

Acceptance of a New Religion and Subsequent Changes in Religious Consciousness

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INTRODUCTION

Religious consciousness is a person's cognitive, emotional and evaluative posture toward religion. The present paper studies three questions: how one's posture in regard to religion changes or remains stable in the process of social change; assuming that components of religious consciousness are identifiable, which traits tend to change and which do not, and why; and what theoretical framework is most useful in understanding the dynamics of this stability and change.

Change in religious consciousness is promoted by a certain meaningful change in the environment. In the present paper, we shall take up the acceptance of a new religion as a type of environmental change in approaching the research problems proposed above.

The new religion selected for this study is called Myōchikai Kyōdan, a group which separated from Reiyūkai Kyōdan in 1950. Myōchikai Kyōdan is a religious sect whose basic teaching is the practice of ancestor veneration through recitation of the Lotus Sutra. The head figure of the religion is a female spiritist. Its roughly 200,000 members are concentrated in the metropolitan Tokyo area and in Yamagata Prefecture. It is considered a medium-sized religious sect.

In order to examine changes in religious consciousness as a result of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs, we selected a hot spring town called Yunohama in Yamagata Prefecture, which has a considerable number of Myōchikai

members. The field study took place in September 1972 and October 1973. Eighty-three member households of Myōchikai Kyōdan and 59 non-member households were interviewed.¹

Now, what do we mean by "acceptance" of a religion? We assume that it means to place the basic teaching of a religion in one's belief system and thus modify or reorganize the belief system. We regard changes in religious consciousness as *resulting from* acceptance of a religion, but they also reflect the *process* of acceptance.

The problem we wish to consider in this paper is not acceptance of religion as such, that is, whether one accepts a religion or not, but the degree of acceptance, that is, whether the basic religious teaching of the newly accepted religion is placed at the center or the periphery of one's belief system.

Operationally, we determined the degree of acceptance in terms of differences on the behavioral level rather than on the level of consciousness as a way of measuring changes in religious consciousness resulting from the acceptance of a new religion. The behavior we investigated related to religious membership and those practices most emphasized by Myōchikai Kyōdan:

- 1) Whether or not one holds official membership, the minimum qualification for acceptance of a religion.
- 2) Whether or not the posthumous Buddhist names of the deceased are recorded in the family mortuary list. When

1. Our sample includes all Myōchikai member households in the third *chōnai* ("district") of Yunohama, all households of Myōchikai office holders in Yunohama, and all households of non-Myōchikai members in the third *chōnai* and a part of the second *chōnai*. The method adopted for field research was a structured questionnaire interview. The persons interviewed were generally speaking members themselves in member households and household heads in non-member households.

a person becomes a member of Myōchikai Kyōdan, he or she enshrines the sect's principal image, called *sōkai-myō*, and receives a simplified copy of the sutras, a rosary, a *tasuki* ("sash"), a membership badge, and a blank mortuary list on which the new member can fill in the posthumous Buddhist names of his *rokushin-kenzoku* (bilaterally traced ancestors of the last three generations). Myōchikai emphasizes the importance of recording posthumous Buddhist names and considers filling in those of *rokushin-kenzoku* as a prerequisite for ancestor veneration. Members are instructed to collect as many posthumous Buddhist names of ancestors as possible.²

- 3) Chanting of the sutras every morning and/or evening. According to Myōchikai teaching, to practice ancestor veneration is to venerate one's ancestors by oneself, and not leave it to religious professionals. This is carried out in the form of daily sutra-chanting at the Buddhist altar (*hōza*) at home. Thus, the question of whether daily sutra-chanting is performed must follow that regarding the recording of posthumous Buddhist names in the family mortuary list.
- 4) *Omichibiki*. It is a Myōchikai teaching that those who receive blessings and benefits (*kudoku*) must express their gratitude in the form of *omichibiki* ("missionary work") and *fusegyō* ("labor service, financial contributions"). We focused on missionary work and asked whether the respondent had succeeded in persuading someone else to join Myōchikai Kyōdan. Participation in missionary work would signify a greater degree of acceptance than daily sutra-chanting. Nevertheless, since Question 3 above asks about present behavior while Question 4 is an inquiry regarding past experience, it is possible to give a positive

2. A bulletin sent to chapter leaders at the end of 1973 states that new members are requested to 1) promptly enshrine the *sōkai-myō*, receive a *tasuki*, rosary, and copy of the sutras, and 3) collect posthumous Buddhist names of *rokushin-kenzoku* (*Myōchikai*, No. 278, March 1974). This suggests difficulty in enforcing members to record posthumous Buddhist names.

- response to Q.4 in spite of a negative response to Q.3.
- 5) Holding office in the sect. The offices of chapter leader, sub-leader, and meeting chairperson (*hōzashu*) are offered to those who have done well in missionary work. Since these field leaders are responsible for the training of members and are in the forefront of missionary work, we assumed that they had reached the maximum level of acceptance of beliefs.

FIGURE 1

		DEGREE OF ACCEPTANCE				
		1	2	3	4	5
GROUP	E	○	×	×	×	×
	D	○	○	×	×	×
	C	○	○	○ — × × — ○	×	×
	B	○	○	○	○	×
	A	○	○	○	○	○

The sample of 83 Myōchikai Kyōdan members was divided into five groups according to their degree of acceptance (see Figure 1):

- E. Has membership but no record of posthumous Buddhist names in the family mortuary list (Point 1 above only) — 19 cases.
- D. Has record of posthumous Buddhist names in the family

- mortuary list but no practice of sutra-chanting or missionary work (Points 1 and 2 above) – 27 cases.
- C. Has record of posthumous Buddhist names in the family mortuary list and practices sutra-chanting or missionary work (Points 1, 2, and 3 or 4 above) – 20 cases.
 - B. Has record of posthumous Buddhist names and practices both sutra-chanting and missionary work (Points 1, 2, 3, and 4 above) – 7 cases.
 - A. Has record of posthumous Buddhist names, practices both sutra-chanting and missionary work, and holds an office (Points 1 - 5 above) – 10 cases.

