Ideologies and New Religious Movements:
The case of Shinreikyō
and its doctrines in comparative perspective

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CONTEXT AND SHORTCOMINGS

No serious scholar of modern Japanese society should underrate
the importance of the so-called new religions (*shinkō shūkyō*) for
an adequate understanding both of present-day social trends
and of an historically relevant interpretation of the effects mod-
ernization has had on the attitudes of the Japanese populace to
the outside world.   Many writers are now aware of the signifi-
cance of these religious mass-movements not only for an evalua-
tion of the contemporary Japanese world-view, but also as a
foundation for a cross-culturally valid theory of culture change.
Yet, as Byron Earhart has pointed out, the study of Japanese
new religions "is far behind comparable fields such as research
on cargo cults" (Earhart 1971, pp. 375–385).

Earhart indicated that one of the major reasons seems to be
the difficulty of unravelling the complexities of the linguistic
and religious traditions of Japan (Earhart 1971, p. 377 and 378).
This is certainly one of the greatest impediments for an adequate
treatment of the subject.   In contrast to the traditional areas
of anthropological research where the historical depth of the
culture under observation would mostly not surpass the time-
span since the Western colonial and imperialistic penetration,
scholars in areas of written civilizations that may span almost
2000 years of source-materials are confronted with a bewildering
abundance of sound sources.

I think the fact that Western scholarship on the Japanese new
religions is still in its beginnings does not only derive from this
difficulty of dealing with socio-cultural developments over long

time periods; that can indeed be of great advantage, as is borne
out by the voluminous, varied yet positive results of interdisci-
plinary efforts in the field of Indian religious studies. The
theoretical paucity of studies on new religions comes from the
development of intrinsically unsatisfactory typologies.[1]   I agree
with Earhart that one of the reasons for this shortcoming of
Western scholarship is neglect of the linguistic and historical
dimension: yet this particular shortcoming is itself closely related
to the construction of the typologies of the new religions by
various scholars.   Many of the typologies are not only rather
superficial and tenuous, but are actually biased and misleading.
They are oversimplified and biased on two points.   Most studies
concentrate on one particular group and extend their results
into unwarranted generalizations about the whole range of the
new religious movements by correlating them with generalized
statements about the *whole* of the Japanese society.   Other
studies arrive at very superficial typologies by categorizing from
one aspect discerned from a variety of groups without an adequate
in-depth treatment of each particular group, its socio-historical
roots and its interrelations with competing groups in the con-
temporary social fabric of Japan.[2]

It is not my objective here to point to the diverse forms of bias
in the fabrication of typologies by various authors.   I shall
instead try to illuminate the "ideology" of one particular group
which I have observed over a longer period by participating in
their ceremonies, by non-structured interviews with the "mes-

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1. Major surveys have been provided by Clark B.   Offner and Henry van Straelen
    1963, Kitagawa 1966, Neill McFarland 1970, Norbeck 1970, and many more;
    one of the first attempts can be gleaned from Anesaki 1916, and Anesaki 1964
    (originally published 1928), pp. 371–374, 397–409.
2. These comments are not intended to denigrate the valuable scholarly work of
    the many individuals who have worked in this field.   The criticism is more
    directed against the resulting confusion among the typologies developed which
    impedes the progress toward a more general theory of the phenomena.   See
    my additional comments in later sections of this essay on the viability of typol-
    ogies and the methodological requirements for them.

sianic founder" and by attending social meetings of the members of this group in their normal day-to-day activities.[3]

The orientation of this paper is similar to that of a previous publication on a different group (Koepping 1967, pp. 101–134). I shall deal purely with the "doctrines" of the group and show certain implications of the "ritual expression" of that doctrine for its followers without generating a general hypothesis as to the reasons and motivations of the followers, or as to the "conductiveness" of any general social condition of contemporary Japanese society. Such correlations can only be considered as the creative figments of the fertile minds of social scientists who draw on the accumulated capital of a body of theories developed from often very specific socio-cultural frames of reference; or -even worse - they are derived from the fictive correlations between the undeniable "fact" of the great number of adherents to the new religions and the socio-cultural factors assumedly leading to this rushing to the new "messiahs." Correlations of either order are based merely on personal "impressions" about an assumed "anomy" of modern Japanese society. Thus the attractiveness of the new religions is presumed to signify the striving of individuals to find firmer roots in a "warm groupiness."[4]

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3. Field-work was done between 1966 and 1969.

4. For such kind of superficial treatment see Murakami Shigeyoshi, "New religions in Japan," in Chie Nakane and Akira Goto, eds., *The symposium on family and religion in East Asian countries* (Tokyo, 1972), pp. 17–27. This is not to deny that one can arrive at a conclusion about an individually or collectively felt sense of "anomie" from a careful analysis of the doctrines themselves. However, it should be kept in mind that quite contradictory results are achieved when a purely functionalist correlation is imposed *a priori* from the outside. The presumed result of modernization and concomitant urbanization as well as fragmentation of traditional structures in Japan and the implicit assumption of the interrelationship of all cultural traits leads for example Norbeck to the conclusion that religion's importance in Japan is on the wane, that "old needs are now being met by new structures of secular, scientifically oriented society" (Norbeck 1970, p. 106). As Cooke showed, quite the contrary conclusion may be reached from an intensive analysis in context: the "old structures"

THE IMPORTANCE OF "IDEOLOGY" OR "DOCTRINE"

In insisting that the "ideology" of a particular religious group
is the key to an understanding of the phenomenon of "mush-
rooming" movements, I am opposed to the argument put forward
recently by Aoki Tamotsu. Aoki considers it dangerous im-
mediately to link the doctrines (ideologies) of the new religions
with the reactions of the general public (Aoki 1972, pp. 106–122).
From his research, Aoki suggests that participants in new reli-
gious movements show a relative deficiency in understanding;
in other words that the average adherent of such a group is at
a loss to explain the concept of "deity" or "soul" etc.. Further,
Aoki says that there is such confusion in the doctrines of several
new religions that it is impossible to understand the phenomenon
merely through an analysis of the teachings advocated by par-
ticular religious groups (Aoki 1972, p. 107 and 108).

I cannot agree with Aoki on this point. If all the doctrines
are so confused, as he implies, and if they are furthermore easily
exchangeable, - two propositions which I think are readily proved
one-sided (Koepping 1974) - the question remains: *Why do*
particular individuals join any specific group? A third proposition
of Aoki proves the circularity of his argument; he claims that
the new religions have to be seen in the light of being "practical
religions," for, as he puts it

> ...the believers... are satisfied if they are presented with
> a wide framework for praxis and are afforded the possibility
> for activity they themselves can carry out (Aoki 1972, p.
> 109 and 110).

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of traditional doctrines are used to meet new challenges in an ingenious way
(Cooke 1974, pp. 267–330). As I have shown previously, the "mushrooming"
of new religious movements can functionally be interpreted as a "response"
to a hypothesized "alienation," and indeed as a sign of the vitality of those
"old structures" (Koepping 1967, p. 134). In other words, the new religious
movements may be a sign of "societal anomy," but their very existence and
attraction does show that "modernization" does *not* equal "secularization."
In this essay I try to keep the functionalist explanatory scheme out of the
discussion by concentrating on the hermeneutical method.

If this is one of his reasons for the popularity of the new religions, I would counter on two points. *Firstly* there is surely no "religion" known to us which does not impress upon its adherents the *practice of faith in the social reality*. *Secondly*, if this emphasis on the practical aspects (instead of a "theoretical" theology) is so paramount in the new religions then it is in itself a "theory," insofar as it provides the foundation for *belonging*.

Whether I advocate action or meditation, involvement in or withdrawal from the world, so-called irrational beliefs in the salvation powers of a living personality (a messiah) or the equally irrational belief in the power of redemption through a supernatural agency (*kami* or Buddha); whether I put emphasis on the redeeming aspects of hard work and this-worldly suffering for the paradise after death and resurrection, or stress the arrival of the paradise here and now through human efforts and intervention: whatever I advocate, my intention is of the same order for, in each case, the basis is one of taking sides or emphasizing certain specified basic "values." We can only grasp the values of a group, its "aspirations," through an analysis of the meaning implicit in the symbols of their doctrine. I agree here with Geertz who advocated as a first step for the anthropological study of religion the analysis of the "system of meanings" which is embodied in the symbols. Only then can and should we relate these systems of meaning to the "social structural and psychological processes" (Geertz 1966, p. 42). A similar point was made by Spiro when he implied that anthropological studies have for too long neglected the study of religion in its "cognitive... aspects" (Spiro 1964, p. 103).

PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS

My approach in the following will therefore progress in several steps. I shall *firstly* focus on the internal logic of the system of one particular religious doctrine; this will be done in a way which is often described as *phenomenological* which implies the description of the doctrine from the view-point of the participant with no

evaluation whatsoever. This phenomenological approach is rather limited in itself as it leaves us with nothing but the "raw data" and excludes by definition any correlation between the self-understanding of the participants and functionalist explanations (see Pye 1974, pp. 107–123).

