

PENTECOSTALISM AND SHAMANISM IN ASIA

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To conclude its two-year project to study the relationship between shamanistic traditions in Asia and the news waves of Christian Pentecostalism, the Nanzan Institute gathered scholars from around the region for a two-day conference in Nagoya. The following is a summary report of the papers and discussions of that event prepared by one of its participants. The full papers are currently being prepared for publication.

THE INTERNATIONAL conference on *Pentecostalism and Shamanism in Asia*, held on 20–21 January 2012 at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, brought to a close a series of workshops and colloquia held between 2010 and 2012. As the project proceeded, it became clear that Shamanism, as an indigenous form of East Asian spirituality, is an essential ingredient in understanding the inculturation of Western Christian spirituality in the region. The comparative focus of the final conference helped clarify a number of questions and disagreements that emerged in the course of the project, challenging notions of the uniqueness and exclusive nature of Pentecostal Christian spirituality and doctrine. Arguably a “bounce-off” of older shamanistic traditions, Pentecostalism makes for an interesting study in East Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where shamanistic practices are still very much alive. These and other issues were taken up by the international team of sociologists, anthropologists, and historians of religion from Japan, South Korea, Russia, Brazil, and the United States.

After opening remarks on the first day by Watanabe Manabu, then director of the Institute, and Paul Swanson, who served as general coordinator of the project, gave an overview of the research since 2010. In it he noted that the original title, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in East Asia*, gradually gave way to a comparative approach. In the various conferences and colloquia that were held, a consensus naturally emerged that Pentecostalism in Asia might best be analyzed in light of indigenous spiritualistic traditions—namely, Shamanism.

In particular, Swanson singled out the major questions that defined the shift

of focus: What is Shamanism? How do we view Shamanism in contrast to Pentecostalism? How do we define the shamanistic elements within Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity? How does one conduct an academic analysis of Shamanism and Pentecostalism given that Christian believers reject the connection?

First Session: Pentecostalism in Korea and Japan

“The Rise of Korean Pentecostalism: A Convergence”

Andrew KIM, *Korea University*

The opening presentation by Andrew Kim raised a number of very important questions that set the stage for the rest of the conference. Why did Christianity become so popular in Korea and not in Japan? Statistics indicate that one-third of the Korean population professes Christianity, in stark contrast to Japan, where less than one percent of the population is Christian. Moreover, in Korea Pentecostal elements are evident in all churches *regardless of denomination*, which seems to be a characteristic unique to Korean Christianity. Whereas in the West Pentecostal practices are limited to Pentecostal churches, in Korea they can be observed in both Catholic and Protestant churches. Even the most conservative pastors who were trained in theological schools in the United States do not hesitate to practice faith healing, prophecy, and other “gifts of the Holy Spirit” in Korea.

Kim argued that the reason for Christianity’s popularity in Korea lies in the inclusion of Pentecostal elements with ties to Shamanism, a tradition that has shaped Korean cultural landscape and has molded religious imagination of Koreans. Beneath surface appearances of a multiplicity of religions in Korea, he went on, there is a single religious commonalty, and that is Shamanism.

Why, then, has Christianity failed to take hold in Japan? Why was Japanese Shamanism not able to provide a similar cultural basis for the acceptance of Christianity as a popular religion? In Kim’s view, Shamanism exists in Japan under the guise of Shinto, even though strictly speaking the two cannot be equated. As a national religion, Shinto has a history of conflict with Christianity. Not so in Korean Shamanism, which was embraced by all religious traditions, Buddhism and Christianity included. Consequently, the turn to Pentecostalism has occurred quite naturally.

Kim went on to draw a loose distinction between *other-worldly religions* like Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam in which the emphasis is on the next world (eternal life, reincarnation, and the like), and *this-worldly religions* like Shamanism, which primarily manifest this-worldly concern with success, prosperity, health, and longevity. In the case of shamanic ancestor worship,

for instance, respect paid to ancestors or the appeasement of the spirit of the dead is believed to bring good fortune and ensure a prosperous life. Koreans are preoccupied with the realization of this-worldly aspirations, and Korean pastors tend to overemphasize divine blessings and divine healing in their attempt to maximize the appeal of Christianity. Doctrinally, they establish the importance of personal intimate relationship with God and teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is necessary to ensure that God grants material wishes. A famous



example is the case with Korean mega-church leader, Yonggi Cho, who preaches the doctrine of “three full blessings of Christ: salvation, health and prosperity,” which are guaranteed under the conditions of personal relationship with God and a “sufficiently strong” faith. In short, the Korean attachment to shamanistic tradition has given Christianity wide cultural berth to incorporate this-worldly aspects into its interpretation of Christian doctrine.

The shamanistic aspects in Korean Pentecostalism are not exhausted by this-worldly concerns. Kim observed that Shamanism also prepared the way for Koreans to accept Pentecostal spiritual phenomena, such as speaking in tongues, healing, and communal participation in ritual celebration. Speaking in tongues and healing have always been familiar practices in Korea in the context of Shamanism, and the step to recognize them in Christian religious experience was a relatively short one. For example, when shamans enter into a trance, they chant ecstatically, not unlike the phenomenon of Pentecostal glossolalia. They also try to interpret their experiences much the same way Pentecostals try to discern the meaning of their speaking in tongues. Moreover, despite the fact that a shamanistic ritual is sacred and solemn, in the end everyone is invited to participate in communal celebration by singing, dancing and clapping.

In summary, shamanistic elements are widely present in Korean Pentecostalism, both doctrinally and practically, confirming the powerful shamanistic influence on Korean Pentecostalism.

DISCUSSION

Andrew Kim’s presentation sparked an exciting debate, particularly around the issue of the religious identity of Christian believers whose Pentecostal expressions are strongly associated with Shamanism. Questions were raised concerning the acceptability among believing Christians of associating Korean

Pentecostalism with Shamanism and Korean Christians with shamans. This, in turn, led to the matter of doctrinal contradictions for a Christian theology that views Shamanism as a “heathen” religion. Biblically and doctrinally, Christianity long dissociated itself from the pagan world and was harsh in its condemnation of fortune-telling, divination, and other folk religious practices. What role can Christian doctrine play in the melding of the two traditions? And has it always been one-way, or has Christianity not also had a role to play in shaping the evolution of Shamanism? Kim responded by noting the many contradictions within the Bible itself, making it easy for Korean pastors to manipulate the selection of texts to suit their purposes. Doctrinal distortions and mischief also need to be taken into account, therefore, when it comes to discussing how shamanistic spiritual patterns were able to blend so smoothly into Korean Christian spirituality and rituals.

Participants also questioned the claim of “uniqueness” for Korean Christianity in its ability to incorporate Pentecostal practices into all Korean Christian denominations, including both mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches. Given that Pentecostal spiritual practices or their equivalent are evident today in a variety of denominations throughout the world that did not traditionally support them, the Pentecostalization of formerly conservative Protestant and Catholic groups may be a more widespread trend and not restricted to Korea.

Nor are Korean Christians the only believers driven by the desire for prosperity and orienting their prayers to this-worldly petitions. Are not these universal features of Christianity? The “gospel of health and wealth” has been around for sometime, even in Christian lands with a much longer history than Korea’s, making it difficult to sustain the claim to uniqueness of Korean Christianity.

In response, Kim countered that in Europe or the United States only ten to twenty percent of churchgoers experience speaking in tongues or other Pentecostal phenomena, whereas in Korea the figures rise to sixty, seventy, or even eighty percent. In other words, while Pentecostalization may be a worldwide phenomenon, what makes Korea unique is the *degree* to which Pentecostal experiences enjoy popularity across denominational lines.

Mark Mullins of Sophia University challenged the basic framework for arguing that Shamanism paved the way for Pentecostal Christianity in Korea while in Japan the diminished influence of Shamanism led to different results. Mullins explained that the influence of Shamanism has always been just as powerful in Japan as it has in Korea, and that many Pentecostal-like practices can be observed among shamans in the Tōhoku area and *shugenja*¹ practitioners throughout Japan. Buddhist temples have Shinto shrines or altars on their grounds and

1. *Shugenja* 修験者 are practitioners of the mystical-spiritual tradition known as *Shugendō*, which incorporates beliefs or philosophies from esoteric Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, and folk animism.

ordinary Japanese go to pray to Buddhist temples for health and prosperity just as the Koreans do. Practices to appease dangerous spirits (*muenbotoke* 無縁仏) are prevalent, and fortune-telling and divine healing are practiced in both folk religions and among the new religions of Japan. Given this data, he concluded, it seems questionable to use the connection to Shamanism to explain the spectacular growth of Christianity in Korea in contrast to Japan.

Kim reemphasized his point that one reason Shamanism did not blend smoothly with Christianity in Japan is that local folk religions have survived under the umbrella of Shinto, whose strong nationalistic tinge has kept Christianity at arm's length. Furthermore, the attribution of "special case" status to Korea is not restricted to the shamanistic cultural background. Indeed, there is no single factor that can be said to have brought about the popularization of Christianity in Korea, so that Shamanism is only one of many contributing elements. Kim also acknowledged the possibility of other theories for the differences in the way Japan and Korea accepted Christianity. In any case, the fact remains that Christianity experienced a grand-scale Pentecostalization in Korea across all denominations, and in Japan it did not. This *is* something special, a reality that sociologists and scholars of religion cannot neglect or underestimate when they study Pentecostalism in East Asia.

James Heisig of the Nanzan Institute inquired about the connection between the shamanization of Christianity and the future of Korean Pentecostalism. If the rise of Christianity in Korea, especially in the last thirty years, can be attributed to a conscious recognition of native religious spirituality—so that being Korean and being Christian are a natural fit for which Pentecostalism provides the glue—does this imply that Christianity will decline just as rapidly as the idea of what means to be Korean changes through secularization and the rejection of traditional superstitions?

Kim confirmed that the results of the 2010 census predict a decline in membership for Protestant Christianity. Overall, Korean interest in religion is on the decline because of globalization, Westernization, and the overturning of traditional values. Just what effect the decline of Protestant Christianity will have on the overall religious landscape of Korea is something we will have to wait to see.

**“The Charismatic Religions of Koreans in Japan:
Shamanistic Rituals and Full Gospel Churches”**

IIDA Takafumi 飯田剛史, *Ōtani University*

Iida Takafumi shared with the participants the results of his research on the religious orientations of two groups of Korean immigrants to Japan: those recruited during the Japanese occupation and those who came after the war. In his study Iida analyzed the social functions of a variety of religious practices observed



among Korean immigrants (Confucian, shamanistic, Buddhist, Christian, and folk rituals, ancestor worship, interment, and the like) and the role they played in the inculturation of the Korean diaspora in Japan.

