

# Christianity as a New Religion

## Charisma, Minor Founders, and Indigenous Movements

Mark R. MULLINS

JAPANESE HISTORY provides rich data for the study of the transplantation and indigenization of religions. This process can be documented and analyzed with reference to several religious traditions in vastly different socio-historical circumstances. The Buddhist tradition was introduced to Japan via China and Korea from the late sixth century, Roman Catholic Christianity was transplanted in the sixteenth century, and various Protestant denominations began missionary efforts from the latter half of the nineteenth century after Japan reopened its doors to the West.

Considerable attention has been given to the study of early Protestant missionary efforts and the subsequent transplantation of churches from Europe and North America. By contrast, comparatively little is known regarding the many indigenous and independent movements that broke away from the mission churches. The reference to Christianity as a New Religion in the title of this paper is not because it is a foreign-born religion and a relatively recent arrival to Japan. Rather, “newness” is related primarily to the fact that indigenous Christian movements broke away from the mission churches and resemble New Religions in so many respects. These movements have charismatic founders and involve significant innovations in beliefs, rituals, and social organization. In this sense, therefore, these Christian-related movements may be viewed as “New Religions” in the Japanese context.

### CHURCH-SECT THEORY AND THE STUDY OF INDIGENIZATION

Over the course of a century scores of Protestant mission organizations from Europe and North America established churches in Japan. During this same period nativistic reactions to these imported expressions of Christianity eventually led

to the creation of a number of movements or sects organizationally independent of the mission churches. Japanese scholars refer to many of these movements as Christian-related New Religions, and several such groups were included in the massive reference work on New Religions published in 1990.<sup>1</sup> These groups, however, do not fit easily into typologies of Japanese New Religions because of their indebtedness to the established Christian traditions. For this reason, in fact, SHIMAZONO (1992: 72) recently suggested that a separate typology was needed to adequately deal with Christian-related New Religions in Japan.

Adapting church-sect theory, figure 1 provides a comparative typological framework for understanding Christian religious organizations in Japan according to three criteria: basic orientation, self-definition, and degree of indigenization. This typology is hardly intended to provide a definitive statement, but it should clarify in a new way the complex relationship between imported and indigenous religions. Readers will note that some groups included in this figure are often regarded as heretical by established or dominant churches. They are included here because this typology is based on an interpretative sociology of religion, rather than theological criteria, and priority is given to the actors' definition of the situation. As BERGER and KELLNER (1981: 40) explain, sociological concepts "must relate to the typifications that are already operative in the situation being studied." Therefore, groups that define themselves in Christian terms or in continuity with the Christian tradition are also included in this typology.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish indigenous movements from the imported denominations and independent evangelical churches in terms of their basic orientation or dominant reference group. The basic orientation of a Christian religious body in Japan tends to be either "foreign-oriented" or "native-oriented." Transplanted religious organizations, including the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran denominations, and the United Church of Christ (the largest Protestant religious body in Japan that incorporates Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches) are still "foreign-oriented" in many respects and therefore located at the non-indigenous end of the continuum. These denominations still receive foreign missionaries and their understanding of theological ortho-

FIGURE 1  
TYPOLOGY OF INDIGENIZATION

Self-Definition (Claims to Legitimacy)	Degree of Change	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
	←—————→ Self-support, self-control, self-propagation	
Monopolistic (Sectarian)	Native-Oriented	Foreign-Oriented
	Spirit of Jesus Church Original Gospel	Mormons Jehovah's Witnesses Baptist International Mission
Pluralistic (Denominational)	Non-Church (Mukyōkai) Christ Heart Church The Way	United Church of Christ Roman Catholic Church Anglican Church Lutheran Church* Baptist Church* Reformed Church
* There are a number of Lutheran and Baptist churches in Japan that represent various European (German, Norwegian, Finnish) and North American traditions.		

doxy and models for church polity and organization are taken primarily from Western churches.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, there are scores of independent evangelical groups in Japan whose dominant reference group tends to be American evangelicalism. While these independent groups are indigenous in terms of the standard criteria of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation, their “foreign-orientation” is still apparent in their literature, tracts, and theology, which is largely “translated” materials from North America.

