Modernity and Postmodernity in Japanese New Religion and Literature

by

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Abstract


The development of new religious movements in Japan is intimately related to fundamental social changes that have taken place since the mid-nineteenth century. Rapid modernization influenced the directions and characteristics of new religions. In this thesis, I argue that three modern conditions — in particular, secularization, urbanization, and the spirit of reformation and protest — have had a profound impact on the nature of new religious organizations. In modern societies, religion became one of the social structures that supports meta-narratives such as communalism, the goals of which are to achieve a better life for the group. New religions entered a new phase after Japan entered the so-called postmodern era, the post-industrial, super-consumption culture beginning in the 1970's. New religions entered a new phase as they were influenced by postmodernism's emphasis on individualism, consumerism, and the emergence of advanced information technologies. Since the meta-narratives and perceptions of reality and authenticity are deconstructed in such a society, new religions offer individual fulfillment through virtual reality and fictitious themes as well as doctrines based on globalism.

By studying two literary works, it becomes clear that underlying the emergence of religious movements are social and cultural problems such as power struggles, legitimacy, individualism, and hyperreality. Literary works that deal with new religions successfully analyze these problems in detail and articulate the drastic ways in which the mentality of the Japanese people has changed according to social changes and movements within modern and postmodern eras. New religions reflect a heightened awareness of people's daily lives and hopes; they emerge from an implicit critique of conventional religions that have been rather concerned with communities as a whole.
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Introduction

This thesis will examine and discuss the relationships between modernity, postmodernity and new religion in Japanese literature. I will examine modernity and religion by studying Takahashi Kazumi’s (1931-1971) *Jashumonge* (The Evil Creed) first published in 1966. I will look at postmodernity and religion by focusing on Shimada Masahiko’s (1961- ) *Yogensha no Namae* (The Name of the Prophet) published in 1992, as well as several other works with religious themes. I will discuss these novels which have interesting religious themes from different but interrelated perspectives: historical, cultural, and literary. By studying modernity and postmodernity in relation to Japanese religions within the context of literary works, I will comment on the ways in which new types of religions in Japan come to have an impact on society, and how literature about religions has reflected people’s problems and sufferings at various historical moments. The examination of new religions in literature is meaningful because of the persistent belief that Japanese people are not religious and because the relationship between new religions and literature has not been a major field of study. I believe that an understanding of the roles of religion in modern and contemporary Japan can help one to understand religion’s potential influence on Japanese culture and society, since religions are always concerned with people’s problems and literature can articulate these issues by offering social and cultural backgrounds.

In Chapter One, I will examine modernity and postmodernity in Japanese new religions. I will trace the history of religions after the Meiji Restoration until the present. In Chapters Two and Three, I will closely look at works by Takahashi Kazumi and Shimada Masahiko, looking at the religious genre in Japanese literature and the treatment of religious themes by critics. I will examine these two works because they discuss the relationship between new religions and society; while Takahashi Kazumi’s masterpiece *Jashumonge* directly deals with the rise and fall of a new religious organization in modern Japan, the foremost postmodern writer Shimada Masahiko explores postmodernity and religion in *Yogensha no Namae*. 
Chapter One: Modernity and Postmodernity in Japanese Religions

Introduction to Japanese Religion in the Modern Age

Japanese religions in the modern period have many complex and contradictory aspects. Matsumoto Shigeru points out the contradictory aspect of Japanese religiousness. He argues that Japanese do not appear to be religious – especially in the modern age, when the number of people who do not commit themselves to specific religions is increasing. At the same time, it seems Japanese are religious when one discovers the large number of religious organizations and the large numbers of people who visit famous shrines and temples.¹

This comment by Matsumoto is, however, insufficient in describing important aspects of Japanese religions as it lacks reference to new types of religions. While it is true that traditional religions are losing their power in contemporary Japan, non-traditional religions in modern and contemporary Japan follow different historical trajectories. Matsumoto’s comment ignores two important questions about religions in Japan: the first question is whether or not Japanese were religious from the beginning of the Meiji period until World War II. If one takes the position generally agreed upon by scholars that modernization in Japan has begun since the Meiji Restoration, it is utterly incorrect to claim Japanese were not religious during the prewar period. One must not forget that Japan became an imperial nation after the government bestowed upon the Emperors deity status, and designated Shintoism as a national religion. However, in the same time period, a number of new religious movements emerged in spite of State Shinto’s existence. Some of the movements grew into massive religious organizations after World War II: for example, Seicho no Ie, Perfect Liberty and Sōka Gakkai were established during the early Shōwa period and sent missions outside of Japan to acquire many followers during the prewar period. These religions are still popular among people in and outside of Japan, which shows that Japanese people at that time longed for the new type of religions.² While State Shinto was concerned with larger national issues, the people sought a religion which was closer to their daily lives.

The second question is whether Japanese people after the war are truly religious or

not. According to nationwide polls regarding religion, 50% of Japanese used to follow particular religions in the 1950’s; however, the number has gradually decreased from the 1960’s to the 1980’s, and it finally reached a low of about 30% in 1995.\textsuperscript{3} It is true that religious events in people’s daily lives are most often affiliated with customs and ceremonial occasions such as funerals, weddings, and New Year celebrations, yet it is too hasty to judge that contemporary Japanese are not religious at all. Again one has to take into consideration the rise of the new religions. Although the statistics are sometimes not very reliable, it has been reported that some of these newly formed religious organizations have several million members; that they comprise 10% of the whole population of Japan.\textsuperscript{4} On the one hand, new religious groups have gradually begun to influence Japanese society. It is well known that one of the largest religious organizations in Japan, Sôka Gakkai, formed the political party Kômeïtô in 1964 and has greatly influenced the political landscape. It also owns educational institutions such as a university and a publishing house. A rather less positive example is Aum Shinrikyô, which had over ten thousand followers in the early 1990’s. Its nerve gas attack on Tokyo’s subways in 1995 resulted in 11 people’s deaths and over 5,500 people’s injures.\textsuperscript{5} This shocking terrorism by the new religious organization led people to reconsider the definition and role of religion. On the other hand, as Shimazono Susumu points out, following the 1970’s, a new spirituality movement has begun in urban areas of Japan – a movement that is similar to the New Age movement in the West. This movement does not require participation in a particular organization, yet it is still very popular among young people. It is possible to say that new religions in contemporary Japan have the potential to significantly influence society. But this does not appear in the percentages of the polls.

It is important, then, for one to learn about new religions and their relation to society and culture in order to understand Japanese religions in the modern and contemporary period. As Inoue Nobutaka points out, new religions are close to one’s daily life; unlike traditional

\textsuperscript{3} Ishii Kenji, Data Book Gendai Nihonjin no Shûkyô (Tokyo: Shin’yôsha, 1997), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{4} Inoue, Gendai Nihon no Shûkyô Shakaigaku, 166-196.
religions, new religions respond to current trends, and are influenced by time. The history of new religions after the Meiji Restoration will illustrate the ways in which Japanese religiousness and society have been changing in the modern and postmodern periods.

**History of the New Religions from Meiji to the Present**

It is very difficult to define the term “new religions” as there are some controversial issues surrounding the periodization of movements among scholars; yet one can, nonetheless, generalize its definition. According to Shimazono Susumu, new religions are new types of religions with secularized doctrines. They develop with the great support of followers in urban areas where rapid modernization has taken place since the mid-nineteenth century, and where traditional religions with longer histories have faced decline. Here I will trace the history of new religions in Japan according to the social changes which occurred in Japan after the mid-nineteenth century, since new religions have strong relationships with modernization and social changes. I will follow Nishiyama Shigeru’s theory which divides religious movements into six periods.

The first period is from the early nineteenth century until the proclamation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889. In terms of politics, this is the transition period from the political disorder at the very end of the Edo period to the establishment of the modern imperial nation in the early Meiji period. In economic terms, it is the starting point of Japanese capitalism and industrialism promoted by the government. For religious history, this is the period of the beginning of new religious movements and of the new religious classification “Sect Shinto.”

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7 New religions in Japan are sometimes called “newly formed religion” (shinkō shūkyō), “new religion” (shin shūkyō) and “new/neo new religion” (shin shin shūkyō). According to Clarke and Somers, the term shinkō shūkyō and shin shūkyō appeared among journalists and scholars in the 1950’s, and the latter is considered as more appropriate term since the former has contemptuous nuance. The third term shin shin shūkyō is used to describe more recent religious movements after the 1970’s and to differentiate them from the “old” new religions. Here I will use the term new religions just to differentiate them from traditional religious organizations such as Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity. See Peter B. Clarke and Jeffrey Somers, _Japanese new religions in the West_ (Kent/ Sandgate/ Folkestone, U.K.: Japan Library, 1994), 7.
established by the government. Confronted by waves of radical changes in politics and society, the great agitation of the people caused the emergence of the new type of religions which directly offered solutions to their problems. After the Meiji Restoration, the government started to interfere in religious issues in order to obtain full control over society. It combined Shrine Shinto (jinja shintō) and the Shinto of the Imperial House (kōshitsu shintō) into State Shinto (kokka shintō) to achieve a modernization of the state and a foundation for national and cultural identity. On the other hand, the government tried to disestablish Buddhism, which was the former national religion, but authorized Christianity due to foreign pressures. The authorities, then, launched into regulation of these new religious organizations as well. Since the government did not want to incorporate new religions into State Shinto, which had to be authentic, it created a new classification called Sect Shinto and approved thirteen different sects as derivative of Shinto tradition. Even under this governmental regulation, some influential religious organizations were formed during this period. For example, Kurozumikyō was established in 1814 and had forty thousand followers by 1868. Tenrikyō was established in 1838 and Konkōkyō was established in 1859, which also gained a considerable number of followers at that time.

The second period is from the proclamation of the constitution in 1889 until the end of the Russo-Japanese war, 1905. During this period, the government improved the domestic political system in order for Japan to become a modern nation. For example, the attendance rate in compulsory education became over 90% in 1902, whereas it was about 50% in 1890. As for international politics, Japan joined the Western powers through victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars; Japan increased its power over East Asian territories competing with other European countries. In terms of economy, this is the point at which Japan began to enlarge its economic zone to encompass other Asian countries, supported by the rapid development of industrial capitalism. For example, in the spinning

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10 Ibid., 24-26.
13 Ishii Susumu and others, Shōsetsu Nihonshi (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1999), 286.
industry, production of cotton exceeded the amount of imports in 1890. After the Sino-Japanese War, Japan started to export cottons to China and Korea. Eventually, the amount of exports exceeded that of imports in 1897.\(^\text{14}\) Thus widespread education helped to distribute imperialism, and advanced industrialization contributed to the restoration of pride in the nation.

As for religion, several religious groups developed into massive organizations. On the other hand, the government began to interfere with the religious movements during the same time period. After the government created the classification of Sect Shinto, new religious groups voluntarily – or sometimes compulsorily – reformulated their doctrines to conform to State Shinto’s doctrine since they wanted to legalize their activities and be independent sects. The regulations by the government became more intensified than the previous period, yet these regulations were not for anti-governmental actions. New religious organizations were not charged with high treason but mainly with illegal magic healing. Nishiyama points out that the government at that time wanted to outlaw anything barbaric or shamanistic in order to maintain its reputation as a fully civilized nation.\(^\text{15}\) But in spite of these regulations, several religious groups became massive organizations during this period because of their secularized doctrines and physical healing. For example, Tenrikyō had three million followers in 1895.\(^\text{16}\)

The third period is from the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 until the Shōwa Depression, which started in 1930. Even though Japan regarded itself as one of the foremost world powers by colonizing Korea, several social inconsistencies emerged during this period. Huge amounts of war amortization after the Russo-Japanese war resulted in an abrupt increase in taxes, which fatigued farmers in the countryside and caused industrial disputes in the cities. To prevent these confrontations, the government promoted moral and ideological policies. The new criminal law issued in 1908 provided a new article of high treason and reinforced the article of lese majesty in order to emphasize the divinity and absolute power of

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 276.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 27.
the Emperor. At the same time, the period from 1912 until 1925/30 is called Taishō Democracy when intellectuals and politicians could participate in democratic and social movements for the right to vote. As for the economy, Japan experienced a number of “up-and-down” events during this period. Victory in World War I ended the serious recession and financial crisis after the Russo-Japanese War. Maritime trade prospered due to the worldwide shortage of ships, and Japan’s maritime trade grew to rank third in the world. Thanks to this war boost, people in the cities enjoyed a new western-type of leisure which involved movies, cafés, and dancing. However, this boost did not last very long. A serious recession caused the Rice Riots in 1918 and reached its peak with the Shôwa Depression, 1930.

As for new religious movements, powerful religious organizations developed rapidly owing to the occult boom, but at the same time authorities regulated new religions more strictly. After Tenrikyô was approved as an independent sect in 1908, no other new religion became a legally approved organization. Unapproved groups were forced into legally unstable situations. Additionally, the government changed its policy for regulating religions. Authorities had applied regulations against “barbaric” activities such as magical healing before, but they now started to accuse new religions of crimes such as high treason. Even under these limiting circumstances, however, some of the new religions such as Taireidô and Ômoto flourished with the help of the occult boom at the end of the Meiji period. These new religious groups had highly syncretic doctrines emphasizing irrational occultism, and they started to use mass media for missionary work in urban areas. In particular, religious groups such as Ômoto and Honmichi stressed the doctrine called “transformation of the world” (yo naoshi) since people experienced intense anxiety and financial difficulties due to two wars and social upheavals. Yet highly political activities by Ômoto and Honmichi resulted in their leaders’ arrests for high treason and these groups could not avoid temporary declines.

The fourth period is from the Shôwa Depression in 1930 until the defeat in World

17 Ibid., 28.
18 Ishii and others, Shôsetsu Nihonshi, 305.
19 Ibid., 288.
War II, 1945. Serious political and financial stagnation such as the political corruption, financial crisis and plutocracy led to the military uprising which pressed the government for a breakthrough. The May 15th Incident in 1931 and the February 26th Incident in 1936 undermined the civilian cabinet, eventually handing the military all political power. As for the economy, Japan experienced a financial crisis due to the number of wars. Even though the Japanese economy recouped three years after the Great Depression with the development of heavy industries such as steel and machinery production, the increase in the national debt incurred for military funds caused an increase of taxes and an increase in the production of bank notes, which eventually resulted in severe inflation. Meanwhile, the government seized absolute power over the nation by passing the National Mobilization Law in 1938. The National Electricity Control Law issued in the same year allowed authorities to interfere in private companies.

Strict controls reached the world of religion, too. The government began to oppress many religious groups, new and traditional, not only through criminal law but also through the Peace Preservation Law. Ōmoto is the one of the outstanding examples of religious oppression in modern Japan. After the leader of Ōmoto, Deguchi Onizaburō, was released from the jail, the organization recovered quickly, establishing an external political organization named Shōwa Shinseikai in 1934. Shōwa Shinseikai was a nationalistic organization supported by politicians, military figures, and the leaders of right wing groups; it attracted one million attendances to the lectures and eight million supporters in 1935. However, the government did not admit this unapproved group related to Ōmoto which openly criticized the Cabinet, and again arrested Deguchi Onizaburō and his two hundred cadre for lese majesty and violation of the Peace Preservation Law. In the next year, 1937, authorities destroyed all the buildings of Ōmoto, including its shrine, and banned its reassociation.

