

*Japanese Religious Affiliations:
Motives and Obligations*

The first convenience the sociology of religion should provide for students of foreign religions is a typological bridge that will enable them to move out of their own culture to exotic lands beyond. One wants to be able to look at groups in strange, new lands and say, "That's a religious sect," or "This looks like a church." Unfortunately, the direct application of the paradigms of the sociology of religion to the non-western world often results in monstrous distortions. In foreign religions we often encounter socioreligious configurations which do not match the social and/or theological presuppositions of the west. Should we then simply throw out the traditional categories of church, sect, denomination, cult, and mysticism and do our work in the language of our informants, i.e., the "emic discourse" of the foreign religion itself? I think not. In the first place, being stylistically awkward, this would invite confusion of a different, more fundamental sort. In the second place, completely giving up our traditional language would make it impossible to make the comparative judgments which ultimately make the study of foreign cultures interesting to us. In this chapter, I therefore would like to begin the construction of a typological bridge which we can use as we move from western culture to the sociology of Japanese religion and society. To do this, we must first lay foundations that will be secure enough to bear the weight of a bridge connecting (at least) two civilizations. In the end, however, we must avoid the temptation to use our bridge as a crutch. After all, a good bridge is one that helps us to move forward, beyond the familiar. Once it has been crossed, we may leave it behind and be on our way.

In this book, our bridge leads us to a land in which basic religious affiliations have traditionally been divided into Shinto parish (*ujiko*) and its guilds (*miyaza*), the Buddhist family temple (*bodaiji* or *dannadera*), the Buddhist prayer temple (*kitō-dera*), the confraternity (*kō*), the New Religions (*shin-shūkyō*, or *shinkō shūkyō*), and various less formal,

ad hoc relations with faith healers, shamans, and mediums. Each of these terms has a rich, in fact a confusing, history which I shall only touch on in this chapter.¹ Suffice it to say that each type has undergone significant change as Japan developed from a primitive confederation of clans to the modern industrial giant it now is. While I shall say a few things about the historical development of these groups, the religious affiliations I deal with in this chapter are primarily those of the modern period.

To establish our new paradigm we must temporarily put aside the familiar Christian categories of church, sect, and denomination and develop a set of more abstract notions. To do this, I would like to apply to these religious affiliations a modified version of what today is called "exchange theory." Although there is a sizable literature on social exchange both in sociology and in anthropology, dissatisfaction with much of this material puts stringent limits on its application to religious affiliations.² While some believe that exchange theory can explain *all* aspects of religion, including its basic values, symbols, and ideas, I shall restrict my use of the theory to religion's social expression.³

Because of the reductionism implicit in many sociological theories of exchange, I would like to begin our discussion by looking at exchange from a new perspective. Following the lead of mainline exchange theorists, we can develop our concept of social and religious exchange by looking first at the exchange of *economic* goods and services. In its simplest form, economic exchange "is a relation between two (or sometimes more) persons each of whom offers a benefit in order to induce a response."⁴ For example, A may give X to B in order to induce B to give Y to him. But offering benefits is not all there is to exchange. Accepting A's inducement obliges B to respond to A by repaying him with Y. In other words, there are two moments involved in any simple act of exchange: 1. the moment when A acts in order to solicit a response from B, and 2. the moment when B, having benefited from A's initiative, is obligated to act in turn.

Even in economics, the concept of exchange takes us beyond the purely economic or materialistic sphere. The perceptive economist therefore recognizes that exchange is "not merely a method for reshuffling the possession of things." On the contrary, it "is a method of controlling behavior and of organizing cooperation among men." In the end, "exchange is possible only in a society in which a moral code and authority keep social peace."⁵ In other words, our two moments of exchange always take place within a specific framework of culture, values, and norms.

The fact that even economic exchanges take place in the context of values means that if we are to apply the concept to social and religious relationships, we must give more attention than exchange theory usually does to *obligatory* experiences. To do this, and to move beyond the purely economic level of exchange, I turn now to the work of Alfred Schutz, specifically to his distinction between *in order to* motives and *because* motives.⁶ By 'in order to' motives Schutz meant an actor's orientation and intentional movement towards a desirable future state. This imagined future state itself can be regarded as the terminus ad quem of the actor's conduct. Schutz's 'because' motives, on the other hand, are determined by "past lived experience," which he describes as the terminus a quo of action. We can relate this dichotomy to our two economic moments by associating A's interested, intentional action with Schutz's 'in order to' motives, on the one hand, and B's felt obligation to repay A with Schutz's 'because' motives, on the other. In a very elementary sense, much of the meaning we assign to economic and social intercourse can be described as a swinging back and forth between these two moments or motives. For Schutz, the sociological interpretation and understanding (*Verstehen*) of human action begins precisely at this point. "Human activities are only made understandable by showing their in-order-to or because motives."⁷

