

Reflections on the Contemporary Revival of Religion

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SECULARIZED SOCIETY AND UNRECOGNIZED RELIGION

Social change in postwar Japan has proceeded apace, and many kinds of phenomena are apparent at the surface level of the social structure. Particularly conspicuous are: the diminution of the rural population and concentration of population in and around urban centers; reduction in the number of people engaged in primary industry and, conversely, an increase in the number of those engaged in tertiary enterprises;¹ the collapse of many traditional communal organizations based on kinship and/or locale—or perhaps the deterioration of their social importance. The family, becoming nuclear, has grown smaller, and the scale of traditional human relations, heretofore preserved in many kinds of social groups typified by the business enterprise, gives evidence of important changes. The political structure has taken the form of centralized authority, and administrative organs have become increasingly bureaucratic. It is only natural that phenomena referred to under the headings of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization, phenomena apparent at the surface level of the social structure, should exercise important influences on the religious consciousness of contemporary Japanese people.

In agricultural and fishing villages where people live close to

Translated by David REID.

1. Gainfully employed labor is conventionally divided, in Japan, into three types. The first two have to do with products. *Primary* industry is that which obtains products directly from nature (e.g., agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, etc.). *Secondary* industry involves making products from the materials obtained through primary industry (e.g., houses, refined foods, tools, weapons, apparel, vehicles, etc.). The third type, *tertiary* industry, embraces everything else (e.g., political, military, religious, and clerical work, teaching, entertainment, etc.). TRANSL.

nature, the behavior of those who make up these traditional, closed societies has been regulated by their religious world view and the myths and rites that represented it. But in today's fluid, highly modernized, industrialized, urbanized society, the religious world view that served as the traditional and spiritual framework by which society as a whole was regulated has become diffuse, and the number of those who participate in the rites has fallen off. In this situation it might appear that the function of religion has become attenuated.

"Secularization" has come into general use as a term for grasping change that is at once social and religious, but there are various views as to what this secularization means. Ikado Fujio, examining the theories of sociologists of religion, infers that secularization does not necessarily mean "dereligionization" but, rather, a change from a society in which religion was treated "publicly" to one in which it functions "privately." He holds, in other words, that we have to do here with a movement from a society in which the function of religion, in accordance with a dualistic division between sacred and secular, clearly involved the idea that "the sacred confronts us from a realm beyond" to a society in which the sacred, as a "power" or inner ethic supports people from within, works within the secular in invisible forms or as "invisible religion" (Ikado 1974b, pp. 53-54). From this perspective, secularization emerges as something that derives intrinsically from the function of religion. Though it may appear that the religious function has diminished, in fact it has not changed. It is simply that in a fluid society with many values "organized religion" gives way to the invisible religion sometimes referred to as "civil religion" or "individual religion" and, without being recognized as religion, carries out its role of supporting the individual and society (Ikado 1974a, pp. 150-161).

REVIVED AND NEW FESTIVALS

Religion in present-day Japan, however, does not necessarily

give evidence of a trend toward "invisible religion" as found in Western secularization. To be sure, there is a reaction against institutional religion and a groping toward new values, but conversely there are also revivals of disappearing traditions and attempts to restore them to life. This is most clearly seen in the revival of the Shinto festival or *matsuri*.

At one time the *matsuri* had become a tired shadow of its former self. Not only was it difficult to mobilize financial support for it, but also, since the young men refused to participate, it was necessary to rely on paid helpers to pull the floats.

Today, however, the young men appear to be returning, little by little, to their "hometown festivals." Precisely because the present era is one of value pluralization, people seek, it appears, a "time and setting" in which they can affirm the values they hold in common. This becomes a reason for *matsuri* participation. Even if one limits himself to the subject of the revival of summertime festivals, a number of features quickly catch one's attention.

At Hirai Shrine in Fukuoka, the children's festival, discontinued since the wartime years, was resurrected by a ward committee after a gap of thirty-seven years as "something that will give the children pleasant summertime memories and help develop in them a feeling of love for the place they call home."

At one of the block assemblies in Osaka, "in order to develop a sense of solidarity based on Shinto rites and a new feeling of love for the hometown neighborhood," block association volunteers donated two *mikoshi* (scale-model shrines to be borne through the parish at festival time) and a supply of *happi* coats (short coats of coarse cloth emblazoned with a symbol identifying the wearers' group). The association thereupon revived the "children's *matsuri*," scheduling it to coincide with the chief festival of Kumata Shrine.

