

RELIGION IN THE ERA OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION: THE NEW NEW-RELIGIONS IN JAPAN

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In the years following world war II Japan wrote history with new religions, the so-called *shinkōshūkyō*. In a few years they scored records in conversions. The Sōka Gakkai for instance saw an increase in membership from a few thousands in 1952 to more than seven million in 1960. Nowadays, that is to say from 1973 onwards the same phenomenon is recurring in the *shin shin-shūkyō*, the new new-religions. In this paper I will focus my attention on these two phenomena in three paragraphs:

1. the abundance of new religions during the last 150 years.
2. *shinkōshūkyō* and *shin shin-shūkyō*.
3. some characteristics of the *shin shin-shūkyō*.

1. The abundance of new religions during the last 150 years

In Japan the phenomenon of new religions is not new. The last two centuries witness the origin of quite a few new religions. In Japan's history it is a rather peculiar fact that the origin of new religions mostly is confined to certain periods. There are other periods in its history in which no other religions came into being. So the Nara period (710-794), the beginning of the Heian period (794-1185), and the Kamakura period (1185-1333) are characterized by an enormous development of new sects and religions in Buddhism and Shintō alike. These developments are described in many books on Buddhism and Shintō. They seem to abound, however, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. So in this paper I will confine myself to some recent developments in new religions and to the new new-religions in particular.

Since the beginning of the 19th century we witness a new wave of new religions in Japan. This development is characterized by three stages hinging on demographical and social factors.

The oldest stage comprises the period since the beginning of the 19th century and lasts until world war I. During this period several new religions came into being. Some of them still exert a strong influence. So religions as Tenrikyō, Kurozumikyō and Konkōkyō still are well known even abroad. The main aim of these religions which were founded mostly by farmers was to bring relief to the neglected people of rural Japan. These religions mostly of Shintō origin assumed Buddhist organizational forms in order to extend their influence to larger areas than the local Shintō shrines are used to do. At the same time some of them promised to the faithful material prosperity under the guidance not of polytheistic Shintō gods but of a monotheistic deity, bearing the name of a Shintō god and endowed with the characteristics of the

god of the Christians. So did Konkō Daijin, the Great God of Golden Light, in the Konkōkyō.¹

The second stage of new religions covers a period of about fifty years: from 1920 onwards until 1970. This period is characterized by an enormous increase of the urban population at the expense of the rural population. So millions of people who migrated to the large urban areas of Tokyo and Osaka gave up their relations with the traditional Shintō and Buddhist shrines and temples of the countryside. In the cities they met with a large religious and social vacuum. Many new religions of Buddhist origin as well as of Shintō brand came into being in order to fill this urban gap. In 1924 there were in Japan about 98 religious organizations. The number of new religions increased from 414 in 1930 towards 1092 in 1935, "after life became more comfortable".² Some of these new religions are wellknown all over the world and even active in Europe such as the Sōka Gakkai, the Risshō Kōseikai and the Reiyūkai. This second period of new religions marks an increase in membership which is unequalled in Japan's and – probably – the world's religious history. So the membership of the Risshō Kōseikai rose from a few thousands in 1953 to 3 million in 1960 and to seven millions of believers today and the Sōka Gakkai increased even from a few thousands in 1953 to 7 million in 1960 and to thirteen or fourteen million today. Poverty, sickness, and the death of many relatives caused by the war had pushed these masses of people to these new organizations which promised wealth to the poor, health to the sick people, and happiness to the souls of the deceased relatives. At the same time they tried to reorganize this people by creating new meeting places where they could assemble and discuss their problems in so called *zadankai*, meetings of groups of an average of twelve or thirteen members under the guidance of leaders, who on their turn were organized in a hierarchical network. Many of these people born during the war regained their human values and witnessed the recuperation of health and an increasing welfare and wealth. In Japan the religions of the first and second stage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are named *shinkōshūkyō*: the newly established religions. Some authors, however, are inclined to confine the name *shinkōshūkyō* to religions of the second stage and not of the first stage, this name being imbibed in the opposition of the state and its officials to the religions indicated by that name during the Meiji and Shōwa areas (1868–1988).³

¹ In Shintō this god was considered to be a bad demon. The founder of the Konkōkyō, however, made him into the 'Parent god of the Universe'. See H. THOMSEN, 1963: 68ff.

² J. KITAGAWA, 1987: 284.

³ So does HIROO TAKAGI in his books which I will discuss more extensively in this paper.

2. The concepts of *shinkōshūkyō* and *shin shin-shūkyō*

2.1 The concept of *shinkōshūkyō*

The term *shinkōshūkyō* came into use during the Thirties just before world war II. Juntarō Murakami provides us with some remarks on the history of this term.⁴ It had to indicate the new religions in opposition to established religions such as Buddhism, Shintō and Christianity. The name initially received the unfavourable undertone of: not recognized yet by the official authorities of the government. The ministry of Home Affairs for example felt them to be suspicious and treated them accordingly. The main reason of this disdain consisted in the fact that these religions came into being during the era of the primacy of State Shintō and its emperor-cult.⁵ The separation of Buddhism and Shintō and also the prohibition of the exertion of the so-called syncretistic practices – for instance the pilgrimages to the Ontake and Fuji mountains under guidance of *yamabushi*, mountain ascetics,⁶ – added greatly to this disdain. There was only some space left to folkreligion. Within its bounds the door still was left open to the start of new religions. These new religions were called: *shinkōshūkyō*.⁷ At the same time these religions became labelled as false religions. The established religions and journalism added to those religions other tags such as inferiority, love of money, low cast etc. Gradually *shinkōshūkyō* became an invective. This situation lasted until the end of the war.

⁴ See JUNTARO MURAKAMI, 1967: 105–125.