I shall therefore *secondly* look for similarities and possible patterns emerging from a comparison of selected aspects of one doctrine with doctrines of other comparable groups. With this *second* step I shall still remain in the phenomenological framework, though the very idea of a comparison is itself clearly a break with the pure self-understanding of each group's members. I am however controlling the comparative endeavour by the phenomenological criterion of relying for each piece of evidence on the self-interpretation of the group.

For my *third* step I shall deviate from the purely phenomenological enterprise by employing the *hermeneutical* method as an *interpretative* framework; this includes terminologies that go beyond the self-understanding of the group's founders and followers since they are derived from the "scholar's vocabulary." This procedure involves what Heidegger has labelled the "hermeneutical circle," which means the constant dialogue between the interpreter - myself - and the "text" - which is in Gadamer's understanding the whole of the social world "out there" (see Gadamer in Grossner 1971, p. 57).

There is logically no other way of approaching a social reality, of which I as researcher, am not "part," but that of the experience and its meaning for the participant which I have then to convey to others. This is clearly an *evaluative* procedure, as Gadamer has admitted (Gadamer in Grossner 1971, p. 57). Yet there is no other way for, as Gadamer has put it,

> The cultural sciences have to be seen in experiential terms; this is no longer a question of the methodology of science, but a question of experiences which are outside the realm of science...
> (Gadamer in Grossner 1971, p. 57; translation mine)

With this hermeneutical approach I still retain a phenomenological stance. This is not because I bracket my "common-sense understanding" of the world or my "scholarly background" or "the world itself," as Husserl would have it; I am still working in a phenomenological framework because, in so far as I rely strictly on the historically derived understanding of those symbols in the contemporary context, I derive the comparative interpretation from the symbolic universe of the culture in question.

In this hermeneutical and phenomenological analysis I shall *fourthly* proffer an interpretation as to what kind of *personal transformation processes* might be deduced from the ideological interpretation of the followers, as supposedly *committed* adherents, of a religious movement.

VALUES AND SOCIAL ACTION

In most groups I have encountered during my research in Japan,[5] the teachings of the founders themselves are quite explicit and coherent as a system of advocated values. I would agree with Robert N. Bellah who pointed out that every form of social action itself is "determined not just by structures of economic, political, and social relationships, but also by structures of social values" (Bellah 1962, pp. 207–219, p. 208). The non-orthodox, meaning non-Stalinist, interpretation of Marx by several so-called "Neo-Marxist" thinkers again admits the importance of the "super-structure" for an adequate understanding of social life.[6] In other words, the rather crude materialistic interpretation of the value-systems through the "substructure" of economic factors has been unmasked as but a paltry explanation for human actions. As Petrovic and others have pointed out, Marx himself saw a double feed-back process between super-structure and substructure, between values and economic conditions, without

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5. I concentrated on the following groups; Ōmotokyō, Odoru Shūkyō, PL-Kyō-dan, Risshō Kōsei Kai, Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, Shinreikyō; less time was spent with adherents of Konkōkyō, Tenrikyō and Sōka Gakkai.

6. Cf. as representative L. Kolakowski (1972).

necessarily making one the determining factor (Petrovic 1971, p. 30 ff.). In particular Marx advocated the necessity of viewing man both as a natural, biological entity and as a natural species with a unique ability to *transcend* the natural drives and necessities of his being. For Marx, man is the one and only animal able to strive for the attainment of the realm of "freedom" and to "liberate" himself from the bonds of naturally imposed conditions of necessity (Marx 1966, p. 117).

I do not want to deny the importance of approaching the attractiveness of the new religions through a study of those factors that are empirically found to be present in the social frame of reference which affects the individual's decision; indeed we cannot understand the attractiveness of particular values through an analysis of the values alone. Such an attempt would amount to the fallacy of immanent intellectual history, as Karl Mannheim called it (Mannheim 1971, p. 268). Further, as Mannheim says,

> the world is known through many different orientations because there are many simultaneous and mutually contradictory trends of thought...struggling against one another with their different interpretations of 'common' experience.

Thus he concludes that

> the clue to this conflict, therefore, is not to be found in the 'object in itself'... but in the very different expectations, purposes, and impulses arising out of experience (Mannheim 1971, p. 269).

However, if a researcher approaches a foreign culture, he cannot immediately grasp these impulses through the ordinary experience of the average individual of that culture (Koepping 1973, pp. 31–67). One approach is through analysis and description of the general values of the individuals who are members of that group. These values are basically expressed in the form of symbolic representations, that is in concepts of language. As semiologists and structural linguists have proved to us, the basic "significance" or "meaning" of certain symbols can only

be grasped through the analysis of the impact of these symbols on the cognitive structures of the community which expresses its views of the world in those symbols.[7]

Therefore, in attempting to build typologies and classificatory schemes or models of explanation about the new religions, we must gain a very accurate knowledge of the "significance" of the shared symbolic universe of the participants of a particular movement; merely transfering specific typological schemes from the "Western" tradition is futile. The whole controversy which has occupied the literature on the new religions for a long time, namely whether they are "genuinely religious" manifestations, is fruitless if we pre-empt a meaningful interpretation by imposing a Western concept of "religiosity" on a different universe of shared meanings. As Bellah has pointed out, most of the words we use in the discussion on the topic of the modernization of Japan, for instance, have a different meaning for the Japanese and the Western reader (Bellah 1962, pp. 207–219).

SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLS

A clarification of the concepts used by Japanese members of the new religions is therefore of the greatest importance. The concepts themselves, and the ideology as a coherent system of concepts, may gain a certain autonomy in relation to the social action connected with them. As Peter L. Berger - in the footsteps of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge - pointed out:

> Religious legitimations arise from human activity, but once crystallized into complexes of meaning that become part of a religious tradition they can attain a measure of autonomy as against this activity. Indeed, they may then *act back upon* actions in everyday life, transforming the latter, sometimes radically (Berger 1973, p. 50).

Nobody who has closely studied the activities of the new religions in Japan can deny that certain concepts advocated by the

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7. The argument follows basically the approaches of semiologists, as for instance Roland Barthes (cf. Barthes 1972).

founders have a profound effect on the daily routine of the members. The legendary proselytizing practices of the Sōka Gakkai (*shakubuku*) have become common knowledge to the general public.

It is not only this effect of the symbols and the specific religious ideology on the daily activities which makes a thorough analysis of the concepts so important. The single units of meaning of which the specific doctrine of a new religious movement consists are clearly not just "invented" by individual "dreamers": on the contrary, they are always taken from a pool of common knowledge, being what Durkheim rather vaguely described as manifestations of the "collective consciousness" (Durkheim 1928).

This means that any symbols appearing in the doctrines of the founders of new religions must also be understood as the representations of a historical continuity of Japanese conceptualization of the category "religious." The symbols used by the founders carry with them an implied "context of shared understanding" for the Japanese follower and are thereby *effective* and *powerful*. Only when we understand the "intrinsic" symbolic meaning for the average Japanese can we try to look for analogous representations in other parts of the world in order to compare the meaning, the function and the aims of what has been separately labelled "messianic movements," "revitalization movements," "charismatic leadership," "millennarian dreams," "cargo cults," etc..[8]

Before, therefore, we can compare certain "ideal types" of socio-religious activities (Weber 1964, vol. 1, pp. 4–7), we must take two steps. *Firstly*, we must understand the mental connotations of culturally specfic symbols for the participant. *Secondly*, we have to trace these units of "significance" and their present-

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8. For definitions of nativism see Ralph Linton 1943; for millennarism Peter Worsley 1957; for revitalization Anthony Wallace 1956; on acculturation the earliest comparative analysis can be found in the English literature in Melville Herskovits 1938.

day meaning in the specific historical context of the society which uses them.

THE CONTEXT OF SIGNIFICATION

To give but one example from both the Western and the Japanese context for the efficacy of the connotations of culturally-specific symbols, it suffices to take the word *Japan*.   For the Western reader, what that word implies depends on his age and nationality as well as his personal experience; it could mean the scenic beauty of Mt. Fuji combined with the exotic qualities of "geishas" as well as the "inscrutable smile of the Oriental"; for others, it could mean "aggressive imperialism" and "yellow peril," or it might evoke admiration or envy about "efficiency and reliability of technological production."   By contrast, the image of the *kanji* for "Japan" implies immediately the eidetic picture of the "roots of the sun"; this certainly means something quite different for Mishima Yukio, for a member of one of the many Nichiren-derived Buddhist lay groups or for a person who was educated in Meiji times.

