

The Ambivalent Effects of Modernization on the Traditional Folk Religion of Japan

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INTRODUCTION

The permeating impact of modernization on the daily life of the Japanese people has wrought serious changes in their traditional religious beliefs. The purpose of this inquiry is to seek out concepts and a methodology to facilitate understanding of the special characteristics of a new religious consciousness that has emerged in the religious culture of Japanese society due to the influence of modernization.

In order to clarify the nature of the problem, it may be helpful to review briefly the steps that led to this study. Since 1969, a small group of Japanese social scientists have gathered regularly in Tokyo to hold a series of seminars under the general heading "Study group to review theories of modernization."¹ My interest in these seminars arose from a desire to understand the cultural transformations that took place in the last stage of modernization in terms of the way in which the "ultimate concerns" that constitute the basis of Japanese folk culture have changed. In an earlier paper growing out of participation in these seminars, I dealt with some of the basic considerations such a study would entail (Munakata 1974). The present paper focuses on a more

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1. The participants in the "Study group to review theories of modernization" have been interested in developing a theory of modernization applicable to non-Western nations. In the past, theories developed for cross-cultural studies were chiefly based on models of European and American society. The participants felt that in order to understand better the modernization of Japan, close attention should be paid to the unique aspects of Japanese culture. Initial results of the research undertaken by this group were published in Tsurumi and Ichii, eds., *Shisō no bōken* [Adventure in thought], 1974.

specific area, namely, the transformation process undergone by traditional Japanese folk religion during modernization.

Definition of terms. The three terms central to the title of this study are: "folk religion," "modernization," and "ambivalent effects." I will take up the definition of "folk religion" in a later section, but here let me devote a word to the meaning of the remaining terms.

"Ambivalent effects" assumes a situation in which an object is affected in some manner or other from without and, as a result, undergoes change. The change is not a simple, straightforward, causal reaction but is complex and unpredictable—so complex, in fact, as to defy comprehension. In such a case the object can be described as "ambivalently affected." If, for example, a situation is hypothesized in which traditional beliefs collapse completely as a result of the permeating influence of modernization, we could *not* call this an example of ambivalent effects. If, on the other hand, the collapse of only a portion of these beliefs leads to a new religious consciousness and, ironically, to the reinforcement of some beliefs, then the causal process leading to this contradictory, diffuse result qualifies as an "ambivalent effect."²

As for the term "modernization," the definitions proposed by sociologists, philosophers, and literati show that the term has elicited no general agreement as to its meaning. In Japan too, the gamut runs from an affirmation of modernization to the more conservative view that it is "the civilization that attacked the deepest part of the Japanese spirit" (Kamei 1972, p. 226). We have yet to establish a firm point of view for undertaking a comprehensive survey of the modernization process of Japanese society. The phenomenon entails a number of ambiguous points,

2. Ambivalent reactions grow labyrinthine. Primary ambivalent effects produce secondary ambivalent effects. Viewed logically, these originally many-sided, diffuse effects are like an explosion of physical energy. In terms of social phenomena, this type of "explosion" leads to a state of complete anomie.

and one imagines that it will take considerably more time for social science to produce an acceptable definition of the term. In this paper its meaning has been narrowed, in accordance with the theme of the investigation, to indicate five types of change in social structure:³

1. Movement of populace from agrarian areas to city environs and, as a result, high concentration of the national population in major cities.
2. Decline in importance of kinship bonds and ties to the land.
3. Increase in the number of social institutions that perform limited and specific functions and, especially, expansion of bureaucratic organizations.
4. Increase in the number of roles based on the principle of contract and achievement.
5. Increase in the applicability of legal norms and extension of the range of permissiveness in social actions.

Methodology. In the methodology used in this paper, modernization is not looked on as a process motivated by specific cultural values. Instead, it is regarded as a process in which a functioning industrial society continues to undergo structural changes while at the same time adhering to the value of self-perpetuation. Traditional religious belief can be thought of as a basic part of the already established culture. Our task, therefore, is to analyze the effects of modernization on traditional religious culture.

This methodology contrasts with the one Max Weber employed in his *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. In Weber's method, religious beliefs concerning the transcendental world were treated as independent cultural factors, modern capitalism coming into being as a result of a process in which these beliefs were translated into actions in this world. Puritanical behavior, that is to say, derived from the Protestant ethic (Weber 1947). The methodology employed in this paper focuses

3. For standards of modernization, the reader is referred to John W. Hall, "Changing conceptions of the modernization of Japan" (1965).

instead on the process in which the values of secularized industrial civilization produce social change that has a serious impact on the established order of the traditional religious realm. If Weber's methodology is thought of as a classic example of the use of logico-meaningful causal analysis to explain social changes occurring at an early stage of the modernization process, the methodology of this paper can be considered a "reverse logico-meaningful causal analysis" suited to the discussion of problems arising from social change in a later phase.