⁵ Hence it is no surprise that many of these new religions initially bore a Shinto mark. See H. TAKAGI, 1958: 36–42. Takagi distinguishes three periods in which the *shinkōshūkyō* came into being: the first period includes the early years of the Meiji period (since 1868) when the so-called thirteen Shintō shūha came into existence: Shintō Honkyōku, Shintō Shūseiha, Shintō Daishakyō, Shintō Fusokyō, Shintō Jitsugyokyō, Shintō Daiseikyō, Shintō Shinshūkyō, Shintō Ontakekyō, Shinrikyō, Shintōseikyō, Konkōkyō, and finally Tenrikyō. To these thirteen sects the Maruyamakyō, the Renmakyō and others have been added. The second period starts about 1925 with the foundation of the Ōmotokyō and the Hito no michi kyōdan. The third period begins after 1945 with the full growth of the Reiyūkai, the Sekaikyūseikyō, the Seichō no Ie, the P. L. Kyōdan (the former Hito no michi kyōdan), the Ōmoto Aizenen (the old Ōmotokyō), the Rishō Kōseikai, the Sōka Gakkai and many others. It goes without saying that since 1945 the emperor-cult was absolutely out of the question. See H. TAKAGI, 1958: 36. During the first two periods the emperor-cult was promoted at the expense of the other religions, which in a way were suppressed. H. TAKAGI, 1958: 40, 41. During the second period the Ōmoto and the Hito no michi kyōdan were kept down. In 1939 believers of all faiths – the christians included – had to pay respect to the emperor. H. TAKAGI, 1958: 42ff.

⁶ The *yamabushi* suffered most from the support of Shintō by the state. Their organisations were disbanded and added to the Tendai, Shingon and Shintō. This situation lasted until the end of the war. Recently their ascetic quarters in the mountains grew into enormous tourist attractions. Their ritual sacrifice of fire, *saitogoma*, which takes place at the beginning of every season draws even the attention of Japanese television and of thousands of tourists.

⁷ See H. TAKAGI, 1958: 38.

The end of the great Pacific War meant also the extinction of state Shintō and a free practise of religion. This meant also a change in the meaning of *shinkōshūkyō* which became used in a more positive and general way. The new religions for their part initially were quite anxious for the bad reputation of this term. Therefore they were more inclined to use the term *shinshūkyō*, new religions, instead. Following the Sōka Gakkai they emphasized: "*shinkōshūkyō de wa nai*": we are not *shinkōshūkyō*. They were more successful than the old religions with their traditional claims of rights and cultural accomplishments. It became objectively completely groundless to look at the new religions as low of origin and unsincere. Many people became convinced that their views became distorted by the cult of Shintō gods and of the emperor in particular. Ideas on magic, primitivity, lack of scientific bases, the state of incompleteness and contradictions in doctrines which always had been ascribed to the *shinkōshūkyō* began to change. The modernity of the *shinkōshūkyō* and their dynamic trend towards progress reflect Japan's capitalistic society, which since 1870 had been modelled after Western society.⁸ The opposition to the old established religions and the foundations of the capitalistic state are considered by Murakami to be the two pillars of the *shinkōshūkyō*. In 1955 Hiroo Takagi wrote the booklet *Shinkōshūkyō no miryoku*, considered by many specialists to be a standard book. In it he tries to locate the concept of *shinkōshūkyō* in the time in which it originated. I will try to mention some of his thoughts.

First he points at a number of conditions which led to the origin of the *shinkōshūkyō*. These conditions are: discomfort (related to sickness, poverty, and the shock of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki), the pursuit of progress, individual conditions (at home or in the *buraku*, the community), the inability of the traditional religions and of the government to give response to many actual demands, and finally the need of guidance and of the creation of new standards for religion and science.

In the second place he points at the element of mass movements. Several *shinkōshūkyō* were geared for great masses of people. In his time Takagi had in mind the Tenrikyō, Konkōkyō, the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai, only one of which according to his later book *Shinkōshūkyō* did reach the goal of one million believers.⁹ All of them emphasized modernity. Moreover the doctrines of these religions were propounded as absolute truths and simplified into a few clear central points. The Sōka Gakkai for instance tried to explain to the common man the difficult philosophy of neokantianism on goodness, truth and beauty in concrete terms. In the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai the doctrine of Nichiren had been reduced to the invocation of the *daimoku*, the 'great eye', being nothing else but the invocation of the title of the Lotus sūtra: Namu myōhō Rengekyō: "I put my faith into the wonderful Lotus sūtra."

⁸ See J. MURAKAMI, 1967: 106, 107.

⁹ On page 51 of this book dating back to 1958 he mentions the following figures: P. L. Kyōdan: 600.000; Sekai Kyūseikyō: 650.000; Seichō no ie: 600.000, Reiyūkai: 2.300.000; Risshō Kōseikai: 370.000; and the Sōka Gakkai: 800.000. See H. TAKAGI, 1958: 51.

In the third place he points at the doctrine of the sects containing special tenets on capitalism and materialism: membership is a guarantee for good health as well as for material prosperity and wealth. All this has been made possible for them by the construction of hospitals (as is the case for instance in the Risshō Kōseikai). So it is a wellknown fact that the Sōka Gakkai founder Makiguchi replaced the old creative value of truth and holiness by a new creative value of usefulness or gain by which he meant a life abundant in material wealth being the focus of all other creative values.¹⁰ Other sects were prepared to meet the material desires of their faithful by the creation of paradises, equipped with all kinds of facilities. Membership of the sect implied the access to all kinds of pleasures which until then were reserved to the happy few: golf links, special swimming pools, and other kinds of pleasures.