Another religious group, Hito no Michi, which is now called Perfect Liberty, was oppressed by the government even though it followed the doctrine of State Shinto. During
the war period, the government oppressed any type of religious group – regardless of compliance with State Shinto – when it became powerful and influential to society. With few exceptions, religious organizations were more strictly controlled by the Religious Organizations Law issued in 1938. In the fifth period is from defeat in World War II in 1945 until the first Oil Shock in 1973. After the defeat, Japan started to become a democratic nation with the dissolution of the imperial system and the proclamation of the new constitution. The Constitution of Japan declares that sovereignty resides with the people; it asserts fundamental human rights, and it renounces war and arms. In it, the Emperor becomes the symbol of the nation who does not have any actual political power. After experiencing seven years of occupation, Japan became independent in 1952 and tried to restore its international reputation. For example, Japan joined the United Nation in 1956 and restored relations with the USSR in 1956, South Korea in 1965, and China in 1972. The Japanese people experienced extreme poverty just after the war, but the economy recovered thanks to the boost provided by the Korean War from 1951 to 1953. Japan then experienced the period of so called “high economic growth.” From 1955 to 1973, the annual growth rate of the Japanese economy was over 10% and its gross national product ranked second among the capitalistic countries in 1968.27

Also, during this period, religious organizations experienced the greatest changes in their history since the Meiji Restoration. Just after the defeat, State Shinto was abolished and the Emperor himself denied his divinity. The constitution declared a separation of politics and religion, and guaranteed complete religious freedom to the people.28

In order to survey new religious movements in this period, Nishiyama further divided this period into two since there are too many changes during this period. The first half is the restoration period after the war from 1945 till 1960, and the latter is the high economic

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25 Ishii and others, Shōsetsu Nihonshi, 341.
26 Ibid., 348-363.
27 Ibid., 356-57.
growth period, from 1961 till 1973. The first half of the period started with the release of the leaders of religious organizations from prison. The leaders who had been kept in prison on the charge of high treason and the violation of the Peace Preservation Law finally won religious freedom, as oppressive regulations and the religion authorization system were abolished just after the war. At last new religions obtained the same rights as the traditional religions had had, and began to conduct their religious activities in freer ways. For example, Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō, which had been forced to change their doctrines according to State Shinto, reestablished their original doctrines. Hito no Michi, Ômoto, Honmichi and Sōka Gakkai, whose leaders had been imprisoned during war time, restructured their organizations and started new missions. Among them, Sōka Gakkai won a considerable number of followers, and launched into politics. Risshō Kōseikai, which is an offshoot of Reiyūkai, also became one of the most powerful organizations. Nishiyama explains that this “rush hours of gods” phenomenon comes about because people who suffered from serious poverty and anomic social situations wanted to have a clear solution to their problems.

In the latter half of the period, some religious groups faced stagnation and disappeared while some others developed further. Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai were two that became massive organizations with rapid increases in membership. During this period, people’s lifestyles became more stable so that they began to look for not shamanistic or practical effects but for something to make their lives livable in the world of religion. These two organizations sensed that people’s motivations for affiliation had changed and that members’ social classes had risen: they then modified their doctrines in more rational ways.

The sixth period is from 1973 until the end of Showa, 1988. During this period, there were no great changes in politics except the Lockheed Scandal and the Recruit Scandal. These scandals show politics allying itself with the economy and bureaucracy in unhealthy

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30 Ibid., 33.
31 Ibid., 34.
32 Ibid., 35.
33 The Lockheed Scandal is the incident when the former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei was arrested for the acceptance of a bribe from Lockheed in 1976. The Recruit Scandal is that the publishing company Recruit bribed a number of politicians, bureaucrats, and executives in big companies in 1988 to become competitive in the market.
ways, even though conservative policies during this period could offer stability in society. In spite of the low rate of economic growth, the Japanese economy became the most powerful in the world in the 1980's, as Japan made considerable trade profits through increases in exports. This brought not only affluence in society, but also “Japan-bashing” by western countries. In terms of religion, the change of lifestyle and thought in affluent society leads people to privatize their interests. For example, religion for Japanese people had been a household matter for a long time; Sōka Gakkai counts its membership not by the number of individual followers but by households. Yet in this period, religion came to be considered a wholly individual matter. This change also brought a boom in the occult and magic, often called the “spiritual world,” and “new” new religions. Even though “old” new religions such as Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai launched into the international food aid and anti-nuclear movements, these organizations did not develop and may ever have declined, in the 1970's. This is mainly because the rationalization of their doctrines did not suit the occult and magic boom and privatization of one’s interest in this period.

On the other hand, there are some religious groups that grew rapidly during the same time period. Shinnyozen, Agon no Shū, Mahikari, the God Light Association (GLA), Kōfuku no Kagaku, and Aum Shinrikyō are new groups that became powerful after 1970. These groups are called “new” new religions by scholars. The definition of “new” new religions is in dispute among scholars as there are no significant changes between “old” new religions and “new” ones. However, there are still some characteristics unique to these “new” new religions. First, they put emphasis on mystical performance and physical experience rather than on studying doctrines. Second, the characteristics of the communities in these religious groups fall into one of two extremes: on the one hand, several “new” new religions such as Agon no Shū and GLA tend to respect the freedom and autonomy of individual adherents to the community; on the other hand, groups such as Aum Shinrikyō and Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity require followers to join extremely

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34 Ishii and others, Shōsetsu Nihonshi, 365-370.
close-knit communities. Third, followers of these organizations are relatively young people. For example, followers in their teens and twenties comprise 60% of Mahikari and 40% of Ōyama Nezu no Mikoto Shinji Kyōkai.

Nishiyama's periodization ends in 1988, and many scholars claim that we are still in the sixth period of the Japanese new religious movement. However, several religious issues and features arise between 1988 and the present, 2001. In politics, many scandals related to the ministerial Conservative Party occurred one after another after the era of Heisei started in 1989. Accordingly, a series of corrupt practices in politics have occasioned disillusionment and discontent with conservatism. Finally, the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) lost its majority and a coalition cabinet took political power in 1993. The bubble economy - caused by speculative dealings based on the prices of lands and stocks - “burst” due to the slump in stock prices in 1990. The Japanese economy has experienced endless recession due to the weakness of the yen and bad debts. Reflecting the mood of recession and fin de siècle, new religious movements are still active and bear the same characteristics as those in the previous period; yet society considers some of the “new” new religions highly problematic and violent. For example, the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity is believed to use its followers to sell ordinary vases and family seals at extraordinary prices with promises of spiritual benefits. Aum Shinrikyō is famous for its usage of drugs and violence to control its followers and its threats of terrorism toward society at large. Yamagishi Kai is accused of “mind control” of its followers. Shimazono claimed that it is difficult to refer to these groups as religious organizations due to their highly disorderly attitudes. Yet, the mass media treats these new groups as antisocial religious organizations and regards them as serious social problems.

Thus, new religious movements in Japan are profoundly related to the fundamental social changes which have occurred since the mid-nineteenth century. Takagi Hirotaka is one

39 Ishii and others, Shōsetsu Nihonshi, 368.
40 Ibid., 369-370.
scholar who emphasizes the impact of the economy on religion since new religious movements seem to be active whenever the economy is in a slump. However, Nishiyama rebuts Takagi’s simplistic theory by showing that it cannot explain the rise of religious movements after the 1970’s, a period of economic growth. Nishiyama argues that there is a complex connection between new religious movements and social change. Rapid modernization and urbanization has influenced the directions and characteristics of new religions. Also, it is obvious that new religions enter a new phase after Japan enters the so-called postmodern era, which usually refers to the post-industrial, hyper-consumption society following the 1970’s. I will next look at modern and postmodern conditions in relation to Japanese new religions.

Modernity and Religion in Japan

After the opening of the country and the establishment of new political frames in the early Meiji period, there were a number of changes in society which Japan had never experienced before. Japan’s political system changed from feudalism to constitutional monarchy. Rapid urbanization and industrialization occurred in imitation of Western countries. The lifestyle of the people changed as they adapted some of the practical customs of Western culture. However, some scholars who study postmodern conditions in Japan claim that this does not constitute a period of “modernity.” They argue that Japan did not have a “modern” period. For example, the poststructuralist Karatani Kōjin claims that modernism in Japan is different from modernism in Western countries: that Japan skipped the modern period, passing directly from the traditional to the postmodern; in the Meiji period, it had already entered “a decentered or multicentered reality” where all fixed metaphysical centers such as God and the ego had been replaced by postmodern deconstructive discourses. On the other hand, another well-known poststructuralist, Asada Akira, claims that Japan has just entered into modernity since Japanese society – and especially its

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43 Ishii and others, Shōsetsu Nihonshi, 368.274-293.
44 Steven Heine and Charles Wei-hsun Fu, introduction to Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspective, ed. Steven Heine and Charles Wei-hsun Fu (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), xii.
capitalism – is “infantile” compared to Western societies. Some scholars argue about the question of Japan’s modernity or non-modernity in books such as Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives and Postmodernism and Japan, both of which assert a strong relationship between premodernity and postmodernity in Japan. It is true that modernity in Japan is different from that of most Western countries. The Western sense of modernity began with philosopher’s assertion of the death of God, previously the epistemological center of the universe, and the attempt to replace that center with humankind. However, Japanese religion has a totally different history compared to the Western one. Japanese religions and theological thoughts such as animism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism have always been polytheistic and syncretic. Then, much later in its history, Japan came to have a deified central authority figure in place in the early Meiji period and it was not until the end of World War II that Japan experienced the shift from absolute God to humankind. This happened much later than in the Western countries. All of these arguments show ambiguity and variety of the definition of modernity in Japan.

Yet the nonexistence of a divine supreme being, the difference in modernization, the incompleteness of Japanese social and political systems – these arguments are too insubstantial to support the idea that Japan did not experience modernity in any field at all during the Meiji period. It is true that Japanese society, especially its political system after the Meiji Restoration and until the end of World War II, bears a strong resemblance to premodernity, but that does not mean that Japan as a whole remained a premodern country. For example, no one can deny that, since Meiji, Japan has experienced modern conditions which had also occurred in Western countries: urbanization, widespread networks of transportation and mass media, secularization, high social mobility and industrialization in

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48 Heine and Fu, introduction, xii.
general. Not only scientific fields such as technology, medicine and industry but also humanistic fields such as economy and philosophy, and artistic fields such as literature and fine arts were influenced by these changes. In his Nobel Prize speech, Ōe Kenzaburō clearly states that Japan embarked on modernization in the latter half of the nineteenth century and experienced large cultural revolutions including the reform of literature, though he admits that modernization in Japan is not complete in some areas.

As for politics and religion, modernization looks ambiguous because of the existence of the emperor system. However, we can discover certain changes in these fields when we compare the Meiji period to the Edo period. For example, as we have seen in the history of new religion, it is obvious that these significant changes in the political sphere also influenced religious movements after the Meiji Restoration. Even though a deified central figure can be considered a premodern phenomenon, the Meiji Constitution guaranteed a certain degree of freedom to the people. As Inoue points out, freedom of speech and religious freedom in the Meiji Constitution functioned better, at least until the wartime period, than during the Edo period which did not allow freedom of thought and religion. This definite change made new religious movements possible after the Meiji Restoration. I would, therefore, like to take the position that Japan started to experience modern conditions since the Meiji Restoration, even though modernity in some areas may have been ambiguous. I will, then, study the characteristics of modernity that influenced the new religious movements.

There are three major characteristics of modernity that are profoundly related to the new religious movements that came about from the mid-nineteenth century onward. The first characteristic is “secularization.” For a long time, established religious organizations such

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51 Inoue, Gendai Nihon no Shūkyō Shakaigaku, 134-135.
52 The word “secularization” in this sentence is the standard translation for the Japanese word “sezoku-ka,” which is used in all Japanese histories of this time period. In English the word “secularization” implies a decline in organized religious activity in a society, but in Japanese it refers most immediately to the dismantling of the feudal order accomplished during the Meiji period. In Meiji,
as Buddhism and Shintoism had been controlled by the ruling classes – that is upper class aristocrats and bushi, high ranking monks and priests. Common people believed in these established religions, yet were not powerful enough to influence their doctrines, practices and teaching. There was a strict hierarchy in the world of religion. Yet, in new religious movements which began at the end of the Edo period, people in the lower classes became the founders of religious organizations, and obtained a considerable number of followers. Also, anyone who devoted him- or herself to religious activities could become a leading member of many of these organizations. Thus, secularization contributed to the destruction of power structures and class differences in the realm of religion.53

Secularization also occasioned a change of location in the performance of religious practices. In Buddhism, which had been a national religion from the Asuka period until the Edo period, many who seriously wanted to pursue a religious life needed to renounce the world and engage in religious practice at secluded temples. However, new religions placed their religious centers in secular places. People became able to perform religious activities at home or in open, public places.54

Finally, secularization brought about a shift in emphasis from "other worldliness" to "this worldliness." Established Japanese traditional religions had emphasized other worldliness: they defined the other world as absolute and heavenly, whereas this world is imperfect and negative. Salvation has to take place in the other world, and religious activities and practices in this world are designed to guarantee salvation in the other world. However, new religions started to place greater value on this current life, promising this-worldly benefits in order to solve problems such as illness, poverty, and discordance in human relationships.55

The second characteristic of modernity that influenced new religions is urbanization. Rapid industrialization in the early Meiji period changed the structure of industry from

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54 Ibid., 56-57.
55 Shimazono, "Introduction to Part 4," 223.
agriculture to manufacturing, which occasioned a great increase of population in the major cities and a depopulation of rural areas. Rapid urbanization influenced people’s traditional relationships to religions. In the Edo period, people had relationships with Shintoism as the religion of their local communities. Everyone in a community had to belong to one local shrine as *ujiko*, a member of the shrine. Agricultural rites and festivals took place under the direction of Shinto priests. People also had relationships with Buddhism as the religion of their own households. Each family belonged to a Buddhist temple as *danka*, a supporter of the temple: each family would have a family tomb there. They venerated their own ancestors according to Buddhist rites. These traditional relationships between the common people and religion became unstable as depopulation and mobility destroyed the stability of the local community and the household. Newly arrived in major cities, people from rural areas had to cut their traditional religious ties and many of them longed for new spiritual support. This background enabled new religions to become powerful, especially in urban areas.

Urbanization also occasioned a change in the unit that joins religious institutions. During the Edo period, common people used to follow their extended family traditions such as their household’s occupation and religion. However, industrialization and urbanization made it difficult to pass on these traditions, as people acquired mobility and the freedom to choose their occupations. Those away from their hometowns created nuclear families in the cities and began to believe in religions which were different from their households’ religions. Most people did not hesitate to have two different religions at the same time, one for their extended family, and the other for their own family. Accordingly, the nuclear family became the dominant unit comprising the new religious organizations of the cities.

The third characteristic of modernity in Japanese religious movements is the spirit of reformation and protest. The very modern spirit of constant progress and improvement influenced religious doctrines too. Protestantism, which began in Europe, is the most significant modern religious phenomenon. People sought for the reformation of and

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58 Ibid., 144-148.
improvement in corrupted traditional churches and they defined this world more meaningful than the next world. This modern spirit of protest became widespread when “this worldliness” and rationalism prevailed in the modern cities. Even though Japan is not a Christian country, Japanese religions were affected by this worldly orientation when Japan’s modernization progressed. Many of the new religious groups have three different types of secular reformations in their teachings: healing sickness (byōki naoshi), healing the heart (kokoro naoshi), and the transformation of the world (yo naoshi). The first two healings belong to personal transformations, however they also work to develop good physical and mental conditions to avoid conflict with others and maintain harmonious human relationships. These transformations are designed to promote the cohesion of the family and other social groupings. The last one, the reformation of the world, is concerned directly with society as a whole. Tenrikyō, Ōmoto and Sōka Gakkai are famous for their political reforms even though they were repeatedly suppressed by the prewar government.\(^5^9\) It is difficult to say that the aspiration to realize their ideals through politics left many concrete results because of strong opposition from society; many Japanese people felt uncomfortable with the obvious relationship between politics and religion. Yet as Arai mentions, such actions helped to represent the voices of those in the lowest rank of society and to protest against unfairness to people who had suffered poverty and prejudice.\(^6^0\) Thus, new religions try to reform individuals and society in order to provide stability in the face of new social environments, groupings, and human relationships.

As described above, these three modern conditions have had a remarkable impact on the foundation of the new religious organizations. New religions cooperate with modernity, as people feel various anxieties when faced with previously unexperienced social changes. It is notable that during these periods of modern social changes, new religions offer stability, and appeal more to the family and other social groupings than to each individual. Communalism, the goal of which is to achieve a better life as a group, can be considered as an important feature of modernity. In modern societies, religion is one of the media which


support meta-narratives of people and society.

**Postmodernity and Religion in Japan**

Japan, however, underwent gradual but crucial changes when society experienced super-consumption culture and highly advanced capitalism since the mid 1970's and the early 1980's. Many advanced technologies such as space science, medicine and communications have greatly changed the people's lifestyles, and mass media such as television, advertising, music videos and the Internet constantly provide huge amounts of information and images. Jean Baudrillard and other commentators claim that we are entering the age of postmodernity, a culture characterized by a super-abundance of disconnected images and styles, un-differentiation of high and low culture, and the deconstruction of meta-narratives, traditional authorities, morals and values. New religious movements have changed at the same time. In Western countries, the New Age movement – which is a religious subculture that draws its inspiration from outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition – began on the west coast of the United States in the 1970's, and it quickly spread to European countries too. Japan is not an exception to this trend. Many scholars, including the foremost postmodernist Jacques Derrida, agree that Japan is one of leading nations that represent the postmodern phenomenon. Japan's religious movements are influenced by these cultural changes. As we have seen, the "new" new religions and a strong interest in the "spiritual world" also emerged in the early 1970's.