Indigenous movements, on the other hand, are “native-oriented” and do not measure their perception of religious truth by the standards of orthodoxy defined by Western theology or ancient church councils. According to most indigenous movements, God’s self-revelation did not end with the canon of the Christian Scriptures. God continues to reveal deeper truths to those who are open to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. While some of these movements operate with the closed canon (the Non-Church movement, for example), many share a common belief that God continues to reveal

new truths hidden from or as yet ungrasped by Western churches. Most of these groups produce their own literature, including monthly or quarterly magazines, editions of the Bible (sometimes specially edited versions), and collections of the founder's writings and lectures. If not revealing radically new truths, indigenous movements at least share in common the conviction that God is calling them to develop Japanese cultural expressions of the Christian faith that are at least as legitimate as the national churches and denominational forms that have emerged over centuries in Europe and North America.

Although indigenous movements share many common features, they can be distinguished in terms of their self-understanding and claims to legitimacy. Religious organizations can be distinguished by whether they claim to be "uniquely legitimate," thus denying the legitimacy claims of other groups, or "collegially legitimate," thus accepting the claims of other groups. Several movements, for example, are placed in the denominational category (for want of a better term) because they make only modest claims for themselves.<sup>3</sup> The Non-Church movement (Mukyōkai), the Way (Dōkai), and Christ Heart Church (Kirisuto Shinshū Kyōdan), for example, only claim to be Japanese expressions of Christianity, not the exclusive path to salvation.

Two groups are placed in the category of indigenous sect because of their tendency to emphasize exclusive truth claims. The Spirit of Jesus Church (Iesu no Mitama Kyōkai) and the Original Gospel (Genshi Fukuin, sometimes referred to as Makuya or the Tabernacle movement), for example, both regard Western churches and Christian traditions as inadequate and distortions of New Testament Christianity. While some of the publications produced by Makuya (including the writings of the founder, Teshima Ikurō) seem rather collegial and inclusive, both groups claim to have recovered authentic Christianity before it was corrupted by Hellenistic culture. This movement has cultivated "ecumenical relations" with many Jewish organizations in an effort to recover the Hebrew roots of Christianity. It continues to sponsor annual pilgrimages to Israel and sends leaders to study Hebrew on a kibbutz, but it has maintained a sectarian stance toward other Christian churches.

無教会 荷会  
基督心宗教団

イエス之御霊教会  
原始福音  
幕屋

## SOCIAL BACKGROUND TO THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

It has been noted in many different contexts that foreign missionaries often fail to distinguish their national culture from the religious faith they seek to transplant. Protestant missionaries to Japan have been no exception. Transplanting the faith has usually included denominational distinctives and loyalties, church polity, forms of leadership, and church architecture, all born in very different socio-cultural situations. Summarizing this tendency in the early period of Protestant mission to Japan, KITAGAWA (1961: 40–41) explains that:

More often than not, European and American missionaries attempted to Westernize as well as Christianize the Japanese people and culture. Japanese converts were made to feel, consciously or unconsciously, that to decide for Christ also implied the total surrender of their souls to the missionaries. The task of evangelism was interpreted by most missionaries as transplanting *in toto* the church in the West on Japanese soil, including the ugly features of denominationalism—an unhappy assumption, indeed.

After Japanese converts were introduced to the Scriptures and went on to pursue serious theological study, many realized that it was possible to distinguish the Christian faith and biblical tradition from the theology, church polity, and cultural values of American and European missionaries.

As native leaders gained a more critical understanding of the Christian tradition and became aware of the significant differences in doctrine and practice among the mission churches, they began to assert more confidently their own ideas as equals of their missionary teachers. The fact that numerous denominations were competing for converts on Japanese soil (each with their own doctrinal peculiarities and forms of government) indicated to many native leaders that there might be room for Japanese interpretations and cultural expressions of Christianity. Missionaries, however, found it difficult to receive instruction from their Japanese disciples. UCHIMURA Kanzō (1916: 233), the founder of Mukyōkai (Non-Church) and one of the most articulate critics of the mission churches, expressed the sentiments of many Japanese Christians in the following passage:

Missionaries come to us to patronize us, to exercise lordship over us, in a word, to “convert” us; *not* to become our equals and friends, certainly not to become our servants and wash our feet.... We believe that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; but unless through God’s grace we save ourselves, we shall not be saved—certainly not by foreign churches and missionaries.<sup>4</sup> [Emphasis in the original]

