

After Prophecy Fails: A Reappraisal of a Japanese Case

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This paper describes a Japanese sect headed by a prophet-founder and the reactions of its members when an earthquake prophesied by him failed to materialize. The founder unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide. The Japanese circumstances are compared with accounts of similar cases of unfulfilled prophecies in the United States which are reported to have led to greater faith among the prophets' followers, a reaction that has been interpreted on the basis of a theory of cognitive dissonance. Similarities and differences in the Japanese and American cases are examined.

On 14 June 1974 Japanese newspapers reported that the leader of a new religious sect in Osaka had prophesied that an earthquake would occur on 18 June at 8:00 a.m. Members of his group were reported to have distributed among the citizens of Osaka 100,000 copies of each of two leaflets concerning the prophesied earthquake and urged them to take refuge outside urban areas. The second leaflet gave instructions regarding safety and the procuring of water. The prophecy failed to come true and shortly thereafter the prophet attempted to commit suicide. The event was given much attention by the Japanese media.

From the viewpoint of the theory of cognitive dissonance, this sect arouses interest because it bears a certain similarity to earlier American examples of "doomsday cults." Basing their interpretation upon historical data on several doomsday cults and upon one modern case study, Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) hold that among these sects false prophecies led to deeper faith and more enthusiastic proselytizing by sect members. In a later case study, Hardyck and

Braden (1962) similarly report greater faith in sect beliefs after the prophecy failed to materialize, but no signs of fervor in proselytizing. The purpose of this paper is to pursue the subject by supplementing an earlier paper (Sanada and Norbeck 1975) in which attention focused mainly on the founder of this sect.

THE SECT

Ichigen no Miya, "The Shrine of Fundamental Truth," is one of many small sects that have arisen in Japan since the end of World War II. It was chartered by the national government in 1950 as Dainichi Dairitsu Genri Kyō. The old name of the sect was changed to the present one in 1964. The founder himself claims that it was founded on the basis of revelation. But in the *Shūkyō nenkan* [Religions yearbook] published by the Ministry of Education's Agency for Cultural Affairs, it is classified as one of 145 Shinto organizations under the rubric of "New Sect Shinto" because the founder had been a disciple of Shimizu Kōgen, a heterodox preacher of Tenrikyō, which until 1970 was classified as one of the Shinto sects.

The teachings of the sect are essentially an eclectic mixture of traditional ideas drawn from Shintoism, Buddhism, and folklore, and of recent occultism, such as the belief in space men in flying saucers and the belief in supernatural spoon-bending power. In fact, the founder openly advocates syncretism. Not only does he explicitly allow prospective converts to bring their own faiths when joining his group, but he also urges the followers to learn about Buddha and Jesus Christ. Using a rather trite expression common in Japanese new religions, he states that there are various paths to attain the summit of religion. Sometimes he says that Ichigen no Miya has already transcended all other religions, by which he seems to mean that his doctrine is a unification of all religions.

The founder and leader of this group, Motoki Isamu (he changed his first name five times; he is now Motoki Noritaka), was born in 1905. Before his retirement from secular life, he served for several years as president of a small company in Osaka that manufactured simple metal products. According to his own statement, he owned six different firms in Osaka. He seems to have been a successful businessman. He claims that he acquired divine abilities through three years of ascetic life in "steep mountains and deep valleys." He cures illnesses by blowing his breath on undergarments and sleeping garments that are brought to him. He is also able to prophesy, which he performs by speaking in tongues that he later translates into Japanese. According to his own claims, his accurate prophecies include the eruption of a volcano in Hokkaido, the end of the Vietnam War, and a tornado in the United States. He even claims that he once participated in a gathering of holy spirits in Yakushima, a gathering held once every three hundred years.

The headquarters of Ichigen no Miya is a group of structures and gardens covering about eighty acres on a hill called Takayasuyama in Yao-shi, Osaka. Its principal buildings are: a shrine containing the founder's living room and bedroom, a business office, a kitchen-dining room, and two dormitories. The parklike grounds are extensively planted with azaleas and contain many cages with birds from various parts of the world and several carp ponds. Maintenance of the headquarters is done by a resident group of male and female members of the sect, who at the time of the prophesied earthquake numbered twenty-one persons. These people receive no salaries, though small allowances for personal expenses are given to young members who have no other income. Three non-resident members spend almost every weekend working without remuneration at the headquarters. The men and women residing at the headquarters lead a simple ascetic life that includes much physical labor.

