Shamanism and Shintoism

Our country is begotten of the Divine Couple, The Divine Male and the Divine Female.
Therefore the mountains, rivers, trees and herbs have their own divine names. . . .
Thus in every cloud of dust or in each particle of the natural elements there is deity.
In what the eye can reach, what the ear can hear, what the hands and feet can feel,
We are everywhere—in amazement—met with Divinity

—Kitabatake-Chikafusal

1. Notes on the T•enty-One Shinto Shrines, 14rh century Japanese text.

I. SHAMANISM

Shamanism Defined

THROUGHOUT THE world one finds a form of religion called shamanism. The shaman is one who specializes in a technique inducing a state of trance, during which his soul leaves his body, either ascending to heaven or descending to the underworld realm of the dead. According to Mircea Eliade, the world-famous authority on such matters, shamanism is based on archaic techniques of ectasy of which we have evidence from paleolithic times onward.' However, there is a clear distinction between the primary religious experience of the shaman and the ideology, mythology and rites attached to his ecstasy. The interpretations and rituals are a product of the general religious environment—Taoist, Shinto, Buddhist or Christian—and may differ decidedly. But shamans, in the strict sense, are a particular class of privileged beings, ecstatics, with certain basic experiences in common to be found in a variety of cultures.

In Eliade's opinion, it is important to differentiate between shamanic ecstasy and spirit-possession. Both the shaman and the "possessed" establish contact with the spiritual world. But the shaman controls his spirits rather than being controlled by them. He is able to communicate with the dead, the angels, demons and "nature spirits" without thereby becoming their helpless instrument. Besides being a medium, the shaman is in some sense the master of the spirit world. He has become a specialist in the human soul because, unlike ordinary men, he sees it, knows its form and can describe its destiny.

Shamans are gifted persons who stand out in their society by virtue of the fact that they possess a religious calling. In their lives are clear signs of a mystical crisis which sets them apart. This difference from ordinary men manifests itself in a temporary derangement of one's psychological equilibrium. Yet this experience of a psyche in crisis should not be confused with aberrant psychic behavior patterns and mental diseases which it may re-

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M. Eliade, *Shamanism,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1964.

semble superficially. As maturity approaches, the future shaman will begin to have visions, prefer to wander in solitude rather than take part in the social routine, or sing in his sleep. He may become subject to fits of frenzy, lose consciousness, withdraw into the forest, feed on the bark of trees, wound himself with a knife or fling himself into the water. [2] Sometimes the spirit of a dead shaman appears to him in a dream and orders him to be his successor. In numerous cases and in very different parts of the world, the future shaman first attracts public notice because he manifests a considerable degree of alleged mental aberration and unconventional behavior. [3]

However, anthropologists have discovered the basic contrast between the psychopathological victim and the shaman. The shaman differs from the epileptic or victim of mental illness because he can deliberately enter into trance. Like the sick man, the ecstatic is projected onto a different plane of existence where he experiences the solitude, danger and hostility of the surrounding world. But unlike the sick, he is one who has been cured. As a result, the shaman displays a remarkably keen intelligence, a perfectly supple body and almost unbounded energy. He has experienced through mystical "death and resurrection" the reality of the sacred—with far greater intensity than the rest of his community. As Eliade concludes, the shamans incarnate the sacred because they live it to the fullest. [4]

Myths of shamanic initiation vary. The beliefs of the *Yakut—a* Siberian version of shamanism—do nevertheless illustrate the basic stages in this process. According to the Yakut, each shaman has a Bird-of-Prey-Mother, a supernatural being resembling a huge bird with an iron beak, hooked claws and a long tail. This supernatural bird appears only twice: at the time of the shaman's spiritual birth and his death. When someone is ready to become a shaman, the bird suddenly shows up, pecks his body to pieces, grabs his soul, carries it to the world of the dead and hangs it on a pine

p. 16.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 23-32.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 32.

branch. After the soul reaches maturity, the bird carries it back to earth, restores the dismembered body to life and the shaman wakes up as if he had been in deep sleep. [5] Typically, shamanic initiation involves death, a trip to the underworld and rebirth.

Shamanist Cosmology

The shaman passes from one cosmic region to another: from earth to heaven or from this world to the underworld of the dead. According to shamanic descriptions, the universe has three levels—the sky, the earth and the lower region. These three cosmic regions (and their subdivisions) can be traversed because they are linked together by a central axis. As the shamans say, they fly up or down through the same hole by which the gods descend or devils climb up. All this means is that communication is possible between terrestrial and supernatural realms. By means of the shaman, the sacred can break through to be manifested on our level.

For some Central Asian tribes, the road to the sky runs through the Pole Star." In fact, shamans believe there is a *Cosmic Pillar* at the heart of the universe which facilitates travel between heaven, earth and the underworld. In archaic cultures, such a channel between different realms of the creation explains how offerings can be made to the gods. For shamans, however, this world pillar presents their means for a *personal ascent* to regions beyond ordinary reach.

Besides believing in a world pillar uniting the three levels of the universe, ancient shamanists speak of the Cosmic Mountain which connects the earth with the sky. Belief in the Cosmic Mountain is part of Babylonian, Indian and Far Eastern mythology. In the Babylonian ziggurat—an artificial holy mountain—is found a symbolic image of the cosmos, its seven storeys representing the seven planetary heavens. Even in early Christian circles the imagery of the holy mountain linking heaven with earth was used. It was said that Golgotha was the center of the world and the

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[5] *Ibid.* p. 36.

[6] *Ibid,* p. 263.

summit of the Cosmic Mountain: the place where Adam was created and buried, as well as the spot where the Savior shed his redeeming blood.'

Shamanic theology has also included widespread belief in a *World Tree*. This cosmic tree—like the cosmic pillar—connects the three levels of the universe. Its branches touch the sky and its roots penetrate the underworld. The World Tree expresses the sacredness of the cosmic order, its power of fertility and its continued life. As such, it becomes the Tree of Life and Immortal, ity. Among the people of Central Asia and among the far distant Germanic tribes, the Cosmic Tree has a bird at its top and a snake at its roots, symbolizing the divine and demonic aspects of the supernatural powers."

According to archaic mythology, the World Tree depicts in addition the total unity of the cosmos—the union of the divine powers of earth and heaven. The creation of the world shows a conflict between the cosmic polar principles: the feminine symbolized by the waters and the snake, the masculine (or upper region) symbolized by the sky and the bird." But the opposite and seemingly contradictory forces of yin and yang (snake and bird) are really complementary powers by which the totality of creation is produced, preserved and rejuvenated. At least in some archaic cosmologies, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is also the Tree of Immortality. By climbing it the shaman reaches heaven. This is the reason for ascending a tree in the initiation rites of shamanism among Siberian tribes and North American Indians. In a typical ceremony, the candidate uses a young birch tree, which has been stripped of its lower branches. On the trunk seven (or nine or twelve) footholds are cut. The birch symbolizes the Tree of the World, and the notches correspond to the number of heavens a man must pass through on his way to the abode of the supreme God.'"

Ibid. p. 268.

Ibid, p. 273.

[9] Ibid, p. 284. The snake, an obvious phallic symbol, is both the sign of aggressive masculinity and (as in this case) the fascination of the female.

[10] "Shamanism and Cosmology." *Ibid,* pp. 259-274.

Nostalgia for Paradise

Besides claiming to be able to communicate with the spirit world, the shaman demonstrates mankind's longing to recover the happiness of the Garden of Eden. According to Eliade, primitive religion clearly reveals man's "nostalgia for Paradise," to use his phrase. We long to return to the time when heaven was so close to the earth that it could be easily reached by climbing a tree, a vine, a ladder or a nearby mountain, as various primitive myths asserted.

According to African mythology, when men lived in Paradise they felt so near to all of creation that they understood the language of animals. Living in peace with every living thing, men found food to be abundant and within easy reach, and there was thus no need for back-breaking work. In fact, so perfect was the harmony between heaven and earth that hatred, fear and death were nonexistent. The parallels between African religion and the Genesis story are obvious. Both show us primordial man (Adam and Eve) enjoying a paradisiac state of perfect freedom, contentment and beatitude. Both likewise incorporate an implicit condemnation of our present condition of frustration, animosity and alienation from God."

Paradise for the archaic societies of tropical Africa or the Palestinian hill country meant four things: 1) an ideal environment in which man could easily meet the gods, 2) friendship and fellowship with animals and all creation, 3) freedom from exhausting work and 4) immortal life. Furthermore, for the Africans—as for the Hebrews—some sort of tragic Fall of man occurred in the distant past. A loss of grace deprived him of his original happiness, radically altered his original nature and created a terrible rift between heaven and earth.

The task of the shaman then is to transcend the fallen human condition and reenter the original primordial state. In primitive societies, the first step in the process is for the shaman to imitate the behavior of certain animals and endeavor to copy their language. By doing so he is supposed to meet an animal or bird, which

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" Eliade, "Nostalgia for Paradise in the Primitive Traditions," *Myths. Dreams and Mysteries.* Harper and Bros., N.Y., 1960, pp. 59-72.

in turn teaches him its language, becomes his friend and reveals to him the secrets of the universe. Becoming one with the animal creation, the shaman masters a spiritual life much richer and more basic than that available to ordinary mortals. He is blessed with the occult wisdom of the furry and feathery denizens of the cosmos. He recovers man's original kinship with all the forces of nature. Not until the shaman enjoys intimacy with animals, it is felt, can he possess the freedom and bliss which are necessary prerequisites for his mystical journey. Friendship with the animals takes him out of the general condition of "fallen" men and enables him to cross the frontier separating us from Paradise.