Applied to religious behavior, 'in order to' motives seem to have an almost childlike simplicity. The ancient Latin prayer *do ut des* and its Sanskrit equivalent *dadami se, dehi me* are examples that come first to mind. Both formulae imply a willingness to sacrifice or exchange something with the gods *in order to* achieve one's aims. There is an ancient Jewish custom which also illustrates this simple religio-economic exchange. A father would approach a priest in order to "redeem" his firstborn son (see *Numbers* 18: 15–16). The priest inquired, "Which do you prefer, your son or your money?" The father, declaring that he preferred his son, handed the priest five shekels. The priest would then intone the words "This [money] in place of that [the child]. *This in exchange for that.*"

Duty, devotion, loyalty, gratitude, and selflessness—virtues which one associates with 'because' motives—pose problems for exchange theorists, especially when their concept of exchange is too closely tied to economic exchange.⁸ Because of the importance of such values in Japanese religion and society, we must carefully hold in check the cultural bias built into exchange theory, a theoretical persuasion which generally reflects the western market economy and its psychology of possessive individualism.



EXCHANGE WITH A GOD. On some stone lanterns at the Kitano Shrine in Kyoto, there are bas-relief carvings of Daikoku, one of Japan's Seven Gods of Luck. Visitors put pebbles in Daikoku's hollow eye sockets hoping that the god, in turn, will bring them good luck.

In Japan, obligation is regarded in terms of the “return of benefits or favors” (Japanese: *on*, *giri*, or *gimu*). Traditionally, the Japanese began life under the heaviest of obligations. As children, they were obliged to their parents for their food, clothing, shelter, and for life itself. As adults, they were obliged to village gods and to their family's sacred ancestors for their land, possessions, and occupations.⁹ In the prewar family-state ideology, in the factory, and in various religious institutions, individuals found themselves bound by various obligations incurred by the real or imaginary benefits *they had already received*. It seems to me that Japanese ethical reflection, whether philosophical or popular, always begins at this point.

I once walked into a tea shop in Tokyo just before business had officially begun. As I sat waiting, the employees joined hands and chanted the following credo:

We are grateful to the people of the world.¹⁰

We will not forget that our shop has been set
up for the sake of the customer.

Sharing both happiness and sorrow, we will cooperate

and not forget to encourage each other.

Setting aside the past and anxiety of the 'morrow
we will not forget to give our all
to the work set before us today!

Hearing this, the westerner might want to ask *why* these young people felt so "grateful to the people of the world." For the young people performing this business ritual, however, such a question does not seem to arise. The conviction that one has already received blessings, benefits, and favors from one's superiors (e.g., customers, gods, ancestors, landlords, shoguns, and emperors) is the terminus a quo of moral feeling, the basic presupposition of ethical discourse and conduct. Gratitude is therefore a key value in nearly all of the country's religions. In this chapter such feelings and values will be treated in a nonreductionistic way as examples of the 'because' motives underlying obligatory conduct.

While positively inspired by previous acts of kindness, feelings of obligation and gratitude are also reinforced by negative sanctions, viz., by consideration of the consequences that would follow if the individuals did *not* express their "gratitude" or fulfill their obligations when expected to do so. In Japan these negative sanctions range from a temporary loss of face to long-term social ostracism. Since religious obligations are usually sugarcoated with fun and games, and since they offer individuals many opportunities to demonstrate their social or moral integrity, explicit negative sanctions seldom come into play. Their importance increases, however, as the obligation in question becomes more burdensome.

In the pages that follow, I shall use Schutz's ideal-typical contrast between 'in order to' and 'because' motives to classify and analyze popular religious affiliations in Japan. We shall look first at the Shinto parish and its guilds, the Buddhist family temple, and the "civil religion" of the prewar period as examples of institutions based on obligatory conduct (or 'because' motives). After this, we shall examine Buddhist prayer temples, Sudden Death Temples, and New Religions as organizations which (ideal-typically) rest on motivated conduct (or 'in order to' motives). Then we shall discuss religious confraternities, groups which embody a mixture of obligated and motivated intentionalities. In this context, we can also take up the problem of syncretism, the basic framework of religio-political relations in Japan. Finally, we shall see that the paradigm we have developed for the study of religious affiliations may have wider implication for understanding the organization of industrial relations in Japan.



MIYAZA PREPARING OFFERINGS. In Ao, a small fishing village in Wakayama Prefecture, the preparation of food offerings for the kami is still the exclusive privilege of the male descendants of nine hereditary miyaza families.

Obligated Religious Affiliations

The local parish (*ujiko*) is the most common institutional expression of the Shinto religion. Since the beginning of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), the parish has generally been regarded as an inclusive territorial unit composed of families having rights and obligations in the cult of the local tutelary deity (*ujigami* or *chinjugami*). Because Shinto is primarily a layman's religion, the kind of professional exchange between priest and lay worshipers that one finds in Buddhism is often less highly developed. Where it does exist, it is usually complemented by a strong lay leadership determined by heredity, rotation of offices, lot, or election. In Western Japan, many parishes were controlled by cliques (called *miyaza*) which consisted of the oldest, most prestigious families in the community. As time went on, these monopolistic parish guilds gave way to a more inclusive parish system.¹¹