According to Iida, the older generation of immigrants practice Confucian rituals and shamanistic family prayers to reinforce kinship bonds and social ties within the Korean community in Japan. Shamanistic rituals are mainly perpetuated by the immigrants from Cheju Island in Korea, who practice them in the Ikoma Mountains of Osaka Prefecture. Some of the older wave are Christians who belong to Catholic or Protestant Korean Churches in Japan. The newer wave of Korean immigrants mainly belong to either mainline Protestant churches (Presbyterian and Methodist, among others) or Full Gospel churches, including the Tent Church (1958–1961), the Yoido Full Gospel Church (1973–), the Salvation Campaign of Ten Million Japanese (1979), and the Tokyo Church (1979–).

Iida's research shows that the Full Gospel and other Pentecostal Korean churches succeeded in converting the later generation of Korean immigrants, while their missionary work among older Koreans and the local Japanese population stagnated. Estimates indicate that the newer generation accounts for roughly eighty percent of Pentecostal Korean congregation. He observed that this latter group is marked by a high level of religious zeal, whereas the older generation of *zainichi* 在日 Koreans, have become Japanized over the years and adopted a placid, uninspired "Japanese" religious mentality.

To summarize, earlier Korean immigrants in Japan who have been the carriers of traditional Korean shamanistic culture do not appear to have been attracted to Pentecostal Christianity, despite the efforts of Korean missionaries. In Iida's words:

I cannot find any direct relationship between these two "charismatic"

movements, namely, traditional shamanistic rituals and Pentecostal Christianity. Shamanistic rituals are only popular among the natives of Cheju Island. In the case of *zainichi* Koreans in Japan, I have not been able to trace any particular human relations or social ties between Shamanism and Pentecostalism.

DISCUSSION

Following Iida's presentation, the question of the possible influence of Shamanism on Christianity was raised again with renewed vigor. As Iida acknowledged in his presentation, animism, spirit worship, witchcraft, and sorcery are universally present and the syncretism of shamanistic elements with traditional religions can be observed not only in Asia but also in Europe, South America, and other parts of the world. At the same time, he emphasized the absence of a direct connection between Shamanism and Pentecostalism among Korean communities in Japan. This discontinuity, according to Iida, may be explained by the Japanization of the immigrant community and their weakened ties to Korean culture. He surmised that this may also help explain their general lack of interest in religion as such.

Paul Swanson suggested that, perhaps what we are calling "Shamanism" here—a this-worldly orientation and the pursuit of supernatural intervention for personal benefit—is merely part of human nature and not distinctively shamanistic at all.

Andrew Kim objected that while praying for the fulfillment of earthly wishes may be part of our "universal human nature," Shamanism in Korea still presents a special case. "When society gives weight to shamanistic practices and identifies them as 'our culture' or 'our tradition,' as happens in Korea, people are encouraged to perpetuate these practices and beliefs." This explains why Shamanism has always played a significant role in Korea and has been able to outlive one political regime after the other, even during the early years of the Chosŏn dynasty² when Confucianism was the dominant religion and other religious practices were banned. In fact, no religious tradition that has managed to survive in Korea through the centuries has failed to include shamanistic elements.

As for Japan, is it correct to assume that historically every religious tradition has stood opposed to Shamanism? Do the Japanese people draw a distinction between folk shamanistic practices and traditional religions in order to preserve the "purity" of doctrine? Might it not be that they share the same "universal human nature" and go to Buddhist temples more to pray for favors than to meditate?

Scholars have insisted that shamanistic beliefs in Japan, as in Korea, have

2. The Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897) is the longest-ruling Confucian dynasty in Korean history.

been integrated into traditional religions and are rather categorized as part of the religious life as such rather than being treated as something “separate.” In this vein, support was voiced for Iida’s implication that taking Shamanism as a basic framework to explain the growth of Christianity anywhere may be an oversimplification of the matter.

Mark Mullins intervened to observe that while Buddhism and other traditional religions in Japan have naturally integrated shamanistic elements, certainly the Protestant movements coming into Japan in the nineteenth century were orthodox in their theology and rejected spirit belief and healing for the better part of a century. Most transplanted Protestant denominations from the Meiji period on, he continued, did not accept any kind of holiness movement or divine healing. Pentecostalism was introduced later with the arrival in Japan of the Assemblies of God and Full Gospel churches; prior to that, it was neither widely taught nor generally accepted. If on the other hand, as Andrew Kim has been arguing, even conservative Korean denominations that had previously rejected an experience-centered religiosity accepted Pentecostalism during the postwar triumphant march of Pentecostalism through Asia, how are we to explain the different fate it met in Korea and Japan?

James Heisig suggested we look at differences in the theological education of Japanese and Korean pastors. Christianity is a heavily doctrinally religion, and it only stands to reason that there would be all sorts of contradiction between Shamanism and official Christian doctrine. Japan never developed a theology to incorporate indigenous religious elements to any serious degree. Japanese pastors and churches deliberately kept themselves short-leashed to Western theology. But what has happened in Korea? Is there any evidence that theological schools or seminaries in Korea, Protestant or Catholic, have fostered the creation of an authentically Korean theology, one that would integrate ideas and terminology from the indigenous religious culture into its interpretation of official Christian doctrine? Are there any training seminars or programs in Korea that actively teach theology with a shamanic ingredient?

Andrew Kim expressed doubt that this might be the case. Apart from *minjung theology*—a proletarian “theology of the people”³—there is no other recognizable authentically Korean theology in Korea. *Minjung theology* may indeed be called a product of true Korean culture, but it originated as a political movement within Christianity and its concerns were wide of the present discussion. For Kim, Korean Christians are influenced by Shamanism at a deeper unconscious level that conscious training and education do not touch. Shamanism is there-

3. Minjung theology emerged in the 1970s from the experience of South Korean Christians in the political struggle for social justice.



fore more likely to manifest itself in the personal orientation of pastors and leaders who themselves have been shaped by their cultural background.

A question was raised for discussion by Andrew Kim who inquired why it should be only in Korea that the theology of prosperity has become a mainstream teaching in *all* Christian denominations. If a this-worldly orientation and a desire for earthly satisfaction is as universal an aspect of human nature as we suppose it to be, then how account for the fact that it is only in Korea that this aspect has become predominant in Christianity? Korean pastors unashamedly use health-and-wealth theology to sell their message to the masses, emphasizing that conversion to Christianity guarantees reaping the benefits of health, prosperity, and longevity.

Several participants objected that the theology of prosperity is observable throughout the world, with Christian pastors on all continents using the emphasis on divine blessings as a sales pitch in their proselytizing. Rafael Shoji noted that it is particularly popular in South America at the moment. In contrast, Alena Govorounova pointed to counter-movements within Christianity explicitly criticizing of such theologies of prosperity. In fact, the theology of prosperity is on the decline in many countries precisely because it was recognized as a heresy that deviates from the core message of the gospel.

Andrew Kim insisted that there is no observable Christian criticism of the theology of prosperity coming *from within* Christianity in Korea, or if there is, it is rather insignificant and marginal. According to reliable surveys, the majority of Korean Christians unflinchingly buy into “health-and-wealth” theology.

In fact, often it is emphasized more strongly than doctrines of faith and eternal salvation. Moreover, while the theology of prosperity may be on the decline in the West, in Korea it remains as popular as ever. “By believing in Christ you will reap blessings both spiritual and material”: this has been *the* prevalent message of the gospel as it is preached in Korea. Only a small segment of Korean Christians criticize the theology of prosperity as a distortion of Christian values.

Govorounova raised a further concern that the real situation with the popularity of the “health-and-wealth” theology in Korea cannot be easily examined and that our understanding of what “the majority” believes may be influenced by the way in which we conduct the surveys. Surveys and questionnaires cannot reflect the true level of Christian devotion in Korea—or anywhere else, for that matter—because survey questions tend to be superficial, limiting, and often formulated in a way that predetermines the respondents’ answers. For example, if the question is put, “Do you believe that God wants to bless you with and that you should pray for health, success, longevity, happiness, and the like?”, an answer in the affirmative does not necessarily imply that the respondent is an adherent of the theology of prosperity or is even aware of its biblical foundations. But neither does it imply that the respondent is ignorant of these matters. Thus, the limited perception we gain of the complexity of individuals’ beliefs through surveys renders our categories of “majority” and “minority” precarious. In short, while the popularity of the theology of prosperity in Korea is undeniable, the phenomenon requires deeper analysis.

**“The Japanese Acceptance of Korean Pentecostalism:
Yonggi Cho’s Church in Japan”**

NOGUCHI Ikuya 野口生也, *Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam*

The final presentation of the first session was focused on a particular case study in which Ikuya Noguchi, examined a branch of Yoido Full Gospel Church. Founded by Yonggi Cho in Seoul in 1958, the Yoido Church is the largest Korean Pentecostal congregation in Korea and indeed one of the largest in the world. Its global impact has been enhanced by the establishment of missions in foreign countries, Japan included. The Full Gospel Tokyo Church was founded by postwar Korean immigrants in 1979 and now counts some 1,200 members. In addition, it has branched out to seventy locations within Japan, which qualifies it as a success story of Yonggi Cho’s mission in Asia.

When we look more closely at the main church in the Tokyo, however, we see that Japanese members constitute only eight percent of the entire congregation. Only 100 out of 1,200 members are Japanese; the rest are Koreans, and the central leadership is in the hands of Yonggi Cho. Noguchi analyzed a number of factors that contributed to the success of the Japanese mission in Japan, focusing on the architecture and organization structure of the Tokyo Church building as

well as the community outreach programs and the care system for new members. Noguchi identified three main factors contributing to the success: (1) the overcoming of the language barrier, (2) proselytization by lay Korean members, and (3) the care provided for new members.

The Full Gospel Tokyo Church has been the most well-established social, cultural and educational center so that it could overcome language barriers (by providing simultaneous translation of sermons), mobilize Korean members as lay missionaries, and provide its own care system for new members. Besides institutional factors, the recent intensified social and cultural exchange between Korea and Japan and the emerging popularity of Korean pop culture in Japan have played a positive role in helping overcome historical tensions between the two countries.