In Malaya this shamanic communion with animals takes an extraordinary form. The shaman begins his séance by evoking the spirit of the tiger. According to a western observer, the Malay shaman in effect turns himself into that jungle creature. He runs on all fours and roars. Also like a tigress licking her cubs, the shaman licks for a long time the body of a patient who has come to be healed. Losing consciousness of his own human personality, the shaman incarnates a tiger spirit. Among the Malays, it is believed that when the shaman dies he becomes a tiger at the end of seven days." Consequently, one who seeks shamanic gifts of clairvoyance, spirit healing and ecstasy seeks to be possessed by the tiger spirit, who will serve as his guardian and guide in the perilous journey beyond the earth, bestowing its blessings and granting supernatural powers.

Less extreme examples of the paradisiac kinship of man and animals have been preserved in the Judeo-Christian tradition. For example, in Isaiah's picture of the Messianic age to come, the wolf will dwell with the lamb and the poisonous snake will no longer bite." Similarly, according to medieval accounts, a lion was the constant companion of St. Jerome, and St. Francis knew the language of the birds so was able to preach the gospel to them. Furthermore, in popular legends about the nativity of Jesus Christ, the animals in the manger bowed down and worshipped him as

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[12] Eliade, *Shamanism. pp.* 344-345.

[13] *Isaiah 11:6-9.*

soon as he was born of Mary.

All over the world, learning the language of animals is believed to be equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature." Being able to imitate their voices enables one to communicate with the Beyond. In the case of birds, since the bird can fly, by becoming a bird—by being "possessed" by its spirit or learning its language—one can undertake a mystical journey to the sky. By putting on a mask in the form of a bird's head or wrapping himself in an animal's fur skin, the shaman signifies his identification with the wisdom of "the wild kingdom" and the fact that he has reestablished the original situation lost at the dawn of time."

Having united with the animal world and learned its language, the shaman is equipped to make the ascent to heaven. In the experience of trance, he bridges the gulf dividing the spirit world from our own level of existence. At least for a time he abolishes the changes made in the structure of the cosmos and in the human situation caused by the Fall. When a Siberian shaman climbs the sacred birch tree he reaches the ninth heaven inhabited by the supreme God. He encounters God face to face and speaks to Him directly as man once did in Paradise. Having attained this state of the highest sort of ecstasy, the shaman describes to his audience all that he sees and all that is happening in the spirit world. His mission accomplished, he collapses exhausted, and after a short time seems to wake up from a deep sleep. He immediately greets those present as though he had just come back from a long journey.' [6]

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[14] In European folklore the owl is said to be gifted with exceptional wisdom; the crow (or raven) and the bat arc signs of the presence of evil supernatural spirits. in Asia the tortoise is the possessor of immortality and the fox is thought to be the abode of usually evil supernatural spirits. As for the serpent, among its many roles as a symbol it is believed to possess the power of immortality because it can shed its skin and replace it with another. These animals are believed to manifest powers which men no longer possess but are thought to have a longing to secure. Thus to unite with them is to rise above the human condition.

Eliade, *Ibid,* p. 99.

Eliade, *Myths. Dreams and Mysteries,* pp. 63-64. Cf. St. Paul's remark: "I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which a man may not utter" (II Cor. 12:1-4).

One more important fact should he noted. In the Genesis account, angels with flaming swords block the entrance to the Garden of Eden to keep ordinary men from returning to it. Among the shamans, one of their most notable powers is their mastery of fire. In their state of ecstasy and trance, they can walk upon fire, swallow live coals and handle red-hot iron without feeling burned.' ' Mastery of fire symbolizes the way the shaman has transcended the human condition. By being able to pass through fire he shows that he can reenter Paradise. He reestablishes communications between earth and heaven interrupted by the Fall—at least temporarily. At least for Eliade, a Roman Catholic, the shamanic experience of "nostalgia for Paradise" is akin to the longing for Eden which is seen in different cultural forms by Isaiah, Virgil, the Church Fathers and St. Francis of Assisi."

The Social Role of the Shaman

Aside from their importance as practitioners of mystical religion, the shamans fulfill an essential social role. As Eliade points out, they are used to defend the psychic integrity of the community. Theirs is the task of combatting demons, curing diseases of all kinds and protecting the tribe from enemies who resort to black magic.

The most important of these functions is the shaman's work as a demon slayer. He serves as the indispensable champion of "Light," defending the positive forces of life, health and fertility. In the eyes of his fellow tribesmen he is one of the most useful members of society—without him they would be overwhelmed by the world of darkness. Serving as a spiritual warrior in the relentless struggle against powerful demonic forces, the shaman may use a spear, bow or sword in his rites or as emblems of his vocation. He can see the spirits, meet the gods and fight the ever-present demons of sickness and death. Ordinary men are comforted knowing they are not alone and helpless in the war against invisible enemies.

The shaman fulfills a second social function in bringing back

" Cf. Leonard Feinberg, "Fire Walking in Ceylon," N.E. Hoopes and R. Peck, ed., *Edge of Awareness,* Dell, N.Y., 1966, pp. 87-95.

[18] Eliade, */bid,* p. 72.

direct and reliable information from the spirit world. Through first-hand experience he is able to explain what happens after death; during his trances and afterwards he gives detailed descriptions of what the Beyond is like. Little by little, men come to realize the true nature of the world of the dead and death itself is accepted as a "rite of passage" to a spiritual mode of being. The ultimate fear of man—his fear of death—is greatly lessened because of shamanic reports of journeys to super-terrestrial realms.'

Shamanism in the Far East

Although most scholars have concentrated on shamanism among the tribes of northern Asia, the techniques and beliefs of the shaman can be found in China, Korea and Japan as well. In China shamanism has been closely associated with Taoism—not the Taoism of philosophers like Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu but the folk Taoism of the holy man, fortune-teller and spiritual healer. During the imperial period, Chinese believed that serious sickness was caused by a flight of the soul from the body. Thus, in the event of grave illness the sorcerer was summoned to the patient's home so he could go into trance to pursue the fleeing soul, capture it and return it to its body. When someone died, a priest, friend or member of the family went up to the rooftop, displayed a fine new robe and pleaded for the soul to return home. [2]

Like the Taoist sorcerer, the shaman is one who can "fly up to heaven." Chinese said that "by means of feathers" shamans were able to leave the earth and ascend as Immortals. As a result, the Taoist holy man was appropriately designated as a "feather scholar" or a "feather guest." [3] Ecstatic dance was also involved in the

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Eliade, *Shamanism.* pp. 508-510. In this regard it is important to note that spiritualism and interest in psychic phenomena revived in the Western world about the middle of the 19th century when many felt overwhelmed by modern agnosticism, atheism and materialism. The Fox sisters' experience with mysterious table rappings in the 1840's aroused national attention and gave birth to spiritualist churches at the very time Marx was promoting dialectical materialism and Darwin was collecting evidence for his evolutionary hypothesis.

Eliade, *Shamanism,* pp. 447-448.

[3] *Ibid,* p. 450.

shaman's ascent to heaven. Once a man or woman was caught up in the frenzy of the dance, he was open to possession by spirits. Then filled with the spirit, he could rise above the earth or descend beneath it.

To prepare for this experience of ecstasy, a Chinese sorceress would purify herself with perfumed water, dress in special ceremonial robes and dance until she was exhausted. At that moment—a time of physical weariness and spiritual receptivity—the *shen* entered. Henceforth, the body was that of the sorceress, but the spirit was supernatural. In the ecstatic experience the woman provided a body through which the *shen* could speak. Such mediums were called *wu* (female) or *hih* (male).[4] As intermediaries between the natural and supernatural realms, these Chinese shamans served as healers, fortune-tellers and mediums throughout most of the nation's history.

The shamanic dance in ancient China was also felt to be intimately related to the primitive innocence of animal life. Emperor Yii the Great, who ruled about 2208 B.C. according to traditional chronology, was one of the earliest models for the shamans and shamanesses of later Chinese history. By dressing up as a bear, he "became an incarnation" of the Bear Spirit.' As primitive people believed, by donning the skin of an animal, a man was transformed into that animal. By becoming the bear, YU became greater and stronger than ordinary men: His fur robe enabled him to communicate with the deepest non-human levels of cosmic life, transcending the limitations and proprieties of humanity. By coming into sympathy with cosmic rhythms, he would achieve extra-human freedom and hence, bliss and immortality.[6]

Among the Japanese, shamanism has also been of primary importance. Even though the emperor was thought of as a divine descendent of the Sun Goddess, he was originally expected to obey

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[4] Because women rather than men were most often gifted with shamanic powers, Chinese shamanism is often called wu-ism. In prehistoric times the bearskin-masked "dancing shaman" was a man, however.