Finally he points at the perfect forms of organization in the *shinkōshūkyō*. In the Sōka Gakkai the horizontal organisation towards the fellow members as well as the vertical and hierarchical organisation concerning the leadership of the sect have been planned so well that every member on both levels can be reached and checked on easily. The organizational set-up of the youth movement at the outset of the Soka Gakkai reminds of the old imperial army.¹¹ Hiroo Takagi also sees these types of organization as militaristic and undemocratic.¹²

The culture of the leaders is quite emphasized. Thus Takagi points out that they have a great deal of experience of life, but a minimum of dogmatic knowledge. From times immemorial they belonged to folk religion. Therefore they very often started their religions as spiritual intermediaries of some deity. For that reason the *shinkōshūkyō* display some magical aspects. They took no notice of science and the leaders appealed to a mysterious authority.¹³ Several new religions of Nichiren-nature give the impression to be a continuation of Kamakura Buddhism. I prefer to maintain, however, that they are nothing else but a modern extension of folk-religion. Many characteristics of Japanese folk-religion such as shamanism, trance, possession, a leadership which takes all this into account, embody rather the primeval Japanese type of the layman with his religious commitment: the *hijiri*.¹⁴ In their ranks there are hardly religious specialists: monks or priests. So in the *shinkōshūkyō* there are many

¹⁰ See K. MORI, 1977: 76.

¹¹ See J. H. KAMSTRA, 1960: 46.

¹² Concerning these and other remarks on the name of *shinkōshūkyō* see H. TAKAGI, 1959: 8, 9. Though his book is named *shinkōshūkyō no miryoku* he mentions in his pages only two features of the *shinkōshūkyō*: progressivity and reaction. In this book he rather relies on his former book: *Shinkōshūkyō of 1958*.

¹³ See H. TAKAGI, 1959: 9.

¹⁴ *Hijiri* is an old Japanese term meaning: the knower of the sun. Because the sun was considered to be holy, this knower of the sun gained the respect of the people who considered him to be the wise man who is radiant with wisdom. Taoist influence extended this concept to that of the virtuous hermit. On the oldest Japanese representations *hijiri* are depicted as Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. See J. H. KAMSTRA, 1985/86: 50-62, and J. H. KAMSTRA, 1987: 321, 322.

well known topics of folk religion described by Carmen Blacker and Ichirō Hori.¹⁵ Even the great laymen and leaders of the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai behave as *hijiri* rather than as monks of some definite sect. In the Sōka Gakkai this antithesis between the manager/director and the abbot/monk is very clear in the modern and Western organisation of the sect with its modern Vatican-like stronghold at the base of mount Fuji devised by Japan's famous architect Kenzō Tange on one hand and the traditionalistic Nichiren Shōshū with its old practises and its claim to be a creation dating back to Nichiren (1222–1282) himself on the other hand.¹⁶ It continues its old traditions in the building of many new temples and the attire and rituals of its monks.¹⁷ Carmen Blacker at the end of her book finds the modern technical culture of television searchlights, tape recorders and microphones thrust in the direction of the sacred utterances of shamans and gods, of the construction of highways to the summits of holy mountains, to kill and to make meaningless many rituals of folk religion.¹⁸ Thus she seems to lose sight of many customs in folk religion by some modern authors erroneously labelled as magic which are still surviving in the *shin shin-shūkyō* be it in a more institutionalized form.

2.2 The concept of *shin shin-shūkyō*

In 1973 the effect of the oilcrisis in the world was also that the second stage of the *shinkōshūkyō* came to an end and was followed by a forth and probably the last stage of new religions in our century which probably will last beyond the year 2000. So even a new name has been coined by Nishiyama: the *shin shin-shūkyō*, the new new-religions.¹⁹ These religions which are mostly still small in size are rather different from the second group: there is a strong belief in the end of the world, in magical power, in miracles, there is also a boom in mysteries and esoteric doctrines and practices: Jap. *shimpiboom*. During the third period the fear of the people of misery, sickness and poverty was taken away by mammoth-organizations such as the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai. In our decade nature is threatened with destruction, the world is

¹⁵ See C. BLACKER, 1975 and Ichirō HORI, 1972.

¹⁶ It claims to be founded by Nikkō (1246–1333), the disciple of Nichiren after the latter's death. According to the original Nichiren sect this should have happened 440 years after the death of Nichiren under abbot Nikkan, the 26th abbot of the Taiseikiji which is today the center of the Nichiren Shōshū and of the Sōka Gakkai. The name Nichiren Shōshū, 'the true sect of Nichiren' dates back to 1912. Prior to this date the sect had many other names: Hokke-shū, Nichiren-hokke-shū, Nichiren-shū Kōmon-ha and Nichiren-shū Fuji-ha. See W. KOHLER, 1962: 226, 227.

¹⁷ See H. THOMSEN, 1963: 82–84, 86–87; W. KOHLER, 1962: 226–230.

¹⁸ See C. BLACKER, 1975: 316ff. In the mentioned books of H. TAKAGI and other authors on the *shinkōshūkyō* this invective 'magic' is used quite frequently in order to indicate many rituals and phenomena belonging to folk religion. In the use of the term magic to my mind there is implicated quite a lot of discrimination of folk religion by the great official religions of Buddhism in imitation of some western theological colleagues. One of them is I. HORI himself. Is he trying to apologize to his western colleagues for his description of Japan's folk religion?

¹⁹ This term came into use around 1981. See Ian READER, 1988: 236.

leaping towards its end by the waist of nature and by the decay of the human race by aids-disease and the increasing number of abortions. So many young people in despair commit suicide. The new new religions try to do something about this.

The name *shin shin-shūkyō* seems to have been the invention of one N. Nishiyama of the Tōyōdaigaku.²⁰ He divides the enormous revival of religions since world war II in three different groups:

1. The period since the loss of the war in which the old system of values was destroyed and many rules became ineffective.