TRADITIONAL FOLK RELIGION

Cultural variation and ultimate concerns. It is important, when initiating a discussion of the traditional religious beliefs of a people, to examine the nature of the cultural phenomena that encompass religion. The leading German cultural sociologist Alfred Weber states that in its original essence all human culture "is nothing but the expression of the effort of the souls (*Seele*) of various historical bodies (*Geschichtskörper*) seeking salvation" (1951, pp. 73-74). This basic characteristic of "cultural activity" stands in juxtaposition to the pragmatic and technological utilization of the natural world that characterizes "civilizational activity." Cultural activities invent or select symbols out of that natural environment to create worlds of meaning. These symbols express the anxiety, fear, and longing for salvation that is the mark of human spirituality, and with time they are refined and become institutionalized. The most important of these symbols and institutions are those that have a religious coloring and express the "ultimate concerns" of the culture.

"Ultimate concerns," as the phrase implies, are those concerns that involve men most profoundly. The term is usually considered synonymous with "god." The form assumed by "god" or "the holy" varies from culture to culture. The Christian scholar Rudolf Otto, for example, expresses "the holy" as the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans" (1950). The eighteenth-century Shinto thinker Moto'ori Norinaga, writing in his *Kojikiden*

[Commentary on the *Kojiki*], defines god or the kami as having three natures: "It is extraordinary. It is exceedingly virtuous. It is greatly fearsome." Moto'ori deemed that man in his finite knowledge and wisdom could never totally know the true nature of the kami. A god has the power not only to provoke fear and trembling in man but also to seduce him with love and stir his soul.

As Paul Tillich emphasizes (1963, pp. 215-218), it is important to distinguish carefully between concern with the holy, that is, "ultimate concerns," and the Ultimate itself. For while the human spirit possesses interest in the Ultimate and attempts to relate to it via symbols, it is impossible for man to know the Ultimate completely. To confuse one's ultimate concern with the Ultimate is, in Tillich's words, to erect an "idolatrous holiness" (1963, p. 216).

A clear understanding of this distinction is essential not only for the theologian and philosopher but also for the person engaged in close analysis of the dynamics of human culture. The fact that "ultimate concerns" represent in the final analysis only one aspect or part of man's attempt to describe the Ultimate explains why we see so many different ways of describing ultimate concerns among the various human cultures of the world. Simple as it may sound, this is why over time and space, against the background of different climates and historical experiences, many different expressions for "ultimate concerns" have emerged. This fact offers a basic answer to the question of why there is so much cultural diversity in the world. It also suggests that the dynamics of a "cultural world" has a unique rhythm that is basically incongruous with that of a "civilizational world." An understanding of this point is essential if we are to comprehend the subject of this paper, the relationship between modernization and religious faith.

Immanentist religious culture. On the basis of this fundamental understanding, let us seek a basic concept that will elucidate the

relationship between modernization and indigenous folk religion. To begin with, it can be stipulated that the formation of the various cultures of the world required the existence of different "historical bodies." In these bodies, individual ultimate concerns became systems of cultural symbols. Religion, moreover, took the experiences of and reactions to the Ultimate and formed them into symbol-laden rituals. Religion is, generally speaking, a cultural phenomenon that gives ultimate meanings to the world and is also deemed to show the way to the resolution of ultimate problems (Kishimoto 1961, p. 17).

Given this understanding, we turn now to an attempt to conceptualize the characteristics of the religious beliefs that form the central axis of a culture formed in the "historical body" called Japan. This requires developing a concept that is suitable for purposes of cross-cultural studies and that covers the basic characteristics of the entire symbolic system of ultimate concerns created in Japan over centuries of historical experience. We must not forget to include the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, all of which were added to and absorbed into the original folk religion. The focus of our analysis must remain, nonetheless, the realm of indigenous Japanese religion. This realm is to be found in the religious beliefs that sprang up naturally and spontaneously from within the traditional religious life of the people. This is the material to be used for our concepts.

The basic characteristic of Japanese folk religion can be referred to as that of an "immanentist religious culture." This contrasts with the basic characteristic of Western Christianity, which is that of a "transcendentalist religious culture." Needless to say, these extremely simplified contrasting concepts are no more than abstract classifications designed for conceptual purposes. Real religious phenomena frequently assume forms that are an admixture of both characteristics, and I do not wish to imply that immanentist religious culture is unique to Japan. Many scholars have pointed out that similar cultures are found throughout the countries of Asia (Iijima 1972, chaps. 4-5).

Japanese folk religion represents only one variant among a large category of immanentist religions.