However, there is an argument that the New Age movement in western countries and the "new" new religions and interest in spirituality in Japan are not new and not postmodern at all. Paul Heelas, a scholar who specializes in cultural change and religion, claims that the New Age movement is not postmodern since it is more traditional than it appears: the New Age sanctification of the self aims to provide a foundation of identity and authority. This argument also applies to Japanese new religious movements. Japanese religions, whether

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traditional or new, are highly syncretic from the beginning of history, and the sanctification of the self is a central concept in traditional religions such as Japanese folk religion, Buddhism and Shintoism. However, even though Japanese new religious movements have some premodern characteristics, the influence of postmodernity on religion is too obvious to deny. These new religious movements must always meet people's needs and contemporary social currents; and the spirituality and mentality of the Japanese after the 1970's has radically changed due to social changes the like of which humankind has never experienced before. I would like, then, to examine the main postmodern features of Japanese new religious movements after the 1970's.

There are three main postmodern characteristics in Japanese new religious movements. The first is privatization. The concern for a happy family and working life during the modern period declined gradually after Japan became a fully developed country; in its place arouse the concern about meaninglessness and the lack of fulfillment in one's life. Some who have sufficient material comfort start to worry about what their lives mean and what their purpose is. Others, who hate pragmatic rationalism and the elitism of modern society, are concerned with harmony with nature and personal, inner fulfillment. Miracles and mystical practice are still powerful in “new” new religions, yet they are used not for group life but for individual experience. Religion in the modern period was focused in the nuclear family, but in the postmodern condition it belongs to an individual. A Japanese family in which each family member believes in a different religion is not at all unusual. This change from the group to the individual influences the ways in which religious groups are organized. Previously, in local religious groups of “old” new religions, people shared the small problems of everyday life with other members. However, in “new” new religions, some groups, such as the Unification Church and Aum Shinrikyō, tend to separate themselves from larger society and create monastic religious communities. Groups such as Kōfuku no Kagaku and Hō no Hana Sanpōgyō use the mass media to gather people and do not rely on closely-knit groups active in local communities. Other groups, such as GLA, think highly of

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65 Macmillan, 1996), 64.
67 Abe, Gendai Shūkyō no Han Kindaisei, 85-87
followers’ independence and spontaneity so that the group does not interfere in religious practices. In any case, people do not need to have a very close relationship with other members even though they are living together, since their religious practices put emphasis on the individual’s inner fulfillment.\textsuperscript{67}

The privatization of religion, however, results since the 1970’s in different religious movements that neither create religious organizations nor emphasize participation in group activities. These movements usually start in highly modernized cities in the world and develop simultaneously. They are called the New Age movement in English, while in Japan it is called the “spiritual world.” In this New Age movement, the ultimate goal is to search and discover one’s individual inner being and deity, to develop one’s own spirituality, and to succeed in spiritual transformation through practical techniques such as meditation, ascetic training, body work and psychotherapy. New Agers think that earlier organizational types of religion with difficult doctrines and institutional forms restricted individuals from realizing their full spiritual potential.\textsuperscript{68} Thus, the emergence of the New Age movement occasions further privatization of religion in postmodern Japan.

The second characteristic is consumerism. In major developed cities, consumerism penetrates people’s daily lives. People have enough leisure time and money to enjoy their lives in the cities where everything is valued in monetary terms. The power of consumption – that is the production of desire according to Baudrillard – becomes a most significant cultural code invading not only markets of pop videos, theme parks, and shopping malls but also non-marketable domains such as science, religion, gender, and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{69} Also in Japan, super-consumption culture since the late 1970’s has a great impact on the area of religion and spirituality as well as the area of the economy. Shimazono points out that commercialization of the sacred has also been taking place since the 1970’s: religions become one of the products for people to choose and consume. For example, in the prehistoric period such as the Jōmon and Yayoi periods, it is believed that individual offerings to the religious activities were made not for one’s own sake only but for the sake of the community. During the

\textsuperscript{67} Shimazono, “Introduction to Part 4,” 224-225.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 226.
premodern period, to renounce the world meant not only a personal offering of the self but also a communal offering: sending away a talented person from a village to temples and shrines means that the village as a whole come closer to the sacred as a community. In the modern period, some new religious organizations were criticized for their extreme requirements for offerings and volunteer work. Tenrikyō was intensely criticized in the mass media because of its policy on offerings, yet these offerings and volunteer works were meant for the sake of community as well as the individual. For example, Tenrikyō’s volunteer work called “offerings to the sun” (hi no kishin) is designed for healing one’s own sickness but it also contributes to the happiness of one’s family and the success of a missionary undertaking. However, since the 1970’s, offerings have lost their communal aims and perform only for the sake of the person. In other words, an offering can be regarded as an investment in achieving one’s own religious fulfillment.  

It is possible to say that followers of “new” new religions are consumers who purchase a whole set of religious experiences of fulfillment and transformation. The New Age movement and interest in spirituality that started in the 1970’s enforce the tendency of consumerism. People do not need to belong to any particular organization to achieve their inner transformation. Instead, they have to spend money in order to obtain religious experience. All they need to do is to attend self-enlightenment seminars or yoga schools, buy books of inner spirituality and healing stones and charms. All mystic rites and arts are purchasable in postmodern culture.

The third characteristic of postmodernity in new religions is the emergence of highly advanced information technologies. The rapid development and propagation of new information technologies such as fax machines, satellite television, videos, cellular phones, the Internet, and digital media greatly change the world after the 1970’s. Information itself comes to possess values, and mechanisms for processing a considerable amount of information at one time are widespread not only within companies and public institutions but also within the home. This change even influences the world of religion, as the center of

71 Inoue, Gendai Nihon no Shūkyō Shakaigaku, 106-107.
72 Shimazono and Ishii, Shōhi sareru Shūkyō, i-iii.
spiritual culture, on two different levels.

First, the development of highly advanced information systems affects the methods of missionary undertakings. Of course, it is well known that “old” new religions made great use of the “old” media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television as missionary media. Also some organizations such as Perfect Liberty and Risshō Kōseikai started festival-type events which non-followers could join and which are broadcast by television. These draw much attention from common people and help in acquiring new followers. Yet still the most successful missionary tactic of religious organizations has been introducing a follower’s acquaintance to meetings or lectures held in the local branch of the religious organization. The mass media is one of the means of supporting these face-to-face missions by followers. However, in “new” new religions, some organizations such as Agon no Shū and Aum Shinrikyō have started to use new media such as satellite television, digital communications through personal computer, and the Internet, along with new varieties of “old” media such as books, comic books (manga), and animated movies. It becomes possible for religious organizations to mission anonymous people regardless of time and place through these new types of media. At the same time, religious practices and events through these media change from mass-oriented to individual-oriented. When Videocassette Recording (VCR) technology was still expensive, followers gathered at one place and watched videos at the same time. After watching, they shared time in discussion and practice. However, since VCR technology has become relatively easy to afford, and since other digital media such as the Internet are widely available, some religious organizations have started to separate followers, letting them watch videos individually. Hence, the emergence of developed technologies enables organizations to mission more anonymously and to offer more individual orientation by overcoming restrictions of time and distance.

Second, this overcoming of restrictions of time and distance, as well as visions of virtual reality after the 1980’s, occasions the shift from “this worldliness” to detachment from this world. Detachment from reality does not mean a return to “other worldliness”; it is a

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desire, rather, to acquire another self in virtual reality. Whereas the goals in the “spiritual world” movement once were to transform oneself or to improve one’s inner self in this world, today the goals are to acquire another self not in one’s reality but in another reality in this world still retaining oneself at the same time. When localness of the body becomes dubious through virtual reality and direct human relationships decrease in one’s reality, people become interested in religious activities that are designed to acquire the abilities of omnipresence and perfect communications with others.\(^5\) For example, most of the seminars and practices in these New Age movements place emphasis on one’s ability to escape from harsh reality and to create another ideal self who can communicate with others perfectly in the imaginary world. The leader of the “new” new religious organization GLA, Takahashi Shinji, actually taught his followers that he was omnipresent, and emphasized the importance of such a supernatural power to his followers, as omnipresence enables them to guide others in better ways.\(^6\) Among them, Aum Shinrikyō is the foremost example of this tendency. They try to achieve full control over people by obtaining supernatural power, which enables one to enter others and take them over. At a larger level, they created a nation-like organization and actually planned to take over the real government by terrorism. Un-differentiation between this reality and virtual reality alters religious doctrines and perceptions of the world. Thus the influence of advanced information technologies radically changes missionary methods, consciousness about the self, and reality in religious activities.

As described above, these three postmodern conditions have had a great impact on new religious movements and perceptions of spirituality after the 1970’s. This phenomenon is deeply affected by the end of meta-narrative. Meta-narratives were the core of modern concepts, as people shared the same goals and ideals, such as democracy and the affluent society. “Old” new religions helped to solve a number of major problems – poverty, sickness, and conflicts in human relationship – in order to come closer to shared ideals. However, radical social changes such as individualism, consumerism, and the emergence of advanced information technologies have begun to destroy meta-narratives and perceptions of reality

\(^5\) Ibid., 31-36.
and authenticity. Instead, virtual reality and fictitious objects come to have power. “New” new religions and the “spiritual world” movements, therefore, offer case-by-case individual fulfillment, personal spiritual transformation, and visions of an ideal world through virtual reality. Furthermore, the lack of direct human communication brings about the desire of possession for an other self. It is possible to say that the sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyō is an extreme example that represents postmodernity in religion since it illustrates the ways in which this group seriously attempted to transform their fictitious society into the real one.\textsuperscript{77} All religions in the postmodern age seek ways in which to cope with drastic changes which cast doubts upon value, morality and authority.

Chapter Two: Japanese Literature and Modernism

The Religious Genre in Modern Japanese Literature

In this chapter, I will closely examine works of Japanese modern literature after the Meiji Restoration, as well as criticism of those works. The literary genre that deals with traditional religions such as Buddhism was already popular before the Meiji period. The religious genre in literature, however, became increasingly varied after the Meiji Constitution, which guaranteed people certain religious freedom and decriminalized Christianity. But, this religious freedom was partly limited: any religion that openly challenged the imperial system was forbidden at that time. For example, during the Meiji period there occurred a backlash against Buddhism and Buddhist literature. Although Japanese people had for a long time considered Shintoism and Buddhism as more or less intertwined, the government insisted that Shintoism and Buddhism should be separated in order to consolidate the authenticity of Shintoism. Consequently, many Buddhist literary works were censored. Christianity, by contrast, did not experience such a backlash, at least in the beginning, due to the governmental policy of westernization. Many students studied abroad or in westernized schools in Japan in order to learn western systems and thoughts; among them, Uchimura Kanzō, arguably the most important Christian thinker in the Meiji period influenced many novelists such as Kunikida Doppo, Arishima Takeo, Shiga Naoya and others. Also, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke often treated Christian themes, though he did not believe in Christianity itself.\(^\text{78}\) However, once Japan had become imperialistic after 1930, it became decidedly difficult to write about other religions and social ideologies. The authorities openly censored many books from 1937 until the end of World War II.\(^\text{79}\) After Japan’s defeat and following the promulgation of the new constitution guaranteeing religious freedom, a few writers slowly began to write about religion again. Post-war novelists such as Setouchi Harumi, Endō Shūsaku, Tsuji Kunio, Miura Ayako, and Takahashi Takako are followers of traditional religions including Christianity who often explore religious themes in their works.

At the same time, however, few literary works have been produced that deal with new


religions, especially during the prewar period: new religions and religious practices were widely believed to be heathenish or barbaric; because most followers of these new religions belonged to lower classes, they had little contact or exchange with the intellectual class from which most writers came. However, after the war a number of writers did begin to show interest in the new religions as part of a broader social movement. In particular, occult booms and the emergence of "new" new religions affected literary themes. Takahashi Kazumi’s *Jashumonge* (The Evil Creed), published in 1966, directly addresses the history of a fictional new religious group. Ishikawa Jun’s *Kyôfûki* (The Wild Wind Memoir), a serialized novel published from 1971 to 1980, is often referred to as the Japanese version of the apocalypse since it deals with eschatology and salvation. Inoue Mitsuharu’s uncompleted work *Kurai Hito* (The Gloomy Person), also a serialized novel published from 1987 to 1991, depicts a new religious group. The novel is influenced by the historical religious rebellion of Amakusa Shiro. As well, Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō’s works after the 1980’s often deal with strong religious themes: among them, *Moeagaru Midori no Ki* (The Burning Green Tree) series draws explicit attention to a savior and his supporters who create a syncretic type of church in a village on the island of Shikoku. Similarly, popular contemporary novelists such as Yoshimoto Banana and Murakami Haruki write short stories centered on new religious groups and followers’ lifestyles.

Thus, it seems obvious that new religious movements have had at least some influence on these major literary works regardless of the authors’ beliefs. Yet, regrettably few critics discuss the relationship between religion and literature. In particular, critics have largely overlooked the relationship between new religion, the New Age movement and literature. The critic Yoshimoto Takaaki often examines literary works and authors’ religious

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backgrounds, yet his criticism is primarily limited to traditional religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. Although Yoshimoto has recently made a number of comments on the Aum incident, his approach is sociological or theological, and does not address the incident's impact on the literary texts.° The poststructuralist critic Karatani Kôjin, on the other hand, takes a sociological approach to the impact of Christianity on early Meiji literature, and he energetically discusses postmodern aspects of Japanese literature. Yet Karatani does not discuss the recent relationship between new religions and literature very much. The philosopher Umehara Takeshi often deals with literary texts when he discusses religions in Japan, yet Umehara also focuses exclusively on traditional religions. Murakami Haruki, the novelist, wrote the non-fiction Andâ Guraundo (Underground), which contains extensive interviews of victims of the Aum nerve gas attack. However, Murakami does not approach this incident through the medium of fiction, even though he wrote at least one short story related to new religions. It seems to me that there must have been sociological and historical factors that have nourished the new type of religions, contributing to their differences from traditional religions. And it seems to me, moreover, that these sociological and historical factors must have influenced literary texts too. It is possible therefore to understand some of the ways in which religions in Japan have changed in the modern and postmodern periods by studying relevant literary works: religious novels, after all, reflect the problems and the ideals of common people at the time that they are written. In this and the following chapter, literary works that reflect modernity and postmodernity in Japanese society will be studied, with particular emphasis on Takahashi Kazumi's Jashûmonge (The Evil Creed) and Shimada Masahiko's Yogensha no Namae (The Name of the Prophet).

Takahashi Kazumi was born in 1931 in Osaka. He entered Kyoto University in 1954, majoring in Chinese literature; five years later, he obtained a Ph.D. in the same subject. While he worked as a scholar, Takahashi became famous as a writer and critic, particularly after he won the Kawade Shôbô literature prize for his first novel Hi no Utsuwa (The Vessel

Takahashi’s deep involvement with the nationwide university upheavals of 1968-1969 is widely known; he supported new left-wing students despite the fact that he was an associate professor at Kyoto University at the time. Takahashi died in 1971 due to cancer in the colon and the liver. In fact, his great struggle with cancer is described in *Waga Kaitai* (My Disintegration), published in 1971.\(^{87}\) It is interesting to know that Kazumi’s wife, Takahashi Takako, also a novelist, became a Catholic nun after her husband Kazumi—who was interested in new religions—passed away.\(^{88}\) This is one of the examples that each individual tends to choose or to be interested in different religious paths in Japan since the 1970’s. The novelist and critic Haniya Yutaka suggests that Takahashi is the writer most profoundly influenced by the tradition of postwar literature. Takahashi’s works tend to deal with grandiose themes that encompass all of Japanese society, including political, economic and cultural issues.\(^{89}\) *Jashūmonge* (The Evil Creed) is the best example of this tendency. It was serialized from 1965 to 1966 in *The Asahi Journal*, and published as a book in 1966 with considerable additions. *Jashūmonge* is—according to both Takahashi and most critics—his masterpiece. By tracing the emergence, development and death of one new religious group, the novel effectively critiques and challenges the entire history of modern Japan.\(^{90}\) I will look closely at themes of modernity through the religious movement in *Jashūmonge*.