2. The super fast revival since the Korean war: i.e. the periods which H. Takagi labels as number three.

3. The period since the oilcrisis until now. Nishiyama is of the opinion that religions which came into being during this period should receive the new label of *shin shin-shūkyō*. In doing so he points at their special characteristics: namely a strong belief in the end of the world and in mysteries. To this he adds that the first post-war period was characterized by eulogies on freedom regained since the loss of the war and the hope of the renovation of the country in the near future. People in their own companies and families felt the fear of three circumstances: poverty, sickness and war. The second period witnessed several successes due to these national efforts. Then mammoth organisations such as the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai and other religions came into being. They brought stability to the country. During the last and third period the system of ecology will be threatened by the destruction of nature. This will keep pace with the production of all kinds of non returnable and throw-away articles and with an enormous pollution of water and air. The whole world seems to be in decay: many youthful persons break down and commit suicide. Many people experience from these problems physical and spiritual adversities. It goes without saying that the period since 1970 is dominated by the idea of the end of the world.

The postwar building up of the economy of the country gave way to a tendency in the opposite direction: the economic boom has to be pulled down and nature has to be restored in order to prevent a catastrophe which might hit the whole world. In the Netherlands the reactions to these same problems are in a secularized form: the churches do not witness an increase of their faithful in order to prevent a world disaster. On the contrary every year about 100.000 of people turn their backs on the Christian churches. The answer of Japan to these questions, however, consists in a revival of new religions. The research of the N. H. K., Japan's National Broadcasting System, of 1984 reveals signs of an increasing interest in religion during the beginning of this decade. More people rely on the Buddhist and Shinto housealtars, the *butsudān* and *kamidana*. The religious organisations are prosperous as never before.²¹

²⁰ According to no. 34 of the periodical Tama of 1984.

²¹ See NIHON HOSŌ KAISHA, 1984: 1-5. The following characteristics of general religiosity in Japan result from the field-research of the N.H.K.: 1. recognition of the belief in ancestors, 2. the recognition of human weakness, 3. the belief in one's fate,

3. Some characteristics of the *shin shin-shūkyō*

1. Nishiyama in his account of *shin shin-shūkyō* adds some special features of these new religions. These features are: corporality, mutuality, individualisation and the special role of the founders. Others mention also the belief in paradises and syncretism. I will confine myself to the features of Nishiyama.

3.1 Corporality

This feature consists in a strong accent on the qualities of the human body. The aims of religion should not consist in all kinds of doctrines but in ritual and practice: therefore abstention and ascetic practices and austerities (so the ascetical practices of cold water showers under a waterfall and fire ordeals) are believed to bring relief and to endow the ascetics with magical power over the earth and even in the sky reaching out into the stars. Noteworthy is the interest in Ufo's, the structure of the universe and many rituals to the gods of the stars resulting from these corporeal practices. This aspect of corporality, however, is not new. It was also stressed by many *shinkōshūkyō*. So the Odoru shūkyō, the Dancing Religion, and Tenrikyō emphasize in their rituals the gestures of hands and feet in dancing. In other *shinkōshūkyō*, however, the function of the body is minimized and restricted to lipservice. This is the case in the *daimoku* of the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai. The function of the body is in the *shin shin-shūkyō* more remarkable. Some religions belief in the power of the imposition of hands. The faithful of the Mahikari sūkyō are convinced that the human hands are endowed with spiritual power: the *te o kazasu*, the embellishment of the hands. It implies an emanation of light in the heart of the fellow member of the sect. In this sect which is one of the largest of the *shin shin-shūkyō* the imposition of hands is considered to be the *mahikari no waza*, the act of the 'true light'. This operation should have been handed down by Buddha and Christ. In imposing hands on the sick and others Christ witnessed of himself: I am the true light (= *mahikari* or *makoto no hikari*). The power of the hands is the power of God, who through the fingers of man enters into the human heart. The *tekazashi* takes place once a month in the presence of more than three thousand mostly youthful *kumite*, i.e. group-members.²² Others emphasize all kinds of bodily austerities. Quite a few sects prefer *suigyō*, consisting in an ice-cold shower under a waterfall, which in some sects even is handmade and artificial. Some sects adopted from the *yamabushi* the sacrifice of fire, *saitogoma*. Seiyū Kiriya (*1925), founder of the Agonshu, the largest sect of the *shin shin-shūkyō*, obtained his magical power by

4. the firm conviction of a requital of good and evil after death, and 5. concrete expectations of this life which can be fulfilled by religious practice for instance the cult of Inari, god of prosperity, and the cult of Jizō, the bodhisattva of a good rebirth. See N.H.K., 1984: 10. See also J. SWYNGEDOUW, 1986: 1-14.

²² See M. HIROTA, 1988: 241-243. The term *sūkyō* in the name of this sect is notable being different from *shūkyō*, religion. The founder of this sect while using the term *sūkyō* intends to indicate that his religion differs from other religions "because of its associations with 'secondary deities' and established religions". See W. DAVIS, 1980: 7.

means of fasting, other physical austerities and *suigyō* under the waterfall of mount Inari in Kyoto. Since 1980 he is believed to have strengthened his magical power yearly by huge fire-sacrifices on the Hanayama, one of the summits of the Higashiyama East of Kyoto. These fire-sacrifices, *gomahō*, consist in the kindling of huge piles of wood. Kiriyaama once bore witness to the influence of these huge fire-sacrifices: 'A new power has been born in me. The fire in my heart likes to leap out of my body. I am the fire of my own. I am the pile of burning firewood'.²³ Baptism also is considered to be some kind of *suigyō*. In the Nihon Assemblies of God *kyōdan*, a Christian *new new-religion*, which asserts to be a foundation of the Holy Ghost himself, *senrei-hō*, the law of baptism, is believed to be baptism in the Holy Ghost. Those who are baptized in the Holy Ghost bear in their bodies a member of God Himself: the *shita*, the tongue, which causes the faithful to perform glossolalia, the gift of tongues, to speak the divine language which was heard for the first time on Pentecost. It is not only limited to Amen and Alleluja, but comprises also untranslatable mantralike terms such as: *marabera*, *marabera*, *perarisute osutera-ru*.²⁴ Some *new new-religions* emphasize also contacts. The Nihon Raierian movement propagates free sex during common baths. Baptism is called transmission and guarantees a seat in the universal ship of the Elohim, who are believed to be creatures of other stars and the founding fathers of mankind. The message of the Elohim is believed to be: 'Don't suppress sex for sex is intimately united with human mankind. A religion which keeps down sex does not contribute anything to the human race'.²⁵

