these two elements is hardly a rarity in reform movements of religious history.) The scholarly element is represented by the towering figure of Suzuki Taitarō and his eminent colleagues—Watanabe Shōko, Masutani Fumio, and Masunaga Reiko. These scholars are hardly representatives of Shinshū scholarship. Suzuki did maintain a close relationship with Shinshū through his post in Higashi Honganji’s Ōtani University in Kyoto and through his longstanding efforts to expound his view of Shinshū experience as being essentially the same as Zen experience; both Masutani and Watanabe were primarily scholars of early Buddhist sources rather than the Shinshū tradition itself. The primary thrusts of this group were a critical evaluation of Buddhist thought and practice in modern Japan and a call for reform as essential to the viability of Buddhism in the context of modern life. Perhaps the

33. *F.A.S.*, nos. 67/68, p. 88.

sharpest strictures against contemporary institutional Buddhism were presented by Watanabe. He attacked the allegedly low level of priestly competence and awareness—both of the great tradition of Buddhism and of the present world—as well as the hereditary system of priestly succession to religious leadership and temple administration; and Shinshū in particular was singled out as the sect which had carried furthest the secularization of Buddhism and the lapse of individual and community discipline in the Buddhistic means of self-transformation.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it appears that much of the discussion among scholars in the late 1940s was severely critical of the sectarian establishment. It sought fundamental transformations in organization and outlook to the end that a living Buddhism might be freed from the incubus of the “funeral Buddhism” into which it had degenerated during a difficult period of history. Without knowing in detail the efforts of these men and the course of their thinking in the years concerned one can only speculate that they found it difficult to gain broad, enthusiastic, and weighty lay support for efforts at reform based upon severely critical views of the present condition of Buddhist sects. That the scholars’ critical goals were in fact compromised in the interests of mounting a broadly based lay movement is evident. For the present character of the Z.B.K., in the founding of which these scholars were instrumental, is of quite a different sort.

The official leadership of Z.B.K. has been inclined to be much more sympathetic to the plight of the sects and of the temple

---

34. A fuller representation of Watanabe’s views, drawn mainly from his *Japanese Buddhism: A critical appraisal*, is represented in my “An assessment of the present state of Japanese Buddhism” (forthcoming).

priests. As President Katō Kenzaburō of Z.B.K. explained in an interview late in 1970, the historical conditions beginning with the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s had to be taken more fully into account in evaluating contemporary Buddhist vitality. The disestablishment of Buddhism at that time and the hostility subsequently directed against the teaching and its institutional forms left a dispirited and economically impoverished clergy. What was required in the still more extreme situation after the Pacific War, according to Dr. Katō, was less criticism and more positive assistance. Many of the valuable properties held prior to the war had been destroyed, and many holdings in land had been lost through legislation; priests now were forced to take outside jobs just to survive, their responsibilities to followers being reduced to the barest minimum. Therefore, when he finally acceded to the urgings of scholars and others to accept the leadership of a movement of revival of Buddhism, Dr. Katō's direction was quite clear: what was needed essentially and on a continuing basis was a kind of teaching mission in Japanese Buddhism. The priests needed assistance in teaching the people; the people should be given opportunities to hear the *dharmā*, the central teachings and life guidance of the great tradition.

The full character of Z.B.K. cannot be grasped without giving some specific attention to Dr. Katō. Clearly, he has exercised his own critical acumen as well as personal commitment in charting the course of Z.B.K.'s development. While readily acknowledging the great inspiration received from the scholars already referred to, he nevertheless insisted on placing primary emphasis on positive assistance to the existing apparatus of Buddhism. In addition to the deplorable economic situation of the temples as a

negative stimulus and the inspiration of men like Watanabe and Masutani (as well as the great scholar-preachers Kaneko and Sōga) as a positive stimulus, Dr. Katō has from the beginning been motivated by a vision of overcoming sectarian differences. It was obviously bad, he has said, to have the followers of each sect think always that his own is best; something must be done to encourage an appreciation of the total heritage of Buddhist thought and life. A lay movement, properly conceived and directed, might do a kind of "missionary" or "inner-mission" work *outside* the temples to supplement the established programs; laymen could, while remaining in their own callings, achieve in the wider society what impoverished temple staffs could no longer do. After all, the sects agree on many points; so let laymen bring laymen to cooperate with one another in propagating the rich treasure of the teaching in modern society.