Although the festivals of the Shinto parish sometimes originate in, or reflect a collective 'in order to' purpose (such as warding off plagues or pests), relations with the parish and its guilds generally are obligatory. The parish and its guilds are part of a network of community obligations into which individuals are born. Since they are made mem-

bers of the parish as infants—by a rite called *ujiko-iri*—their affiliation with the parish is anything but voluntary.¹² Throughout life they will feel a responsibility and loyalty to this particular ujigami and ujiko. Because the authority of the parish and its deity is quite effective, there usually is little need to enforce these obligations with sanctions. To put it in economic terms: the authority of the parish is cost-effective. Nevertheless, should individuals shirk their role in the village festivals or fail to make their stipulated contribution to the upkeep of the shrine, they might be shunned or isolated from the community, a form of ostracism called *mura-hachibu*.

At the beginning of the Meiji period, the government deliberately extracted Shinto from its age-old union with Buddhism and made it a symbolic vessel of the newly concocted imperial system. Since the ancestors of the imperial family were venerated as Shinto deities, Shinto parishes throughout the country were recruited to serve as outposts of the government's nationalistic and militaristic propaganda. Japanese morality had traditionally been measured by the degree of honor or shame the individual brought upon the ancestors of his family. By spreading the worship of the imperial ancestors as the ancestors of all Japanese, the obligations individuals owed to their families and the local Shinto gods were sublimated and transformed into loyalty to the state. Thus, by grafting its ideology into the traditional folk practices of Shinto and ancestor worship, the state manipulated the people's primitive, *volkisch* feelings of pride, guilt, and conscience, making these the emotional base for a new civil religion.¹³

An excellent example of the creation of civil-religious obligations is an episode in a novel by Murayama Tomoyoshi, a writer originally active in the antigovernment, proletarian art movement. Arrested in 1932, Murayama underwent *tenkō* (ideological conversion to the imperial ideology) and, for two years after his release from prison, devoted himself to writing "conversion novels." In his book *The White Night* (*Byakuya*), he describes the psychology of *tenkō*. The following passage vividly illustrates the role of ancestors as symbols and agents of conscience.

After his second summer there [in prison], absolutely shut away from fresh air, his mind was eroded by something undefined and invincible. He felt as though his flesh and blood, or rather something mysteriously a part of his own father and mother, and of their forebearers from time immemorial, whose faces, names and lives had long since perished was eating away his existence, which was after all an infinitesimally small particle of their posterity. However hard he tried to

cry out at them, to push them aside, and to drive them out, it was of no avail. In his struggle with his invisible foes, day in and night out, he groaned, struck his head with his fists, and scratched the wall with his nails.¹⁴

In this way, the ultranationalistic civil religion promoted by the government transformed the will of ancestors, *kami*, and buddhas into the mandates of the government itself. Obligations to the emperor "knew no end." Under the American occupation, leaders at SCAP did their best to destroy the obligatory nature of the Shinto parish and make the religion a voluntaristic or democratic denomination in the American sense of the word. Some have argued that demographic change itself may have had an even greater eroding effect. Morioka Kiyomi, for example, found that new residents in suburban Tokyo have little sense of identity with the local *ujigami*.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the same study shows that relations with the parish become stronger the longer the family lives in the area. The decline in obligatory ties therefore does not mean that the Shinto parish is on its way to becoming a voluntary association. Population dislocation seems to be only a temporary disruption of this essentially obligatory kind of affiliation. As a social custom, making contributions to the local shrine continues to be virtually obligatory in many parts of Japan, even for Christians and other non-Shintoists.¹⁶

In contrast to Shinto, the values and institutional affiliations associated with Buddhism might seem to be more universalistic and voluntaristic. After all, Japanese Buddhism has been successfully transplanted to Hawaii, California, New York, Brazil, and other places the *kami* themselves seem loath to visit. Actually, the voluntaristic aspect of Buddhism can be traced back to ancient India, where the religion developed as a "specifically religious" movement in contrast to the ambient "natural religion," Hinduism.¹⁷ In Japan, before the Tokugawa period, only the Nichiren sect had insisted that all members of a family be members of the same temple. The government itself played a decisive role in destroying the voluntary nature of Buddhism. The new temple system (*tera-uke*) established by the Tokugawa shogunate transformed the motivated affiliations of previous centuries into the obligatory ties of the family temple common throughout Japan today. The growth of temple cemeteries during the Tokugawa period also hastened the development of particularistic, obligatory conduct in Buddhism. Graves contributed to this growth of particularism by virtue of the fact that they are even less mobile than the earthbound shrines of the Shinto gods. In the twentieth century, demographic change (i.e., urbanization and subur-



BUDDHIST FAMILY TEMPLE AND GRAVEYARD.

banization) has seriously weakened the ties between urban families and family temples, which often are located in the distant countryside, far from the family's present residence. When they move to the city, many families not only leave their family temples and memorial tablets behind; sometimes they even forget the name of their *danna-dera*. Unless there is a death in the family, a Japanese seldom would think of approaching the priest in his new neighborhood to ask to be made a "member" of his temple. In this context, 'in order to' motives would simply be out of place.

