

## REVIEWS

### The Religions of the World Made Simple

by *John Lewis*

*New York: Made Simple Books, Inc., 1958*

*Glossary, pp. 191, \$1.00*

This volume by the lecturer in philosophy at Morley College, London, England is in its fourth printing (April, 1960). Here is what happens when the religions of Japan are "made simple" (pp. 44—51).

#### Chapter Six

#### BUDDHISM IN CHINA AND JAPAN—SHINTO

##### The Text

Page 41

1. "The Buddha left no successor and no ecclesiastical organization."

2. "It was sixty years before the verbal teachings of Gautama were set down in writing."

##### Reviewer's Comment

The Buddha left no single successor because in view of the nature of his teachings, this would have been inappropriate; but he left several successors and he established an ecclesiastical organization.

It was about 300 years after his death that the verbal teachings of Gautama were set down in writing. Until then the teachings were memorized and transmitted orally.

3. "Buddhism never claimed to be an authoritative revelation."

What does this mean? Most Buddhists very definitely believe that the teaching, *dharma* (*hō*) is authoritative. Whether awakening or enlightenment is revelation may be debatable.

4. "The Pali scriptures were not written down until 80 B.C.

The exact date cannot be stated with such certainty.

5. "The scriptures of the Mahayana school ..... have never been systematized like those of the Hinayana school."

They have been systematized in the same way as the teachings of the Theravāda (Hinayana) school.

6. "It [the Lotus Sutra] preaches the doctrine of the Cosmic Buddha in whom all things consist."

The Lotus Sutra preaches the doctrine of the Eternal Buddha. The Cosmic Buddha, that is, Vairocana, is preached in the Kegon Sutra.

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7. "Islam has driven it [Buddhism] from Malaya and Indonesia where only monuments remain."

In Malaya and Indonesia we can find not only monuments but also small, active Buddhist organizations, both Chinese and Malayan.

8. ".....the Sixth Great Council of the Hinayana Buddhists.

Southern Buddhists dislike the word "Hinayana" because it originated as a Mahayanist term of contempt. They prefer the term Theravāda, meaning "School of Elders." The correct name is the Sixth Buddha Sāsana<sup>a</sup> Council.

<sup>a</sup>. Pali, "teaching"

9. ".....at Rangoon where a great new World Peace Pagoda has been built to seat 15,000 people."

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10. "Many [Hinayanaists] believe that this closes the Buddhists era and that a new Buddha will appear."

11. "Mahayana possesses in addition to its popular literature, another type that is abstract, philosophical and paradoxical, which was first formulated in Northern India."

12. "It is difficult to put esoteric Mahayana doctrine into conceptual form."

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13. "Amida is, of course, a Bodhisattva."

This should read: "..... a great new World Peace Pagoda and a hall, constructed to resemble a cave, which will seat 15,000 people, has been built."

Some may believe this. There is no reason to think that they represent the position of "many" Theravāda Buddhists.

The meaning here is not clear. Mahayana doctrine, including the doctrine of nothingness (*śūnyatā*) is believed to have been first formulated in southern India. In view of the paragraph which follows it appears that the author may be confusing this with esoteric Buddhism which some scholars believe may have been first formulated in southern India.

The author seems to identify all Mahayana doctrine with esoteric Buddhism, but the latter did not appear until about the 7th century A.D.

It would be more accurate to say, "Amida was a *bodhisattva* named Hōzō 法蔵 (*Skt., Dharmākara*).

14. "It was in China that Mahayana Buddhism had its chief success and it was here that the practical-minded and this-worldly Chinese developed the doctrines of the Pure Land and the Bodhisattvas."

"By 700 A.D. Mahayana Buddhism had so changed that every monk ..... took the Bodhisattva vow."

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15. "Avalokites-vara"

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16. "The most extraordinary form of Mahayana Buddhism [that is, Zen,] was founded in China by a ferocious Indian sage, Bodhidharma .....

17. ".....revelation comes not by striving but by a sudden jolt."

The author seems to imply that the Bodhisattva concept is of Chinese origin. Actually this concept is found in Theravāda sutras and was already in Mahayana Buddhism by the 1st century A.D. Its fuller development took place in China.

The hyphen is misplaced. The name should be written either Avalokita-īśvara or Avalokiteśvara:

Why extraordinary? Zen Buddhism, being based on the practices by which Gautama himself is believed to have attained enlightenment, would seem to be a very natural development. Why ferocious? To the oriental, at least, Bodhidharma's countenance is benign, pleasing, or interesting, but never ferocious.

Over-simplification has resulted in a preoccupation with one form of Zen, that is, the Zen of the Lin-chi 臨濟 (Rinzai in Japan), also

called Kan-hua 看話 (Kanna in Japan) or Kung-an 公案 (Kōan in Japan) Zen, and the complete neglect of the Zen of the Tsao-tung 曹洞 (Sōtō in Japan) Sect, that is, the Mo-chao 默照 (Mokushō in Japan) Zen, or the Zen of silent meditation. In Japan the Sōtō Sect reports 15,140 temples and 6,816,715 adherents, whereas the fourteen traditional Rinzai Sects report a total of 5,228 temples and 2,999,220 adherents.