In other words, symbols - sounds as well as signs - invoke very specific significations for different individuals.   Misunderstandings are therefore more the rule than the exception in the dialogue between individuals who share a certain basic "universe of meaning" through their socialization process; it creates almost unmanageable difficulties in an inter-cultural dialogue, particularly when we are confronted with a symbolic universe not only of sounds but also of ideographs which play such an important part in the Japanese cognitive processes.

The formal rules of a foreign grammar we can, to a degree, communicate on a purely structural level, but the connotations of "meaningful" pictures are in the eye of the beholder, whether he is conditioned to see specific connotations in them or perceives them only as communicative "signs" or merely as aesthetically pleasing.   The same strictures of transference apply to the often decried apparent "syncretism" of the doctrines of many, if not

all, Japanese new religious movements. Many of them use explicitly Western words and "concept-bundles" like "democracy," "capitalism" or "rationalism," without necessarily implying the same significance as a Western reader would accrue to these concepts. To appreciate fully the implication of such words for the Japanese speaker, one must evaluate the historical dimension of the switch in meanings.

It is with these cautionary strictures that I present the "ideology" of one particular group of the new religions. I would like to point out that I do not attempt an interpretation of the "significance" of the Japanese and Western concepts appearing in the ideology of the group as perceived by both. I am presenting more an attempt in the sense of the requirements imposed by Joachim Wach for the comparative sociological study of religious phenomena.

> A comparative study of the types of religious communion would necessarily involve an analysis of the motives for its establishment and of its significance for and effect on the members. This implies that *the purely sociological inquiry would have to be supplemented by an examination of the self-interpretation (ideology) of the group, organization, or body* (Wach 1962, p. 34; emphasis mine).

It is in this sense that the following doctrine is presented as a description of the "ideology" of the group and it is therefore not a strictly sociological analysis. The term "ideology" here encompasses only the theoretical system of self-designation and explanation of the founder of the group and some of its members; it is not used in the specific and often derogatory sense of exposing a "false belief-system."

SHINREIKYŌ - THE FOUNDATION OF THE MOVEMENT[9]

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9. The following explanations are, if not otherwise indicated, summarized from tape-recorded interviews with Ōtsuka and his followers; the main publication of Shinreikyō at the time of research was entitled *An Introduction to the Study of Esoteric Teachings of Shinreikyō* (Tokyo, 1957), which will be referred to hereafter as *Shinreikyō Pamphlet*.

Shinreikyō can be translated as "Teachings of the Spirit" or "Spiritualistic Group." The symbol *shin* normally means "heart," "centre of thought and feeling," or sometimes simply "center." In combination with the Japanese sign for *rei,* which implies "ghost" as well as "spirit" in its different meanings (often as spirits of deceased persons, but also as the "haunting ghost"), the word *shinrei* comes to imply "psychic, spiritual, spiritualistic." The members of the group therefore translate their group-name in English as "Metapsychic Scientific Institute."

Many visitors to Tokyo before 1973 would have noticed the advertisement written on the walls of the Tokyo branch of Shinreikyō which was then opposite the main entrance of the Hotel Okura. The slogan read: *"Greater miracles than Lourdes."* Behind that wall was the residence of the founder of Shinreikyō, Ōtsuka Kan'ichi, who is reverently referred to by his followers as "Master Ōtsuka." The original foundation date of the group is given as 1939; it was officially incorporated in June 1948 with the Ministry of Education as Shūkyō Hōjin Shinreikyō. The headquarters of the group is in Nishinomiya in Hyōgo prefecture; the group has branch churches in Tokyo and in the prefectures of Wakayama, Kyoto, Osaka, Kanazawa, and at the time of my observations, conversion efforts were being made in the northern parts of Honshū. The official number of adherents is given by Ōtsuka as 150,000; my own estimates indicate that the number of his followers lies closer to 30,000.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE FOUNDER AND HIS POWERS

The main feature of the group seems to consist in the healing of "incurable" diseases by their founder, Master Ōtsuka. He can heal, through his presence alone, any symptoms from infantile paralysis to asthma and tuberculosis and even cancer. The healing of cancer was the main slogan through which the group became known in Tokyo. Between 1969 and 1972 visitors could, almost every month, see a demonstration of several hundred people passing through the down-town districts of Maru-

nouchi, waving banners and shouting slogans indicating that Master Ōtsuka is the only true healer of cancer. How does *he* explain his own powers, and how did he receive the gift?

As Master Ōtsuka tells it, he was born in 1885 in the province of Awa on the island of Shikoku. In his life-history special emphasis is put on the place of birth, for his emotions and his mind were stimulated by the pure landscape of his upbringing. Of particular importance is the pervasive "sacred atmosphere" with which the island of Shikoku is imbued: it is on Shikoku that the Buddhist saint Kōbō Daishi was born, and Shikoku itself was created by the two original deities of the Shinto pantheon, namely Izanagi and Izanami. The two original deities gave birth to Shikoku, and the name of the island implies that it has one body and four faces or, as the teachings of Shinreikyō put it:

> The four faces corresponding to the four lands which constitute Shikoku were given their respective names of Lovely-Princess (*Iyo* or *Ehime*), Prince-Good-Boiled-Rice (*Iyorihiko* or *Sanuki*), Princess of Great Food (*Ogetsuhime* or *Awa*) and Brave-Good-Youth (*Takeyoriwake* or *Tosa*) (see *Shinreikyō Pamphlet* 1957, p. 8).[10]

This combination of names of benign origin of the island means that "this fair and picturesque island is believed to be perpetually hallowed by the Divine Spirits filling its mildmannered inhabitants with serenity" (*Shinreikyō Pamphlet* 1957, p. 29). It is evident to the members of Shinreikyō that Ōtsuka was brought up in a spiritually exalted atmosphere and "...it was natural that he should have become conversant with the secret principles of cosmic law" (*Shinreikyō Pamphlet* 1957, p. 9). At the age of 16 the Master went on the search for the "hidden secrets of nature" and he is supposed to have begun at that time to foretell the future of his parents, relatives and schoolmates. At the age of 21 he went on an ascetic spiritual search in Korea, China

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10. These are the old provincial names of Shikoku; cf. E. Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan* (Tokyo: Tuttle and Co., 1972).

and Mongolia.   On his return, he withdrew into contemplation
and then went into the field of "technical inventions."   He
made his first attempt at collecting a spiritual group of disciples
around him at the foot of Mt. Fuji, where he declared he would
devote his future life to heal those who are afflicted with organic
and psychic ailments.   After the start of World War II he is
supposed to have written more than 2000 letters to the military
leaders of Japan, warning them of the alliance with Germany
and Italy.   During the war, it is said that he withdrew from
public life.   However, in 1939 he had founded his first organized
group of adherents as the Reigen Kaku, the "Mansion of the
Divine Spirit."[11]

Master Ōtsuka seemed to have acquired very specific powers
of insight into the functioning of the divine principles of nature
and therefore radiates sacred cosmic power from his body and
mind.   As his wife put it to me during one interview session:
the Master is comparable to an electrical generator station for he
receives in his body the cosmic energies which he is able to tap
with his mind, and he then distributes this great energy in mea-
sured quantities to the people who need it, as the generator sta-
tion distributes electricity to many thousand smaller outlets.
As Shinreikyō maintains, Master Ōtsuka

> has telepathic powers which are radiating and flowing from
> the limbs of his body whose mind is purged of all physical
> and mental impurities, because the Master is linked with
> a transcendental source of Cosmic Intelligence (*Shinreikyō
> Pamphlet* 1957, p. 14).

However, it looks as if the possession of these cosmic powers
is not solely due either to the search of the Master for the divine
powers of nature or to his personal ascetic efforts; a supernatural
agency intervened very early in his life and awakened in him
the potential to find those powers, making him, in other words,
a vessel of divine power.   Legend has it that when Ōtsuka was

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11.   Many of the data could not be confirmed in written documents, except for the
      statements by Ōtsuka and his wife.

two years of age, a heavy rainstorm developed and, as it started to thunder, lightning struck nearby and the baby, held against his sister's shoulders, became unconscious. As Shinreikyō teachings say now: "... an inscrutable divine power seemed to have taken possession of the fainted baby" (*Shinreikyō Pamphlet* 1957, pp. 10–11).

Master Ōtsuka considers himself the present messiah who was announced by Buddha as well as by Jesus Christ. Buddha predicted 2500 years ago that in the days of *mappō*[12] (i.e. during the decline of the belief in the teachings of Shakyamuni), people would loose their faith and human suffering and natural catastrophes would make the earth shake yet that, in those very times of great despair for mankind, a new messiah of great power would come to save the human race.