Motivated Religious Affiliations

Among Japan's motivated, 'in order to' religious affiliations are included Buddhist prayer temples, voluntary pilgrim bands (e.g., those discussed in chapter 2), utopian communities like *Ittōen* (see chapter 6), new Sudden Death Temples, and various New Religions which appeared during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Motivated affiliations can be subdivided into the behaviors of clients and devotees. By 'clients' I mean those people who establish only transient,

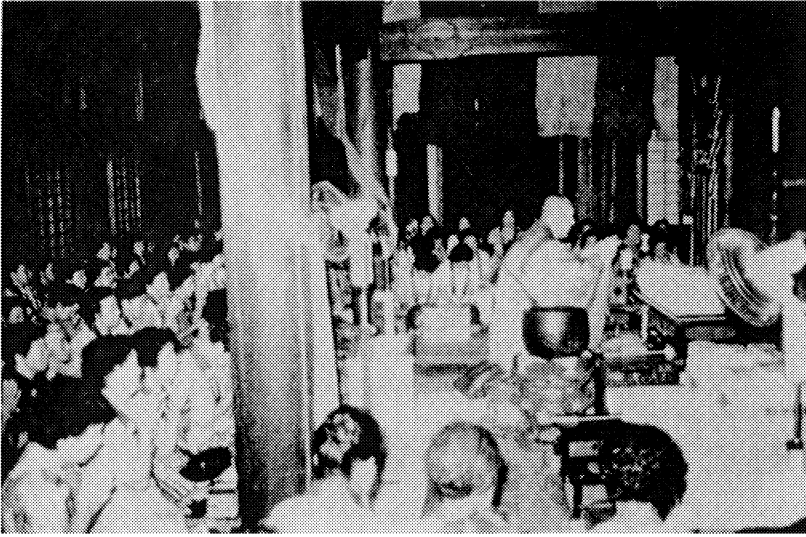
ad hoc relations with religious institutions (e.g., temples and shrines), or with holy men or women [e.g., fortune-tellers, mountain ascetics, faith healers, and the *oshi* priests (discussed in chapter 2)]. By 'devotees' I have in mind stalwart believers who maintain self-sacrificing, loyal, long-term relations with religious institutions. They are especially active in utopian communes and the New Religions.

The millions of Japanese who crowd into Tokyo's Meiji Shrine and other nationally known shrines at New Year's are probably the best examples of what I mean by religious 'clients.' As clients, these people do not have the enduring sense of loyalty to these institutions that members of the *ujiko* have to their *ujigami*. Typologically speaking, clients are simply erratic pilgrims. When they attend festivals or visit a shrine, they play the role of guests—in contrast to the active member of the Shinto parish or Buddhist family temple, who often is called upon to play the role of a host or sponsor of religious events. Since they are bound to shrines and temples neither by kinship nor by neighborhood, questions about ritual rights, duties, and privileges—issues which pre-occupied members of the *miyaza* and some Shinto parishes—are naturally of little or no concern. The object of their devotion is often a deity with specific religio-magical boons to offer. A young female client, for example, may go to a medium to get advice about her marriage prospects. Or she might go to a shrine recommended by friends to buy amulets that (hopefully) will help her to find a husband. If the amulets work, her next pilgrimage might be to purchase still another one to ensure safe childbirth. Later, when the family buys a new Toyota, her husband might assume the client's role and drive the car to the Narita Fudōsan temple to buy an amulet for "traffic safety." When their son becomes a high school senior, he might become a temporary client of the god Tenjin (Sugawara Michizane) and pray for good luck on his college entrance examinations. As specific, goal-oriented, ad hoc activities in search of this-worldly benefits, none of these acts needs to be repeated. While pilgrimage and other client-type activities have a long history in Japan, the growth of fleeting clienteles is closely related to the atomization of Japan's urban population, and to the secularization of the traditional parish and temple in particular. The phenomenon is also a response to the expansion of professional priesthoods which has tended to encourage the commercialism of festivals and has made possible the sale of amulets and blessings in the shrine throughout the whole week.

In recent years, elderly clients have been attracted to Sudden Death Temples (*pokkuri-dera*), institutions which are surely among the most curious religious innovations—some might say the most macabre—in

postwar Japan. Appearing around 1960, these temples ensure the client a quick and easy death, followed by a safe rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. The Sudden Death Temples are clearly a response to the problems of Japan's rapidly aging population. As the size of the average family decreases, the elderly have increasingly begun to live apart from their children. Presently, about twenty-five percent of them maintain separate residences, which is few compared with western countries but a great increase compared with prewar Japan. This is a population cohort which came to age when great stress was laid on the family and filial piety. From their perspective, the preference of the younger generation for small, nuclear families and separate homes naturally seems selfish. Spending their final years in a situation which Japanese critics call the "use and throw culture" (*tsukai sutete bunka*), the elderly feel that they too have been used and cast aside. Because postwar legislation encourages the equal distribution of inheritances, in many families no one child has the material resources to take care of the parents. Many of the elderly are therefore passed around from one child to the next (*tarai-mawashi* or *babakorogashi* as it is called), a routine which can be extremely unsettling for the aged. Suicides among the elderly have increased ominously.¹⁸ Under these circumstances it is quite understandable that the some of the aged would turn to the Buddha and pray for a quick end to the sorrows of this life.