The more specific lines of the rationale for this new movement show the marks of Dr. Katō's scholarly counsellors. As one of the fruits of critical study of Buddhism which began to have an influence in Buddhist circles as early as the turn of the century, the "back to the historical Buddha" emphasis informed numerous earlier reformist or "new Buddhist" movements.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Katō recalls that his first slogan as president of Z.B.K. was "return to Shaka (Sakayamuni)." The historical founder was (as in much modernizing thought in Islam) taken as the best focal point for a new unity. Shaka's teaching was viewed by President Katō and his associates as always and in many forms available to the people—analogue to the many streams which constantly feed

---

35. See the previously cited article for a brief treatment of some of these movements.

the river. Therefore, some hearers, according to their temperament-experience-karma, accepted and emphasized certain aspects of Shaka's preaching; while others took different aspects as the most helpful and effective guidance. Thus did Zen, Shinshū, and other sects and schools in their root forms begin to take shape. Yet all derive from one Buddha's teaching in the interest of enlightenment. Whatever one's capacities and limitations, the marvelous flexibility of Shaka's teaching opens a way for all, each taking what is understandable and practicable for him. But whatever form is embraced has a single source: Buddha—and a single demand: that one's own self-consciousness be developed as a means to the single goal, namely, enlightenment, realization of our own Buddha nature, whether by chanting *nenbutsu*, by sitting in *zazen*, or some other way.

One additional point further characterizes Dr. Katō's major ecumenical interest: the question of the relation of Z.B.K. to "new religious movements," especially those whose Buddhist background or affiliation is clear. Dr. Katō's response to this question is clear and sharp: there is no connection whatsoever with these self-styled lay Buddhist movements. While the association has never explicitly criticized the new religious movements, it stands implicitly as a judgment against their narrow sectarian loyalties. The Kyōkai is exactly the opposite of a sect in being an *association* for Buddhists of all sects to hear about Buddhism; it is not itself a sect, nor does it exalt a particular

36. It should be remarked on behalf of "new religious movements" that while Sōka Gakkai's sectarian relationship with the otherwise small Nichiren subsect, Nichiren-Shōshū, is pronounced, this is not the rule. Risshō Kōseikai's Buddhist background, e.g., tends to be broad and not sharply sectarian in nature.

sectarian orientation.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in terms of method the difference is equally great. In Dr. Katō's words, "This is a society where persons wish to hear *bukkyō* ("the teaching of the Buddha"). That is, Z.B.K. does not set out to preach a particular version of Buddhism, nor does its "mission" work involve a conversion motive. To make his point concretely, Dr. Katō explained that on the same afternoon as my interview he had been invited by interested laymen to speak to them as a serious Shinshū devotee in commemoration of the anniversary of Shinran Shōnin's death. Had the occasion been instead one of the important anniversaries of another sect he would have assisted interested persons in obtaining services from someone qualified in that particular tradition.

Thus there are in Z.B.K. no efforts at propagation and conversion comparable to the style made famous in certain new religious organizations. Further, Dr. Katō gave assurance that Z.B.K. has no "founder" in the sense that one speaks of the founders of the new religious organizations with all this entails in terms of the nature of piety and of organizational structure. The approach of Z.B.K. is unmistakably in the pattern of classical Buddhism, namely, to provide *opportunities* for teaching and guidance for those interested or concerned enough to come seeking it.<sup>37</sup>

The program of Z.B.K. consists essentially of a monthly journal

---

37. It might be noted, however, as another informant pointed out, that the outreach to the general public has in fact been somewhat more "missionary" than the characterization given here suggests. The corps of eminent scholars who have lectured and written for Z.B.K. have served by their reputation as well as expertise to bring to the general public an awareness of Buddhism which otherwise would not have been achieved in view of the small organizational apparatus of the Kyōkai.