In the same way did Christ and other bible prophets warn of the future when "it will rain fire from the heavens." This, say the teachings of Shinreikyō, is what has actually happened: the fire from heaven was the atomic bombs dropped on Japan, and the messiah is Master Ōtsuka himself, the "light from the East," the salvation of mankind.[13]

However, the powerful cosmic energies are not only transferred through the presence of the Master himself. He distributes in his ritual centers a "sacred salt" called *go-shin-en* which has not only the power to heal sickness but can also be mixed with water and sprinkled over the rice-fields and fruit-orchards to accelerate the growth and fruition of the plants and effectively kill insect pests. Yet more can be done with the sacred salt: many informants told me that the application of the salt to modern machines, for example refrigerators or motor-

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12. *Mappō* is the third stage after the death of the historical Buddha; the first stage lasts for 500 years, the second for 1000 years, and the third stage for 10,000 years. During this time man is considered as so deprived that he needs saving from outside (*tariki* in Japanese); for this concept in the teachings of Nichiren, see Anesaki 1916; for the meaning of *mappō* in the teachings of Hōnen and Shinran, see Paul Ingram 1974, p. 343.

13. On the idea of the "light", see Paul Ingram 1974, pp. 331–344.

cars, makes these gadgets function again after a breakdown.[14]

All people can, says Master Ōtsuka, learn to "tune in" to the cosmic forces; this is done through the ritual introduced by the Master. During the prayer-sessions or when entering one of the meeting centers, the adept cleanses himself with fresh spring water, puts the palms of his hands together and moves them from the stretched position above his head slowly down to the pit of his stomach, trying to vibrate his hands and to ululate the syllables BU-KAN-SEI-KI; these are so-called *mugen-kyo*, or "meaningless" syllables, which enable people to "turn off" from the ordinary daily "noise" and to "tune in" to the cosmic forces.[15]

The effects of the teachings of the Master, his presence and the exercises of "vibrating with the cosmic vitality" have miraculous effects. Over time, says Master Ōtsuka, people change in character and attitude: families that were ridden by strife will

14. Some of these ideas remind us of the teachings of Sekai Kyūsei Kyō in Atami. Any direct like between this group, Shinreikyō, and the Atami-group, or of Shinreikyō to Ōmoto could not be discovered. However, Shinreikyō's teachings have a great similarity to some tenets of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, and the founder of that group, Okada Kōgyoku, was once a member of the Atami movement; see Koepping 1967, pp. 101-134, and Koepping 1974, p. 111. The effect of the salt on machinery was told to me on two occasions: once during a testimonial meeting at Ōtsuka's Tokyo residence, once at a private social gathering.

15. A similar procedure can be observed at prayer-sessions of Odoru Shūkyō: in particular in the morning before breakfast the followers all stand in an upright position, put the palms of their hands together and vibrate them from a position above the top of their heads to the pit of their stomach, chanting with vibrating vocal cords "*na-myō-hō-renge-kyō*". The explanation for this exercise given to me during the life-time of the late Kitamura Sayo at the head-quarters in Tabuse coincides basically with the one given by Shinreikyō and could be summarized with the words, "cleansing", "driving out of evil" and "tuning in" to the powers of the foundress. The meaning of "*na-myō-hō-renge-kyō*" is different from the one given to it by members of lay-Buddhist groups as for instance Sōka Gakkai or Risshō Kai, *namu-myō-hō-renge-kyō*; it should therefore here be translated as "a humble woman who reunites god and man through the Lotus Sutra" (cf. Kitamura Sayo, "The dancing religion," in *Contemporary religions in Japan*, vol. 2, 1961: 26–43).

live harmoniously together; parents and children will have an orderly relationship again; man and wife will live in blissful union; and people will detect their hidden powers and will be successful in their own specific fields. Master Ōtsuka is convinced that sportsmen and actors who are members of Shinreikyō, have had exceptional success; most people cite the sumo-wrestlers Tamanoumi and Yoshibayama and the Kabuki actor Kichiemon as examples.

However, Master Ōtsuka does not promise the prolongation of life, because God can end man's life (*jumyō*). The main aim of life on earth is to live *happily* (*gendai gokuraku*).[16] When members of Shinreikyō die, there will be no rigor mortis; this means that all members become eternal *kami*.

WORLD HISTORY AND COSMIC FORCES - NATURE AND HISTORY IN SHINREIKYŌ

Master Ōtsuka does not see a conflict of doctrines between different religious denominations. He wants to unite the Christian monotheism with a Buddhist pantheism through his own teachings which he perceives as "existential globalism", conveying the vitalistic truth of the cosmic energies.[17]

Since Christ appeared as the prophet in the West, and Buddha was the great prophet of the East, Ōtsuka himself is now the final prophet of the *Center*; he therefore not only represents the "light from the East," but derives his powers from Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi, the deity ruling the center. The importance of the center being the present focus of power is explained by Ōtsuka

16. The word *gokuraku* which is often translated as "paradise" implies originally "highest joy" in the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū where it represents Amida's Buddha Land (cf. Paul Ingram 1974, p. 334).

17. Many of such formulations seem directly to be derived from a book by Fujisawa Chikao, *Zen and Shinto* (New York, 1959) who develops his ideas about the integration of Western and Eastern thinking from the assumed metaphor of Prince Shōtoku who linked the image of a tree with its branches and twigs to the unity of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism. Proof for the actual connection is unobtainable from the members of Shinreikyō.

by reference to the different positions the earth has had at different times to the center of the cosmic forces. It is only now that the rotation of the earth has brought it nearest to the divine forces of Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi. This principle (*genri*) of the holy deity of the universe, namely Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi (The Ruler of the Centre of Heaven in traditional Shinto scriptures), is materially manifested in the person of the sun-goddess Amaterasu-Ōmikami. In other words, Ōtsuka seems to perceive the sun-goddess of Shinto as the personification of the vital energies of the cosmic principle (*uchū no genri*);[18] the vitalizing force of the sun-goddess Amaterasu-Ōmikami is embodied in the actual cosmic body of the sun.[19]

Master Ōtsuka sees himself, since he had a revelation (*reikan*, "flesh of inspiration"), as being able to channel these cosmic forces, and as being the final earthly vessel of the cosmic energies. He is but a return of the cosmic principle in man's form, a second or third coming after Buddha and Christ (*sairai*). Because all this was once revealed in the sacred scriptures of ancient Shinto but then kept hidden, it is only natural that Japan will be the center of the "new earth." The truth of this is "hidden" in the words of Shinto, when Japan is referred to as *hi-no-moto* (or normally *Nihon*, meaning the "roots of the sun") and as *Yamato* (the "country of the great peace"). The paradise of happiness starts with the appearance of Master Ōtsuka.

Ōtsuka explains that the wheel of history proves also that the center of power and gravity is returning to the East, naturally to *Japan*, from where history started. As he sees the history of the world, the present bad conditions among mankind arose

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18. A similar understanding of the vitalistic powers of the sun can be seen in the teachings of Kurozumi Munetada (1779-1849) the founder of the group Kurozumikyō where the believers face the sun with open mouth to partake in the cosmic vitality (cf. Tanaka Goro 1956).

19. Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi is one of the first deities mentioned in Shinto mythologies, yet not always as a major one; Amaterasu appears as central symbol in many other new religions, for instance in Konkōkyō, Odoru Shūkyō and Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan.

through the strong influence of Western materialism which has, in an imperialist storm, swept the whole of the world during the last 300 years. During all that time, materialistic philosophies proliferated in the whole world. Yet in the East, spiritual forces had always been strong; under Chingis Khan's rule, the world experienced for once the power of Eastern spirituality. The meteoric rise of India under the spiritual leadership of Nehru, coupled with the rejuvenation of China's spirituality under Mao Tse Tung, are further signs of the reversal of history.

As people everywhere now realize, says Master Ōtsuka, both ideologies spawned in the West - democracy and communism - are no longer able to rule the world. It is now up to Japan to play the leading role of the unification of Eastern and Western principles because it is already the center of the blending of oriental and occidental forms of living. Prewar Japan showed what can happen when a country adopts purely Western knowledge of technology and attitudes of ruthless imperialistic aggressiveness. A defeat will ensue when ever the balance between spiritual forces and acquisitive scientific materialism is tilted.

Basically then, Western civilization has led to a proliferation of specialized fields of knowledge and with it to a materialistic "civilization" (*busshitsu bunmei*); what we really need for the future happiness of man is a spiritual "culture" (*seishin bunka*).[20]

This imbalance of the opposed forces of materialism and spirituality is symbolically shown by Master Ōtsuka in his image of man: since the general forces of history have led to an imbalance between the spiritual vertical axis and the materialistic horizontal axis, man appears in an elliptical shape instead of being round as a circle. Man's ideal shape will come about when

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20. The symbolism is inverted in comparison with that of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan. There the final paradisic state will be *bunmei* (civilization), whereas *bunka* implies the present state of a split world and degenerate culture, for Mr. Okada writes the sound "bunka" with the signs for *wakeru* (to split) plus *ka* from *kagaku* (science); see glossary for the signs (cf. Koepping 1967, pp. 111–112).

the vertical axis (time) and the horizontal axis (space) are in equilibrium. We therefore find the following equations: horizontal axis=materialism=space, plus vertical axis=spirituality=time.

