

# Japanese Religiosity in an Age of Internationalization

Jan SWYNGEDOUW

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Many an observer of Japan's sociocultural scene is struck by the remarkable coexistence of opposing values—sometimes so opposed as to seem to give the lie to the principle of contradiction itself. Is there another country in the world that can boast such a homogeneity of race and culture as Japan? Is Japan not one nation and people, united around the "Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth" (to use the words of the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, still deeply engraved on the hearts of many citizens)? Yet this homogeneity finds expression in a mosaic of seemingly conflicting elements on every level of Japan's social system. The wide range of differentiated institutions on the level of social structure, as well as the plurality of cultural values, both indigenous and imported, with their correlate in the "compartmentalized" personality structure of the Japanese, attest to a diversification with endless possibilities of further development. Again, however, these various elements co-act and interact in such a way that their relative independence does not harm the inner balance of the respective levels or the harmony of the social system as a whole.

Perhaps there is no better or more appropriate way to illustrate this basic fact of Japanese culture and society than to refer to Shinto mythology, which understandably reflects the deepest stirrings of the Japanese soul. From an original state of chaos, the kami appeared and bore offspring. The more individual

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This is a slightly revised version of a paper originally presented in Japanese at the Fourth Kyushu International Cultural Conference, held at Fukuoka 1-4 August 1977 and sponsored by the Fukuoka UNESCO Association. The Japanese version was published in *Fukuoka UNESCO* 12 (1977): 1-10. The present paper carries forward some points earlier made in the author's "Secularization in a Japanese context" (1976).

kami came into being, the more the world became real and order became manifest. To quote the "exegesis" of a Shinto scholar:

In Shinto polytheistic belief possesses a special significance. The fact that the gods are many means that the world is that much richer, that much more perfect. As a matter of fact, even when we are not thinking of gods, we know that plurality connotes a good (Shinto Committee 1958, pp. 14-15).

In seeking to explain this "unity in diversity, and diversity in unity," scholars likewise refer to a plurality of theories, each emphasizing one or another element depending on the discipline to which he belongs. But what these theories have in common is that they are used to interpret Japan as a society and culture that is supposed to have maintained a state of balance through the ages, a balance exemplified and proven by the fact that Japan has survived and prospered as an independent nation since time immemorial.

This is not to disregard the fact that this balance has often been put to the test during the course of history. If foreign scholars sometimes tend to underestimate the impact of elements within Japanese society itself that have shaken the foundations of the nation, it can hardly be denied that the turning points in its history have been the moments when Japan came into contact—or was forced to come into contact—with alien cultures. The introduction of Chinese civilization and Buddhism, the meeting with the "Southern barbarians" during the so-called Christian century and again with the West at the end of the Tokugawa era, and not least Japan's experience of occupation by foreign powers after the defeat in the Pacific War—all these are rightly considered events that have pushed the country into new periods of history. This writer, however, would like to venture the opinion—as a hypothesis that will have to be vindicated or overturned by the actualities of Japan's future history—that we now stand at the threshold of an era that will change the face of Japan's society and culture to a degree unprecedented in both

scope and intensity.

During the events and periods of the past, Japan could preserve its identity as a unique and homogeneous culture through applying—or better, through having been able to apply—its revered principle of “selective adoption and adaptation of foreign elements.” This principle permitted Japan to neutralize, to some extent, the impact of radical change without upsetting the balance of its social system and mental life.

If my reading of recent and present-day Japanese history is correct, it is this balance and this identity that are challenged today in a radical way. In this age of internationalization, to put it in a nutshell, for the first time in Japan’s history the problem of coping with stimuli and pressures from outside is no longer merely a question of how to absorb them into the socio-cultural structure so that national identity is safeguarded. The growing need for the creation of a world community and the actuality of internationalization have given rise to the problem, for Japan as for any other nation, whether intercivilizational encounters can any longer be regarded as an issue to be dealt with and scientifically studied within the limits of the respective cultures and for the sake of preserving their respective traditions. The position advanced here is that the issue makes culturally specific limits *passé*. In other words, the meeting between cultures is no longer a matter of adopting and adapting alien values for particularistic purposes. No nation can stop short any longer at this point. It has to consider how its particularistic values can be related to and harmonized with the universal values that make the emerging world community viable.