Again, Yasaka Shrine in Kashiya (Shizuoka Prefecture), affectionately called "Heaven" ever since the Heian period (794-1185), reactivated its "wild *mikoshi*" in the summer of 1978 after

an interval of seventy years. Before World War II, Kashiya was a small settlement of less than a hundred houses, but since the 1960s when it began to develop as a new residential area, its population mushroomed, now numbering some 650 households or about 2,700 people. Its residents, old and new alike, desiring “with our own hands to make this a pleasant town to live in,” organized themselves into thirty-seven block associations, and the officers of these associations, meeting together, decided unanimously to restore “Heaven’s wild *mikoshi*.” Tradition has it that this “wild *mikoshi*,” preceded by drums and torches, used to make its way through the streets and, when it came to the houses of families who did not observe the village rules, would plunge into their rice paddies. Its bearers, by way of greeting, would call out, “Congratulations! Heaven is entering your fields.” Then they would reduce the rice paddy to a trampled muddy mess. But toward the end of the Meiji era (1868–1912), on the ground that it did not accord with civilization and enlightenment, this practice was abolished. Reviving the “wild *mikoshi*” in 1978 entails quite literally a gap of seventy years. Among the old-timers in Kashiya, only two or three remember what it used to be like (*Jinja shinpō*, 21 August 1978).

In addition to cases where shrines or civic associations take the lead in restoring festivals, there are also cases of new, high-rise apartment communities and the like where *mikoshi* are built and festivals developed from scratch. Their purpose, however, is to build up or renew the community by means of a festival, not to restore or revive faith.

Moreover, in every area it has become popular to hold festivals of various kinds, ranging from “hometown festivals” to “beer festivals” and even “pickled vegetable festivals.” In all these tourist- and business-oriented festivals the aim is to attract customers. They have nothing to do with religion (Endō 1972). But they do, on the one hand, exploit a kind of “nostalgia for the festival,” a nostalgia that lingers in the hearts of many Japanese

people, and, on the other, they clearly demonstrate the existence of a strong desire to recover the sense of solidarity provided by participation in now vanishing communal organizations.

INVOLVEMENT OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

In distinction from these festivals, there are also phenomena where, quite apart from established civic or religious organizations (such as civic associations and shrines), ordinary people put their heads together and begin to form new circles of friends. I would like to present three examples that I have recently studied and then offer a few reflections as to their meaning.

Example 1: Yuinen. The town of Oyama in Shizuoka Prefecture has a population of 23,684, covers an area of 134.21 square kilometers (83.4 square miles), and, though legally organized as a town in 1912, has also incorporated the villages of Ashigara (1955), Kitagō (1956), and Subashiri (1956). Its population stood at 24,256 in 1970, at 24,072 in 1975, and at 23,684 in 1978, these figures indicating a population decrease of 2.4%. Since its 1912 population was 23,049, there appears to have been little change during the past seventy years, but a check of the 1976 Resident Registration shows that in that year there was a natural increase of 241 and a social decrease of 547—a net loss, therefore, of 306. Under the heading of social movement, 371 people from within the prefecture and 1,506 from outside moved into Oyama, whereas 626 moved out to other parts of the prefecture and 1,789 to other prefectures. A tendency toward population decrease is thus evident.

According to the 1975 National Census, employed residents of Oyama fall into three classifications: those in primary industry numbered 1,028 (7.8%), those in secondary industry 4,477 (34.1%), and those in tertiary industry 7,639 (58.1%). Compared to the 1970 census, these figures mean that those engaged in primary industry have decreased by 4.4% and those in secondary industry by 2.7%, while those in tertiary industry

have increased by 7.1%. The decrease among those engaged in agricultural work, the chief form of primary industry, is remarkable in recent years. Compared to 1970, the 1975 figure showed a drop of 596 people. The decrease in households engaged in specialized agriculture is also conspicuous. In secondary industry a decrease of workers in construction and manufacturing is evident. The change in the number of people engaged in manufacturing can be thought of as causally linked to a structural change in the administration of the spinning factory that employs some 1,300 persons. Tertiary industry accounts for nearly 60% of the working population, but over half are connected with service industries and government (Jichishō Gyōseikyoku Shinkōka 1978; Oyamamachi Yakuba Kōhō Kōchōka 1978).

During the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), Oyama was located on a main artery for the transportation of lumber, charcoal, cocoons, and lacquer. A stone pillar dedicated to Batō Kannon (the Horse-headed Avalokiteśvara) shows that wide use was made of horse power. Toward the end of the Tokugawa period, a voluntary pilgrimage association known as the Fujikō was quite popular, and Oyama stood on the road its adherents followed. Statues of Tebiki Kannon (the Guiding Avalokiteśvara) that indicated the route to the pilgrims have been found by the dozens. They lead to a site associated with Yuinen.

Yuinien was an ascetic who ceaselessly chanted the name of Amida (Skt., Amitābha) Buddha. From 1826 he shut himself up in the mountains of Ueno Oyama (part of the town of Oyama) to practice austerities, dying there in 1880 at the age of ninety-one. The temple he erected there used to be called Okunosawa Nenbutsuin, but the year before he died it was made a branch temple of Shiba Zōjōji temple in Tokyo and renamed Takizawasan Yuinenji temple.