The present study is an attempt to understand the various changes in religious consciousness caused by the differing degree of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs. How, then, did we measure the religious consciousness of the respondents before they had accepted Myōchikai beliefs? Since past consciousness is not directly measurable, we had to look for a legitimate substitute.

Before population grew through immigration, all households in Yunohama were members of the Buddhist Sōtō Sect with about 90 percent of the households belonging to the parish of Jōkei Temple, the only Buddhist temple in Yunohama. Nearly 80 percent of the Myōchikai members in our sample were former parishioners of Jōkei Temple. Taking the consciousness of 27 non-Myōchikai household heads who were still Jōkei Temple parishioners (the total number of non-Myōchikai households in the sample being 59), we treated it as the traditional religious consciousness. Non-Myōchikai members who are *not* Jōkei Temple parishioners can be categorized into four groups: Risshō Kōsei-kai, Sōka Gakkai (Nichiren Shōshū), others, no religious affiliation. In our analysis, we will refer only to Sōka Gakkai since the number in other categories is negligible.

We shall first describe changes in traditional religious practices, on which basis we will pursue our examination of changes in consciousness.

CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The traditional religious practices of the residents in Yunohama include ancestor veneration services connected with Jōkei Temple of the Sōtō Sect or with *miko* (“female necromancers”), and prayers for worldly benefits associated with Onsen Shrine, Zenpō Temple (the head temple of Jōkei Temple) and Sugino-o Shrine. The places of religious practice were located in the home or in the community of Yunohama and its neighboring areas. To measure the degree of traditional religious practices, we used the sum of the scores from the following four scales. Two categories based on the location of practices — home vs. community — and two categories based on the orientation of practices — worldly oriented prayer vs. ancestor oriented services — were crossed to construct four categories (Figure 2):

- 1) Worldly oriented prayer in the community (0 - 8 points).
Measures: visits to and prayers at Onsen Shrine in Yunohama, Zenpō Temple in Shimokawa, Sugino-o Shrine in Umamachi, and the Three Dewa Mountains.
- 2) Ancestor oriented services in the community (0 - 8).
Measures: visits to one's parish temple, visits by the parish priest, frequency of memorial services and visits to the family tomb.
- 3) Worldly oriented prayer at home (0 - 8).
Measures: Presence of a household Shinto altar and a talisman from Onsen Shrine, presence of other talismans, presence of other worship objects, and frequency of offerings to the household Shinto altar.
- 4) Ancestor oriented services at home (0 - 8).
Measures: presence of a household Buddhist altar, of-

ferings to the Buddhist altar, frequency of cleaning the Buddhist altar, and frequency of sutra-chanting.

FIGURE 2
Religious Practices

		LOCUS OF PRACTICES	
		IN THE COMMUNITY	AT HOME
ORIENTATION OF PRACTICES	WORLDLY BENEFITS	1	3
	ANCESTOR VENERATION	2	4

The score indicating the performance of traditional religious practices, which is the sum of scores in Nos. 1 to 4 above, is higher for Myōchikai members than for Jōkei Temple parish members, and among Myōchikai members it is higher when the degree of acceptance of the new religion is higher (the score becomes higher from E toward A). Jōkei Temple members score about the same as those in Groups E and D of Myōchikai Kyōdan. It is notable that among non-Myōchikai groups Sōka Gakkai (Nichiren Shōshū) members score extremely low (Figure 3).

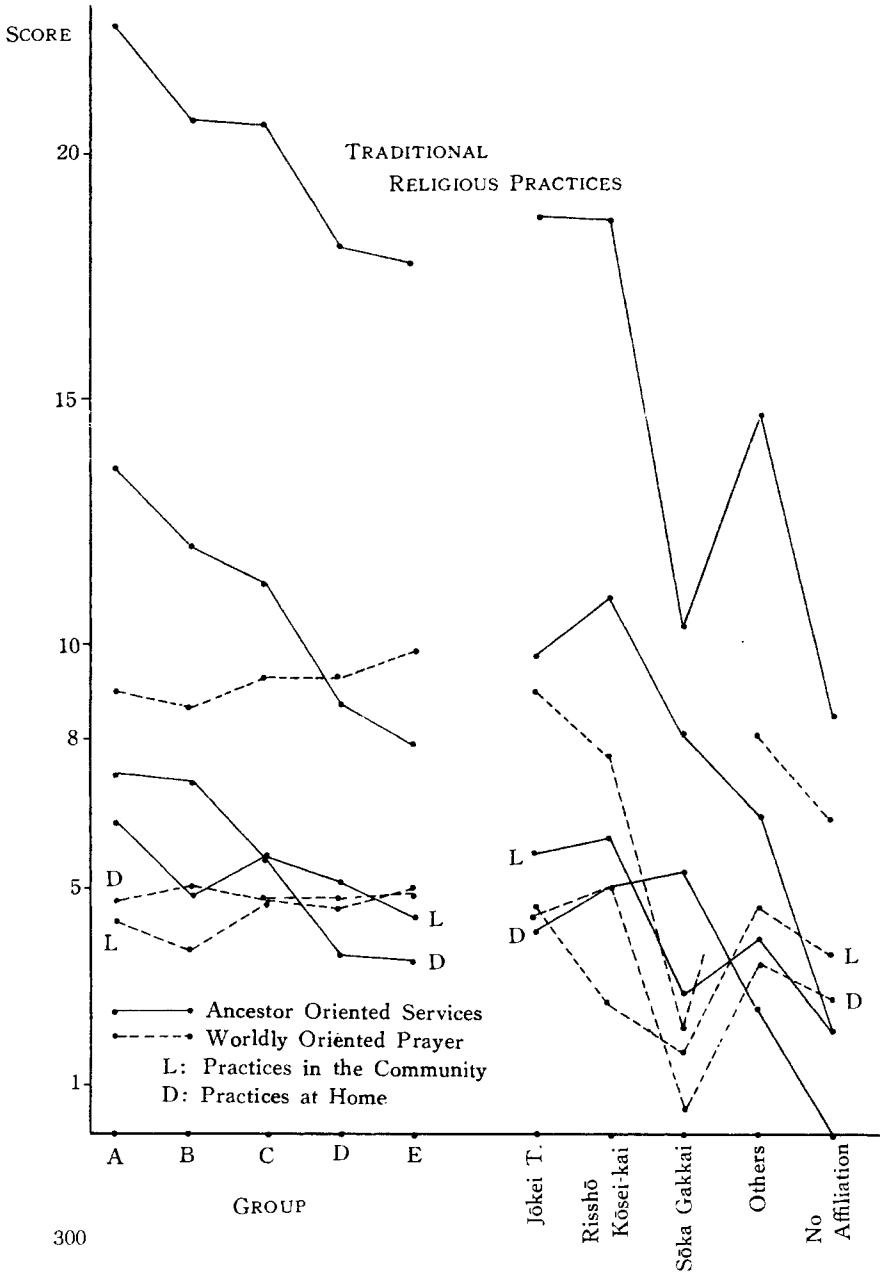
Why is the degree of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs positively related to the score? To answer this question, we observed each score from the four scales of the degree of traditional religious practices. The score of Myōchikai believers on worldly oriented prayer both at home and in the community is relatively constant regardless of variations in the degree of religious acceptance and is as high