It will be useful to consider first the meaning of this term in juxtaposition with the characteristics of transcendental religious culture. The immanentist world is based on religious sentiments that grow up in the natural setting and climate of Japan and in the daily experiences of the communal life of farming and fishing villages. In particular it is characterized by ancestor worship and nature worship. It contrasts with, for example, the Christ as the self-revelation of a transcendent god, for immanentist religious culture is based on religious sentiments created by man living in a set natural environment. Ultimate concerns are represented by the kami who are believed to be immanent in this world. In a transcendental religious culture, as in the case of Christianity, this world and its inhabitants are the creation of a transcendent god, and man and god are bound together in a bond of love. The purpose of this world lies ultimately in serving the greater glory of this god, and the natural world is therefore thought of as an object to be used and controlled by man. According to the sentiments of immanentist religion, although the gods reside in the world of souls, they have ready access to this world and are therefore immanent. According to surveys conducted in traditional Japanese farming village communities, daily labor, family living, and village activity are by no means merely activities involving the use of instruments. Instead, they are activities of deep religious meaning (Hori 1962, pp. 241–250). In these villages, there are a number of rituals, festivals, and religious objects that represent the immanent gods' continual intercourse with village life. Indeed, the rites of ancestor and nature worship are symbolic ceremonies giving concrete imagery to this intercourse. In a passage concerning the welcoming of the souls of the dead at the Bon festivals held throughout Japan in the summer, Yanagita Kunio says in "Senzo no hanashi" [About our ancestors] that beliefs in an immanentist religious culture are learned gradually through a long, experi-

ential process—or in his words, through “unconscious transmission” (1962, pp. 108–110). Consequently, such beliefs do not exist in the form of logically organized dogma. They are sentiments that enrich and give meaning to the totality of life (Cassirer 1935, pp. 109–110).

In an immanentist religious world, nature possesses a symbolic meaning that reinforces the folk religion. In other words, the believer projects his religious faith onto the natural environment. Yanagita cites Sai-no-kahara on Tobishima island, Sado, Niigata Prefecture, as a natural setting the Japanese have endowed with religious meaning (Yanagita 1962, p. 128). According to the oral legends of the islanders, the rocks that surround a great cliff that stands in the ocean opposite Sai-no-kahara have meaning as “the stepping stones to the other world” for the souls of the dead. At the heart of this free and readily comprehensible way of endowing nature with meaning are the religious sentiments characteristic of an immanentist religious culture. The same basic religious sentiments are also observable in the worship of *yama no kami* (“kami of the mountain”) and *ta no kami* (“kami of the ricefield”) in farming villages and in the worship of *umi no kami* (“kami of the sea”) among fishing villagers or inhabitants of remote islands.

Parallelism is another characteristic of immanentist religious cultures. This is a type of religious faith that depicts the life of the soul in the afterworld in terms of the basic patterns of life in this world. The afterworld takes this world as its standard. The use of life experiences to create similarity between this world and the next is characteristic of worldly centered immanentist religions.⁴

Anthropologist Florence Kluckhohn describes Japanese immanentist religious culture from a different point of view. Her

4. For example, the path to adulthood is celebrated on the following ritual occasions: the seventh day after birth (*shichiya*); a shrine visit thirty or thirty-one days after birth; *kuizome* or “first food” on the hundredth day after birth (rice is prepared and fed to the baby in symbolic representation of its having been weaned; in actuality, however, the family only goes through the motions of

description is in terms of man-nature relationships which she divides into three categories: man's subjugation to nature, his harmony with nature, and his mastery over nature. Japanese culture belongs to the second category. In this category there is no real separation between man, nature, and the supernatural. "One is simply an extension of the other, and a concept of wholeness derives from their unity" (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961, p. 13).⁵

This characteristic is also observable in Shinto thinking. Shintoists believe in the immortality of the soul and posit the existence of two realms, one for the living and one for the dead. To describe the latter they use a variety of words, for example, *takamagahara* ("the heavenly fields"), *tokoyo no kuni* ("the world beyond"), *yomi no kuni* ("the land of darkness"), and *kakuriyo* ("the hidden realm"). They do not, however, think of this realm as a heaven or utopia in an afterlife that is divorced from this world. The worlds of the living and the dead are enveloped

feeding the child—who will not be weaned for some time); visits to the shrine at ages three, five, and seven (*shichi-go-san*); and marriage.

The soul of the deceased is honored on the seventh, thirty-ninth, and hundredth days after passing on to the other world, and rites are observed in the following years after death: 1, 3, 7, 13, 17, 23, 33, and 50. After the fiftieth year, the individual soul is considered to have merged with the realm of the spirits.

This type of parallelism is elaborated on by Herman Ooms in his "The religion of the household: A case study of ancestor worship in Japan" (1967).

5. A comparison of the dichotomy of religious cultures employed in Kluckhohn's paper "Man-nature orientation" may be set forth as shown in table 1.