The present paper tries to elucidate some of the implications of this radical change for the religious consciousness of the Japanese. Pointing to specific phenomena in contemporary Japan’s religious and cultural scene, it is intended as a small contribution to the opening of a new vista, a broader framework within which to interpret these phenomena.

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE RELIGIOSITY

There is certainly no dearth of scientific studies on religion in Japan. Ever since the discipline of religious studies was established as a more or less autonomous field of learning, Japanese and foreign scholars have competed eagerly in trying to unravel and give order to the truly bewildering panorama that religion in this country presents. If at times confusing, it is also a delight to enter what the late Kishimoto Hideo, one of the most outstanding Japanese scholars in this field, so aptly called this "laboratory of religion." Not only specialists, who deal with this subject professionally, but even casual foreign observers of Japanese culture point to Japan's religious scene as the example par excellence of the complex problems that arise when an alien culture is approached in terms of traditional Western concepts but challenges this very conceptualization itself. Growing awareness of this problem has in recent years prompted scholars of Japanese religion to reconsider their customary compartmentalized approaches to the diverse religious traditions and to search for a more unified interpretation of these traditions, both in their historical development and in their actual position in Japanese society.<sup>1</sup>

The plurality of religious traditions and organizations throughout Japan and, still more, the simultaneous adherence of individual Japanese to these different "religions" often constitute a riddle to Westerners, accustomed as they are to thinking of religion in terms of doctrinal orthodoxy and exclusiveness, not to mention their underlying proclivity to take for granted the ideal of unity. But according to the Japanese way of thinking, illustrated above in terms of the value attributed to Shinto polytheism, plurality connotes a good surpassing that of unity, for it is precisely in and through plurality that harmony and order become possible. What calls for explanation from this perspec-

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1. For a description of contemporary trends in religious studies in Japan, see Tamaru Noriyoshi, "Religion" (1975). See also Yanagawa and Abe, "Some observations on the sociology of religion in Japan" (1978).

tive is the nature of harmony and order. Can it be said that Japan's peculiar geographical position as a chain of islands at a "safe" distance from the continent, together with the fact that no foreign power has ever held it in lasting servitude, were instrumental in producing this phenomenon? Unlike other countries, Japan has been able to permit and manage this type of pluralism because no immediate danger existed that its identity as one nation would be destroyed. The result has been a special kind of homogeneity, one based on maintaining a balance among the various constituent elements through allotting each a more or less clearly circumscribed compartment of action with its own rules and idiosyncrasies. In the world of religion alone, we see this pattern repeated in different manifestations of the religious phenomenon.

On the societal level, plurality exists in the differentiated appearance of various specialized religious institutions, commonly classified under the rubrics of Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, and "Others" and further infinitely subdivided into smaller religious sects. Their harmony is manifested in the celebrated mutual tolerance of the various religions—a tolerance admittedly not always practiced in the course of Japan's religious history (a fact sometimes overlooked by all too zealous Western admirers of things Oriental), but even here, the exceptions confirm the rule. One point that deserves emphasis in this connection is that despite many cases of overlapping, the various religious institutions have preserved their self-identity, not so much through the inculcation of differentiated doctrines as through specializing in rituals and other activities that answer to specific needs among their clientele.

On the level of personal religion the matter is somewhat more complicated. The "syncretistic" behavior of the Japanese strikes everyone who observes their religious conduct. Indeed, it might seem as if "undifferentiated unity" rather than "harmony of differentiated elements" would be the appropriate term for this behavior. Support for this view might appeal to

the fact that most Japanese have no interest in doctrinal differences and readily put "gods and buddhas" on the same level. On the other hand, however, they seem to have an unrationalized intuitive feeling that religious benefits can be expected from different religious institutions in fairly well-defined patterns. Exceptions apart, nuptial blessing will not be sought from the Buddhist priest, but he will be called in when a death occurs in the family. And is not the fate of Christianity the clearest example of how the Japanese, instead of mixing everything up into a religious "stew," allot to each religion a highly specified behavioral compartment? In the annual cycle of events Christianity has been allotted the celebration of Christmas, however Japanese, and in the Japanese life cycle Christianity is increasingly sought out for the solemnization of marriage rites. But everyone seems most content when each religion knows its place and does not try to step beyond the boundaries of its allotted area.