Tours to the Sudden Death Temples are organized by Buddhist Ladies Associations, senior citizens clubs, and travel agents. Only a few clients travel by themselves. The tour includes stops at two or three such temples and an overnight stay in a temple inn. At the Kichidenji temple in Nara, for example, a complete pilgrimage consists of three separate calls: the first to pray for a long life and good health; the second for protection against accidents; and the third for a quick and easy death and rebirth in the Pure Land (*anraku ōjō*). Because old people often fear the embarrassing "diseases of the lower parts," or *shimo no byō* as the Japanese put it, visitors to the temple are asked to bring a special set of underwear with them to be blessed. Those who forget to bring underwear with them may purchase it at the temple. These garments are blessed by the priest who sprinkles them with holy water and utters a spell over them in the name of a toilet deity called Uzumasa.¹⁹ After this, the priest gives a fifteen-minute sermonette adroitly mixing light entertainment with the sober thoughts of traditional Japanese Buddhism. He assures his congregation that death is not something to be feared, but is merely like the falling of autumn leaves. With simple daily effort, one can be reborn in the Pure Land. One should therefore always wear a smile, use gentle words, and keep one's heart pure.



SUDDEN DEATH TEMPLE. The priest is blessing the underwear on the altar.

As a mode of religious affiliation, the Sudden Death Temple tour is obviously ad hoc and transient. No one gets to know the priest or his family well. Nor does the priest have time to talk personally with the thousands of elderly clients to whom he ministers every week. The relationship is, in fact, based on a simple exchange: admission is charged and underwear is blessed for a set fee. Looked at as a total event, only part of the “therapy” of the tour takes place in the temple itself. Back in their comfortable excursion buses, the old folks have a chance to talk with each other about their health, tension with their children, and the other problems of aging.²⁰

We turn next to the ‘in order to’ affiliations of devotees, the most notable of which are the so-called New Religions (*shinkō-shūkyō*, or *shinshūkyō*), syncretistic sects with founders, scriptures, and mass followings.²¹ Joseph M. Kitagawa describes these movements in the following words:

Their teachings are eclectic and not well systematized, but their simple, direct, and practical beliefs and practices appeal to the masses who do not feel at home with the complex doctrines of established religions. . . . Most of them are highly centralized in their organizational structure, utilizing cell group systems as well as incentive plans. A few of them have semimilitaristic disciplines. All of them use mod-

ern mass media of communication and have efficient methods of tithing or its equivalent.²²

The clients of Buddhist prayer temples (*kitō-dera*) and Shinto shrines (*omiya, jinja, or jingū*) establish temporary relations with these institutions in order to recover their health, ward off accidents, ensure safe childbirth, or admission to the university of their dreams. The relationship of the devotee with his or her New Religion grows out of similar 'in order to' motives. But the relationship in this case is usually longer lasting. In response to the devotees' all-too-human needs, the New Religions display a universalistic, "whosoever-will-may-come" kind of attitude. Some, like Sōka Gakkai, have assumed a more aggressive posture, threatening that whosoever-does-not-come will be damned, or will at least get sick. While the actual beliefs of these groups may not appear to be *substantially* rational, the behavior of their adherents is based on a *functional* rationality and clear-cut 'in order to' motives.²³ This does not mean, however, that the individual who joins a New Religion is in all ways similar to the "religious joiner" in Western societies. Berger and Luckmann have described the latter a person strolling through the supermarket of suburban denominations, selectively (i.e., comparatively and rationally) making his or her ecclesiastical purchases.²⁴ In Japan, few individuals seem to select their religion on the basis of such cool, comparative analysis. While people are naturally interested in the cost-benefit factor (i.e., the ratio of miracles per yen and time invested), chances for one-to-one comparisons of prices, products, and services are limited. Believers generally stay with a sect as long as they are blessed with miracles or good fortune. When their luck sours, or when the cost of their involvement becomes greater than the satisfaction they derive from it, they simply drop out. If they join another New Religion later on—and movement between these groups is considerable—it usually will be in response to a coincidental meeting or conversation with a friend, relative, or neighbor. Proselytizing by strangers, while practiced by most of the New Religions, seems to be less effective.²⁵ Thus, the traditional obligatory influences of *Blut und Boden* continue to play a role even in religious groups based explicitly on motivated conduct.