(*Zaike bukkyō*), periodic lectures in the major cities and over the radio, and group visits to sacred sites in Japan and abroad. The last of these may be said to reflect a rising level of economic affluence in Japanese life as well as a renewed interest in the tradition on the part of Buddhists. Nevertheless, the quality and variety of the tours will surely increase the general awareness among Buddhists of historic Buddhism all the way back to its Indian genesis. Korea, Burma, Thailand, Ceylon, and India are major areas included on foreign tours. The tours feed more than the popular passion for "site seeing" in that they are programmed to provide expert guidance in the religious and aesthetic dimensions of the sites and their cultural treasures.

The public lectures and the journal are most conveniently discussed together, since transcribed lectures constitute a major feature of the monthly magazine. Lectures are held at least once a month in the major cities—Tokyo, Osaka-Kyoto, Nagoya, Kobe, and also in Hokkaido (northernmost of the main islands)—and radio broadcasts, including short wave, are made each week. Lectures will vary in sectarian and thematic content according to the region in which they are given. No person or committee in the Tokyo office decides what will be heard where. Requests from groups of laymen in various regions are received, which means that the decision is made essentially on the basis of the type of Buddhism that is prominent in that part of the country. Usually the lecturers are persons familiar to and/or resident in the area. Tokyo and Osaka-Kyoto regions therefore present the most weighty list of scholars and public figures, priests and laymen who have served in this way. While local situations dominate lecture programs in Hokkaido, Nagoya,

and Kobe, shortwave broadcasts carry primarily the more general and comprehensive viewpoints of the Tokyo and Osaka lectures.

The policy of the magazine reflects President Katō's broad ecumenical outlook in another very significant way. He insists that Z.B.K. is an association for all Buddhists of all social and economic and cultural backgrounds. To facilitate this principle lectures deemed difficult to understand by the general reader are edited by the staff into simplified *kanji* ("Chinese characters") and *kana* ("Japanese syllabary letters"). The danger that a steady diet of noted scholars will provide an appeal only to upper intellectual circles is hereby mitigated to a significant degree.

The same interest is furthered by other regular features of the magazine. One is a column on living biography or "life notes," contributed not so much by scholars as by prominent laymen. President Katō is in effect a model for this; he has written several books, often drawing on his own life story to illustrate aspects of Buddhism. A chemist who also presides over "Kyōwa Hakkō," a fermentation business centered in Tokyo, he represents at once the successful man of the modern world and a devotee of deep and insistent piety. With such leadership it is no surprise that the magazine can attract such persons as a special advisor to Japan Air Lines, corporation executives, and civil servants among its contributors to the "life notes" series.

Among the irregular features of *Zaike bukkyō* are symposia or dialogues of specialists on current issues, comments on literature dealing with Buddhism, a short outline of Buddhist history, introductory sketches to temples in various parts of Japan. Of special interest both as a mission technique and a promotion of

cultural identity and awareness is a section of the magazine which analyzes words in common use in terms of their Buddhist origin or influence. The fact that so many words have a Buddhist history now generally forgotten points up more than the degree of secularization of Japanese life today; it demonstrates concretely to believers and others as well the pervasive role of Buddhism in building the culture in which all Japanese take great pride.

The format of the overall program as also of the magazine itself has remained virtually unchanged for the twenty years of their existence. The magazine's bookstore and subscription sales have increased the monthly printings from 3,000 to 7,000 copies in this period. New ideas or new needs, however, have not been identified. Perhaps the stable or static nature of Z.B.K. correlates with a view of modernization which seems to be normative in its leadership ranks. It is that the movement is understood as bearing no particular relation to *modern* needs or crises. The human situation is seen to be not essentially different now than in the Meiji period or any other time in human history. The modern conditions of life, the war, the great changes occurring over the past century create no new difficulties for living the Buddhist life.