Firstly, the preliminary and first few chapters of *Jashūmonge* provide background information regarding the new religious organization, Hinomoto Kyûreikai. The time is Showa 6 (1931) when the founder of Hinomoto Kyûreikai, Gyôtoku Masa, is already dead, and her son-in-law, Gyôtoku Ninjirô, is the leader of the organization. The story recounts the way in which Masa becomes a founder of Hinomoto Kyûreikai. Masa originally came from a poor farming family; she had six children between her two ex-husbands. After she was divorced and as a result of dire poverty, Masa could not help losing four of her children to

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90 Higuchi Satoru, “Enkon no Shinkô Shûkyô Seisuishi,” in *Jashûmonge*, vol.2 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha,
death. She often fell into states of mental confusion, and turned to different religions, seeking an explanation: what did her life really mean when four of her children die, and the other two reject her? Yet, with the exception of a Buddhist monk, no one treated her seriously. After Masa entered the mountain for her mental training, she returned to the village as a shaman who could cure people’s diseases. All the villagers were soon converted; they became her followers. This was the original moment of Hinomoto as a religious group. The initial doctrine of Hinomoto addressed the fate of the poor who could not be happy in this world: as such, it spread quickly among poor farmers and young factory workers who had reaped none of the benefits of the Meiji Enlightenment.91

Hinomoto grows when Masa meets Kamekawa Ninjirô who comes back to the fictional village called Kanbe after ten-year’s wandering. Indeed, on the day that Ninjirô returns, Masa makes a prophecy: the person who saves Hinomoto Kyûreikai is coming. Soon Masa finds out the prophecy has come true, for Ninjirô has great life experience and excellent management abilities which will enable the religious organization to develop further. Ninjirô initiates various kinds of movements which well reflect his broad experience and knowledge; he also gains new followers from the proletarian classes, in addition to farmers. In Taishô 2 (1913), when Masa is 59 and Ninjirô is 33 years old, Masa relinquishes her leadership to Ninjirô by adopting him as a son-in-law. Ultimately, the second leader, Ninjirô, refines the structure and doctrines of Hinomoto.92

In the beginning, the doctrine of Hinomoto bears a strong resemblance to the Pure Land sect of Buddhism which emphasizes the harshness and transience of this world and salvation in the next world. Rumors circulate, then, that Hinomoto is a religion of suicide as Hinomoto seems to approve suicide as a kind of religious expression. However, at the same time Ninjirô incorporates the Chinese thought “Great Harmony” (daidô shisô), which proclaims an ideal equalitarian society, into the doctrine of Hinomoto.93 Masa had sought desperately to find the meaning of life in this world and to transform this world into a better

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92 Ibid., 41-47.
93 Ibid., 145-148.
one: Ninjiro takes over her hope and enhances it with Great Harmony. Within the 
organization, followers live in an equal community, a community free of discrimination and 
men's sexual repression of women. The dissemination of this equalitarian thought becomes 
Hinomoto's main strategy for transforming the world (yo naoshi). The idea of yo naoshi 
helps to recruit supporters among the intellectual class who are interested in political 
reformation of the state.94

The headquarters of Hinomoto Kyûreikai is in Kanbe near Kyoto with many branches 
in major cities, which are supervised by the regional leaders. In the headquarters, there are 
groups of elders and organizers for consultation. As for the organizational administration, 
there are departments of general affairs, management, proselytizing, finance, project planning, 
and publishing. Additionally, in terms of practical business, there are departments of 
agriculture, industry and ceremony, as well as institutes for women, for the young, and for 
the counselors. Hinomoto owns farms, spinning factories, sericultural factories, botanical 
gardens, and hospitals – all of which are affiliated with the headquarters. With Ninjiro's 
excellent management, Hinomoto Kyûreikai grows to a million followers by the time that the 
Shôwa period begins.95

It is obvious that the background to this fictional religious organization described by 
Takahashi Kazumi bears resemblance to the conditions of modernity which are described in 
the previous chapter. Dismantling of the feudal order enables a poor woman to become the 
leader of a religious organization and to give salvation to people in the lower classes whose 
lives have deteriorated as a result of rapid urbanization. Hinomoto is organized by its 
followers and the organization places its center in a very secular place such as a village near 
to a city; its doctrines are designed for followers' daily lives. Though the doctrine of 
Hinomoto is originally based on salvation in the next world, it simultaneously stresses 
salvation in this world: the group originally became famous, after all, because of Masa's 
magical power of physical healing and fortune telling. Above all, the spirit of reformation 
and protest – that is the idea of yo naoshi – is the central theme in the novel. The story

95 Ibid., 145-148.
stresses that Hinomoto is acutely aware that religion must deal with the problems of this world in order to solve the problems of the lower classes. Hinomoto succeeds in gaining a considerable number of followers and supporters in just thirty years because the organization aims to be a religion of common people and for common people who have lost their direction in the rapidly changing society. In other words, Hinomoto Kyûreikai has its own meta-narrative to achieve in this world.

Problems of Modernity According to Foucault

After learning about Hinomoto’s success, it is striking to discover that the present-time in the story actually starts just after the governmental oppression of Hinomoto Kyûreikai which protests reformation of this world. The description of its development and success are covered in the preliminary chapter of Jashûmonge, and the following chapters deal primarily with Hinomoto’s suffering and survival through oppression and prejudice. Hinomoto suffers mainly as a result of oppression by the government, that is to say, the power of the ruler over the ruled. However, the story simultaneously illustrates another type of power which the government invisibly and indirectly exercises over Hinomoto and which Hinomoto also must exercise over itself. Hence, another reason for Hinomoto’s struggle emerges. Takahashi indicates that the dark side of modernity – that is the new power struggle hidden behind the bright side of modernity. He transforms Hinomoto’s suffering into a symbolic issue of modernity in relation to new power structures.

Michel Foucault, who theorizes the idea of power from a different angle, categorizes three different types of power by clarifying their characteristics in his late works such as Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality Vol.1, and his lectures on “Governmentality.” Here, I will look at Foucault’s new concept of power in the modern age in order to suggest another reason for Hinomoto’s suffering.96 The study of power in the Western theoretical tradition for a long time dealt only with issues of sovereignty and legitimacy. This tradition regards the idea of power as the ruler’s power, which enhances the capacities of those who possess it; as an imposition on the freedom of those who are ruled.

Foucault, however, insists that the study of power must move away from this traditional approach. He argues that there exist more complex power relationships in modern society. Foucault, then, introduces three distinctions: power in general, domination, and government. First, power in general is defined as “the total structure of actions” concerning the actions of free individuals; that is to say, power behavior of the individual is not entirely determined by physical constraints. Power in this case is exercised over people who are in a position to choose, and its purpose is to influence their choice. Since this power is exercised over those who are free, there exist always possibilities of resistance. In this definition, power and resistance against power are “ubiquitous human realities in this world.” Power is everywhere and available to anyone who is free, yet its exercise is “often unstable, ambiguous and reversible.”

Foucault’s second definition of power, “domination,” designates what we usually call power. Domination, unlike power in general, refers to “asymmetrical relationships of power in which subordinate individuals have little room for negotiation”: they have very limited freedom due to the effects of power. In the case of domination, people who dominate are often able to impose their will on ever those who resist. Domination is more stable and hierarchical than power in general, yet it is not entirely one-sided: there is still some room left for the dominated to resist by committing suicide or homicide. Still, Foucault argues that domination must be avoided whenever possible because it permits the “perpetual instigation of new dominations” which enable those who dominate to exploit those who are dominated.

Foucault’s third definition of power relationships, “government,” lies between power in general and domination. “Government” has a very wide meaning, for it refers to the ways in which individuals govern their households and themselves, as well as the ways individuals govern an institution, a community, and a state. Government is the notion of “conducting” or controlling a series of actions of rationality and technology; consequently, government is “a

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97 Ibid., 97.
98 Ibid., 101.
99 Ibid., 102.
100 Ibid., 102-105.
less spontaneous exercise of power over others or over oneself.” It is the invention and use of technologies in order to regulate conduct. In other words, government refers to the regulation of conduct through rational application of technical means. It aims to affect behavior not only directly but also indirectly by influencing “the manner in which individuals regulate their own behavior.” In this sense, government contains “an element of calculation” and knowledge of its intended object, which Foucault argues is not always present in other types of power exercise. Government is defined as a modern phenomenon which has emerged and expanded since the sixteenth century when governmentalization of the state began.

Hindess argues that, when the power relationship of “government” prevails, this disciplinary technique – which Foucault had already argued in *Discipline and Punish*, published before his governmentality lecture – can be regarded as a “generalizable” instrument of government. Discipline becomes an instrument or a technique of power exercised over one or more persons and sometimes over oneself in order to provide individuals with particular skills and a larger capacity for self-control; to make them susceptible to instruction; to shape their characters in different ways. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains the widespread tendency in seventeenth-century Europe to use disciplinary techniques for various purposes: education, training, military organization, administrations of hospitals, prisons, and other institutions of confinement. Discipline was first employed in these specific institutions, yet disciplinary projects, with their associated techniques of panopticism, surveillance, regimentation and classification, become “ubiquitous features of all modern societies” – ubiquitous because, as Foucault argues, discipline is “an excellent productive power: it can enhance the capacities of people as well as constrain them.” Discipline often involves repression, yet it is not essentially repressive or negative in nature, for it aims “to strengthen the social forces to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply.” Disciplinary mechanisms require that knowledge over each individual is acted upon, and this knowledge provides those who

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101 Ibid., 106.
102 Ibid., 105-112.
103 Ibid., 113-118.
104 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York:
govern with more refined techniques of power. Disciplinary projects reveal that government and the knowledge of governed individuals are inseparable. Thus, government is a modern modality of power supported by disciplinary mechanisms; and, while government may appear less repressive than domination, it is nonetheless powerful when it accumulates knowledge of those who are governed through disciplinary measures. Now, I will look at the way in which these ideas of power relationships and their techniques are described in *Jashûmonge*.

**Governmentality and Discipline**

The story starts just after the governmental oppression in Kanbe, where the headquarter of Hinomoto lies. A few months before the story begins, the government destroyed its shrine on the hill, and arrested Hinomoto’s leader Ninjirô and its cadre on a charge of lese majesty and transgression against the Peace Preservation Law. Part One of *Jashûmonge* traces the trial of the leaders while the sufferings of the followers are also described. Ninjirô’s wife, Yae, now in charge of Hinomoto Kyûreikai, holds a conference with the rest of the cadre, those who have escaped arrest. The focus of their conference is how to cope with the trial. In particular, the charge of lese majesty is connected to Hinomoto’s religious doctrine called *ofudesaki*, which was written by Masa and can be interpreted only by Ninjirô. The authorities have arrested Ninjirô and Hinomoto’s cadre on the suspicion of lese majesty since *ofudesaki* includes a line that reads, “the Emperor is also a human being,” contradicting the fact that the government declared the Emperor’s divinity in the early Meiji period. Some followers believe that they should modify their doctrine if it will help Ninjirô and the elderly cadre in jail; others suggest that they should confront the authorities and fight for the legitimacy of their doctrine. The followers struggle, arguing about what is best for the organization, as they cannot decide unanimously on either of the choices.\(^{105}\)

Now we learn that Hinomoto’s suffering is actually very different from the suffering of Christians in the early Edo period, though they both experienced religious oppression. The

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\(^{105}\) Random House, 1977), 208.

\(^{105}\) Takahashi, *Jashûmonge*, vol.1, 61-75.
Edo government strictly banned Christianity, and invented a device called *fumie* for purposes of interrogation. In this interrogation, the officer asked individuals to place one foot on a picture of Jesus made of copper. If a Christian refused to step on it, they were forced either to convert to Buddhism, or to face death. In the Meiji period, however, since the Meiji Constitution guaranteed religious freedom to the people, it was impossible for the government to openly prohibit the beliefs of particular religion. Instead, the government adjusted the laws to classify what was deemed appropriate for the nation, and it started to manipulate those who did not fit into the classification and conform to the norms set by the authorities. The quality of the suffering in the modern period is different from one in the premodern period.

In Foucault's essay "The Subject and Power," he defines three types of struggles against power. The first is the struggle against "forms of domination" over ethnic, social, and religious issues. The second struggle is against "forms of exploitation" which separate individuals from what they produce. Both have long histories in society. The third struggle, however, appears much later, when the new political structure called "the state" starts to emerge, and it is a struggle against "subjection which ties one to oneself and submits one to others." Foucault argues that this third struggle is a very important modern phenomenon, although struggles against domination and exploitation have not disappeared but have, rather, increased in the modern age. It can be argued that a modern form of power, government, brings about this struggle against forms of subjection. Foucault argues that governmentality, with its affiliated modality, discipline, is a power structure which subjugates people by calculation.

As we have seen, Hinomoto now struggles against governmental power exercised by the authorities. Since the doctrine *ofudesaki* is the most important for their religious life, followers do not want to change a single word of it. Yet, if Hinomoto confronts the government, there is a strong possibility that the government will disapprove of Hinomoto.

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107 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," afterword to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 208-224.
Because Ninjirō often told his followers that Hinomoto should not change even a word of ofudesaki, followers at the conference temporarily agree that Hinomoto will neither delete nor add a word without Ninjirō’s permission. However, in the past, Hinomoto as a religious organization had no choice but to submit itself to some extent to the laws and governmental powers in order to acquire more followers. In fact, Hinomoto has long been faced with issues which create discrepancies in the organization:

教団の内情はかならずしも単純ではなかった。それは破壊された本殿が神明造りでありながら付属建築物が寺院風であったことも見られる。…これ自体、政府の神仏分離に方針からすればことさらな反抗の姿勢ともみえるわけであり、また教団の教義自体にも元来重層的な矛盾のあることをも意味している。浄土宗的な終末観を濃厚にもっていた開祖まさにと、既成の教派神道の喩蓄をとりて教団活動を公認のものにしようとした教主の志向とかすでに多少食い違うものであったことは、旧い信徒たちはみな知っていている。108

The inside of the organization was not always simple. The complexity could be observed in the buildings of Hinomoto. While the main shrine, which was broken by oppression, was built in the style of a Shinto-shrine, the other affiliated buildings were built in Buddhist-temple style. … This fact can be regarded as obvious defiance to the governmental policy of separating Shinto and Buddhism. Yet, it also shows that there were some fundamental discrepancies in the doctrine of Hinomoto. All followers who have been in Hinomoto for a long time know that there existed a difference between Masa, who had an apocalyptic belief influenced by the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism, and Ninjirō, who tried to make Hinomoto’s activities legally approved by becoming a part of Sect Shinto.

It is clear that Hinomoto is characterized by a fundamental contradiction: Ninjirō compromises to join Sect Shinto, while Masa originally believed in Buddhist thought. Ninjirō chooses to make considerable efforts toward self-discipline in order to conform to the norms set by the authorities and to survive as a religious organization. In fact, we learn that Ninjirō had been wise to change Hinomoto’s direction when the government banned magic

healing practiced by religious organizations a few years earlier. He ordered followers not to use magical techniques without permission, and he also changed the missionary policy into a more rational, mass-oriented one using newspaper and magazines.\footnote{Ibid., 31.}

Hinomoto now struggles against submission: in other words, it suffers from the dilemma of whether or how much it must submit itself to the governmental power of the authorities. Some followers know that, in order to survive the trial, they need to (self-)govern their organization with (self-)disciplinary measures. During intensive discussions about this struggle among followers, tragic news arrives at Kanbe: the Kyushu district of Hinomoto Kyūrei kai has decided to separate itself from Hinomoto, to become an independent religious organization named Kōkoku Kyūsegun, which pledges allegiance to the Emperor and the Imperial State. While Hinomoto deals with the dilemma of how to discipline itself in order to survive, Kōkoku Kyūsegun reads the current trend of Imperialism and modifies their belief system. In fact, Kōkoku Kyūsegun grows rapidly with their successful disciplinary measures: they are approved as part of Sect Shinto, which conforms well to imperial ideologies. The elderly followers of Hinomoto are worried that the discrepancy over how Hinomoto should discipline itself will bring further problems. Their worries, indeed, are well founded since this very discrepancy results in the organization’s internal disintegration.\footnote{Ibid., 104.}

It is a great relief for the followers of Hinomoto when Ninjirō and the entire cadre except Nakamura Tetsuo, who is in charge of the Hinomoto newspaper, are suddenly granted bail before the public trial. After they arrive at Kanbe, Ninjirō conducts a meeting with his cadre and discusses several issues that have emerged within the organization. First, while he wants younger followers to interpret other additional doctrines, Ninjirō confirms that he is the only person who can interpret ofudesaki. Next, Ninjirō suggests a restructuring of Hinomoto’s administrative system, for he and his cadre are still under bail orders and there is a strong possibility that all will be arrested in the future. Finally, he orders young people to establish study groups for social movements and political reform.\footnote{Ibid., 159-178.}

The temporary order within the organization, brought about by these recoveries in
Hinomoto Kyûreikai, is, however, destroyed when the police send Hinomoto the documents of a judge’s investigation as well as Ninjirô’s report for the preliminary trial. In both of the documents, Ninjirô has clearly admitted that Hinomoto can delete the problematic line in ofudesaki. In addition to this, the documents reveal that Ninjirô has said that Nakamura Tetsuo is the only person who should be blames for the suspicion of lese majesty. The members do not believe that these comments are truly Ninjirô’s, and his wife Yae decides to visit her husband who has gone away for a rest at a hot spring resort. Before Yae questions Ninjirô, he congratulates her effort in achieving consensus among the cadre regarding the wording of ofudesaki. He says Yae always does the right thing:

あなたにも、もう推測はついていよう。…わしは惨めなころび者のように、はやく予審の決着をつけ、はやく日の目をみたいばかりに、言わでもがなのことを予審判事に言った。もちろん一緒にとじこめられている長老のことも心配だった。教団のことも気がかりだった。…しかし、いかに弁明の言葉を積みあげても、償えないことをわしはした。宗教家として、宗教団体の指導者として、あるまじきことをわしは言った。

You may be able to guess what happened. … I said what I should not have said to the preliminary judge as if I were a miserable traitor, because I wanted to finish the preliminary trial as soon as possible and be out in the sun. Of course, I was worried about the elderly members who are also in jail and the organization too. Yet, I did something which I cannot compensate for even if I piled up the words of excuse. I said something which I, as a believer and a leader of the religious organization, should never say.