THE PROBLEM OF TYPOLOGIES ONCE AGAIN

The careful analysis of the specific ideology of one religious movement in present-day Japan by use of the semiological method does indeed show that the symbolic concatenations of the group have a special significance. The ideology of Shinreikyō reveals the underlying concern of its followers about their individual existence in this world, about the position of the nation in history and about the general condition of the world and man's position in the cosmic scheme. It is only through the description of the details of the symbolic meanings that the internal logic of one particular group emerges. Yet, there is at least one scholar in the field of comparative studies of new religious movements who rejects this as a valid task for comparative sociology. Bryan Wilson stated recently in regard to such "deviant" religious phenomena that

> ...the groups which espouse particular responses and the circumstances of their emergence and persistence concern us, but the intricacies of their theological argumentation do not (Wilson 1975, p. 29).

Having undertaken the in-depth analysis of the "theology" of one particular group, and being convinced that no other approach can provide us with a sound foundation for cross-cultural comparisons, I am here compelled to take issue with Wilson. He has attempted to develop a comparative framework for the sociology of religion with an increasingly wider scope.[21] In his last publication he rejects terms which have been used in

21. Wilson started with his publication *Sects and Society*, 1961; in the following I am mostly referring to his *Religious Sects* of 1970 and his *Magic and the Millennium*, Paladin edition 1975 (originally published 1973 by Heinemann Educational Books.)

the anthropological literature for several decades, terms such as "nativism," "messianism" etc... He says, for instance "... nativism... is too widely found in new movements for it to be the basis of a very fruitful comparative analysis" (Wilson 1975, p. 485). I cannot accept his logic here, for in rejecting one set of terms which is admittedly - if used indiscriminately - rather hazy, he substitutes another set of terms which surely rests on the same shortcoming of over-abstraction. Wilson's scheme of "responses to evil in the world" is of such level of abstraction that it explains very little. He develops from his scheme of eight forms of "responses" two basic types which he labels "thaumaturgical" and "revolutionist." About the thaumaturgical response, which he equates with the term "magical," he says: "(it) is the primal manifestation of religion in tribal societies" (Wilson 1975, p. 492). In regard to the "revolutionist" response he goes on to say:

> The revolutionist response is occasional, episodic, unenduring... . Of all forms of religious response to the world, it alone is incapable, in its own terms, of attaining any measure of success (Wilson 1975, p. 492).

He hoisted himself on his own petard when he denigrates typologies based on nativism and messianism thus:

> Concepts of such general application tend both to reiterate very broad truths, but also to overlook significant differences between movements which comparative analysis and terms of less ambitious generality and abstractness might elucidate (Wilson 1975, p. 487).

If Wilson creates such broad categories as "response to the world" *a priori* as ideal types, we end up with quasi-causal explanations of such triteness that they say that all religions are an answer to the problems in the world which people perceive as unresolved or unresolvable. What then distinguishes new religious movements from any other form of religiosity?

In regard to Wilson's broad generalizations I have to agree with Gary Schwartz who said:

Classification based on differences in sect belief emphasizes the sect's ideological posture toward the larger society at the expense of its distinctive attributes as an integrated system of religious values and norms. For example, Bryan Wilson's recent typology tends to ignore the specific normative content of sect-ideology and to concentrate instead on its 'mission' - the sect's attitude toward societal values and standards (Schwartz 1970, p. 69).

THE PROBLEM OF SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTIONS APPLIED TO JAPAN

When we turn to the Japanese situation, the danger of Wilson's simplistic abstractions becomes glaring. He says:

> ...the new sects in Japan emphasize their utility, in every-day life. This is a characteristic manipulationist orienta-tion, but in Japan it has the special importance of providing a modern faith for a society whose traditional faith is not easily accommodated to modern conditions...many of the sects sponsor public works of one kind or another ... In countries like...Japan, traditions of voluntary service and disinterested goodwill have been very much less developed than in Protestant Europe... (Wilson 1970, p. 222).

The facts which he describes here secondhand are indeed easily corroborated, yet two are patently fallacious. *Firstly*, Japan has had for centuries organizations of voluntary help and mutual assistance, in particular on the village-level: any historian or anthropologist could have informed Wilson on that aspect. *Secondly*, it is dubious in any context, as in the Protestant Europe-an one, to speak of "disinterested goodwill."
Surely we cannot assume that the *Protestant ethic* derives from "disinterestedness"? The least any Protestant with means would be interested in is to "save his soul."[22]

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22. Wilson might have done well to read Karl Mannheim carefully in this con-text. Mannheim distinguished three levels of meaning, an objective one, an expressive one, and a documentary one. The third level is neither concerned with the objective structure of an action nor with the subjective intentions ex-pressed by it; documentary meaning reveals what we could label the hy-pocrisy as extrapolated from a dissonance of the two other levels. See Gunter

In the conclusion to his most recent work, Wilson makes the following observation:

> ...There is a diminution of trust in strictly personal qualities (as distinct from impersonal, technical expertise). Modern men do not look for a man - or a god - to 'come to save us': they look to impersonal, consciously evolved agencies and organizations, and to scientific procedures of enquiry and prescription (Wilson 1975, p. 503).

This certainly leaves us with a blatant dilemma for an interpretation of the Japanese situation. Here we have large numbers of the populace streaming to the new religions founded by personalities who are perceived as "living deities" and whose specific purpose is the business of "salvation," whether they proclaim themselves as "trumpets of God" or as the "second coming of Christ or Buddha." Do we just ignore these claims and the clearly visible attraction of personal saviours or do we argue the "devious" way around it by stating that the Japanese do not belong to the category of "modern men"? Both forms of the argument appear patently nonsensical. Wilson's scheme might be considered an elegant heuristic device, but should not be considered as a typology that enables us at least to *understand*, much less to *explain* these phenomena.

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICAL UNDERSTANDING

The discussion of Wilson's fallacies has vividly brought to the fore the peculiar difficulties which we all encounter in analysing foreign belief-systems upon which people base their daily activities. It is the difficulty of reconciling the insider's view (the "emic" category) with the requirements of the outsider's perception, in this case with the scholarly enterprise of conveying the meaning of foreign cultural manifestations (the "etic" category). Wilson seems to say that we cannot have it both ways when he categorically states:

W. Remmling 1975, p. 25; also Harold Garfinkel 1967, p. 40; Karl Mannheim, 1952, p. 61.

> To formulate new categories and to coin a new terminology,
> and perhaps especially one that aims at generality and width
> of applicability, is to jeopardize the possibility of grasping
> the distinctive and peculiar feeling-tone of the diverse phe-
> nomena that have been subsumed into these general types,
> by virtue of their similarities of structure, function, and pro-
> cess. It is at this point that what the sociologist hopes to gain
> must be reluctantly paid for in the coin of the historian and
> the anthropologist. The minutiae which are locally signifi-
> cant, and which the historians and anthropologists have
> carefully noted, are surrendered for grosser resemblances
> of those dominant configurations that show inter-cultural
> comparability (Wilson 1975, p. 18).

I am not content with this "either-or" limitation and think
that a careful steering between the opposite fallacies of abstract
generalizations and utter relativism is possible if we apply what
Mills has once called the "sociological imagination" (Mills
1971), which is very similar to the *hermeneutical* method advocated
by Gadamer (Gadamer 1965).

The *first fallacy* of one-sided accentuation of abstract general-
izations, which had its heyday with the writings of Talcott Par-
sons and is nowadays continued in various forms of "systems
theories" which create abstractions on *a priori* assumptions about
the functioning of whole social systems, has been exposed cogently
by Sorokin and recently by Gouldner. Sorokin argued quite
convincingly that we can never be sure that all parts of a society
or culture really belong to a mutually related system of "func-
tions"; maybe the occurence of tatami mats and of Shinto Shrines
in one and the same culture is nothing but a *congery* of items, and
who is to prove that all traits of a culture are systematically
related? (See Sorokin 1966). In a similar vein, Gouldner
has pointed out that it is not very useful to start with such abstract
mental constructs because the specific components of a social
system have to be empirically validated *before* the relationships
within a social totality can be assumed (see Gouldner 1975, p.
195).

The *second fallacy* of extreme relativism is committed by those social scientists who insist on the uniqueness of certain events in specific ethnic groups under particular circumstances. This insistence on relativism runs counter to the whole enterprise of the sociological and anthropological endeavour which aims at an interpretative integration of actions and events from other times and areas into one's own life-world. Moreover the notion of relativism itself could not have been developed without the implicit mental action of comparing one's own life-experiences with those one encounters as "foreign." I think that C. Wright Mills has adequately described what we as social scientists should aim for when he circumscribed the "sociological imagination" as follows:

> Seldom aware of the intricate connexion between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connexion means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world (Mills 1971, p. 10).

