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X

Japanese

Religion

BY

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Buddhism

Buddhism came into Japan in the sixth century A.D. from Korea and China. By this time it was already almost a thousand years old, and a highly developed religion. One can well imagine how deep an impression it made on the relatively simple and unsophisticated

Japanese of that age, presenting to them not only a profound teaching from India but also the art and culture of China through which that teaching was now expressed.

The essentials of the teaching itself are succinctly stated in the Four Noble Truths:

1. The truth of suffering—that suffering is inherent in life. Buddhism is deeply conscious of the finite character of human life. Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, health and sickness are inextricably bound up with one another. The more we seek of one, the more exposed we are to the other. And so the trouble lies in the seeking. This leads to the second of the Noble Truths—
2. That suffering is caused by desire or selfish craving. It is the desiring of things for oneself that brings pain. Why? Because this desire is based on an illusion—that things, and we ourselves, have permanence. In fact, nothing does. They and we are all transitory, all constantly subject to change. To possess things is impossible. To be attached to them is to depend on the insubstantial. They come into existence by a concatenation of causes and conditions, which are themselves transitory. Dependence on things brings frustration and disappointment. But there is a way out, as the third Truth tells us.
3. Desire, and consequently suffering, can be eliminated.
4. The fourth Truth is the Noble Eightfold Path whereby one may be delivered from desire and suffering to attain the peace of Nirvana. This Eightfold Path is essentially an ethical and psychological discipline. By achieving greater self-control, greater detachment from things, greater selflessness, one achieves freedom from illusion. This is not just a freedom of the mind, like intellectual detachment, but an active, practical freedom over one's whole self and one's environment. It aims at concentrating the mind in meditation, at attaining an intuitive awareness of the Truth, in which the peace of Nirvana is found. Nirvana means simply the extinguishing of desire. It implies nothing about the extinction of self, except insofar as self is bound up with desire or craving.

In relation to the Japanese religious outlook, as we see it in the preexisting Shintō religion, there are two things that strike us. Shintō showed a cheerful, optimistic attitude toward the world. It expressed

a simple joy in life. Pain, dejection, death it preferred not to talk about. These were taken notice of only by the taboos placed on them. From this standpoint Buddhism, in its preoccupation with suffering and death, would seem an extremely pessimistic approach to life. Yet this may well have been the reason why Buddhism touched the Japanese so deeply. It gave them a new insight into aspects of life which Shintō had not dealt with. At the same time it suggests why the Japanese, in accepting Buddhism, also modified it. They infused into it some of their own native appreciation of life and nature.

But Buddhism had its own positive side, as well. The third and fourth Truths express a remarkable confidence that suffering can be overcome. To some Nirvana may have seemed a pale and lifeless concept, a kind of spiritual no-man's-land. But by the time Buddhism reached Japan, it had developed more appealing ways of expressing itself. For instance, the prime objects of faith were known as the Three Treasures or the Three Refuges. These were:

1. The Buddha.
2. The Law or Dharma.
3. The Religious Community (Sangha).

1. The Buddha was he who had won the truth and shared it with others. As commonly represented in sculpture, sitting in meditation, he symbolizes the fundamentally meditative character of Buddhism.

2. The Dharma or Law—the truths or teachings of the Buddha which would bring release from suffering.

3. The Sangha—the body of those who had devoted their lives to achieving and spreading this Truth. It is roughly comparable to holy orders or monastic orders in the West. The characteristic activity of the Sangha was study and meditation. To take up the religious life was understood as leaving the world, leaving one's household or family, leaving behind the personal cares and attachments of life, for a life apart from the world of men. It was a type of discipline Shintō had never demanded of the Japanese. Pre-Buddhist Japanese religion was organizationally speaking, just another aspect of the dominant clan organization. The Buddhist monastery, by contrast, was a community dedicated to learning, to spiritual cultivation and to religious worship.

