

# ŌMOTO

(Great Foundation)

by Isao Deguchi

About seventy years ago, that is, in 1892, there I ved in the town of Ayabe in Kyoto Prefecture, a woman by the name of Nao Deguchi. She was fifty-six years old, when one day she suddenly received a divine revelation which she reported to her neighbors and friends. This was the beginning of Ōmoto.

In time Nao began to record her revelations and continued to do so thereafter for twenty-seven years, that is, until her death in 1918, Her writings, which consist of some two hundred thousand sheets, are called *Ofude-saki* ("Tip of the Brush").

Mrs. Deguchi's youngest daughter, Sumiko, was married in 1899 in Ayabe to a man named Onisaburō who took her family name. Onisaburo studied Mrs. Deguchi's writings and from these he developed the doctrines of Ōmoto. Moreover, under his leadership the number of Ōmoto believers increased and the organization became strong.

In 1921, however, the government persecuted Ōmoto in what became known later as the First Ōmoto Case, The basis for the persecution was that there were passages in the writings of Nao Deguchi that were considered to reflect unfavorably on the divinity of the Imperial Family. Consequently Ōmoto was

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\* This talk was delivered at the Institute by Mr. D guchi on October 15, 1960.

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accused of lese majesty by the court, which had considered the case in three sessions, but because of an amnesty in connection with the death of Emperor Taishō, the case was dismissed and no judgement was rendered.

In 1935, however, the government persecuted Ōmoto in what is known today as the Second Ōmoto Case, and this time it became really serious. The specific charge was that, although Ōmoto took the form of a religion, the leaders in reality were trying to usurp the Imperial Family system and that Onisaburō himself wished to replace the Emperor as the ruler of Japan.

Following this indictment the government ordered Ōmoto dissolved ; all the headquarters buildings in Ayabe and Kameoka were completely destroyed ; the land owned by Ōmoto was ceded to the towns of Ayabe and Kameoka ; and more than one thousand believers were called by the police and subjected to investigation. Then, out of this number, fifty or sixty were imprisoned and brought to trial, and all were found guilty. Onisaburō, the one most responsible, was sentenced to life imprisonment ; Isao Deguchi (the speaker) was sentenced to fifteen years of penal servitude ; and the others received sentences of from two to thirteen years.

When the case was appealed all were declared not guilty on the basis (1) that all those charged had acted from a religious motive, and (2) that the leaders had no intention of changing the national polity or of engaging in political activities. The procurators, however, appealed the case to the Supreme Court.

In the meantime Onisaburō Deguchi, Mrs. Deguchi, and Isao Deguchi (the speaker) were released after six years and

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eight months in prison. But as soon the Pacific War broke out Ōmoto had to suffer persecution which lasted for a total of ten years. Finally in 1945 the court for the third time declared the accused not guilty and the case was ended.

When the decision became final, the land at Ayabe and Kameoka was returned and the leaders lost no time in again uniting their strength in rebuilding the faith. However, Master Onisaburō Deguchi died in 1948 at the age of seventy-seven and his wife, Sumiko, the Second Leader, died in 1952. Since her death her eldest daughter, Naohi, has been the spiritual head.

There is a great deal of literature on Ōmoto, but the fundamental teachings consist of *Ofude-saki*, and *The Story of the Spiritual World* (*Reikai Mono-gatari*) in eighty-one volumes written by Master Onisaburo. These two constitute the fundamental scripture of Ōmoto.

*Ofude-saki* contains teachings regarding the reconstruction of the world, — not only this mundane world but the spiritual world also. Both worlds should be reconstructed in such a way that all who desire it can be changed into better spirits. Ōmoto has preached with great sincerity, not only in Japan but throughout the world, that the world must be radically changed. This may have been the reason why the Japanese Government persecuted Ōmoto, because it misunderstood the spiritual meaning of these words.

Mrs. Deguchi said with great emphasis in her writings that the end of this world is fast approaching ; but she also stated at the same time that the present is the beginning of a new world. Therefore all mankind must awaken and return

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to the mind of God as soon as possible. The mind of mankind should become clean and pure as the mind of God. Otherwise all will be destroyed. She also made many predictions about the future which up to the present have all been proven correct. They are not really predictions, but warnings given by God. If humanity listens to these warnings and changes its beliefs, then the great sufferings and difficulties of mankind will decrease. The minor sufferings we have to face will become as nothing at all or disappear by virtue of our changed mind and our changed belief. But if mankind remains blind to the truth and the need for the purification of the mind, then many difficulties and more suffering will visit it in the future. However, in the end by the power and strength of God, that is, by divine dispensation, mankind will be saved at last and there will be a peaceful world.