The historical facts about Yuinen are not altogether clear, but it is known that through his promotion of religious austerities and of *nenbutsu kō* or voluntary associations dedicated to chanting

the name Amida Buddha, he attracted numerous followers. His influence extended to Suruga (central Shizuoka Prefecture), Izu (eastern Shizuoka Prefecture), Sagami (Kanagawa Prefecture), Musashi (Saitama Prefecture and western Tokyo), and Kai (Yamanashi Prefecture), as is shown by stone pillars located in these areas and bearing the words *Namu Amida Butsu* ("Praise to Amitābha Buddha!") inscribed in Yuinen's distinctive hand. The pillar located at Kurinokisawa in Oyama, a pillar so large that each ideograph, it is said, can hold a bushel of rice, is particularly impressive. Even today a number of sizable *nenbutsu kō*, such as the Chūshun Nenbutsu Kō, the Kita Izu Dai Nenbutsu Kō, the Dai Myōgōhi Nenbutsu Kō, etc., survive in each of these areas.

After Yuinen's death, his disciple Honshō Yuishin became the second-generation priest of the temple. He constructed the building known as Kaizandō and looked after the temple, but as a result of the great earthquake of 1923, the temple was destroyed, and a statue representing the Triple-Bodied Buddha was half-buried. Three years after the earthquake a temporary structure was thrown up to serve as the main building, but already remembrance of Yuinen was growing dim.

In Ueno Oyama there is a seventy-five-year-old man named Endō Tadashi who describes himself as "an ordinary man with a love of learning." In his house he carefully preserves, in addition to three large hanging scrolls by Yuinen, some forty medium-sized scrolls bearing names of buddhas or bodhisattvas. At the time of New Years and *Bon* (the Buddhist All Souls' Day, observed in midsummer), he hangs the three large scrolls in a place of honor as the center of his household festival, a custom that began with his grandfather. Apparently when his grandchild started school, Mr. Endō was embarrassed at not being able to answer a question as to what these scrolls were. He began to study about them so as to be prepared with a clear answer, and little by little came to understand many of the facts of Yuinen's life. Later he met Mr. Watanabe Yoshihiro of the Yuinen

Gyōja Kenkyūkai (Group for the Study of the Ascetic Yuinen) and joined them in conducting a survey of the dilapidated stone buddhas of Okunosawa and making arrangements for their restoration. He also became acquainted with Mr. Yajima Yoshirō, a native son of Oyama who specializes in photographing stone buddhas and stone pillars. As they surveyed the old site for ascetic exercises, they came to see how exalted a person Yuinen was. This led to the formation of the Mikuriya Shidan-kai (Mikuriya Historical Colloquy) and the Association in Honor of Saint Yuinen. On the basis of these groups, some four million yen was collected from *nenbutsu* pilgrims throughout the country. A major renovation of the Yuinenji temple kitchen was carried out, and in 1974 the Dai Nenbutsu Kō of Yuinenji temple held its most successful meetings ever.

In anticipation of 1980, the hundredth anniversary of Yuinen's death, a document entitled "Statement of Intention to Restore the Buried Buddha of Ueno Okunosawa" was circulated among the landowners of Oyama in September 1977. Among its proponents were leading figures of various public and civic organizations. This restoration proposal, however, was voted down by the town council and thus came to naught.

As this course of development shows, Mr. Endō and his friends, chiefly out of intellectual interest in what manner of ascetic Yuinen was, found themselves attracted to this chanter of the name of Amitābha Buddha, this ascetic who died nearly a century ago. The climax of their endeavors came when five old people in their seventies, on 12 April 1974, just one day before the Annual Festival for Yuinen, rediscovered, after an interval of some fifty years, a remote site where Yuinen had undertaken austerities, a place called the *maboroshi no oku gyōjō* or the "visionary site for mystical ascetic exercises." This rebirth of a hundred-year-old faith, aroused as a result of the intellectual interests of Mr. Endō and his friends since about 1966, has come to be connected with a faith in Saint Yuinen. Mr. Endō speaks of this experience as "being captivated by the virtuous influence

of Yuinen.”

Active as head of the Association to Honor the Virtuous Influence of Saint Yuinen, the Oyama Centennial Association, and the Mikuriya Historical Colloquy, Mr. Endō looks after people who visit Yuinenji temple and the ascetic exercise sites. At present, the movement is led primarily by elderly people, but young people who have come to know the history of their community and love it are beginning to participate in small numbers. Future developments will be worthy of attention (Yajima 1975).