It is important to recognize that indigenous Christian movements were not merely the result of personality conflicts and power struggles with foreign missionaries. By the late Meiji period the social climate had become decidedly anti-Western and nationalistic, after an earlier phase of worshipping everything Western (*seiyō sūhai*). In his study of attitudes toward modernization in Japan, Marius JANSEN (1965: 5) notes that “the responses of representative and leading Japanese were necessarily conditioned by the climate of opinion within which they moved.” This statement is equally valid with respect to Japanese Christian leaders active during this period. The establishment of State Shinto and revival of Confucianism, on the one hand, were accompanied by parallel developments among Japanese Christians. Many Christians exchanged the displacement theology of the missionaries for a fulfillment theology in an effort to recover and legitimate the cultural riches of native traditions. The approach of missionaries came to be regarded by many indigenous leaders as “smelling of butter” (*batākusai*) or “smelling of the West” (*seiyōkusai*). This identification of Christianity with the West had become a stumbling block to propagation and many leaders became convinced that “Japanization” or “de-Westernization” was the only way forward. Independent indigenous movements became the most extreme examples of this process. While nationalism and conflict with missionaries were important “precipitating factors” that clarify the “timing” of these movements, we must consider other factors to explain their “content.”

#### THE ENABLING FACTOR: IMPORTED AND NATIVE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS

In referring to indigenous Christian movements as New Religions I do not intend to suggest that they are created ex-nihilo. New Religions do not appear out of thin air: they draw

FIGURE 2  
SELECTED MINOR FOUNDERS AND INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

MINOR FOUNDER	MOVEMENT	DOMINANT WESTERN INFLUENCES	DOMINANT NATIVE INFLUENCES
Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930)	Non-Church (1901)	William S. Clark, Professor and lay Christian, Sapporo Agricultural College, Amherst	Confucianism, Bushidō
Matsumura Kaiseki (1859–1939)	Church of Japan (1907), The Way (1912)	James Ballagh, Dutch Reformed Church, Yokohama Band, New Theology, Darwinism	Neo-Confucianism (Yōmeigaku), Shinto
Kawai Shinsui (1867–1962)	Christ Heart Church (1927)	Tōhoku Gakuin College (German Reformed Church)	Confucianism, Buddhism, mountain asceticism, Kyōkenjutsu
Murai Jun (1897–1970)	Spirit of Jesus Church (1941)	Aoyama Gakuin College (Methodism), True Jesus Church, Taiwan, Unitarian Pentecostalism	Folk religious traditions and the ancestor cult
Teshima Ikuro (1910–1970)	Original Gospel or Tabernacle of Christ (1948)	Zionism, Jewish Traditions	Uchimura Kanzō and Non-Church principles, folk religious traditions, mountain asceticism
Nakahara Masao (1948– )	Okinawa Christian Evangelical Center (1977)	Plymouth Brethren Missionary influence, Dispensationalism	Okinawan shamanism

on “vital elements of the religious heritage” (EARHART 1989: 236). Consequently, we must give attention to this “enabling factor” in the development of New Religions. In the Japanese context, New Religions draw from a vast reservoir of beliefs and practices related to ancestors, the spirit world, Buddhist, Shinto, and Confucian traditions. Similarly, the charismatic founders of Christian movements may have unusual insights and be creative individuals, but they do not start from scratch when organizing a new church or movement. They draw on the imported teachings, rituals, and organizational forms of the mission churches, as well as on various indigenous religious traditions. Native and exogenous elements are creatively adapted by minor founders and form the basis for new organizations. The religious experiences of these leaders and their unique combination of foreign and indigenous elements give rise to new formulations of belief-systems, new rituals and

forms of religious practice, sometimes an enlarged canon, and even new forms of social organization.

Notwithstanding the popular myth of the homogeneous Japanese, it is necessary for us to recognize the cultural diversity of this receiving society in order to understand these new indigenous forms of Christianity. Religious diversity (folk religion, Shinto, Buddhist sects, Confucianism) and competing group loyalties (rival clans, social classes, and regions) provided the complex matrix for Japan's encounter with Christianity. The various reinterpretations of Christianity result from this complex interaction between imported foreign elements and diverse native traditions. Figure 2 highlights the dominant foreign and native influences on selected minor founders and movements.<sup>5</sup> Only through in-depth case studies will we be able to unravel and assess the actual impact of various religious traditions on founders and adherents. Here we have only briefly indicated that many different streams of foreign influence (reformed theology, pentecostalism, dispensationalism, unitarianism) have been mixed in unique ways with indigenous elements to produce new expressions of Christianity.