as the score for Jōkei Temple members. The score on ancestor oriented services, on the other hand, descends sharply from Group A toward Group E.; Group D scores almost the same as Jōkei Temple members. This trend is particularly true in regard to those services performed at home. From these observations it is interpreted that acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs positively influences the score on traditional religious practices by increasing ancestor oriented services (particularly those at home) without decreasing other types of religious practices. Among Sōka Gakkai members, on the contrary, the score on ancestor oriented services at home is high but the other three scores are low, making the total score for traditional practices extremely low.

The fact that Myōchikai members are requested to set up a household Buddhist altar, install *sōkaimyō* and the family mortuary list, offer rice, water and other offerings, clean the Buddhist altar and perform daily sutra-chanting, explains the positive relationship between the degree of belief acceptance and the score on ancestor oriented services at home. Furthermore, Myōchikai teaching does not demand that members cut off affiliation with their old Buddhist parish. On the contrary, it instructs them to welcome visits by temple priests on occasions such as an anniversary of death. This may explain the positive relationship between the degree of acceptance and the score on ancestor oriented services in the community though the score is not strikingly high. Also, Myōchikai teaching is quite alien to the Sōka Gakkai practice called *bōhōbarai* (rejection of objects belonging to other religions) as it does not allow members to neglect Shinto shrines and altars. This explains the trend for the score on worldly oriented prayer to be as high as that of Jōkei Temple members regardless of the degree of acceptance.

In short, acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs does not decrease the degree of worldly oriented prayer, and at the

FIGURE 3
Performance of Traditional Religious Practices by Groups



same time encourages ancestor oriented services, resulting in a positive relationship between the total score on religious practices and the degree of religious acceptance. Categorization based on the degree of acceptance, however, may involve factors other than religious acceptance, and these factors may contribute to an increase in the score on traditional religious practices. To investigate this point, we examined the influence of economic status, commitment to permanent residence in the community, and attachment to traditional family values on our outcome variable. We did not find any systematic variation caused by the first two factors and found only slight indication that the higher the degree of acceptance, the higher the score on attachment to traditional family values. The score is extremely high for Group A, but the high score on attachment to traditional family values may be a result of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs as well as an independent variable that may increase the score on ancestor oriented services. Therefore, we can conclude that the degree of performance of traditional religious practices is primarily an outcome of the degree of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs.

TEACHINGS OF MYŌCHIKAI KYŌDAN AND ITEMS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Acceptance of a belief is, as we stated previously, operationalized as acceptance of the teachings of religion. We now intend to discuss the teachings of Myōchikai Kyōdan which underlie the practices requested of members and see how they are demonstrated in the questionnaire items we used.

The fundamental teaching of Myōchikai is to "practice ancestor veneration in accordance with the Lotus Sutra." We may interpret it analytically as a belief system in the following manner:

- 1) the belief that the Lotus Sutra is the king of all sutras and that the principle of the sutra is *busho-gonen* (literally, what is in Buddha's mind) which Myōchikai interprets as ancestor veneration³
- 2) a belief in the spiritual world (a prerequisite for ancestor veneration) and its mutually dependent relationship with the secular world
- 3) a belief in causality as explained in Buddhism (a prerequisite for the mutual dependency above).

Of the questionnaire items,⁴ Q.9 (ancestor veneration*), Q.17 (union of souls) and Q.23 (Buddhas) are related to Point 1 above; Q.14 (immortality of the soul*), Q.15 (reincarnation), Q.16 (spiritism), Q.18 (Bon festival), Q.19 (misfortune and failure to attain Buddhahood*), and Q.20 (aid from the other world) are related to Point 2 above; Q.10 (curses), Q.11 (worldly benefits*), Q.12 (moral prerequisite for divine blessings), Q.13 (laws of causality), and Q.21 (enlightenment) are related to Point 3. We added three items which might not be directly related to Myōchikai teachings but are important in understanding the religious consciousness of the Japanese people. They are: Q.8 on divination, Q.22 on the concept of sin, and Q.24 on Buddhas and Shinto deities. The asterisks above and in the following sections indicate items constituting the central component of the teaching. Myōchikai teaching also emphasizes the concept that dead ancestors reside in the spiritual world and the notion of recognizing close deceased kin bilaterally – on both the husband's and wife's sides – as ancestors. We will discuss these notions in the next section.

3. Myōchikai teaching interprets that by ancestor veneration 1) one's ancestors can attain Buddhahood, 2) a person and his descendants can attain happiness, and 3) world reform will be brought about (*Myōchikai*, No. 278, March 1974).