Turning to the dynamics of proselytization, Noguchi drew on Clifford Geertz's anthropological concepts of "experience-near" and "experience-distance" to distinguish the way Japanese members perceive Korean Christianity. On the one hand, such institutional and doctrinal factors as central leadership, hierarchical social structure, and the promise of this-worldly benefits are "experience-near" for potential Japanese converts because they are easily recognizable from Japan's own religious traditions. On the other hand, Pentecostal experiential features, such as divine healing and speaking in tongues are "experience-distance" for mainstream Japanese members, even though Korean members and natives of Okinawa natives may find them "experience-near."

As Ikuya Noguchi put it:

I do not conclude that Charismatic experiences play no role in the conversion of Japanese members to the Tokyo Church. Many Japanese converts in my research indicated that they originally joined the church for emotional support and emotional comfort, although later on charismatic experiences became the crucial factor in their decision to convert. In other words, charismatic experience was not the *initial* point of appeal for many Japanese.

Noguchi's emphasized that the success of the Korean missionaries lay primary in their ability to *transcend cultural boundaries and overcome historical tensions* between Koreans and Japanese. This is significant, given the historically strained relationships between the two countries due to the humiliating government policies and brutal treatment the Koreans were made to endure under Japanese imperialism from 1910 to 1945 and the anti-Japanese sentiments that continue unabated in Korea to this day.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion participants questioned the notion of the "success"



of Yonggi Cho's mission in Japan and the Full Gospel Tokyo Church in particular. As James Heisig put the matter:

After twenty-two years in Japan the church has only one hundred Japanese members. Where is the *success* in that? If the largest church of Yonggi Cho's mission in Japan could not convert more than that, it looks to be more a model of failure than one of success. This suggests that those Japanese who are interested in the kind of religious experience offered by foreign missions like Yonggi Cho's are not at all represent-

tative of mainstream Japanese society. If anything, they would have to be classified as a marginal element. What we appear to have is a foreign religion whose mission counts amount the most disastrous in the history of religions in Japan. Anthropologically and sociologically speaking, is there any other way to interpret the data?

The participants broadened the question to consider the notion of "success" in regard to religious conversion and proselytization. In one sense, a mere one hundred Japanese converts in more than two decades may be considered an utter failure, especially in comparison to the new religious movements that have dominated the Japanese religious scene from the modern period. In another sense, however, given that an average evangelical church in Japan typically consists of ten members, the Full Gospel Tokyo Church's number of converts is a success *comparatively speaking*. As Okuyama Michiaki observed, perhaps, we should term it a "diminished failure" or a "better quality failure."

Mark Mullins seconded the suggestion that the "sociology of failure" is more suited to analyzing the case of the Full Gospel Tokyo Church. Within the comparative framework of the Protestant Christianity in Japan, it may be relatively successful, but compared to Sōka Gakkai and other new religions, it is an unqualified failure. We have therefore to ask: Is a quantitative approach the right way to measure the success of religious conversion?

It was pointed out that statistical comparisons are not always accurate. Most religious groups, traditional and new, tend to overestimate their membership by including extended families or irregular memberships into their statistics. Others agreed that membership figures are often wildly overstated and render the date concerning religious conversions suspect. Still, the numbers do help to trace

broad tendencies. Frank Korom observed further that not all religious groups define success in terms of numbers. On the contrary, some religious groups consider their small membership a sign of success, identifying themselves as a “select few” who possess esoteric knowledge hidden from the outside world. Perhaps, we need to dissociate the idea of success from idea of institutional impressiveness or membership rolls, and to think more in terms of quality. This is particularly the case in Christianity, where the “seed” is just as valuable as the “harvest” and the unheralded missionary effort of planting “seeds of faith” is more highly esteemed than the visible “harvest of souls.” What is more, statistics do not reflect the seriousness of conversion or the depth of religious devotion. So who decides what counts as success and what as failure?

In the end, the discussants reached general consensus that Korean missions in Japan can indeed be reckoned successful in terms of “colonizing the colonizer.” Frank Korom referred to what James Scott’s called “the empire strikes back,” in which formerly colonized nations use so-called “weapons of the weak” to further their own effect on their former colonizers. As Noguchi demonstrated, Korean missionaries were able to step over national boundaries and sidestep historical tensions in establishing their Christian mission in Japan.

Second Session: Pentecostalism in Japan

“Brazilian-Japanese: The Religiosity of the *Dekasegi*”

Rafael Shoji, *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo*

Rafael Shoji addressed the issue of the growth of Pentecostalism among the *dekasegi* (出稼ぎ, Brazilian migrants) in Japan and the emergence of a “Brazilian-Japanese” religiosity. His research examined the ways in which *dekasegi* reinterpret their native Brazilian spiritual world to fit the Japanese cultural context and “transplant” Brazilian spiritual beings into the soil of their adopted country. In particular, he focused on the Pentecostal practices of exorcism as they are performed by Brazilian-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) in Japan.

The Brazilian religious worldview has been greatly influenced by indigenous South American religions, as well as by African folk religions, black magic, Catholicism, Protestantism, and any number of other beliefs and sensibilities. Brazilians have an easy time accepting belief in karma and the influence of evil spirits as a sources of illness, accidents, misfortunes, and the like. But the unified spiritual worldview of the Brazilian *nikkei* (日系, those of Japanese ancestry) is still more eclectic and diverse, combining Japanese and Brazilian elements. It is filled with *kami*, Buddhas, ancestors, saints, African-Brazilian entities, and other spiritual beings channelled through spiritist mediums. This hybrid spiritual

world was brought to Japan by the Brazilian *dekasegi* and led to the formation of a *transnational* “Brazilian-Japanese” Pentecostalism.

The UCKG is representative of Brazilian neo-Pentecostal movements in Japan that place a major emphasis on the theology of prosperity and exorcism. Shoji’s research concluded that the theology of prosperity did not gain much popularity among Pentecostals in Japan, since most Brazilian migrant workers expressed the desire to save money for their return to Brazil rather than to “sow” financial “seeds” in the “spiritual soil” of the church’s donation box in the hopes of finding prosperity in Japan. Their more pressing concerns are with maintaining family ties, as expressed in the motto adopted by the Brazilian Neo-Pentecostal churches in Japan: “No success can make up for failure with one’s family.” Hence churches such as UCKG have strived to present themselves as the solution to family strife, illness, and emotional stress.

If the desire for prosperity faded from the religious worldview of the *dekasegi*, exorcism did not. It remains a characteristic feature of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism in Japan as it does Brazil. In his presentation, Shoji showed video recordings of *descarrego* (the exorcism of African-Brazilian evil spirits and entities) as practiced by the UCKG in Japan. The sessions are typically held on Fridays, a day commonly observed by practitioners of African-Brazilian religions in their performance of *Umbanda* religious services or other associated magical practices like *Macumba* in order to commemorate a holy battle against evil spirits.

Descarrego includes the purification and exorcism of houses of worship and places in Japan similar to those frequented by African-Brazilian entities in Brazil, such as beaches, rivers, waterfalls, crossroads, train tracks, cul-de-sacs, and cemeteries. While the main ritual is going on in the church, assistant pastors go outside of the church to make a “strong prayer” in those other places, beating their whips on the ground to exorcise evil spirits and eliminate their influence on the lives of the faithful. By means of this “spiritual combat,” the neo-Pentecostals attempt to symbolically conquer the Japanese geographical places that would be used by *Umbanda* practitioners in Brazil and to set free Christian believers from the evil schemes of the devil. In their theology, the devil, disembodied spirits, and ancestral curses have a significant share in the blame for depression, suicide, psychological problems such as hearing voices and seeing apparitions, and mental distress. The high suicide rate in Japan is explained by Pentecostals as proof of the strong presence of evil. The need for exorcizing ancestral curses, which are the spiritual equivalent of hereditary physical illnesses, is reinforced in Japan by the importance of ancestor veneration.

In his concluding remarks, Shoji explained that the transnational neo-Pentecostal exorcism of Brazilian spiritual entities on Japanese soul is an indication of the emerging global dispute between Pentecostal churches, which are centered on the figure of the Holy Spirit, and animistic religions, whose belief in spirits

does not typically include the Holy Spirit. The carry over of African-Brazilian evil spirits to Japan, Shoji argued, demonstrates the extent to which belief in spirits is an almost universal phenomenon that transcends the place and culture of their origin and allows for transference into quite different environments. This being so, we may need to revise our understanding of the process of inculturation, indigenization, and transculturalism to fit the relationship of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism to Shamanism.

In other words, the migration of natural and shamanistic religions should not be viewed primarily as a transcultural phenomenon but as an adaptation to a new natural environment, a kind of “in-naturalization.” In the human and social sciences we normally speak of a single nature and a multiplicity of cultures, but in the case of Pentecostalism it may be more accurate to speak of a global Pentecostal culture adjusting to a multiplicity of shamanistic religions. The local natural landscapes and animated spirits are so crucial to shamanic beliefs and practices that we may speak of the *transnationalization* of Pentecostalism as achieved through a kind of *transnaturalism*, that is, by the inclusion of new natural environments (occupied by evil spirits) into the same, worldwide spiritual combat. Thus when Pentecostals interpret the submission of all natural spirits to the Holy Spirit, theirs is a *multinatural* strategy. Insofar as Pentecostalism is understood as a shamanistic Christian movement, it cannot simply interpret the spiritual world in such a way as to detach itself from the spiritual entities associated with the natural world in order to bond to a God that exists beyond that world.

DISCUSSION

Shoji’s presentation spurred a lively debate on the possibility of the in-naturalization (as opposed to an in-culturation) of religions in the current context of globalization. If, as he argued, local folk traditions are supported by local nature with its landscapes, seasons and particular flora and fauna, simple transnational adaptations of shamanistic folk religions like Shinto become difficult to sustain, even in an age of the “global village.” Speaking of local fauna, James Heisig recalled a similar problem faced by Catholic missionaries in the central highlands of Papua New Guinea who had to deal with the fact that reference to the “Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world” made no sense to a people who had never seen a sheep. The local equivalent of the lamb would have been the “pig of God,” an idea that sent shudders down the spines of Vatican theologians who saw it as an affront to Christian doctrine.

This raised the question of whether it is easier for animistic religions to adjust to different natural settings than it is for doctrinally-centered religions like Christianity or Islam. Shoji was cautious, noting that attempts to transplant Shinto to Brazil were an utter failure for the simple reason that in addition to

the ethnic elements in Shinto that are incompatible with the Brazilian national spirit, Shinto could not bring itself to connect with a nature and environment different from that of Japan.