Example 2: A pillar to Mokujiiki Kanshō. The city of Mishima in Shizuoka Prefecture has a population of 92,000, covers an area of 61.8 square kilometers (38.4 square miles), and used to be the 53rd post town on the old Tōkaidō or East Coast Turnpike. For many years it was the seat of the provincial capital of Izu, but in 1889 it was legally organized as a town. For a time, when the Tōkaidō Railroad was routed through Gotenba, the town fell into decline, but in 1934 the Tanna Tunnel was opened and a fork built into the Izu-Hakone Railroad. With this, Mishima became accessible as the point of entry into the Izu hot springs area, and the town began to grow again. In 1941 it was legally organized as a city.

The employed population of Mishima is divided as follows: 2,722 (6.7%) in primary industry, 15,626 (38.4%) in secondary industry, and 23,350 (54.9%) in tertiary industry. The population growth of Mishima appears in the following statistics: 78,141 in 1970, 89,298 (an increase of 14.2%) in 1975, and 91,896 (an increase of 17.6%) in 1978. Its major products are milk, rubber and paper products, and machines. Secondary industry has leveled off in recent years, but tertiary industry, since it has the hot springs behind it, continues to grow (Jichishō Gyōseikyoku Shinkōka 1978).

On 9 May 1973, under the leadership of Watanabe Torao, chairman of the Mokujiiki Kanshō Pillar Protection Committee, a stone pillar in honor of Mokujiiki Kanshō² was erected beside

the main thoroughfare of the Shiba Honchō quarter in Mishima. It is presumed that this pillar is one that was removed from Mishima Taisha shrine in accordance with the 1868 ordinance calling for the separation of Buddhism and Shinto, after which it stood in the precincts of the Mishima Aizen'in temple. In 1890 a garden named Rakujūen was developed on the land where Aizen'in had been located, and in 1952 this became a municipal park—as it remains today. The pillar honoring Mokujiki Kanshō, neglected as a result of the anti-Buddhist iconoclasm of the early Meiji period, had been used as a cover for a channel carrying spring water for Rakujūen, but in 1950, in connection with construction work on the new road, it was discarded beside the stream. There, face down, it served as a steppingstone for neighborhood women who came there to do the family laundry. For about twenty years it lay there, no one aware that this steppingstone was actually a stone pillar.

By coincidence, the Mr. Watanabe who discovered that this stone was a pillar was also informed by Mr. Itō, a local historian, that Mokujiki Kanshō and Mokujiki Shōnin (“the virtuous bonze Mokujiki”) were one and the same. Mr. Itō made the mistake of thinking that there had been only one Mokujiki Shōnin and thus wrongly identified these traces of the Shōnin Mokujiki Kanshō as those of the Shōnin Mokujiki Kōdō of the Nagano area. Mr. Watanabe, feeling it shameful that a pillar dedicated to such a famous monk had been treated so discourteously, appealed to those who lived in that neighborhood and formed the Pillar Protection Committee. They collected about ¥100,000, erected the pillar alongside the main road outside the fence of Rakujūen on 9 May 1973, and on 13 May 1973 held a

2. “Mokujiki Kanshō” looks like a surname and personal name, but in fact it is quite different. *Mokujiki* is a term of respect popularly applied to monks who subject themselves to a certain dietary austerity. *Moku* literally means “tree” and *jiki* “to eat.” *Mokujiki*, accordingly, means to subsist solely on a diet of fruit, bark, nuts, and roots. *Kanshō*, meaning “right perception,” is the name given the monk under discussion at the time he entered the monastic order.
TRANSL.

Buddhist memorial service there. Some 120 residents of the Shiba Honchō quarter attended this service. Mr. Watanabe seized the opportunity to invite interested people to attend a similar service at his home on the thirteenth of every month, calling it a “*nenbutsu* gathering” (a small meeting centering on recitation of the phrase *Namu Amida Butsu* or “Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light”). These gatherings have now been held for the past five years. The participants, who come from some of the old neighborhood associations, number about twenty on the average.

Municipal authorities suggested that erecting the pillar on such a street might show a want of respect and that it might be better to move it to the grounds of Mishima’s famous Ryūtakuji temple, a Rinzai Zen temple founded by the Zen master Hakuin (1685–1768). The members of the group, however, rejected this notion and decided to see to the pillar themselves. It so happens that many residents of Shiba Honchō are affiliated with the *nenbutsu*-reciting Pure Land Sect, and for this reason the Pillar Protection Committee and the *nenbutsu* gatherings tend to be bound together even where there is little or no relationship with Mokuji Kāshō.