4. For the questionnaire items, see Appendix.

CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

As was mentioned earlier, we regard the religious consciousness of parish members of Jōkei Temple as the traditional religious consciousness in Yunohama. As we described in the previous section, religious consciousness was examined in terms of responses to 17 questions on divination, ancestor veneration*, curses, worldly benefits*, moral prerequisites for divine blessings, laws of causality, the immortality of the soul*, reincarnation, spiritism, the union of souls, the Bon festival, misfortune and failure to attain Buddhahood*, aid from the other world, enlightenment, the concept of sin, Buddhas and the deceased, and Buddhas and Shinto deities. Responses were scored as follows: completely agree (+2), agree somewhat (+1), undecided as whether to agree or disagree (0), disagree somewhat (-1), completely disagree (-2). The mean score was calculated for each group. Jōkei Temple parishioners show mean scores (in parenthesis) as follows (Table 1):

- 1.0 and over (strong agreement): ancestor veneration* (1.85), moral prerequisites for divine blessings (1.78), Buddhas and the deceased (1.52), Bon festival (1.11)
- 0.0 - less than 1.0 (weak agreement): law of causality (0.89), immortality of the soul* (0.89), Buddhas and Shinto deities (0.67), union of souls (0.63), reincarnation (0.52), enlightenment (0.44), spiritism (0.19), aid from the other world (0.15)
- 1.0 - less than 0.0 (weak disagreement): worldly benefits* (-0.04), curses (-0.19), concept of sin (-0.33), misfortune and failure to attain Buddhahood* (-0.44), divination (-0.96).

There is no "strong disagreement" (less than -1.0) when the questions are confined to the first 17 items. Traditional religious consciousness in Yunohama can be seen in the pattern of means ranging from strong agreement to weak

TABLE 1
Mean Scores on Religious Consciousness by Groups

	Total: Member	A.B	C	D.E	Total: Non- Member	Jōkei T.	Risshō Kōsei-kai	Sōka Gakkai	Others	No Affil- iation
Number of Households Interviewed	83	17	20	46	59	27	3	6	14	9
Q9 Ancestor veneration	1.88	2.00	1.85	1.85	1.76	1.85	2.00	1.67	1.71	1.56
Q23 Buddhas and the deceased	1.77	1.88	1.80	1.72	1.14	1.52	1.00	0.00	0.86	1.22
Q12 Divine blessings	1.58	1.76	1.70	1.46	1.58	1.78	2.00	0.83	1.21	1.89
Q18 Bon festival	1.29	1.88	1.25	1.09	0.58	1.11	0.67	-0.17	0.36	-0.22
Q13 Laws of causality	0.99	1.76	0.95	0.72	0.56	0.89	-0.33	0.83	-0.14	0.78
Q14 Immortality of the soul	1.33	1.94	1.70	0.93	0.71	0.89	0.67	1.33	0.21	0.67
Q15 Reincarnation	0.51	1.71	0.55	0.04	0.24	0.52	0.00	1.00	-0.21	-0.33
Q21 Enlightenment	1.08	1.71	1.45	0.70	0.37	0.44	1.33	0.33	0.50	0.33
Q19 Misfortune and Buddhahood	0.43	1.88	0.65	-0.20	-0.49	-0.44	-0.33	-0.17	-0.57	-0.78
Q20 Other-worldly aid	0.83	1.76	0.75	0.52	-0.31	0.15	0.67	-0.83	-0.64	-1.11
Q11 Worldly benefits	0.72	1.47	0.85	0.50	-0.19	-0.04	1.00	0.00	-0.71	-0.33
Q22 Concept of sin	0.22	0.88	0.70	-0.24	-0.41	-0.33	0.00	-0.67	-0.29	-0.78
Q8 Divination	-0.60	-1.29	-0.80	-0.26	-0.66	-0.96	1.00	-0.83	-0.21	-0.89
Q16 Spiritism	0.37	1.24	0.05	0.20	-0.02	0.19	-0.33	-0.83	-0.29	0.44
Q17 Union of souls	0.98	1.12	0.85	0.98	0.27	0.63	0.67	0.00	-0.21	0.00
Q26 Buddhas and Shinto deities	0.41	0.41	0.95	0.17	0.39	0.67	0.67	-0.67	0.29	0.33
Q10 Curses	-0.33	-0.47	-0.05	-0.39	-0.61	-0.19	-1.00	-0.83	-0.79	-1.33

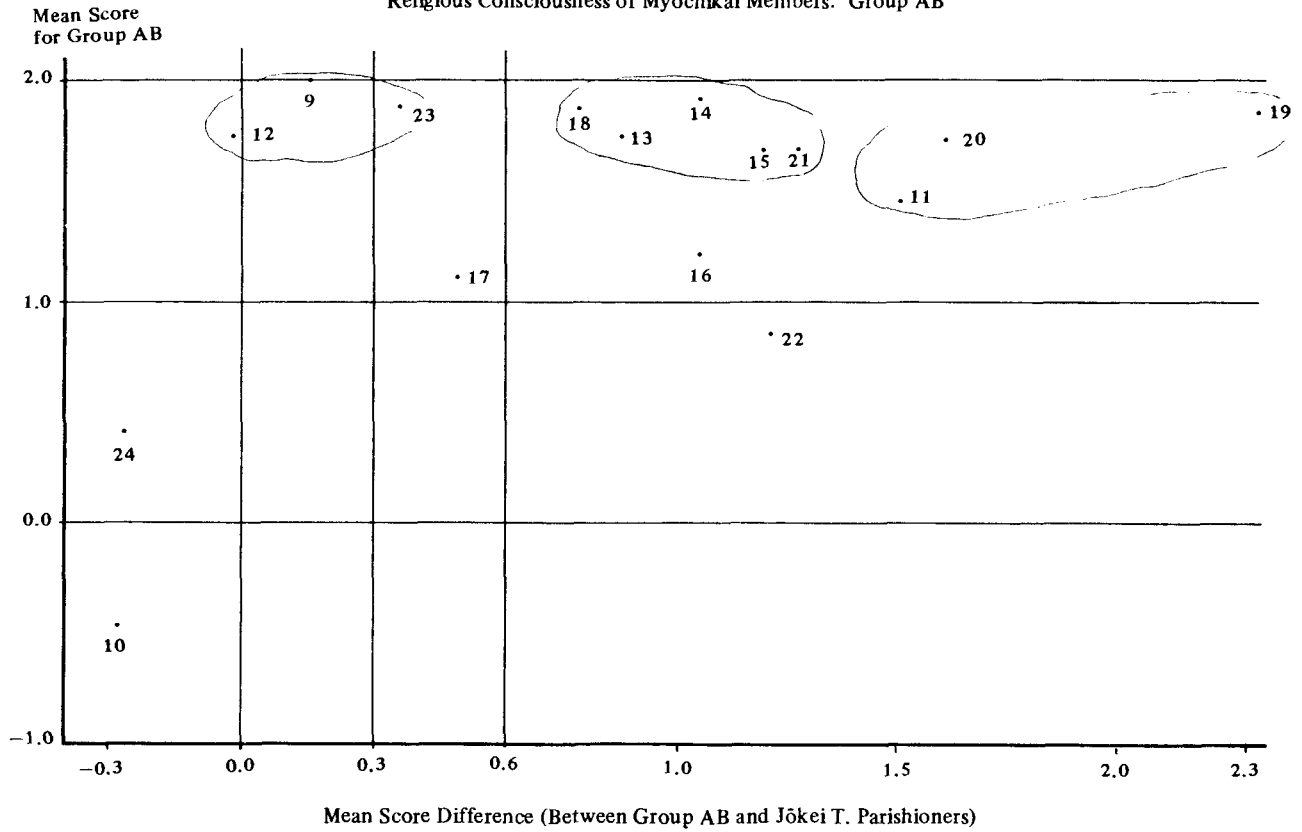
disagreement. The changes caused by acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs may be inferred from Figures 4-6 which summarize the consciousness of members according to degrees of acceptance.