In the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism, which was to be most in-

fluent in Japan, we may observe certain general trends of great importance:

1. First, the Buddha as an object of worship, rather than simply as a teacher, was increasingly the center of attention.
2. There was not just one Buddha so revered, the historical Buddha, but many of them—all embodiments of the Liberating Truth which they had achieved first through the accumulation of meritorious deeds, and finally through an experience of enlightenment.
3. The most popular objects of devotion were the Bodhisattvas, Buddhas-to-be, who had won Nirvana for themselves but elected to remain in the world to help others win it.
4. There was an increased emphasis in Buddhism on faith and on the saving grace of the Bodhisattvas as a means of achieving liberation. By the same token there was generally less emphasis, at least in the popular mind, upon the hope of achieving liberation through the pursuit of meditative disciplines.

5. Mahāyāna Buddhism asserted most emphatically that salvation was open to all, and that all other faiths, all other schools of Buddhism served only to bring men by different pathways to the one saving truth most fully expressed in the Mahāyāna.

One can imagine the effect on the early Japanese of these ideas and ideals, a sudden revelation to them of a new world of the spirit, of new human potentialities. Take, for example, the Buddha figure. First of all, it represented an ideal of human triumph over suffering. Of the attainment of spiritual peace. Secondly it was expressed in human form with an artistry that is compelling. Before the advent of Buddhism Japanese religion had no such sculpture, no objects of veneration or inspiration modeled on the human form. But with their native sensitivity to beauty, they must have been deeply moved by the sublime representations of the Buddhist ideals of contemplation in the Buddha figure or of compassion in the Bodhisattva images.

The development of Buddhism in Japan reflects historical changes in the society itself. Its introduction was sponsored by the ruling clans of the sixth and seventh centuries, and religious institutions were closely identified with the extension of the power of these clans, especially that of the Imperial House. Under such rulers as Prince Shotoku and Emperor Shōmu, Mahāyāna Buddhism constituted an important element in the ideology of the new state, which aimed at universal dominion. Such scriptures as the Lotus Sutra and Kegon Sutra offered a vision of a universal spiritual order corresponding to

the new political order. Other texts promised blessings on the state and its subjects in return for its patronage of the new religion. Temples and monasteries were built for the Buddhas and guardian gods whose protection was sought for the rulers. To a considerable extent the dominant social ideal assumed a harmony of interests between the propagation of religion and the maintenance of peace in the land.

For the most part religious organization and practice reflected the aristocratic structure of the society. Egalitarian tendencies in Mahāyāna Buddhism were inhibited, while hierarchical attitudes developed strongly. The aesthetic aspect of religion predominated, not only because of the Japanese native sensitivity, but because the aristocratic society of the Nara and Heian period admired beauty and elegance above all things. Esoteric Buddhism, as taught especially by Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi), best exemplifies this trend in the Heian period (ninth to eleventh centuries). It held that truth was manifested in all things, physical as well as mental, material as well as spiritual. The potentiality for Buddhahood lay in all things, and all things could contribute to one's attainment of Buddhahood as they influenced the development of one's total self. Bodily training, psychological discipline, aesthetic cultivation—all aspects of one's personality were involved in the attainment of Buddhahood. Consequently ritual and art were as important as scripture and meditation. It was not just a matter of enlightening the mind but of affecting and transforming the whole man.

This view of the world and of man gave great impetus to Buddhist art. Esoteric Buddhism included innumerable gods and Buddhas in its pantheon. All were considered different expressions of the same essential truth. Represented pictorially in the so-called mandala, these gods and Buddhas embodied the whole universe and were arranged in different patterns and postures to illustrate different aspects of reality. A close *rapprochement* with Shintō was also made possible by the acceptance of its gods as manifestations of the cosmic reality. Such a catholic and all-embracing attitude went far toward adapting Buddhism to Japanese tastes, especially the love of nature and enjoyment of beauty.

The collapse of the Heian court and its civil administration in the eleventh century brought profound changes in Buddhism. Religious institutions bound up with the fortunes of the court nobility declined, while a highly aestheticized and sentimentalized religion, based on

the refined enjoyment of beauty and the ennui it gave rise to, could not meet the challenge of the difficult times ahead. With almost constant warfare, famines, pestilences, and social disruption came a sense of impending doom. The mind of the new age was tragic and heroic, not aesthetic.

But the new religious situation was also a product of developments within Buddhism itself, especially the growing consciousness of a discrepancy between the Mahāyāna ideal of universal salvation and the fact that the attainment of Buddhahood seemed so difficult, and in practice limited to so few. The new forms of Buddhism, generated directly out of the old monastic center of Mt. Hiei, near Kyoto, attempted to bring salvation immediately within reach.