#### **MINOR FOUNDERS, INNOVATION, AND CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY**

The anti-Western social climate, growing nationalism, and dissatisfaction of Japanese Christians with Western missionaries are important precipitating factors that illuminate the development of indigenous Christian movements. These factors alone, however, do not provide an adequate explanation for the birth of these movements. Like other Japanese New Religions, indigenous Christian movements represent much more than social crisis and "reaction" to imported Christianity. The break with Western mission churches and the creation of viable alternative forms required strong charismatic leaders. "The innovative decision of the founder," EARHART (1989: 236) points out, "cannot be completely subsumed by either social factors or the influence of prior religious factors." How are we to understand the charismatic leaders who play such a key role in the development of indigenous movements? WEBER (1964: 46) made no distinction between charismatic individuals who renewed an old religion and those who founded new religions, but subsumed

both under the category of prophet. Werner STARK (1970: 84), however, drew attention to the need for another concept to deal with innovations within a religious tradition:

In order to describe Paul of Tarsus correctly, we need some such concept as that of a minor founder. In Paul, we behold an archetype which was to be re-incarnated many times in the history of the Church. Behind him, there appear such figures as Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Bernard, Ignatius, Alphonso, and many others. They were all minor founders, revolutionaries and reformers and even reactionaries (goers back to the original) rolled into one, and certainly not routinizers in the sense of Kipling and Weber.

Although Stark's comments are limited to the role of minor founders in the history of European or Western Christianity, this category seems equally relevant to understanding the development of Christianity in non-Western contexts.

More recently, Anthony BLASI has drawn attention to the category of "minor founder" again in his study of early Christianity, *Making Charisma: The Social Construction of Paul's Public Image* (1991). Arguing that Paul was much more than a "routinizer" of the charisma of Jesus, BLASI (14–15) explains that he "...was a 'minor founder,' a founder who resembles major founders in so far as he was an agent of change but who was more conservative than they insofar as he maintained a basic continuity with what had come before him. Paul did something new, but he did it within an already recognizable Christian subculture." Similarly, the charismatic leaders of indigenous Christian movements also create something new, but in recognizable continuity with an existing religious tradition. Minor founders in Japan departed from the religious traditions imported by foreign missionaries in significant ways, but at the same time passed the Christian heritage on to people in this new cultural context. Perhaps we could summarize by saying that a "minor founder" is a charismatic individual who gives birth to a new religious movement in an effort to address the needs of a new type of member, while at the same time conceptualizing the movement as an extension, elaboration, or fulfillment of an existing religious tradition.

From a sociological perspective, "charisma" and "charismatic authority" can only be understood in terms of the social relationship between a "leader" and "followers." Individuals

can claim to have direct contact with God and to have received new revelations, but a movement will not be born if the new message does not meet the needs and aspirations of a significant audience. The message must have some appeal and followers must be convinced that these particular individuals have a special connection with the sacred. The break with an existing tradition, in this case with imported mission churches, requires a powerful figure whose personhood authenticates the claims. While founders and movements vary in the degree to which they reject existing traditions and introduce new elements, at the very least they claim to have direct access to the sacred and to have an independent basis of religious authority. UCHIMURA Kanzō (1920: 592), for example, one of the strongest advocates for an indigenous Christianity and founder of Mukyōkai, claimed:

Japanese Christianity is not a Christianity peculiar to Japanese. **It is Christianity received by Japanese directly from God without any foreign intermediary; no more, no less.** In this sense, there is German Christianity, English Christianity, Scotch Christianity, American Christianity, etc; and in this sense, there will be, and already is, Japanese Christianity. “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.” The spirit of Japan inspired by the Almighty is Japanese Christianity. It is free, independent, original and productive, as true Christianity always is.