In Figures 4 to 6, the mean scores of Myōchikai members are on the Y axis while their scores relative to the mean scores of Jōkei Temple parishioners are on the X axis. Both the absolute degree of agreement-disagreement and the difference between the religious consciousness of Myōchikai members and the traditional religious consciousness are thus presented simultaneously. Groups D and E have been combined because of the negligible difference between the two; Groups A and B are also combined as one group because of the small number of cases in each.

First of all, let us look at the religious consciousness of Group AB as shown in Figure 4 in order to see if there are any pronounced changes due to the acceptance of a new belief. Of the 17 items, there were 11 items which scored 1.5 and over. We consider them to be core items strongly supported by Group AB. Of these 11 items, there are three (ancestor veneration*, Buddhas and the deceased, and moral prerequisites for divine blessings) which indicated only a slight disparity with the traditional religious consciousness, suggesting that they have been strongly supported from a time prior to the acceptance of Myōchikai teaching. Of the remaining eight, five which showed a greater difference were the immortality of the soul*, the Bon festival, laws of causality, reincarnation, and enlightenment. Finally, the three which differed most were misfortune and failure to attain Buddhahood*, aid from the other world, and worldly benefits. The five items above showing a greater difference, received only "weak agreement" in the traditional religious consciousness, while the final three, those showing the greatest difference, even received "weak disagreement." Here we may observe changes in consciousness

FIGURE 4

Religious Consciousness of Myōchikai Members: Group AB



caused by the acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs.

A discussion of Groups C and DE will verify the plausibility of the above interpretation. Religious consciousness of Group C is presented in Figure 5 in the same manner as that for Group AB. We find in Figure 5 that ancestor veneration*, Buddhas and the deceased, and moral prerequisites for divine blessings are plotted in the same area for Group C as for Group AB. This fact is in accordance with our assumption that these three are retained from the traditional religious consciousness. The scores for the group of five items in Figure 5 are not so high as for the three items just mentioned, and they indicate some difference from the traditional religious consciousness. The scores for the lowest group of three items fall in the category of lowest scores and their deviation from the traditional religious consciousness is the greatest.

When we look at Figure 6, which presents the religious consciousness of Group DE, we notice again that the top group of three items is located in the core of the traditional religious consciousness. The five items in the middle group do not show much difference from those of Jōkei Temple parishioners and, we may conclude, virtually represent the traditional religious consciousness. The bottom three items show some discrepancy and their scores are the lowest of all.

The items in the lowest group received "weak disagreement" from Jōkei Temple parishioners. This changes to "weak agreement" and finally to "strong agreement" as the degree of acceptance increases from Group DE to Group C and finally to Group AB. Those items in the middle group which receive "weak agreement" come to receive "strong agreement" in the above process.

Beliefs regarding curses, Buddhas and Shinto deities, spiritism, and union of souls do not show any systematic patterns of change from Group DE to Group C and Group