Ninjirô’s submission to the authorities is a symbolic event for Hinomoto. Ninjirô struggles with his conscience and his status as a religious leader, yet he cannot help choosing to submit to governmental power and to discipline Hinomoto into a harmless religion for the nation. In particular, the fact that Hinomoto’s leader is willing this time to change the organization’s important doctrine means that the self-discipline of Hinomoto has reached the very core of its beliefs. Thus, Ninjirô invites the crucial discrepancy within the organization, which

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112 Ibid., 211-214.
113 Ibid., 218.
subsequently leads some followers to carry out radical political actions. First, one of the elders attempts to make a direct appeal to the Emperor; next, some members plan an agricultural strike as well as political reform; and, finally, a young military officer becomes involved in the assassination of the Prime Minister. As a result of these extreme activities, the government eventually disapproves of Hinomoto as a religious organization, arresting its core members and forbidding its reassociation.\textsuperscript{114}

In Part Two of \textit{Jashūmonge}, Hinomoto still attempts to maintain its following – albeit secretly – while Ninjirō’s first daughter, Are, becomes the leader of the organization. It is very difficult, however, for the organization to maintain itself since there are not enough funds to run the factories, the main source of their income. Are, then, decides to marry the leader of Kōkoku Kyūsegun, the first son of Kyūsegun’s founder who established independence from Hinomoto. Kōkoku Kyūsegun offers Hinomoto financial help, but in exchange for the offer, Hinomoto must agree with the political marriage between Are and Kyūsegun’s next leader, and accept absorption into Kōkoku Kyūsegun. Finally, Hinomoto completely submits to governmental power losing both its name and its pride. In order to maintain a following, Hinomoto sells its soul to the ultra-right wing organization that once betrayed Hinomoto.

Thus, Takahashi successfully reveals the modern power relationships of government and its affiliated technique of discipline through the struggles of one new religious organization. Hinomoto Kyûreikai is the best target for the authorities because it originally represented the defiance of the lower classes and resistance to ideological unification of the imperial state. Governmental power, which is eager to disperse revolutionary potential, manipulates common people who are dissatisfied with the government, and provokes them to turn on Hinomoto Kyûreikai. The government successfully transforms Hinomoto into a scapegoat which eventually bears the brunt of people’s discontent toward society. This effectively illustrates the modern modality of power, government, is actually far more powerful and cruel than it appears. Hence, Hinomoto’s struggle against governmental power – its ultimate movement toward self-discipline for survival – occasions crucial discrepancies

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 261-272, 349-355, 388-401.
which eventually lead to its decline.

**Totalizing and Individualizing Power of the State**

The second issue of modernity which causes Hinomoto's suffering is the conflict between the roles of political power and religious power in modern society. In the premodern age, politics and religion were closely related to each other: in fact, they were inseparable at first. They came to take on different roles in the early history of Japan. The separation became clear when the court designated Buddhism as the important moral values in the Asuka period. Politics relied upon religion for its justification, and religion was complementary to politics. Politics dealt with the whole of society in this world, while religion was concerned with the individual's salvation in the next world.\(^{115}\) There was not, therefore, an obvious confrontation between the two for a long time. However, in modern society, the roles of religion and politics become different from what they were in the past. As we have seen in the previous chapter, religion in the modern age emphasizes "this worldliness," and some groups are launched into political reformation in order to transform society as well as individuals. On the other hand, as Foucault argues, politics in modern society comes to possess the individualizing form of power as well as the totalizing form of power. While it is true that the state largely ignores individuals, concerning itself with interests of the totality, Foucault argues that the political power of the state also includes structures that affect individuals, techniques that are derived from the power of "government" and from totalization procedures.\(^{116}\)

In most western countries, the modern state separated politics from religion in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries because otherwise religion could intervene in political affairs and become a motive for political transformation.\(^{117}\) In Japan, on the contrary, the Meiji government declared the unity of politics and religion, bestowing upon the Emperor both sovereignty and deity. Therefore, other religions, – and in particular new religions – conflict with politics. On the one hand, new religions are now concerned with "this worldly" total benefits to the masses, as well as individual affairs. On the other hand,

\(^{115}\) Abe, *Gendai Shūkyō no Han Kindaisei*, 62-63.

\(^{116}\) Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 213.

\(^{117}\) Abe, *Gendai Shūkyō no Han Kindaisei*, 62-63.
politics are concerned with “this worldly” salvation of individuals through health, well being, security, and protection against accidents, as well as the totalization and unification of the masses. Foucault defines this individualizing power – whether wielded by religion or politics – as an aspect of modern governmental power, and he calls it “pastoral power.” The phrase pastoral power is derived from the notion of a pastor who has power over each individual sheep; hence, the idea comes from the Christian tradition. In Christianity, a pastor deals with the mentality of each individual in order to assure the individual’s salvation. Modern pastoral power, however, moves beyond religion, dealing with salvation not in the other world but in this world. The state also comes to possess that power to govern each individual.¹¹⁸ I will, then, look at how Hinomoto Kyûreikai attempts to venture into the arenas of social and political reform, and how the state intervenes in religious affairs, exercising its individualizing and totalizing power in Jashûmonge.

When one compares Hinomoto as a new religion to traditional religions such as Buddhism which only provides personal salvation in the other world, one discovers that Hinomoto is a religion which seeks the salvation of all people individually and totally, in this world. In Ninjirô’s report for the preliminary trial, he clearly states that new religions have two different roles, and that State Shinto is not close enough to the common people’s daily lives. Ninjirô believes that new religions are necessary in modern Japan because they can offer salvation to common people and invigorate the nation’s spirit.¹¹⁹ Therefore, it is logical that Hinomoto’s doctrines serve the larger purpose of saving society as a whole. Hinomoto declares in its doctrine that followers never go to heaven without saving an individual who suffers in this world. Since Hinomoto’s doctrine has such strong foundations of equalitarianism and totality, it is acutely aware of any kind of oppression and inequality. Accordingly, in the village of Kanbe, Hinomoto promotes equality between men and women and a certain level of sexual liberation for women. Hinomoto understands that men’s oppression of women is one of the very important concerns for a religious organization:

宗教が人を救おうとするものである以上、男による女の抑圧を、その秘密な性の

¹¹⁹ Takahashi, Jashûmonge, vol.1, 172.
Since religion is for people’s salvation, any religion which does not try to dissolve men’s oppression of women in terms of hidden sexuality does not deserve to be called religion. Accordingly, such an intention will always conflict with established laws and morality which are designed for government.

This quotation indicates that Hinomoto believes that religion has to concern itself with people’s unhappiness even if the reason for that unhappiness originates in the political and moral spheres. For Hinomoto, men’s oppression of women, which has been in Japanese society for a long time, is not an exception. Clearly, Hinomoto knows that its ideals will surely be illegal because they challenge the conventional power structure. Hinomoto believes that the social system, which makes common people unhappy, must be restructured, otherwise true individual salvation will not be realized. Thus, from its inception, Hinomoto’s ideals are destined to conflict with established political structures.

In spite of the fact that the leader, Ninjirô, and the cadre are still on trial, Hinomoto, then, plans to undertake more political actions, for Japanese politics have been seriously corrupted as a result of a number of wars. While it is true that Hinomoto needs to discipline itself in order to survive as an organization, followers nonetheless try desperately to maintain the idea of *yo naoshi* as the core of their beliefs. Since farmers comprise the majority of the organization, Hinomoto plans to establish a community which is based on primitive communism. Farmers have always been controlled and exploited by the ruling class regardless of who rules society; even after the agricultural reform in the early Meiji period, farmers were still forced to pay most of their earnings to landowners, a situation hardly different from feudalism in the Edo period. Therefore, Hinomoto creates a proposal for a new agricultural reformation. Of course, Hinomoto is a religious organization, so it cannot join in the violent terrorism planned by young military officers. Yet, young followers of Hinomoto still believe their proposal can save poor farmers:

何が必要か？…無理な工业化政策をとる必要のない平和。そして農村の、他の何

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120 Ibid., 314.
What is necessary (for farmers)? … Peace which does not force farmers to industrialize their farming; autonomy of the farming villages where no other people rule; and a free alliance between farmers and working class people which requires no interference by each other. … As the spirit of capitalism is the preservation of a contract, the spirit of such free alliance is the spirit of a vow which respects the freedom of each other. Religion, then, which is originally a community held together by vows, is assigned an important role.

Here again, Hinomoto believes that the order of a truer society depends on a religious belief, which is obviously different from the ideology of Shintoism and the state. Hinomoto wants to save exploited farmers by interfering in highly political matters. It becomes concerned more with social structure than with individual salvation: the young members of Hinomoto actually plan to appeal for a farming strike to the farmers in order to realize Hinomoto’s agricultural reformation. Hinomoto’s belief in yo naoshi now becomes politically agitative and difficult to distinguish from social movements led by political theorists or activists. The government wants to destroy Hinomoto Kyüreikai by applying as many laws as possible because Hinomoto conflicts with governmental policies and its one million followers would be powerful enough to affect the nation as a whole. Ultimately, the agricultural strike is not carried out as the government arrests important members of Hinomoto and bans its reassociation. Hinomoto believes that religion can challenge the centralization of political power, yet it fails to rebel against the government and its totalizing power.

Hinomoto, then, is pushed further into a corner when the government forcefully yet invisibly exercises pastoral power over the people, through which it can control the mentality of each individual. After Hinomoto is absorbed by Kôkoku Kyûsegun, everyone thinks the organization will flourish: Kôkoku Kyûsegun is, after all, a right-wing religious organization.

121 Ibid., 363.
which follows State Shinto’s doctrine and it has grown by following recent trends. However, the merger does not bring any new members and supporters to the organization. On the contrary. Quietly and gradually the number of supporters of any religion – including Hinomoto and Kōkoku Kyūsegun – starts to decrease as Japan enters the war period. While it is believed that a life of poverty and strife usually leads people to depend on religious beliefs, this is not the case:

何故か、何故だろう？おそらく一つは隣組制度の確立、大日本婦人会の浸透にある。のべつまくなしに面接版がまわり、朝は町会会単位のラジオ体操とか神社や道路の清掃などの勤労奉仕、昼には廃品回収や防空演習や兵士の見送り、夜には公債券当ての相談から、やがて日常の世話や相互監視。…宗教団体が行うべき日常的活動の大半は、政治にうばわれ、人々は新聞雑誌をにぎわす、より大規模な戦争の予感に、信条の相違を超えて団結したのだ。

Why (are people moving away from religion)? Maybe the reasons are the establishment of the neighborhood system called *tonari gumi* and the Women’s Association of Imperial Japan. Message boards come around to each house repeatedly. In the morning, women join in physical exercise held by each block association, and they volunteer to clean shrines and roads. In the afternoon, women join to collect waste for recycling, to practice evacuation, and to see the soldiers off. In the evening, they consult about how to allocate government bonds. Finally, women mutually look after and watch over each other. … The government deprives religion of most of its daily roles, and people experience solidarity by overcoming the difference of their beliefs as they anticipate a wide-scale war in newspaper and magazines.

Here, what Foucault argues with regard to modern political power, “pastoral power” is clearly shown: such power can offer individual salvation even as it unifies the masses. The government centralizes its power by giving all people, no matter which class they belong to, a common purpose of victory in the war. Men in the battlefield and women left in the villages contribute themselves to victory in the war. Now the authorities control the whole society and its direction in the name of the war effort. At the same time, the authorities can exercise

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governmental power with both pastoral and disciplinary measures in order to control every
detail of each individual’s daily life, men in the military and women in the villages.
Eventually, people come to surveil each other in order not to leave anyone out. Religion –
which usually takes care of people’s daily lives by offering mental support for the individual,
mutual support, and motivation for a better life – is deprived of its role by the authorities. It is
almost impossible for Hinomoto as a religious organization to keep its followers in this kind
of situation; their original role of saving individuals is taken away by the political power
while their larger ideal of saving society through the transformation of the world by religious
power is destroyed by governmental oppression. The government holds both individualizing
and totalizing power over people, and religion loses its position.

It is, then, symbolic that Chapter Two of *Jashûmonge* ends as all the members in
Hinomoto’s headquarters hail the Emperor when they listen to the declaration of war on the
radio. These members convert instantly to State Shinto even though they are followers of
Hinomoto, whose leader and cadre are still in jail, and whose shrine was destroyed with
dynamite. This moment of conversion is described as “a more regrettable blot in the history
of the organization than the fact that the leader and cadre secretly declare their conversion in
the jail.”\textsuperscript{123} Thus, political power succeeds in taking over the area that religion had
previously occupied, and in totalizing the masses for its own benefit. Hinomoto, which tries
to attain political reform as well as individual salvation, becomes the ideal target for
government attack, as Hinomoto’s activities and doctrines are too political to be part of
religious life. Hinomoto must suffer because of the conflict between its role as a religious
organization and the core idea of *yo naoshi*: in the end, its religious role is taken away by
political power.

**Rebellion and its Meaning**

Having suffered as a result of governmental power and its affiliated techniques such
as discipline and pastoral power, Hinomoto endures during the war period, and finally, in Part
Three of *Jashûmonge*, meets the end of World War II. Ninjirô’s wife Yae becomes sick and
Ninjirô himself dies in jail before the government releases all the political and religious

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 141.
prisoners. Ninjirō’s second daughter, Aki, becomes the temporary leader of Hinomoto after her elder sister, Are, marries the leader of Kōkoku Kyūsegun. The Constitution of Japan promulgated in 1946 guarantees religious freedom so that Hinomoto becomes a legally approved religious organization. This is a chance for Hinomoto to regain its followers and to reorganize its structure. Followers quickly begin missionary activities by publishing cheap magazines for common people. Next, by opening new branches in the cities, it gradually revives in popularity. People feel relieved following the intense danger during the war period, and they try to survive the chaos after the war by relying on spiritual guidance.¹²⁴

However, when Hinomoto becomes concerned with the rice supply – by directly selling low-priced rice to poor people in the black market – the police intervene in its activities once again. Aki and her consultant are arrested because Hinomoto refuses to submit rice to the government in an organized way. While other political and religious organizations which were oppressed during the wartime now become legally active, Hinomoto is still oppressed by the authorities – which now promotes, ironically, democracy. This oppression seriously affects Hinomoto’s organizational policy. Before his death, Ninjirō had left two different wills, symbolically representing Hinomoto’s contradictions as a religious organization. The first will is peaceful, advocating harmony between human beings and nature; the second is a resentful will, accusing the entire ruling classes of always exploiting helpless, common people.¹²⁵ The extreme difference between his wills causes two different organizational policies: one is to make an effort to achieve Hinomoto’s ideal society peacefully by offering some of its representatives for regional election; the other is to put a revolution into practice when the Japanese government submits to the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ). One accidental homicide of a policeman by a Hinomoto follower triggers the organization to follow the latter policy, as there is no other way for Hinomoto to fight against the government and to complete their doctrine of yo naoshi.