Frank Korom intervened to question the motives of the *dekasegi* neo-Pentecostals in Japan who are anxious to exorcise Brazilian demonic entities from the Japanese streets, beaches, and train tracks but seemingly unconcerned with the demonic activity of the local disembodied spirits and deities manifest within native Japanese religions. Would not it be natural for Brazilian neo-Pentecostals to declare a war on Shinto and Buddhism much the same as certain North American neo-Pentecostal churches have done in Japan?

Shoji thought this too big a step for Brazilian migrants in Japan to take at present, given that it pits a minority group against mainstream society. Exorcisms targeted at Japanese religious groups grounded in native religions would surely create conflicts between the Brazilian Christians and Japanese society at large, all of which would not reflect well on the *dekasegi* in general. Targeting Brazilian entities might eventually prove a stepping stone to a larger exorcist agenda, but that would require a larger presence of the Brazilian neo-Pentecostal community in Japan.

Korom further suggested that it would be interesting to conduct research on “the pizza effect,”⁴ that is, the way in which Brazilian neo-Pentecostals returning back to Japan re-acculturate themselves to Brazilian Pentecostal communities. How do returnees return to Brazilian Pentecostal practices? What “Brazilian-Japanese” aspects of their religious worldview can they carry back with them to Brazil? Shoji confirmed that there are neo-Pentecostal movements and churches founded in Japan that have begun to send missionaries back to Brazil, and that further research on their impact would be required to fill out the picture.

**“New Religions and Pentecostalism in Comparative Perspective:
Sociological Observations from the Japanese Context”**

Mark Mullins, *Sophia University*

Addressing the question of why Pentecostalism (or Christianity in general) has been such a great failure in Japan, Mark Mullins set Pentecostal movements against the backdrop of new religious movements in Japan, suggesting the three main reasons for Pentecostalism’s inability to take root:

1. *Bad timing.* Most Pentecostal movements arrived in Japan well after the new religions had saturated the market for experience-based religion with scores of movements focused on healing, spirit belief, and exorcism.

4. The phenomenon of reverse acculturation based on the historical example of pizza, which became popularized by Italian immigrants in the United States and then later returned to Italy where it became part of the “national cuisine.”

In Whitney R. Cross's terminology, Japan is a "burned-over district" for enthusiastic religion.⁵

2. *Foreign orientation.* Pentecostal movements, like other forms of Christianity in Japan, have the negative perception of being "foreign."
3. *Exclusivistic orientation.* Pentecostal movements tend to clash with Japanese religious sensibilities and "combinatory" religiosity.

Within this wider historical context, Mullins presented Japanese Pentecostalism as part of a major historical shift of Christianity from the West to new centers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Currently the Pentecostal "global megablock" of post-denominational independent churches is expanding most rapidly in Asia. Japan and Taiwan are exceptions because, in his view, new religions have not left any "spiritual vacuum" for Pentecostalism to fill. Pentecostalism shares so many functional features with the new religions, both spiritualistic and experiential, that they are virtually interchangeable in the marketplace of religions:

1. *A spiritualistic worldview.* Both share the notion of a living, unseen world to which one can connect, Christian prophets or shamans and the prophets of the new religions are viewed as mediums between the spiritual and material worlds.
2. *An emphasis on healing and exorcism.* This is seen in practices like the *chinkon kishin hō* (鎮魂帰神法, method of healing in Ōmoto), healing performed through various forms of *sazuke* (さづけ, Tenrikyō); healing and purification rituals in Sūkyō Mahikari (お清め, *okiyome*).
3. *Continuing revelation and speaking in tongues.* Prophecy and messages from the other world appear both in Pentecostalism and in new religions, for example *reigen* 霊言 (Ōkawa Ryūhō, Kofuku no Kagaku); *igen* (異言, glossolalia in Tenshō Kōtai Jingi Kyō and GLA).
4. *Religious experience stressed over abstract doctrine.* Both Pentecostalism and new religions tend to simplify doctrine and make teaching and practice more accessible.

Furthermore, from a sociological perspective, Pentecostalism and new religions also may be seen as functional equivalents in terms of their social functions and impact:

1. *Laicization.* The empowering of the laity and equal access to the sacred and the holy.
2. *Egalitarianism.* Leadership opportunities for women.
3. *The creation of new translocal religious communities.* Membership that transcends kinship and parish affiliations, new social networks of support,

5. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950).

social capital, positive relationship to economic development and upward mobility, *hōza* (法座, *Risshō Kōsekai*), group counseling; small groups for Bible study and prayer in Pentecostal movements, etc.

In a word, the new religions of Japan (and Taiwan) had already filled social and spiritual voids for people who seek spiritualistic experiences and social support.

Mullins then went on to contrast “fulfillment theology” and “displacement theology” with respect to conversion and proselytization in Japan. Fulfillment theology stipulated that Christianity not displace what is already present in the native culture but fulfills and enriches it, whereas displacement theology identifies the given religious situation as evil and strives to replace it with the “truth” of the Gospel, the one Holy Spirit, and so forth. This way of thinking pursued by foreign-oriented and foreign-controlled Pentecostal movements and some others forms of Christianity transplanted in Japan clashes with the Japanese way of thinking and its combinatory religiosity—unlike the new religions, which are more open to indigenization, to dealing with issues of the ancestors, and to establishing local leadership. Mullins summarized:

Pentecostal Movements have come to the Japanese religious market too late. What they are trying to sell had already been sold. Over the past two centuries Japan experienced several waves of religious movements (at least four, according to Shimazono Susumu’s framework), which included experiential forms of religious expression, speaking in tongues, exorcism, personal experience of God, social support networks, egalitarianism, and so forth long before the arrival of Pentecostalism. By the time Pentecostal Christian movements had begun seriously to pursue mission work in Japan, most Japanese had been “inoculated” against overly enthusiastic and high-demand forms of religious community. So, it is a *question of timing* above all that explains why Pentecostalism stumbled in postwar Japan and why it was the home-grown, indigenous new religions that attracted the masses in the process of urbanization and modernization.

In his concluding remarks, Mark Mullins suggested that his analysis provides solid ground for explaining the relative failure of Pentecostalism in Japan in comparison with its success in South Korea. The growth of Christianity in Korea is duplicating the growth new religions enjoyed in Japan during the postwar period. This raises the question, Why did Christianity and not new religions become popular in Korea after World War II? Mullins argued that the attitude toward Christianity in Korea was shaped by Japanese colonialism and macro-political relationships with the Japanese empire at the time. Christianity was not the threat to Koreans, Japan was. As a result, Christianity was strongly associ-

ated with liberation because it came from the West and which represented anti-Japanese powers. In addition, many Korean Christians were actively engaged in the independence movement under Japanese rule, further strengthening the connection between Christianity and liberation in the minds of the Korean people at the time.

In Japan, on the other hand, Christianity was for many years perceived as a “foreign” and “evil” (subversive) religion (*gairai shūkyō* 外来宗教, *jakyō* 邪教). It was the religion of the postwar occupying forces and McArthur’s attempts at promoting it did not succeed. The perception of foreignness continues to cling to Christianity in Japan and there is no indication this is likely to change any time soon. While Pentecostalism is the fastest growing denomination *within* the Japanese Christianity today, its numbers are insignificant and its presence ultra-marginal if not outright counter-cultural. It may effectively meet the needs of immigrants, displaced or marginal groups and individuals, but it seems unlikely that Pentecostalism—or Christianity in general—will ever enter the mainstream of Japan.

Mullins went on to argue against the idea that Korea’s shamanistic cultural background accounts for the spectacular growth of Pentecostalism in Korea. Although Shamanism certainly played a major role in the popularization of Pentecostalism by *shaping enthusiastic expression of religion* across denominations, from the most orthodox to the most charismatic, whether it actually affected *the growth* is another matter. Had it done so, we would see a similar picture in Japan, where “Shamanism” and spirit belief are as prevalent as they are in Korea. In fact, the exact opposite is the case. Instead, Mullins suggested, it was the process of urbanization and modernization in Korea and Japan, and its accompanying movement of the masses from rural areas to the cities, that gave rise to Christianity in Korea and to new religions in Japan in the postwar period.

DISCUSSION

In the discussion, Mullins introduced differences between Korea and Japan in terms of their macropolitical relations with Christianity. In twentieth-century Korea anti-colonial ideology led to a “Korean national Christian identity.” In Japan, the longstanding identity crisis—Is it possible to be a Japanese national and a Christian at the same time?—persisted. In particular during the period of State Shinto in the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese Christians struggled to justify their existence in a Japanese society while theologians were trying to find a place in the imperial ideology and remaining a believing Christian. The failure on both counts reinforced Christianity’s counter-cultural image.

A number of participants challenged Mullins’s theory. To begin with, as Frank Korom noted, were there not marginal attempts to indigenize Christianity, such as identifying Jesus as a *kami*? Iida Takafumi questioned Mark Mullin’s

reference to “bad timing” in postwar period Japan. He pointed to the consensus among historians of religion that the immediate postwar period was potentially an ideal time for Christianity to flourish in Japan. For one thing, Shinto had collapsed as a nationalistic ideology and failed as a state religion. For another, the ban on anti-Christian policies was dropped and most Japanese were open to American culture on many levels. How does this constitute “bad timing”?

Mullins acknowledged the brief period of Christianity’s growth during the period of soul-searching after the war, but the number of Christian converts and the overall enthusiasm towards Christianity declined as rapidly as it grew. According to statistics, the average “Christian life span” in postwar Japan was one to two years. Clearly Christianity could not shake off its image as a foreign religion. Mullins also noted that the attempts of some Christian groups in Japan to indigenize have not ended in success. Most Japanese who experimented with Christianity at the time later joined more indigenous new religions like the Buddhist Sōka Gakkai or the Shinto Ōmoto-kyō. Moreover, most conversions involved individuals without the support of family and community. Here again, the contrast with the new religions is telling.

Andrew Kim insisted on the need for a broader theoretical framework, arguing that analysis of the “success” or “failure” of religious proselytization cannot overlook the presence or absence of a strong organized religion. Christian missionaries in Latin America, Africa, and Korea did not face institutional opposition from existing religions, whereas in places like India or the Middle East, the dominant presence of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism represented a major obstacle. Thus, when Christian missionaries came to Korea in the modern period, traditional religions had been suppressed by the Confucian Chosŏn dynasty without constituting Confucianism as a religion proper. In the case of Japan and China, the strong presence of Buddhism, Taoism, or Shinto hindered the spread of Christianity.