FIGURE 5
Religious Consciousness of Myōchikai Members: Group C

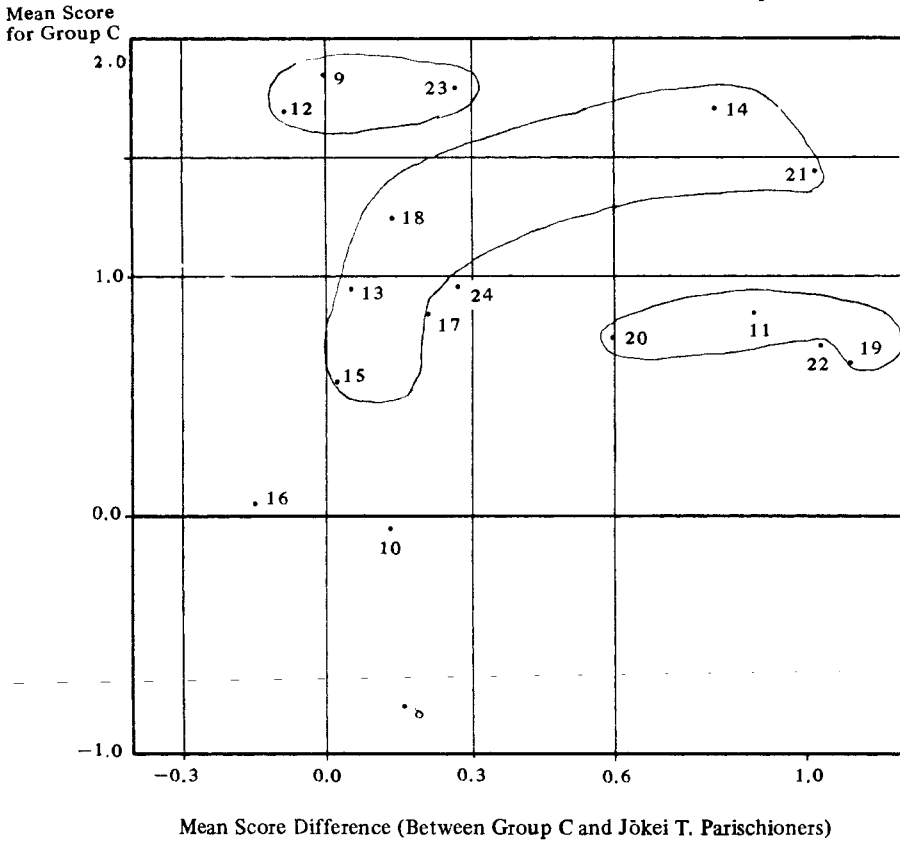
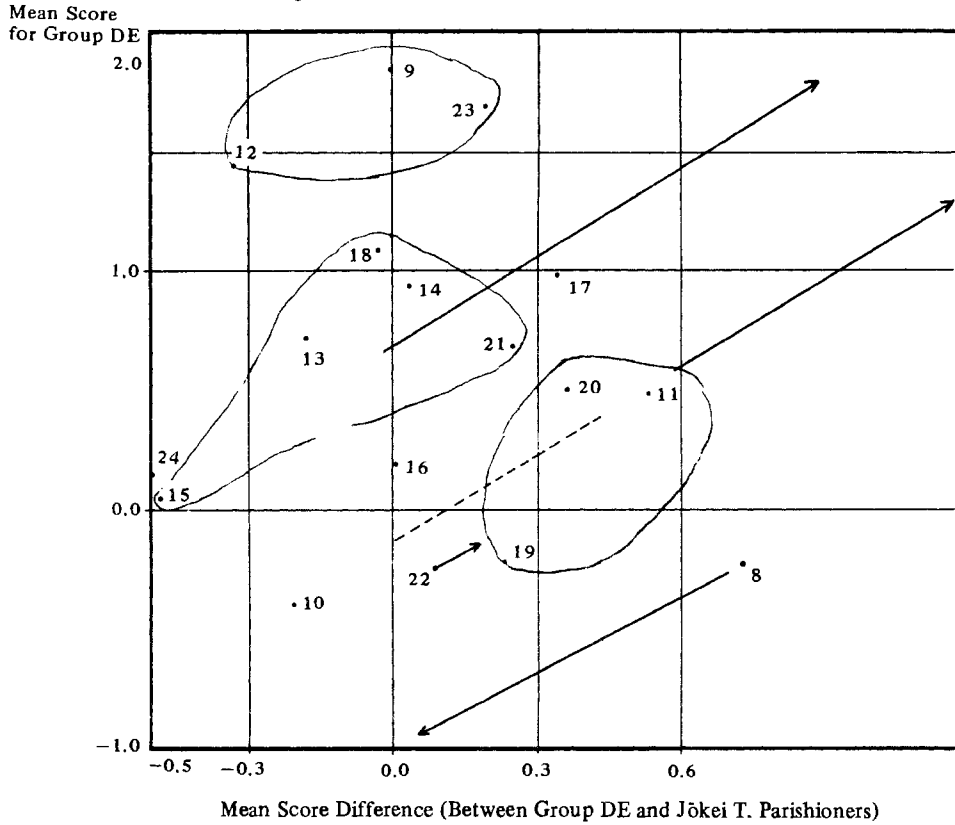


FIGURE 6

Religious Consciousness of Myōchikai Members: Group DE



AB. Attitudes regarding the concept of sin, however, change from “weak disagreement” to “weak agreement,” and those regarding divination from “weak disagreement” to “strong disagreement.” Though these changes differ from the patterns shown in the three groups of encircled items, they are also considered to be the result of acceptance of a new belief.

We shall now attempt to generalize or interpret from the standpoint of Myōchikai teachings what was discussed above regarding the differences between Myōchikai members and Jōkei Temple parishioners. First, we may conclude that the three items which maintained high scores from the beginning without any change due to acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs have a normative validity which is not confined to Jōkei Temple parishioners and residents of Yunohama. On the other hand, the bottom three items in Figure 6 have been strongly influenced by acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs. Since these items are either unique to Myōchikai or a part of the teachings they continually emphasize, it is reasonable to conclude that the greater the acceptance of the beliefs the higher the scores for these items.

Finally, “views on ancestors” is presented in Figure 7. In response to the question on the whereabouts of ancestral spirits, those who show a higher degree of acceptance of Myōchikai beliefs tend to have a higher ratio of answers such as “in the spiritual world” or “in the minds of descendants” and a lower ratio of answers such as “in the tomb,” “in the household Buddhist altar,” or “don’t know.” Also, it is interesting to find, though this was expected, that as the degree of acceptance increases, the proportion of respondents who think of ancestors as “bilaterally and closely related recent ancestors” also increases while that of those who consider them to be “ancient ancestors, including the founder of the household (*ie*) and his immediate succes-

sors" decreases. We have already indicated the positive relationship between the degree of performance of traditional religious practices, particularly as seen in the scores for ancestor oriented services, and the level of acceptance of a new religion. This trend is also positively related to the pattern of change in defining ancestors.