No man was ever saved by other men’s faith, and no nation will ever be saved by other nations’ religion. Neither American Christianity nor Anglican faith, be it the best of the kind, will ever save Japan. Only Japanese Christianity will save Japan and the Japanese. (Emphasis mine)

The charismatic authority of minor founders is based on their convincing claims to direct contact with the sacred, sometimes additional revelations, and their persuasive personalities. It is also not uncommon to find claims of miraculous healings in the early stages of these movements. Matsumura, Kawai, Murai, Teshima, and Nakahara, for example, five of the six founders included in figure 2, each claimed to have either experienced personal healing or been used by God to heal others. During subsequent phases of the institutionalization process, the charismatic authority of these minor founders is reconfirmed and routinized. In some cases, the teachings and writings of the founder came to be viewed with

equal or similar authority to the Bible. Even if religious groups distinguish in principle between the canon (Bible) and the founder's writings, in practice they tend to function with similar authority in the community. Religious services normally include readings from the Bible as well as numerous references to the founder's teachings, example, or quotations from his or her writings. Just as Christians normally view the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' interpretations of these ancient texts as "sacred," members of indigenous Christian movements tend to merge the Scriptures and their founder's interpretation.

These minor founders sometimes even become the object of veneration and special ritual respect. Kawai Shinsui, for example, the founder of Kirisuto Shinshū Kyōdan (Christ Heart Church) is paid ritual respect with bows to his photograph at the beginning and end of each service. His writings are also quoted as frequently as the Judeo-Christian scriptures. On a number of occasions I have even heard the deceased founder addressed in prayer ("Chichinaru Kamisama, Iesu Kirisuto, Kawai Shinsui Sensei" ["Father God, Jesus Christ, Kawai Shinsui ..."]), as though he has become a part of the Holy Trinity in the minds of some followers. This tendency to venerate minor founders has a long history, as NAKAMURA Hajime (1964: 454) explains with reference to Japanese Buddhism:

One result of this absolute devotion to a specific person is that the faithful of the various Japanese sects are extreme in the veneration with which they acknowledge the founder of the sect and perform religious ceremonies around him as the nucleus. **One has absolute faith in the master as well as in the Buddha, without feeling that there is the slightest contradiction.** It is not that one pays less attention to the Buddha, but the idea is perhaps that a profound faith in the master and devotion to the Buddha have the same significance. [Emphasis mine]

In much the same way, members of Christ Heart Church appear to experience no cognitive conflict in "believing in Jesus Christ" and venerating the founder, Kawai Shinsui, who made the salvific significance of Christ real to them through his teaching and example.

What distinguishes indigenous Christian movements from other New Religions is the fact that minor founders link their

new insights to the existing religious tradition. This can take the form of “fulfillment” or “restorationist” explanations. In fulfillment explanations, the teaching of these founders is understood as the additional truth Jesus promised his disciples (“when the Spirit comes he will guide you into all truth”). The new insight fulfills or even supersedes the understanding of Christianity found in the Western churches. In restorationist explanations, Western churches are viewed as degenerate, and indigenous movements assert that they are only recovering or restoring important truths once held by the early church. No matter how severely these movements are assessed or criticized by mission churches or the dominant orthodoxy, in one form or another each regards itself in continuity with the Christian religion or, at the very least, more fully expressing the teachings and intention of Jesus.

#### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The foregoing discussion can be regarded as no more than the preliminary spade work needed for constructing a more adequate understanding of indigenous Christianity. In concluding this essay, I would like to suggest areas for future study and comparative research.

First of all, we still need a basic inventory and documentation of indigenous Christian movements. There are at least six other movements I am aware of about which almost nothing is known. Case studies of these movements are needed before we can move on to more reliable generalizations regarding these types of movements in Japan. While each movement developed out of a particular set of circumstances (specific foreign influences, personality conflicts, and indigenous proclivities), comparative analysis of these groups will likely reveal a number of common features. Religious authority in major Buddhist sects in Japan, for example, is transmitted through father-son blood lineage.<sup>6</sup> To what extent have Christian movements adopted or adapted this traditional pattern of leadership succession? So far I have discovered a similar pattern in at least three movements. While not always passed from father to son, religious authority tends to stay in the family of the founder. In the Spirit of Jesus Church, authority was transferred to the founder’s wife and, according to my informants, his daughter is in line to be the next bishop. Christ Heart Church is now in its third generation of leader-

ship. The founder's authority was first transferred to his son and recently to his grandson. Matsumura Kaiseki and his wife were childless, but adopted a son to take over as head of The Way. The adopted son's wife, and then daughter, succeeded him as head (*kaichō*) of this religious body. It seems, therefore, that the imported organizational forms and authority structures (representative forms of government) are not readily adopted by Japanese if they have a choice. This is just one area that deserves additional consideration in future comparative studies.