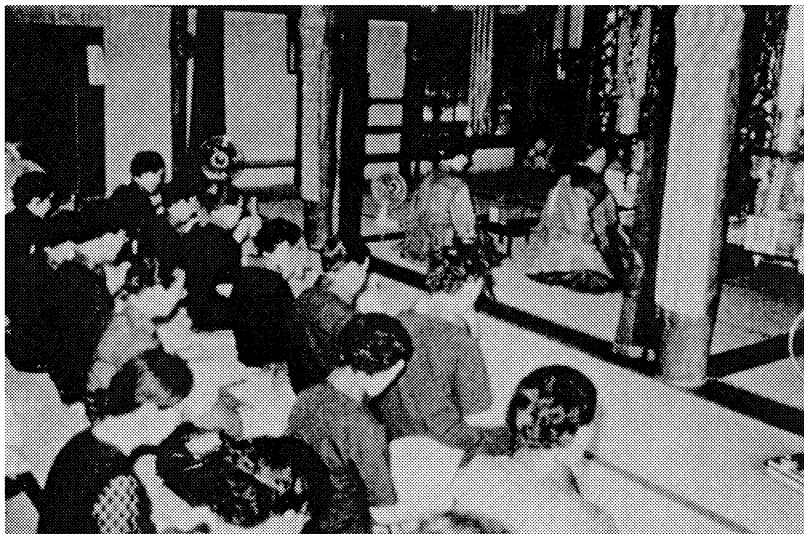
Confraternities: A Mixture of Motivated and Obligatory Behavior

Thus far, we have seen that Shinto parishes and Buddhist family temples are based on the historical dominance of obligatory conduct,

while Buddhist prayer temples, Sudden Death Temples, New Religions and communitarian movements take as their sociological point d'appui the functional rationality of 'in order to' motives. The confraternities (*kō* or *kōshū*) which we shall now examine run the gamut from those which are nearly identical with the particularism of the local community cults, on the one hand, to those based on universalistic faith-commitments, on the other. In some confraternities, 'because' motives seem predominant. In others, 'in order to' motives stand out. Most, however, are a mixed bag.

While the history of religious confraternities in Japan goes back to the time of Prince Shōtoku (573–621), it was the New Buddhism of the Kamakura period (1192–1338) which gave rise to the institution as we now know it. From the beginning, these groups benefited both from the individual motivations and the family obligations of their members. The Pure Land Ikkō sect, for example, held meeting to "pay back the blessings" (*hō-on-kō*) which members felt they had received from their founder, Shinran Shōnin (1173–1262). On the face of it, this sounds like obligatory conduct: piety here is a response to spiritual and material blessings *already received*. On the other hand, the express purpose of the Pure Land confraternities was to assemble *in order to* strengthen a common faith in Amida Buddha. Thus, religious voluntarism seems to develop in this sect much as it did in the Protestant movements of the west, viz., churches and sects which were also based on "faith alone" (*sola fide*). In both cases, the result was the emergence of a type of religious affiliation which had at least the potential for transcending the bonds of kinship and local community. Amida Buddha of the Pure Land sects therefore functioned as a specialized, adventitious deity within the local community. He was an alternative, or even a rival, to the inclusive, obligatory festival-faith of the Shinto parish.

To put this in European terms, the Pure Land confraternities were virtually Free Churches surrounded by the *Landeskirchen* of Shinto and Buddhism on the one hand, and by the private *Eigenkirchen* of the warrior class on the other. Varying in size from ten to one thousand members, these groups cut across the community's traditional pastoral and geographical borders. A confraternity often did not include all of the members of the same village, or even all of the followers of a given priest. On the other hand, a single chapel (*dōjō*) might house several *kō*. To use European terminology again, one might think of these groups as *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, i.e., pietistical or devotional conventicles within the church. In some cases, the *kō* incorporated all of the believers of one village with those of neighboring communities. It was this *translocal* mode of affiliation that made the sect a political and



CONFRATERNITY. This nembutsu confraternity in Wakayama City also functions as a club for older women in the area.

economic power to be reckoned with in premodern Japan. While composed initially of peasants, these confraternities were not simple, egalitarian associations. On the contrary, they were merely links in a long ecclesiocratic chain leading up to the powerful Honganji patriarchs at the top. Other, less highly structured confraternities formed for the purpose of, say, venerating a local deity, did have a relatively horizontal or egalitarian organization.

Ikeda Yoshisuke has reduced this bewildering variety of confraternities to the following threefold typology:²⁶

1. Those which *transcend* the local community
2. Those which are *coextensive with* the local community
3. Those which are *subsumed by* the local community

While Ikeda regards confraternities of the first type as the most likely to create social tensions in the community, it seems to me dubious that the translocal nature of these groups alone accounts for this fact.²⁷ For example, was it merely the translocal nature of the Pure Land confraternities that led to the fifteenth century *Ikkō Ikki* rebellions in the Kinki, Tōkai, and Hokuriku areas? I think not. While their translocal nature undoubtedly added great strength to the movement, groups of

this sort tend to create social tension primarily because of their overall 'in order to' orientation. Such groups naturally lend themselves to organized, purposeful activity. Thus it seems to be religious groups which have both a translocal social organization and a capacity to express purposeful or instrumental intentionalities that are most likely to foment social change. By way of contrast, more conservative religious groups (such as the Shinto parish or Buddhist family temples) based on ascriptive obligations and duties are less wieldy and tend to become involved in social change only in a defensive way, e.g., in connection with local disputes over privilege and prestige.²⁸