3.2 Mutuality

A second characteristic is the spiritual exchange between people. This concerns not only the mutual relations of people who are alive, but also the contacts with the souls of the deceased. In this respect special attention is focussed on the souls of the abortive foetusses, the *mizuko*, the 'waterchildren'. Many sects try to relieve people from the psychological problems resulting from abortions and to save the souls of these *mizuko*. This spiritual exchange with beings of the other world is sustained by many miracles wrought by the founders. In the *shin shin-shūkyō* this spiritual exchange is more essential than in the *shinkōshūkyō*. In folk religion the relations with the other world were kept up usually by shamans (*miko*) and *yamabushi*. In the *shin shin-shūkyō* these relations are maintained by the founders. Quite a few of the *shin shin-shūkyō* seem to be established in order to keep up these relations. Their names indicate this fact. Some sects call themselves *reikai*, world of the souls, or *reiba*, wave of souls. Other sects as the Yamatokyō and the Daiwa *kyōdan* sacrifice in a special manner to the souls of the deceased.²⁶ The Mikotokai, the 'society

²³ See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 99, 100, 113.

²⁴ See M. HIROTA, 1988: 36. Concerning this primal divine sound see: J. H. KAMSTRA, 1989: 49-66.

²⁵ See M. HIROTA, 1988: 69-71.

²⁶ See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 110-117.

of life', founded in 1969, is of the opinion that the daily worship of the god Sumiyoshi will contribute to the liberation of the souls from the *yūkai*, the 'world of ghosts', the *jigokukai*, the 'world of hells', and the other 19 spheres in the universe which are the abodes of all the souls and spirits, and will be received into the *munensō*, the 'sphere of no-meditation'. In this sphere they will act as the guardian spirits of their offspring.²⁷ In this sect the souls are not equalled to Ufo's. In other sects Ufo's are believed to be the spirits of the other world. Some sects see explicitly in the inhabitants of Mars or Venus these extraterrestrial beings. The Raierian movement which I mentioned before ascribes the creation of the world in book Genesis of the bible to the Elohim. The Hebrew term Elohim should mean: the people who came flying to earth from heaven. 'We, Elohim, scientists, have been searching for the right planet. Thus we have found the earth. The creation of the earth is nothing else but the establishment of the right conditions under which life on earth became possible'. The tower of Babel originally should have been the rocket which brought the Elohim to earth. That also should have been the case with Noah's Ark, described in the bible as standing on a high spot (Genesis 7,17). In our times the Elohim are believed to know the dangerous zones of the earth: wars, environmental pollution, human problems, aids etc.²⁸ The *Pyramido no kai*, the society of the pyramid, is convinced of the divinity of the sun and of the Ufo's being nothing else but the souls of human ancestors. Not only the sun goddess Amaterasu and Kōbō Daishi, but also Jesus and Mary, who Kameisan, the foundress of the sect, claims to have saved from many pains, rank under these ancestors.²⁹

Since in our decade people feel relieved from war, sickness, and poverty there is all room for spiritual experiences and exchange on one hand and for *asobi*, fine games on the other, which include also physical and bodily exchange. In 1975 in Chiba, the capital of the prefecture of the same name, the founder of the *Reiba no hikari kyōkai* completed in the midst of a forest a three storey building which he called palace of angels. The surrounding area was named the divine castle. There he constructed also an artificial waterfall for *suigyō*. He believes in the divine power of sake, Japanese rice wine. Therefore on set times he has in his paradise a cup of this divine nectar sacrificed to the gods. In Japan he was made famous by special movies, books, and mangas, cartoons.³⁰

²⁷ The sects ascribe all misery in this world to bad innen, karma. See M. HIROTA, 1988: 93ff.

²⁸ The French origin of this sect is quite interesting. The foundress should have been Pauline Paulilon, who in 1973 at the age of 37 for the first time met an Elohim who explained to her the creation of the world. See M. HIROTA, 1988: 53ff.

²⁹ See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 88ff.

³⁰ See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 117.