This was most marked in the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Buddha Amida. Amida, a common subject of meditation in Esoteric Buddhism, became increasingly an object of worship. Exclusive devotion to Amida was stressed as the one reliable means of salvation for sinful men in a corrupt and disordered world. It was only necessary to utter the name of Amida in sincere faith and then, whatever one's sins in this life, one would be taken at death to Amida's Pure Land, where all the obstacles, illusions, and temptations that prevented one from achieving Buddhahood in this world would be removed. This doctrine of salvation by faith brought Buddhism out of the monasteries, with their austere disciplines, into the households of peasants and townspeople. For the first time Buddhism became a religion of the masses. Accordingly, the temples of this sect were later built on a great scale, to accommodate the large number of devout worshippers who came to pay homage to Amida.

Amidism stressed the value of faith, not human action. Another important movement in medieval Buddhism combined faith and action in devotion to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. This scripture proclaimed the salvation of all beings, but also insisted on the need for courageous action to spread the good word of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren, the founder of this movement in the thirteenth century, believed that the Buddhism of his day was thoroughly corrupt, and that it was the mission of himself and the Japanese people to purify and revive it. He was an intransigent critic of both political and religious leaders in his day. For his outspokenness, he suffered arrest, imprisonment, and exile, setting an example as a fearless fighter and martyr for truth. His modern followers tend also to be great activists in the political and social sphere, and to be strong Japanese national-

ists. They are well organized and an important factor in national elections. Thus Nichiren's Lotus sect is a rare example of a Buddhist movement with a political and social program. Or the other hand it had the least influence on the Japanese arts in general.

One of the sects Nichiren most condemned was Zen Buddhism. He thought Zen essentially a selfish teaching because it centered around the enlightenment of the individual rather than the salvation of mankind or the nation, and because it stressed self-effort rather than salvation through faith. And Zen did indeed oppose the idea that Buddhahood was something to be sought outside oneself. Every man has a Buddha-nature, and to realize it, according to Zen, he need only look within. Self-understanding and self-reliance are the keynote of Zen.

The means by which this inner realization may be achieved is indicated by the term Zen, meaning "meditation" or "concentration." To speak of it as a "means," however, is appropriate only with reference to the specific procedure involved in the practice of meditation: sitting erect, cross-legged and motionless with the mind concentrated so as to achieve, first, tranquility, and then active insight.

Meditative practices of this sort were an essential feature of Buddhism from the earliest times and are related to the Yoga practices of ancient India. It was in China, however, that the practice of this type of meditation for the first time became the basis of a separate school of Buddhism. In protest against the prevailing scholasticism of Chinese Buddhism, with its attention to scripture and philosophical discussion, a movement developed stressing intuitive enlightenment and rejecting any dependence on scripture or doctrine. The sect was organized around individual masters who claimed an authoritative patriarchal transmission of vital truth from the first teacher, Buddha. According to tradition, this transmission was brought from India to China by Bodhi-dharma. He is a favorite subject for Zen painting, expressing qualities of rugged integrity, resolute courage, and penetrating insight. From him the transmission went on from generation to generation without verbal preaching or written scripture, but with cryptic signs or striking gestures as the only overt form of communication from one patriarch to another.

There is, however, a body of literature which has grown up around the Zen masters, consisting of anecdotes about them or about the steps by which disciples of Zen have gained the truth. These usually

focus upon a baffling problem which will not yield a solution until the student abandons ordinary processes of reasoning and opens the doors of his mind to intuitive understanding.

But of all the means of conveying the insight of Zen to the uninitiated, perhaps the most effective have been the traditional arts of Japan, such as landscape painting, landscape gardening, the Nō drama, swordsmanship, and the tea ceremony. The pioneer teachers of Zen in Japan had a particularly close association with the cult of tea. The making and drinking of tea is one of the simplest of everyday activities. Zen turned it into a fine art. This is typical of the Zen approach to life—finding great beauty and significance in the commonplace. Everything about the tea cult is a combination of the utmost simplicity and the greatest refinement.