The procedures of the *nenbutsu* gatherings are typical of those of lay Buddhist meetings. Members hold the services in accordance with the “*Nenbutsu* guidebook.” That is, a scroll with the ideographs for “Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light” is hung in the place of honor, a memorial tablet that Mr. Watanabe had made in honor of “the spirit of the venerable Mokuji Kāshō” is set before it, and a number of sutras are recited.³

Mr. Watanabe, the leader of this group, was born in 1914 and worked thirty-six years with the railroad before his retirement. From his early years he has been an active volunteer worker, instrumental in starting such organizations as a musical group,

3. The *Maka hannya haramitta shingyō* (3 times), the *Shūku Kannon kyō* (10 times), *Ojizō-san* (1 time), *Kōbō Daishi-san* (1 time), *Oyakushi-san* (1 time), *Jūō Hotoke-san* (1 time), the *nenbutsu* (100 times), the *Kannōn kyō fumon bongē* (1 time), the *Shigu seikan no ge* (3 times), and the *Sōbutsuge* (1 time).

a baseball team, children's clubs, etc. He says, "I like a weatherworn statue of Buddha found in a field better than a shiny, gleaming statue of Jizō." The reason is this: "When you see a shiny Jizō statue, you know somebody is producing such an item for profit. But nobody makes a profit from a Buddha found in a field."

This way of thinking is tied up with the erecting of the stone pillar in honor of Mokuji Kāshō. By means of this discarded, forgotten pillar, he hopes to restore lost neighborliness. "I aimed to develop neighborly ties through Mokuji and his pillar, and thanks to him, that's exactly what has happened." The pillar and the *nenbutsu* gatherings have given rise to a strong sense of solidarity among the residents of the area. Not only has Mr. Watanabe's aim been achieved, but, "thanks to Mokuji," he himself has experienced an inner conversion.

Since the pillar has been put in place, many bypassers pause before it in an attitude of devotion. Some put offerings in the offering box every day, and some faithfully bring a little something on the thirteenth of every month. Though no clean-up schedule has been set up or responsibilities assigned, somebody sweeps and cleans around the pillar daily. As a result, in the vicinity of the pillar, including the road, there is hardly a speck of dust.

A rough classification of *nenbutsu*-gathering participants by age-group shows that there are five people in their forties, five in their fifties, ten in their sixties, and two in their seventies. Some have dropped out because of a husband at home or because of affiliation with a new religion, whereas others belonging to the same new religion have joined and been very active during the past two years. It is not that this group is bound together by a common faith. Many look forward, rather, to tea and conversation after the chanting of the *nenbutsu*.

In the city of Mishima there is one other stone pillar in honor of Mokuji Kāshō. It appears to have been erected for the sake of people put to death at the Mishima execution site known

as the *kubikiriba* or “beheading place.” When the Shinkansen (“bullet train”) was being constructed, part of the track was laid on this site, so the railroad put up the money to transfer the pillar to a site some three hundred meters away, and it is reported that a lavish religious service was held. Unlike the Shiba Honchō quarter, however, no ongoing committee to look after the pillar came into existence. Since its removal to the new site, the pillar has been almost entirely neglected.

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Mokujiiki Kanshō was a popular object of veneration spoken of as “the Kōbō of our day.” According to the research of Morimoto Shinji, a graduate student at Nihon University, Kanshō was born at Sumoto on the island of Awaji, traveled as an itinerant monk throughout many areas in central Honshū leading many people to faith, and died in an Edo (now Tokyo) prison in 1829. From the fact that pillars in honor of Mokujiiki Kanshō may be found at some sixty locations in various areas of central Japan, one may surmise something of the extent and forcefulness of his labors. The pillar in Shiba Honchō is one of the sixty.

As far as Mr. Watanabe and the other members are concerned, the kind of person Mokujiiki was is a question in which they have no interest. Even on hearing the explanation resulting from Mr. Morimoto’s research, they merely responded, “Oh, is that the kind of ascetic he was?” or “We look forward to hearing more about the results of your research.” Their own previous misconceptions did not come up for consideration at all. The important thing for them is the function the pillar presently serves.

Example 3: The child-protector Jizō. The city of Iruma in Saitama Prefecture has a population of 93,267 and embraces an area of 44.8 square kilometers (27.8 square miles). In accordance with the 1953 Law promoting Mergers of Towns and Villages (*Chōson gappei sokushin hō*), it merged with surrounding villages, in 1956 calling itself the town of Musashi, and in 1966

becoming legally constituted as the city it is today.

Of its employed people, 2,033 (5.6%) are engaged in primary industry, 15,571 (42.6%) in secondary industry, and 18,910 (51.8%) in tertiary industry. With regard to population growth, the 1970 population stood at 65,369, the 1975 population at 83,997 (an increase of 28.5%), and the 1978 population at 93,267 (an increase of 42.7%). The main cause of this increase is the development of the city as one of the "bed towns" in the Tokyo area. The high-rise apartment complex being built in Iruma on land zoned for new residences has twenty-five subdivisions and will provide 700 new dwellings. Only 100 had been completed by 1974, but in 1978, 500 were ready for use (Jichishō Gyōseikyoku Shinkōka 1978).

