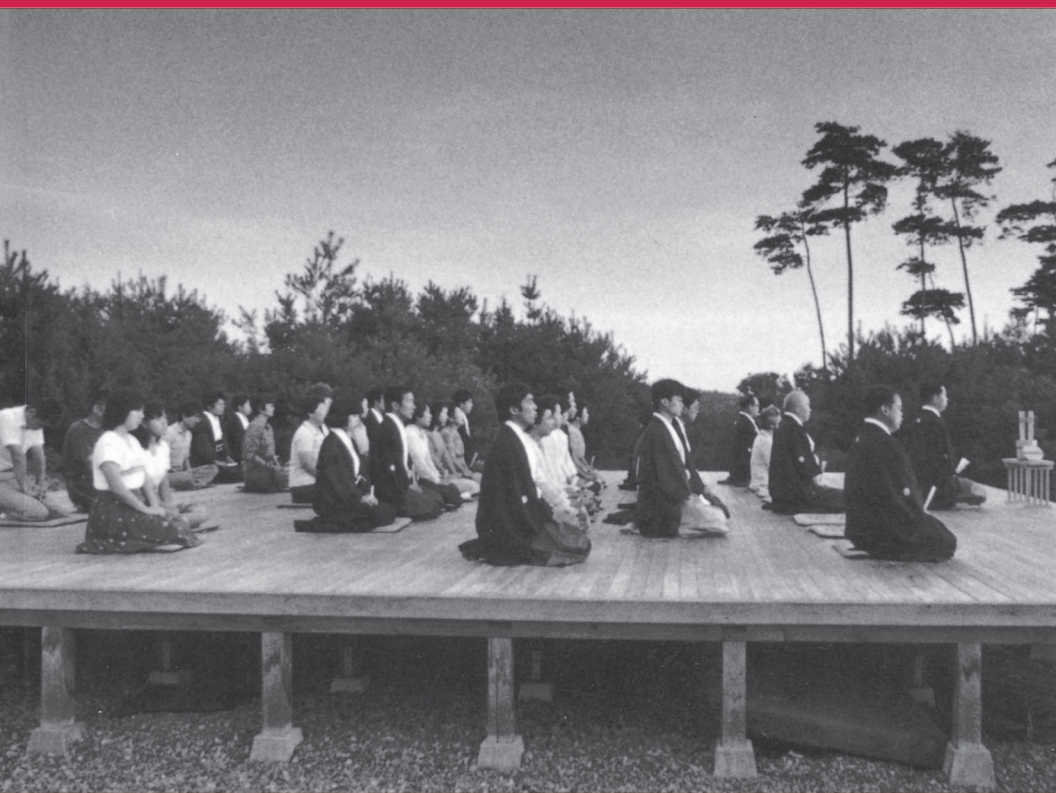


KUROZUMIKYŌ

AND THE NEW RELIGIONS
OF JAPAN

Helen Hardacre



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Dedicated to the Fukumitsus of Okayama, Japan

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Preface

While I was gathering data for this study, I lived in the Ōi Church of Kurozumikyō, 黒住教 in Okayama Prefecture, with its ministers, the Fukumitsus. Thinking that I might want time to myself occasionally, the Fukumitsus accorded me a rare privilege for their household: a room of my own. Luckily for me, as it turned out, that room did not become my private, cloistered world. There were doors on all four sides, and it soon became customary for any followers visiting the church to seek me out if I were not visible in the gathering room before the altar. One or several of my doors was quite liable to be flung open at any hour between 6 A.M. and midnight, as followers came to tell me stories of the many blessings they have received through Kurozumikyō and the Fukumitsus. They spoke of healings, powerful dreams, family problems solved, and the caring counsel of the church. They were eager to launch into their experiences, and often it was a struggle to keep up with them. I learned to keep notebook and tape recorder at the ready.

The ministers, especially Fukumitsu Katsue and Fukumitsu Sukeyasu, spared no effort to explain their beliefs and to share with me their hopes for the followers. Katsue's mother Hiroe took me with her all over western Japan and tirelessly explained to me Kurozumikyō doctrine and the inside stories of each of the many churches we visited. She wrote the story of her life for me, and I have translated this in chapter six. This document, and her daughter Katsue's sermon (translated in chapter three), vividly convey the joyful spirit and ethos of these "sun worshipers." The association I have come to enjoy through the Fukumitsus with Kurozumikyō followers includes many precious friendships, to say nothing of the data I obtained. Seeing the complete, unqualified dedication of the Fukumitsu ministers to their followers, I became aware of new depths of energy and power in the human spirit. Though I have written of Kurozumikyō as illustrative of broader issues, I am mindful of its uniqueness as well. No outside observer has a right to expect the riches that I received in my four-doored room (doorless, for all practical purposes), but I hope that every student of Japanese religions may have at least one such experience.