They work from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. maintaining the grounds, taking care of the birds, and growing vegetables for their own consumption. As a group, these members may be identified socially as coming from the lower middle class of the nation. Except for two members who suffer from physical handicaps and a woman who is quite old, their membership in the sect is a matter of commitment by personal choice and not a means of providing a livelihood. One member formerly owned and operated a small restaurant, which he sold in order to move to the sect headquarters. Two young men are college graduates, presumably well qualified for gainful employment elsewhere. Meals are very simple, consisting of agricultural products grown by the members and purchased staples limited principally to rice and inexpensive kinds of fish.

Regular ceremonies of the group consist of one rite, called *jōrei*, "purification of the spirit." This rite is conducted daily from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the shrine. The rite begins with all those in attendance clapping their hands five times and reciting words of thanksgiving in unison. In this rite, the founder usually addresses the convocation by speaking in tongues, which he later translates into Japanese. These glossolalic utterances, which appear to consist of meaningless syllables with a rhythmic pattern, are referred to by the founder as *genko*, "the original language." A "paragraph" in the original language, for example, is as follows: "zerai fasteryekufan. ra-zeafufan, futin, yu-u-spon, zatsukuyu, fa-iran." During the utterance, the behavior of the founder seems calm and normal rather than ecstatic, as is the behavior of all attendants. The behavior of the founder may be called possession, since he refers to a "holy spirit" or a "soul of language" that "possesses" him when he speaks the original language, but this possession involves no marked departure from ordinary behavior beyond the performance of glossolalia. Sometimes in the rite, the founder gives a

lecture on doctrine, morals, or national and international issues without speaking in tongues. All sessions are recorded on tape. Three sessions per month are selected, transcribed, and published in their monthly organ.

According to official statistics (Bunkachō 1974), the membership of Ichigen no Miya numbered 5,613 as of the end of 1973. In general, membership figures are based on the reply of each religious body to the annual official inquiry. As the compilers of these statistics point out, most Japanese religious organizations usually include in these numbers the adherents' family members as well as persons who have long since dropped out. The actual figure in the case of Ichigen no Miya is no exception. It was undoubtedly much smaller, probably not exceeding several hundred people. About seventy non-resident members took refuge at the headquarters on 18 June, the day predicted for the disaster. Non-resident members unable to go to the headquarters were instructed to proceed to certain other areas or to take precautions at home.

THE PROPHECY

The founder states that the holy spirit started to warn him twenty years earlier that 1974 would be the year of a terrible disaster. On 1 January 1974 the holy spirit informed him that the disaster would be an earthquake and that it would happen in June 1974. The spirit would not, however, reveal the day or hour at that time because doing so "would cause people to worry excessively." On 10 June the holy spirit informed the founder that the quake would occur "before or after" 8:00 a.m. on 18 June. On 13 June, following the founder's instructions, sect members began to pitch tents at the headquarters for refugees from the more densely settled urban areas of Osaka. The digging of wells to provide drinking water "for the citizens of Osaka" also began on this date.

Distribution of the warning leaflets began on the same day and was done mostly by members of the headquarters group, several of whom were arrested for disturbing the peace and interrogated by the police. On 16 June refugees began to arrive at the headquarters. Some were family groups with children, of whom those of school age were, of course, committing truancy. Several tons of rice and a truckload of medications for later dispensation to the needy were purchased by the sect. One member stated that he had sold his furniture because it would be destroyed by the earthquake. Another stated that he had used ¥250,000 of his own money to purchase canned goods for the refugees. One old woman among the non-resident members was reported to be ill at her home as a result of having attempted to commit suicide by inhaling gas because her husband had opposed her desire to flee to the headquarters.