[5] Eliade, *Ibid.* p. 458.

[6] Ibid, p. 460.

the commandments of the gods communicated to him through dreams and states of ecstasy. These trances—in which he was possessed by spirits—were produced by playing the *koto* and other musical instruments. As time passed, however, the emperor shared his priestly functions with designated religious dignitaries. Still, in theory the Japanese affirmed that the charisma of the emperor depended heavily on the ability of the shamanic diviner.' According to the ancient Shinto histories, the first emperor Jinmu (circa 660 B.C.) and the tenth emperor Sujin were both closely connected with shamans. Jinmu's mother may well have been a shamaness. As for Sujin, he was assisted by two shamans: his aunt and a diviner of humble birth. A later empress, Jingo, was praised for her ability to pacify troublesome spirits. Until the introduction of Buddhism and its adoption as the state faith, Shinto had neither a regular priesthood nor a fixed ecclesiastical organization. Some priestly functions were carried out by clan heads; others were performed by shamans who had special rapport with the spirits. After the government insisted that priests in both Buddhist and Shinto shrines become de facto public officials, the Japanese masses turned for personal religion to "unauthorized" holy men, healers and mediums. Often these wandering shamans called *ubasoku* were only nominal Buddhists. That is, they used Buddhist language and told Buddhist stories while continuing the shamanic practices of the older Shinto." At this point we need merely note how deeply Shinto was rooted in shamanic soil and that this feature persisted behind the official cult of a later period. More detailed treatment of Shinto is reserved for another section.

Because Korean shamanism is not well known in the Western world yet exhibits all of the major characteristics of the faith, we shall use it as a case study. Except for minor variations, shamanism in Latin America, central Africa[9] or Polynesia resembles that to be found in Korea.

Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History,* Columbia University Press, N.Y. 1966, p. 19.

[8] *!bid,* pp. 19-45.

[9] For black versions of shamanism, see material on Haitian voodoo (i.e., Marcus Bach, *Strange Altars.* Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1952) and the new independent Christian cults of Africa.

Korean Shamanism

Although shamans in Siberia can be classified into a few distinct types, the situation is quite different in Korea. For example, there are no definite classes of Black and White shamans, whereas in north Asia there is a recognized separation between those who invoke evil spirits and those who seek the aid of benevolent ones. In Korea shamanism is practiced by *Mudangs, Paksoos* and *Pansoos.* In addition there are experts in occult wisdom: the *Chikwan* (geomancers), *Ilkwan* (selectors of favorable days), and *Yubok* (blind female fortune tellers).

The *Mudangs* represent by far the greater number of shamans and are always women. A much smaller group, the *Paksoos,* are men. The *Pansoos,* who are not shamans in the strict sense, are blind experts in divination who because of their physical handicap are believed to possess an inner eye which enables them to foresee the future. Like their Siberian counterparts, the male Paksoo wears the outer dress of a woman while the female Mudang always wears the outer dress of a man. Possibly, as has been suggested, this curious use of ceremonial garments of the opposite sex may reflect a desire to appropriate the psychic energies of both the male and female. Or perhaps the robes of the shaman are intended to reflect the androgynous nature of the godhead. If the divine contains a polarity of yin and yang, it may be fitting for human instruments of sacral power to do likewise. Almost all scholars agree that the change from normal dress has some kind of mystic significance.

Mudangs wear on their ritual garb small round iron disks—flat, shield-shaped pieces, two to five inches in diameter. Whatever the original meaning of these decorations, they are now commonly said to possess unusual mantic power. When they shamanize, the Mudangs also wield crude iron swords or three-pronged forks which are supposed to generate supernatural power. In Siberia the male shaman's robe is decorated with iron breasts and he dresses his hair like a woman.

Like Siberian seances, those held in Korea are always conducted at night. Shamanic rites—called *Koots—involve* the beating of drums and ecstatic dancing. The Mudang accompanies her

séance with blood sacrifices—often a chicken or pig. In the past, humans were also sacrificed, especially to the powerful and dangerous spirits of the sea. Pretty young girls were cast into the waves and drowned, presumably to satisfy the wild lusts of the ocean gods.' According to the Confucian historians who despised shamanism, this Korean practice was abruptly discontinued after a magistrate ordered that Mudangs be sacrificed instead of young girls.

In Korea shamanic incantations and techniques are not in any way standardized. Handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, the methods for summoning and controlling spirits vary considerably from Mudang to Mudang. Although there are several books available—often imported originally from China—there are no sacred scriptures. Occasionally during a séance ancient Buddhist charm sentences will be recited from a book entitled the *Chunsoo Kyung.* Also held in high esteem is a brief booklet called the *Okchu Kyung* or "Nine Heaven Original Controlling, Thunder Shaking Chunchon Book.'

Women who become Mudangs are ordinarily extremely sensitive individuals. Unfriendly critics say they are usually neurotic, [3] a rather harsh and unfair judgment, it would appear. New Mudangs are sometimes recruited from among the children of practicing shamanesses or from nearby female relatives. In many cases there is no transmittal of psychic powers from mother to daughter. Koreans believe that when a Mudang dies, her spirit seizes control of another person. The spirits force the new person to serve them. Often a girl becomes a Mudang quite unexpectedly, occasionally against her conscious will. However, at least unconsciously the woman must have provided an opening for the spirits to enter her. In some instances, if the Mudang has no children of her own, she adopts an orphan or employs a young servant girl whom she

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' Cf. the Mayan practice of drowning young girls in the sacred well of Chichen-itza who were said to become brides of the rain god Chac.

[2] Translated in full as an appendix to C.A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea,* Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1961, pp. 276-286.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 192.

gradually trains. If the child is of a properly nervous temperament, she may be able to receive visions after long years of apprenticeship. It would be fair to assume that such "trained" Mudangs are seldom the most reliable. For the true Mudang psychic sensitivity comes as an unexpected—or unwelcome—gift. Koreans are therefore traditionally fearful of "the falcon spirit," as it is termed, who swoops down on an unsuspecting woman much as a hawk suddenly seizes a baby chicken.

Shrines and Rites

Writing in 1900 for the magazine of the Royal Asiatic Society, a Christian missionary commented that behind the official state cult of Yi dynasty Confucianism—which was observed perfunctorily—the real, vital religion of Korea was shamanism. Twenty-five years later, another missionary correspondent for the same society noted that shamanism was still the strongest religious force in the country. In this connection it is important to recognize that shamanism retained its influence without government support, in spite of Confucian disdain and in the face of a well-financed, aggressive Christian missionary program. More significantly, shamanism did so without an organization, a trained clergy or impressive temples. Only during Queen Min's time was shamanism favored by the palace and this official patronage was of brief duration." Although condemned publicly by Confucian literati, Protestant missionaries and Western-oriented reformers, Koreans of all classes openly or covertly turned to the Mudangs for guidance in periods of stress.

Nevertheless, shaman shrines, to be found everywhere, were always small and unpretentious. Even the National Spirit Shrine (Kooksa Dang), located on Seoul's South Mountain, was so tiny it could accommodate only fifty people. When hundreds of people gathered for shamanic worship to *theSansin,* for example, services

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Queen Min (assassinated in 1895) was an ardent shamanist as well as a very remarkable woman. She elevated her favorite Mudang, Yi Chi Yong, to the rank of princess, encouraged the shamans to organize nationally so that they could be more powerful and forced the Confucian scholars to be respectful of the popular faith. This short-lived royal patronage came to a sudden halt when the queen was murdered.

were conducted on the mountain top in the open air. Mudangs hold no stated services comparable to the Sunday Bible classes or sermons of Christians. Nor are the shamanic shrines in any way visibly inspiring. Inside one may find a brightly colored red and yellow picture of the spirit, or a simple wooden tablet bearing his name, as well as wall charts inscribed with the names of spirits and deceased shamans. Ordinarily rites are held in private homes. The only impressive signs of shamanism in Korea are the great stone faces or heads called "Miryucks" (in honor of Maitreya, the Buddha-to-come) which were originally connected to Korea's pre-Buddhist faith. [5] But these no longer hold special meaning for the Mudangs.

More important than the shrine is the *Koot ,* the Mudang's ecstatic dance and trance. Besides the special robes, iron trident and sword, the shamanic ritual involves the use of a special rattle *(Pangool)* and an hour-glass drum about three feet long. A small trumpet which makes a wailing, mournful sound is used by the Mudang's assistant.

The first step of the rite involves a chicken, pig or dog being sacrificed and a meal prepared. Once the food has been placed on a small table the Mudang begins her dance to the sound of the trumpet and drum. As she leaps about, whirling around like a Sufi dervish, she calls upon the spirits to join the revelry. Often the dancing goes on all night and sometimes has to be resumed for several evenings. Finally the spirit arrives and partakes of the sacrificial food. To dispel the spirit after it has eaten, the Mudang may show it a small horse made of straw. She begs the spirit to mount it. When he has done so, she seizes the horse, runs out the door and throws it into a stream or high up in a tree."