The idea of God and the universe are given in the scriptures. This world is divided into the spiritual and the material. In Ōmoto God is called, Dai Gen Rei 大元靈, that is, the Great Fundamental Spirit or Great Original Spirit. Ōmoto teaches that the entire creation is derived from spirit and that spirit develops power. This power is revealed in various bodies. Therefore we have spirit, power, and body. But the source of the entire creation is naturally God, that is, Spirit.

God is the Great Fundamental Spirit of the universe. From this Fundamental Spirit come all other forms of existence. Human beings are a part of this Great Spirit. That is to say, they are regarded as children of God, since they have within themselves a part of the Original Spirit.

Man is born in this world to carry out the Divine Will on

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earth. Ōmoto believes that, after the physical death of the body, the spirit will return to the spiritual world. In the spiritual world man will continue to live in a spiritual manner.

One of the characteristics of Ōmoto is that the scriptures describe life in the spiritual world in detail.

Ōmoto regards all religions as having the same fundamental root. According to our interpretation God reveals his truth and his teachings in accordance with the needs of the age and from the standpoint of different peoples. This is the reason why the existing religions of the world seem to be different on the surface. But all religions are based on truth, love, and compassion. The terminology may be different but the essence is one and the same. All religions should have common ideals to promote, and they should have cooperative functions to fulfill for the welfare of mankind and the peace of the world. It is the duty of all religions of the world to join hands and to cooperate in promoting these goals. This is not mere talk, for it pervades the minds of all Ōmoto followers.

If I might be permitted to describe Ōmoto teachings in Japanese I would use the expression *Kan-nagara no Taidō*, that is, the "Great Way according to the Kami" or the "Great Path in accordance with the Divine Will." This term gave the impression abroad of an aggressive militarism but this is a great misunderstanding. *Kan-nagara no Taidō* means to base everything on the kami and act in accordance with the divine will.

We have developed four principles :

1. CLEANLINESS, (*Seiketsu-shugi*): This means not only cleanliness of the physical body but also of the mind. It

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means that the soul and even the spirit must be made clean.

2. WAY OF LIVING, ( *Shinten-shugi* ): In various religions people talk of sin or social evils, but in Ōmoto the concept is expanded in such a way that not to do good is also a sin. Ōmoto takes a positive stand not a negative one.

3. BRIGHTNESS OF LIFE, OPTIMISM, ( *Rakuten-shugi* ): This is not the same as optimism. It is an attitude of mind which takes delight in following the Divine Will and is grateful for everything given by the kami. This may be said to constitute a unifying attitude. That is to say, everything is unified in accordance with the divine will.

At present we feel that our most important mission is to convey the sacred teachings of Ōmoto to people all over the world. Fifteen years have passed since Ōmoto regained its freedom after having been persecuted and destroyed by the government. During the fifteen years the number of Ōmoto churches, or institutions which may be regarded as churches, has increased to between twelve to thirteen hundred. There are churches in almost every prefecture of Japan. There are worship services and special festivals in the Shinto manner held in these churches. At Ayabe the purely religious functions are held. At the second headquarters buildings in Kameoka there are administrative offices and a preaching and teaching center.

A magazine printed in Esperanto was begun in 1923. Both books and pamphlets printed in Esperanto are sent abroad. At present Ōmoto has contact with over sixty countries through these Esperanto publications. Magazines are also printed in English and followers have been won to the Ōmoto faith

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through these publications. Brazil has the largest number of followers with their own churches. Mexico is next in number but there is no church building there.

Missionaries (*Sendenshi*) of Ōmoto number nearly six thousand. The number of believers who have registered at the headquarters is between one hundred thirty and one hundred forty thousand. There are many who have not come to the headquarters to register, but they participate in the functions held all over Japan. If they should be included it would raise the number to well over three hundred thousand.

The most important function at the Ayabe headquarters is held at the beginning of spring (*setsubun*). The ceremony is held to drive away all the sins and evil of the believers. We could call it religious purification. This year (1960) over a million participated in this festival either in person or by proxy.

Ōmoto also has a peace organization for the entire world. Ōmoto is a religious organization, but apart from this Onisaburō Deguchi established a separate organization in 1925 called, Jinrui Aizen Kai, that is, the "Universal Love and Brotherhood Association" (U. L. B. A.). This organization has been working hard ever since for world peace.