And yet a question remains. Perhaps it is a typically Western bias of mine to need some sort of overarching or underlying principle to sustain this harmony of disparate elements, but I would like to raise the question: what is it that keeps Japanese society and the individual Japanese person together?

Reflection on this question leads one to a principle that can be summarized in a few words.

The principle that gives meaning to, or perhaps "integrates," the sociocultural order of the nation and the biographies of individual Japanese is a value which at once includes and transcends the expression it receives from the various elements, whether taken separately or together. This value can appropriately be identified, using admittedly vague and unscientific terms, as that of "Japaneseness," and it entails, I presume, a religious character, such that it gives a kind of sacred aureole to the various entities and subordinate values with which the Japanese people shape their daily life. This principle is, then, the "religion of Japaneseness" (*nihonkyō*), a term made popular

by Isaiah Ben-Dasan, the nom de plume of a mysterious writer of several recent bestsellers, but a term that points, nonetheless, to a very real and basic dimension in Japanese man and society.

#### PRESENT-DAY CURRENTS

*Boom of "theories of Japaneseness."* No phenomenon more aptly characterizes the predicament in which present-day Japanese society finds itself than the astonishing, ongoing boom in "theories of what it means to be a Japanese" (*nihonjin ron*). Put forward from all possible angles and by the most diverse persons, popular writers and scholars alike, this "navel gazing" has in recent years reached proportions that have aroused a feeling of uneasiness among foreigners observant of this trend, but these proportions themselves are illustrative of the Japanese national character that these theories propound and also of the challenge that this national character is undergoing at the present time.

The extreme sensitivity of the Japanese to whatever is said about their country, particularly by Westerners, indicates that these "theories of Japaneseness" touch on a tender string that resonates with a value far surpassing the ordinariness of everyday life. In other words, being a Japanese seems to carry with it a significance that makes appropriate the attribute of "sacred." This is, of course, no novelty in Japanese history. It is reminiscent of the old adage that Japan is "the land of the kami"; it connects with the core of the traditional belief that the divine dignity of the nation lies at the basis of national unity and social solidarity. To be sure, the religious terminology connected with this belief is generally avoided nowadays—though attempts to revive it are not altogether rare. Moreover, many Japanese would firmly deny that there is anything "religious" in the present quest for and reaffirmation of national self-identity. Nevertheless, the repeated emphasis on Japan's uniqueness, particularly when viewed in the light of Japan's past and its traditional expressions of religiosity, indicates in this writer's opinion that we have to do here with the value of "sacredness," that is,

a value that encompasses and surpasses the individual, giving a meaning and direction to his existence that transcends the possibilities inherent in his own limited being.

As indicated, this idea of the sacredness of being Japanese has a long history. It stands at the core of Japanese religiosity and has found explication in a rich variety of symbolic thinking and behavior. That it is of a "particularistic" nature is true by definition, for it has to do with the "particular" value of belonging to a "particular" people and culture. It was the virtue of this sacredness to assimilate, transform, and accommodate all imported values into the particularistic pattern of well-balanced pluralism described above. As I have written more extensively elsewhere (Swyngedouw 1976, pp. 297-98), in this process Shinto has played a preeminent role as the primary heir and custodian of Japan's primitive religiosity. In the present boom of "theories of Japaneseness" this is reflected, for example, in the special attention given to traditional practices and beliefs, in the rediscovery of Japanese folklore studies by men like Yanagita Kunio and Origuchi Shinobu, and in the actual revival of many traditional festivals and customs. If this creates a sense of euphoria among Shinto enthusiasts, the ambivalence of this phenomenon (which will be treated shortly) should not be belittled.

The fate of Buddhism in this country clearly illustrates the vigor of the "religion of Japaneseness." Though universalistic in origin, Buddhism was completely domesticated to serve the particularistic values of its adoptive country. Both its ascendancy to the position of a quasi-state religion during the Tokugawa era and its relegation to the status of a "funeral parlor association" in the minds of many people today exemplify the fact that Buddhism has been made subservient to "Japaneseness" by being put into a well-demarcated compartment as a condition for keeping the whole in equilibrium.