In summary we may say that Z.B.K. represents a kind of middle-of-the-road service organization of sectarian and supra-sectarian Buddhism. Its lay character is genuine, as is its interest in the elements common to all sects, deriving from their single source, the Awakened Gautama Buddha. Reform of the sort and dimensions once envisioned by one of the co-founders, Watanabe Shōko, seems unlikely to be undertaken by the associa-

tion, though the gradual spread of scholarly perspectives on the questions of understanding Buddhism may slowly work some degree of change in institutional structures and traditional priorities of the Buddhist life. Z.B.K. represents the great settled center of Buddhist devotees, center to right of center on the political-social spectrum. It has no special youth program, sees no special crises for individual belief and practice or for institutional structures of the sects in the "new Japan" of the late twentieth century. Cooperation and harmony among the sects and ample opportunity to read and hear the *dharma* are the fundamental needs at any time and under whatever conditions may prevail in human life. To these the association dedicates itself.

### **Shingon**

The peculiar character of Shingon lay movements as more traditional and cultic in emphasis than those of Shinshū and Zen as discussed in this paper can be presented only briefly here. One can say that Z.B.K. is very traditional in its return to Shaka's teaching as the holy center and in its nearly exclusive concern to "hear the *dharma* preached." Or again, one can maintain that Zen movement insistence on *zazen* practice as essential to their goals is likewise traditional and cultic. In saying, however, that Shingon lay movements as distinct from the Shinshū and Zen movements may be typified by these features I mean to call attention to the relative lack of any sense of crisis in Buddhism's relation to modern life and so of comparable responses. This has already been noted with reference to the Z.B.K. leadership's perception of modernization and its implications for Buddhism. Yet in the case of Z.B.K. there are two important differences.

which place it on another point of the continuum from very little to very much concern with issues posed by modernization for living the true Buddhist life. First, Z.B.K. scholarly founders have been intensely aware of the challenge and danger which the modern world holds for Buddhism, and for this reason worked to set up an appropriately conceived lay movement. Second, Z.B.K. came into being shortly after the Pacific War, when the effects of modernization on Japanese life and attitudes reached a most critical phase. By contrast, in Shingon movements these two elements are less prominent. This is not to say that organizations with "social relevance" functions are totally absent from the scene in Shingon.<sup>38</sup> The movements discussed below, however, represent perhaps the major thrust of lay piety in the sect; and they complete the spectrum of lay movement types discussed in this paper.

*Daishi Kyōkai.* To begin with the most recent of the movements within Shingon, Daishi Kyōkai is an "association" established in the name of Shingon's founder-saint of the tenth century, Kōbō Daishi. While the movement centers at Mt. Kōya, the holy place of Kōbō Daishi's later years and entombment,<sup>39</sup> its work

38. Several efforts associated with Daishi Kyōkai (see below) were begun in the past thirty or forty years, and they include such standard interests as scouting, education, dealing with problem children, etc. Of six groups (other than those treated in this article) on which some information was gathered, however, by far the largest three are cultic in purpose. They are: the Kōyasan Kongo Kō ["The diamond (Vajra) society of Mt. Kōya"], the Kōyasan Shūkyōbuyō Kai ("The Mt. Kōya association for religious dancing"), and the Kōyasan Shingonshū Danshinto Kyōgi Kai ("Council of lay supporters of the Shingon sect at Mt. Kōya").

39. The following account is based on interview material gained in discussion with the Rev. Soeda, on consultations with others, and on observations during two visits to Mt. Kōya.

spread over all Japan. Daishi Kyōkai is a revival effort within Shingon, designed as an inner-church evangelization movement. Its main mode of operation is the cultivation of traditional arts and skills within a rather well organized framework. *Geidō* or “way of arts” is a most Japanese interest which seeks to capture in or to reduce to stylized forms essential human activities and aspirations. In Daishi Kyōkai the traditional arts of singing and dancing in the style of *goeka* are prominent. This kind of *shūkyōbuyō* or religious dance has a long history in Japan, having been used on pilgrimages certainly as early as the Edo period on the island of Shikoku. Daishi Kyōkai use of it for over a generation probably has its immediate roots in the popular movement among oppressed groups in the early and mid-nineteenth century. (Cf. the religious dance composed by Nakayama Miki, foundress of Tenrikyō, in the 1880s and still a central part of the cultic celebrations in all Tenrikyō churches.)