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18. "Saton"

Should read "*Satori*"

19. "The Zen form of Buddhism .....gave direction to Bushido."

It is true that in the Kamakura 鎌倉 period (1185~1333) Zen Buddhism "gave direction to Bushidō 武士道," but Jōdo Buddhism also appealed to the warriors at the end of the Heian 平安 period and in the beginning of the Kamakura period.

20. ".....the teachings of Zen Buddhism were combined with native Japanese elements, Confucian ideas and some Taoism."

Not only Zen, but all other forms of Buddhism were "combined with Japanese native elements" and contributed to "Japanese social existence."

21. "Its [Zen] spirit shaped the moral attitudes and modes of living that are called Bushido....."

The author creates the impression that there was no ethics in Japanese life except Bushido; but Bushido was the ethics of the warrior class. There were other classes in Japan and these as well as the warrior class were influenced ethically by other forms of Buddhism.

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The author, as well as other Western scholars, should know that Japanese Buddhism and Zen Buddhism are not identical. Without in any way belittling the contribution of Zen to Japanese life, attention should be called to the fact that, according to the 1961 Religions Year Book (*Shūkyō Nenkan*) published by the Ministry of Education, out of a total of more than 47 million Buddhists, only about 10 million are Zen adherents. Pure Land Buddhism has over 14 million, Nichiren nearly 11 million, Shingon 10 million, and Tendai 2.3 million.

SHINTO

The discussion of this subject is very confusing because of a failure to distinguish between the past, that is, pre-surrender Shinto, and the present. Before disestablishment all shrines were "state shrines." The author is aware that "Shinto shrines have been disestablished" (p. 51), but he nonetheless uses the expression, "State Shinto appears to be....." and refers to "State Shrines" in the present tense (p. 50).

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22. "It is the only vital religion of the 80,000,000 subjects of the Emperor of Japan."

This sentence smacks of the pre-World War II psychology. In view of the preceding discussion of Buddhism, it is something of a surprise to learn that Shinto "is the only vital religion" in Japan. This is, of course, absurd.

Even when the book was published in 1958, the population of the country was close to 90 million.

23. "Shinto, however, cannot divorce itself from the basic psychological and anthropological roots of all religions."

Postwar Shinto scholarship does not attempt to do this. Generally speaking it is just as modern and objective as Western scholarship.

24. "The word for gods is kami ....."

This is the most common word. There are others.

25. "The Shrines ..... are small, simple, and very numerous."

Most shrines are relatively small and simple. Some are elaborate, even elegant.

26. "There are over 100,000 of them [shrines]."

There may be, but the official figure is 79,775.

27. "There are public rituals at the state shrines and festivals for the family and village shrines."

There are no "state shrines" today. All shrines are private religious institutions. There are festivals at all shrines. (It would require too much space to straighten out this over-simplification.)

28. "In the eighteenth century Shinto was purged of foreign influences, especially Buddhist, and declared to be the only true religion."

In the eighteenth century a movement arose to purge Shinto of foreign influences; but it was only partially successful. I question whether Shinto was ever "declared to be the only true religion," except, perhaps by a few individuals.

29. "Shinto was proclaimed the religion of the Japanese State."

After an abortive attempt to make Shinto the state *religion*, shrines were separated from other forms of Shinto, and Shrine Shinto became a "non-religious" state cult.

30. "The department concerned is the Ministry of the Interior ..."

This Ministry was abolished in 1947. Since 1945 the administration of shrines as *incorporated religious bodies* has been in the Ministry of Education.



31. "Shinto is ..... a national obligation, with a prior claim over all religious allegiance. Christians and Buddhist may profess their own religions, but they must acknowledge the supreme authority of the State and attend the State Shrines."

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32. "The total number of State Shrines is 183."

33. "About 17,000,000 Japanese are included in a number of recent sects ....."

This statement is too extreme, even as a description of the pre-war situation. It completely misrepresents the present situation. Probably in no country in the world is freedom of religion more complete than in Japan today.

(Other comments are called for but they require too much detail and so are omitted.)

This figure cannot be identified. Presumably it was taken from sources published in the middle or late 1920s. According to the *Shintō Encyclopedia* (1938) there were at the time of writing, in addition to the Grand Shrine of Ise, 116 national shrines (*kanpei-sha*) and 89 government shrines (*kokushi-sha*), or a total of 206 shrines that were under the direct supervision of the national government and, therefore, in this special sense might be called "State Shrines."\*

This statement is found under the heading of "Shinto Sects;" but it is difficult to know exactly

\* *Shinto Dai Jiten*, Tokyo: Heibon Sha, 1938, (3 Vols.) For a discussion of the meaning of these terms see *Contemporary Religion in Japan*, Vol. II, No. 2 (June, 1961), pp. 84-5. Ed.

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what is meant. The figure 17 million was used at one time (1937) for the thirteen sects of "Sectarian Shintō."

The total for some 126 Shinto sects, according to the Ministry of Education, was some 12 million in 1953 and is about the same today.

34. "Not being under State control....."

As already stated, no religion, including Shrine Shinto, is under state control.

The above and other errors not noted may be accounted for perhaps by the bibliography at the end of the chapter. The four references dealing with religion in Japan are all pre-war and the ones on Buddhism are concerned only with Zen.

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