Christianity's universal claims did not lend themselves so easily to particularization. The so-called Christian century (1549-1650) ended in persecution and banishment, and in the modern



period Christianity has not succeeded in attracting more than a handful of people who, moreover, are often looked on as standing outside the main stream of genuine Japanese culture. Indigenization remains the outstanding unresolved issue, and voices among theologians and popular Christian writers calling for a *Japanese* Christianity constitute part of the present-day trend toward tense introspection. Yet when it comes to interpreting instances where adaptation to Japanese forms of religiosity have been effected, as in the adoption of Christmas as a festival in the annual cycle or the performance of church weddings as a high point in the life cycle, even the advocates of acculturation hesitate (Swyngedouw 1977, pp. 293-94).

In a word, present-day Japan gives evidence of intense introspection which, if not itself a religious quest in the strict sense of the word, has at least a religious dimension in its exaltation of the sacred value inherent in being a member of the Japanese race. But why this almost obsessive inward-looking?

*Internationalization.* Alongside the boom in "theories of Japaneseness," there is another theme that increasingly attracts the attention of the contemporary Japanese public, a theme that seems at first to contradict or at least counterbalance the unilateral emphasis on national identity. This is the theme of *kokusai-teki kankaku* or "international feelings," a term that has become almost a slogan in the mass media and that is exemplified not only by books and articles on the subject but also by the frequent appearance of Westerners in Japanese television commercials. The term suggests increasing awareness of both a reality and a fear.

The reality is that Japan can no longer hold itself aloof from what is happening outside its own boundaries. Events and conditions in foreign lands have increasingly to be reckoned with not only because of their impact on Japanese culture and society but also because of the demand they make that Japan step beyond its national boundaries and assume toward the outside

world responsibilities other than those traditional in foreign relations. Japan has become a member of the emergent world community and has been made aware of its responsibility to cooperate more actively in further developing this community lest it fall victim to the global collapse of civilization that is warned of if peoples do not learn to live together in more peaceful and unitary ways.

Awareness of this reality is *increasing* in Japan, but general awareness has by no means yet been realized. Daily confrontation with world problems occurs through the mass media, which penetrate all levels of society with a diffusion rate surpassing that of many Western countries; thousands of Japanese tour the world and are supposedly extremely eager to acquire all kinds of information and new learning. Yet one is sometimes astonished at the really scant impact these experiences seem to exert on the closed-mindedness of the people. To be sure, Japan's geographical position and its history of isolation, together with the resultant "island mentality," constitute a tremendous handicap to nurturing the "international feelings" needed for an age of intercivilizational contacts.<sup>2</sup> But is the only remedy, then, a sort of shock therapy? The Japanese tend to evade direct confrontation and abrupt change, but sometimes these are inevitable. The shock they received some years ago when former Prime Minister Tanaka visited Southeast Asian countries and encountered hostile masses criticizing Japan's economic practices served as an occasion that opened the eyes of many to their obligations on the international scene.

At the same time, however, the present Japanese preoccupation with "international feelings" is also the awareness of a fear. This is the fear that Japan, in becoming part of the coming world community, might have to give up part of its national identity.

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2. This point has been cogently developed by Edwin O. Reischauer in his *Toward the 21st century* (1975) and in his *The Japanese* (1978), especially chapter 38. For a more elaborate treatment of the need for "international feelings," see John E. Walsh, *Intercultural education in the community of man* (1973).

This fear is understandable and not without foundation. It connects, moreover, with the very core of the present-day obsession with introspection. The latter is a natural, to some extent even essential, mechanism of self-defense against the inroads of alien values. It is a reaction to the challenge presented by forces that try to break open Japan's insularity and consequently endanger the ethos that has sustained it. As mentioned earlier, this is by no means the first time that Japan has felt threatened by the outside world. It is the first time, however, that this threat has so directly affected the general public, for only in this period have the achievements of modern science exposed them in a personal and immediate way to stimuli from abroad. This is also the first time that the challenge from outside has come in the form of a request not for mere acceptance but for response and exchange. The bewilderment shown by many Japanese on learning that foreigners can be genuinely interested in so typical a Japanese practice as Zen meditation might be a case in point. Such an attitude evokes a shock of realization, for it means that values they had always regarded as a particularistic possession, values to which they had attributed a sacred character, have now to be divested of this sacred particularism or particularistic sacrality.