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s Some are carved in bas-relief on cliffs while others are statues. In the Diamond Mountains there is a carved face cut on a cliff sixty feet high. The statue of Eunjin near Kongju stands sixty-five feet high. Scores of smaller Miryucks can be seen in every part of Korea. Anthropologists often compare these to the stone heads on Easter Island in the South Pacific and rather different ones found in Mexico.

[6] This rite of exorcism to rid a sick person of the spirit which has "possessed" him has certain distinctive features which would vary from time to time. The key features are the use of the dance to induce ecstasy and the ability of the Mudang to summon the spirits, communicate with them and control them. In addition to serving as an exorcist, the shaman can hold a seance to speak with spirits, a service not necessarily connected to the performance of an ecstatic dance.

Worship of Spirits

Korean shamanism includes belief in numerous good and evil spirits: those of the earth and air, the waters and hills, rocks and trees, gods and goblins. Some are benevolent, some malicious and some just plain mischievous. Shamans therefore have traditionally provided a variety of articles *(Chiksung orSoosal Yungsan)* to ward off evil spirits. In olden days people used a screen with a picture of a tiger or dragon which they placed inside the gate of their house to frighten away demons. Similarly, at the road leading to a village they set a wooden goose on a pole to guard the area from demons. If an epidemic broke out, archways of bramble bushes were erected over the roads and the sacrificial blood of a bull or dog was poured on nearby stones, protecting the villagers from the disease-carrying spirits.

At the head of the Korean shamanic pantheon is the supreme God: *Hananim* . Worship of Hananim—Master of the sky—goes back to the earliest period when Tangun, the founder of Korea, worshipped Hananim on his high altar at Kangwha. This Supreme God is the creator of all; He sends the rain, is responsible for the harvest and gives us our life.'

Beneath Hananim are the divine Generals of the Five Points *(0 Pang Chang Koon),* who rule the five separate regions of heaven: the Green General of the Eastern Sky, the Red General of the Southern Sky, the White General of the Western Sky, the Black General of the Northern Sky and the Yellow General of the Zenith. Hananim lets each of these rule supreme in his part of the sky and each has an army of spirits to carry out his bidding. When a shaman is called in to perform his rites, he first locates the offending demons in the proper ward of heaven and persuades the ruling *Chang Koon* to curb the offending spirit.

The *Chang Koons* are represented by carved posts set up at the village entrance. In autumn the villagers gather at these wooden pillars to offer sacrifices of rice bread and fruit. Each year a new post is erected but all of the older ones are left standing. Occasion-

? Korean Protestants use the word "Hananim" to denote the Biblical God YHWH, but Catholics prefer the Chinese term "Chunchu."

ally twin posts are set up, one for the General of the Upper Heavens and the other for Madame General of the Underworld.

The *Chang Koons* also have subordinates. These are called *Sinchangs* and there are said to be eighty thousand of them. A shaman seeks the good will and help of one or more *Sinchangs* because these spirit officers are in charge of great numbers of inferior spirits.

Shamans believe that special earth spirits protect and control the land. In pre-20th century Korea, every home had its *Tujoo* (site god) who controlled the ground upon which the house was built. *Tujoo's* shrine was a small jar, perhaps containing a few coins, with a tent-shaped cover made of thatch. At least once or twice a year the family would offer the spirit a meal of cooked rice, rice bread or fruit, and pay their respects by bowing reverently.

Koreans worshipped mountain gods *(Sansin)* as well. Near the top of the mountains, they built small shrines to the Old Man Spirit which contained his picture, that of a venerable sage seated upon a tiger. He ruled everything on or within the mountain: its trees, minerals, birds and mammals. Consequently, hunters, miners and herb doctors who collected medicinal roots paid the mountain spirit special reverence. He also provided the water for the lowlands beneath the mountain; so in case of drought, the blood of sacrificial cows, pigs or dogs was poured on stones near his shrine. It was said that then the Old Man Spirit would have to send long-needed rains—to cleanse the blood-stained rocks which defiled his sanctuary.

In addition to mountain gods, there were believed to be mountain pass spirits *(Sunghwang Dang).* Wherever a road went through a pass, Koreans built a little roadside shrine, usually beside an old gnarled and twisted tree. Next to it they placed a pile of pebbles and one of the wooden pillars of the Five-Point Generals. Strips of colored cloth were attached to a straw rope in front of the shrine or hung from the branches of the sacred tree. Travellers left bits of their clothing as offerings to the mountain pass spirit. Some of the cloth, however, was a gift from brides who had to travel through the dangerous mountains on the way to the homes of

their husbands. Fearing that angry spirits from her father's house might follow her, the girl spread a small feast at the shrine and left a bit of her clothing. By the time they had finished enjoying their meal, she would be out of reach and they would have to return home. Merchants paid respect to *Sunghwang Dung* by offering bits of silk. Farmers left rice to the spirit so that he would bless them with bountiful crops. Stable boys gave him tiny images of horses. Petitions for the spirit's aid were written on strips of paper and tied to branches of the tree.

Next to the shrine one found a curious pile of small rocks, the exact purpose of which is uncertain. Everyone passing by was expected to add a stone to the mound and spit upon it in disgust. While the stories told to explain this practice vary greatly, they all agree that the pile of rocks is a reminder of a faithless woman stoned to death as punishment for her adultery. [8]

Believed to preside over the plain and its farming villages are spirits called *Chunsin* . Connected with worship of these agricultural gods is an offering made to Ko Si. Before the farmer eats his mid-morning or noon lunch, he drops a spoonful of rice on the ground, crying, "Mrs. Ko, come and eat this!" Ko Si was the mother of the powerful Buddhist monk Tosun (10th century A.D.). After suffering from repeated crop failures, farmers in the two provinces south of Seoul requested help from Tosun. He rid the area of the evil spirits which had caused so much trouble, and since then the harvests have been bountiful. In gratitude the farmers pledged to offer perpetual sacrifices to Tosun's mother. For shamanists, reverence for spirits of the dead is as necessary as worship of the supernatural powers behind nature.

Water spirits too have an honored place in the Korean pantheon. Chief of these is the Dragon who rules rivers, lakes, wells, and the ocean. He resides in bottomless lakes and is worshipped by casting food upon the waters and saying prayers. While the Dragon is a benevolent spirit, quite the opposite are the spirits of any persons who have drowned. According to Korean folklore, those

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[8] Cf. C.A. Clark, *!bid,* p. 201 for three stories about the origin of the stone pile. Compare this with the rite of "stoning Satan" carried out by pilgrims to Mecca.

who drown are trapped in the water until they can pull in some unfortunate victim to take their place. Therefore, their spirits lurk around the water, forever trying to lure someone to his death. To appease and pacify these water ghosts, the Korean shamaness offered blood sacrifices at the water's edge. Furthermore, when Koreans in the past started off on a journey by boat, they first attracted all the nearby spirits by beating drums and gongs. Then they put food and incense on a straw raft and set fire to it. While the spirits were occupied with eating and enjoying the smell of incense, the boat sailed away out of their reach.

Koreans believed a special spirit *(Sungjoo)* dwelt in each home. When a new house was completed, the shamaness arrived to placate the spirit who would make it his dwelling place. She produced a paper envelope, filled it with rice and money, then soaked it in wine. After appropriate prayers, she pasted the envelope to the side of the ridgepole of the house. At harvest time and other important occasions, the house spirit was fed and prayers were recited to make it happy. If things went wrong in the household, this showed that the *Sungjoo* was angry or had deserted the place. In such cases, the shamaness had to be called back.

Among the other household spirits worshipped in Korea was the Hindu-Buddhist god Sakra. An earthenware jar full of dry rice was set up on a shelf and dedicated to him. This *Cheisuk Jar,* as it was called, was worshipped periodically. If the rice swelled and spilled out of the jar, it was a sign of good fortune to come; if it soured, the family could expect trouble. The *Samsin,* a trinity of spirits, were worshipped by women who longed for children. They also were believed to guard a child until he was ten years old. To provide a nest for these benevolent spirits, a shamaness hung a paper bag or gourd in the warmest and best part of the living room. Naturally, the *Samsin* were fed and worshipped regularly by the women of the family. Also venerated in most Korean households was the Taoist Kitchen God who nested in a bundle of cloths hung on the ridgepole. As a result of the introduction of the Confucian examination system to Korea, shamans encouraged the veneration of the Red Diploma Spirit *(Hongpi Kwisin).* Those who passed the

Confucian examinations for public officials were awarded sheepskin diplomas nearly three feet square and stained deep red. Since they were supposed to symbolize great power, the diplomas were often set up on the wall behind a curtain and worshipped. Of course, it was not the diploma itself but the spirit of it which was venerated.

The *Keullip* is the Korean god of wealth. He was believed to live in a great bunch of strings hung up against the wall of a house or the shop of a merchant. There are other good luck spirits who live in snakes and weasels. People were therefore pleased if these creatures made their home in the woodpile.

Tree worship was also a feature of Korean shamanism. However, unlike the Indians who worship the banyan, the Japanese who believed in the sacredness of the *sakaki* or the Germanic tribes who worshipped the oak, Koreans have not singled out any specific species of tree for worship. Any old, gnarled and twisted tree can become an object of veneration. Sometimes, a village would adopt a whole grove and assign each tree to a family. To show a tree is sacred, a rope of left-woven straw or a piece of thatch like a woman's apron was tied around it. Special tree worship took place on the fourteenth night of the first lunar month. After spreading red soil around the tree, the devout offered food and recited prayers to the tree spirit.