3.3 Individualisation

The third aim of the new new religions is to realize more individualization. Since the Seventies there is in Japan's society a lot of loss of identity. The ideas of management and the value system have been changed. All over the country one can observe not only the dissolution of the old *ie* (great family)-system but also of many nuclear families. The individual sees the ties with his company and with his family loosened and gets the feeling of being lost in this world. This uneasiness becomes apparent in the increasing number of suicides. So the new religions have to see to it that the identity of the individual will be restored. The *shinkōshūkyō* also aimed at the salvation of the individual, who felt himself lost since he moved from the countryside to the large industrial cities. They reached this goal by uniting these individuals in the so called *hōza*, 'dharma-sessions', and *zadankai*, 'groupsessions'. The organisation of these sessions was directed towards a collective solution of the problems of each individual. The main aim in all this seems to consist in the use of these individuals in the organisation of the *shinkōshūkyō*. They had to form a new collective. The members of the *shinkōshūkyō* were prepared for mass meetings and mass behaviour. The methods of the *shin shin-shūkyō*, however, aimed at the new problems of alienation and isolation are different. Sometimes they try to reestablish the identity of the individual just by the recitation of a mantra, meditations or a meeting with the leader of the sect (be it by means of a television set). This meeting has to be paid for indeed. Thus Seigyō Shimada of the Tenshin-ōmikami-kyō meets his faithful through the monitor of a television set which is placed on an altar, adorned with the Japanese flag.³¹ Quite a few sects stress the need of a kind of soul-searching: the tracking down of mistakes and shortcomings of the past which are believed to have brought about many inconveniences in modern daily life. Concerning these causes of daily life the idea of *innen*, *karma*, is in many sects a point of discussion.³² In the Mikotokai every event is believed to depend on good or bad *innen*. Nisano Toda, the founder of this 'society of life', made once a nasty fall and lost his eye when he was nineteen years old. When the visual power of his other eye also became weakening he intended to commit suicide. Sumiyoshi, the god of the sect, however, appeared unto him and convinced him of his bad *innen* which could be removed by the god himself.³³ The Yamatokai or Daiwakyō, founded on November 21 1983 in Miyasaki

³¹ See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 7.

³² *Innen*, skt. *hetu-prataya*, is a special Buddhist term meaning *karma*. In has the meaning of a direct cause, which leads to a certain effect, while *en* stands for an external and indirect cause. Every deed is done in accordance with *in* and *en*. See R. H. BLYTH, 1965: 129, 130. Sometimes the term *innen* indicates all kinds of causes. The school of the Sarvastivadin for example knows six types of causes. See R. H. BLYTH, 1965: 238. The Sōka Gakkai in its *Shakubuku kyōten* uses the term *innen* in order to distinguish Buddhism from Christianity. The inferior qualities of Christianity are ascribed to its contempt of the causes and their effects. See J. H. KAMSTRA, 1989: 42.

³³ The Mikotokai is only located in Sapporo and has a membership of about 300 persons. See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 93-97.

(Kyūshū) counts about 55.000 worshippers. It tries to reconcile evil deeds of the past by means of *innen*-sacrifices, which include also prayers to Mizuko-Jizō, Jizō of the abortive fetus-souls.³⁴ Seiyū Kiriyaama, the founder of the Agonshū, has drawn up the idea of *innen* in more detail. He distinguishes between vertical and horizontal *innen*. The vertical *innen* consist in the ties of the ancestors with their offspring. The horizontal *innen* are the ties of the individual with his former lives. The difference for example between brothers and sisters, who are descendants of the same parents lies in their various former lives. The principal *innen* of people keep them away from buddhahood. In order to reach buddhahood the Agonshū proscribes austerities which last thousand days: the *senzagyō*. These thousand days austerities are subdivided in three groups of 333 days each: the *shozā*, 'begin-session', concentrates on the ancestors, the *chuzā*, the 'middle-session', is aimed at one's former lives, the *manza*, the 'full-session', includes the offspring, and the thousandth day is the day of fulfilment.³⁵ Kiriyaama sees no bright future for individualistic Europe for Christianity lacks the idea of *karma* and the methods to cure bad *innen*. He says: 'Because salvation depends on *karma*, the chances of Europe are very bad. Wars always started in Europe. The third world war will not commence in the Far East and will also be focussed on Europe. The main reason of all this lies in the fact that Christianity does not succeed in saving the world'.³⁶

3.4 The Founders

The type of the founders of the *shin shin-shūkyō* deserves special notice for they reflect the problems of their time and at the same time the expectations of their followers. Max Weber united these two aspects in his idea of charisma being the expression of the relation which exists between the leaders and their followers. Charisma is also manifest in the founders of the *shinkōshūkyō* and the *shin-shūkyō* for they reflect the situation in which they are living and the hopes of their followers which they try to fulfil. Yet there is a clear difference between the founders of both groups of religions. The founders of the *shinkōshūkyō* experienced the collapse of the country caused by world war II. The expectations of their followers concerned material and physical well-being. Material prosperity and a good health in private life and the strive for world peace in a solid organisation were and still are the main aims of these religions. I mentioned in this paper already the fulfilment of the private desires. The image which the current leaders of the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōseikai show to the world is that of promoters of worldpeace. With this in mind they pose with pleasure together with the secretary-general of the

³⁴ See ASAHI SHIMBUNSHA, 1984: 110–117. For more details on the bodhisattva Jizō see J. H. KAMSTRA, 1988: 73–88.

³⁵ The founder of the Agonshū bases his explanation of *karma* or *innen* on the Agama-literature and the *Sutta Nipata*, which bases the improvement of *innen* on *gyō*, austerities. See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 193–212.

³⁶ This reminds me of a very pious teacher in history who once told me that original sin was the main cause of the submarine warfare. See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 225.

U.N., the Pope or with other officials of any country, so for instance with the prime minister Lubbers or cardinal Alfrink of the Netherlands.³⁷