The fundamental spirit which animates this movement is that all humanity are brothers in one God. Therefore they should love and trust each other and try to spread this spirit. They should try to bring this spirit into their daily practice or daily living. This peace movement also considers the promotion of interfaith cooperation between different religions of the world as very important. This peace organization has been

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very active in the movement to abolish atomic and hydrogen bombs. It was the first to collect signatures against the use of the bomb. The society has also been very active in promoting the World Government Movement, believing that a world government would eliminate the danger of war.

Within Ōmoto there is great respect for the arts and artistic creations. There is also great concern to improve agriculture. Since the war the leaders have done their best to give guidance to the farmers in rural areas, to help them increase their agricultural production. In the future there is hope that we may be able to do more in the field of social welfare. At present we have a home for the aged, a nursery for children, and a special institution for teaching mentally retarded adults.

### Discussion

**Q** I have the impression of a monotheistic rather than a polytheistic concept of God.

**A** The term Kami has a very wide meaning in Japanese. So in Ōmoto we do not separate monotheism and polytheism. We hold that there can be many beings from the one and only God. For instance, the soul or human souls living here or in the other world are a part of the spirit coming from the one and only God. There is no division and they are not separate entities.

**Q** Does a person when he becomes a member have to participate in any initiation rites or make an affirmation of belief.

**A** Anyone who wishes to become a member may express this wish in writing at any local church. Usually all those who become genuine believers come to Kameoka for a four-day training course. They participate in the worship services



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and have lectures. The whole course is called Practices (*shugyō*). Since this is a training which all must have sooner or later, it can be said to be an initiation rite.

**Q** When people become members do they disassociate themselves from their local temple or shrine or is the Ōmoto faith something that is added?

**A** There is no compulsory regulation as far as Shinto believers are concerned. They may retain their connection with a shrine, because Ōmoto respects the Shinto faith. As for Buddhism or other religions, there is no compulsion. Those who wish to console the spirits of their ancestors according to the Ōmoto way, may do so, but if circumstances do not permit this they may continue to follow the Buddhist way.

**Q** Why is the name Wanisaburō sometimes used instead of Onisaburō for Mr. Deguchi?

**A** It should properly be "Oni" but some people pronounced it "Wani!"

**Q** Didn't Onisaburō open himself to criticism, for example, by riding on a white horse when only the Emperor rode on a white horse?

**A** The horse was not pure white, and this was understood by the officers in court. But Onisaburō was the kind of man who did whatever he thought was right. Naturally such a characteristic was apt to invite misunderstanding. However in his later years his true intentions were understood.

**Q** Has the Aizen Kai experienced any difficulty with communist groups doing the same things as it does, or has there been cooperation?

**A** The movement may be the same in some respects, but the

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Ōmoto group has always worked for peace from the standpoint of religion and a humanitarian attitude. This group kept itself apart from leftist groups. On a very broad scale the group has been able to promote these movements and has not experienced any clashes.

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## THE GRAND FESTIVAL OF THE OMOTO FOUNDRESS

*Iwao P. Hino*

The Japanese, whose ancestors were largely farmers, have never ceased to hold their harvest festivals. . . .

Soon after summer is over, fetes in honor of local tutelary deities are going on everywhere in towns and villages, — a little earlier than the actual harvest itself. These can easily be perceived by the sound of drums from the groves of tutelary shrines and the sight of vertically-long flags fluttering in the autumn breeze.

Ōmoto's Grand Rite of the Foundress, commemorating the Ascension of the Prophetess Nao Deguchi, fell on November 5th this year (1961). On the same day the Annual Autumn Festival of the Ōmotists' Ancestors and the Harvest Thanksgiving were also held.

Ayabe at this time of the year has a gay season during the annual Crysanthemum Puppets Show which, following the

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festivities of the local guardian gods, lasts for a month. . . . This entertainment attracts rural visitors from far and near.

All the streets leading there are gaily decorated like "special sale days." Rain or shine a crowd of merry-makers often jams the roads. One year the Show Manager installed a scene in the Ōmoto precincts, so that a stream of spectators poured in during the holidays. . . .

Early that morning the precincts were enveloped in a dense mist. It was quite mystical to see buildings, trees, and all loom fresh and serene like silhouettes.

At the signal a procession of white-robed performers made their appearance as if "the gods of heaven" were "cleaving the many-piled clouds of heaven with an awful way cleaving."\* These noble figures from the mist marched into the hall of worship from the grand staircase.

With the inspiring performance of yakumo-koto, the ritual commenced.