Finally, Korean shamanism affirmed the existence of numerous mischievous spirits. Goblins *(Tokeibis)* delight in inconveniencing people by misplacing articles which then have to be hunted for. *Namshakui* and *Duosuni* are the dangerous and vandal spirits of boys and young men who have died violent deaths. Even though they no longer have bodies, they have not been calmed down and made responsible or law-abiding. Among the dangerous demons none was more feared than the ghost of a young girl who died just prior to her marriage. Such frustrated souls would be particularly malicious. Consequently, their bodies were buried deep under much-travelled roads and roof tiles were attached to their heads to keep the spirits imprisoned in the grave. Members of the family would also put a basket of silk wedding clothes on a

special shrine shelf in the home and carefully offer regular sacrifices to appease the troubled spirit. For Koreans, *Talki Kwisin* on the sixteenth night of the first lunar month is comparable to the western Halloween: all the evil spirits appear to show their power. Fortunately, if one hangs a sieve in the front doorway, the demons will become so preoccupied counting the holes in the sieve they will never get around to entering the house.

Messages from Spirit World

Shamanism testifies to the possibility of direct communication with spiritual entities—gods and goddesses, angels, demons or the souls of the departed. Whether practiced in Haiti or Hong Kong, the simple core of shamanism is unquestioning acceptance of the idea that even in ordinary, everyday life there exists two-way traffic between the supernatural and natural. For the worshipper, every human emotion has a matching and answering emotion in the realm of the divine. Implicit in the faith is a basic polarity between the visible and invisible worlds.

Although numerous examples of communication with the spirit world could be easily found, let us merely cite three dramatic illustrations from the Far East in our modern era. Each provides convincing evidence of the central affirmation of shamanism. Each gave birth to a religious movement of lasting value and perhaps most important, each has had an effect upon society at large.

The Taiping Movement (1837-1864)

At a time when the Manchu government of China was in a sad state of social, economic and political disintegration, a disappointed office-seeker named Hung Hsiu-ch'uan founded the God Worshippers Society. Their aim was no less than to remake the nation into the Heavenly Kingdom. In 1837 Hung went to Canton to try to pass the imperial examinations. Though he failed, while in the city he picked up a series of Christian tracts prepared by the London Missionary Society. He probably read them casually but they made no impression upon him at that time. When he went

back to Canton the next year and again failed the tests, Hung became seriously ill and had to be carried to his village in a sedan chair. During this illness, he started having visions.

Hung feared he was dying and would be taken to Yen-lo, the Buddhist king of Hades. Instead, he was carried away by angels to a region of brilliant light. There he was washed at a river by an old woman. She cut out his vital organs and replaced them with new ones. Having been remade, he was brought to an elderly gentleman who complained that men were sinfully worshipping demons instead of himself. Then, Hung was given a sword and seal, tokens of his commission, and told to return to earth to destroy the demons.

As a result of this vision, Hung took on a marked change in personality. His depression was replaced by unusual self-confidence. Yet the following year Hung again could not pass the Confucian exams. But when he returned to his village, he started to read the Christian tracts he had bought years earlier. Entitled "Good Words to Admonish the Age," they gave Hung an explanation of his strange vision and new meaning to his life. On the basis of his scanty knowledge of Christian doctrine, he now believed that he had ascended to heaven, been baptized by the Heavenly Mother and commissioned by God the Father to wage war on the demons. Since Hung had also been introduced to a middle-aged man in heaven who treated him like a member of the family, he assumed that this must have been Jesus. Henceforth the Chinese seer thought of himself as the younger brother of Christ, called to establish God's kingdom on earth.

Hung's program promoted both individual and national regeneration. By worshipping only the one God and cultivating the heart, his followers would open up heavenly glories to man's view. On the basis of faith in the Fatherhood of God and belief that all men form a single clan, the God Worshippers Society would subjugate the demons and produce a new era of "great peace" *(Taiping)*. Hung used the Ten Commandments as the code of behavior for his disciples. This meant forbidding opium smoking, concubinage, gambling, wine, fortune telling, banditry and pros-

titution. Since the Great God is the Father of all under heaven, Hung favored social equality, a new set of personal values and a new source of authority among brothers and sisters. All this to take place in a new religious commonwealth.

Though Hung combined Protestant teaching with the traditional Chinese emphasis on the family, his famous Taiping attack on idols gradually broadened into a revolution against the Confucian gentry and the whole status quo. The course of the Taiping revolt, its amazing successes and its ultimate suppression are not our concern. Suffice it to say that Hung's vision had enormous social, political, economic and religious consequences. Marx and Maoist writers have seen it as a valuable precursor to the Communist reconstruction of China. Nationalists have also paid glowing tribute to the Taiping movement. Sun Yat-sen was inspired by its ideals and felt he would carry to completion Hung's program.

Culturally, however, the crusade against idols led to the senseless destruction of innumerable art treasures, including the 260 foot Porcelain Pagoda of Nanking built in the 15th century. Though religiously the God Worshippers Society had created the only truly indigenous form of Christian faith China has ever had, they had, on the other hand, administered a nearly fatal wound to Buddhism in that nation. For good or ill, nevertheless, an essentially shamanic movement had made a profound effect in one very important period of China's modern history.'

Ch'ondogyo, the Heavenly Way

Ch'oe Che-u (1824-1864) was the founder of the religion called the Heavenly Way, which played a vital role in both the development of Korean nationalism and the struggle for independence. He began his work as a result of a vision in which he was

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' Dr. Philip L. Wickeri has written about "Christianity and the Origins of the Taiping Movement," *Ching Feng* (Hong Kong), vol. XIX, no. 1, 1976, pp. 5-34. For sample anti-Taiping evaluations, see M.A. Nourse, *A Short History of the Chinese,* New Home Library, N.Y., 1942, pp. 214-227 and Daniele Varê, *The Last Empress,* Literary Guild, N.Y., 1936, pp. 105-118. A recent survey of the Taiping Rebellion as Chinese historians now interpret it can be found in Immanuel C.Y. Han. *The Rise of Modern China,* Oxford University Press, London. 1970. pp. 270-308.

commissioned by Heaven to create a new way of life based upon faith in God and man. Ch'oe was the son of a well-known Confucian scholar; but because his mother was a concubine, he was ineligible to become a civil or military official. Although his mother died when he was six years old and his father when he was sixteen, Ch'oe became well-educated in the Confucian classics, Buddhism, Taoism and the newly-introduced Roman Catholicism of the missionaries. It is important to note that he was physically frail as well as emotionally sensitive.

During the late spring of 1860 Ch'oe had a mystical experience in which he was given a twenty-one character "Sacred Formula":

> May the creative force of the universe be within me in abundant measure. May Heaven be with me and every creation will be done. Never forgetting this truth, everything will be known. [2]

From the Sacred Formula, Ch'oe derived his basic principle: man and God are one *(In nae ch'on).* When the individual exercises faith in the oneness of his own spirit and body in the universality of God, union between Heaven and man can be realized. One must harmonize all truth in a Tao based on this fundamental unity.

Ch'oe combined and reinterpreted certain principles of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. From Buddhism he borrowed the ideal of a cleansed heart. From Confucianism he stressed the importance of the five relationships: father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, elder-younger and friend-friend. Taoism taught him the need for cleansing the body from physical and moral filth. When asked how his ideas differed from Roman Catholicism—then called "Western Learning" *(Sohak)—he* replied that his "Eastern Learning," *Tonghak,* is based on the incarnation of God in man, shows how to control one's temper and helps one to think

[2] *A Brief Guidance to Cheondogyo,* Cheondogyo Central Headquarters, Seoul, 1971, p. 1. See also C.A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea,* pp. 144-172. For the Ch'ondogyo Bible translated in full, see Clark, */hid,* pp. 258-276.

clearly. By contrast Christians find the incarnation only in Jesus, do not really study to know God, have no spirit to inspire their physical development and lack the Sacred Formulas

Ch'oe had a decidedly mystical bent—quite unlike the Chu Hsi Confucianism of his contemporaries. This can be explained in part by his admitted study of the *I Ching.* However, he also knew the Korean shamanist texts such as *Ch'amwisol—the* "Theory of Dream Interpretation." These writings encouraged spirit worship, stressed the value of sacred mantras and prophesied the fall of the decadent Yi dynasty. Nor should we forget that the establishment of Ch'ondogyo resulted from Ch'oe's direct communication with the spirit world.

Ch'ondogyo offered an idealistic and altruistic faith to Koreans in a period of social decay and turmoil. It gave comfort and hope to the masses who were oppressed politically, and in desperate straits economically. It combined deep mysticism with concern for social justice. It taught unselfish respect for one's fellow men: treat people as though they were God. As a leader, Ch'oe inspired intense personal devotion, so it was natural for his followers to call him "Great Divine Teacher" *(Taesinsa).* Within three years after his revelation, Ch'oe had attracted a large following of poor farmers, politically discredited members of the upper classes, social reformers, and some intellectuals. Like a messiah, Ch'oe proclaimed the possibility of heaven on earth *(chisang ch'on'guk).* As Yi Ton-hwa, a modem Ch'ondogyo theologian says, the oneness of God and man means that man has the ability to become divine and the present world the capability to become a paradise.'