CONTEXT AND HORIZON OF OBSERVER AND OBSERVED - THE INTER-
PRETER AND HIS TEXT

What Mills advocates here is not a grand vision of the new "demi-gods" of knowledge in the persons of social scientists. Rather, he aims to show the transformation-processes through which a particular person or group has passed in arriving at their present condition and then to relate this to our own situation. The social scientist among others is supposed to be particularly trained for this task of immersing himself in, and detaching himself from, particular situations. This immersion and involvement gives the scholar insight into the operation of the ideology of a particular group on *their* terms; detachment from the situation puts the scholar back into his *own* context.

Mills thus neatly describes the whole anthropological enter-

prise. The process of bringing to the fore the double meaning-context implies not a description of transcendental truth, or of things-in-themselves; rather it denotes the simple task of making others aware of the many potential possibilities for coordinating individual and group-action into a general framework without unnecessary distortions. This in turn should give rise to a common-sense understanding of the world we live in.

The whole procedure coincides perfectly with Alfred Schutz's views on applying the *phenomenological* stance to the social sciences. He wrote:

> Each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the life-world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as well as his fellow-men in terms of commonsense interpretations of everyday life. Compliance with this postulate warrants consistency of the constructs of the social scientist with the constructs of commonsense experience of the social reality (Schutz 1970, p. 279).

To achieve this equilibrium between the inside and the outside construction of the meaning of any reality we need rigourously to separate the two levels of understanding which I would label *'primary'* and *'secondary' levels of interpretation*. This is exactly what the hermeneutical approach of Gadamer aims for when he says:

> ...the interpreter's own horizon is determining, but even that is not as a particular standpoint which one holds or enforces, but more like an opinion and a possibility, which one brings into play and puts at stake, and which contributes to appropriating truthfully what is said in the text (Gadamer 1965, p. 336).

The interpreter in our case is the social scientist who is himself the "tool" of the method. The "text" of Gadamer is the social action of the actors themselves. Janet Wolff succintly interprets Gadamer's hermeneutic theory in relation to the social scientist:

> The interpreter must recognize both his subject's and his own place in history, in the tradition of real events, and must comprehend the relationship and fusion of the two standpoints in his work (Wolff 1975, p. 107).

This is in my opinion exactly what Mills had in mind when he said:

> The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two within society (Mills 1971, p. 12).

What this means in the context of the religious movements we are dealing with is that the double context can only be achieved by persons not completely involved on the "emic" level as believers of a particular "truth." *The secondary level* of meaning can only be elucidated by the researcher, and not by the founder of a religion, because it needs a non-partisan frame of observation which is uncommitted. Instead of actually mixing the two horizons of understanding, I prefer to keep the two levels separate.

It is of the utmost importance to retain the "autonomy" of each horizon of meaning; that of the "text" and that of the "interpreter," that of the social group under study as well as that horizon which comprehends the role of the social scientist. With this hermeneutical stance which I have elaborated here I aim at *interpretation*, not *explanation*. I can thus gain a great deal, since I am potentially able to discern the congruence between the "text" and the interpretation.

THE MODIFICATION OF IDEAL TYPES

I have already introduced the "text" of the ideological components of the religious group Shinreikyō by a semiological analysis. What should be the next step? I suggest it must be a meaningful interpretation of that particular ideology in the context of the religious climate of modern Japan, which should then be placed in an historical perspective. This I shall try by applying a modified form of ideal types.

What I am looking for is not so much the ideal prototype of the "messianic leader" or the "nativistic component" in modern Japan by "accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasised view-points...": in such a way did Max Weber describe his pure mental constructs which are - according to his admission - rarely found in reality (Weber 1949, p. 90).

I am rather more interested in sticking to a "lower" level of abstraction by pointing to *the range of ideological viewpoints* occuring in a particular reality. This I shall attempt by taking two specific points or components out of the ideology of Shinreikyō in order to compare these with other religious movements in contemporary Japan. The chosen points concern the *self-image of the religious founders*, and their *general world view*.

It is not enough to state categorically that all founders of modern Japanese religious movements are "messianic" charismatic figures. The interesting point is to find out what kind of messiah or saviour they consider themselves to be. In the same way it is not sufficient to proclaim all religious movements to be "nativistic"; we must find out in what way they diverge in their teachings in regard to their view of themselves vis-à-vis the outside world.

In uncovering the *range* - if possible the extremes as well as the middle ground - of the ideal types, I will then be able to place the particular group in a contemporary as well as historical context on a scale of types which show the group's relative association or dissociation from other groups in the spectrum. In this way I gain a "typology" which is directly derived from the self-image of the founders and the groups.

Laying bare the variations within ideal types also gives us access to the *aims* of the specific groups. Working from the further assumption that many people join particular groups *because* of the expressed goals, I can then derive some general

conclusions about the potential transformations the individual has to go through: in this case, however, we are concerned not with any particular individual, but with the "average believer". Whatever the biographical situation and the personal motives which drive people to those religious groups, all have one thing in common; the proffered ideology - or components of it - seems in some way to fulfill their expectations.

A COMPARISON OF THE SELF-IMAGES OF RELIGIOUS FOUNDERS

Master Ōtsuka considers himself the new and last *messiah*. He is directly connected to and in contact with the ultimate spiritual forces that govern the universe. These spiritual forces are considered to be vital cosmic energies. This puts Master Ōtsuka into the same category as the founder of the group called Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan (Universal Church of Civilization of True Light). As I have pointed out in my description of that group,[23] their founder, Okada Kōgyoku, considers himself the "trumpet of God." Both, Ōtsuka and Okada, have one thing in common with several other (mostly *male*) founders of religious movements in Japan; they do *not* consider themselves as deities *per se* or even that they have the deities in their bodies. One leader, Miki Tokuchika, the present head of PL-Kyōdan, gave me several interviews.[24] He maintained that leaders who *do* believe they are host to the deity are slightly "insane"; he cited as example the late Kitamura Sayo, the foundress of the Odoru Shūkyō (dancing religion) or, to use it's proper name, the Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō (Religion of the Heavenly Shrine of the Sun-Goddess).

The contrast between leaders such as Okada and Ōtsuka or Miki and those of the type of Kitamura is vital. The latter type of movements, nascent since the 1830's in Japan, are headed by mostly *female* leaders who consider themselves either to be deities or to have these deities literally "in their body" (besides

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23. Cf. Koepping 1967, pp. 101–134, and Koepping 1968.
24. Between 1967 and 1969 at the headquarters in Tondabayashi.

speaking and writing in the words of the deity). These are the foundresses of groups like Tenri-Kyō, Ōmoto and others. The late Hori Ichirō made the first tentative link between these foundresses and the shamanistic tradition of Japan (Hori 1968).[25] Carmen Blacker recently advocated a similar interpretation (Blacker 1971).

As I have elsewhere shown conclusively for Odoru Shūkyō, Kitamura Sayo is, in the post-war period, the prototype of the great foundresses who are genuine shamanesses, displaying the classical features of North Asian shamanism (Koepping 1974). Kitamura claimed to have a trinity of deities in her belly; one is tempted to say she was "pregnant" with the deities. This type of founder I would label the *shamanistic form of messiah* as one end of the continuum of that ideal type variously described as charismatic or messianic.

By contrast, founders like Okada, Ōtsuka or Miki tend toward what I would refer to as a *rational form of messianic charisma*. I think that merely to label the founders of religious movements in Japan all and sundry as "charismatic," "messianic" etc. is woefully inadequate. All of them saw and see themselves as indeed the only true and last prophet and saviour. This is very much in the traditional Japanese pattern of "living deities" (*ikigami*), which is historically documented in Shinto and goes back at least to the early sources of the *Kojiki* (A. D. 712) and *Nihongi* (A. D. 720).

What distinguishes the founders is the perception they have

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25. Hori Ichirō has in several publications alluded to the great importance of shamanistic features in new religious movements. However, because of the limitations of this essay I cannot here deal in depth with Hori's analysis and his conclusions which I do hope to pursue at a later time. I would like to hint only at the possibility that the shamanistic charismatic founders of new religions do not fit easily the functional ascriptions given to either the *miko* (Schrein-Shaman) nor the *kuchiyose* ("necromancer") types (see Koepping 1974, pp. 61–66). For the relevant Japanese literature, see Hori 1975, pp. 246–247; See also Schiffer 1967, pp. 177–185; for sources on Odoru Shūkyō see bibliography under Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō.

of their own relation to the divine forces: in the shamanistic form they perceive of themselves as "seized" by those divine forces, as "possessed," while in the rational form they build elaborate ideologies to substantiate their claims to "supernatural" powers.[26]

What is therefore of interest is the justification the founders put forward for their mission. I think the material indicates a dynamic in the continuum of ideal types of charismatic founders which is not so much a *routinization of charisma*, but what I would rather call a shift from the shamanistic charisma to a *"rationalization" of the charismatic foundation*. Both forms do indeed exist side by side in contemporary Japan. Any claim to explanatory and causal correlations between different forms of charismatic foundations in "traditional" Japanese society and in times of "modernization" has to be set aside at first. There is no clear indication that an increased urbanization leads to an increase in the incidence of rationalized forms of charismatic foundations.