THE DAY OF THE PROPHESED EARTHQUAKE

Following their leader's instructions, the ninety persons at the headquarters ate an early, hurried breakfast on 18 June and gathered at 7:00 a.m. at a square near the shrine. There they heard via transistor radio a telephone interview with their leader that was being conducted by a newscaster from an Osaka radio station. In response to the question as to what he would do if his prophecy failed, the founder replied, "I shall take the blame and dissolve the sect." When the interview ended, the founder emerged from the shrine building, wearing boots and trousers instead of the traditional Japanese style clothing he usually wore, and joined the group in the square. The founder addressed the assembled people, urging them to be unselfish and to aid as many people as the facilities at the headquarters could accommodate. After his address ended, over forty people remained in the square while the others went to places on the sect grounds which the founder had designated as safe. Before

8:00 he left the group and entered the shrine building.

The catastrophic hour of 8:00 arrived, but nothing happened. The assembled people remained calm and continued to wait. At about 8:30 a number of people gathered at the door of the shrine building. At 8:50 two members inside the building, shouting tearfully "We are saved!", opened the door to admit a few of the members waiting outside. It became clear afterwards that they meant that they had found the leader before he succeeded in killing himself by piercing his abdomen with a sword. They had to call an ambulance, but the telephone inside the building was jammed with inquiries from nonmembers. The members had drained the gasoline from all of their cars following the founder's instructions. Two men came out the door, fetched a small gasoline container, and ran to the parking area. At 9:15 an ambulance arrived. The men entered the shrine and carried the founder to the vehicle on a stretcher. At 9:30 two police cars arrived and the police began their investigation. The two members of the headquarters group informed the refugees that the warning had been cancelled.

Soon thereafter about ten refugees left, saying they had work to do elsewhere. The thirty people remaining in the square seemed to expect some explanation as to why no earthquake had occurred. They speculated among themselves. One young woman stated that the earthquake might come on the following day because the founder had said the time would be "before or after" eight o'clock. All the men in the headquarters group had by this time gone by car to the hospital. About 11:00, the women residing at the headquarters returned to their routine of feeding the caged birds and other tasks, including the preparation of lunch. After lunch, the remaining non-resident members began to leave, and nearly all had gone by 5:00. The headquarters group remained.

THE AFTERMATH

While the founder was recovering under medical care, some information about the attitude of the sect members was provided by reports in newspapers and weekly magazines of interviews with three members. Ignoring the fact that the attempted suicide occurred about thirty minutes after the predicted time of the quake, one man surmised that the founder had prevented the earthquake by offering himself as a sacrifice. Another man reasoned that their leader attempted to commit suicide because he had failed as a prophet, but that the failure was caused by his misunderstanding the message in "the original language." The third interviewee held that the suicidal attempt was an expression of gratitude to the holy spirit for withholding the earthquake.

The founder returned to the sect headquarters on 17 July and resumed leadership of the sect ritual that evening. The following quotation is a part of the revelation during the rite: "On 18 June at 8:30 a.m. God accepted the founder's life. Some people would speak of him as a living corpse, but God will make use of his spirit for ever.... All of you are failures. Why? You thought that if God's prophecy did not materialize, you would be so scorned and slandered by people that you would fall into total ruin. So you looked with eagerness for a disaster to occur. That was your wish, but it was not the will of God. If you had had the magnanimity to desire that everybody be saved, you could have been content with slander or any treatment you received. Above all else you should have prayed to God that everybody be saved without adversity.... Even Jesus Christ was nailed at and stoned because he had ventured to make a great prophecy and then prevented its materialization himself. He was forced to take refuge for a while. But the people who had stoned him afterwards came to know the truth and realized their error. You have to experience hardships in order to be sanctified. However severely you may

be stoned or abused, you should endure to the end and wait till the time is ripe. All of you whose hearts are open, become bamboo. Be bamboo that endures under the ground and waits for spring. You will gain everlasting grace." The revelation hints that the founder succeeded in preventing the earthquake by praying against it and by sacrificing his life. The failure of the prophecy is not attributed to his misinterpretation of the original language.