The discussion turned to the question of how Shamanism and Pentecostalism relate to the natural world and today’s growing environmental consciousness. James Heisig questioned the human-centered interpretation of Shamanism prevalent at the present conference, noting that historians of religion define Shamanism and other animistic religions primarily in terms of their relation to the natural world. The rituals of shamanistic and folk religions have always reflected the natural environment, flora, fauna, and the change of seasons. Certainly in Asia this has always been the case. How does it come about then that we so easily discuss animistic religions in such anthropocentric terms? Might not this reflect a more general situation in which traditional animistic religions have come to be underrepresented both in academia and in the public sphere?

It was further noted that Andrew Kim’s presentation of Korean Christianity was focused on the personal benefits gained by certain human-centered func-

tions of Shamanism. In doing so, the animistic relation to the natural world was passed over. This is not surprising, given that Evangelical Christianity has tended towards a counter-environmentalist position and provided a religious foundation for much right-wing opposition to global warming and the active pursuit of environment-friendly policies.

This led to a discussion on who is the voice of Shamanism in Asia, and which religions today are the voice of the natural world. As one participant put it, might it not be that the dominant voice Shamanism has in Korea today is the one Christians give it? And what about Japan? Shinto has never appeared on the world scene as a powerful pro-environmentalist religious movement. In fact, there is a noticeable lack of academic literature on Shinto's relationship to ecophilosophy or environmentalism, symbolized by that fact that the one volume still missing in the Harvard *Religions of the World and Ecology Series* is the volume on Shinto. Is there any chance that Shamanism in Asia could actually find its own voice outside of Christianity and other religions that draw on it?

The participants agreed that the revival of Shamanism in the past decades has been taking place mainly as part of the New Age and neo-paganism movements. The cult of Mother Earth, the cult of Gaia, and other New Age eco-centric philosophies have been promoting the sense of sacredness of the earth and the natural world. Public figures like Michael Harner conduct Shamanism workshops and there is even the possibility of earning a higher degree in Shamanism. All these efforts have contributed to the globalization of Shamanism as an environmentalist force. Still, as Heisig observed, the environmentalist aspirations of *traditional* Asian folk religions, such as Shinto, remain underrepresented today.

Third Session: Charismatic Religion in Russia and Sri Lanka

“Returning Revelatory Spirituality into the Social Scientific Study of Pentecostalism: On Discourse Constructions of Pentecostal Identities in East Asia and Beyond”

Alena Govorounova, *Kansai University*

In her presentation, Alena Govorounova emphasized the importance of preserving the first-person experience and personal narrative as valid academic tools in the sociology of religion. When analyzing the dynamics within religious communities, the sociology of religion takes into account all kinds of social aspects, including demographics, statistics, migration patterns, political factors, and economic factors. Yet, it tends to ignore completely the experiential dimension of religious experience. As we embark on the academic study of Pentecostalism, we cannot ignore the fact that Pentecostalism is an experiential religion first and

foremost, and this is crucially important for the understanding of the formation of the Pentecostal religious identity and its accompanying subculture.

What are the factors that make Pentecostalism the fastest-growing Christian denomination in the world? Why do so many traditionally conservative and doctrine-heavy Christian denominations (Baptists, Methodists, Calvinists, and Catholics, among others) become so quickly Pentecostalized despite their traditional opposition to overly enthusiastic expressions of religion? What draws people towards Pentecostal congregations and affects their decision to convert?

Govorounova sought the answer to these questions in the “direct personal experience of God” that Pentecostalism centers on. Spiritual experiences of the supernatural invigorate doctrine, and this is what attracts people. The problem is how to study these experiences with the tools of the sociology of religion. Simple third-person objectivity is not enough. Only analysis of the personal narratives of believers can show us how they construct their sense of spiritual reality, their shared religious identity, and their unique religious subculture.

This raises the problem of how to distinguish authentically “pneumatological” experiences from simple sham, and on what grounds certain experiences are said to belong to the exclusively Christian Pentecostal doctrinal framework and others to be excluded from it. Pentecostal revelatory theology (pneumatology) centers on the so-called “nine gifts of the Holy Spirit” summarized in Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (12: 1–13), the experience of which authenticates doctrine. Prophecies, “word of knowledge,” divine healings and exorcism, among others, constitute a specific “prophetic subculture,” having its own theory and praxis, special language, instructional literature, symbolism, and so forth. Perhaps the most commonly recognized revelatory phenomena take the form of a “message of knowledge or wisdom,” which represents a supernatural response to an individual’s inner thoughts, or private undisclosed information (telepathic communication), or “prophecy” (precognition of forthcoming events). Such paranormal events are held to be consistent with biblical accounts and often lead to life-altering decisions which may be helpful or harmful for the individual and the community.

To study this in the concrete, Govorounova undertook fieldwork at the “Prophetic Café” of the Arise Tokyo Christ Church in Tokyo. There she interviewed former fortunetellers, occult healers, and other occult practitioners who converted into Christianity as a result of their experience of the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” at the café, whose pastor and staff claim to be “Holy-Spirit anointed.” In turn, they join forces to counter the “other” that menaces their Pentecostal identity, namely, non-Christian spiritual traditions, like Shamanism, animism, occultism, and divination by recounting their personal narratives of the voyage “from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.”

She went on to note that while the social and natural sciences (particularly,



neuroscience) may explore these “revelatory phenomena” as indicators of human potential, in general the above-mentioned phenomena have either been deliberately excluded from the scientific framework in the course of development of mainstream modern science, or else they have been marginalized as “metaphorical” or “paranormal.” The scientific interpretation of revelatory spirituality, which is of crucial importance for understanding Pentecostalism, is approached as a by-product of the evolution of human consciousness, as a social psychological response to the environment or as a response to basic

human instincts like fear, hope, and the need for recognition. In short, prophetic revelations, visions and other revelatory phenomena are seen as psychopathological deviations.

Govorounova went on to report on fringe scientific research on supernatural shamanistic phenomena conducted by the Research and Development Center of the Foundation for the Law of Time in collaboration with Institute for Scientific Research in Cosmic Anthropoecology (ISRICA), an organization within the Russian Academy of Sciences. The ISRICA scientists claim to have devised reproducible experiments that prove the existence of a “torsional energy field” that lies beyond electromagnetism and gravity and travels faster than the speed of light. Within this “flow of time,” the past, present, and future all exist at the same time and in all places. According to ISRICA scientists, this discovery enables us to explain all psychic phenomena, including the paranormal abilities of Siberian shamans. The ISRICA research team conducts experiments by placing experimental subjects inside hypo-magnetic chambers where the magnetic field is greatly reduced, and report that changes in the magnetic field alter the intellectual and spiritual properties of humans, giving them powers of clairvoyance, telepathy, precognition, and the like.

“Shamanism is not a religion. It is a special phenomenon of the human intellect and spirit,” claims ISRICA director, A. V. Trofimov. As for the indifference with which the Institute’s work is met, he goes on:

The tendency of modern historical civilization has been to separate society from science and to isolate science as a sociocultural mechanism apart from its genuine reality as cosmoplanetary thought stream. The scientific establishment with its totalitarian legalization has become just one more

belief system, so that new science is denounced as false science, while the defenders of “science” dress themselves in an invisible but infallible cloak of belief, not science.

After explaining the ideas of the ISRICA in further detail, Govorounova wrapped up her presentation by returning to the interface of Christian theology and the sociology of religion with a series of questions: How is it possible to reintroduce revelatory spirituality into the academic discourse? What would be the next step? What kind of paradigm shift would it require? Should we revise the contemporary materialist-dominated scientific paradigm in order to reestablish the academic validity of the transcendental? Should we return to a medieval theocentric or premodern dualistic paradigm? Should we further test the biocentric paradigm or the hypothesis of a noosphere?

The sociology of religion may not be equipped to test revelatory experiences in laboratory conditions, but it would benefit greatly from giving more weight to the first-person perspective. At least it would warn against sweeping generalizations regarding the experiences and motivations of Pentecostal believers, even as they avoid the pitfalls of Christian apologetics?

DISCUSSION

To open the discussion, Paul Swanson challenged the idea of academically validating first-person accounts of revelatory experiences, asking how we establish a framework for testing the authenticity of personal narratives. Let us say subject A claims to have had a revelatory Pentecostal experience, subject B a revelatory shamanistic experience, and subject C claims to have been abducted by aliens. How do we evaluate their claims? Are we to throw out the third-person perspective and yield to first-person interpretation?

In response, Govorounova argued that the sociology of religion is not interested in the *ontological claims* of religious believers’ revelatory experience as such, but only in how religious subjects create their shared religious identities and subcultures. Personal accounts can help generate interpretative models that do not suffer from the kind of limited, prejudiced, or reductionist third-person models prevalent today. Moreover, excluding the “insider perspective” may yield contradictory results. For example, Kim came to the conclusion that Pentecostalism succeeded in Korea because of the incorporation of shamanistic cultural elements into their worldview. But Rosalind I. J. Hackett⁶ arrived at the exact opposite conclusion, affirming that Pentecostalism succeeded in Africa and beyond because of a discourse that demonized and scapegoated Shamanism and other indigenous folk religions as part of its tactic of “spiritual warfare.” Is

6. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, “Discourses of Demonization in Africa and Beyond,” *Diogenes* 50/3 (2003): 61–75.

Pentecostalism Shamanism-friendly or Shamanism-hostile? Without including the first-person experiential perspective of actual Pentecostal believers, there is no way to answer the question.

James Heisig further challenged Govorounova's proposal of an interdisciplinary framework that would combine the sociology of religion and theology:

First-person narration is anecdotal. Anecdotes are fine. Like all data, they have to be listened to and their mode of discourse analyzed. Without them research is incomplete. But the problem arises when an anecdote becomes authoritative or serves as the foundation for an argument concerning something outside the world in which the anecdote was created. It is the authority granted to the anecdote that is the problem, not the anecdote itself. For example, we cannot logically make one person's claim to have experienced Jesus Christ authoritative and in the same breath deny that authority to someone who believes he was abducted by aliens. By the same token, we cannot on the one hand affirm the value of a Christian's experience of the Holy Spirit, and on the other deny it to the shaman who sees the Holy Spirit as a demon to be exorcized. The difference between theology and the sociology of religion is that theology takes religious experience and makes it authoritative on the basis of a doctrinal tradition accepted on faith, and this is something the scientific position does not allow. Is it not asking too much to attempt a fusion of theology and the social sciences?