One may observe here, too, the permeating of Zen by traditional Shintō attitudes and values: simplicity, naturalness, love of beauty, and lack of interest in doctrine. Generally speaking, Zen developed a close association with the new military aristocracy, especially the Ashikaga shogunate. Devotion to Amida and the Lotus Sutra was stronger in the lower classes. These three forms of Buddhism tended to dominate the religious scene down into modern times, but with the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate at the end of the sixteenth century there was another major change which tended to limit the role of religion in Japanese life. The shogunate attempted to unify the extremely decentralized feudal system and strengthen civil administration. Though tolerating Buddhism it felt a need for a common political and social ethic, which Buddhism did not provide. The Tokugawa therefore encouraged the spread of Confucianism.

Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism

Confucianism, though a product of China, has not, historically speaking, been confined to a role as the national creed or cult of the Chinese, but has entered deeply into the lives of other East Asian peoples as well. Its transmission to these other countries is all the more remarkable, however, since Confucianism has had no missionaries of its own to win converts abroad. The scholar and the official, rather than the monk or pilgrim, is the usual symbol of Confucianism in action; its natural orbit is the family and the state, not the "uncivilized" world.

Consequently, when Confucianism was first introduced into Japan

in the sixth and seventh centuries, Buddhist monks had to serve as the intermediaries, bringing Chinese culture with them as naturally as Christian missionaries of the twentieth century brought Western medicine, for example, to strange lands. Similarly, when the second great wave of Confucian influence reached Japan, Buddhist monks again served as intermediaries—this time the Zen monks who played such a prominent part in trade and intercourse with China, and who made their monasteries centers of Chinese studies in the Ashikaga period. Art history tells us how great an impression had been made on the Japanese by the artistic achievements of the Sung dynasty. Another outstanding product of Sung times was Neo-Confucian philosophy, which likewise attracted the attention of learned monks in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Japan.

Nevertheless, it is to other factors than its reception by Zen monks that Neo-Confucianism owes the ascendancy which it achieved in the early years of the Tokugawa period. Neo-Confucian orthodoxy in Japan was a creation of both scholarship and state sponsorship. Circumstances had enhanced its importance to men confronted by precisely those problems which Confucianism took most seriously, and whose outlook and interests differed greatly from its original clerical sponsors. It was not long, therefore, before those who espoused the cause of Neo-Confucianism attempted to liberate themselves from clerical dominance and establish Neo-Confucianism not only as an independent teaching, but also as a creed and code having undisputed state sanction. The outstanding leader in this movement was Hayashi Razan, and characteristically the leadership of the orthodox Neo-Confucian school in Tokugawa Japan passed down through his family, on a hereditary basis, so that successive generations of Hayashis served as the chief educational adviser; to the shogunate and the chief authorities in intellectual matters right down to the fall of the Tokugawa in 1868.

There is no time here for even a brief summary of Confucian beliefs or principles, and I shall confine myself to mentioning just three elements in Confucianism, or rather Neo-Confucianism, which I believe exerted special influence in Japan. These are its ethical humanism, its rationalism, and its historical mindedness. First, let us take up its ethical humanism.

The moral doctrines of this school focus directly upon man and his closest human relationships, not any supernatural order or divine law. These are expressed most concretely in the Five Human Rela-

tionships and their attendant obligations (between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brother, and between friends). Such an emphasis upon human loyalties and personal relationships was obviously congenial to the feudal society of Japan in this period, and provided a uniform, secular code by which the Tokugawa could maintain social order in all their domains, no matter how divided they might be by local loyalties or religious allegiances. It is a noteworthy fact that public morality until recent times drew more upon the ethical teachings and terminology of Confucianism than upon any other doctrine.

The Neo-Confucian philosophy imported to Japan under the Tokugawa was known as "the philosophy of reason (or principle)." It stressed the objective reason or principle in all things as the basis of learning and conduct. Intellectually this required exhaustive study of things and human affairs in order to determine their underlying principles, pursuing what the *Great Learning*, a favorite text of this school, called "the investigation of things." This positivistic and quasi-scientific approach was a notable characteristic of Japanese thought and scholarship in the Tokugawa period, which showed a new interest in observing the constant laws of nature and human society, as contrasted to the medieval, Buddhist view of the world as subject only to ceaseless change, the Law of Impermanence.