What makes the present situation still more novel is that, unlike former times, the stimuli from outside no longer come from one alien civilization at a time, each as a static unity that affects with all its power a basically homogeneous Japanese culture and society. Instead, the stimuli are bewilderingly diverse, being themselves manifestations of an outside that is itself in a state of flux and turmoil.

All these elements together, in their cumulative effect amounting to an overload of stimuli, put unprecedented pressure on Japan's adaptive powers. This overstimulation implies, in fact, a fundamental questioning of Japan's sacred values; it elicits as a matter of course extreme reactions of confusion, irritability, and self-reflective withdrawal. Until now, this self-reflection has

produced few results other than reaffirmations of the necessity of preserving the old values and repeated attempts to absorb the new in accordance with the hitherto effective compartmentalization method of selective adoption and adaptation. Even where the need for more "international feeling" is emphasized, in most cases this is argued within the framework of the "theories of Japaneseness," thus not as a goal to be attained but as a means by which to preserve and strengthen the dignity of the nation. I am inclined to see this way of reasoning exemplified in the somewhat paradoxical phenomenon that the Japanese religious organizations presently most active on the international scene as promoters of universal brotherhood, for example, Ōmoto (of the Shinto tradition), or Risshō Kōseikai and Sōkagakkai (both of which derive from that stream of Buddhist tradition associated with Nichiren), are precisely those generally regarded as exponents of a typically Japanese particularism. But does subordinating internationalism to particularism constitute a genuine solution? Does it manifest a correct understanding of what is really happening in today's world?

#### CHANGES IN JAPANESE RELIGIOSITY

In the preceding pages I have tried to look at Japanese religiosity primarily in terms of the "religion of Japaneseness," a basic principle that gives meaning both to the nation and to the individual Japanese. This religiosity, having at its core the sacred particularistic value of being Japanese, can be found and is expressed in the various religious institutions, though none of them, even in combination, fully exhausts it. This religiosity is the main factor that has made possible the adoption of foreign cultural values into Japanese soil and their adaptation in such a way that they fit into the pluralistic but balanced religious pattern of mutual tolerance and relative role-differentiation.

I have further pointed out that the boom in "theories of Japaneseness" that have caught the attention of the whole nation betrays the fact that here we have to do with a sacred value—and

one felt to be in jeopardy. The fact that the theme of nurturing “international feelings” has recently been inserted into these theories indicates a growing awareness that Japan’s having been propelled into the international community constitutes one of the main challenges to its traditional particularistic values. The question remains, however, whether this challenge is actually bringing fundamental changes to the established patterns of Japanese culture and society—and if so, whether there are indices showing that these changes are taken seriously through conscious response to them.

*Breakdown in the balance of intracultural pluralism?* In the opinion of this writer, Japan is gradually reaching a point where it will be forced to operate above its heretofore effective range of adoption and adaptation—with all the results this change will entail. The stimuli introduced by the forces of *intercultural pluralism* are becoming so manifold and intense that the balance of Japan’s *intracultural pluralism* must ultimately break down.

This balance has been maintained so far because Japan’s insularity allowed it the time necessary to pick and choose among incoming influences and to adapt them so as to fit into the pluralistic pattern kept in equilibrium by its subordination to the particularistic value of Japaneseness. In today’s world, however, it has become increasingly impossible to preserve even a relative insularity. The frequency and intensity of intercultural encounters and exchanges have become so overwhelming that all cultural units find the very rationale on which they are built called into question. The present plight of Christianity, whose function as the underlying principle of integration for Western culture is rapidly dwindling, thus leading to a crisis of Western culture as such, is but one example of what might be in store for other cultural units and their underlying integrative principles also.

This does not mean that the immediate future will see Japanese culture doomed. It does mean, however, that it will become increasingly difficult for Japan to accommodate the avalanche

of incoming alien values to the traditional pattern of compartmentalized meaning systems. As a result of this difficulty, together with factors at work within the various compartments, the traditionally compartmentalized meaning systems begin to reach out beyond their allotted areas and thus put the long-maintained balance into jeopardy. Perhaps this will not constitute an immediate threat to the overarching principle of "Japaneseness." But insofar as there exists an essential link between this principle and the balance among the various compartments, the principle cannot evade being subjected to a basic reappraisal as to its validity and legitimacy.