Ch'oe's ministry lasted barely five years. Indignantly refusing to give a large sum of money to a corrupt official, he was imprisoned on charges of organizing a religion contrary to national principles. After months of abuse and torture in jail, Ch'oe was condemned for proclaiming the existence of a Lord of Heaven

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[3] Benjamin B. Weems, *Reform. Rebellion, and The Heavenly Way,* University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1964, pp. 7-8.

/bid, pp. 10-11. Quoted from *Essential of In Nae Ch'on,* Ch'ondogyo Central Headquarters, Seoul, 1925, pp. 199-201.

superior to the king. Equally disliked was his preaching of a religion resembling the hated Catholicism of the foreign missionaries. Found guilty of treason, he was finally hanged.

In 1871, seven years later, a *Tonghak* youth started an uprising in his home town, proclaimed himself a general and beheaded the local chief magistrate. He was caught and executed. In 1894 a far greater rebellion by the followers of the Heavenly Way took place. The frightened Yi monarch asked for Chinese troops to quell the insurgency. China promptly sent an army and Japan moved in to keep the Manchu empire from interfering with its own plans for subjugating Korea. The Yi dynasty had stopped the rebellion but paved the way for its own destruction, as Korea came under the subjugation of the foreign powers. *Tonghaks,* however, were outlawed and persecuted savagely, and their activities were restricted to purely religious matters. But Ch'ondogyo never abandoned its faith in a kingdom of God on earth. Their leaders were in the forefront of the 1919 independence movement and in our own time Ch'ondogyo has fought valiantly against communism. [5] Its social activism has always been a concrete application of its intense eschatological mysticism."

Tenrikyo: Religion of Divine Wisdom

Scholars who study the many "New Religions" of Japan find that shamanistic practices play an important part in most of them.' For example, *Tenrikyo—with* several million adherents today—fits perfectly the pattern delineated by Eliade for archaic shamanism. The Religion of Divine Wisdom originated as a result of an experience of spirit-possession." The founder of Tenrikyo,

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[5] Ch'ondogyo leaders in Seoul plotted an uprising in North Korea in 1948 and again in 1950 (A *Brief Guidance to Cheon-do-gyo,* pp. 17-18).

" Cf. Key Ray Chong, "The Religious Meaning of Ch'oe Che-u's Tonghak Doctrine" in Robert J. Miller, ed., *Religious Ferment in Asia,* University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1974, pp. 64-79.

Prof. Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. finds the same to he true of many of the new sects and cults which have become a major feature of post-World War II America. See his *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America.* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. , 1973, pp. 28-31.

[8] Henry von Straelen, *The Religion of Divine Wiselmn ,* Veritas Shoin, Kyoto, 1957.

Nakayama Miki (1798-1887) was the wife of a big landowner and the mother of four children. From childhood she had been an unusually devout Pure Land Buddhist and at age nineteen had been initiated into one of the highest rites of the Jodo sect. When she was forty-one years old, she and her husband and son were suddenly subjected to great physical pains. As was the custom, a shaman was called in to cure them. Since the shaman's usual helper was not available, Miki agreed to serve as the medium in the rite of exorcism. During the ritual, Miki became possessed by a god and fell into a deep trance. Asked by the shaman to identify himself, the spirit replied: "I am the True and Original God. . . . I want to take Miki as the Shrine of God and mediatrix between God the Parent and man."

Everybody was awestruck by what had taken place. However, Miki's husband demanded that the god leave his wife's body because she was the mother of four children who needed all her attention. Speaking through the medium, the spirit thereupon threatened to destroy the whole family if his will was thwarted. A family council was convened and for three days Miki remained unconscious. When the husband concluded that nothing could be done but accept the god's wishes, Miki came out of her trance and the pains suffered by the husband and son completely disappeared.

According to Tenrikyo, the place where Miki became "possessed" was also the exact spot where the Divine Parent originally created the world and man. God's final revelation and first act of creation thus occurred at the same place. To commemorate these events and the unique holiness of this particular location, Tenrikyo worshippers erected an 8.2 foot wooden column *(kanrodai)* which has become the focal point of their devotions. Such a column bears a significant resemblance to the sacred pillar or tree of life which is so basic to archaic shamanism.

At present, the Patriarch of Tenrikyo—the great-grandson of the foundress—regularly leads a mystical dance around the holy column. He stands in the north position, his wife stands opposite him in the south, four men stand in the west and four women in the east. For ten minutes, the ten dancers perform a dance which is the

most important rite of Tenrikyo. The Patriarch portrays the supreme male deity and his wife takes the role of the chief goddess. Each of the ten participants wears the mask of a traditional Shinto deity and their dance, conducted in secret, probably represents a mystical reenactment of creation. Another dance of three men and three women is publicly performed in front of the altar and lasts about an hour. This ceremony—the central act at all Tenrikyo temples in Japan—is accompanied by the beating of drums, creating a feeling of intense religious excitement.

On top of the sacred column sits a wooden cup which could hold over two gallons of liquid. Tenrikyo believes that sometime in the future the Heavenly Parent ("Tenri-O-no-Mikoto") will pour a special supernatural dew into this container. When the faithful drink the heavenly nectar, a messianic age will begin. Blessings will follow immediately. People will always be happy, be able to achieve perfect virtue and wisdom, and live to be 115 years old. Modern adherents of Tenrikyo still long for the consummation of this promise of ultimate bliss.

Miki claimed on the basis of revelation that God should be worshipped as "the Parent." According to her, He created the world and mankind in order that man should lead a cheerful life. To live joyfully, he should treat everything he has, even his body, as something loaned from God. To please the Heavenly Parent , we should be extremely careful in our care for our body because it does not belong to us; when we die we should return it to Him with much gratitude.

Tenrikyo affirms the essential and incorruptible goodness of creation. Evil is only dust covering man's true nature; God will therefore serve as the broom to clean the hearts of all the people in the world. Like Buddhists, Tenrikyo adherents believe in reincarnation. We return our body to the Creator at death but our immortal soul borrows a new one. To prepare for the age of perfect happiness to come, men should keep their minds free of the dust of sin and live now a joy-filled life.[9] Although many efforts have been made

[9]For a brief summary of Tenrikyo doctrine, see H. Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan,* Tuttle, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 33-60. Also Takahito Iwai, *The Outline of Tenrikyo,* Tenrikyo Doyu-Sha, Nara, 1932, pp. 178-228.

to show how much Tenrikyo owes to Buddhism or Shinto, Miki and her followers affirm that the Religion of Heavenly Wisdom is the result of the Parent God's direct revelation—through the mouth of the prophetess in whose body He dwelt.

II. SHINTOISM

History of Shintoism

As THE indigenous faith of Japan, Shinto means the Tao of the Kami, the road to the gods. At first and for many subsequent centuries, it was an animistic and polytheistic faith which combined shamanistic practices with the rites of a primitive agricultural fertility cult. Reminders of this early religion can still be found in the Ise worship of the Sun Goddess, pilgrimages up the sacred Mt. Fuji, rice planting and harvesting ceremonies, veneration of holy trees, the doll festival on March 3 and boys' festival on May 5 every year. The chief characteristic of shrine Shinto is the *torii,* a gate made of two horizontal beams supported by two pillars, at the entrance to the palace of the Kami, as each place of worship is called.'

A new period opened with Buddhism's arrival. Beginning in the 6th century A.D. and lasting more than a millennium, Japan honored Mahayana Buddhism as the state faith. Buddhist priests took over Shinto shrines and reinterpreted Shinto beliefs in accordance with Buddhist metaphysics. However, because Buddhism is a tolerant faith, there were few changes in Shinto rites and careful preservation of Shinto shrines. Shintoists attempted to reconcile themselves to the new situation by claiming that Buddha taught the Way of the Kami and his fourfold truth came as a revelation from the Sun Goddess.

This Buddhist era ended when Japan opened her doors to the West and pure Shinto was revived as the basis for proud, self-assertive nationalism. Kamo Mabuchi (d. 1769), Motoori Norinaga (d. 1801) and Hirata Atsutane (d. 1843) promoted the recovery of Japan's heritage and a return to her original glory. Before, in their opinion, it had been "corrupted" by Chinese and Indian notions. [2] State Shinto henceforth became the ideological support for Japan's

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[1] For details, see Hideo Kishimoto's revision of M. Anesaki, *Religious Life of the Japanese People,* Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, Tokyo, 1961, pp. 12-29.

[2] Cf. *J.A.* Hardon, *Religions of the World,* Image Books, N.Y., vol. I, pp. 227-235. Also, Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History,* pp. 160-176.