More concentrated attention has recently been given in the Daishi Kyōkai program to *ikebana* or flower arranging. This gentle art is taken to be a way of inducing high spiritual states and can be referred to as *hana no shūkyō* or “religion of the flower.” Ancient styles are being recaptured, hereditary schools identified, and degrees of advancement recognized. Plans are afoot to open a two-year higher school devoted primarily to this art in cooperation with Daigakuji temple in Kyoto.

The Kyōkai headquarters at Mt. Kōya is host to an annual celebration of several days in early May in conjunction with the series of national holidays which culminates in Children’s Day. Individuals or groups of delegates from local units of the Kyōkai come to Mt. Kōya to demonstrate skills in traditional arts. Not

only dancing and singing but chanting of sutras, singly and in groups, is evaluated by a board of judges, and certificates are awarded. This is a colorful occasion when all participants are in traditional kimono attire. The chanting takes place in contest fashion, according to a prearranged ordering of the performers. A makeshift stage is erected within the headquarters temple, suitably draped in bunting and well lighted. Individuals, and groups of four persons, usually of middle to advanced years, have the opportunity to share their devotion and practice in the stylized chanting of a sutra. The degree of concentration required for ceremonial chanting of this type is evident. For not only are the high pitch and modulations of voice demanding, but this singsong recital of memorized scripture must be coordinated with diverse hand movements; in appropriate rhythmic patterns one hand wields a small mallet, striking an equally small sounding-piece which rests at one side on the *tatami* (the performer squats on the shins in traditional fashion), while the other hand rings a tiny gong held head high in front of the performer. Like the cultic instruments themselves—mallet, sounding piece, gong—each movement of the performer has been carefully polished and properly executed. The mallet and gong are swung just so; the prostrations before and after performance are ritually carried out; even the positioning and carrying of the instruments is stylized in just the same manner as gestures in the tea ceremony—pouring, wiping the bowl, etc.

*Daishi Kō.* Going further back in Japanese history as a clearly recognizable phenomenon is a second lay movement, the *Daishi Kō*. *Kō* is an ancient social pattern of Japanese life which is much discussed by anthropologists and sociologists. It has cer-

tainly had an important role in the functioning of religions in Japan, especially folk religions. For our purposes a simplified designation of the *kō* is a neighborhood organization which includes a religious function.

The present Daishi *Kō* has evolved in the past fifty years out of diverse predecessors of the early Meiji and pre-Tokugawa periods. According to the head priest of a temple in Mt. *Kōya*, there were no lay movements (as understood here) in the Shingon sect prior to Meiji. Priests were then preoccupied with their main responsibilities of prayer and priestly training; there was no margin of time available for reaching out into secular life or for engaging the lives of laymen in such fashion as to produce what we would recognize today as a lay movement. The modulation away from a virtually exclusive cultic emphasis in the Shingon sect appeared in a limited way in the early Meiji period. This was due in part to the example of the popularized forms of Buddhism—as, for example, in the Shinshū, Jōdo, and Nichiren sects—which challenged Shingon and Tendai to apply themselves more broadly to everyday life.

A still more powerful influence which altered Shingon's image was economic. The inauguration of the Meiji era meant that temples no longer received government support but had to become economically self-sufficient.

At the time that the new economic situation demanded adjustment in Shingon's operations in terms of the relationship between temple, clergy, and lay believers, a group of believers became especially concerned with the teaching of *Kōbō* Daishi and with the shrines at Mt. *Kōya*. Fired with fresh enthusiasm to spread the faith by teaching and preaching, they sought to develop



instruments appropriate to their mission. By a process of group consultation (representing a typical Japanese pattern of decision-making) they composed a work called *Anjin shō*. It was to constitute a watershed in the history of Daishi Kō, marking off the Meiji and present versions of the movement from that of the previous two or three centuries.