In response, Govorounova reiterated her opening question: How can we reintroduce revelatory spirituality into the social scientific study of religion without falling into the trap of Christian apologetics?:

In my presentation, I set theology aside and placed pneumatological revelatory experiences within the framework of psychic phenomena in order to ask how they might be analyzed scientifically. I discussed how shamanic hysteria may be approached from a biocentric standpoint, not from the perspective of a Christian theologian. My suggestion was that the research of the ISRICA scientists, who propose that Siberian shamans have access to the noosphere or planetary collective consciousness could be applied to the revelatory experiences of Christian prophets. Whether God exists or not is wide of the question I was asking. My only aim was to argue maybe the models and patterns prevailing in the sociology of religion might be challenged, revised, expanded and potentially enriched by the introduction of narrations of first-person experience."

“Charisma and Community:

A Brief History of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship”

Frank Korom, *Boston University*

The story of a holy man named Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaiyaddeen offers a sociological case study of the emergence of the charismatic faith leader who put his extraordinary powers to work in founding his own spiritual organization. Frank Korom’s research into this study suggests a spiritual leader who fits perfectly into Max Weber’s sociological model: a charisma-endowed individual using his unique gifts and powers to sway people to his point of view, thereby disseminating a particular worldview that is either a reformed version of a preexisting tradition or a radically new vision that has no precedent. A new movement entails a new cult or sectarian community, which gradually matures into a denomination and in some cases, the institutionalization of the founder’s unique qualities in what Weber referred to as an *Amt*, the bureaucratic office in which those qualities are housed.

Why is the story of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen important? Korom explains:

While we know much about the history of religions in general, we know less about what transpires on the ground during the formative years of a new religious movement’s inception, and the longer we wait, the murkier reconstructing events become.

The case of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, who began his ministry in Sri Lanka, moved to the United States to establish a spiritual educational center in Philadelphia, and was posthumously enshrined, can help us throw the light on the practical process of institutionalization of new religions.

According to oral records Korom uncovered, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen is a holy man who emerged from the jungles of southeastern Sri Lanka sometime between 1940 and 1942. As a charismatic leader, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen staged three “comings” during his career that loosely correspond to the stages of institutionalization of religion described by Max Weber. In his early northern Sri

Lankan phase, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen presented himself as a typical Hindu *guru* or Sufi *zinda pir* (living saint), characterized primarily by pragmatism (farming, healing, settling disputes, etc.) The second phase set in when he began to minister to the urban elite in Colombo and elsewhere on the island as a spiritual-philosophical



guru, resonating with the theosophical movement popular in 1970s. The third phase coincided with his arrival in the United States, where he appears as a typical perennial mystic, in line with the New Age universalism and anti-dogmatism popular in the 1970s. In time, however, he came to emphasize a distinctly Islamic message focused on a fourfold pattern of spiritual development: *shari'ah* (revealed law), *tariqa* (path), *haqiqa* (truth), and *ma'rifa* (gnosis). In Bawa's view, a more perfected state of union with God results in *sufiyya*, a state of constant remembrance (*zikr*) and contemplation (*fikr*) which transcends the "four religions" of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam, each of which corresponds to a different level of truth and spiritual development. Korom sees the present Bawa-established community as having undergone the fourth stage of institutionalization, or what Weber termed "the routinization of charisma," which involves the establishment of an office marked by stricter rules, a strengthening institutional infrastructure, and a dissemination of the founder's teachings. Korom summarized:

To understand Bawa's appeal correctly, one must trace his historical development from his humble local roots to his rise to international fame. The ultimate goal of my project is to look at the development and flow of his transnational spiritual movement to understand how this unusual and somewhat anomalous individual's charisma led to the formation of an idiosyncratic Sufi community far removed from the founder's point of origin... How does an unknown recluse rise to fame and establish himself as a global authority on matters of the soul?... What strategies did Bawa and his "handlers" employ to manage his image as he moved from an eclectic guru in Sri Lanka to a normative Sufi *sheikh* in the United States?

Korom expressed the hope that his current research will ultimately contribute to our understanding of how a marginal "cult" evolves into a "sect," and then ultimately into a "church" as it ages and matures doctrinally through time.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Following Korom's presentation, Alena Govorounova wondered whether a "Shamanism-versus-Pentecostalism" framework allows us to examine in depth the full human experience of religious adherents and to understand the dynamics of their relation to "the spiritual world" from their own first-person perspective. The Weberian notion of charisma may help us understand the *fact* that Hindu gurus and Christian leaders use their unique gifts and powers to sway the opinions of others, not *how* they actually do it. What are these gifts and powers and how do they become doctrinally justified? More importantly, how do spiritual leaders *experientially* define what counts as an *authentically*

Pentecostal (or shamanistic or esoteric, or what have you) spiritual experience? Only then can we ask how Pentecostals, for example, deal with the disturbing similarity between their own experiences and those of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen and his followers.

Korom reported that Bawa was said to possess telepathic, prophetic, and other paranormal abilities that are indeed similar to those claimed in Christian Pentecostal experiences, Alena went on. Evidently, shamans and fortune-tellers in Asia fall into a trance and other altered states of consciousness; they prophesy and provide healing sessions, and the same phenomena we can see at work in Pentecostal churches. On the surface, and from a third-person perspective, these “supernatural” phenomena appear identical, but if we look at the first-person discourse constructions of Christian and non-Christian (shamanistic) identities, differences begin to emerge. For example, in Pentecostal theology, non-Christian (shamanistic) “spiritual gifts” are real phenomena, but their power comes from a source other than the Christian God: they are “demonic counterfeits.” With such claims, Pentecostal Christianity constructs its identity as a spiritualistic religion by disassociating itself from Shamanism and other animistic religions and identifying them as spiritual enemies. And, of course, the tables can be turned. In any event, how can we hope to compare the *experiential* aspects of Shamanism and Pentecostalism, and the subsequent construction of a discourse of identity?

The participants agreed that, perhaps, a classical comparative approach is not the most effective method for the study of Shamanism and Pentecostalism as experiential religions. James Heisig commented that, perhaps, the concept of “identity construction” may not be precise enough, and that the real question perhaps is about different *levels of explanation* constructed by various groups to account for experiences that, in their first-person narrative form, appear to be identical but in reality are not.

Korom stressed the importance of anthropological case studies in the analysis of experience-based religions, where discrepancies in interpretation are too obvious to ignore. In a sense, all religions are exclusivistic and this is one reason anthropologists of religion today prefer to speak of *Shamanisms* in the plural, where each religious group has its own distinctive form and its own level of interpretation concerning their practices. Pentecostalism is not alone in its exclusivism and its rigid demonization of non-Christian phenomena. Shamanism, too, may interpret Christianity and its “Holy Spirit” as a demonic power that needs to be exorcised. To sum up, a methodology centered on the case study takes particular religions on their own terms without submitting them to a comparative approach from the outset.

Mark Mullins questioned Govorounova’s claim that first-person experience and personal narrative need to be reintroduced into the sociology of religion. Is

it really so that the sociology of religion does not take Pentecostal or shamanistic spiritual experiences seriously enough? Is it true that sociologists quickly move on to the categories, comparisons and other sociological methods without regard for first-person experience? Does any responsible sociology of religion take certain aspects into account and leave out others altogether? In his own case, Mullins reported:

I want to know what the world means to the Pentecostals. I want to listen to their narratives and understand how they experience the Spirit and construct their spiritual worlds. This is one important dimension of understanding the phenomenon because these experiences prompt religious adherents to go out to the world and evangelize. But the more important sociological question here is: What is the place of that group in the larger social setting? How can we put these groups in context? We can certainly say that part of the explanation for why Pentecostals are growing more rapidly than mainline evangelical groups is that they are much more serious about their faith, that they take religious experiences seriously, and that they are eager to share them with others. But this is only one dimension of the reality that we are trying to understand.

Mullins went on to note that when sociologists begin comparing religious groups, they are looking for the answers to the questions such as when, where and how religious groups grow. From the sociological perspective, religious groups grow in the context of rapid social change, social crisis, or social mobility; they also grow because of the natural birth rates or fertility rates. All these factors need to be taken into account and contextualized. Only then can comparison begin. It is not enough to simply say that the rapid growth of Pentecostalism is a result of powerful personal experiences. Might it not be that religious growth is more a matter of being at the right place at the right time? Certainly we need to take spiritual experiences into account as part of reality we are trying to understand, but this does not mean we have to say “Amen” to the interpretations of them that accompany first-person narratives.

In response, Govorounova reiterated her insistence that the inclusion of first-person accounts enriches our sociological models. To give an example, Andrew Kim reported that Korean Pentecostal pastors incorporate indigenous shamanistic elements into their theology, in order better to convey their message in a Korean cultural environment. But this overlooks the practice of “spiritual warfare” taught in Pentecostal seminaries and churches where believers are required formally to renounce all prior non-Christian spiritual practices, associated with magic, divination, occultism, animism, astral projection, fortune-telling, tarot cards, astrology, horoscopes, involvement in cults, New Age, and other Eastern mysticisms—all “works of the devil” that impede “baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

Many Pentecostals may agree that Shamanism is present in Korean churches in forms of fortune-telling and divination, but they actually perceive it as a “pollution” of Christian doctrine. Thus while it may appear from the outside as if syncretic tendencies in Korean mega-churches are widely accepted, in reality the spread of Shamanism may be causing serious internal tension within the churches. Based on Kim’s presentation, Govorounova suggested that Pentecostal multinational churches in Korea have been transformed into “multinational corporations” that play by the rules of the secular world and focus more on the accumulation of wealth than on fidelity to doctrine. Even if this is the case, corruption is not the whole story. A closer look at the personal narratives of believers may show resistance to this trend.

Kim countered that the extraordinary popularity of the mega-churches in South Korea is seen as a positive sign of the ability of the churches to network beyond their own local communities. He further questioned the formal renunciation of non-Christian practices in these churches, pointing to surveys indicating that fully fifty percent of Korean Christians still practice ancestor worship.

In response, Govorounova suggested that the old distinction between *real* and *nominal* adherence to the faith may be at work. Ninety percent of Russians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians, but the majority of them are not even remotely familiar with the most basic tenets of Christianity. So, too, as Christianity grew in popularity in Korea and became a vehicle for social networking and business connections, the boundaries between church and secular society have become blurred. Numbers alone are deceptive, as are the apparent ties between religious belief and religious culture.