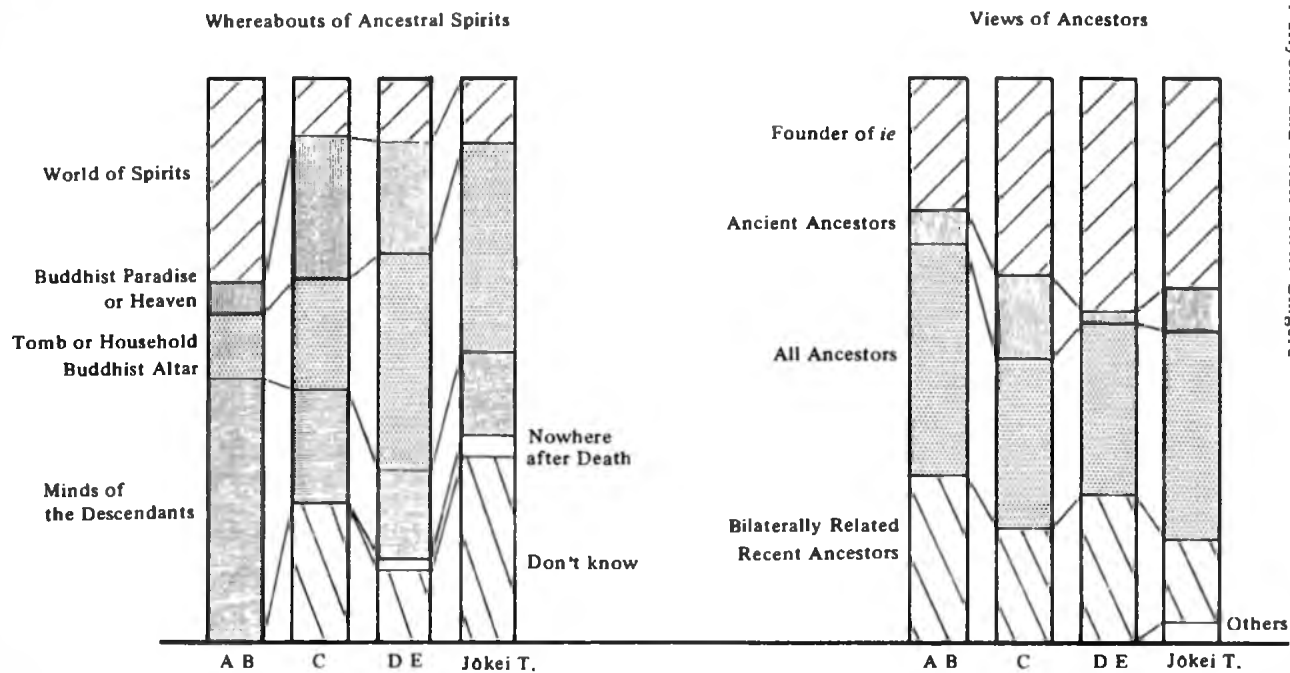
HYPOTHESIS REGARDING CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

In this section we would like to present a hypothetical frame of reference to explain the changes in religious consciousness discussed in the preceding sections.

First, let us assume that religious consciousness has three zones: core, peripheral, and intermediate. Next, let us assume that the core zone does not easily change with the acceptance of a new belief and that the peripheral zone tends to change relatively easily. It is also assumed that items of religious consciousness that received "very strong agreement" or "very strong disagreement" make up the core zone and that those receiving "weak agreement" or "weak disagreement" make up the intermediate and peripheral zones. The core zone of the traditional religious consciousness, then, includes an emphasis on ancestor veneration*, an identification of Buddhas and ancestors, and the concept of moral prerequisites for divine blessings. The peripheral zone includes belief in spiritism and/or curses, concepts regarding aid from the ancestors and the receiving of worldly benefits through sutra-chanting*, and so on.

With the introduction and acceptance of a new belief system, there arises a need for modification and reorganization of the traditional structure of the religious consciousness. Modification or reorganization takes place when certain traits of consciousness in the intermediate and peripheral zones are pushed into the core zone by the doctrinal support of the new belief, while keeping the existing core zone of consciousness stable. We propose that con-

FIGURE 7 Views of Ancestors by Groups

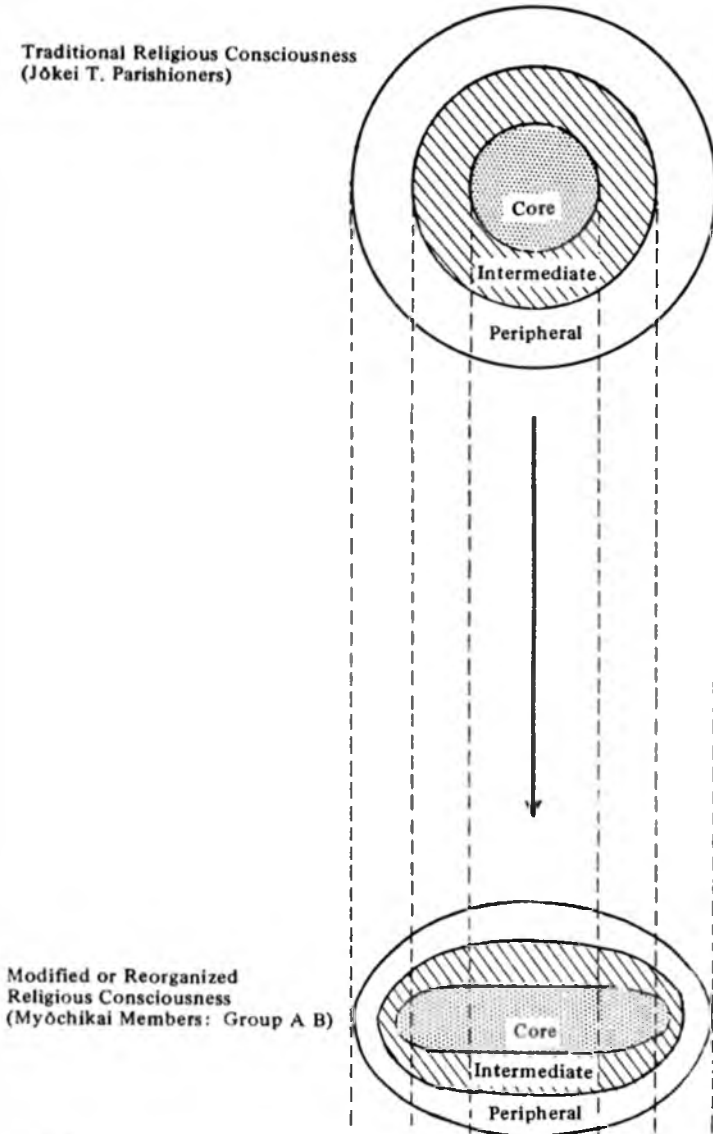


cepts regarding misfortune and failure to attain Buddhahood*, worldly benefits*, and aid from the other world moved into the core zone in this way, receiving very strong agreement from the respondent.