The relationship between charismatic leadership, indigenization, and numerical growth also needs to be addressed. According to Robert Lee's *Stranger in the Land: A Study of the Church in Japan* (1967), the Westernness of Christianity is a major obstacle to numerical growth. Without indigenization, he argues, significant growth cannot be expected. All of the movements in figure 2 experienced significant growth at one time in their history, but today most are barely holding their own or are in a state of rapid decline. The current membership of these groups varies widely, but ranges from several hundred to twenty or thirty thousand.

Mukyōkai, for example, was estimated to have between fifty and one hundred thousand members in the late 1950s,<sup>7</sup> but two decades later Caldarola's study (1979) placed the membership at about 35,000. A follow-up study is needed, but my guess is that Mukyōkai has continued to experience decline since then. In the late 1970s, the Original Gospel consisted of close to 60,000 members, organized into some 500 home Bible-study groups around the country. In 1990, however, I was informed by a leader in the Tokyo office that there were only 150 groups meeting nationwide and approximately 25,000 subscribers to their magazine *Seimei no hikari* (Light of Life). The headquarters of the Spirit of Jesus Church reports that it has over 300 ministers, close to 200 churches, and a total membership of 420,000. The membership figure is clearly inflated and cannot be accepted at face value. This church practices baptism for the dead, more specifically baptism for the ancestors of living members. Some observers have been overheard suggesting rather cynically that this is guaranteed to be one of the fastest methods of church growth! Although still a generous figure, the active membership of 23,283 reported by church headquarters provides us with a

more accurate picture of the actual strength of this movement. Christ Heart Church has declined to a membership of approximately 1,300 and adherents to The Way number less than 300 nationwide. Nakahara's Okinawa Christian Evangelical Center, the most recently organized group included in figure 2, is currently in a phase of rapid growth and has baptized over one thousand adherents in just over a decade.

A study of growth and decline patterns in these movements raises the question of whether groups can dig their own graves through "over-indigenization." Comparative studies of religious movements indicates that those maintaining a "medium level of tension" with the larger society are the ones that are growing. STARK (1987: 16) explains that a "movement must maintain a substantial sense of difference and considerable tension with the environment if it is to prosper. Without significant differences from the conventional faith(s) a movement lacks a basis for successful conversion." In the case of some indigenous Christian movements in Japan, they have become so indigenous that there is minimal tension and ineffective mobilization of members for recruitment activities. This is clearly the case with Christ Heart Church and The Way. While these two movements experienced significant growth under charismatic founders, the routinized indigenous forms have not provided an adequate foundation for long-term growth. It is also undeniable that the conservative Confucian character of movements organized decades ago appear rather austere to contemporary Japanese. "What will give one generation a sense of unifying tradition," YINGER (1970: 112) correctly notes, "may alienate parts of another generation who have been subjected to different social and cultural influences."

Finally, we need to consider the role and significance of indigenous Christian movements for the larger Japanese society. To what extent, in other words, do these movements represent significant social change? In his study of the New Religion Gedatsu-Kai, for example, EARHART (1989) discovered that in spite of the new elements introduced by the founder it was in many respects a revitalization movement of traditional Japanese religiosity, or a "return to the center." In fact, involvement in Gedatsu-kai leads to increased participation in traditional religious practices, such as worship before

a *kamidana* (Shinto god shelf) and *butsudan* (Buddhist altar), and visits to the local Shinto shrine and to the family Buddhist parish temple. Similarly, HARDACRE's (1984) study of Reiyūkai Kyōdan revealed that it attempted to revitalize the traditional extended family (*ie*) and ancestor veneration, and that the role of women was largely confined to domestic and religious duties. Only a serious study of the teachings of indigenous Christian movements, an analysis of social relations, gender roles and status, and a survey of the actual practices of members will reveal whether they represent alternative cultural values and social roles, or in fact reinforce traditional Confucian ideals. We may also discover that many indigenous Christian movements represent primarily "a return to the center" rather than significant social change.