In this high-rise apartment complex a statue of Jizō, the child-protector, was erected in 1974. What follows is based on a report by Osada Mineo, a student at St. Paul's University, together with the author's survey on the process that led to the erection of this Jizō statue.

On 24 June 1974 a sixth-grader, while riding his bicycle within the complex, was struck at an intersection by a backing truck and died instantly. On 1 October of the same year a kindergarten, caught between a fence and a backing bus, was crushed to death. At that time the apartments in the complex numbered only a hundred, but the residents, because two children had died in traffic accidents in little more than three months, were thrown into a state of shock and fear. As one would expect in a housing development of this kind, its residents include many young mothers and children. Not a few parents must have thought, "Next time, it might be my child."

At this juncture, a Mr. Morita, though his child had not been involved in any of the accidents, thought up the idea of erecting a statue of "Jizō, the child-protector." He and a number of friends appealed to residents of the complex. The residents, all experiencing the same anxiety, were eager to join in support of the idea. Soon more than sixty had signed up,

inaugurated the "Committee to Support Erection of a Statue of Jizō," and collected funds in the amount of ¥200,000. Despite this surge of support from the residents, however, the plan was not easily brought to realization. Mr. Morita formulated his appeal in these terms: "This Jizō is to be thought of not as an object of faith as in Buddhism, but as one who will stand as a substitute for our children, an expression of our hope that no more children will meet with disaster." This appeal was opposed by a number of people. These opponents, without exception, were members of established religious bodies or left-wing political parties.

Support Committee members, though disconsolate over the nonparticipation of some of the residents, entered into negotiations with the municipal authorities. They requested not only help in regard to traffic safety but also a subsidy, for it was essential to obtain the right to lease the land on which the statue would stand. To their surprise, however, the attitude of the municipal authorities turned out to be unreceptive. They would not grant even the right to lease the land, not to mention a subsidy. The reason given was that "because of the principle of separation between government and religious organizations, the city cannot rent land to a religious body." However much Mr. Morita and his group explained that the Jizō they wanted to put up was strictly for the sake of traffic safety and had no connection whatever with any specific religious organization, the municipal authorities took the view that Jizō was an object of faith in Buddhism and held to this position resolutely. The situation became extremely difficult, but the Support Committee, far from giving in, persisted doggedly in the negotiations. Apportioning responsibilities, it had some of its members make contact with a stonecutter and win the promise of a reduced price for the statue, while others, armed with the *Six codes of law*, continued in the attempt to persuade the municipal authorities. Nonetheless, the flat refusal suggested by the attitude of the city authorities made more than one negotiating housewife burst

into tears.

At length, the desperate appeals of the residents bore fruit. The right to lease land was secured, and on 24 November 1974 the ceremony for the erection of the eagerly awaited Jizō was held. From the time of the second fatality to that of the erection ceremony, less than two months had elapsed—an astonishing speed! In addition three mirrors were put up at dangerous corners and curves. In this apartment complex with its many subdivisions there are over ninety road turnings, and what with the constant construction work and the frequent truck traffic, the children are exposed to an unusually high degree of potential accidents. In any case a Jizō whose countenance is suffused with serenity and benevolence has been set up in a handsome shelter. On the day of the ceremony, residents showed up one after the other until more than a hundred had paused in an attitude of devotion before the statue of Jizō. Even the city authorities, who had been so unyielding at the outset, reportedly appeared on the day of the ceremony and planted shrubbery at the site.

On Jizō's halo, underneath the Sankrit *a*, are inscribed the words "Child-Protector Jizō." Below this inscription are two more. The one on the left reads "Traffic Safety, Security and Long Life." The one on the right reads "Fulfilment of Vows, Satisfaction of all Requirements." And on one side of the halo is yet another inscription: "24 November 1974. Petitioners. Erected by the Iruma Committee to Support Erection of a Statue of Jizō."

As of the time of the ceremony the Support Committee was dissolved, but for the sixty old friends who started it, close neighborly relationships continue. On the 4th, 14th, and 24th of each month, days generally associated with Jizō services, the residents assemble of themselves, clean up around the statue and its shelter, make offerings of flowers, and burn incense. No matter when one passes the statue, Jizō is never without flowers. He always wears a clean bib and cap, and the strings of a thou-

sand folded-paper cranes and bells are increasing in number. One time when two or three people were painting the roof, others who had not been in residence when it all began heard of the project, and soon five or six others were there with brushes. The two dwellings closest to the shelter were built after its construction, and the people living there knew nothing about how it had come into existence. But they too sometimes lend a hand with the weeding, and since they see bystanders everyday stopping for an act of devotion, they say things like: "I don't know whose child it is, but everyday a kid who looks like about a fourth-grader comes to pay homage," "There's an old woman who comes on the 4th of every month bringing her grandchild," etc. Mrs. Morita once noted with surprise, "The other day when I went there I saw that somebody had reinforced the base with cement so Jizō wouldn't topple. I wonder who it was." Four years have passed since the statue was set in place, and the number of apartments in the complex now exceeds five hundred. Those who have moved in since 1974 thus constitute the majority. But even those totally unaware of how the statue got there appear to be unconsciously led, because of this child-protecting Jizō, into close relationship with one another and in a most natural way take part in the care of Jizō.