*Anjin shō* provided a unified account of Kōbō Daishi's Shingon teaching as well as a systematized presentation of beliefs and practices which follow from faith in him. As such, it formed an essential tool for missionary work. Chapter after chapter of the book takes up separate subjects in the faith and institutional aspects of Shingon, exposition of Kōbō's thought and of his choice of Mt. Kōya as his central shrine, etc.

Beginning in the twentieth year of Meiji (1899), *Anjin shō* was printed and sent to all related temples to serve as the common basis for the rejuvenation of lay piety. The twenty-first day of each month (the day of Saint Kōbō's departure from this life) was set aside for regular meetings in small groups to study and discuss the substance of *Anjin shō*.

It was out of conviction, practice, and experience such as this that the present Daishi Kō developed. Within some twenty-five years it spread throughout Japan by street preaching and work among those too poor to afford the standard ministrations of a Buddhist priest. Countless small units or *Kō* of ten to twenty members were established under a leader, in whose house they assembled monthly for group prayer and discussion of Kōbō's authoritative teaching and the "virtue" or spiritual qualities which he had attained through training. The central motif of Daishi Kō is thus seen to be attainment of individual self-

perfection by training and through holy fellowship of cultic practice; to advance the one is to advance the other.

This close reciprocal relationship in pursuit of the movement's goals is seen in two further activities which still characterize the Daishi Kō. In the severe period of winter when families are often isolated for days by cold and heavy snow *kangyō* ("winter religious activities") are performed: members of Daishi Kō chant sutras and sing hymns for the welfare of all families; families are visited and presented with a charm as another means of promoting wellbeing. Similarly, at the time of death in a family, members of the Kō visit the family to chant and sing. Donations in response to these services are turned over to headquarters for the support of pilgrimage and other such common needs of the fellowship. Thus, Daishi Kō members consider themselves able, through a single set of activities, to work toward self-perfection through cultic recital, to exhibit a vigorous Shingon belief and piety, and to gain the benefits of a community relationship.

Especially in the Osaka-Kobe region lay mission activity, supported by priestly instruction in the temples, became intense in the movement's early years. Gradually, the conviction grew that Daishi Kō should have its own national center. Early in the Taishō era (about 1916) a headquarters was established formally at Mt. Kōya. This large stride in the institutionalization of Daishi Kō was to be seen in retrospect as a mixed blessing. For it soon developed that the earlier pattern of missionary activity was replaced by a systematic dispatch of priests to districts throughout Japan. Each priest so assigned served for one year as consultant and mission worker in the temples of that district. Whether due to this structural and methodological

change in the mission or to other reasons, a cooling of ardor has become evident over the past fifty years. This has prompted the feeling in some quarters that failure to maintain the early vigor can be traced to the fact that priest missionaries assigned to large districts in effect had displaced the *Anjin shō*. This book is seen as the key to early success in the movement—a common text, commonly drawn up, yet so clearly formulated that elderly and poorly educated persons could understand it. Consequently, there are now calls for a rewriting of the *Anjin shō*, to be used once again as the power center of mission. And here the conservative-cultic character of the movement remains prominent even though a desire for updating is also evident. For while the form of the new version must “match the present time,” its purpose is to bring devotees back to a single text and to a more uniform outlook and practice in Shingon.

*Kōmyō Shingon*. Still older and still more narrowly cultic in character are two movements presently current in Shingon. The first is Kōmyō Shingon, which stresses the chanting of the *Kōmyō*, an ancient mantra, countless times—the round number of 1,000,000 (*hyaku man ben*) being frequently cited as ideal. The founder of “New Shingon” some seven hundred years ago, Kōgyō Daishi or Kakuban, especially emphasized the use of *kōmyō*, while Old Shingon (centering at Mt. Kōya) subordinates *kōmyō* to other practices and the primary text, *Anjin shō*. Even Old School Shingon, however, gives pride of place to *kōmyō* chanting in the mass for the dead.