A letter from a society of psychics in Tokyo asked, however, if the problem did not lie in the discrepancy between the Gregorian calendar, the official calendar of modern Japan, and the ancient lunar calendar, which is ordinarily used today only in some supernatural contexts. In 1974, the 18th of June by the lunar calendar corresponded to 5 August by the modern calendar. On 4 August an earthquake did occur in Saitama Prefecture. The group at the headquarters then became uneasy, speculating that the earthquake might strike Osaka on the following day, the 5th. But the founder gave them no instructions to prepare for such an event, and accordingly they did nothing. When the quake failed to materialize on 5 August, they reasoned that it had already been prevented by the founder's sacrificial attempt to commit suicide.

On 6 August, the fifteenth anniversary of the date when the founder first came to the site of the present sect headquarters, he called people together for a special ceremony. Members were notified well beforehand that he would at this time make an important announcement. At the appointed time, about 180 members gathered in the small shrine and on its steps. After the ceremony, the founder announced that he had decided to dissolve the sect, because he had committed himself to do so if his prophecy failed. He explained that this course of action would make him and his sect seem reasonable to other people. Referring to his attempted suicide, he stated that he had already vin-

dicated himself before God and that his life had been given to God. He informed his audience that he would sell his own property in order to return to them the money they had donated for the sect's use, but that the repayment might be as little as one-fourth of the amount given. He stated that he was attempting to persuade the prefectural government of Osaka and a private firm to accept the headquarters property as a gift and to maintain it as a public park. Since the sect's property was to be given away as a gift, he urged the people to clean the grounds so that not a single weed remained. Concluding his address, he said that being a religious juridical person is not necessary in order to help people and that in future he would help them by practicing palm-reading in the streets. All members of the audience appeared to remain calm. Those who lived elsewhere soon left.

On 25 September the founder visited the governor of Osaka and proposed the donation of the headquarters grounds. It seemed that the sect would soon be disbanded. Nevertheless, in a series of negotiations between the sect and the prefectural government it turned out that the sect was requesting the government to purchase their piece of land in urban Osaka in return for the donation. The price offered was one billion yen. The negotiations failed. The sect has not been disbanded. According to the official explanation offered by the sect, the founder has not yet received any messages from the holy spirit with regard to the dissolution of the sect. One of the members states that, although it has been firmly decided that the sect will be disbanded in the near future, "the near future may mean 1990 or even 2000."

The founder did not give any further explanation about the failure of his prophecy for the time being, stating that nobody would understand the truth because it had been a "transaction" between God and himself. At last in October 1974, the founder gave a detailed description of what

had happened inside the shrine on 18 June. He spoke as follows: "After I had cut my abdomen and carotid artery..., I lay on my side with my head toward the altar. I could see my own body as if it belonged to somebody else. I thought that I had managed to get out of my body at last, and I was greatly surprised to find that my body had changed itself into the islands of Japan and that a fire had broken out at its center. Then I knew that God had transferred the cataclysm to my own body. I thanked God and felt a bliss I had never experienced before." In this explanation, he claims that he played an active role in preventing the earthquake, ignoring the fact that he attempted suicide about thirty minutes after the predicted time of its occurrence. On another occasion, he stated that he attempted suicide after having found that the earthquake had been withheld by the cosmic spirit. This explanation seems reasonable with respect to the time. The founder continues to explain the failure of his prophecy in both ways, while the active members seem to cling to the former explanation. One of them, trying to dissolve the time contradiction, contends that timekeeping in the spiritual world is different from that in this world and is beyond human understanding. Furthermore, shifting the focus of attention, they interpret the fact that a person who cut his belly so deep as to let the bowels rush out but still remains alive in this real world as no less than a miracle.

The founder, in order to buttress the sect's doctrines following the failure of his prophecy, has started to lay stress on another matter, namely, the original language. He repeatedly insists that the faith of the sect has already been vindicated by the fact that some members who were "pure in heart" had received the gift of the original language in June 1974 before the predicted date of disaster and that nearly all the devout members have started to speak the original language since July 1974. Now it is not only the

founder who speaks in tongues during their daily rite. Almost all the attendants speak in tongues by turns, though the founder will never allow the members to translate. The founder, or the holy spirit that possesses him, has recently started to warn of the imminent Judgement of God and the imminent ruin of the human race – though this time the date is not specified. According to him, at the next Judgement, it will not be “Noah’s Ark” but flying saucers that will save the faithful, the original language being “a reserve seat ticket on the flying saucers.” In other words, the ability to speak the original language is proof of being worthy to be among God’s elect. He encourages the remaining members to be more ascetic in order to be included among the members who have received the “soul of language.”