Acknowledgments

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I am very much indebted to the Sixth Patriarch of Kurozumikyō, Kurozumi Muneharu, for granting permission for my study of Kurozumikyō and for facilitating innumerable opportunities for observation and interviews. I wish to thank the hundreds of Kurozumikyō followers who graciously and generously shared their time, their hopes, and their beliefs with me. Lastly, I wish to thank the editorial and design staff of the Princeton University Press, especially Miriam Brokaw, Cathie Brettschneider, and Laury Egan, for making this publication possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

The World View of The New Religions

The contemporary religious scene in Japan is commonly divided into the “established religions” (*kisei shūkyō* 既成宗教) and the “new religions” (*shinshūkyō* 新宗教 *shinkō shūkyō* 新興宗教). These categories are further divided into Buddhist-and Shintō-derived varieties of each as well as into further subcategories.¹ This study addresses the distinctive character of the new religions of contemporary Japan through a case study of Kurozumikyō 黒住教, a Shintō 神道 religion founded in 1814 by the Shintō priest Kurozumi Munetada 黒住宗忠 (1780–1850). With its headquarters in Okayama City, it is largely a rural group but also commands a significant urban following, amounting to about 20 percent of its total membership of 220,000. Founded by a priest of the “established” Shintō tradition, it is one of the oldest of the so-called new religions and seems to combine aspects of both new and established types.

THE NEW RELIGIONS OF JAPAN

The new religions and their members represent an important and distinctive sector of Japanese society. In spite of the great variety of their doctrines, new religions share a unity of aspiration and world view significantly different from those of secular society and from the so-called established religions. New religions constitute the most vital sector of Japanese religion today and include perhaps 30 percent of the nation’s population in their membership.²

¹ Two much-used surveys of the new religions are H. Neil McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) and Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963).

² Ministry of Education, *Shūkyō nenkan* (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1982).

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New religions have appeared in three waves in modern history, the first from roughly 1800 to 1860, the second during the 1920s, and the third in the postwar period. They have developed in relation to the established religions, and both have been powerfully shaped by the currents of Japanese and world history.³ Neither can fruitfully be considered static, ahistorical categories. It is useful, however, to develop a systemic, comprehensive characterization of the new religions as they exist now in contemporary Japan. They display an orientation that shapes and channels the experience and behavior of a large proportion of the Japanese people. That orientation or world view in turn occupies a distinctive position in the history of Japanese religions.

Centering on temples and their clergy, established Buddhism maintains elaborate ecclesiastical hierarchies and ordains its priests in textually prescribed ceremonies. It upholds a strong distinction between priest and layman in which laymen sponsor temple rites but do not perform them. To a certain extent, the rewards awaiting the faithful are forthcoming after death, and to ensure their achievement, funerals and memorial rites should be performed by an ordained cleric. In Shrine Shintō (*jinja Shintō* 神社神道), another name for Shintō's established variety, the line between priest and layman is clearly drawn also. The priest's liturgical training and rigorous observance of purifications and abstinences entitle him to a proximity to deity impossible for the layman. The layman goes to the priest for ritual services, sometimes for special prayers to secure

Japanese scholars estimate that between 25 and 33 percent of the total population are members of new religions. Statistics for the new religions are notoriously unreliable and are subject to considerable inflation due to widespread practices such as counting members by households rather than by individuals. In recent years, however, the groups themselves have begun to feel a need for a more accurate count of their membership and so have in many cases begun counting members by dues actually received. Needless to say, this is a much more accurate measurement. Thus, problems with calculating the membership of the new religions are not so acute as in the past. If one calculates the number of members of new religious groups as reported in the *Shūkyō nenkan* and then subtracts as much as a third, the total is still in excess of 30 percent of the total population of Japan.

³ Discussion of differences between "established" and "new" religions may be found readily in chapter 3 of Edward Norbeck, *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*, Rice University Studies, vol. 56, no. 1 (Houston: Rice University, 1970).

divine blessings here and now, such as safe childbirth, peace and safety in the home, or prosperity in business. Between established Buddhism and Shintō exists a division of labor most clearly observable in rites of passage: to Shrine Shintō are assigned the rites of birth and marriage while Buddhism retains title to rites of death and ancestor worship. In the established varieties of both Buddhism and Shintō are found ideas about the pollution of women, which have historically barred them from priestly roles. Both temples and shrines are generally passed from father to son, giving the priest-hoods of both Buddhism and Shintō the character of hereditary occupations. The laity of the established religions is mainly recruited hereditarily on the basis of traditional family affiliations with temples and shrines. Both Buddhism and Shintō have established a number of sites as places of pilgrimage, to which local temples and shrines send the faithful. The validity of local practice is guaranteed in part by this continuing connection to venerable cult centers.