TABLE 1
TYPES OF RELIGIOUS CULTURES CORRELATED
WITH ORIENTATIONS TO NATURE

Basic Types of Religious Cultures	Man-Nature (-Supernature) Orientation
Immanentist	Subjugation to nature
	Harmony with nature
Transcendentalist	Mastery over nature

SOURCE: Data from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961, pp. 12-13.

within the one immanentist religious realm. Consequently, at either thirty-five or fifty years after death, the souls of the dead come together and merge into one great body of souls. Before undergoing this unification, they make frequent visits to the world of the living. The souls of the ancestors return to the homes of their descendants every year at specified periods or on special occasions when ceremonies are performed to call them back. A number of symbolic rituals are carried out in the family house in order to receive the visiting soul. In advance of the Bon Festival of the Dead held according to the traditional calendar on 13 July, food is specially prepared, the house and its furnishings are given a thorough cleaning and polishing, and new wardrobes are made ready. The normal work routine is suspended, and the children are reminded to be on their best behavior. In some farming villages, the farmers will not do scything in the fields for fear of injuring the feet of their ancestors as they make their way across the land to return home (Yanagita 1962, p. 110). Yanagita cites four reasons to explain why Japanese feel a closeness and intimacy with the world of the dead.

First is the feeling that even though a person has died, his soul continues to reside in Japan and does not go far away. Second is the feeling that there is constant contact between this and the other world and that the dead return not just at the time of the annual festivals but that they can, at the instigation of either party, be recalled to the world of the living without difficulty. Third is the feeling that the wishes one expresses on his deathbed will inevitably be fulfilled; and fourth, many people believe that in order to fulfill these wishes, the dead not only establish plans on behalf of their descendants but also, by being reborn into a second and third life, actively work to carry them out (Yanagita 1962, p. 120).

Yanagita considers the belief in rebirth found among Japanese to differ from the Buddhist idea of the transmigration of the soul (1963, pp. 560–561). In other words, the belief concerning

the two realms of the living and the dead is a synthesis of the images of this and the other world drawn up on the basis of "this-worldliness." The two realms are intimately and inseparably related. There is no acceptance of the concept that death cuts off or ends the relationship between the dead and the living. The souls of the ancestors do after a number of years merge into a larger spiritual body, but until that time a reciprocal intercourse is maintained through the media of such rituals as ancestor worship and the Bon Festival. This depiction of ancestor worship is, admittedly, an ideal one. In practice, the motivations for the perpetuation of these rituals is not confined to mere immanentist religious sentiments but has its origins in complex social and psychological factors as well.

In comparison with the beliefs that have been practiced for centuries as part of the daily life of the villages, formal Shinto doctrine is considerably more dogmatic. For example, Shrine Shinto amplifies the basic principles of immanentist religion and offers a full-blown explanation of the meaning of the individual's role in society. Responsibility for individual social behavior derives not from a belief in a transcendent god but from a sense of duty requiring one to execute the role assigned him within the framework of the "holy world" of the immanent gods. Social roles within immanentist religious society are neither secular, instrumental, nor contractual. Rather, the performance of one's role is at bottom a form of service dedicated to the well-being of one's community and family—the pillars of an immanentist religion. In addition the existence of evil in life is looked on as the work of the gods of the "world of darkness" (Ono 1973, pp. 51–75). Calamity and ill-fortune are avoided by the performance of rituals like *misogi* (purification by water) and *harae* (purification by the waving of holy objects). Shinto admits of none of the Christian ideas of sin, atonement, and divine forgiveness. In Shinto the word *matsuri* ("festival") has an all-important meaning. A *matsuri* is a religious ceremony held in order to commune with the gods; *matsurigoto* (which once

meant administrative action but now means festive acts) are performed on behalf of the gods to assure their prosperity. In order to perform *matsurigoto* or festival roles properly, the rites of purification cited above are performed. Formal Shinto thought thus consists of a systematized, and what should be called an "ideologized," version of the nature-centered religious values of the indigenous folk religion. In this sense the political ideology of national Shinto has evolved from a prototype immanentist religious culture found in the daily life of the Japanese people and in the beliefs they have transmitted across the ages.

RELIGIOUS SOCIAL CHARACTER

Modernization and immanentist religion. A discussion of the effect of modernization on the kind of traditional immanentist religion seen in Japanese society raises a number of important problems. For example, was Japanese modernization the product of an internal change, or was it the result of influence from without, that is, from Western civilization? If the latter, what aspects of Western civilizations were transmitted to Japan? What made it historically possible for, in particular, the rational and technological production aspects of contemporary Western civilization to be absorbed into a culture based on an immanentist religion? How was the mutual incongruity of Western technological civilization and Japanese religious culture overcome and integrated into a modern nation? What changes took place in the traditional religious sphere as a result of other social changes induced by the introduction of Western technological civilization? In particular, what were these changes in the late stage of the modernization process when the basic changes in the social structure resulting from modernization had penetrated into the daily life of the Japanese?

In this paper we are especially interested in this last question. Earlier we broke down the meaning of modernization into five types of change and stated that it was the purpose of this inquiry to seek a conceptual framework for analyzing the effects of mod-

ernization on traditional folk religion. Let us consider this matter more fully.