Kim objected that as sociologists and anthropologists of religion we often have to rely on survey results and, in fact, this is one of things scholars are best at. Do sociologists of religion really need to “get into the minds of religious believers?” And even if they do, their tools of choice are surveys and questionnaires, which in turn are analyzed to search for patterns. Other participants chimed in to confirm the need for a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods in the sociological study of religion.

Noting that the success of the Pentecostal movement worldwide is strong counter-to the secularization theory, Awazu Kenta suggested that the question of the sociological interpretation of Pentecostalism needs to be complemented by the question of the significance of Pentecostalism for the self-understanding of the sociology of religion. Clearly religion and spirituality in many forms continue to play a significant role in the lives of human societies, and our sociological methodologies must grow and keep pace with the evolution of that role.

Regarding the “doctrinal pollution” addressed by Govorounova and the syncretism and creolization that Shoji discussed in the Japanese-Brazilian context, Korom observed that all religions wrestle with the idea of “purifying” their

teachings and exorcising alien or hybrid elements in the search for authenticity. Authenticity is not easily had; it is contested through constant, dialogical interaction between hybridity and purification, religion and custom. What is curious, however, is that “purity always invites more hybridity,” as the historian of science Bruno Latour put it.⁷ Korom argued that Latour’s anti-modernist model may be applied to the religious context as well. Thus there seems to be an ongoing dynamic of “pollution versus purification” within both folk religions and official religions, allowing the two to coexist but always in a state of struggle.

This brings us to an even bigger question: How do we distinguish folk religion from classical or normative traditions? The ongoing debates within the religious communities as to what is acceptable and what is not within the frame of a given religion, both doctrinally and practically, are fully acknowledged. But the constant and creative tension going on between folk and doctrinal religions at the ground level tends to be ignored by normative tradition and yet never fully rejected. As an example, Korom cited Webb Keane’s work on the conversion strategies of the Calvinist mission in Indonesia over the period of a hundred years.⁸ One of the things the Calvinists did in their attempts to convert Indonesian animists to Calvinism was to distinguish between religion (*agama*) and custom (*anshara*). The missionaries allowed their Indonesian converts to practice rituals of animal sacrifice for the purpose of the distribution and consumption of meat as long as they excluded the liturgical worship of offering the sacrifice to the ancestors through verbal performance. In this way they removed the *religious* element from the animistic ritual but allowed for the *customary* slaughtering of the animal within the context of communal exchange. This may be seen as an attempt to “purify” indigenous religious practice from its animistic elements without destroying the practical side of the ritual.

James Heisig challenged Korom’s earlier proposition that “all religions are exclusive” as well as Takafumi Iida’s claim that monotheistic religions have oppressed shamanistic animistic elements throughout the world. Is it really true that religions define themselves through the exclusion of the “other”? The prevalent religious mentalities in Europe and the United States do not hold in in Asia. The debate over “multiple belonging” that preoccupies religious thinkers in Europe and the United States attracts little attention in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Quite the contrary, it is by and large taken for granted. In this regard, Govorounova’s checklist of non-Christian beliefs and practices that Christian Pentecostal converts are asked to give up is incompatible with the Asian religious mentality. If Christianity were strictly to adapt the Western attitude to

7. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

8. Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

multiple belonging, Christianity would never have taken root in Asia and many other parts of the world. In fact, the suppression of animistic, shamanistic, and other native religions in Western Christianity takes place only within the most doctrinally-controlled, institutionalized settings. Christianity in the West could not have survived, and cannot continue to survive, without the shadow side of an unofficial animistic tradition that includes alchemy, Gnosticism, superstitions, folk tales, and magic. To assume that monotheistic Christianity has suppressed animistic and shamanistic elements throughout the world one has to focus on a rarefied form of Christianity, far from its living, pulsating reality. Thus it comes as no surprise to find animism thriving in Christian Korea.

To illustrate his point further, Heisig gave an example of a Full Gospel Church in South Korea, whose members originally met on the shamanistic mountain, where they built their huts and held weekend retreats –but they still remained Christians. In Europe this would be considered paganism or witchcraft but in Asia this kind of multireligious belonging is almost normal.

Govorounova objected that the ties to Shamanism in Korea are a tactic of “spiritual warfare” similar to the exorcism of evil spirits from various geographical locations described by Rafael Shoji in his presentation on Brazilian-Japanese Pentecostalism in Japan. Korean Pentecostals see it as their mission to go to shamanic sites to exorcise demonic spirits by the power of the Holy Spirit and “take over these places for the Kingdom of God.” She also resisted the suggestion that multireligious belonging could in any way be compatible with the Christian Pentecostal worldview. She insisted that Asia’s Pentecostal Christians take doctrine as seriously as it is taken in the West and are engaged in an ongoing debate over what native beliefs and practices are acceptable. In this way, they forge a kind of “multireligious identity” which, as in the case of the Calvinist missionaries in Indonesia, does not compromise their Christian faith.

She cited the example of mind and body healing techniques originating in Eastern cultures such as yoga, brain yoga, meditation, and even the martial arts. Western Pentecostal Christians add these techniques to the checklist of forbidden practices, whereas Asian Pentecostals are much more open to these practices as long as they are “revised” to eliminate “alien” spiritual elements. Thus one finds a de-mystified form of yoga that preserves the physical exercises but leaves out the “cleansing of chakras and connecting with the Mind of the Universe.” Similarly, certain martial arts have been reformed to retain the physical practice but leave out any mention of “emptying the mind and achieving the state of *mushin* 無心 (no mind).”

Korom intervened to elaborate further on the conventional distinction between religion and culture. He quoted the Dalai Lama, who has encouraged people to practice Buddhist meditation for its healing benefits while at the same time discouraging adherents of other religions to convert to Buddhism

simply for the sake of its meditation techniques. He sees the healing function of meditation as a secular phenomenon open to everyone regardless of religious affiliation. Hence, the fact that many American Jews and Christians practice meditation does not mean that they have converted to Buddhism.

In this same vein, Korom went on, many phenomena that have religious origin may be considered simply cultural and need not have religious connotations or threaten religion. The conventional distinction between religion and culture prompted remarks among several of the participants. Mark Mullins observed that for many religious groups and individuals, purity of doctrine is not a concern, nor is drawing a clear line between religion and culture. There are Jesuit priests in Japan who practice Zen meditation without any fear of having compromised their faith. The conventional religion-culture distinction is also potentially dangerous in the political context, as witnessed in those politicians brandishing the distinction for their political gain. As an example, Mullins reviewed his present research on revivals of State Shinto or civil religion and the attempts of the Liberal Democratic Party in 2005 to force a revision of the articles in the Constitution dealing with state and religion.⁹ Erasing of the distinction between religion and culture may potentially result in discriminatory policies and manipulation of the government funds in favor of religious institutions, which would redefine themselves as “cultural units” under the proposed revision of the Constitution.

Rafael Shoji challenged the participants to give careful consideration to how we use the terms religious syncretism and hybridity. He pointed out that the general attitude towards syncretism among the conference participants appears to be positive, but among Pentecostal Christians themselves, the terms have a negative connotation insofar as they perceive other religions (Shamanisms, animisms, witchcraft, and so forth) as their “enemy” in a “spiritual warfare.” Shoji argues that Pentecostalism and Shamanism, though apparently in opposite camps, actually share “a very similar spiritualistic worldview.” This does not imply that the two are syncretized, but only that they are what Mullins calls “functional equivalents.” If indeed Shamanism and Pentecostalism have developed parallel understandings of “a spiritual world as alive formless, intelligible beings,” then the “positive syncretism” and “positive hybridity” may in fact be no more than parallel interpretations of that world.

Brazilian Christianity, he went on, looks on the surface to be highly syncretic or shamanic, but in reality this is not the case. What happens is that, on the one

9. Article 19: Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated. Article 20: (1) Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. (2) No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious acts, celebration, rite or practice. (3) The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

hand, Brazilian Christians accept the shamanistic spiritual worldview as *real*, that is, they recognize and affirm it in a kind of “positive syncretism.” On the other hand, they make clear doctrinal distinctions between Christianity, the “true religion,” and Shamanism, “the religion of the “enemy (i.e., the devil).” It would therefore be “negative syncretism” to accept the shamanistic spiritual worldview and religious practices without making it doctrinally or conceptually distinct from Christianity. The fact is, he insisted, Pentecostalism and Shamanism are mutually exclusive, and their perceived combination in some kind of “syncretism” or “hybridity” is nothing other than a partial recognition of the other’s spiritual worldview as a correct interpretation of reality. Pentecostalism and Shamanism do *not* mix or incorporate each other’s elements; they simply happen to *mirror* outlooks on the unseen spiritual world as populated with angels, demons, ancestor spirits, and other spiritual entities.

What role, then, do first-person narrative have to play? Shoji suggested that objective and accurate data on the spiritual world as the experiencing subjects see it require the methods of hard science, perhaps along the lines of neuroscience suggested by Govorounova. But in the social sciences, all interpretation, whether first-person or third-person, is necessarily limited and biased.

In response to Shoji’s suggestion of a shared worldview, Govorounova reiterated the results of her research at the “Prophetic Café” to insist that first-person narratives do not preclude the question of truth. In her interviews, she asked individuals how they can be sure that the prophetic or supernatural knowledge they receive comes from the “right’ source” and not from the false prophesy the Bible warns us against. This question, traditionally referred to as the “discernment of spirits,” was unnerving for church members and pastors who had been raised in a Christian environment and never had any reason to challenge their spiritual experiences. In contrast, church members who had been fortune-tellers and mediums prior to conversion were quick to identify the difference. They reported the exhaustion they felt after a session of divination or healing, and the uncertainty over the complete accuracy of the information they were passing on. After their “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” however, they reported a sense of joy and peace, and an assurance of the truth of the “revelations of the Holy Spirit” that came to them. Similar responses came from those who were clients of mediums and fortune-tellers. In sum, Govorounova observed that her fieldwork supported Shoji’s proposal that what is perceived as a syncretism of Pentecostalism and Shamanism is in fact a common acceptance of a spirit world with radically different interpretations.

Heisig accepted Shoji’s suggestion, but warned that the “proof” of truth based on personal narrative can go both ways. He cited the example of Zambian Archbishop Milingo who turned to Shamanism for reasons not unlike those cited by Govorounova’s subjects for conversion to Christianity. Korom also urged the

participants to take into account such factors as pragmatism and utilitarianism when analyzing the reasons that motivate people to turn to supernatural forces, Christian or otherwise: “People are generally pragmatic, and if they get sick, they go to a healer; if this does not work, they go to a Christian miracle-worker, then to the hospital, and so forth, until the problem is fixed. Is this syncretism or just simply pragmatism?”