Among the doctrines of the new religions there is great variety, since doctrine frequently originates in revelations to a founder.⁴ Most reserve a special place for ancestor worship, whether their main theological focus is Buddhist or Shintō. Often shamanistic practices resembling spirit possession have the aim of divining the ancestors' will or present condition. Founders tend to be charismatic individuals who attract a following through faith healing rather than through ordination and textual erudition. Many of the new religions' founders are women. The new religions tend to recruit their following through evangelistic proselytization and dramatic conversion, at least in the first generation. They promise followers "this-worldly-benefits" in the form of healing, solution of family problems, and material prosperity. In ethics they emphasize family solidarity and qualities of sincerity, frugality, harmony, diligence, and filial piety. Between laity and leaders there is only a vague dividing line, and for the most part, anyone may acquire leadership

⁴ Historical studies and studies presenting trait lists of the new religions abound. A readily available combination of the two approaches is Murakami Shigeyoshi, *Japanese Religion in the Modern Period*, trans. Byron Earhart (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1980), pp. 10–18, 48–51, 70–79, 82–91, 137–56.

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credentials, including women. Frequently the new religions recognize no sacred centers but those of their own history. Although the connection is not always acknowledged, the new religions have grown out of the established and in many cases are not entirely separate from them. For example, many new religions find it difficult to overcome the attachment to established Buddhist funeral and ancestral rites, producing the incongruous situation of religions able to provide doctrine, ritual, and an organization perfectly adequate for a human life span but forced at death to return their believers to Buddhist temples for final disposition. Funerals and ancestor worship commonly present difficult hurdles in the process of a new religion establishing independence.

It is in world view rather than doctrine per se that the unity of the new religions lies. The related term “cosmology” is widely used in contemporary scholarship to refer to a world picture, a visual image of various cosmic realms and their denizens: heavens, hells, pure lands, demons, hungry ghosts, and the like.⁵ The present discussion, however, distinguishes cosmology from world view and concentrates on the set of relations believed to link the self, the body, the social order, and the universe as a whole.

Most writers on the new religions recognize a common orientation among the religions and have sought to articulate it. Two approaches have dominated this endeavor. The first is to say that the new religions represent reactions to the same social problems, that they are reactions to a variety of “crises.” I have written at length on the problems of the “crisis explanation” and will not recapitulate that argument here, since this study is not principally

⁵ Recent studies that follow this usage are *Ancient Cosmologies*, ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Lowe (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975) and Robert Wessing, *Cosmology and Social Behavior in a West Javanese Settlement*, Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Series no. 47 (Athens: Ohio University, 1978), pp. 22ff. Clifford Geertz makes a useful distinction between “world view” and “ethos.” “A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order.” See “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 127.

historical in nature.⁶ The second is the trait list identifying common elements. Many scholars have pointed out that the new religions typically include shamanic elements, ancestor worship, and faith healing. These trait lists have a certain utility in providing an index of features, but they fail to articulate the internal coherence of the separate items. Thus they fail to discover the most basic unity of religious orientation, of which the traits are expressions.⁷

I agree that the elements identified by the trait list approach are extremely significant. It is, however, precisely their particular combination, the relation among these various elements, that is most important, not their separate identities alone. The collection of elements that has been called constitutive of the new religions is in fact derived from a more basic source: world view. The goal of this work is to show how and why these elements fit together to make a coherent whole. In spite of the great diversity of doctrinal formulations of these groups, there is a unity among the new religions that is of a different order than a catalog of elements. The constituents of that unity may be shown through the example of Kurozumikyō.

THE WORLD VIEW OF THE NEW RELIGIONS

This discussion adopts the term *world view* for a characteristic conceptualization of the relation of the self to external levels of existence and stereotyped patterns of thought, action, and emotion based on that conceptualization. Thus to delineate a world view is

⁶ Many earlier studies of the new religions tried to portray them as reactions to social crisis, broadly conceived. Although social change has been a catalyst in the founding of many new religions, this explanation is often too simplistic. The studies by McFarland and Thomsen, cited above, are two such examples, and there is considerable similar research by Japanese scholars. Typical of the type are Takagi Hirō, *Nihon no shinkō shūkyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1959) and Saki Akio, *Shinkō shūkyō* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1960). For a useful bibliography on studies of the new religions, see Byron Earhart, *The New Religions of Japan: A Bibliography of Western-Language Materials*, Monumenta Nipponica (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970). I have tried to detail the shortcomings of the crisis approach in *Lay Buddhism in Contemporary Japan: Reiyūkai Kyōdan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁷ Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*, is a good example of this approach.