By the end of 1974, the members of Ichigen no Miya had sharply decreased. The founder himself admitted that the number of *onagai* or “requests for his magical cure” had fallen off greatly. In response to the query from the Agency of Cultural Affairs the sect was obliged to reply that its membership numbered 1,762. Although this figure is not fully reliable, the remaining members recognized that there had been a marked decline during the year because, as noted before, Ichigen no Miya had claimed a membership of 5,613 persons in 1973. This kind of slump must have been very painful for them.

During this time, the founder was by no means indifferent to propagation. Toward the end of 1974, he encouraged adherents to make known their religious experiences to others. Two members residing at the headquarters and two non-resident members wrote about their experience of this-worldly benefits for their monthly organ. On one occasion the founder expressed his heroic resolve to commit himself to an evangelistic task, stating that he would try to proselytize, even if he was hooted at, beaten, or downtrodden. But in another context, he stated that he would not prose-

lytize for his belief because of his principle that "those who come are welcome, but those who go away are not regretted." In fact, he has made no attempt to prevent old-time members from dropping out. He sometimes says that he will allow them time "to search their soul." At other times he says that God purges the riffraff periodically.

The remaining active, devout members, who numbered about twenty toward the end of 1974, appear to have become inflamed with zeal for their faith. But in contrast to the energy they once devoted to the task of distributing warning leaflets as well as constructing shelters and digging wells for others, they have dedicated little or no energy to the propagation of their faith.

DISCUSSION

Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956, p. 4) formulate five conditions under which their theory of cognitive dissonance is applicable to the failure of a prophecy:

1. A belief must be held with deep conviction and it must have some relevance to action, that is, to what the believer does or how he behaves.
2. The person holding the belief must have committed himself to it, that is, for the sake of his belief, he must have taken some important action that is difficult to undo. In general, the more important such actions are, and the more difficult they are to undo, the greater is the individual's commitment to the belief.
3. The belief must be sufficiently specific and sufficiently concerned with the real world that events may unequivocally refute the belief.
4. Such undeniable disconfirmatory evidence must occur and must be recognized by the individual holding the belief.
5. The individual believer must have social support. It is unlikely that one isolated believer could withstand the

kind of disconfirming evidence we have specified. If, however, the believer is a member of a group of convinced persons who can support one another, we would expect the belief to be maintained and the believers to attempt to proselytize or to persuade nonmembers that the belief is correct.

In other words, if someone holds a firm belief, he cannot discard it despite the failure of a prophecy based on it, even though he cannot ignore a fact that contradicts his belief. He cannot resolve this dissonance himself, and he must seek a mode of cognition consonant with his faith. Under such circumstances, the most convenient mode of cognition conceivable for him is the fact that others share his belief. On this basis, he tries to make his belief known to others and to convert them to it.

Before comparing the reactions of the members of Ichigen no Miya with American cases, we need to point out the dual strata of its membership. The group consists of two strata of members. The majority of the members enrolled may be called "clientele." They are troubled by secular problems; for the most part they suffer from physical illnesses or handicaps. From time to time they visit the founder, or send somebody to him, to ask him to exorcise their troubles. It is a common observation among the students of Japanese new religions that these people drift from one sect to another, seeking founders with a high reputation for divine abilities. The founder of Ichigen no Miya himself regards them as "common believers" who seek "personal happiness" or "this-worldly benefits." A number of them do attend the special ceremonies and donate some money. According to the founder's own statement, the total monetary donations amount to 2,000 million yen. But they do not attend the daily rite conducted at the headquarters, for the shrine cannot accommodate 1,762 people, much less 5,613. In short, they are loosely connected with the

sect. In contrast to them, the active members may be called "apprentices." These members assiduously attend the daily rite. They seek to follow the example of the founder as an ascetic who "helps people with his divine ability." They try to acquire psychic powers through asceticism under the founder's instruction. They spend some time at night practicing what they call *gyō*, that is, sitting in contemplation on a flat stone, called *zenza* or "a seat for *zen*." This is something that ordinary members never do. Thus they may be called subleaders.