It is with reference to benefits for the dead that Kōmyō Shingon's cultic use shows most strikingly what would normally be called magical features. For Kōmyō devotees associate the

sutra of that name with "Holy Land." Close to the time of Kōmyō Shingon's founding, one Eisan learned from the sutra of the miraculous power of a certain type of sand. The discovery of a large source of this sand near Saidaiji (a rail junction just outside Nara) established that center as headquarters for the Kōmyō group. There the activity of *odōshaja*, distributing sacred sand, came to be focused. Recitation of the sutra by a lay-believer thousands of times was seen to add unusual strength and even light to the sand. It appears that no single source of the sand's power can be agreed upon; for not only is the sand itself said to have inherent power, the devotees' numerous chantings of the sutra increases this power; moreover, when dispensed by the temple priest, power accrues through his ritual blessing. Thus, we appear to have a case of the contagion of holy power: not only the object of the cultus itself is "all-mighty," as stated in the holy sutra; holiness derives as well from the priestly rite and the lay chanting which have become associated with the sand and its marvelous powers.

Perhaps the most concrete use of this holy sand also concerns the dead. It is believed that when, to the accompaniment of continued chanting, the material is placed on a corpse's joints after the onset of rigor mortis, the joints become pliable again. Even Old School Shingon believers may regard such a demonstration of supernatural power as "quite wonderful."

The dead are not the only benefactors, of course, from the sand's powers and the merit of mantra repetition. The latter, at least, serves also as a means by which a lay devotee can rediscover the "virtues" of the Supreme Reality of Shingon theology, Dainichi Nyorai, which are enumerated and expounded in the

scripture called *Dainichikyō*. The highest aim of *hyaku man ben* chanting is to gain the merit of Dainichi Nyorai's "virtues" in terms of self-perfection, the true goal of Shingon piety in the use of the *kōmyō*. As the five sections of the sutra containing this mantra explain Nyorai's nature ("virtues"), the reader and reciter comes to understand and, by ceaseless chanting, to appropriate the light and power at the heart of the universe—symbolized in the person of Dainichi Nyorai himself.

*Ajikan*. The second narrowly cultic practice within Shingon completes this brief sketch of current forms of piety in that sect of Japanese Buddhism. Related in principle to the *Kōmyō* Shingon just discussed, its origin is clearly traceable to Chinese and Indian prototypes.<sup>40</sup> *Ajikan* or "letter 'A' contemplation" is based on the principle that "A" is the initial sound of all language. (Cf. the master *bija* or "seed-syllable" of yoga: AUM.) Sanskrit "A" is the mother sound behind all words. Therefore, one who fixes his gaze intently on the visual symbol "A" while focusing his mind wholly on "A," is believed to arrive at a comprehension of all buddhas and the entire universe. In mythological terms, once again, this irreducible center of all is Dainichi Nyorai, and the purpose of discipline in *ajikan* is to "duplicate" in one's own being Dainichi Nyorai.

*Ajikan* is obviously an extremely demanding discipline, aiming at the removal and even destruction of one's store of experiences and worldly knowledge through sustained "meditation." All

---

40. Explicit parallels to *Ajikan* lore go back at least to the *prajñā* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which produced a sutra called *Perfection of wisdom in one letter*. "A" is here expounded as the essence of all *prajñā* teaching. See Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A historical survey* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 58 f.