For a trait to move from the peripheral zone and settle in the core zone of a person's consciousness, he has to repeat religious activities of various sorts; for example, having personal contact with a "guiding parent" (*michibiki no oya*) and other leaders, attending *kuyōkai* services (memorial services) and *hōza* meetings of the local chapter, participating in pilgrimages to the headquarters and holy places, and practicing missionary work. As such practices are repeated, the new consciousness traits become a part of the core zone, and the new zone thus created forms the core of the modified or reorganized consciousness structure (Figure 8).

It is assumed in the scheme of change in religious consciousness described above that the core zone of a new belief contains traits that are somewhat similar to the existing religious consciousness and that it does not contain traits which are fundamentally foreign to it. This framework is, therefore, applicable not only to Myōchikai Kyōdan but also to various sects derived from Reiyūkai Kyōdan. It is not applicable to Christianity, which contains decisively foreign traits. Acceptance is not impossible, however, if there are common factors in the traditional consciousness and the newly introduced foreign religion. In such an instance, if acceptance should take place, the subsequent change in religious consciousness would be drastic. Yet even after a drastic change, it is not unlikely that, depending on conditions, the consciousness could be pulled back to the old state. At any rate, further study is needed for analysis of changes in religious consciousness caused by acceptance of a new religion with high heterogeneity. In the present study, we have attempted to clarify

FIGURE 8 Change in Religious Consciousness



the mechanism of change in religious consciousness caused by the acceptance of a new belief congenial to the core of the traditional religious consciousness and have presented a hypothetical framework based on our empirical data.

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APPENDIX

The questionnaire on religious consciousness administered in Yunohama contained the following:

Please answer all questions with one of the following responses:

- a. completely agree b. agree somewhat c. undecided
 - d. disagree somewhat e. completely disagree f. don't know
- Q.8 (Divination) I depend on divinations of women necromancers (*miko*) or mountain priests (*yamabushi*) when perplexed.
- Q.9 (Ancestor veneration) It is important to pay respect to and hold services for one's ancestors.
- Q.10 (Curses) If services are neglected, deities and ancestors will punish and curse you.
- Q.11 (Worldly benefits) If services such as chanting sutras and prayers (*odaimoku* and *onenbutsu*) are performed, blessings and worldly benefits will accrue.
- Q.12 (Moral prerequisites for divine blessings) One will not be

- blessed by deities just for praying to them, unless one also tries to correct one's faults of character.
- Q.13 (Law of causality) Good deeds will be rewarded in another world, if not in this one, and bad deeds will be punished in another world even if they are successfully hidden in this one.
- Q.14 (Immortality of the soul) Man may die but his soul (spirit) remains forever.
- Q.15 (Reincarnation) Man will be reincarnated as some other being after death.
- Q.16 (Spiritism) It is possible to invoke the spirits of the deceased, hear their words, and talk to them.
- Q.17 (Union of souls) The spirits of the recently deceased will gradually unite with the spirits of ancient ancestors if duly venerated.
- Q.18 (Bon festival) At Bon festival time the spirits of the ancestors come back to their descendants' homes.
- Q.19 (Misfortune and non-attainment of Buddhahood) Misfortunes occur because there are ancestors who have not attained Buddhahood.
- Q.20 (Aid from the other world) Ancestors are always watching over their descendants and help them out when they are in trouble.
- Q.21 (Enlightenment [*satori*]) Man can attain enlightenment as Buddha did if he practices incessantly.
- Q.22 (Concept of sin) It is only through the benevolence of deities that sinful people are saved.
- Q.23 (Buddhas [*hotoke*] and the deceased) *Hotoke* are the same as dead ancestors.
- Q.24 (Buddhas and Shinto deities [*shinbutsu*]) Shinto deities (*kami*) and Buddhas (*hotoke*) are similar.
- Q.25 (View of ancestors) To whom does the word "ancestor" refer? (Choose the one which is closest to your view.)
- (a) The founder of the household (*ie*)
 - (b) Ancient ancestors including the *ie* founder and his immediate successors
 - (c) All ancestors from the founder of the *ie* to the most recent one
 - (d) Bilaterally and closely related recent ancestors (e.g. parents,

- grandparents) on both the husband's and wife's sides
- (e) Other
- (f) Don't know
- Q.26 (Whereabouts of ancestral spirits) Where do you think the ancestors are? (Mark only one answer in a. and b.)
- (a) World of spirits – The Western Buddhist Pure Land (*saihō-jōdo*) – *Sukhavati* (Buddhist paradise) – Heaven
- (b) Underground – Hell
- (c) Nearby mountain
- (d) Tomb
- (e) Household Buddhist altar
- (f) Minds of the descendants
- (g) Other
- (h) Nowhere after death
- (i) Don't know

GLOSSARY

<i>bōhobarai</i> 誘法払い	<i>odaimoku</i> 御題目
<i>busshō-gonen</i> 仏所護念	<i>onenbutsu</i> 御念仏
<i>fusegyo</i> 布施業	<i>omichibiki</i> お導き
<i>hōza</i> 法座	Reiyūkai Kyōdan 霊友会教団
Jōkei-in (temple) 乗慶院	<i>rokushin-kenzoku</i> 六親眷属
<i>kudoku</i> 功德	<i>saihō-jōdo</i> 西方浄土
<i>kuyōkai</i> 供養会	<i>shinbutsu</i> 神仏
<i>michibiki no oya</i> 導きの親	<i>sōkaimyō</i> 総戒名
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