It may be supposed, first of all, that the natural environment, social institutions, and symbol systems essential to the transmission of a traditional immanentist religious culture did not escape being influenced by the changes that modernization wrought in the social structure. The effect of urbanization and the development of industrial civilization on a society's religious culture is not confined to Japan alone. In 1966 the theologian Harvey Cox stated in his book *The secular city* his view of the way the development of the technopolis has changed the relationship between man and the God of Christianity (pp. 386-387). According to Cox, this relationship, in the age when individualism and city culture arose from man's liberation from tribal society, was expressed by the phrase "I and Thou." God was looked on as the Other who possessed the authority to rule over the individual. In today's ever-expanding urban society, however, God and man stand alongside one another. Cox calls this a relationship of "alongsideness." He suggests that contemporary man may be able to meet a god who is a "you," thus forming a new relationship of "I and you." Cox's book subsequently became the subject of much debate—an indication of the extent to which even in the Western world urbanization and the development of technological civilization have affected not only the physical environment but also religious culture. One wonders what problems these changes pose for Japan, where the extent of urbanization is without parallel elsewhere in the world. One wonders if the shock sustained by the immanentist religious culture of Japanese society was not more direct and more serious than that undergone by Western Christianity.

It is ancestor and nature worship that formed the basis of Japanese religious life, and these beliefs naturally grew out of and were fostered by the farming, fishing, and mountain villages scattered throughout the "monsoon-type climate" of which Watsuji Tetsurō speaks (1963, p. 134). Folk beliefs had their

roots to a great extent in kinship bonds and ties to the land; their religious symbols and ceremonies were intimately and inseparably tied to social and natural conditions. Consequently, the destruction of these historical kinship communities by the advance of modernization meant the destruction of the "vessel" that had enveloped and nurtured this folk religion. As kinship communities broke down and ties to the land were loosened, there arose a situation in which traditional beliefs "died like plants that have lost their soil" (Ono 1973, p. 53). The social changes that resulted from the development of industrial civilization—for example, the nationwide expansion of industrial technology, the modernization of agriculture, the penetration of urban civilization into regional cities, the emergence of the nuclear family, the increase of urban cities divorced from nature, the appearance of "delimited participation" in which membership in rational organizations is based on contractual principles, the rapid secularization of the daily life of farming and fishing villages—made it extremely difficult to assure the perpetuation of traditional folk religion. The expansion of industrial and technological civilization has meant the gradual disappearance of Japanese immanentist religious culture. The two cultures were basically antithetical. As modernization took place rapidly, so did the changes in the religious culture. As a result, these changes have yet to be totally integrated. Though they cannot be grasped simply in terms of generation differences, an overall view reveals that the age groups of the elderly, the middle-aged, and the young reflect the effects of social change and that each generation has created a relatively different religious culture. Moreover, as time goes on, the religious culture found at the bottom of the demographic pyramid will, it may be supposed, gradually advance in rank and increase in number of adherents.

Changes in religious social character. An analysis of the effects of modernization on religious culture can be undertaken from a variety of viewpoints. In this paper the concept of "religious

social character” is used as a method for grasping the total picture of the metamorphosis of a “new religious consciousness” that rapidly grew up in Japan under the influence of modernization.

The concept of “social character” has been previously employed by Erich Fromm, Abram Kardiner and Karen Horney, and others, but it became best known in 1950 with the appearance of David Riesman’s *The lonely crowd* (p. 18). Generally the term “personality” is used in social science to mean the total self with all its biological and psychological elements. “Character” refers to that part of personality formed from a posteriori social experiences. “Social character” refers to character that is socially shared by a group of persons who, by virtue of age or social and cultural environment, possess similar social experiences. “Religious social character” is, therefore, that part of social character that relates to religion. The study of social character is based on the premise that social experiences elicit from the raw materials of human personality a character indispensable to a person’s survival in society. Social character is therefore often equated with social conformity in the socialization process, but it does not exclude the possibility of individual creative adaptiveness.

The types of religious social character of interest here are conceptualizations of the several types of character found among the different generations living in contemporary Japanese society. It would be inappropriate to assume that these abstract typological concepts can be applied in a direct one-to-one relationship to differences in age. For example, a conceptualization of religious social character according to the age groups of those born prior to 1900, those born between 1900 and 1945, and those born after 1945 might not be particularly significant. We should first conceptualize an “ideal type” representing a specific traditional religious culture and define religious social character on the basis of this type. This procedure will then make it possible to follow the major steps by which religious culture

changed in the course of modernization and to identify the types of religious social character that correspond to these steps.

In an earlier section we referred to the traditional religious culture of Japan as immanentist. Consequently, we may think of the corresponding religious social character as immanentist. The immanentist type believes that the gods dwell in this world; he fosters the worship of ancestors and nature; and he practices a life style based on the religious values inherent in such forms of worship. This type perceives the divine in the midst of nature. He refuses to treat natural objects purely as instruments, and he feels that contact with nature involves latently religious meaning. In the social environment that produces this type, kinship bonds and ties to the land are strong, and human relations and organization are heavily imbued with religious meaning. Given a self-sufficient culture, this type will learn his society's religious sentiments unconsciously, and his commitment to his faith is often stronger than the faith of a man who has acquired his beliefs through formal study of dogma or an intellectual decision. Though the immanentist type is representative of a highly provincial type of culture, he is not necessarily intolerant of foreign cultures or religions. So long as the basic beliefs of his religious community remain unscathed, his community will be open to outside beliefs (Hori 1955, p. 77).