A strong sense of the importance of human history has been a feature of Confucianism from earliest times, in contrast to Buddhism and Hinduism which have attached little importance to history. In Japan the writing of the first national histories in the eighth century was a direct outgrowth of Confucian influence on the Japanese court. Similarly, when Confucianism was revived and reintroduced in new forms under the Tokugawa, it gave a strong impetus to the writing of history. The founder of the official school himself undertook to write a general history of Japan, after centuries during which history was neglected under the dominance of Buddhism. But the significant thing here is that this reawakened sense of history should have contributed so much to the growing sense of Japanese nationalism. For it inevitably pointed to the importance and preservation of Japanese traditions. Thus perhaps the most influential Confucian school of historical writing was established at Mito by a branch of the Tokugawa ruling house. Following Confucian principles, it emphasized the principle of loyalty to the legitimate dynasty—that is, the Imperial

House in Kyoto, rather than the Tokugawa shogunate itself. It is not surprising that this same Mito branch of the Tokugawa house should have played a leading role in the Imperial Restoration of 1868.

The dominance of Confucian thought and culture in the Tokugawa period derived from its secular functions. Institutionally it was represented by the scholars and officials who served the shogunate or the various domains. These were members of the military aristocracy, but during the long Tokugawa peace their military functions gave way increasingly to scholarly and bureaucratic ones. There was a notable extension of education and cultural activity, some of it reaching out to include Western studies as learned from the Dutch in Nagasaki. By the nineteenth century the process of "civilizing" the old warrior class had proceeded far enough that they and many of their Confucian values could adapt to the new situation confronting Japan, but the creation of a modern state eliminated the old institutional basis of Confucianism and a serious question arose as to how the latter could survive among the modern bureaucrats, technicians and university professors of a new age.

The Shintō Revival and Modern Nationalism

The emperor-centered nationalism of modern Japan, however, besides deriving from these tendencies in Tokugawa Confucianism, also owed much to the Shintō revival which took place in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The interest in history which was stimulated by Confucianism led the Japanese to reexamine the history of their country, and to exalt Japan over China. Following essentially this same line of thought and study other thinkers established the School of National Learning (as opposed to Chinese learning) and devoted themselves to "rediscovering" what they thought was the pure and undiluted Japanese tradition. They were convinced that Japan had its own characteristic way of life, and a spirit all its own. But when they reexamined the records of the past they had great difficulty identifying anything in the early records not strongly influenced by Chinese thought. In the end they turned to poetry and novels like *The Tale of Genji* as expressing this characteristic spirit or attitude, which they identified particularly with the emotions, the feelings of man, rather than his rational faculties. Thus, opposed to

Confucian rationalism, which they identified with the Chinese, they upheld the emotional sensitivity and innocent spontaneity of the Japanese.

In the potent brand of nationalism which surged up in nineteenth-century Japan these two strains in Tokugawa thought, Shinō and Confucianist, were synthesized in a conception put forward by the later Mito school, the conception of Japan's peculiar "national polity" (*kokutai*). "Polity," of course, refers to the basic form of government in a society and the ends which it is thought to serve. According to the Mito theory, Japan's distinctive national polity was based on the divine ancestry of the Imperial House, the assurances of the Sun Goddess concerning its destiny to rule the world, and the peculiar virtues of the Japanese people in remaining faithful to this dynasty down through the centuries. In late nineteenth-century Japan and right up to the end of World War II this doctrine became almost universally accepted among the Japanese. It was the ultimate appeal and sanction invoked in support of virtually any political stand: Japanese reactionaries, conservatives, liberals, and even many social revolutionaries appealed to its authority. Embodying as it did virtually all of Japanese tradition, it served as a national symbol susceptible to some extent of divergent interpretations. Westernized liberals, for instance, tended to dwell on the example set by the young Emperor Meiji, who, in his famous Charter Oath, called for increased participation of the people in government. Conservatives emphasized disciplined loyalty to the throne. But Western political labels are inadequate when applied to the strange configurations of Japanese nationalistic thought. The extremes of left and right meet in the thinking of those who reject the bourgeois culture of the West and reassert traditional Japanese values.