attention is concentrated on "A" to the exclusion of all residues of past experiences; one's entire being is unified in concentration on "A," all seeing and thinking are cut off. The rationale for this regimen of the spirit recalls again the lore of yoga. Experience and knowledge are seen as products primarily of our nervous system, centered in the spinal column; there all thought, movement, response to stimuli are controlled. Thus, the endeavor of *ajikan* discipline is to seize control of the controller of our bodily and mental life. This end is facilitated by the fact that we have two brains, the "small brain," which controls physical movements, and the "great brain." The "great brain" is the source of all behavior; it stores all past experiences; and it is this psychic store of experiences whose power must be weakened and stopped, so the natural power inherent in our essential being may enable us to see "A." Meditating on "A" in such fashion as to bring under control the contents of the "great brain," we come not only to see "A" visually but "see-understand-affirm" that all is ultimately only "A." In more concrete, religious terms the perfection of *ajikan* practice is attained in that by our *inner* hearing and seeing we truly hear Dainichi Nyorai's preaching and directly behold his being.<sup>41</sup>

---

41. Some quarters of contemporary Shingon evince a warm interest in the high quality of *samādhi* or the contemplative state attainable in Zen. Others are concerned to point up the superiority of Shingon meditation: the latter preserves the comprehensive tradition of *mikkyō* or esoteric Buddhism, while Zen has only extracted a meditative discipline from it. Whereas in Zen all effort focuses in *zazen* and *kōan* exercises on the *mu* symbol in the effort to understand and become "nothingness," in *mikkyō ajikan* one seeks the more positive goal of awareness of and identification with the perfection of Absolute Person, Dainichi Nyorai. It is in this state that the highly esoteric art, sutras, and hymns—incomparably worship-eliciting in the Shingon view—have been composed.

Practice of *ajikan* occupied in ancient times an important aspect of Shingon discipline, carried on primarily by priests and trainees in seminaries and main halls of temples. Having gradually fallen into virtual disuse, especially since Meiji, it is now being revived. Priests, it is pointed out, have had to give their time to administrative matters at the expense of the self-perfecting regimens of earlier times. Consequently it became accepted practice to simply include *ajikan* meditation as one element in the daily temple ritual the priest is obliged to perform in worship of Dainichi Nyorai. Even in the central seminary at Mt. Kōya meditation on the sacred "A" has not been done rigorously. The last few years, therefore, have seen a revival of interest in this very demanding *sādhana* or way of practice for spiritual development. Now "quite a number" of laymen have taken up the practice. The great headquarters temple at Mt. Kōya has just completed a separate new hall in its compound to encourage the growing interest. Composed of three rooms, the hall is equipped with *tatami* and cushions for sitting, each supplied with individual sets of meditation "aids" in the form of two standards about one meter high; scrolls hang from the standards, one emblazoned with a golden Sanskrit "A" in special esoteric script, the other carrying a likeness of the full moon. The central room accommodates a score of devotees for practice, while each side room is limited to three spaces. Aside from the brilliant gold, blue, and white of these accoutrements, the hall's interior is austere and simple. In contrast to the Daishi Kyōkai (as discussed above) no regular or special celebrations or contests in public display of cultic skills is deemed suitable either to this *ajikan dōjō* ("practice hall for *ajikan*") or to its central function.

### **Concluding Remarks**

It is necessary in closing to reiterate the reservations with which this paper began. A continuum ranging from conscious and vigorous engagement with issues raised for traditional religion in the modernization phenomena of Japanese life at one end to the dominance of cultic interests at the other is certainly suggested by the data collected; it has here been used for its organizational value. Its use, however, should not be taken as a firm scholarly judgment that the placing of various "schools" of traditional Buddhism as wholes would necessarily follow the pattern indicated here. The data are too incomplete, and the author's comprehension of the essential character of the major schools is inadequate to support such a judgment; one might also wager heavily on the basis of what some would call "laws of history of religions" that each such school would on close examination show its own continuum in miniature.

Furthermore, the presentation of the particular materials used here includes no claim to have identified the "most significant" (by whatever criteria of significance) of Buddhist lay movements in the context of Japan's intensive modernization.

All that can be claimed for these sketches is that they reflect aspects of contemporary religiousness as it seeks form within established frameworks of traditional Buddhist sects, suggesting that there may be more vitality therein than has generally been suspected. Further developments in these and other movements will have to be followed and monitored if we are to claim an adequate depiction of the condition of religion in Japan.