"immanental theocracy," as it was called. [3]

Apologists for State Shinto were primarily interested in promulgating love for country, reverence for the emperor, filial piety and loyalty to the government to reinforce the concept of a strong centralized state. When they were criticized by Christians for denying men religious freedom, they replied that the compulsory rites of State Shinto were not anything more than patriotic exercises. By reducing Shinto in such a fashion, the way was opened for the birth of more enthusiastic Shinto sects which had no formal connection with the government but met popular need for a warm and vital religious life. Thirteen such sects sprang up and prospered under the guidance of charismatic founders, women as well as men.[4]

When Japan was defeated in World War II, the Allied occupation authorities abolished State Shinto and forced the emperor to renounce his claim to divinity. This left the ancient shrine Shinto and newer sectarian Shinto.[5] To these should be added several of the New Religions which grew out of Shinto. *Tenrikyo* is an example of sectarian Shinto and PL Kyodan (the Religion of Perfect Liberty) is an illustration of a new religion based on Shinto to some degree. [6]

Shinto Myths and Scriptures

In the opinion of Shinto priests and scholars, the pattern for man's daily life and worship can be found in the prehistorical Age of the Kami. *Kami—loosely* translated as "gods" or "spirits"—refers to the fundamental powers of creation: phenomena of nature

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[3] Cf. D.C. Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan,* E.P. Dutton, N.Y., 1938 *and Modern Japan and Shinto.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1947.

[4] For example, *Omoto-kyo was* founded on divine oracles received by a peasant shamaness Deguchi Nao (d. 1918) whose son-in-law Deguchi Onisaburo (d. 1948) was believed to be the messiah-Maitreya.

[5] In post-war Japan, Shinto found itself with a loss of government revenue, shortage of clergy and lack of a modern systematic theology. Worse, some said that the historic shrines were only cultural monuments which should be kept up by the government but they no longer had any religious meaning. Kitagawa, *Ibid.* pp. 284-289.

[6] Cf. H. Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan:* Kurozumikyo. pp. 61-67. Konkokyo, pp. 69-78, Omoto and subsects, pp. 127-182.

like the sun, mountains, trees, wind, thunder and certain animals, as well as ancestral spirits, particularly those of the Japanese imperial family or outstanding national heroes. Anyone or anything with a "numinous" quality'—eliciting wonder, fascination or reverence—is divine, a dwelling place of the Kami." Among the most important Kami are the Kami of the Center of Heaven *(Arne-no-minaka-nushi),* the two Kami of birth and growth *(Taka-mimusubi-no-mikoto* and *Kami-musubi-no-mikoto),* the heavenly Adam and Eve who gave birth to the islands of Japan *(Izangi-no-mikoto* and *Izanami-no-mikow),* the Sun Goddess *(Ama-terasu),* the Earth Ruler *(Susa-no-o-no-mikoto)* and the Moon God who governs the realm of darkness *(Tsuki-yomi-no-mikoto).*

Shinto mythology reports that the Earth God behaved so badly toward his sister, the Sun Goddess, that she became angry and hid herself in a cave, causing the whole cosmos to be plunged into darkness. To persuade the goddess to come out a wild and merry dance was performed. When *Arne-no-Uzume* ("the Dread Female of Heaven") dressed up in strange clothes, kindled a fire and then danced on a tub, all the gods laughed. The Sun Goddess wondered how they could be so jolly while the world was wrapped in total darkness, so she peeped out of the cave. At once she was seized and prevented from hiding again. This folk tale obviously has several levels of meaning. It describes the natural rhythm from day to night and winter to spring. It shows the terrible effects of sin. Furthermore, it stresses the value of the shamanic dance as a means of banishing the realm of darkness and illuminating the soul of man.`'

Shinto mythology also teaches that Japan is a "holy land" and her people are a "chosen people." The god *Izanagi* ("Male who

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Cf. Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy,* Oxford University Press, London, 1970. His definition of the Holy ("the numinous") as the *mysterium tremendum* is an apt description of the Shinto Kami-concept.

[8] Sokyo Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way.* Bridgeway Press. Rutland, Vt., 1962, pp. 6-9.

[9] Masaharu Anesaki, "Japanese Mythology," J.A. MacCulloch, ed., *Mythology of All Races.* Cooper Square Publishers, N.Y., 1964, vol. VIII. Also, Jean Herbert, *Shinto,* Allen and Unwin, London, 1967, pp. 227-388.

invites") and the goddess *Izanami* ("Female who invites") marry and produce their special offspring: the islands, mountains, rivers, trees and grass of Japan. The Sun Goddess was also a product of their union. Some time later, she sent her grandson down to earth with three sacred treasures by which his descendents—the future emperors of Japan—could show that they ruled by divine right: a mirror, a sword and a jewelled necklace. '° Her shrine—the imperial shrine of the Sun Goddess at Ise—is the main temple of Shinto.

There is no Shinto bible, mainly because the religion is shrine-centered and rite-centered rather than book-centered. However, records of ancient beliefs are found in *Kojiki* ("Record of Ancient Matters") and *Nihon Shoki* ("Chronicles of Japan"). Both date from the early years of the 8th century A.D. yet contain much older traditions. ' [1] Although the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* are of minor importance in shrine Shinto or the religious life of the masses, the stories in them were a standard part of primary school education from the Meiji period until the defeat of Japan in 1945.

Respect for the Dead

In Shinto there was originally no idea of a far-off heaven or a mysterious hell in the bowels of the earth. The departed spirits were thought of as constant presences, able to share the pleasures or pains of the living. Their real world was the place of burial. The spirits were believed to dwell in the tombs provided for them. They required food and drink and in return they would confer blessings on their benefactors. Although their bodies had disintegrated, their spirits linger on, living in a new plane of existence."

The wicked man, however, becomes a spirit as surely as does the good man. All alike are *Kami* . In the afterlife, the wicked retain their evil inclinations. Hence, it is necessary to propitiate these wayward spirits with offerings of food, while playing the harp and

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[1] " These three sacred objects are believed to be connected with an early Japanese shamanic cult.

' ' Post Wheeler, *The Sacred Scriptures of the Japanese,* Schuman, N.Y., 1952.

[2] See "Spiritism" and "Ancestor Worship in Ancient Japan" in Genchi Kato,A *Study of Shinto,* Meiji Japan Society, Tokyo, 1926, pp. 32-47, 52-58.

the flute, singing and dancing or whatever else is likely to put them in good humor.

According to Shinto belief, to die is to enter into possession of superhuman power, i.e., to be capable of conferring benefits or inflicting misfortune by supernatural means. Even if while he was alive a man might be only a common laborer, once he died he inherited unusual spiritual powers. Consequently, his children pray to him for aid in their various undertakings. Yet, the dead are dependent on the living. According to Shinto belief, they need earthly nourishment and homage. Only through the devotion of their kindred—or other kindly people—can the discarnate souls find happiness and peace. Each spirit must have shelter—an appropriate tomb; and each requires suitable offerings. If he is respectably sheltered and adequately nourished, he will be happy and therefore bestow good fortune on his benefactors. However, deprived of a fitting sepulchre, proper funeral rites and regular offerings, the disembodied spirit will suffer from cold, hunger and thirst, feel miserable, resentful or angry, and therefore act malevolently toward those who have forgotten their duties.

Because of the decline of deep religious feelings in the modern world, it may be difficult for us to imagine how the happiness of the dead could depend upon material food. Among the ancestor worshippers of the Far East, the dead were believed to consume not the physical substance of the food but only to absorb and enjoy its invisible essence. However small the offerings of the living to the dead it was mandatory that they should be made regularly. The visible and invisible worlds are forever united and cannot be broken without dire consequences. Because the well-being of the dead and their surviving loved ones are bound together, neither can dispense with the help of the other.

Ancestor worship is founded upon five beliefs: I) the dead remain in this world, haunt their tombs, frequent their former homes and enjoy the company of their living relatives; 2) all the dead become spiritual entities possessing supernatural powers, but retain the characteristics of their previous earthly existence; 3) as the happiness of the deceased depends upon respectful service

from their descendents, so the happiness of the living is to some extent controlled by piety to the dead; 4) many natural events in the world are decisively affected by the influence of discarnate spirits; 5) all human actions, whether good or evil, are somewhat guided by the invisible workings of the spirits."

Three Modern Japanese Thinkers

Ishida Baigan: Ethical Mysticism

Ishida (1685-1744) was an influential Japanese thinker of the shogun period whose movement called *Shingaku* attracted thousands of middle-class merchants and exerted enormous influence for more than a century. At twenty-three he decided to propagate Shinto, possibly as a result of a campaign by priests to encourage people to make a pilgrimage to the Ise shrine. While working as a clerk for a Kyoto merchant to earn a living, he devoted all his free time to study and lecturing. With the aid of a learned teacher who expounded Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, he achieved "enlightenment" at about age forty. As he put **it,** at last he felt like a cormorant plunging into the serenity of a great sea." Within a few years he left his job to lecture. Living frugally and never marrying, Ishida concentrated upon learning the true nature of man and "knowing the heart." *Gakumon,* he taught, means behaving prudently, serving one's lord with righteousness, respecting parents, being faithful to friends, loving man at large and having pity on the poor. In his opinion, because men have been darkened by human desires, their original heart has been lost. By recovering his lost heart, one can become the heart of heaven and earth. '[5] Recognizing the basic human predicament, Ishida compared people to sick men with paralyzed hands and feet. To recover man's true heart, he recommended meditation, an

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[15] Cf. Lafcadio Hearn. *Japan's Religions,* University Books, New Hyde Park, N.Y., 1966. For a careful study of Chinese ancestor worship in modem times, see Francis L.K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1949.