Chiba Kiyoshi, who was adopted by Hinomoto when he was a boy, comes back to the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 307-320.
¹²⁵ Ibid., 197-200.
organization after fighting in the war and plans a revolution for the farmers. After the accidental homicide, he easily deprives Aki of Hinomoto’s leadership since she is in jail. Kiyoshi begins guerrilla tactics in order to create emancipated districts all over the nation in spite of the fact that he knows his revolutionary guerrilla activities will hardly succeed. He cannot give up his dream of establishing an ideal society, so he decides to make Hinomoto’s followers transgress one of their rules: one must not murder anyone. Now Hinomoto is no longer a religious organization, but a guerrilla group that may take other people’s lives away. The guerrilla faction who takes over the village of Kanbe is successful for three days only, and finally the Japanese government and the GHQ invade, taking over Hinomoto’s guerrilla stronghold at Kanbe. The story ends with a commentary on Hinomoto’s infantile terrorism after its leaders choose to die of self-starvation.¹²⁶

Why, then, does Hinomoto dare to put its revolutionary idea into practice, despite the fact that its leader knows the chances of success will be less than one percent? Why does he force Hinomoto followers to transgress its doctrine? Hinomoto believes that Japanese people who were forced into the war and exploited for a long time have a right to protest against the ruling class. Hinomoto wants people to rethink what really constitutes the reformation of the world, even as they are worn out by the war and desperately searching for food:

…つねに受身に国家権力に対峙しようとし、失敗しつづけたひのもと救霊会が、総反攻に転じようと覚悟を定めたのだ。攻撃は最大防禦。たとえその攻撃が所期の目的を達せずとも、すべては血ぬられてしかありえない。此岸の変革とは如何なるものか、救霊会のとなえる神の国とは如何なるものか、その片鱗なりも人々に知らせようとしたいのだ。¹²⁷

…Hinomoto Kyûreikai, which has always resisted the authority of the state in passive ways, now decides to resist positively. A good offense is the best defense. Even if the offense does not achieve its purpose and if the messages from Hinomoto are incomplete, Hinomoto wants to inform people about the reformation in this world which cannot avoid bloodshed and the kingdom of God Hinomoto preaches. Hinomoto wants to illustrate the ways in which common people – including its followers

¹²⁶ Ibid., 471-570.
—have been treated unfairly by the government. People must realize the extent to which they have been blindly manipulated since the prewar period by governmental power and its corollary disciplinary and pastoral techniques. Therefore, through its resistance movement, Hinomoto wants to lead people to reconsider postwar Japanese society. Just as Foucault argues that in each of the three forms of power there are possibilities of resistance by the oppressed, here as well, even in the post-war democracy, governmental power pervades the nation, and people can resist its invisible control. This is a final opportunity for Hinomoto’s followers to fight for their belief that people should be fairly treated according to the idea of Great Harmony. Although there is a strong possibility that their rebellion will fail, Hinomoto’s core members believe that their ideal of *yo naoshi* can be more than an ideal: it can be an actual policy. They hope that another leader will emerge who can take over this policy even if Hinomoto as an organization disappears.

This rebellion, then—a rebellion against all the authorities—is the most important event in *Jashûmonge* since it reflects Takahashi’s thoughts regarding post-war Japan and its power relations. In writing this novel, Takahashi is staunchly faithful to the history of Japanese new religions—with the exception of this rebellion and its failure. Consequently, it is clear that Takahashi intentionally includes this rebellion in his text for specific purposes; the rebellion symbolizes the spirit of reformation and protest, which characterizes modernity in new religious movements. Firstly, the rebellion and its failure illustrate the strength and inevitability of governmental power in modern society. Takahashi seeks to explore the ways in which a new religious organization, usually more flexible than a traditional one, would react when it ceases compromising with governmental power. In the afterword of *Jashûmonge*, Takahashi says:

> 発想の端緒は、…すべての宗教がその登場のはじめには色濃く持っている世なおしの思想を、教団の膨張にともなう様々な妥協を排して極限化すればどうなるかを、思考実験してみたいということにあった。表題を邪宗門と鉤うったのも、むしろ世人から邪宗と目される限りにおいて、宗教は熾烈にしてかつ本質的な問いかけの弦力を持ち、かつ人間の精神にとって宗教はいかなる位置をしめ、いかなる意味をもつのかの問題性

127 Ibid., 470.
The idea of Jashûmônge comes from my intention that I would like to try and think how the notion of yo naoshi, which exists in the early stage of any religion, would be treated in an extreme situation excluding all compromises, which follows in the development of religious organizations. The reason for its title Jashûmônge is that I always think that a new religion that is regarded as an evil creed by others contains the power to pose questions in an intensive and intrinsic manner. I always think that new religious movement includes many significant questions such as what is the position of religion in the human spirit, and what it means.

This paragraph reveals that Takahashi is conscious of the existence of governmental power which indirectly forces individuals and groups into positions of subjugation, and these people have little choice but to compromise in order to survive in such a society. Takahashi, then, chooses a fictional religious organization which is an ideal opponent to the state because religion represents a challenge to politics in terms of both individualizing and totalizing power. In particular, this religion, as it is supported by the lower classes that have been exploited by the ruler, cannot but challenge the logic of the government. Indeed, the religious organization is able to directly and sincerely approach the inherent problems of human nature, politics, society, and religion. However, the failure of Hinomoto’s rebellion demonstrates that governmental power is too potent to be subverted by one organization. As Foucault’s study suggests, modern society is run by disciplinary projects such as constant surveillance and individual classification which, combined, cover the whole of society as well as the individual within it. Inevitably, we cannot escape governmental power.

Yet, while Hinomoto’s rebellion ultimately implies the depressing and inescapable features of governmental power structure, with its disciplinary and pastoral projects in modern society, Takahashi, at the same time, moves beyond this in Jashûmônge. He implicitly poses crucial questions: why, when the state’s power was weakened by the defeat, did Japanese people fail to question who was responsible for the war by themselves rather

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than letting foreign countries do so? Why did they say nothing about their unhappiness and exploitation during wartime, and blindly follow the GHQ and the new government? Why did people meekly accept new authorities without questioning the reasons for suffering and death during the war? Do we really have the sprit of protest which symbolizes modernity? In discussing these crucial questions, Kawanishi Masaaki, a critic, explains the core motive which motivates Takahashi to write *Jashūmonge*:

> なぜあの時日本人は涙など流し、意識も変えず生活に埋没したのか。…内乱を起こし、…そのためにたとえ多くの人が死に、…飢死しても、そこに生きる人間が主張し勝ち取った理念を築かなかったのか。…この無限に連鎖する呪詛の環と直接性への希求こそが高橋和巳をして邪宗門を書かせた動機の一つであると思う。¹²⁹

Why did Japanese people shed their tears at that moment, and bury themselves in their daily lives without changing their awareness? …Why didn’t they establish their own ideas about the ways in which human beings can protest and win even if many people die or starve in the rebellion? …I think that both the endless circles of resentment and crave for directness make Takahashi write *Jashūmonge*.

As Kawanishi argues, Takahashi implicitly but profoundly regrets the fact that no one tried to question or challenge the governmental power of the state just after the war. While in modern society it is almost impossible for individuals to challenge disciplinary and pastoral projects of the authorities, it ought to be possible for Japanese people to question and criticize the future power of the state when the state, the executor of power, makes terrible mistakes with disastrous consequences for the nation. Takahashi doubts that the ambiguity of modernity in the political sphere will improve without discussing the crucial mistakes of the authorities. Therefore, Takahashi invents a new religious organization, Hinomoto Kyūreikai, and reveals its suffering through its compromises and conflicts with governmental power. Ultimately, he depicts Hinomoto’s direct challenge to the authorities because he believes that this fictional yet plausible story can lead the Japanese people to reconsider what they should have done in the past and what they must do now in order to effect the establishment of a mature democracy.

¹²⁹ Kawanishi Masaaki, *Fukashi no Unmei, aruiwa Takahashi Kazumi ni tsuite no Danpenteki na Kōsatsu*
Thus, in *Jashûmonge*, Takahashi reveals the negative side of modernity, a new power struggle behind the positive side of modernity, the spirit of reformation and protest, by describing the ways in which governmental power and its affiliated techniques such as discipline and pastoral power work in modern society. Discipline can manipulate individuals and groups by implicitly instructing them in self-discipline and compromise. Pastoral power deprives religion of its role of offering this worldly salvation to each individual. Under these techniques, Hinomoto Kyûrei-kai is driven to desperation and destruction. Yet, at the same time, Takahashi never gives up on the possibility that a new religion can achieve a meta-narrative of transforming the world by challenging various self-disciplines and pastoral measures. In comparison to traditional religions – which do not have close relationships with people’s daily lives – new religions are concerned genuinely with the happiness, fairness and peace of individuals and society in this world. Hence, new religions become an important medium to seek for the truth, peace, and meta-narratives of society and individuals in this world because such religions possess the ideals necessary to challenge various modern problems such as the governmental power of the state.

*(Tokyo: Kodansha, 1974), 74-75.*
Chapter Three: The Religious Genre in Japanese Literature and Postmodernism

Yogensha no Namae

Having examined modern conditions in the religious genre of Japanese literature, I would now like to examine postmodern conditions of religion in Japanese postmodern writing – specifically, in Shimada Masahiko’s *Yogensha no Namae*. Shimada Masahiko was born in 1961, in Tokyo. He entered the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages in 1980 and majored in Russian. He enjoyed painting pictures, playing in the orchestra and participating in the drama performance club. Shimada became widely known for his first novel “Yasashii Sayoku no tame no Kiyûkyoku” (Divertimento for the Gentle Left Wing) published in the magazine *Kaien* when he was a fourth year student at the university.130 This novel was nominated for the Akutagawa prize. In the following year, 1984, Shimada graduated from university and published *Muyû Ókoku no tame no Ongaku* (Music for a Somnambular Kingdom) which won the newcomer category of the sixth Noma Literature Prize.131 Since his debut in 1983, Shimada has been one of the most popular contemporary writers in Japan. Shimada’s works are strongly influenced by postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Baudrillard, and Deleuze, and his works often address postmodern themes such as schizophrenia, simulacra, pastiche, AIDS, sex change, immigration, self-exile, and “rent-a-child.”132 *Yogensha no Namae*, published in 1992, is characterized by postmodern themes related to religion: it is a novel that describes the adventures of a Japanese man named Wataru as he seeks to find a new prophet and invent a new religion.

*Yogensha no Namae* consists of five independent chapters. The first chapter is titled “Letter from the Converted.” The letter is written by a religious Muslim man living in New York, and it is addressed to his friends and family members in his home country, Palestine. The letter declares that the man is going to convert from Islam to another religion: after meeting Wataru, he has come to doubt his religious beliefs. The Muslim man realizes that

groupings according to nationality, race, community, and religious belief do not bring about world peace and that individuals need to overcome such differences in order to fully understand each other.\footnote{Shimada Masahiko, \textit{Yogensha no Namae} (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1996), 8-43.}

The second chapter titled “The Confession of Mariko” is a confession by a Japanese girl, Mariko, to a priest of the Catholic church to which Mariko once belonged. Five years before, she left for the U.S. to study English, yet no one knows where she has been since then. Mariko suddenly returns to Japan and tells the priest that she became a professional prostitute after she was raped in New York and chose to become homeless; Mariko then met Wataru who taught her that Christianity could not help her to overcome her sufferings and to understand infinity in the world. Therefore, Mariko asks the priest to excommunicate her as a heretic: she believes in Wataru who tries to discover the universality of different religions in the world.\footnote{Ibid., 45-74.}

The third chapter, titled “The Boyhood of the Prophet,” describes Wataru’s background. He has a father who works for a paper company and a mother who believes in many different religions. In fact, his mother eventually becomes a founder of her own religion while his father, ever a realist, never becomes interested in religion. Wataru has been influenced by his mother who has always been concerned with religion, morality, and spirituality. He eventually grows to become a good mind reader and moderator who loves to read the Bible and the autobiography of Gandhi. Wataru recognizes himself as a genius pacifist. Wataru’s father suggests that Wataru leave Japan and study in New York. Wataru’s friends regard him as an erratic who fears nothing in New York.\footnote{Ibid., 75-105.}

However, in the fourth chapter “Who was Murukashi?” Wataru meets a man called Murukashi to whom Wataru must yield obedience for the first time in his life. When Wataru initially meets Murukashi, Murukashi is a homeless man claiming that he is a prophet and an agent of God and from the parallel world of \textit{narukisogorosu}, “the world where one’s consciousness has to go around in circles.” During Wataru’s second meeting with Murukashi, Murukashi presents himself as an efficient banker, explaining that he is indeed a banker who
deals not with money but with people’s souls. After this second meeting, Wataru starts to suffer from strange bouts of sleeplessness, constipation, and headache. Wataru feels as though somebody else is manipulating him and, at last, his body and soul are completely taken over by Murukashi.  

The last chapter, “Calling,” reveals Murukashi’s identity and his motivations for taking over Wataru. Murukashi’s father is a Jewish Buddhist scholar and his mother is a Tibetan. He despises religion while his parents are very religious Buddhists. One day, however, he experiences a sudden revelation which tells him to travel south. Even though Murukashi becomes interested in learning about religions, he eventually dies in an accident. Thirty years later, Murukashi meets Wataru who has the same intentions as Murukashi and Murukashi decides to take over Wataru. In the last page of the book, there is a pastiche of the Bible appendix for readers who might have specific problems in their lives. The appendix in the novel lists particular parts of the novel so that we can refer to them when we are in trouble. For example, if a reader would like to pray, the appendix refers the reader to “The Letter from the Converted,” page 18, line 10, and “Mariko’s Confession,” page 63, line 6.  

This story comprises many postmodern aspects regarding religion, which we have examined in Chapter One. First of all, the religion that all of the characters in the story refer to is a totally private belief system. They believe in neither religious community nor the possibility of great salvation of the world through religious belief. Rather, the people in the story quest for personal relationships with god/gods. For example, the religious Muslim man seeks to prove his faith to Allah not through community but through himself. Mariko becomes interested in Christianity because she has a crush on the priest. Each of Wataru’s family members believes in different religions or beliefs. Religion in this novel is concerned not with community or society but with the individual and the individual’s own inner spirituality.  

Next, the commercialization of the sacred in the contemporary age is illustrated in the story: the best example of this is the case of Wataru’s mother. She is interested in many

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136 Ibid., 107-137.
137 Ibid., 139-174.
138 Ibid., 175.
different religions, as she believes all gods will help her. She selects the best parts of various religious doctrines as if they are commercial goods; she understands them according to her own interpretations. One day, a man discovers that Wataru’s mother has the qualities of a religious leader, and he makes her the commercially successful leader of a new religion. For Wataru and Mariko, religion is also a matter of choice and consumption. They travel around the holy places in the world in order to absorb the best part of different religions. Wataru goes to Yoga and buys a machine for mental training, as well as books of mind-reading and hypnotism in order to obtain the “sixth sense.” Commercialism and consumption thus underlie this novel.

Finally, there exist the themes of virtual reality and the desire to obtain another self in this world. When Wataru is a high school student, he engages in a number of practices to obtain a sixth sense and psychic power. He longs to have another self that will be able to read other people’s minds and control them. Wataru’s rival, Murukashi, claims that he is from a parallel world and that he possesses the power of omnipresence. Murukashi invades Wataru’s head, attempting to take over his soul and body. Characters in this novel are concerned with this world rather than another world, yet they are interested not in reality, which is harsh or boring, but in virtual reality which offers more attractive experiences. As described above, there are very explicit postmodern themes in Yogensha no Namae. Now I would like to closely examine three postmodern issues in this story and compare these to modern issues we have looked at in the previous chapter. The comparison will illustrate the ways in which modernity and postmodernity differ in the context of religion.

Postmodern Criticism: Derrida’s Deconstruction

We have seen that power struggles and the legitimacy of authority are the most significant theme in modern society. In Jashūmonge, the new religious organization, Hinomoto Kyūreikai, which attempts to transform Japanese society, is designed to challenge the governmental power of the state. While some religious organizations modify their beliefs in order to conform to State Shinto, which is the ideology of the state, the followers of Hinomoto fight prejudice against their religious belief system, which is regarded as heathenish. To be orthodox and to subjugate oneself to power structures are the necessary
conditions for religious organizations to survive in the modern age, and religion struggles with these conditions in order to transform the world. In *Yogensha no Namae*, however, the religion to which the protagonist Wataru refers has nothing to do with power struggles and the legitimacy of religion. Rather, the story questions whether religion in the contemporary age has anything to do with power structures and legitimacy at all. Are there reasonable enough grounds to refer to what one believes to be "legitimate" and "politically correct" as such? Shimada casts doubt over such a centered discourse and redefines the ways of new contemporary religions by introducing the notion of deconstruction, proposed by Jacques Derrida in his early works. Here, I would like to outline the idea of deconstruction, widely known as one of the major postmodern theories, according to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* and various other related essays.