In the fully developed nationalist doctrine which became orthodox state teaching in the late 1930s, as set forth in the *Kokutai no honrei* (Fundamentals of Japan's national polity), glorification of the Emperor and of the traditional virtues of the Japanese people is combined with a strong opposition to Western influences, and in particular to the individualism of the West, which is contrasted to the Japanese ideal of a harmonious society working together as one family. Western capitalism, individual enterprise, individual rights are seen as manifestations of bourgeois self-assertion, disregarding the good of society as a whole. Similarly, fascism was viewed simply as a form of racial self-assertion. It was believed that the contradictions

of Western individualism, class warfare, and racial antagonism could only be resolved by pursuing the traditional Japanese ideal of the family-state or family society, in which everyone worked together, not necessarily as equals, for the good of the whole, and in which leadership represented only a higher form of self-sacrificing service to the nation. Japan's mission in the modern world, they thought, was to assert this ideal throughout the world and rescue the West from the dilemma of unrestrained individualism.

Japan's defeat in World War II completely shattered the belief in Japan's national destiny. Charges of Japanese oppression and atrocities in occupied territories were a shock to those who had believed idealistically in Japan's divine mission to lead the Asian peoples. Disillusionment brought a trend toward the abandonment of traditional ideas and practices in favor of whatever seemed to represent the superior civilization of the Western conqueror. The teaching of Confucian ethics disappeared almost entirely, and a wave of indiscriminate "Americanization" followed. But in response to this there also arose a strong undercurrent of reaction and resentment in the form of anti-Americanism. The least significant element in this was overtly traditionalistic or from the right. Most often, among intellectuals and the young it manifested itself in "Marxist" protests against "bourgeois capitalism" and "Western imperialism." In a period when Marxism was disintegrating as a philosophy, its authority shattered by de-Stalinization and the Moscow-Peking cleavage, and its economic dogmas undermined by practical failures and pragmatic compromises, left-wing movements and idealistic socialism continued to attract the young as essentially a form of moral protest against all forms of social evil.

Among a much larger segment of the population, however, traditional attitudes reasserted themselves in another guise: the new religions. As in the case of left-wing movements, wherein traditional values provided the moral dynamism behind ostensibly modern and revolutionary drives, the "new religions" have drawn heavily on the traditional sources of religious emotion (chant, song, and dance) and aesthetic appeal, while insisting on their "newness" and ultramodernity. One of their most important functions has been to provide a new sense of community in the midst of rapid processes of social change and urbanization. Strong group feeling, group therapy, and mutual help are found in those of a predominantly social character. Another common element is faith healing. The more political sects

stress vaguely moralistic and rationalistic solutions for the complex problems of an advanced industrial society. Some are quite internationalistic: making claims to universality and exhibiting a kind of rotarian ecumenicism—while others are intensely nationalistic. In the latter case, however, no clear political trend is apparent. National self-interest in foreign policy is conceived in the form of neutralism and little sense of world mission or national destiny is evident.

In the meantime economic prosperity has brought a boom in domestic tourism. More people than ever visit shrines and temples on holiday and the affluence of religious centers is manifested in the repair and rebuilding of many historic shrines long neglected even in the earlier period of ultranationalism. The more serious adherents of such faiths, aware of the commercialism that has invaded religious institutions, are disturbed over its implications and are pondering deeply the true role of religion in modern life.

XI

*The Art of**Japan*

BY

HUGO MUNSTERBERG

and performed their rites mainly outside the confines of organized religion.

One of the most interesting of these careers in folk religion is the female shaman, or shamaness, who was sought for various special requests but especially for communicating with the dead. Ichiro Hori describes the role of the shamaness in Japanese history and the clearly defined steps for training as a shamaness. The thorough training and symbolic initiation attest to the seriousness of the occupation.

Shamans are found in many cultures, and their religious services to the community vary considerably. However, in Japan as elsewhere, the shaman is generally believed to possess the superhuman ability to leave the body and go to the other world. This means that he (or she) can even talk with the dead. In some parts of Japan, especially in the north, shamanesses still exist, and their "ministry" is much more serious than the rather playful seances of the West.

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Shamanesses in Japan

Japanese shamanism has persisted throughout a long period of religious history without having been institutionalized in a strict sense, though it commingled with Shinto and Buddhism and underwent many changes.