It should be noted that Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter are especially interested in the reactions of ordinary members to rebuttal, because the historical data they reviewed indicated that several religious movements grew more active to some extent after evidence confuting their beliefs was manifested. They hypothesize that this growth may have been brought about by the proselytizing activities of ordinary members. In this connection, they state: "Leaders of a social movement may, after all, have motives other than simply their conviction that they have the truth. Should the movement disintegrate, they would lose prestige or other rewards" (1956, p. 29).

In this case, the majority of the members, or what the founder calls "common believers," are ordinary members in the strict sense of the word. They showed no signs of fervor in proselytizing and simply dropped out of the sect. This is predictable from the five conditions cited above. The first four conditions may be said to have been met by them, or at least by about seventy of them, for they had taken refuge with their children and their valuables, believing that the quake would occur. But they did not satisfy the fifth condition, since they had been left alone for a while because of the founder's hospitalization. For these people the founder's divine ability became suspect because of his failure. And, after all, their commitment to the faith may

not have been so deep, as is suggested by the founder himself.

As for the active members, who constantly attend the daily rite, it is apparent from the preceding descriptive data that they satisfy the first four conditions listed above. These people give clear evidence of a deep conviction that has relevance to their own actions and of a commitment to their belief. This evidence includes ascetic, self-sacrificing devotion to the prophet and to his instructions. They did indeed commit themselves to their belief in ways that are difficult to undo, as is evidenced by such behavior as working at the headquarters without remuneration, distributing leaflets, and making preparations for the earthquake, including the expenditure of much money and physical effort.

The fifth condition, that the individual follower must have social support, was also met by the active members. They form a fictive family. In fact, the founder is called "oyasama," which literally translates as "honorable parent." One of the active members stated after the failure of the prophecy that they should thereafter support the aged founder as his dutiful children. Their affiliation with the sect involves strong emotional ties to the founder, ties that are not easily or willingly broken and that transcend their belief system. These men and women continued to live at the headquarters or frequent there for the purpose of performing their customary roles. They successfully sought among themselves explanations consonant with their faith. Their explanations as to why the prophecy failed to materialize expressed no lack of faith in the reliability of their prophet. Incidentally, one member, who explained the failure by surmising that the founder had misinterpreted the original language, cannot be included among the active believers. He was regarded as a member of high standing by nonmembers because he had been affiliated with the sect for a long time and had donated a considerable piece

of land. Consequently, he was interviewed by several reporters for the press. But he neither attends the rite regularly nor works at the headquarters, although in his reply to several reporters he claimed that he had spent 30 million yen in preparation for the earthquake, which included the construction of an earthquake-proof building and the payment of severance allowances to the workers discharged from his own firm. At any rate, the active members who had long lived and worked in close association had previously provided one another with social support, and they continued to do so. They had ample time to discuss their faith with each other while working together at the headquarters. The act of speaking in tongues among these members during their daily rite seemingly served to produce a sentiment of communion. Therefore, they should have been motivated to proselytize. Furthermore, if we are allowed to regard them as leaders rather than as devoted but ordinary members, then they must have had motives other than that of dissonance reduction.

A cursory glance at the descriptive data presented above may seem to permit the conclusion that the active members of this group increased their fervor in proselytizing after the prophecy failed to materialize. This conclusion, replicating the findings of Festinger and others, might seem warranted by the fact that some of them wrote of their personal experiences, expressing how deeply they were in debt to the founder as well as to the holy spirits they worship — something they had never done before. At this point, however, we must scrutinize what is regarded by Festinger and others as evidence of increase in proselytizing zeal. It is a fact that the chief members of “the Lake City group” started to welcome reporters as well as visitors and to talk about their faith, whereas before the predicted date of disaster they had been secretive about the content of their prophecy and hostile to the press. In contrast, Ichigen no

Miya was open to outsiders from the beginning. They disseminated the message of warning from the holy spirit, talked freely with nonmembers about their belief, and willingly responded to phone calls from the press and from worried or jeering outsiders before the predicted date of disaster. After the failure of the prophecy, the active members have never committed themselves to activities for acquiring new converts to their belief, such as street preaching or visiting door to door to distribute leaflets – activities in which they had engaged previously in order to warn nonmembers of the impending disaster. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the active members of Ichigen no Miya “simply maintained the same conviction after disconfirmation as they had before and neither fell away from the movement nor increased their proselytizing” (Festinger et al. 1956, p. 30). That is, the belief was maintained without any social support from new converts. For this reason, it is necessary to compare this group with a case that failed to replicate the pattern.