THE WORLD-IMAGE OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS ON A COMPARATIVE LEVEL

Many groups share with Shinreikyō similar images of the position of Japan in world-history. For them all, Japan is the origin of civilization, the new and future center of world-salva-

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26. The term rational should not be misunderstood here. The possession and seizure by a divine force is of course also a "rationalization" of some kind. What I intend to express is that the shamanistic founders do not go to any length to justify their divine powers by an elaborate ideology. The event takes place, though never without their own efforts. The founders on the other end of the continuum are of course not always free of some form of "possession" either, as the (fictitious?) life-story of Ōtsuka indicates when he was unconscious after the impact of a thunderbolt. Miki Tokuchika seems the most clear example of a "possession-free" charisma (because he "inherited" it only?). There are many problems still unsolved in regard to the diverse forms of religious founder personalities. A prime example for empirical evidence would be the observation of the new leader of Odoru Shūkyō, the granddaughter of Kitamura, who does not seem to display, as her grandmother did, shamanistic seizures".

tion: such also has been the ideology of different intellectual and religious movements throughout Japanese history since at least the 13th century. Basic legitimation of this view is sought by all groups in a selective, syncretistic and eclectic interpretation of either Buddhist or Shinto scriptures.

The future paradise will originate from Japan as the "pillar of the world" and the claim for Japan's primacy in the world gains its plausibility from return to the "old sources" (whether the Shinto concept of *kami-no-michi*, or the *mappō*, the "last stage of history" before the coming of the final Buddha, the Miroku Bosatsu or Maitreya, according to the *Saddharma-Pundarika* or *Hokke-kyō*, the "Lotus Sutra").

These and many other similarities between the new religious movements would make it easy once again to throw the many separate ideologies into "one pot" of a mechanistic typology. Yet, again I would conceive of these similarities only as a base-line of shared traits within the ideal type of *nativistic orientations*. Beyond that base-line the differences in the continuum of this ideal type are rather pronounced.

On one end of the continuum we find many groups which not only expect the millennium to start from Japan, but also reject "foreign things," in particular science and technology, in a very pronounced fashion. Since science and technology are conceived of as the basic evil agents that have led man astray from his search for his "real" destination, a world which relies on science will be destroyed by a disaster of apocalyptic dimensions. The dialectic interpretation of this apocalyptic event relates to the fact that man is the agent of his own destruction, but that this destruction is at the same time seen as his punishment by divine agents. A prototype of this kind of extreme anti-foreign and anti-scientific position can be seen in the teachings of Odoru Shūkyō.

In contrast to this attitude we find a great number of groups which are not at this extreme. Many groups are not purely *anti*-scientific and are not completely opposed to modern tech-

nology and Western derived forms of life: they even couch their own ideologies in terms derived from the scientific vocabulary (as does Shinreikyō). Yet they stress the syncretization of Western thinking and Eastern spirituality in order to achieve a balance.

In other words, they make a virtue of an old Japanese art: the taking over of "foreign" ideas in order to remold them in their own cultural style. This is a particularly remarkable trait in the field of the re-interpretation of language (as in Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan). I would argue that this points to a certain "rationalization" of the ideology. These groups display a form of nativism in their insistence on the superiority of the "spiritual" component of *eastern man*, but they take notice of the plain fact that Japan has adopted so many foreign ways; these they integrate by means of a *"tolerant accommodation,"* a form of acculturation which I would label as *reformative* or *restorative* in contrast to the radical anti-acculturative stance of groups like Odoru Shūkyō. Again, there can be no doubt that both attitudes appeal to a great number of contemporary Japanese.

Attitudes then, range from blatant anti-foreign sentiments to an accommodating inclusion of foreign artefacts: a superior ethical position is consistently maintained. The particular ethics of a movement is considered to be typical Japanese or "Eastern," yet it is also considered to be universally applicable.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATIVISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM

This superior ethical position betrays a very strong nativistic attitude which is different from plain ethnocentrism. Wilson rejected this term with reference to the observation made by Munro S. Edmondson that nativism is nothing but a term for the normality of the ethnocentric stand taken by every cultural group vis-à-vis an alien group (see Wilson 1975, p. 485 and Edmondson 1960, p. 184). I think Wilson as well as Edmondson has completely misinterpreted the term nativism by proclaiming

that nativism is basically a conservative force standing in opposition to cultural innovation (Edmondson 1960, p. 184). Yet as Lawrence once cogently said, it is a matter of course that nativistic aspirations are only conceivable if fashioned after a real or imagined past; no other epistemology can be logically expected (Lawrence 1964, p. 224).

It is, however rather different if the identity of the ethnic unit is self-consciously delineated and proclaimed in the face of foreign intrusions, and then fashioned into a two-pronged ideology which points not only to the millennium of the "best" future for the individual and the collectivity, but also points to the millennium as a final state of the universal supremacy for the ethnic unit in a future "new" world.

This reasoning reveals the truly innovative force of the nativistic standpoint which focusses on the "overturning of the existing world-order" and the coalescence of the past paradise with the future "golden age." I have concentrated solely on the "ends" which each ideology envisages. Were we to look at means, it seems as if the more "bureaucratized" the organization becomes, the more muted is its violent rejection of the existing order, especially after the death of the original "charismatic" founder. This is for instance the case with the group Odoru Shūkyō whose foundress originally encouraged followers to refuse to pay taxes to the government as it was "wicked." Later the group became much more amenable to the existing order, although still retaining its ideology of the divinely-inspired violent overthrow of that existing world-order.

THE RANGE WITHIN THE NATIVISTIC IDEAL TYPE IN REGARD TO ATTITUDES TOWARD SCIENCE

The greatest ambivalence can be found in the various stands the above founders take in regard to the application of "science" in the world. On the one hand most groups consider science as basically a Western creation, and the source of the running down of the present world-order (Odoru Shūkyō, Shinreikyō,

Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan for instance). On the other hand, the products of Western science are not rejected outright. Members of Shinreikyō do use refrigerators and T. V. sets; when, however, these do not function properly, the owner has recourse to "holy salt." PL-Kyōdan as well as Risshō Kōsei Kai use the most modern facilities for medical care, but maintain at the same time a belief in the psycho-somatic origin of most diseases, which can only be healed by "spiritual" means. This implies both the "inner cleansing" of the individual - or as Tenri-kyō formulated it "the brushing away of the dust of this world" - and the use of sacred ritual. Shinreikyō's founder Ōtsuka, told me that he can heal even cancer by tapping the divine cosmic forces, and many "conversion-stories" corroborate the strong belief of the followers in these powers. Yet, in explaining the etiology of diseases, he uses a rather refined "scientific" explanation when he says that mankind has lived for millions of years with the "bacteria" that are agents of the disease, but that it is only when "man gets out of shape" by neglecting his spiritual vertical axis (man becomes elliptical) that these disease carriers become activated in the weakened body.

The nativistic attitude in regard to the realm of science shows therefore a multivalent continuum of incorporating "scientific" proof, but it also mixes the millennial or chiliastic expectations with "magical" components such as "salt" (Shinreikyō) and the sacred tooth of Nichiren (Sōka Gakkai) (see Koepping 1969, pp. 247–258). Whether this can on the explanatory level be correlated with the "fear" of a rather recent technology which is not fully understood (so that one has to use "magical wands" to make it "safe") is a point worthy of empirical investigation. However that may be, we may assert that in almost all groups with millennial expectations within the nativistic continuum we also can find "magical" manipulations. This negates Wilson's belief that magical manipulations do not occur in developed societies (Wilson 1975, p. 484).

SUMMARY OF THE INTERPRETATIVE DIMENSION

Two main points emerge from a purely hermeneutical and phe-
nomenological presentation of some aspects of the "text" as
given by the founders through their ideologies. By analyzing
these ideologies with the help of semiological techniques, we
arrived at the level of meaning which these symbols contain
for the Japanese follower/believer. These two "emically"
derived value-clusters I put into a framework of variations within
a range of ideal types without applying unwarranted "evalua-
tions." The two value-orientations with their respective range
were:

a) the charismatic and messianic image of the founder
personalities, with the scale ranging from a relatively
strong shamanistic justification for that gift to a
comparatively rational explanation of the "healing"
powers;

b) a nativistic core within the ideology which ranges
from the extremes of a rabid anti-foreign stance to
an accommodative position, with a number of exam-
ples which show the ambivalence toward foreign
or alien things and ideas within this range.