Symptoms pointing to beginnings of such changes are becoming increasingly manifest. In the behavior of Japanese people we see a growing freedom of choice as regards the expression of religious needs. Social pressures that allowed only for a fixed pattern of religious pluralism have diminished considerably in recent years, and the conviction is gaining ground that religion is ultimately an issue to be decided by the individual. In other words, increasing contact with alien values acts as a conscientization factor, making not only intellectuals but also ordinary people aware that the traditional patterns in which they found meaning for their lives are not, after all, absolute. Moreover, changes in the structures of society as a whole and the degree of the individual's integration into them, in a word, the democratization of society, give Japanese people a greater opportunity than ever before to put this awareness into practice.

As might be expected, this new way of thinking manifests itself in the first place among younger people. Negatively, it appears in the slowly emerging trend to avoid participating in the traditional religious rites that used to shape the annual and life cycles of most people. I like to think, however, that the great number of people, especially among the youth, who claim to have no religion, are in fact assuming a posture of independence toward traditional religious organizations and patterns rather than directly negating all religious feelings and needs. Positively,

it appears in the tendency to perform religious acts according to a self-chosen pattern. For example, fewer and fewer people feel bound to worship at their local Shinto shrine or to participate in community events. If they do so, it is increasingly because of a personal decision. If freely choosing where to find religious "solace" (a move from patterned to unpatterned syncretism) is the most conspicuous manifestation of this incipient breakdown in the traditional balance, its polar opposite (a move in the direction of exclusiveness) can be interpreted as symptomatic of the same basic tendency. Among those who enter a so-called new religion, for example, many seem to find fulfilment of their religious needs exclusively in terms of the new faith they have found and have no further recourse to other religious institutions.

That all this newly acquired liberty does not as yet constitute a direct denial of the "religion of Japaneseness" has already been indicated. On the contrary, some forms in which this liberty is exercised could very well reinforce it, particularly where a conscious choice is made to "identify with" the Japanese race. But where religions and individuals step beyond boundaries formerly subordinated to the overarching value of "Japaneseness," the chances increase that a breakdown in this balance will entail a devaluation of the prime referent that provided a sacred symbolization for the expression of religious needs. It will probably diminish the sacredness of the particularistic value of being Japanese in favor of a sacredness to be found within the various religions or, perhaps more likely, within the liberated religiosity of the individual. If this latter means a "particularization" of religiosity to the extreme level of the individual person, it also signifies, paradoxically, the discovery of "universal" values, for it is through valuation of the dignity of the person that the ethos of the universally human is established.

*Responses to the challenge.* It is difficult to assess the extent to which awareness of the radical changes affecting Japan (and the world) is eliciting conscious responses to cope with them.

One may venture, however, to mention a few points.

As indicated earlier, the recent popularity of the theme of internationalization indicates that the challenge is at least beginning to make itself felt. At the same time, however, it is hard not to view value-judgments concerning this trend without a degree of skepticism. The amazing regularity of "booms" that keep the Japanese public in short-term periods of suspense, together with the general aversion to abrupt and radical change, are actually two sides of one and the same coin. A real crisis awareness comparable to that which now exists in the West is certainly still lacking.

It was pointed out above that in many instances even "internationalization" is accommodated to the defense of traditional values; to speak of Japan's role in the international community, with the accent on "Japan," is another example of the "neotraditionalistic" response long characteristic of Japan's method of coping with outside influences. This is not, however, the whole picture. The search for individual meaning and freedom, most conspicuous among younger people, is steadily gaining ground. Admittedly, this search is often poisoned by a latent need for *amae* (a relationship of emotional dependence on a superior) or ends in reactionary feelings of *akirame* ("resignation"). Again, it sometimes results in an extreme form of egocentrism taken for the realization of the individualism looked on by the Japanese as the hallmark of a still enviable Western civilization. The possibilities involved in this search point, however, to the discovery of a sense of personal independence and imply the freedom to affirm an order of things that transcends particularistic relationships. In other words, the search for individual meaning makes one able to look upon others as equals and thus provides a perspective that nurtures universal values as transcending the interests of the specific social group to which one happens to belong.<sup>3</sup> To the extent that this quest involves a religious char-

3. For a treatment of this problem in relation to new forms of community, see my *From community to communitas* (1973).



acter, it means a shift in the attribution of sacred value; sacredness attaches not to belonging to the Japanese race but to the attainment of individual freedom and fulfilment—a value at once personal and, ipso facto, universally human.