The founders of the *shin shin-shūkyō* on the other hand reflect different situations and other expectations: the wounds of the war are healed and the explosive growth of trade and industry confronts everyone with the insoluble problems of the environment. People are occupied not with the ideas of well-being and health, but with the downfall of our world. Exactly these topics become apparent in the leaders of the *shin shin-shūkyō*. Otherwise than the leaders of the *shinkōshūkyō* they have much in common with the ancient *hijiri* even in their ascetical practice. They institutionalized shamanism in their new religions which not long ago was only confined to the distant areas of North and South Japan. Notwithstanding they have also quite a lot in common with the leaders of the *shinkōshūkyō*, typified by Joseph Spae as follows: 'Their deportment is folksy, their speech is direct and even uncouth in its carefully nurtured dialectical brogue. At all times they keep close to the common man whose ailments they transfer upon themselves, whose hidden aspirations they voice, whose yearnings for safety and deliverance they incarnate. They travel much; they preach relentlessly; they live luxuriously. They bask in adulation and even anthropolatry. Several of them claim to be theophanies, unerringly led by divine inspiration. Others, more modest, are satisfied with the role of prophet or medium. All are proficient in spiritual science. Mystical experiences are common with them. For they commune with gods, demons and ancestral spirits'.³⁸ As shamans they are on good terms with gods and spirits. Their ascetical practices provide them with magical and supermundane powers, which enable them to perform miracles. The claim of miracles is an element in which the *shin shin-shūkyō* differ from the *shinkōshūkyō*. Modern Japanese authors point out that precisely in the leaders of the *shin shin-shūkyō* three principal elements are united: the mediatorship between gods, spirits and men, the control over all powers of the earth and the ability to preach salvation in a clear language.³⁹ Many founders of these religions derive their mediatorship and authority from revelations in dreams and visions. In 1982 Jesus and his mother Mary appeared in a dream to Kameisan, the foundress of the *Pyramido no kai* and asked her to save the souls and also his mother Mary. In almost every biography of the founders of the *shin shin-shūkyō* there are stories about dreams and visions with revelations of Amaterasu, Sakyamuni, Amida, Sumiyoshi and many other deities. I will, however, confine myself to the personality of Seiyū Kiriya, the founder of the Agonshū. This sect which claims a membership of approximately 1 million believers is the largest

³⁷ See for the Sōka Gakkai the volumes of SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL, and SŌKA GAKKAI, 1985: 5, and for the Risshō Kōseikai the volumes of *Dharma* and R. ITALIAANDER, 1982: 96.

³⁸ See J. J. SPAE, 1956: 127.

³⁹ See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 82.

sect of the shin *shin-shūkyō*.⁴⁰ The sect came into being in 1978. Seiyū Kiriya was born in Yokohama in the family of a shopkeeper. His original name was Masuo Tsutsumi, but in 1954 he changed it into Kiriya: the mountain of the *paulownia imperialis*, a special kind of a tree.⁴¹ Failure in business and the lecture of among others Dostojewski's description of murderers and saints led him to monkhood. He undertook to perform the ascetical life of a *yamabushi* by fasting and exposing himself to ice-cold waterfalls and made a choice for the ascetical rules proscribed clearly in the tantristic *mikkyō* or esoterism of the Shingon-sect. According to the rules of this sect he was ordained an ashari. In addition to this he studied psychology and astrology. In 1955 he founded a small society: the Kannonjikeikai: society of the blessings of Kannon. That same year he went to the waterfalls of Fushimi Inari South-eastward of Kyoto and vowed to practice *suigyō* for seven years in wintertime and to fast 3 to 5 days in summertime.⁴² He also took the decision not to meet his wife and children for a long time. In 1970 Juntei Kannon appeared to him in a dream and advised him to quit water austerities and to perform instead the more effective *saitogoma*, huge sacrifices of fire.⁴³ Since then yearly in the month February he performs *saitogoma* on the Hanayama a few miles to the north of Fushimi Inari. In 1971 he wrote the book *Henshin no genri*, the principles of spiritual change. It is a passionate plea in favour of esoterism. The enormous spread of this book all over Japan led since then to an increasing interest in esoteric matters: the *shimpiboom*.⁴⁴

For a long time he earnestly read the *Lotus sūtra*, but he became gradually convinced of its insufficiency due to the fact that it leads to the state of bodhisattva only but not of Buddha himself. On April 8 1978 on occasion of the foundation of the Agonshū he declared: 'We are in great need of great compassion (Buddhism) and love (Christianity). If we like to realize both, we need the highest power and wisdom, preached by Buddha himself. This doctrine will free us from the current chaos, it will guarantee a bright future and is in fact the backbone of mankind. In order to achieve these aims Christianity will have to go hand in hand with Buddhism.' He retraced Buddha

⁴⁰ HAYAKAWA estimates the membership of this sect under the 300.000. 30 % of them are under 30 years old, about 40 % live in large cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. K. HAYAKAWA, 1986: 17.

⁴¹ This is the name of a Chinese kind of trees of the family of the *scrophulariaceae*. The genus is called after the dutch queen Anna Paulowna (1795-1865).

⁴² See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 60ff. Fushimi Inari is a famous place of pilgrimage of the foxgod Inari. See J. H. KAMSTRA, 1989: 179-214.

⁴³ Juntei Kannon is one of the seven original forms from which later in China and Japan the 32 various shapes of Kannon (Avalokiteshvara) have been developed. The Sanskrit name of Juntei Kannon is: Cunda Avalokiteshvara. Cunda before her union with Avalokiteshvara was one of the twelve famous and deified dharani's. As a special type of Avalokiteshvara she is considered to be the matrix of all buddha's. See A. MATSUNAGA, 1969: 127, 128.

⁴⁴ See IAN READER, 1988: 248: 'Certainly the publication of this book is an important event in the movement's growth, for it sold a large number of copies and brought Kiriya's name before the general public.'