The leading role in Japanese shamanism has been played by shamanesses. . . . In Japanese, the general term for a shamanic figure is *miko*, which means explicitly a shamaness. There is no special term for a male shaman. . . .

According to the classification of Taro Nakayama, Japanese shamanesses are divided into two categories. The first category he calls the *Kan-nagi*, which include the *miko*, who belong to the imperial court and Shinto shrines. These shamanesses retain roles only in certain formal Shinto rituals but have lost almost all their original functions and techniques. The second category is the *Kuchiyose*, including shamanesses who settle down in their own villages or migrate from village to village in compliance with the requests of the residents. They utilize techniques of trance and engage in telepathy, mediumship, divination, and fortunetelling, employing flexible but predictable forms. Their most frequently requested service is to communicate with guardian deities or spirits or with wraiths and spirits of the dead. The most popular name for the first category is *miko* or *jinja-miko* (Shinto shrine shamaness); for the second category, *ichiko* or *sato-miko* (city or village shamaness). The shamanesses of these two categories are semi-institutionalized. The *jinja-*

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miko (or *kan-nagi*, using Nakayama's term) are usually chosen from among daughters of hereditary families of Shinto priests or of hereditary parishioners of particular Shinto shrines. By contrast, the *sato-miko* (or *kuchiyose-miko*, or *ichiko*, using Nakayama's term) become shamanesses through certain initiatory ordeals and training directed by a teacher or elders.

I must add a third category, which includes both male and female shamans, in order to clarify the shamanic elements of contemporary religious phenomena in Japan, such as the newly arisen religions, and the functions of many independent sorcerers and magicians. I shall call this category the *yussha* (magician) or *gyoja* (practitioner) system—hat is, the magico-shamanic system. The Japanese *yussha* and *gyoja* are chosen by their guardian spirit, deity, or ancestral shaman. . . .

Until the beginning of the twentieth century there were many wandering shamanesses (*aruki-miko*) in rural society and even in Yedo (the former name of Tokyo), Kyoto, and Osaka. They were called *ichiko*, *ezusa-miko* as well as *Shinano-miko*, *Agata-miko* and *nono*. *Shinano* (the old name of present-day Nagano prefecture) and *Agata* (a country name in Nagano prefecture) are from the sites of the largest headquarters of these wandering shamanesses. They visited from village to village with their territories immediately following the harvest in autumn, traveling in groups of five or six. Their main functions were: communication with spirits, deities, wraiths, and the dead; divination and fortunetelling through trance; prayers for recovery of the sick; and purification of new buildings, wells, iveries, and hearths. They might give their own fetish to a parishioner's child so that he would grow up in good health; sometimes they held memorial services for a parishioner's ancestors. Some were said to have practiced clandestine prostitution, especially in the urban societies.

These wandering shamanesses have almost disappeared in present-day Japan, though many settled village shamanesses belonging to the *kuchiyose* system are still active in various provinces, notably in the *kuchiyose* (eastern) area of Honshu. In the Tohoku area they are not genuine shamanesses in the strict sense, not having been elected or chosen by their deity or spirit but rather, voluntarily or involuntarily, adopted by an elder shamaness master and bound to her in the relationship of master and apprentice. In the Tohoku area almost all the shamanesses are blind. Blind girls in this area have usually become the apprentices of the older shamanesses who lived near their native village. The novices undergo training disciplines such as cold-water ablution, purification, fasting, abstinence, and observance of various taboos. They are taught the techniques of trance, of communication with supernatural beings or spirits of the dead, and of divination and fortunetelling; they also learn the melody and intonation used in the chanting of prayers, magic formulas, and liturgies, and the narratives and ballads called *aimon*. After three to five years' training, they become full-fledged shamanesses through the completion of initiatory ordeals and an initiation ceremony which includes the use of symbols of death and resurrection.