The second type of religious social character is the latent-immanentist type, the product of a latent-immanentist religious culture. "Latent" is used here to mean that, although the external life style is in large measure rationalized and secularized as a result of the influence of modernization, the traditional religious culture is retained in a latent form. It is true that in the midst of urbanized civilizations, traditional festivals continue to be held. But many of these festivals have already lost meaning and direct connection with the daily pattern of city life in industrial civilization. The latent-immanentist type received his child-socialization experiences—an important phase in the formation of religious social character—in immanentist religious

culture. The social environment of his adult years, however, is constituted not by the world of farming and fishing villages but by the world of the city and the relationships of the nuclear family. The work group to which he belongs is a highly modernized, bureaucratic organization, and his duties are of a *zweck-rational* nature, that is, they are oriented to the realization of secular, pragmatic goals. Whether at home or office, his role performance has no religious meaning. This type is unique in that it has come into existence only as modernization invaded the traditional immanentist religious world and made that world more rational. On the manifest level, the social behavior of this type is conducted along the rational lines of industrial society, but traditional religious values continue to operate on a latent level. This type reflects in its personality the peculiarities of Japanese modernization and, culturally speaking, these people possess a dual social character. As the internalization of traditional values occurred spontaneously and naturally during childhood, they are often retained on an unconscious level.

The dual social character of the latent-immanentist type was identified by David L. Doerner in his survey on attitudes of urban Japanese on life after death (1973). Doerner is a Catholic priest, and he carried out a series of interviews with 100 believers who belong to his parish in Yokohama in order to learn their ideas on life after death.⁶ The majority of persons interviewed were over thirty years of age, and they belonged to a variety of social groups. Doerner discovered that the ideas his parishioners held concerning life after death showed the same traditional immanentist religious world view that Yanagita described in

6. These interviews were conducted during July and August 1972. The people interviewed were all members of the middle class. About 35 were baptized Catholic at birth and came from strong Catholic backgrounds. Among the 100 people interviewed, only 20 were in their twenties. Doerner points out that although the women in their twenties held the same opinions as their elders, the responses from the men in the same age group were more ambiguous, as indicated by the tendency to respond "I don't know."

“About our ancestors” (Doerner 1973, pp. 13–14). For example, in response to the question “Where do you think your ancestors are?” — a question that relates to an immanentist point of view—only 3 out of the 100 interviewees replied *tengoku* or “heaven” (in the sense posited by Catholicism).

Sixty-one people, 33 women and 28 men, responded “They are near,” “They are around us,” “They are always guarding and helping us.” Of these sixty-one people, ten were Catholic from birth. Sixteen people answered, “They don’t know”.... As to the effect the ancestors have on those remaining, the response to the question, “Does the dying wish of a person affect those remaining?” was practically an unanimous “Yes.” Forty-three women and forty men responded in the affirmative. Of those eighty-three who answered in the affirmative, fifty-nine people (thirty women and twenty-nine men) felt a strong sense of responsibility in fulfilling these desires. And the remaining twenty-four people felt that in some indescribable way the deceased exercised an influence in their lives (Doerner 1973, p. 13).

The interviewees were people who lived in the midst of urban culture, steady churchgoers who, despite their heavy exposure to Catholic doctrine, displayed the classical immanentist religiosity of traditional Japanese religious culture. In other words, although the vast majority of middle-aged Japanese outwardly live according to patterns of contemporary urban behavior, it would appear that they still retain a traditional immanentist orientation in their deeply internalized religious sentiments.

As a second example of the kind of latent religious sentiments found in the latent-immanentist type, we can cite the contents of the last wills and testaments of the war criminals who, after the end of World War II, either died in prison or were executed.⁷ Tsurumi Kazuko, who analyzed the contents of these documents, found that the beliefs expressed by these men reflected the latent

7. In 1946 the International Military Tribunal for the Far East was established. Altogether some 4,000 people were arrested as war criminals, of whom 1,068 were executed or died in prison between 1946 and 1951 (Tsurumi 1970, p. 139).

religiosity that Yanagita described in his writings on the Japanese view of immortality and rebirth (Tsurumi 1970, pp. 163–167).

The fact that latent-immanentist types possess a manifest and latent (a dual) social character, leads to the creation of behavioral and organizational patterns in daily life that have a unique Japanese coloring. Despite the high degree of technological sophistication, the existence of life employment and seniority systems in Japanese industrial organizations is indicative of how deeply rooted Japanese traditions are in the area of human relationships ((Wilson 1974). This sort of latent immanentist religious undercurrent is maintained for the most part by the middle-aged group. The tendency for Western styles of scientific, rationalistic thinking to appear in tandem with immanentist religious sentiments is found not only in industrial organizations but also in the interpersonal relations of politicians—as well as in the life attitudes of intellectuals. During its youthful and middle-aged years, this type tends to be receptive to the values of Western civilization, but in old age it often returns to its latent-immanentist world view and the religious character once latent makes itself manifest.