For quite a while after erection of the Jizō statue, no traffic fatalities occurred. Occasional traffic accidents happened, but it is reported that the injuries were all light. But on 31 August 1977 a third-grade youngster riding her bike was hit by a car and, after two days in the hospital, died. "But," someone said with a sigh, "that child came from a family that didn't even know about Jizō."

At this point, with Mr. Morita, Mr. Matsuda, and others who had been instrumental in starting the Support Committee, a ceremony was held on 23 November to commemorate the three years since the statue had been put up. "We had a priest come and read a sutra, and then passed out candies to the children," said the owner of the *sushi*⁴ shop in the apartment complex.

Even now the Self-Government Association of the complex refuses to deal publicly with care of the Jizō. The reason given is that the Self-Government Association cannot involve itself with any particular religion, in this case Buddhism. But the Self-Government Association decision aside, a solidarity that has its center in the child-protector Jizō appears to be growing quietly among the residents. Moreover, the child-protecting Jizō is beginning to take on a new function.

“Just the other day someone came up to me and said, ‘Thank you so much for putting up the Jizō. I went to him every day to pray that my seriously injured child would recover, and he has snapped back with miraculous speed.’ It’s downright embarrassing to be thanked by someone you don’t even know,” said Mrs. Morita with more than a trace of pleasure. And it is more than a matter of traffic safety. For example, there are parents who take their children to pay homage to Jizō if they have hiccups that will not stop or a fever that will not go down, and there are said to be elderly people who go there to pray that their grandchildren will pass the college entrance examinations. One might say that the function implied in the inscription “Security and Long Life, Fulfilment of Vows,” is beginning to be realized.

A FEW REFLECTIONS

According to the census of 1975, the percentage of the population engaged in primary industry fell from 19.3% in 1970 to 13.1% in 1975. The percentage of people in tertiary industry was 51.7%, more than half the total work force. Those in secondary industry accounted for 35.2% of the employed. If these values are taken as standards, even a town like Oyama where agricultural traditions remain comparatively strong gives evidence of urbanization in so far as those in primary and tertiary industry are concerned. In Iruma the percentage of the people engaged

4. *Sushi* is the name for a vinegared piece of pressed, cooked rice (about 1" × 1" × 3") generally topped with a slice of fresh sea food or egg. TRANSL.

in secondary industry is quite high, but the influx of population into this "bed town" may be considered as due to the conspicuous increase in income of one stratum of the population, this increase itself deriving from the economic growth of the nation.

What is common to the three foregoing examples is the absence of control from established religion, on the one hand, and the weak sense of solidarity in the traditional local community, on the other. From this it appears, therefore, that with regard to the social function of religion, these towns are indeed representative of the secularized modern situation. Peter Berger described it over a decade ago when he said that present-day religion has lost its ability to integrate the whole, that in terms of its relation to society, religion has withdrawn from integration of society as a whole in favor of becoming the special integrating factor of particular social groups (Berger 1967, p. 340). In this situation ordinary people, having no direct connection with established religion but motivated by a "non-religious" desire for neighborly ties that might substitute for the sense of solidarity once provided by the now lost traditional communities, have formed small groups through involvement with religious symbols such as a hanging scroll, a stone pillar, a statue of Jizō. These small groups are constituted by people who come from a common social class, share common concerns and desires, and rely on voluntarily selected common symbols. They are by no means bodies formed for religious purposes, nor do they hold a world view that functions to support the basic framework of a so-called "natural" local community—as is the case with cultural religion. The members of these small groups, desiring to obtain relief from the tension and anxiety of modern society, pursue the meaning of human life and seek something on which they as individuals can rely—this is the basic framework they hold in common. But these groups are not organized religious bodies that seek to extend their basic framework to yet other groups. They remain at the level of individual religion. At most, they provide only a sense of solidarity that follows from

the basic framework they hold in common. One should not overlook the fact, however, that through involvement with forgotten religious symbols, these small groups revive an aspect of the culture of the past or consciously seek to perpetuate such an aspect. To this extent they may come under the heading of "nativistic movements" (Linton 1943, p. 230).

The members of these groups by no means perceive their actions as religious behavior. But because they have laid hold of a norm on which they can rely and have attached meaning and order to their behavior as a result of coming into contact with these religious symbols, they have achieved a kind of autonomous integration. Consequently, though these groups possess a certain regulative power over the individuals who choose to join them, they do not possess the four elements constitutive of a religious organization: doctrine, ritual, believers, and facilities (Fujii 1978, p. 297). They serve merely as forms of invisible religion, living from the desires of people seeking a sense of worthwhileness in life, secretly informing the ethics of private life.