Japan's confraternities are based on a rich mixture of motivations and obligations, some of them religious, some secular, but most inseparably religious and secular at the same time. Whether their aim is to affirm a common religious faith, organize a pilgrimage, or hold a sweepstakes (*mujin-kō*), confraternities often demonstrate a high level of goal—or functional—rationality. Nevertheless, hierarchical and *Gemeinschaft*-like elements can also be found in their makeup. Because they were intimately tied to traditional patterns of social and economic interaction, many confraternities have now disappeared. While laymen blame priests for their demise, and priests chide laymen for their lack of zeal, the truth is that in Japan, as elsewhere for that matter, it is notoriously difficult to maintain groups *sola fide*. Hence the importance of the social and material exchanges (e.g., feasting, fun and games) which took place in the *kō* when the institution was in its heyday. The disappearance of these secular or parareligious exchanges is therefore not unrelated to the decline of the *kō* in postwar Japan.

Syncretism

We are now in a position to expand our basic paradigm and show how a combination of obligations and motivations led to the formation of religious syncretism, not pluralism in the western sense of the word. But first a word about the distinction between these terms. Syncretism and pluralism are both cultural systems resting on a multiplicity of alternatives. It is the structuring of these alternatives that makes the difference. Pluralism is a differentiated system of genuine religious and/or cultural alternatives. I say "genuine" because in this case society recognizes that adherence to one alternative may legitimately make commitment to other alternatives impossible. Since the alternatives in a pluralistic system seem to be moving apart from one another, I like to

think of pluralism (ideal-typically) as a system of *centrifugal cultural differentiation*. Syncretism, on the other hand, I shall call a system of *centripetal cultural differentiation*. While there are cultural alternatives available (and practiced) in syncretistic systems, these alternatives coalesce, or dovetail, and, over the course of time, tend to become *layered, obligatory modes* of behavior and/or belief.

A brief historical digression is in order. In Japan's premodern period, alternatives from the outside world were transmitted to the closed society of manor and village primarily by wandering, unordained holy men. Together with itinerant entertainers, traders, and craftsmen, they gathered at large shrines and temples or in market places, i.e., places in which life was relatively unconstrained by magistrates and political authorities. The holy men carried with them a mixed bag of religious goods and services—Taoist magic, Shinto spells, and various Buddhist practices. Some were evangelists of one of the "single practice" sects. Relying on their own charisma rather than on official ordination, they organized their followers in small confraternities or other cultic orders.²⁹ Thought to possess special, esoteric knowledge about the spiritual world, these peripatetic holy men helped to spread the high culture of the capital throughout the provinces.

Since the deities and Buddhas of these holy men came from the outside world and provided an alternative to the indigenous cult, I shall refer to them as *adventitious deities* (*marōdō-gami*). The attraction of the adventitious deities was both thaumaturgical and soteriological. As functional deities, they were thought to have special miraculous virtues (*reigen*) such as the ability to ensure safe childbirth, a good harvest, or the cure of various maladies. Others guaranteed instant enlightenment—or at least assured the believer of immediate rebirth in the Pure Land after death.³⁰ In the eyes of the villager, the deity and his messenger were not always clearly distinguished. In fact, the missionary's residence sometimes evolved into the shrine of the *marōdō-gami*. In other cases, the local people themselves brought the adventitious deity home to the village, enshrining it in the precincts of their own *ujigami*. By giving their heretofore nameless clan god the name of a prestigious provincial or national god they sought to win for themselves the magical benefits of more powerful deities while simultaneously enhancing the good name of the village itself.

We can see two types of religious affiliation emerging from all of this: the one based on 'because of' obligations to the local deity, the other originally growing out of 'in order to' motivations focused on faith in a god or Buddha from the world outside the community. These alternatives can be summarized as follows:³¹

Locative and Adventitious Affiliations

| The Locative Pattern (<i>Ujigami</i>) | The Adventitious Pattern (<i>Marōdō-gami</i>) |
|--|--|
| integrates community and kinship groups | establishes a community of believers apart from the local community and its kinship groups |
| exclusive, "particularistic" relations based on genealogy and/or geography | inclusive, missionary faith with relations between the sacred and the congregation based on faith and/or a demanding religious monopraxis |
| deity has undifferentiated functions | deity and missionary have specific functions and strong "personalities" |
| authority of deity reflected in political, economic, social, and cultural circumstances of the community | authority of deity reflected in the magico-religious power of its transmitter (missionary, shaman, hero), his techniques of ecstasy, and social position |
| (generally) routinized leadership based on rotating lay-priesthoods | (often) a charismatic leadership developing later into hereditary priesthoods |