The perpetuation of these deeply rooted, latent-immanentist religious values is reflected in the process by which Christianity has been diffused in Japan. It is evident, for example, in the remark by the Christian author Masamune Hakuchō (1879–1962) which describes Christianity as “a harsh religion denying this world” or in Endō Shūsaku’s novel *Chinmoku* [Silence] which takes as its theme the role of Christianity in Japan. One of the novel’s central characters, the Catholic priest Ferreira, states that Japanese culture rejects Christianity. “It is a swamp that rots the roots of Christianity.” Again, “The Japanese are not able to think of God completely divorced from man... The Japanese imagine a beautiful, exalted man, and this they call God.” Endō’s novel evoked considerable debate within Christian circles in Japan, but more important, what he succeeds in creating in his novel is the atmosphere of traditional Japanese

immanentist religious culture. Though *Chinmoku* is conceived in the form of a historical novel, it addresses itself to the problem inherent in an encounter between Japanese culture, which is strongly immanentist, and Western Christianity, which is transcendental in nature.

The third type of religious social character is the "post-immanentist" type. This is the product of a religious culture in which immanentist religion has disappeared not only on manifest but also on latent levels. It is the product of changes in the external social environment such as urbanization and industrialization—for now the effects of modernization are complete—as well as the interruption and cessation of the function of the socialization process which in the past transmitted traditional religious values. Living in a rapidly changing social environment, many parents lost the confidence to preserve the traditional way of life they once learned and therefore did not pass it on to their children. Moreover, the natural setting and the traditional village community that served as the symbolic vehicle for the transmission of immanentist religious culture are nowhere to be found in the sprawling metropolitan areas.

Another important result of these social and cultural disturbances has been that, as one type of religious value weakened, it was replaced not with a new type but rather with non-religious elements, that is, ideas that resulted from changes in a social structure revamped by modernization. These ideas, however, did not appear in the form of a direct challenge to traditional religious values. There were no hotly debated arguments such as have occurred in the rivalry among sects and churches in Western Christianity. As a result of the disintegration of essential social, cultural, and physical conditions required to sustain traditional beliefs, the traditional Japanese value system has tended to disappear heteronomously without having a chance to fight back. This has created a momentary and partial vacuum in Japanese religious culture.

We refer to the type of religious social character most com-

monly found in this unstable state as the post-immanentist type. It is quite natural for youths belonging to this type, youths who were raised apart from the symbolic body that is the external fostering condition requisite for the preservation of the traditional faith and who also had no opportunity to acquire the values of their parents or grandparents, to tend to slip away from the immanentist religious world of the past. Though the secularized industrial society of modern Japan may be able to distribute technological roles to its youth, it is still unable to equip its young people with a religious culture. Some youths long nostalgically for this now lost traditional world and engage in sentimental fantasies about its restoration, but the general trend is for young people to have little empathy for the traditional religious world.

The results of a survey on "The youth of the world and the youth of Japan" released in July 1973 support this conjecture. This survey was conducted among youths aged 18 to 22 in ten countries, each sample group consisting of 2,000 persons (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973)⁸. In the section on religious faith, 74.0% of the Japanese respondents reported that they had "no interest" in the subject—a result considerably at variance with replies made by foreign youths. Interpretation of statistical data is always a highly speculative matter, but it may be supposed that the word "religion" or "religious faith" was understood by the Japanese interviewees to mean belief in traditional Japanese religion. This survey suggests that traditional Japanese religion has to a major extent lost the supporting factors that foster religious interest among youth. That section of the survey dealing with the "degree of satisfaction with one's livelihood" shows that French youth, at 80%, were far and away the most highly satisfied. Whereas more than 60% of the youth

8. The percentages for the youth of the other nine countries who expressed disinterest in religion are: Sweden 41%, United Kingdom 32%, France 19%, Switzerland 15%, U.S.A. 13%, West Germany 6%, Brazil 8%, India 2%, and Philippines 0% (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973, p. 136).

of other nations were at least "satisfied" or "slightly satisfied," only 24.9% of Japanese youth placed themselves in these categories (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973, p. 29). Moreover, among youths complaining that "their country has given too much priority to industrial development at the sacrifice of the individual," Japan ranked highest with 90.4% (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973, p. 31). The results of this international comparison of thinking among the youth of the world suggest that Japanese youth have largely abandoned their traditional immanentist religious culture even on the latent level and that in comparison with the youth of other nations they are extremely dissatisfied with their lives in a rapidly expanding industrial civilization.