#### NOTES

\* A longer version of this article appears in *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2/1 (Winter), 1993. Mark R. Mullins is Associate Professor at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo and Yokohama.

<sup>1</sup> See INOUE Nobutaka, et al., eds., *Shinshūkyō jiten* [Encyclopedia of the New Religions], Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1990. This indispensable volume contains over a thousand pages of information on New Religions in Japan.

<sup>2</sup> Readers should keep in mind that this framework is based on a continuum. I am not arguing that indigenization has not occurred in these foreign-oriented religious bodies, only that the process has proceeded more slowly than in indigenous movements with minor founders. See REID (1991) for studies of indigenization within the United Church of Christ in Japan, NISHIYAMA (1985) on the Anglican Church, and DOERNER (1977) on the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>3</sup> I have used the denominational category in order to emphasize the self-understanding of these groups, even though they lack the characteristics normally associated with a denomination in the West (i.e., central bureaucracy, complex organizational structure, and a formal system for ministerial training and ordination).

<sup>4</sup> UCHIMURA's (1886: 159) pessimism regarding the prospects of Western Christianity was expressed as early as 1886, when he wrote: "Which of the nineteen different Christian denominations which are now engaged in evangelizing Japan is to gain the strongest foot-hold there? In our view, —and let us express this view with the most hearty sympathy toward the earnest endeavors of the missionaries of all the denominations—none of them. One reason is that mere transplanting

of anything exotic is never known on Japanese soil. Be it a political, scientific, or social matter, before it can be acclimatized in Japan, it must pass through great modifications in the hands of the Japanese.”

<sup>5</sup> Several of the founders and movements in figure 2 have already been the focus of serious field research. CALDAROLA (1979) provided a helpful study of Uchimura and the Non-Church movement, considering in particular the role of Confucianism and the samurai code (Bushidō) in this reinterpretation of Christianity. It is not coincidental that Uchimura, whose Non-Church movement became the inspiration for many other groups, was introduced to the Christian faith by a lay Christian, Dr. Clark, who was not preoccupied with the ecclesiastical concerns of most missionaries. Caldarola also analyzed the influence of folk religion and shamanism on Teshima’s application of non-church principles in the formation of the Original Gospel or Makuya. In an earlier paper (MULLINS 1990) I sketched the development of the Spirit of Jesus Church (Iesu no Mitama Kyōkai) and considered the dual influence of imported Pentecostalism and dispensationalism, as well as the indigenous ancestor cult on Murai’s reformulation of Christianity. Most recently, IKEGAMI (1991) has provided a major study of Nakahara Masao and the Okinawa Christian Evangelical Center established in 1977; this is now a rapidly growing movement combining Plymouth Brethren Christianity and Okinawan shamanism.

Christ Heart Church and the Way are the focus of my current research. The founders, Kawai Shinsui and Matsumura Kaiseki, were both educated in mission schools dominated by the Reformed tradition. After disagreements with missionaries on a variety of matters, they began independent churches and drew on various Asian religious traditions in their interpretations of Christianity. The creed of Christ Heart Church, for example, includes the following confession: “We believe the ways of the ancient saints are not destroyed but rather fulfilled by the coming of Christ.” For Kawai Shinsui, the “ancient saints” included Buddha, Confucius, Mencius, and others. Zen meditation and Kyōkenjutsu (another influential form of bodily training and discipline) also greatly influenced the religious practice of both Kawai and his followers. Matsumura Kaiseki initially organized the Nihon Kyōkai (Church of Japan) in order to create a Japanese Christianity independent of Western control. He became widely known as an advocate of Confucian Christianity, but eventually claimed to be establishing a “New Religion” of the eternal way. While Neo-Confucianism provided the primary categories of Matsumura’s perspective, the Christian teaching of a personal God and Jesus’ teaching of neighborly love were key elements of “the way.”

<sup>6</sup> See FUJII (1986: 164) for a discussion of transmission of leadership and authority in Japanese Buddhist sects.

<sup>7</sup> This is the estimate provided by HOWES (1957: 125) and is based on attendance at Bible study meetings and lectures as well as subscriptions to Mukyōkai magazines.