Figure 1

The process whereby the confraternities of an adventitious deity become established in villages gives us some idea of the ways in which external cults were indigenized in general.³² Often the confraternity had a dual leadership made up of local stalwarts and missionaries from the outside world. The cult was propagated most successfully when the missionary was able to befriend the local priest and religious establishment. In recently founded villages, or in villages where the cooperative spirit of the community had weakened, the new faith made rapid headway. The adventitious god was often amalgamated with the indigenous deity. When this happened, the local deity assumed the name of the adventitious god, a set of specific functions, and a more definite "personality." This process of acculturation was hastened when the village was located close to the main shrine of the outside god. Near Kyoto, for example, many village deities were called Ise-sama (since Ise is relatively near Kyoto), whereas in distant Hokkaidō missionaries from Ise were able to establish only branch shrines of their cult. Often the temporary residence of the missionary served as an ersatz pilgrimage site for those unable to make the long journey to Ise. Aside from sheer distance, the process of assimilation could also be slowed down by the strangeness of the new god. The more the cult of the *marōdō-gami* resembled that of

the *ujigami*, the more readily it was accepted by the community. Once accepted, the confraternity became integrated into the structure of the local religious system by patterning its festivals and concepts on those already familiar in the vicinity, and by gradually substituting for its own discipline the distribution of wonder-working amulets.

Such were to logistics of acculturation. But the question remains: why did the interaction of locative and adventitious patterns result in syncretism and not in pluralism as such? The ultimate reason, I believe, lay in the vulnerability and dependency of the local community. The traditional Japanese village was open to attack from outside, yet beholden to the same outside world for its defense. While it had its own internal political culture and leadership, ultimate power and authority came from political centers beyond its borders. The mythical charter of sacred kingship itself (the *tenson-kōrin* myth) was based on a shamanistic or *marōdō-gami* kind of scenario.³³ Thus, unlike the Abrahamic traditions in which social integration rested on belief in one God, one faith, and one religious practice, the political and social integration of Japan has traditionally been based on a *multiplicity* of gods and faiths. Significantly, the theological articulation of this syncretism (the *honji-suijaku* system) first appeared during the tenth through the twelfth centuries when the manorial system was becoming dominant. Shinto deities which had long been regarded as “sentient beings” in need of the Buddha’s salvation themselves, or as guardians of Buddhist temples, were declared to be manifestations of the various Buddhas. After they lost imperial support in the middle of the Heian period, temples made use of this syncretistic theory in order to amalgamate Buddhism with the indigenous religious customs of the manors they controlled.

Whereas in the west it was heresy (or pluralism, as it is called today) which seemed to threaten the unity of Christendom, in Japan, it was monopraxis (emphasis on a single religious practice) that posed the greatest spiritual menace to the traditional integration of society. In the course of time, both the True Pure Land Buddhists and the Nichiren sects became deeply involved in rebellion. Under such circumstances, in order to avoid conflict with the religious establishment of the community, the new religious alternative (say, Amida Buddha) was generally treated as a supplement to the traditional devoirs of village and family. Grafted into these primary groups, participation in the confraternity of the adventitious deity gradually became obligatory, and finally hereditary. As the ‘in order to’ motivations of the first generation gave way to the ‘because of’ obligations of posterity, the adventitious deity ceased to be much of an alternative at all. The result therefore was not pluralism, but syncretism.

Refining and Restricting the Paradigm

Field researchers familiar with the messy motives of daily life will quickly sense that Schutz's motivational dichotomy cannot be directly translated into an interview schedule. And they are right. One problem is that there is a *verbal* overlap between the expressions 'in order to' and 'because of' (see note 7). This however, is not as much of a problem as the *systemic* or *historical* overlap commonly witnessed in the motives which typify institutions. Since motives are likely to change over the lifetime of the individual member—and, more obviously, over the course of his family's interaction with the group—this ambiguity *in re* may be more significant than the ambiguity *in theoria*. For example, a family which originally joined a Buddhist confraternity in order to worship Amida Buddha, in later generations may participate in the same rites simply as a family *devoir*. Similarly, while most Japanese join a New Religion in order to find a cure for illness or bad luck, subsequent experience may have a transforming effect on their original motivation. Miraculous experiences or significant personal relationships often generate new obligations to sects and deities. In this way, groups which originally depended on the intentionalities of magic and voluntarism develop new outlooks based on more rational, devotional obligations. Simultaneously, as these groups become more stable or mature (e.g., as they move into their second generation), they naturally tend to become more inclusive and quietistic. No longer is it mandatory for a person to authenticate his membership by wrapping himself in the mantles of magic and charisma. Gradually, the group may put on the whole armor of an obligatory institution. Hence the well-known metamorphosis of sects into denominations, a transformation which, abstractly at least, can be spelled out in terms of a history of motivations and obligations. While people will continue to convert out of specific 'in order to' motives, younger family members often join merely out of filial piety. Thus, within the same family, motives for joining and continuing to participate in a group will vary widely.

Religious affiliations based on obligatory conduct often undergo a similar change, but in the opposite direction, i.e., by generating new 'in order to' motives. For example, during the ultranationalist period, Japanese politicians advanced the cause of their own factions by cloaking their political ('in order to') ambitions in the obligatory rhetoric of civil-religious slogans. This use of political slogans differed hardly at all from the purchase and use of religious amulets, both being instances of goal-oriented (*zweckrational*) behavior.³⁴ Or, to take a more general example: an individual born in a Shinto parish might get the urge to run