The usual purification service was observed first. Then the Master of the Rite respectfully advanced in front of the altar and announced the day's rite to God. It was followed by the offering at the altar of every conceivable kind of land and sea products sent in from all corners of the country.

During all this, which took much time, the yakumo-kotos were being played.

Before it was finished, Sandaisama, the tutelary leader, entered the Miroku-den at the front steps, made her way to the front, and took the uppermost seat.

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\* From the liturgy of Oharai (General Purification Service). Translation by W. G. Aston,

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Then the *norito* ( liturgy ) for the Grand Rite of the Foundress Nao Deguchi was reverently read aloud by the Reverend Eiji Deguchi, Ōmoto President and administrative head, who played the role of the Master of the Rite. The Harvest Thanksgiving followed and was conducted by the Vice Master of the Rite.

After the liturgy the symbolic offerings to God of the *tamagushi*, a green pine sprig tied with a white paper ribbon, were presented. This also took a long time because those making offerings were many in number. The first was Madam Naohi Deguchi, tutelary leader, second, the Master of the Rite, and third, the Honorable President, the Reverend Uchimaru Deguchi. Then followed representatives of Ōmoto evangelist, councils, councillors, consultants, headquarters officials, auxiliary organizations, the women's association, the young men's association, associated religionists, the major of Ayabe, Ayabe assemblymen, the Ayabe Ōmoto Assistance Association, diocesses, the followers present and, lastly, the Chief Committee for the Grand Rite.

Among those making offerings were two English women spiritualists, one of whom was an evangelist of Ōmoto as well. She, clad in an elegant kimono, attracted the attention of the pious throng.

Next, Sandai-sama recited the Liturgy of Thanksgiving, in which the followers joined in the chorus. The Master of the Rite, who had changed seats with her, resumed his former place and sang the dedication hymns together with all the devotees.

With this the Grand Rite ended. Sandaisama and the

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ritual performers withdrew.

A short interval later she appeared, amidst a roar of applause, and made a short address.

The Autumnal Anniversary of the Ōmotoists' Anniversary of the Ōmotoists' Ancestors followed. By this time it was drizzling, although no one in the hall was aware of it, so the schedule of the day was changed; the pilgrimage to Ten'nodaira graveyard to attend the Memorial Service before the Foundress' Tomb and that of Sainōsha, was cancelled. Worship from the Mirokuden was offered instead. We bowed in the direction of Ten'nōdaira and were naturally reminded afresh of the Foundress and her *Ofudesaki*, the great revelation given to humanity.

After this ceremony lunch with *sake* was served in the large hall, with white cloths laid on the *tatami* (padded rush mattings). . . .

During this merry meal, warm sunshine shone out of doors, for the sky had cleared.

Then by twos and threes the followers began to go out of doors to make their pilgrimage to the Ōmoto grave-yards: some on foot and some by car.

All the winding way was packed with a stream of pilgrims for about two miles. The road ran along the foot of Fujiyama hill, which was painted with autumnal tints. Down below, on the left, was a stretch of narrow, irregular valley with a meandering stream in its midst. Terraced rice fields flanked on both sides the heights opposite. . . .

There are three tombs standing on the top of a pine hill in the grove and coppices. To the right is that of the Foundress; to the left is that of Master Onisaburō Deguchi; and in the

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middle, a little at the back, is that of the Second Tutelary Leader, Madame Sumiko Deguchi.

After paying their homage to the Tombs, they turned to the Sainosha, where they offered their *tamagushi* and memorial service for the recent dead, the war dead of all nationalities, and those souls with no surviving relatives.

Those who have relatives' graves in the adjoining cemeteries paid a visit there to console their spirits. The cemeteries were strangely crowded with old, familiar persons with their liturgy sounding here and there.

You will find an inconspicuous plot in one corner of the older cemetery under pine trees, where a small wooden nameplate is standing to show the place where once had been the Foundress' tomb.

It is almost unbelievable, but even her tomb was ordered to be transferred because the Ōmoto Case was judged under the old lese majeste law, and because of the Ōmoto teaching regarding non-resistance.

In the afternoon the President, the Reverend Eiji Deguchi, gave an address. There were other items, among which three impressed the audience very much. Two were short addresses by the English ladies expressing their wish to serve Ōmoto, and the other was the report of the opening of a new branch temple, dedicated to the Ōmoto God, in one of the Gotō Islands in the Kyūshū district, where native Japanese Catholics (the "hidden Christians") were converted in mass.