Ambivalence in religious social character. In our analysis of the effect of modernization on Japanese religious culture, we posited three patterns of character, and as our basic premise in setting up ideal types, we assumed the existence of an immanentist religious faith which has ancestor and nature worship at its center and which forms the nucleus or core of Japanese religious culture. This nucleus within the cultural system is equivalent to the term "cultural universals" coined by Ralph Linton (1936, p. 272).

Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity are, in this system, properly relegated to positions on the periphery of this native religious culture. These foreign religions may have influenced the native culture to some extent, but they were also transformed by it. Historically speaking, one can say that although Japanese religious culture has been influenced by foreign religions, the religious beliefs that constitute the core of the uniquely Japanese aspects of the culture have not disintegrated. The changes, however, that modernization has produced in the basic structure of Japanese society do, as stated above, threaten the continued existence of this basic core. Modernization represents a serious crisis for traditional Japanese folk religion.

What does this instability in the religious culture mean in terms

of the three types of religious social character already discussed? First, the immanentist type relates completely to the traditional religious culture. Its religious behavior is governed by the framework of kinship and land ties of community. The basic principle of its behavior patterns is particularistic. The religious behavior of this type conforms to the norms of a highly cohesive community. It is high in "normative stability" and shows little ambivalence. This type belongs to the "tradition-directed type" and is found at present among the elderly age groups living in farming and fishing villages. In generation terms, these people received most of their socialization during the period from early Meiji up through the beginning years of this century.

The religious behavior of the second or latent-immanentist type is complex and highly ambivalent. If we look at this type of behavior in relation to universalism and particularism, we see that in the area of instrumental activity, they follow as a rule universalist patterns; in expressive actions, however, they act according to their latent religious values. While engaged in daily life in the city, their behavior is extremely secularized and pragmatic, but on emotional levels they retain in considerable degree an orientation toward immanentist religious culture. Living in the midst of an urbanized industrial civilization and within the confines of the nuclear family, these people easily fall prey to frustration in their religious life. The "new religions" that have grown up in urban environments have the ability to appeal to the religious sentiments of these unfulfilled people. The beliefs of these newly founded religious organizations are, in their basic characteristics, frequently of a "tradition-oriented type" (that is, desiring a return to tradition) and emphasize, contrary to the trend of modernized culture, the importance of ancestor worship. The leaders of these new religious organizations display, moreover, a kind of charisma that indicates that they understand the sentiments of traditional immanentist religion. Within this type there are some who have abandoned the imma-

mentalist way of thinking for a more universal one. In general, however, there is a gap between their overt-modernized social behavior and their covert-traditional religious attitude. The social behavior of people in this type tends to be extremely ambivalent because they have absorbed a bit of both universalism and particularism.

Though qualitatively different, the third or post-immanentist type also displays a high degree of ambivalence in its religious consciousness and behavior. If the distinction between universalist and particularist behavior patterns is again brought into play, it appears that as the shell of the traditional religious world tends to crumble—not of its own accord but under pressures of modernization—there will be more opportunity for Japanese youth to abandon the traditional immanentist religious world in exchange for new, more universal values. In the previously mentioned youth opinion poll, 35.8% of the Japanese cited “love and sincerity in relations with others” as the goal of their lives, 28.0% citing “meaningful work.” On the other hand, 18.7% replied that they did not know what they sought from life—the highest percentage among youth from all over the world (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973, p. 15).

It is worth noting that without exception the young people participating in this poll cited in relatively high percentages “love and sincerity” as the goal of their lives: 63.5% for the United States, 48.3% for the United Kingdom, 56.4% for France, 52.9% for Switzerland, 59.8% for Sweden, 58.6% for Yugoslavia, 34.9% for India, 35.1% for the Philippines, and 44.2% for Brazil (Sōrifu Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu, ed., 1973, p. 15). The words “love and sincerity,” which symbolize a humanistic value system, have become a life goal shared by the youth of the world. The fact that Japanese youth agree with this goal indicates that they have largely abandoned their traditional, particularistic religious culture and are tending to approach a more universalistic world. At the same time, Japanese youth have yet to find a new perspective on the future because of the instability of the basic struc-

ture of the established religious culture. As a result of the massive disappearance of the symbol systems and institutions of established religion, religion is becoming "invisible" in Japan. The fact that Japan ranks highest in the percentage of youth unable to state their life goals also reflects the post-immanentist type of religious consciousness among our youth. The loss of interest in and distrust for established religion as well as the lack of a new religious perspective may, paradoxically, have led Japanese youth to show increased interest in interpersonal relations and to place greater emphasis on sincerity and love. There is considerable ambivalence built into the behavior of the young who, though liberated from traditional culture, have yet to grasp a new world view that includes a religious dimension. There may be some young people who long nostalgically for a return to traditional, immanentist religious culture, but the difficulties of maintaining a symbolic world from the past are considerable. The behavior of the youths who represent the post-immanentist type of religious social character is frequently uncertain and ambivalent, but in its confusion we can see the birthpangs of a world culture based on an international perspective.

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