[14] The cormorant is a bird somewhat like a pelican trained to catch fish in Japan.

[15] Cf. Mencius whose thought was most important for Ishida.

austere life and devotion to one's social obligations. To be good is to unite with the heart of *Amnterasu,* the Sun Goddess, and act accordingly.

Shingaku espoused the importance of the work ethic. What one does—one's occupation—is what heaven has decreed, the basis for service to the nation and the foundation of the family. If one does not know his occupation, he is inferior to birds and beasts, declared Ishida. How can we neglect our job if we profess to be interested in righteousness? Because one's work is a holy calling, it is necessary to promote honesty, economy and only a just profit.

Ishida's theory made the merchant's life as noble as that of the samurai warrior. But he also underlined the duties of the money-maker. When a merchant was nearly wiped out because of a bad flood, he came to Ishida for advice. Ishida insisted that the merchant should sell everything he still possessed, even to selling his clothes, in order to repay his debts. In *Shingaku* thinking, if complete honesty be practiced, everybody within the realm of the four seas would become brothers. To the shrewd and enthusiastic Japanese bourgeois capitalists, Ishida argued that only the honest man has truly responded to the mirror-like mind of the Shinto gods. There is nothing shameful about selling; what is shameful is to practice dishonesty, live disjointed in heart and become a criminal in the eyes of the Shinto gods.

Ishida Baigan learned much from Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism but he was essentially Shintoist. Because Japan is the special holy land and its emperor is the lineal descendent of the Sun Goddess, the Japanese should recover the lost heart and unite the way of Heaven with that of earth. Even if he uses Confucianist ideas, Ishida's initial interest was in Shinto, expressed in his veneration for the goddess of the Ise shrine and the belief that Japan is the Land of the Kami, superior to all other countries.t t"

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[16] Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion, Free Press. Glencoe,* III., 1957, pp. 133-177. Bellah somewhat differs from the above interpretation by insisting that Ishida was primarily Confucian rather than Shintoist.

Chikao Fujisawa: Concrete Catholicity

For Ishida Baigan, Shinto was interpreted as ethical mysticism; for Chikao Fujisawa, a 20th century Shinto apologist, it is a much-needed philosophy of "concrete universalism."[1] in his opinion, brings man into existential communion with Nature and unites him to the material world. By combining spirituality and practical utility, it can overcome the dichotomy between transcendence and immanence. By reuniting scientific objectivity with religious subjectivity, Shinto bridges the chasm between the holy and the mundane. It asserts the vital connection of transcendental Heaven and immanent Earth.

A spiritual understanding of basic Shinto myths reveals the nature of concrete universalism. Shinto extols worship of the High Tree Deity *(Kukuno-Chi)* and the Sun Goddess—the former male, the latter female. The first represents the expansive male activity as the second symbolizes the contractive female principle. For Sh i n-toists, every wedding is therefore a reminder of the cosmic union of the god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami which produced the islands of Japan.'[2]

According to Fujisawa, Shinto myth furthermore shows how man has broken the unity between Heaven and Earth which the Kami designed for him. When the grandson of the Sun Goddess descended to earth to rule the world, the god of Mt. Fuji invited him to marry his two daughters, the divine princess of the cherry blossoms and the strong, but ugly Rock-Long-Princess. When the sun prince decided to wed only the lovely younger girl, the rejected sister became so ashamed and resentful that she cursed his marriage. Since he preferred delicate beauty, his children would be as short-lived as the cherry blossom. Also to show her anger, the Rock-Long-Princess caused a succession of explosive eruptions to devastate the area around Mt. Fuji. What this story means is that

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[1] Chikao Fujisawa, *Concrete Universality of the Japanese Way of Thinking,* Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1958. This author, a professor of Nihon University, studied at the Universities of Berlin and Peiping and served at the Permanent Secretariat of the League of Nations in Geneva.

[2] Fujisawa, *Ibid.* p. 15.

man should love both aesthetic and utilitarian values. [19] Hence, when the Meiji leaders of the mid-19th century restored Shinto to its rightful place in Japanese life, they were justified in importing western technology to balance the traditional aestheticism of their culture. Shinto provides Japan with an all-inclusive faith in contrast to the otherworldliness of Buddhism and the mechanistic materialism of the Occident. [20]

Tokuchika Miki: Life as Art

Tokuchika Miki (b. 1900) founded one of Japan's new religions called *PL Kyodan* (Perfect Liberty Church) in 1946. His father had started a group—Hito *no Michi* (Religion of Man)—which attracted a million members in a single decade before its suppression by the government in 1937. Revived by the son when religious freedom was guaranteed by the American military authorities, the Religion of Man was then renamed the PL Religion. [21]

PL is clearly a Shinto faith brought up to date and purged of the nationalistic disadvantages of state Shinto, shrine Shinto and sect Shinto. The elder Miki based his Religion of Man on a revelation received after worshipping a sacred tree for five years. This tree had been planted in memory of his teacher: an itinerant priest, faith healer and spiritualist. The younger Miki adopted as the symbol of his PL faith the *Omitama,* a wheel-shaped gold emblem consisting of twenty-one rays emanating from a central hub signifying the sun. These two objects of veneration represent the most prominent Kami of ancient Shinto: the High Tree Deity and the Sun Goddess. For PL the shining sun symbolizes the noble and merciful God, who creates all things in accordance with a divine plan and endows every man with individuality and intelligence. [22] Following one of the twenty-one precepts of their faith,

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[19] Fujisawa, */bid,* preface, pp. vi-ix.

[20] As Baigan used Confucian ethics to explain Shinto, Fujisawa finds support for his views in the 20th century Existentialist philosophies of Gabriel Marcel and Martin Heidegger.

[21] Cf. H. Thomsen, *New Religions of Japan.* pp. 183-198.

[22] From the prayer used at all PL services.

members "live radiantly as the sun." [23]

Everyone studying Japanese culture is impressed by its aesthetic emphasis—seen in scroll paintings, miniature gardens, flower arrangements, Noh plays and Kabuki dances. Since these grow out of the ancient Shinto love for the divine beauty of nature, Tokuchika Miki used this as the foundation for his religion of Perfect Liberty. "Life is Art," he said.

By contemplating Mt. Fuji or the delicate loveliness of cherry blossoms, one can see that God is the perfect artist. He provides the supreme example of creative talent by making everything distinctive. Whatever God does is an original creation. He gives to each thing He makes a certain unique individuality whether it be a person, a cloud, a flower or a rock. For millions of years God has been expressing His inner nature, always new and different in form, as if He simply had to make room for more examples of His inexhaustible creativity. Therefore, life is art.

If God is the supreme artist, we become truly human only to the degree that we make of our lives a painting, poem or piece of sculpture. What men possess—their land, money, position—are materials by which they are to display the artistry of their lives. Man's aesthetic intuitions are therefore signs of our kinship to the Kami. Because man possesses the essential qualities of God, he is God manifested in human form. He is an artist as his Creator is an artist. Hence, every man should regard his life as "a continuous succession of self-expressions." By using the things of nature as materials for self-realization, we become creative and learn the meaning of peace. Each individual exists for the ultimate joy and total satisfaction of an artistic life. [24]

Like ancient Shinto, PL is primarily interested in our every day, workaday world. It exhibits no concern for the sort of meditation which makes men hermits or monks. PL members seek to be consciously alive and alert, a hundred percent involved in daily tasks. For them, prayer simply means getting direction from God

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[23] Listed in Thomsen, *Ibid.* pp. 188-189.

[24] Marcus Bach, *The Power of Perfect Liberty,* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971, p. 38.

so they can do well whatever they are called upon to do. [25] Prayer should be a method of finding guidance; hunches and intuitions are also ways God speaks to men.

Because man is God's noblest creation, he alone possesses the capabilities and artistic talent to create a better world. What makes humans distinctive is their conscious desire to surmount their natural limitations. God wants us to develop our unlimited potential. If one has a clear understanding of his relative position with his fellow men, society and the divine Universal Plan, he can overcome his limitations. Each individual—says Miki—should express his unique God-given personality but always in relationship to the divine Plan and always in reference to the ideal of the coming age of Great Peace.' By being aware of the unity of man and the cosmic power, by making work an act of God, PL reasserts the ancient Shinto principle that happiness for the individual and society results from working harmoniously with nature. [27] If we live artistic lives, Miki teaches, we can create a world of matchless beauty—a world mirroring God's creativity.

Thanks to sects such as Perfect Liberty, Shintoism, like its cousin Shamanism, is still a vital faith, subtly defying modern secular trends of thought and life in Japan. With Shamanism and Shinto, ancient traditions are being kept alive through the more modern, streamlined offshoots of the religion. In the Far East at least, new revelations of truth and new ways of looking at traditional messages continue to attract devotees and continue to point men towards Heaven.

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[25] *Ibid.* p. 59.

" Bach. *Ibid.* p. 100.

Ibid, p. 109.

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