It would be very "tidy" if we could allocate to the different
extremes within the range diverse other features that have come
to light during the discussion; it would certainly delight the
mind of abstract typology-creators if we could discern any defi-
nite correlations between the shamanistic type of founders and
the apocalyptic forms of millennial expectations or between
the accommodative nativism and the non-shamanistic founder
personalities. It would even be rather neat if we could *not*
find "magical" manipulations on the side of the rational founders
or the accommodative posture within the nativistic continuum.
The facts do not allow such neatness. The only statement
I can make from the "text" is to indicate that all groups fall
somewhere between the opposing poles of the continuum within
the ideal types. Yet this negative conclusion should be taken

as an encouragement to "construe" theoretical paradigms or typologies on a comparative level in such a way that the whole of the continuum can be accommodated. Otherwise we commit intellectual "suicide," because we are forced to "bend" the data in order not to destroy a "convenient" typology![27]

Before concluding this essay with the suggestion of the levels of transformation potentially discernible, I would like to stress that the application of the hermeneutical method leaves open the question of what kind of value-orientation attracts what kind of people.

I have to admit that I do not know why certain people choose the particularly shamanistic orientation of the charismatic leader, and why other people choose a more "rational" type of leader; why some people adopt, from the gamut of ideological possibilities, the anti-acculturative form of explicit millennial nativism and others the more accommodative form of it. Yet again, some people do not choose any of the described religious orientations for a "change of the existing order," but rather channel their energies into radical secular activities (the student movement of the late 1960's)[28] or into the pursuit of material success (the managerial and business men's ethics): I can offer no reasons.

Though some sociologists have tried to prove the correlation

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27. This goes also for the typology of "revitalization" movements developed by A. F. C. Wallace who tries to convince us that there are for instance four attitudes discernible in regard to the goals of cultural reorganization which he labels revivalistic, utopian, assimilative and expropriative. Taking the first two only we can see the short-coming of this typology: as revivalistic the author describes such movements that try to restore a golden age, whereas as utopian he describes those which see the golden age in the future.

I personally cannot logically imagine any movement - and the Japanese cases certainly bear this out - where these two levels would ever occur as single elements. The golden age of the future is always manufactured with the imagined golden age of the paradisical past. This particular dialectic has been pointed out very concisely by W. E. Muehlmann (cf. Wallace 1966, p. 165; Wilhelm Muehlmann 1964, pp. 321–368).

28. Cf. Koepping 1970, pp. 268–286.

between status deprivation and the adherence to so-called "devious" religious movements, this facile picture does not fit the facts, as has been pointed out by Gary Schwartz and Rodney Stark among others (see Schwartz 1970, p. 75; Stark 1964, p. 706).

What my hermeneutical approach has shown is the great variation in the normative order of ideological positions; I can offer no *explanatory* scheme as to the position of these ideologies in the whole system of the existing Japanese society.

THE FIVE POTENTIAL LEVELS OF TRANSFORMATION

Existing data does not allow me to correlate that presumed state of dislocation, anomy or alienation pervading the collectivity and the individuals of modern Japanese society with adherence to religious movements such as Shinreikyō. However, I think my interpretation has shown one all-pervasive theme running through the official ideology of the group: that is the theme of *reversal* of the world-order. I would call this a form of a *total* reversal, since it is aimed not only at the individual but is also envisaged for the whole of Japanese society, for all societies on earth, for the position of the Japanese within the "new" world-order of the future, and for the position of mankind in the cosmic order. Victor Turner has introduced into anthropological literature the seminal idea of the efficacy of many rituals both as forms of status-reversal or status elevation and as processes which unstructure the existing hierarchial social order through the establishment of different forms of *communitas* (see Turner 1969). I posit that any member joining a group like Shinreikyō is at least on the surface committing himself to the following transformations which may be deduced from the ideology:

  a) *On the symbolic level*, we find transformations of meanings of words and ideas: the meaning of culture (*bunka*) becomes "the age of science and dissipation" (as in Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan) etc...

  b) *On the cosmic level*, founders like Ōtsuka are the chosen "vessels" of divine forces which appear here and

now: the divine forces can be transmitted to the faithful through these "vessels." This is the transformation of the world-order and of all of mankind. The implications of this transformation are manifold, and all further transformations follow from it; the main one is the establishment of a new world in which inequality and any form of deprivation will have disappeared. Paradise will be here and new on earth (*gendai gokuraku*), and man will again be equal to the deities, innocent, uncorrupted, happy (as in Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan).

c) *On the ethnic level,* the position of Japan will be a special one, for there will be a status reversal of the power-hierarchies, and a status elevation of Japan itself as the land of the "rising sun" (*hi-no-moto*). The Japanese have a special mission of awakening mankind to this future millennium since the "light comes from the East": Japan is in a privileged position, according to the interpretations of the old Shinto scriptures, because it is the origin of all races, languages, and the only true belief system (Shinto) which is the "way of the gods" (as in Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan).

d) *On the status level,* there will be a change in the shape and character of man due to the belief in the cosmic and divine revelation. When the spiritual forces are in balance with the material forces, man will become round as a circle and no longer be elliptical; science will wane, religion will wax, and time and space will be in harmony. At that time the "meek will inherit the earth" and "the wicked ones in power will be overthrown" (so go the teachings of Odoru Shūkyō). This implies the status reversal of the individual in the existing order. In the final order everybody will be equal (with a slight dialectical

shift, since the followers of the specific faith will be "in power" as they are the "chosen ones"). This level is the fourth transformation of the individual in society.

e) *On the final and crucial level,* the individual has to "cleanse his heart." This is the personal psychological transformation which is required to become one of the future "god-men." This also requires a change of life-style; one must be humble, non-materialistic and brotherly towards one's fellow men. *This* level is the essential prerequisite for achieving any and all other transformations.

It seems clear that these are the main five transformations which the leaders of the new religious movements try to implement through their ideologies. Variations on these five themes can be found in every other so-called "new religious movement" in present-day Japan. Sōka Gakkai is a prime example for the transformation of the individual's position in society for it introduces ranking hierarchies to the religious realm.

This shows also the lability of these groups which have oftentimes originated with the explicit aim of *spontaneous communitas,* as it has been labelled by Turner (Turner 1969, p. 132). The influence of explicit doctrines (*ideological communitas*) as well as of the need to mobilize resources (the *normative communitas*) have turned many of the *utopian* models into new hierarchical establishments. This might be the logically expected result of belief in the "millennium here and now," in a complete and total reversal of the existing order, because most of these groups do not conceive of, nor could they sustain, *states of non-order.*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To use Turner's terminology in a metaphorical sense, I would venture to say that the new religious movements are an expression of the yearning of great parts of the Japanese populace for a

reversal of the present order and for an *undifferentiated brotherhood of mankind;* yet status reversal tends inherently toward a new hierarchy in practice.

The actuality should not distract us from the *revolutionary potential* of these ideologies (a "normal" feature of all forms of salvation, be they secular or sacred in their orientation). I hope I have been able to show how a careful analysis of the meanings of symbols and ideologies through semiology and hermeneutics can lead far beyond current typologies. It may uncover the involved process of the total transformation which is required from the individual follower.

Context (historical dimension) and *content* (ideological dimension) reveal more than most scholars would hazard to guess, because- as Heidegger has neatly put it- "language speaks" (Heidegger 1960, p. 32). What we need is thorough analysis of the cognitive aspects of religious phenomena rather than timeless and neat categorizations.

GLOSSARY

Amaterasu-Ōmikami 天照大御神
Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi 天御中主
bunka[1] 文化
bunka[2] 分科
busshitsu bunmei 物質文明
go-shin-en 御神塩
gendai gokuraku 現代極楽
hi-no-moto 日本
Hokke-kyō 法華経
ikigami 生神
Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗
jumyō 寿命
kami-no-michi 神道
kanji 漢字
Kitamura Sayo 北村サヨ

Konkōkyō 金光教
kuchiyose 口寄せ
Kurozumikyō 黒住教
Kurozumi Munetada 黒住宗忠
mappō 末法
Miki Tokuchika 御木徳近
miko 巫女
Miroku Bosatsu 弥勒菩薩
namu-myō-hō-renge-kyō
　南無妙法蓮華経
na-myō-hō-renge-kyō 名妙法蓮華経
Odoru Shūkyō 踊る宗教
Okada Kōgyoku 岡田光玉
Ōmotokyō 大本教
Ōtsuka Kan'ichi 大塚寛一

PL-Kyōdan ピーエル教団
Reigen Kaku 霊験閣
reikan 霊感
Risshō Kōsei Kai 立正佼成会
sairai 再来
seishin 精神
Sekai Kyūsei Kyō 世界救世教
Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan
　世界真光文明教団
shakubuku 折伏

Shinreikyō 神霊教
shinkō shūkyō 新興宗教
shūkyō hōjin 宗教法人
Sōka Gakkai 創価学会
tariki 他力
Tenrikyō 天理教
Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō
　天照皇大神宮教
uchū no genri 宇宙の原理
uchū no shinri 宇宙の真理

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