Derrida examines the characteristics of metaphysics in the history of western philosophy, claiming that Platonic metaphysics was established by offering the fundamental oppositions of values and notions in the world. This opposition is not a simple opposition, but implicitly contains a hierarchical order. For example, metaphysics defines the fundamental opposition between speech and writing: speech is regarded as "possessing a vital immediacy, a 'presence,' as both the presence of its speaker and more important the presence of speech to consciousness." On the other hand, as writing disrupts such a presence, it is viewed as exemplary of "absence," that is, as the merely secondary or supplementary representation of speech, which is itself a representation. Based on this hierarchical opposition of speech/writing, Derrida also discovers the hierarchical order in other binary oppositions. Oppositions such as meaning/form, soul/body, virtue/vice, and internal/external, the former is the superior term and a higher presence; the latter is the inferior term. These oppositions assume the first priority and conceive the second in relation to it as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first. For a long time, philosophers have attempted to make the first prioritized term actually present and the

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140 Ibid., 26.

141 Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 89-93
second supplementary term disappear from our presence. Traditionally, metaphysicians wanted to remove the secondary term from the first term, rendering the second term totally external in relation to the first term: only when the second term is perfectly external in relation to the first term, is it possible for the first term to be genuinely present.\(^\text{142}\)

Derrida, then, questions whether it is possible for us to perfectly exclude the secondary term to the first one. First, Derrida hypothetically suggests that the secondary term is perfectly external from the first term. This situation, however, brings about a paradox: if the secondary term is perfectly external to the first term, and if the secondary term is a mere shadow or a decayed and degenerated simulacrum of the first, why does the secondary term represent a dangerous existence to the first term? Why is it not possible for the privileged first term to exclude the second from itself? Why can the secondary term easily invade the first term, destroying and deconstructing the internal meaning of the first term? Accordingly, Derrida concludes that the hierarchical opposition of external/internal is not possible, and that the boundary between internal and external is never ultimately fixed; it is always changeable and unstable. The external, the secondary term, is always inside of the internal, the first term. It is impossible to exclude the secondary term from the first term, for the secondary term is in fact already inside of the internal. Derrida calls this movement “supplement” since the secondary supplement, which is added to the main body later, invades the internal and finally takes over the main body. This movement of supplement is the disturbance of the boundary between internal/external, and it becomes the basis of the deconstruction of hierarchical binary oppositions.\(^\text{143}\) Thus, deconstruction, as Derrida defines it, has two tasks: first, to expose the problematic nature of all centered discourses; second, to overturn metaphysical concepts by displacing their conceptual limits. Deconstruction seeks the margins of traditional thought in order to exert pressure on their legitimacy and borders, and to examine their untested foundations.\(^\text{144}\) Having explored the concept of deconstruction, we are now going to examine the ways in which mechanisms of


\(^\text{143}\) Ibid., 82-87.

Deconstruction of Differentiation in Religions

The first chapter in *Yogensha no Namae* deals with the process through which Wataru changes the religious beliefs of the Muslim man by deconstructing both the differentiations between religions and the forms of social rebellion upon which the Muslim man relies. In the beginning of the first chapter titled “Letter from the Converted,” the man is described as a very religious Muslim. He has come to New York from Palestine five years earlier in order to become an engineer. At first, he takes a job as a taxi driver in order to support himself and his poor parents in Palestine until he can obtain a scholarship for graduate school. The Muslim man studies hard and reads the Koran whenever he has a break during his shift. He always attempts to preach to his customers—no matter what backgrounds they have—about the grace of Islam and the Koran. Sometimes his preaching results in trouble since the Muslim man argues with passengers who believe in different religions. After a few months, he passes the scholarship examination and becomes a graduate student. The Muslim man thinks he owes all of these successes to Allah: he has resisted all of the seductions of New York by swearing loyalty to Allah according to the words of the Koran.

His strong trust in Allah and the Koran, however, starts to change after he meets Wataru. In their first encounter, Wataru is a passenger in the Muslim man’s taxi. Wataru shows his respect to Islam, but he also makes clear the fact that he is more interested in inventing a new religion by himself. The Muslim man is offended: he feels that Wataru is dishonoring Islam. This encounter with Wataru, however, encourages the Muslim man to learn about pagans’ understanding of Islam, for he wants to correct Wataru’s misunderstanding of the Koran and Islam. The man wants to teach Wataru that Allah is the absolute and ultimate God and that the Koran is made of God’s words. When the Muslim meets Wataru for the second time, the man wants to emphasize that Allah is the only God in the world, and people have not recognized Allah’s ultimate power. Then, Wataru replies:

君はまだ神は一つでなきゃいけないと思っているんだな。まあ、それは見とめてもいい。しかし、唯一絶対のあり方は様々なんだ。同じアッラーの神を崇拝しようとも、神の言葉（コーラン）の解釈によって、アッラーの存在も変わっててしまうだろう。にも
You still think that God has to be unique, don’t you? Well, I can accept that. But, the ways of being unique and absolute are various. The existence of Allah may vary according to the interpretations of God’s words, that is the Koran, even if you worship the same Allah. If you insist that Allah is the only and absolute God regardless of this fact, it turns out that God is pantomorphic.

Wataru assents to the monotheism on which the Muslim insists, yet he cunningly points out that a monotheistic understanding of God does not necessarily mean that God’s behavior is absolutely the same at all times. Then, Wataru questions the legitimacy of the Koran as writing: even though the Koran is a sacred script, it is a book with written words – that is, a text. As Derrida argues, texts are writings, which are defined as secondary to speech in the history of western philosophy. Yet Derrida discovers that texts as a supplement have the power to undermine what the privileged first term, speech, symbolizes – for example, internal, truth, presence, origin, or their equivalents. Texts are free from the “presence” of the author and the tradition of legitimate interpretation. Because texts are of the author’s intention and open to interpretation by others, texts are neither settled nor stable. Once the Koran becomes a text, it is necessarily exposed to different varieties of interpretations. Therefore, Wataru argues that God is a pantomorphic being by deconstructing the traditional, canonical understanding of the Koran: there exist endless interpretations of Allah every time a reader approaches the Koran.

The Muslim man becomes angry when he listens to Wataru’s lecture yet, in his letter, the man confesses that he senses some truth in Wataru’s words. The man knows that Wataru is talking nonsense about God, but he cannot refute Wataru’s argument. After their second encounter, the Muslim falls in love with a woman who is very popular among the male students. The man successfully becomes one of her boyfriends, but he is frustrated because he cannot monopolize the woman, and she manipulates him as if he were her servant. One

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145 Shimada, Yogensha no Namae, 20.
146 Lyon, Postmodernity, 13-14.
day, the Muslim man is shocked to discover that the woman is Jewish; he feels despair about being Palestinian because he feels that Palestinians will continue to lose to Jews under any circumstances. When Wataru’s letter then arrives, it is as if Wataru knows the Muslim’s broken heart:

Do not take advantage of God in order to wreak your personal vengeance. God is related to the world in God’s way, regardless of our intentions. The more you try to be loyal to God, the more you are betrayed by God and misunderstand God. … I agree that Muslims are the people who are the most loyal to God, yet why do you continue to lose in wars? Are those God’s trials? No, they aren’t. God does not want to interfere in wars. … If you still want to remain in the innocent faith, you will experience nothing good. Not until you can relativize your faith and give more freedom to yourself as a slave to God will you be able to be born.

Wataru warns the Muslim man that he should not bring religion and the history of confrontation with the Jews into his personal love affair since God has nothing to do with what human beings do. God is not a fixed being with stable intentions for human beings. As God does not have any intention to intervene in our daily lives, it is totally incorrect to ask God for help and then to become disappointed by the unhappy results. In fact, even though Muslims in Palestine have been very religious, they have never won in conflicts with the Jewish people. Wataru leads the Muslim man to think that the God Allah is not what followers have expected, but something unstable, changeable, and pantomorphic, which

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147 Shimada, Yogensha no Namae, 30-31.
people cannot easily understand. Therefore, Wataru recommends that the Muslim man relativize his faith in order to recognize God as an independent being who has nothing to do with the expectations of human beings. The Muslim man must free himself from a conventional, one-sided relationship with God in order to understand the true nature of religion. Only then can the man as an independent individual establish a new relationship with the independent other, God.

Soon, a war between the U.S., Israel and Palestine breaks out. Some Americans – in particular, Jewish Americans – oppress the Muslim man and his friends, as they are seen as enemies. The Muslim decides to join the anti-war movement since he does not want to lose his Palestinian friends in a war that Palestine is destined never to win. The man also recognizes that Americans and Jews profit economically from the wars, and Palestinians are always easy targets for them. The man does not want to discard his pride as a Palestinian by becoming American, nor does he want to behave like one of the stereotypically bloodthirsty Muslims. Rather, the man wants to regard himself as an independent individual who refuses to belong to any group. He confesses that his anti-war sentiments have been strongly influenced by Wataru. When the Muslim and Wataru meet by chance during an anti-war demonstration, Wataru deploys his own idea of religion, declaring that he will invent a new God as he does not believe in outdated Gods. Wataru continues:

ぼくは決して、君に改宗しろとはいわない。…ただ、アッラーの神はムハンマドの時代とは違う神になってしまったといいたいんだ。現代のアッラーは人間がある程度聡明になった分、ますます人間の理解を拒むようになったんだ。神の策謀はムハンマドの時代よりもはるかに複雑になったんだ。アッラーの神は変幻自在なんだ。イエス・キリストになったり、仏陀になったり、モーゼになったりするんだ。そして、君たちムスリムだけじゃなく、世界の中の人々に対して平等に愛と試練を与えられるんだよ。¹⁴⁸

I will never advise you to change your faith. ... However, I want to tell you that the God Allah has become different from what he was in the age of Muhammad. Allah in the contemporary age refuses to be understood by human beings, as we become to some extent wise. The devices of God become far more complex than

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 38.
those in the age of Muhammad. The God Allah is pantomorphic. He also becomes Jesus Christ, Buddha, and Moses. And, he equally supplies love and hardship not only to Muslims but also to people all over the world.

Here, Wataru first accepts the Muslim religious belief saying that the man does not need to convert his faith. Yet, Wataru emphasizes that there is a difference between religion in the contemporary age and religion when it was established. When Muhammad established Islam, the religious belief of Islam was designed for the differentiation between Muslim and pagans. Muhammad fought against pagans for Islam’s glory. Muslims have for a long time supported this tradition of differentiation, but it is obvious that Muslims have not been successful in history nor have they brought about peace in their countries. Therefore, Wataru deconstructs the opposition of Muslim/non-Muslim by arguing that the world and God’s intention in the contemporary age – both of which in the past could be explained through simple binary oppositions – have become too complicated for such binary oppositions. Thus, religion in the postmodern age is un-differentiated: there is no distinction between the gods of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions. God is singular and plural at the same time, influencing all people in the world regardless of their beliefs.

The Muslim man is shocked by Wataru’s ideas, as they sound distinctly irrational. At the same time, however, the man recognizes the possible reasons for his shock. After hearing Wataru speak, the Muslim man suffers from a severe headache; he seriously thinks over whether he can accept Wataru’s words or not. A few weeks later, the Muslim man runs into Wataru who is attempting to stop a fight between a Jew and a Palestinian on the street. Yet, both sides strike blows at Wataru and run away, while the Muslim man asks for help from the police. When the Muslim man asks Wataru which side he tried to help, Wataru answers that he is neither a friend nor an enemy for either side because both of them obstinately believe in their own god and despise the other’s god in selfish ways. According to Wataru:

何も世の中を一つの神や一つの民族の思惑通りにする必要はない。そんなことをしても、平和にはならない。ぼくは奴らに「仲よくしろ」とはいわなかった。もっともっと分裂すればいいと思う。誰もが国家や共同体や宗派や家族から離れて、一人のよるべなき者、いかなる集団にも属さない何者でもないものになるまで、分裂してしまえば
It is not necessary for us to let one god or one race control the whole world. This does not bring any peace. I did not say, “Make friends” to those who were fighting. I think people should become atomized more and more. I think people should atomize themselves until they are distinct from states, communities, religions, and families and become individuals who do not belong to any groups. At that moment, we will be able to face each other as living human beings.

Wataru points out that differentiation according to religions or races has never achieved success in the world. It is impossible for us to understand and support each other when we exhibit prejudice, pride, and other conventional norms we have blindly relied on. To free ourselves from these conventional viewpoints which come from our desire to differentiate, Wataru believes that the deconstruction of differentiation is necessary: we must resist any categorization which forces us to differentiate from other categories, as great prophets such as Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad did. We need to become individuals who do not rely on privilege and pride in order to satisfy our personal desires. Differentiation is always related to interest; once interests are involved, neither side ever stops competing with the other. Wataru believes that the deconstruction of this differentiation can help each one of us to become a mere living human being in the same world capable of understanding not only ourselves but also others as independent individuals. Moved by Wataru’s idea, the Muslim man decides to discard his hatred towards Jewish people and he converts to the new religious belief which will he believes finally bring peace to Palestine and Muslims.

In the modern literary work *Jashūmonge*, differentiation and pride in a new religious organization represent the crucial values in the story. Takahashi emphasizes the marginal cultural category of the new religion since it has the power to ask questions about problematic society in a more intensive and intrinsic manner. Hinomoto Kyūreikai ventures to transform the world in order to bring about an equal and democratic society but it results in power struggles only. Modern works still rely on the differentiation between

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149 Ibid., 41-42.
orthodox/pagan, legitimate/illegitimate. In the postmodern work, *Yogensha no Namae*, on the other hand, Shimada deconstructs the legitimacy of traditional religions as well as differentiation according to race, nationality, religious belief and culture. Through Wataru's words, Shimada illustrates that differentiation reflects groups' interests and never brings about peace. Religion, as Shimada defines it, is not a fixed, stable notion: God is beyond our intentions and interests; God transcends the confrontations and differentiations of human beings. Therefore, we need to deconstruct the differentiation of religious faith in order to overcome our prejudices, reach better understandings of others, and establish world peace. Atomization of each individual, then, will be able to lead us to global peace and unity.

**Deconstruction of Individual Faith**

After deconstructing the differentiation of religious groups, Wataru goes on to more closely examine individual faith through religious teaching: in particular, he examines religious notions regarding the other world and miracles. Most religions still define their own ideas of the after life despite the fact that major religions have – as a result of modernization – placed their emphasis on this world. In *Jashumonge*, for example, we discover that this world has more meaning for its followers than the next world. But the existence of an after life has a significant role in the doctrine of Hinomoto. People who seek for “this-worldly” benefit or salvation do not deny that they are also highly concerned with their after lives. Thus, life in this world gains importance in the modern age, yet it does not result in the denial or extinction of the notion of an after life. The other world is the realm of God and peace, and it remains one of the most important notions in modern religions. In *Yogensha no Name*, however, Wataru has harbored doubts about the other world since he was a boy. Wataru’s mother is a religion fanatic who prays to different gods each day of the week. She talks about the other world – about heaven and hell – to young Wataru. When Wataru is not a good boy, his mother often threatens that he will go to hell and suffer. Wataru insists that he will never go to the other world, but his mother argues that, when a human being dies, there is no choice but to go to the other world. Wataru, however, senses that there is something different about the after life:

- ぼくは死んだら、何もないところに行くんだ。あの世なんて本当はないんだ。
I am going to go nowhere after I die. There is no after life. That is a selfish invention by a person who wants to die at peace.” ... Wataru could not imagine that good behavior in this world is the only means to escape from the difficulties in the other world. He instinctively recognized that reason in this world has no meaning in the other world. Perhaps there will be neither father nor mother in the other world, and what he has said will be rejected there.... He thought that he would rather lose his way on purpose if he should have to go to such a place.

At first, Wataru simply denies the existence of the other world, but he recognizes that the other world is something different from what his mother has explained to him. No matter how well he behaves, no matter what actions he performs, his deeds in the present world will not affect his after life. The notion is unfounded that the other world is a consequence of the present world. Rather, Wataru believes that the other world is something beyond our imagination, just as God’s intention is beyond our imagination. The after life must be a world utterly different from what we normally expect it to be. Wataru cannot understand why he really needs to go to such an unreasonable place after his death. Therefore, Wataru plans that he would rather go to a place which is neither the present world nor the other world. Because no one can prove that there is only the present world and the other world, Wataru points out the contradiction of dichotomy in religious beliefs.

After becoming a university student, Wataru meets a Japanese woman, Mariko, who turns to prostitution after being raped in New York. When Mariko’s supervisor is killed by gangs, Wataru obtains a special job to bring Mariko from New York to Europe. Wataru introduces himself as a religion reformer and suggests that Mariko travel around Europe with him. Since Mariko used to go to a Catholic church when she was young, they decide to visit

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150 Ibid., 87.
Vatican City. Mariko prays that all people in the world will be free from fears and that they will not commit sins out of fear. She cannot forgive the men who raped her, yet she thinks that the world will become a better place if those who sin have a genuine sense of guilt. After asking Mariko what she was praying about, Wataru explains how people’s fears – especially their fear of death – have influenced the religious notion of the after life:

Fears certainly distract people. For example, the fear of death. … I will not be bothered if the other world doesn’t exist. I think ideas such as the other world, heaven, hell, final judgment, and The River of Sanzu come from the fear of death. … Living things are born and must die. In order to understand such a story, people invented God. Then, in addition, they made up concrete images of the after life and comforted those who are afraid of death.