in the oldest collections of Buddhist sutras: the *Agamas*.⁴⁵ Hence he called the religion founded by himself: the religion of the *Agamas*: Agonshū. In the year of its foundation the new religion counted one thousand members. Kiriyaama is told to have a prophetic eye. So he wrote in 1974: 'Man will be changed into a god or into a demon by means of vibration. This will only happen in religions of the new era: the era of Aquarius. In the 21th century a new virus disease will lead to the downfall of 4 billion of people. There will be starvation and great mortality.' In 1974, the year of this prophecy, aids disease was not known yet. The Agonshū claims also other miracles. Many miracles seem to happen on the mount Hanayama, where every year the *saitogoma* are performed. In 1977 on this mountain which is destined for the construction of the great *sōhonzon*, the main object of worship, a large Buddha statue of stone weighing forty kilograms has been unearthed: a statue of Kongokai Dainichi, which according to the famous archeologist Mosaku Ishida should stem from the Heian period (794–1185). This was not so much a great miracle but a rather spectacular excavation. Ishida points at a hall for Dainichi (Mahavairocana), flanked by Bishamonten to the right and by Fudo to the left, which in the Heian period stood at the site of the Hanayama.⁴⁶ On February 5 1978 on the Hanayama the yearly great *goma*-sacrifice and worship of the stars took place. Suddenly the great fire-dragon-god appeared in the fire as a herald of Dainichi. On February 4 1979 it was Fudo-myōo who appeared suddenly in the fire of the *saitogoma*. His figure was five and a half meter high and has been documented photographically.⁴⁷ On that moment Hanayama, the mountain of shamans was believed to have been turned into the Pure Land of this world. On February 3 1980 Buddha, Juntei Kannon, Fudo myōo, Marishiten, Bishamonten and other devas one after the other appeared during the *goma*-sacrifice.⁴⁸ In 1985 at the great *goma*-sacrifice 700.000 followers attended

⁴⁵ The word *Agama* is the Sanskrit term for what is called in Pali *Nikaya*: the excellent teaching of the Buddha. It is the name of the five oldest collections of sutras. In Chinese and Japanese Mahayana-Buddhism only four of these *Agamas* are in use. See E. LAMOTTE, 1958: 164–167.

⁴⁶ See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 189.

⁴⁷ T. YAJIMA, 1985: 190ff. This god of Hindu origin (Acala) is in Japan amongst the *yamabushi* very popular. Fudō being surrounded himself by a halo of fire (the fire of meditation) has a special relation with the *saitogoma*. He is believed to burn away all kinds of spiritual defilements. His great power lies in: 'overcoming disease, poison and fire, conquering enemies and tempters, and bringing wealth and peace to his devotees' (ALICIA MATSUNAGA, 1969: 248, 249).

⁴⁸ See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 190–192. Marishiten in Sanskrit Marici deva, is another form of the Hindu sungod Surya. In Indian Tantrism she is believed to be an emanation of Vairocana and in Japan this deva is worshipped as the principal protector of the warriors. Special rites in honour of Marici intend to invoke her protection on distant journeys, the earning of fortune, and victory in difficult discussions. See A. MATSUNAGA, 1969: 255, 256. Bishamonten (Sanskrit: Vaisravana) is one of the four protectors of the universe and in particular of the North. In Japan he is believed to belong to the seven deities of good luck. He is the protector of Dharma, the bestower of faith and the senses of duty and honour. See A. MATSUNAGA, 1969: 253, 254. See also U. A. CASAL, 1958: 20, 21.

the ritual.⁴⁹ With their prayers they tried to 'get the Buddhas on the move: for world peace, for the healing of sickness and the salvation of the souls of the deceased and of the *mizuko*', the souls of abortive fetuses.⁵⁰ His followers look at Kiriya as the leader who can dispose of the salvation of mankind and of all kinds of souls and spirits. He accentuates his words with miracles: apparitions and special healings. Thus this man who once solemnly vowed to turn all human beings into Buddhas combines in his person three qualities: he is the shaman who unites man with Buddha, he is a *kami* endowed with powers over heaven and earth, and finally he is an excellent and efficient preacher.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

All these characteristics justify the new name *shin shin-shūkyō*. After a comparison of this new phenomenon with the *shinkōshūkyō* I reach the following conclusions and questions:

1. *How new are the new new-religions?*

The phenomenon of *shin shin-shūkyō* is quite revivalistic: folkreligion did not die out but revives in the *shin shin-shūkyō*.

2. *They are pessimistic.*

Our world is approaching its total downfall. Only extramundane powers: gods or Ufo's can bring salvation. Salvation will not work without miracles.

3. *Japan has a special duty.*

Japan as the Pure Land, as Takama ga hara, as paradise is the only place on earth from where salvation of mankind will be realized.

4. *No doctrines but physical practice and ritual.*

Otherwise than in the established religions with their profound teachings or koans all energy is focussed on purposeful actions: with the body in the form of austerities and sometimes in meditation.

5. *The role of the Yamabushi and Shamans has been adopted by the founders of the shin shin-shūkyō.*

To the present day pastoral work and the solution of daily issues have been a matter of *yamabushi* and *miko*. Their duties have been adopted somehow in an organized form by the new leaders of the *shin shin-shūkyō*.

6. *They are proof of the religious impact on Japan's people.*

The statistics of the N.H.K. inquiry and the fact of the origin of more than 20 *shin shin-shūkyō* since 1973 provide the reverse of European and American statistics: a growth in religion. Modern issues produce religious and not only

⁴⁹ The number of participants on occasion of this *Agon no hoshi matsuri* (the starfestival of the Agon) stems of Kiriya himself as do the figures of the years 1983: 450.000, and 1984: 500.000. According to another research these figures should have been: 1983: 60.000, 1984: 100.000, and 1985: 125.000. See K. HAYAKAWA, 1986: 25.

⁵⁰ See T. YAJIMA, 1985: 24ff. The fees to be paid by the faithful are quite large: the admission fee amounts to 16.000 Yen, a sacrifice for the liberation of bad *innen* (*gedatsu-kuyo*) comes to 100.000 Yen, as does the sacrifice for a *mizuko* (*mizuko-kuyo*). See K. HAYAKAWA, 1986: 27. HAYAKAWA met some former members of the Agonshu who paid within three years in fees an amount of 3 million Yen. HAYAKAWA, 1986: 28.

secularized reactions. This is apparent in many ways. Even the Christian churches in Japan notwithstanding a barely increasing number of believers hail many applications for ministry and priesthood.

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