When the novice has completed her training, she is initiated into the shamanic mysteries by her mistress. Before the initiation ceremony, as preliminary preparation, the novice puts on a white robe called the death dress and sits face to face with her mistress on three rice bags. Several shamaness elders assist in the ceremony. They chant and utter the names of deities, buddhas, and several magic formulas in unison with the mistress and the novice. In this mystical atmosphere, the novice's joined hands begin to tremble slightly. Observing carefully the novice's change of behavior, the mistress perceives the climax of inspiration and suddenly cries in a loud voice to the novice: "What is the name of the deity that possessed you?" Immediately the novice answers: "So-and-so deity (or sometimes buddha or bodhisattva) possessed me." When the mistress hears this answer, she throws a large rice cake at the novice, and the novice falls off the bags and faints. Sometimes the elders dash water on top of the novice's head 3,333 times at a wellside or at the seashore. The novice in a dead faint is warmed by the body heat of shamaness elders who share her bed, and finally regains consciousness. The novice is said to be newborn and is then initiated. She changes her white death dress to a colorful so-called wedding dress and performs the ceremony of the traditional wedding toast by exchanging nine cups of *sake* with her mistress. This exchange of cups is the most important part of the traditional wedding ceremony of Japan. After ritually practicing the first communication with her ancestral spirit and other spirits of the dead, the novice is given a large feast to certify her proficiency as an independent shamaness. Her mistress, shamaness elders, parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, and friends are all invited. After a week or ten days' isolation at her tutelary shrine as a rite of recovery, or *agrégation*, she becomes a professional shamaness....

The shamanesses of the Tohoku area are usually requested to communicate with and transmit the will of superhuman beings and the spirits of the dead. They are often invited to visit a family in mourning, because the first communication with the spirit of the newly dead person is thought to be an important part of the funeral. They call it the *hotoke-no-kuchiake* ("opening of the dead person's mouth"). *Hotoke* originally meant "Buddha," but in colloquial speech now indicates any dead person. Especially when a person has met an unnatural death or died in difficult childbirth, the ceremony of opening the dead person's mouth is the most important service for the salvation of his soul. The relatives collect a sum of money and rice from seven neighboring villages and invite a shamaness to perform a special and complicated service called *nana-kura-yose* (séance together with the seven divine seas)....

One interesting custom is the large gathering of shamanesses held once a year, on the day of *Jizo-bon*, at several sacred mountains and temples in northern Honshu, such as Mount Osore, the Jizo hall in Kanagi-machi in Aomori prefecture, Hachiyō-ji temple in Fukushima prefecture. *Jizo-bon* is a festival for the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, whose Japanese name is *Jizo* (Ti-tsang in Chinese). *Jizo*, popular bodhisattva among the Japanese since

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the tenth century, is believed to be a savior of spirits of the dead, who otherwise would be suffering tortures in hell, as well as a guardian deity of children.

Mount Osore is a dormant volcano and is believed to be the Other World by the inhabitants of the area, who believe that there is a terrestrial paradise as well as a terrestrial hell on the mountain top with its crater lake. From early morning on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar—the festival day of *Jizo*—old men and women from various villages climb Mount Osore carrying special rice dumplings to offer at each of the stone statues of *Jizo* and stupas and mounds along the mountain paths. Since ancient times the common people have believed that dead children are required to heap up small stones to build a stupa, goaded by the ogres of hell, if they died without having offered any service to their parents or community. Accordingly, any woman who has lost a child heaps small stones in the shape of a stupa as a substitute for her child on this day.

More than thirty shamanesses also climb the mountain for the festival and occupy a special corner near the main hall of the temple in order to fulfill the worshippers' requests. Old women who have been deprived of husband, son, daughter, or grandchild ask one of the shamanesses to communicate with this spirit as a part of the indispensable memorial service. They sit on the ground around a shamaness and listen with rapt attention to the voice of the dead relative who speaks through the shamaness. From morning till midnight these shamanesses fall into trances to communicate with departed spirits upon each request. A shamaness's income on that day alone might amount to more than eight thousand yen (approximately twenty-five dollars) at the rate of a hundred (about thirty cents) for each request. Each trance for a single spirit continues for five or ten minutes on the festival day; on ordinary days, it lasts an hour or more.

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Japanese folk tales

Folk tales are an important part of the Japanese cultural heritage, a popular mixing of religious beliefs and historical events with local color and pride in antiquity. As handed down in Japan, folk tales represent a dimension of culture not so prominent in the West; the tales are not really "believed in," as with religious scriptures, yet they are treasures much more than the Western fairy tales.