It is precisely the recognition of this search for greater individuality that is presently causing some subtle changes in Japan's religious organizations. If group belonging still constitutes the basic motive for much religious involvement, it is nonetheless remarkable that "personal faith" is increasingly emphasized—and that this emphasis provides an incentive for joining an organization or for giving new life to a worn-out religious faith. This holds for most of the new religions; it also obtains for many of the established religions.

In Buddhism, this emphasis on personal faith manifests itself in reform movements that stress the active participation of lay people in religious affairs. It often entails the broadening of religious fulfilment-claims, a move away from the former "alotted compartment" way of thinking toward more global claims over the whole individual. Here too, a breakdown in the previously maintained balance among religious traditions and their roles is evident. This emphasis on the personal is necessarily accompanied by a reappraisal of what it means to be human and, consequently, by a rediscovery of the universal values in Buddhism. This takes form in the growing awareness that Japanese Buddhism is in fact an integral part of world Buddhism and in the rise of a kind of Buddhist ecumenical movement.

That personal faith and the openness toward universality it entails constitute a graver challenge to Shinto and other religions more deeply linked than Buddhism to the particularistic value of "Japaneseness" is a point that cannot be further developed here. This much, however, should be indicated: current changes in society and culture, particularly the increasing encounters with the outside world, make it more and more evident that many of the values the Japanese had considered peculiar to their culture are in fact more universal than they had thought.

They are universal not only in the sense that similar values can be found both in Japanese and extra-Japanese cultures but also in the sense that some of Japan's cultural values appeal to people far beyond the Japanese world.

As for Christianity in Japan, it will suffice to repeat that as a religion with centuries-old credentials of universality, it is eminently equipped to cope with the present changes, quite apart from the challenges it faces from other quarters, and to serve as a kind of catalyzing agent in smoothing the way for changes in Japanese religiosity. Ironically, however, it often seems to be so engrossed in problems of how to achieve "authentic" indigenization that it neglects its inherent potentiality for more universal openness.

#### CONCLUSION

The changes in Japanese religions and religiosity mentioned in the foregoing pages have many more aspects than those touched on here. These changes, moreover, can be interpreted in many other ways and frames of reference. Research on these matters is still in a pioneering stage. Only history can tell whether these changes are really as radical as many people, the present writer included, tend to think.

The position of the individual in and versus the surrounding society is undergoing fundamental changes, in my opinion, all over the world. Internationalization or intercivilizational encounter constitutes but one of the many factors making for such change. But in Japan, because of its geographical position and past history, this factor has a peculiar weight and unprecedented impact. On the level of socially organized religion, it sets in motion a process whereby the various religious organizations, once subordinated to the value of Japaneseness in a balanced pattern of compartmentalized roles, gradually become differentiated from the overarching value system. This differentiation process is undermining the pattern itself, enabling religious organizations to leave their allotted compartments and meet

the more personal religious needs of the people. On the personal level, changes in the position of the individual in and versus the society in which he lives result in a discovery of the possibilities inherent in his own individuality. If this signifies a privatization of religion, it also means that one is enabled to share his religious aspirations with fellow human beings in accordance with patterns to which he himself sets the limits. In a word, the present changes in society and culture are altering the locus of sacrality from the overarching value of Japaneseness to the values to be found within individual persons and in their expressions of the universally human.

It might seem that Japan, under the impact of internationalization, is gradually turning from particularism to universalism. An interpretive scheme of this kind, however, is probably too simplistic. Universal and particularistic values are, in the last analysis, not contradictory but complementary. But perhaps this reflection implies the need for a new definition of particularism—or at least for a new perspective on it. Can particularistic values remain “possessions” to which people should cling with unrelenting stubbornness and which they should try to preserve for their own exclusive use? May it not be that their preservation will depend on making them available to a much wider public? If I may be allowed to conclude by expressing a personal desire, I hope that the present introspective boom in Japan will not stop short with a self-complacent (and somewhat anxious) admiration of its own genius. I hope it will open the eyes of the Japanese people to the beauty of Japanese values that can become their proper contribution to the world community in the making.

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