What stands at the center of the integrating function is the neglected, forgotten, and rediscovered religious symbol. That is to say, the religious symbol, a cultural property such as a Buddhist statue, stone pillar, or hanging scroll, brings back the function of giving meaning to a whole. The members who select a particular symbol thus relativize the components of the actual social structure and personality structure and are enabled to exercise the function of critical assessment. What Ikado Fujio (1974a, pp. 90-94), following Glock, Ringer, and Babbie (1967), has pointed out as the two functions of "comforting" and "challenging" are fully performed in these small groups. At the present stage, however, these functions, far from being sufficiently developed to cover the whole of society, are woven into the belief structures of individuals and are carried out only within these small reference groups. Moreover, all these groups have been formed only within the last few years. How they will

develop in future is by no means clear. It is also worth noting that those who played key roles in getting these groups started were neither charismatic figures nor strong leaders.

Munakata Iwao is one scholar who has taken up the topic of changes in religious consciousness that accompany urbanization. Starting from the "immanentist" type of religious consciousness he deems characteristic of Japan's basic religious culture, he compares the religious consciousness of three generations. He deals with the "traditional immanentist type," the "latent immanentist type," and the "universalistic immanentist type" as three distinctive forms of religious social character. He sees the older generation as having received the strongest influence from traditional religion, the middle-aged generation as having been raised under the influence of traditional religious culture but living their adult lives in the midst of modern rationalistic culture and therefore giving evidence of a certain "schizoid" social character, and the younger generation as living in an age in which the influence of modernization has penetrated every corner of their social universe (Munakata 1977, pp. 30-31). In the case of Oyama it is possible to speak of the rediscovery of a religious symbol on the part of the older generation, but in the Mishima case this rediscovery was by the middle-aged generation. In Iruma too the devising of a religious symbol was by the middle-aged stratum, but the decision to give it the form of a Jizō statue can be interpreted as the natural expression of a latent but aroused religious sentiment. This rediscovering and devising of lost or forgotten religious symbols is possible, therefore, to the middle-aged and older generations as a kind of nostalgia for traditional religious values or rites, a perspective that permits traditional religious culture to revive. To adolescents and young people, however, lacking the experience of growing up in the kind of natural, social, and cultural environment that makes it possible to absorb these traditional religious sensibilities and being raised, instead, in a secularized, industrial, urban civilization, such a rediscovery or reworking of religious symbols

is wellnigh impossible. These three examples are all phenomena born of this period of extremes we call the modern age. But in the future in which the younger generation will be central, it seems unlikely that this kind of pattern will recur. What kind of evolution such small groups will go through in the years ahead depends, it may be suggested, on the kinds of responses the young people make to these rediscovered religious symbols.

In the case of Oyama and Mishima, it is possible, of course, to regard the developments cited as nothing but a recrudescence of a form of religious consciousness that aspires to recover or perpetuate the old communal organization. In the case of Iruma one also has to admit the possibility that this development includes at least the seeds of an attempt to build up a new communal organization in the form of a "citizens' movement." From the fact, however, that the Support Committee dissolved itself immediately after the Jizō statue had been put in place and did not go on to develop a new kind of communal organization, it appears that what is distinctive about these three examples is that in each case people with similar ideas got together to create a small, intimate group of a type that had not previously existed in those areas. This is a matter of recovering one's true self through intimate association that overcomes the anonymity Harvey Cox has pointed out and, at the same time, in experiences shared with close friends, a matter of sensing and laying hold of religious meaning by coming into contact with something "sacred." Of these small groups formed for non-religious purposes it may be said, therefore, that because of the new fellowship they provide, they now exercise an unexpectedly religious function.

The modern period is often spoken of as one in which people have lost touch with their local roots, but this can also be taken as meaning that modern people, precisely because of having lost touch in this way, come to understand for the first time the meaning of what they have lost and seek to build a new community where they can once again feel "rooted." The com-

munities seen in these three examples are still quite simple and small in scale, but these groups, despite their simplicity and smallness, are filled with an atmosphere of close friendship, mutual acceptance, and "at homeness." They are still very pure and delicate, a far cry from the gaudy ostentation of the large religious organizations, but they do serve as "fortresses" that ward off the devastation that threatens the spirits of modern people. I must admit to some hesitation in applying the term "religious" to these small groups, but perhaps it is possible to comprehend them as one form through which religious revival takes place in modern Japan. Though different from the conspicuous religious revival movements of the 1970s with their "counter culture," "youth culture," and "new religious movements," we should not lose sight of these tender movements coming to birth among the common people.

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