Rafael Shoji objected that Brazilian Pentecostalism strongly condemns this kind of “spiritual shopping.” The message of the Pentecostal preachers in Brazil is clear: if you go for healing to an occult practitioner, your problems will only get worse. Granted people tend to be pragmatic, too many Pentecostal communities stress spiritual and ritual purity to allow for sweeping generalizations about their pragmatism or utilitarianism. This is another reason for including data from participant observation.

Roger Mushi suggested that while the focus of the present conference has been on the relationships between Pentecostal and shamanistic communities, we should not overlook the importance of relationships between individual Pentecostal leaders and shamans on the personal level. In Africa, he ventured, ninety percent of Pentecostal leaders have connections with local witch doctors and shamans. This has raised the criticism—on television programs in the Congo, for instance—that Pentecostal pastors conduct healing sessions by drawing on the power of demonic spirits under the guise of calling on the Holy Ghost, and financially reward collaborating shaman.

Rafael Shoji objected that such accusations may be ungrounded, especially if they come from the persons unfamiliar with Pentecostal spirituality and doctrine. He offered the example of a pastor of Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil who had practiced African-Brazilian witchcraft and healing prior to his Christian conversion. Although he maintained a shamanistic spiritual worldview, he has condemned any association with spiritual practices outside of the Christian context and claims that true healing is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. On the surface, Christian spiritual healing looks similar to shamanistic healing, and a Pentecostal pastor in question might be accused by shamans of using their shamanistic power to heal while he himself believes he is conducting healing sessions through the power of the Holy Spirit. In any event, quick judgments may overlook a variety of factors that make appearances deceptive.

At this point the question of Pentecostalism’s and Shamanism’s relation to nature was raised again. Participants discussed the differences in the understanding of “charisma” as a defining factor in the individual’s relation to the world in the Western and Eastern religious traditions. In Western Christianity, the term tends to imply contact with a “Holy Spirit” that transcends the natural world, whereas in animistic and shamanic religions charismatic individuals are

so called because they are fully in touch with the natural world and therefore can channel higher powers. In general, these latter traditions are thought to be closer to nature than monotheistic religions are, but actually Shamanisms and animisms are no less transcendentally-oriented than Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. In fact, the idea of the immortal soul, which was introduced to the West through the Greek tradition, was influenced by Asian shamanistic practices of astral travel, bilocation, and other paranormal spiritualistic phenomena.

So why the assumption of a closer relationship to nature and the worship of nature in Shamanism? Why do Pentecostalism and Shamanism appear to be in opposite camps on environmental questions? Why do Christian evangelicals in the United States pressure politicians to deny the phenomenon of global warming and disapprove of radical environmentalist policies? Is it because the natural world does not have a role in the Christian “drama of salvation” and as such is irrelevant to Christian Pentecostal religious agenda? More importantly, how is it possible to overcome this apparent polarity between Pentecostalism and Shamanism in regard to nature? To what extent is it possible to shift the balance in Christianity away from what lies *outside* the natural world in order to highlight those aspects of the tradition that draw humanity closer to what lies *inside* the natural world?

Rafael Shoji proposed that the polarity be explained in terms of the geography of religions. Unlike folk religions, Christianity does not have close ties to the natural environment because in the Abrahamic tradition the symbol of this world is the desert—the absence of living nature. This helps explain why the transplantation of native religions is a much more difficult missionary task than the transplantation of monotheistic traditions. Shamanisms and animisms do not relate to nature in the abstract but always in terms of a concrete locale. It also explains why Western sciences, historically rooted in the Abrahamic traditions, are founded on the assumption of one nature and many cultures. Overall, the more global doctrinal orientation of monotheistic traditions makes them more flexible and adaptable to foreign environments.

This leads us to ask how Christianity relates to the local natural environment when it is carried to foreign lands. Shoji argued that Christian Pentecostal movements see their mission as *the spiritual purification of the natural environment*, focusing on cleansing local environments of evil spirits. In their rituals of geographical exorcism, Pentecostals strive to evict evil spirits from the land and reduce their destructive power on the lives of inhabitants. They see it as a “holy battle” between the Holy Spirit and the “powers of darkness.”

Korom noted that the conception of the “purification of the land” is not exclusive to Pentecostalism. Indian immigrants to the United States perform similar purification rituals by sanctifying local landscapes and equating them with sacred places in India: the Mississippi becomes the Ganges, Mount Rainier

becomes Kailas, North America turns into Mother India, and so forth. The notion of an impurity in the land, animals, and humans that needs to be ritually purified has deep roots in animistic traditions. Still one can ask what distinguishes them from Christian purification rites?

Andrew Kim challenged the consensus that Shamanism is presumably more environmentally-friendly than other religions. He argued that while nature-worship and spirit-belief are certainly present in contemporary Korea, the orientation of Korean Shamanism remains primarily human-centered and utterly pragmatic. Shamans seek to manipulate spirits to obtain healing and other practical benefits. Saving the planet is not their primary agenda.

Govorounova stepped in to challenge the assumption that Shamanism is more conceptually immanent and this-worldly than Pentecostalism. She proposed that neither shamans nor Pentecostals hold a dualistic worldview. On the contrary, their paranormal spiritual experiences make the spirit world very real and tangible to them and their sense of reality is holistic. The transcendent is one with immanent reality, not a mere doctrinal abstraction. She went on to resist the idea that political candidates in the United States who identify themselves as Christian evangelicals represent Pentecostalism across the world, and that their attitudes towards environmentalism may be taken as a benchmark of global Pentecostalism. What is more, Christian evangelicals do not normally use biblical verses in debates about global warming; their discussions revolve mostly around the reliability of the scientific evidence. At the same time, many professional environmentalists, not just evangelicals, draw on the doctrine of *stewardship* as a biblical foundation for their desire to protect the planet. Still, the environmental agenda is not central to Christianity, but for that matter, one would be hard pressed to find a Shamanism in which this is the case either. The stress on aesthetic appreciation and the beautification of nature, as Kim demonstrated earlier, is certainly present, but it lacks a political dimension. Neo-paganism and New Age movements appear to be the only active spiritualistic activists promoting ecophilosophy and environmentalism today.

At the end of the discussion the participants questioned again the inherent relationship between Pentecostalism and Shamanism from a variety of angles. They tested the notion of religious universalism against Shamanism and Pentecostalism and argued whether Shamanism may be considered a religion proper or a universally present cultural expression of a basic human longing for transcendence. Okuyama Michiaki argued that the spread of world religions like Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism would have been impossible without the incorporation of local spiritual elements. *Ryōbu shintō*¹⁰ 両部神道 in Japan

10. *Ryōbu shintō* 両部神道 is a syncretistic school that combines Shinto with the teachings of the Shingon sect of Buddhism.

and New Age movements are good examples of this. In this sense, the notion of universalism may be essential to the understanding of the relationship between Pentecostalism and Shamanism. Iida Takafumi agreed that while Christianity doctrinally struggles with the acceptance of Shamanism, there is an obvious universal presence of shamanistic spirituality around the world that may have paved the way for other religions. The challenge is identifying it with some precision.

Heisig noted that official Catholic doctrine does not deny the reality of shamanistic experiences but it marginalizes Shamanism into the realm of superstition, assuming that all superstition is harmful. Certainly when they are used to control and manipulate the weak and the downtrodden, they are. But there is also a sense in which superstition is a cry of the soul for something more than the established religion is prepared to deliver. It rises up from unquenched desire that dry scholastic doctrine and formalized ritual cannot respond to.

Korom recalled Émile Durkheim's remark that "magic has no church" to reintroduce Kim's treatment of Shamanism as a "non-religion." If, as Kim argues, Pentecostalism is most successful in those parts of the world where there is no strong organized religion able to withstand alien religious elements, then the classification of Shamanism as a non-religion makes it easy for global Christian Pentecostal movement to move in and assimilate shamanistic beliefs and practices. Korom referred to the similar conclusions of Richard M. Eaton who described a pattern of "relatively easy proselytization in the absence of a strong



religious opposition” in the context of Eastern India, where the rapid process of Islamization was aided by the fact that Hinduism was not well organized in these areas. Since the local population was primarily taken up with tribal animistic rituals, Islam was able to move in and take over. Islamic missionaries began pragmatically by clearing the land, starting farms, introducing agriculture, meeting people’s practical needs, and thereby gaining people’s trust. Only then did they gradually introduce their teachings. Thus, contrary to popular belief, the Islamization of Eastern India was not brought about by fire and sword but through a slow process of assimilation that took advantage of a preexisting spiritual vacuum. Both Eaton and Kim suggest useful sociological models for understanding how missionary efforts succeed in the absence of a strong organized religion in the host country, and how local shamanistic or animistic elements get absorbed into the doctrinally-centered religions.

Mullins supported the understanding of Shamanism as a form of spiritualistic religious expression preparing the way for Pentecostalism. He referred to David Martin’s work on the reasons behind the expansion of global Pentecostalism. According to Martin, there is a layer of shamanistic religions around the world in many cultural contexts on which Pentecostal expressions of Christianity draw. Pentecostalism thus resonates with local traditions in a way that more rationalized, overly cognitive Protestant missionary movements could not. “Whether we call it universalism or a common layer of folk religiosity,” Mullins concluded, “there is something out there that does not fit into our hard categories of world religions, and Pentecostal expression seems to have tapped into it in such a way as to satisfy the spiritual needs of many people.”

The participants discussed a number of other questions not directly addressed in the present conference but possible areas for future examination. They included:

1. The relation between Esoteric Buddhism (*Shingon mikkyō* 真言密教) and Shamanism in Japan.
2. Catholic forms of Pentecostalism in East Asia and beyond.
3. The fate of Pentecostal Christianity in China, Taiwan, and other Asian countries.

Closing Remarks: WATANABE Manabu

In his closing remarks, Watanabe Manabu acknowledged that the given theme of the conference, “Pentecostalism and Shamanism in East Asia,” was not defined clearly enough, which left the discussion adrift at times. At the same time, the wide range of philosophical, theological, doctrinal, experiential, psychological, anthropological, and environmentalist approaches confirmed the

fact that the study of Shamanism and its relationship to Christianity in this part of the world merits further discussion. He expressed his hope that this dialogue will continue in the future and that the Nanzan Institute may be a part of that dialogue.