Hardyck and Braden (1962) report that although members of the American group they observed clung to their belief when the prophecy failed and even seemed to increase in fervor, the members of this sect did not attempt to proselytize for their belief. This difference from the findings of Festinger and others, they suggest, is attributable to two factors: (1) the degree of social support available within the group, and (2) the amount of ridicule the group received. With regard to the first factor, they point out that “the True Word group” they personally observed had accumulated about five years of experience in working together and even spent forty-two days in underground shelters in close association, while “the Lake City group” had not been formed until just five months before the predicted date of cataclysm. In addition, almost all the members of “the True Word group” trusted in their prophet’s divine ability,

while the two chief psychics of "the Lake City group" sometimes received mutually inconsistent messages. In other words, Hardyck and Braden suggest that the members of "the True Word group" might have been able to gain more social support from within their group, and therefore suffered less dissonance. Referring to the second factor, they point out that "the True Word group" received a great deal of supportive comment from outsiders, whereas members of "the Lake City group" were cruelly ridiculed. Thus dissonance experienced by members of "the True Word group" may not have been very strong.

With regard to the first factor, no repetition is needed here. The active members of Ichigen no Miya are similar to "the True Word group" members in this respect. As for the second factor, they were in a situation similar to the one encountered by "the Lake City group." The responses of the outside world toward Ichigen no Miya were cold from 13 June, the day they started to distribute their leaflets. Osaka prefectural police regarded the leaflets as expressions of a malignant, scientifically insupportable rumor and mobilized men to detect the rumormonger. The chief of Yao police station summoned the founder to question him on his motives. The police understood that the leaflet distribution had been carried out not for fun but from a sincere religious motive, but they blamed him for arousing undue anxiety among the citizens and demanded that he cease distributing the leaflets at once. After the prophet attempted to commit suicide, the public press treated the news with harsh criticism or banter. One of the major newspapers commented, "Is the craze for 'supernatural power' or 'great prophecies' the same today as it was in times past? Or is it that nowadays there are more warmly dressed and well fed people who, for want of anything better to do, amuse themselves with superstitions?" One weekly magazine mocked the founder, saying, "Like the great founder that he is,

in cutting the belly, he successfully missed the vital point.” Another magazine reported, “Alas, like a loincloth that slips and fails to cover the privy parts, his prophecy slipped so he cut his belly.” The founder, for his part, declares that reports on the event of 18 June by the various newspapers and weekly magazines are erroneous and that the press disseminated nothing but wild speculation. But despite the claim that he is really a man of exceptional powers, the founder has now come to be known to outsiders as a scare-monger without any reliable spiritual power. Furthermore, according to the founder’s own statement, the founder of another new religious sect visited him after his release from the hospital and told him that he was bewitched by an evil spirit. This man urged him to join his group so that he would be able to learn “the proper original language.” Thus the members of Ichigen no Miya had dissonance to reduce, as did the members of “the Lake City Group.”

Therefore, a conclusion along the lines suggested by Hardyck and Braden is that proselytizing did not occur in this case because the dissonance due to the confuting evidence plus the dissonance due to the ridicule they received were reduced by the social support available within the small group. This conclusion has an important implication. It allows us to suspect that in the past there may have been a number of sects that experienced prophecy-failure but did not augment their proselytizing activity and thus did not find their way into archives.

The active members in this case did increase in fervor, but in their own way. They began to spend more time sitting in contemplation on stones at night. They became more secluded from the outside world and more autistic. It seems that they had to find cognitions consonant with their faith within themselves if they were to find them at all.

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