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PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Recovery from cancer

*Eiichi Ono*

When I operated a toilet goods store in Osaka, it was destroyed by an air raid, and I had to take refuge in the home of my mother-in-law, She was blessed with a son and six daughters, but was widowed rather early, and worked harder than a man when goods were scarce during the war. She finished the course of training at Ōmoto Headquarters in 1951, and advised me to do the same. My job prevented my following her advice till four years ago, when fortunately or unfortunately I got a gastric ulcer and had to take sick leave. I then went to the Headquarters and got my training.

Ōmoto had suffered official persecution twice, and the adverse newspaper accounts I had read at those times were fresh. so my attitude toward the creed was not free from suspicion. But three days' study took away my incredulity and made me understand the true mission of man. The course changed my whole outlook on the world, and I am now spending each day in perfect happiness.

My mother-in-law's health began to fail about three years ago, and the treatment given by a doctor in the neighbourhood showed little effect. She became bedridden last May. Her children advised her to have X-ray pictures taken, and as a nephew of hers (mine) worked in an office connected with

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the hospital in Osaka; we took her there and had six pictures taken. When I went to the hospital with a sister-in-law to learn what the findings were, we were simply told the results would be communicated to the nephew. This gave us a premonition of the worst. Two days later I was sent for by my brother-in-law and was told that the doctor had said, "She has cancer in the stomach and pancreas the size of an egg. Overwork extending over many years has weakened her very much and there is no way to cure her. She will live only about three months, hardly till the new year. Let her have whatever she likes."

We also consulted a professor of Osaka University, who recommended an operation, but her advanced age, 64, and emaciated state did not seem to justify it. There remained, we thought, only one way, — to pray to the Great God. I urged her to have *otoritsugi* performed by Mr. Eitarō Hayashi (an evangelist) of Sakai City, who had first taken her to the holy place, and said I would call on him on my way home from work. Some company business intervened and I came home without carrying out my intention, only to find that Mr. Hayashi had been there in the morning. She at first thought he had come by my request, but he said he had come because he had a feeling he should. She interpreted this as the divine will and was greatly delighted to ask Mr. Hayashi for *otoritsugi* (mediation).

The next day Mr. Hayashi asked her whether she was willing to die or wanted to live for a long time. She was too confused to make any reply. Then he said, "Don't be alarmed. Your trouble is cancer, which present-day medical



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science is absolutely powerless to cure. Pray to God with your whole heart. I will also do the same, and have the cancer removed within three weeks.”

We, her children, had kept the matter of her cancer to ourselves because we were afraid the knowledge would make her spiritually despondent and cause aggravation of the disease. But, hearing Mr. Hayashi reveal the truth to her, we made up our mind and told her and Mr. Hayashi that we knew the truth and asked him for *otoritsugi* (mediation).

He started the rite on June 4, and the patient, who had been writhing with pain, became visibly better day by day, and on the last day of the month we performed a thanksgiving service with Mr. Hayashi's participation.

The neighbours and adherents attending the service were impressed by the truth of God's promise that He would effect a speedy cure of the disease, if we prayed to Him with our whole heart.

Her pain is completely gone now and she is well enough to do some household chores. When she regains more strength she will pay a thanksgiving visit to the holy place. The family are keenly looking forward to the day. Laughter has returned to our home after so long an absence. I am determined to make a new start on my road of faith.

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**Kanji Glossary**

Ayabe 綾部	Ōmoto 大本
Dai Gen Rei 大元靈	Ōsaka 大阪
Deguchi, Eiji 出口栄二	otoritsugi お取次
——, Isao 伊佐男	rakuten-shugi 楽天主義
——, Naohi 直日	<i>Reikai Monogatari</i> 靈界物語
——, Onisaburō 王仁三郎	Sakai 堺
——, Uchimaro 宇知麿	sake 酒
——, Sumiko 澄子	Sainosha 斎納社
Fujiyama 富士山	Sandaisama 三代様
Gotō Island 五島列島	seiketsu-shugi 清潔主義
Hayashi, Eitarō 林 栄太郎	sendenshi 宣伝使
Jinrui Aizen Kai 人類愛善会	setsubun 節分
Kameoka 亀岡	Shinten-shugi 進展主義
Kan-nagara no Taidō 神ながらの大道	shugyō 修行
Kyōto 京都	Taishō 大正
Kyūshū 九州	tamagushi 玉串
Miroku-den 弥勒殿	tatami 畳
norito 祝詞	Ten'nōdaira 天王平
Ofude-saki お筆先	Yakumo-koto 八雲琴
Oharai お祓い	