Wataru has developed his understanding of the other world over the course of his life. When he was small, Wataru had wondered why he would have to go to the other world after his death, and he had discovered that there is another place which does not belong to the present world or the other world. Yet he had not considered the ways in which the notion of the other world had been shaped. Now he recognizes that the other world comes from human beings’ fears of death. Consequently, God’s images, which are illustrated in various religions, are inventions by human beings who cannot escape the fear of death. In order to rid themselves of fear and anxiety, people assume that there must be something continuous between this world and the after life. Hence, religions are shaped by such human desires. Wataru points out that conventional religions are designed to lighten the anxieties and fears of individuals: they cannot fundamentally function to make each person think that everyone can be absolutely free from such anxieties. Here, Wataru reveals that a human being – who is

151 Ibid., 63-64.
created, who is God’s servant, who is a candidate for god/goddess, or part of God’s intention, according to the major religions – is, in fact, the creator of images of God. Human beings have created the notion of the other world and God’s images in order to overcome their self-centered anxiety. The opposition between God and human beings, thus, is deconstructed. The absoluteness of God and the glory of the after life, as defined in the major religions, become unstable.

Wataru also takes a critical stance toward another important religious notion: miracles. In *Jashūmonge*, when Hinomoto as a religious group is starting to grow, miracles represent one of the most important appeals to the people in the village. Poor people who are seriously ill cannot help relying on the healing power of Hinomoto’s founder, Masa. In Hinomoto, miracles are a crucial religious component, assuring each member’s trust in the religion. Only a profound understanding of the religion can lead to such miracle healing. *Yogensha no Namae*, on the other hand, questions whether the profound faith of each individual can enable miracles to happen. When Wataru and Mariko are present at holy places where many terminally ill people pray for miracles to heal them, they pray for the miracle that all the people in the world will stop praying for miracles; Wataru knows that most people believe more in miracles than in the God himself. He suggests that those who only pray for miracles should be deserted by God: only those who are abandoned yet still believe in God can understand the infinity of God. Wataru, then, shows hatred towards the pilgrims and describes the ways in which many pilgrims depend on religion only for themselves:

あいつらは信仰を通じて、神と取り引きできると思ってやがる。その信仰だって甘っちょろいもんさ。奴らにとっては人と神の関係は商売みたいなものなんだ。五ドル払ってタクシーに乗る。運転手は五ドル分だけ客を運ぶ。ところがあいつらときたら、五ドル払って、千ドル分乗ってもらうと思ってるんだから困るよ。  

They (pilgrims) think that they can trade with God through their faith. Their faith, moreover, is very naive. For pilgrims, the relationship between human beings and God is business-like. We ride in a taxi and pay five dollars. But pilgrims think that they should ride for a thousand dollars’ distance paying only five dollars, which

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152 Ibid., 69.
is annoying.

Wataru critically points out that pilgrims at churches and temples who pray for miracles take for granted that religious faith is a measurable, valuable and exchangeable commodity. The more seriously pilgrims commit themselves to religion, the more benefit they expect to receive from God. Yet their attitude towards religion is neither serious nor well considered: many pilgrims are only willing to be religious for their own benefits, not for others, or for the sake of the whole world. In addition to this self-oriented faith, those who wish for miracles cunningly attempt to trade their faith with God. They seek more benefits from God than they actually deserve, pretending to be faithful to God. This attitude, however, again emphasizes the fact that people predominantly use religion for their own interest. They are religious only when they think that their faith will bring about miracles. Accordingly, without the possibility of miracles, they may no longer be religious. Human beings are supposed to be given miracles by the gracious God who actually controls the ways in which religion functions.

When Wataru and Mariko travel to Russia, they meet a strange father and his daughter. The daughter is fond of being a prostitute; she thinks that she will become rich and sophisticated by taking various customers from all over the world. Her father is the guard of an apartment building, yet he insists that he has another, more significant, job to perform everyday: that is to say, he is the guard of the grave yard. He visits various tombs – which have nothing to do with his family or friends – and prays that the souls of the dead will not perish forever. He is willing to befriend the dead because he believes that this world will disappear if souls perish. The father does not care that his daughter is engaging in prostitution in the next room, as he believes that sacrifice is necessary to save the world, and his daughter’s prostitution is one such sacrifice. Wataru and Mariko think that the man is more religious than the pilgrims because he is not interested in religion for his own sake. The man, however, asks Wataru and Mariko to pay money to his soul when they are about to pay for his daughter. Listening to the man’s words, Mariko gradually recognizes his selfishness:

(男は）単にまなけものなんだ、と私は思い始めてしまいました。墓参りを続けていれば、世界は安泰だと信じている、そんな一人よがりは、奇跡にすがることと何ら変わ
I started to think that (the man) is just idle. His own belief that the world will be kept safe by continuing his visits to the graveyard is almost the same as believing in miracles. He certainly has a kind heart, but it is kind only when it is meaningless. Wataru flatly said to him, “Your soul cannot be an article for sale. It is short of self-sacrifice, isn’t it?”

The man believes that his activity of “soul guard” is one way of sacrificing himself in order to save the world, just as his daughter’s prostitution is an act of self-sacrifice. Initially, Wataru and Mariko believe that the man is more pious than the pilgrims who take advantage of religion. But the man asks them to pay money for his soul: he is proud that his soul is valuable, as a result of his good conduct as soul guard. His self-centered views of religion, this world, and the other world are also self-oriented – no different from the pilgrims’ cravings for miracles. His attachment to the dead souls might be seen as one good example of the man’s kindness but it can only be qualified as kindness when the intention of visiting the dead has no other motivation. Once the man thinks his visits have a religious meaning or value, he starts to assume benefits from God. Therefore, Wataru tells the man that his soul still lacks self-sacrifice.

Thus, Shimada reveals the ways in which the egoism of human beings actually controls religion by deconstructing religious notions such as the other world, miracles, and faith. Through this deconstruction, it becomes clear that not only groups but also individuals take advantage of religion for their own sake. In Jashūmonge, it is believed that God’s grace brings about one’s happiness in the other world and provides benefit through miracles. These personal attainments are possible only when followers are truly religious and trusting of God. However, as represented in the postmodern age, people who believe in religions take advantage of the existence of God without profound faith. People invent the other world, crave for miracles and dabble in spiritual communication in order to rid themselves of their

\[153\] Ibid., 72.
fears; they hardly pray for universal peace and harmony. Conventional religions, then, are derived from the egoism of human beings, not from religiousness. Therefore, Shimada suggests that only those who are abandoned by God but still believe in him will understand truer religion because they will not expect any benefit for their own self-interest.

**Deconstruction of Reality**

Thus, Wataru deconstructs differentiation according to religious grouping as well as the legitimacy of personal faith by examining confrontations that originate in religious and racial difference, the invention of the other world, and dependency on miracles. As we have seen, the differentiation of religious organizations and the establishment of individual faith are crucial factors in modern religion, but their legitimacy comes under doubt in the postmodern world. Wataru believes that conventional religions are controlled by the egoism of human beings; people take advantage of religion for their communal or personal interest. While it has been thought that human beings believe in God so that God might benefit, the fact is that human beings do not believe in God unless they can be rid of fears or obtain benefits. Human beings attempt to take charge of God and God's intentions. New religions in the contemporary age, Wataru argues, are for all as well as for nobody: new religions must be independent from existing religions and free from the egocentric exchange between faith and benefit.

Yet, though Wataru's argument sounds powerful, so far he has neither experienced nor invented this new religion about which he talks. Wataru tells Mariko that he has attempted to absorb all heterogeneous ideas related to religion and to deconstruct what people regard as the "obvious" in his five-year travels. However, Wataru realizes that he has absorbed unfamiliar ideas only in his common sense but now must reach a new level of consciousness. His goal is realized when he meet Murukashi who names himself "the honored citizen of narukisogorosu." Murukashi is a homeless man living in the park, but he explains that being homeless is a respectable status in his former world: a homeless individual opens him- or herself equally to all without any personal interest. Murukashi, then, goes on to explain that the world of narukisogorosu is a parallel world where God is existing but forever travels or sleeps. Instead, a homeless person is an agent of God. When Wataru
does not believe what Murukashi says about this parallel world, Murukashi replies:

The things which exist in your brain actually exist. God is no exception. Those who believe that there is no God must create something else instead in their brains. Honest atheists know that to create something else is more tiresome.

Deconstructing the real and the presence, Murukashi tells Wataru that the distinction between what is real and what is not real is dissolved in the world of narukisogorosu. There is no difference between what we imagine in our brain and what is external reality. Therefore it is very difficult for atheists to be real atheists because they already possess and recognize the idea of God in their brain. These descriptions of narukisogorosu deal with alternative reality, or even with hyperreality that a foremost postmodern theorist, Jean Baudrillard, terms. As a result of the deconstruction of reality and legitimacy, abstraction in the postmodern age is no longer a concept and simulation is no longer a substance. There exists a world beyond differentiation: a hyperreal world which functions according to the models of the real without origin or reality.¹⁵⁵

Wataru, however, believes that Murukashi's hyperrealistic world is something uninteresting for him, as he cannot visit narukisogorosu and there is no way to prove its existence. When Wataru meets Murukashi for the second time, Murukashi, who looks like a banker this time, suggests to Wataru that they exchange souls because Murukashi is an agent of God. Wataru, who cannot believe the existence of a hyperreal world named narukisogorosu, attempts to ignore Murukashi, yet Murukashi shows Wataru his supernatural powers by fading his hand into a desk. Taken aback, Wataru still insists that there could be some trick behind Murukashi’s magic. Then, Murukashi describes the hyperreal world:

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 113.
¹⁵⁵ "Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it.” Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations,” in Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166.
Narukisogorosu is the world which is established in the contortion of space. The contortion of space can appear anywhere as I demonstrated right now. God always travels in such a space. God exists in places that you can touch when you reach out your hand but, at the same time, God exists limitless distance away. ... Anyway, you will not have any trouble though you cannot understand what I say because you live without doubting anything in this world which looks to be orderly and consistent.

Murukashi explains that the world he comes from does not belong to the other world or to this world: the world Murukashi comes from is not in Wataru’s reality but in the contortion of space in this world. In short, Narukisogorosu belongs to a hyperreal world. Murukashi points out that there are many contortions everywhere in this reality, even though Wataru cannot feel them, and he says that God travels through such a hyperreal world which is beyond time and distance. Then Murukashi severely criticizes Wataru who is not trying to understand what Murukashi says; Wataru is still relying on his common sense and reasoning. Murukashi reveals that the reality upon which Wataru blindly relies actually includes such an unreasonable and inconsistent hyperreality. According to the supplementary movement which Derrida theorizes, a hyperreal world is now starting to encroach upon the real world.

Murukashi, then, tells Wataru that Murukashi himself is also omnipresent, and he disappears in front of Wataru. After this second encounter, Wataru becomes seriously frightened by Murukashi’s existence because Murukashi can be present anywhere at anytime. This experience elicits in Wataru a stronger fear than that of death. Wataru attempts to think that he can also be omnipresent; he believes that he will be not free if he cannot act the same way as Murukashi. As we have seen in Chapter One, postmodern religion shares

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156 Shimada, Yogensha no Namae, 117-118.
characteristics with virtual reality: the desire to have another self in virtual reality and to achieve the perfect control of the other. These important themes begin to emerge when Wataru starts to suffer from strange headaches, sleeplessness, and paralysis. Wataru feels that Murukashi is controlling his body, and he totally loses control of his own body. When Wataru goes to see a doctor, he explains that Murukashi has become a parasite that moves around his whole body. Suddenly, as he asks the doctor for advice, something goes wrong with Wataru and he starts to speak like a different person:

おまえたちの妄想が作った神々は全て滅びる時が来た。…神々はおまえたちを救う以前におまえたちを苦しめる。自分のわがままを神々におしつけるな、神々のわがままを受け入れる覚悟も持たずに、神々の名を唱えるな。…神々はおまえたちの信仰を拒む。いかなる態度を示そうとも、神々はおまえたちに見向きもしないであろう。神々は始まりも終わりもない、時間が消滅した世界におまえたちを置き去りにしてゆく。もはや、頼るべきものは何もない。157

The time has come when all the gods that your delusions have created will perish. …Gods will make you suffer before they save you. Do not impose your egoism on gods, do not call on gods without your resolution of accepting gods’ egoism. … Gods refuse your faith. No matter what attitude you show, gods will not return to you. Gods leave you the world which has no beginning, no end, and no time. No longer is there anything you can rely on.

This – Murukashi’s message to people who are religious – is the death sentence of legitimate religions. He declares that gods who are created by human beings will die and different gods who are independent of the intentions of human beings will come. He points out how human beings have misunderstood what gods will do. People are too dependent on gods so that they cannot regard gods as independent, inapprehensible others. Gods are going to renounce such a unilateral relationship with human beings and exist without the caring faithfulness and religiousness which human beings have shown to them. The time has come when gods will abandon people neither in this world nor in the other world but in the hyperreal world where there is no time and no distance. In such a world, people can no longer rely on legitimate

157 Ibid., 129.
religions.

Murukashi tells Wataru to repeat these words in order to get rid of the headache. As Wataru repeats them, he feels Murukashi become bigger inside of his body until the two finally become united. This union, however, lasts only for a few seconds – then Murukashi emerges from Wataru’s body and is gone. Now, Wataru cannot help chasing after Murukashi since he cannot understand why Murukashi keeps annoying him. After a few weeks, Wataru eventually finds Murukashi. Yet Murukashi swallows Wataru. Once inside Murukashi’s soul, Wataru learns that Murukashi is the child of a Tibetan mother and a Jewish father and born in Tibet. As he grew up, he chased after woman after woman without studying Buddhism, which his parents profoundly believed in. When Murukashi began to take an interest in his former life and religion, he was killed in an accident. Murukashi, then, discusses his intention with Wataru:

I decided to enter you as a parasite – Please wait, without consulting the host? – I choose you – You choose me for what? – You will be my reincarnation. ... – I do not want to coexist with you – Your soul will merge with my soul well.

Here, Murukashi declares that he will live in Wataru’s body. Murukashi examines Wataru’s soul and discovers that Wataru has the same intentions as Murukashi: that is, to deconstruct legitimate religions and invent a new contemporary religion. Murukashi cannot pursue his goal because he was killed in the accident. Therefore, Murukashi suggests that Wataru can be his reincarnation. Reincarnation usually means that those who die will lose their memories and be reborn, but to become Murukashi’s reincarnation is not to be reborn without former memories or to coexist with someone’s soul. Rather, this reincarnation is a union of two souls, a hybrid of Murukashi’s and Wataru’s souls. It is an ultimate attempt to deconstruct reality, presence, and the legitimacy of reason.

158 Ibid., 167.
Murukashi offers to tell Wataru what he has been since he died thirty years earlier. Murukashi did not go to the other world but, rather, went to the world of *narukisogorosu*. Murukashi proves Wataru's notion that the other world which people have imagined does not exist. In *narukisogorosu*, Murukashi lost his emotions but obtained the power to be omnipresent beyond the limitations of time and space. Murukashi hoped that no one would rely on religion because he knew that what religions preach about the other world and reincarnation was totally incorrect. Therefore, Murukashi decided to find a soul that was closer to his own in order to return to this world and achieve his goal of inventing a new religion. He chooses Wataru who has the same understanding of legitimate religions, and he shares with Wataru his wisdom:

おまえは神の名を唱えてはならない
おまえは偶像崇拝してはならない
おまえは道徳を説いてはならない
おまえは自らを神や仏になぞらえてはならない
おまえはただ人々を迷わせ、分裂させよ
おまえは人々に自らの頭で考え、自らの体で行動することを強いよ
私の悟りはおまえの悟りである

You must not call God's name.
You must not worship idols.
You must not preach about morals.
You must not compare yourself to God or Buddha.
You must confuse and isolate people.
You must force people to think with their heads and to act with their bodies.
My enlightenment is your enlightenment.

This is a declaration of commandments for a new religion that Murukashi establishes by learning about conventional religions in this world. The first four commandments contradict what most legitimate religions recommend or allow people to do. The first prohibition, against calling God's name, criticizes blind dependency on religion. The second prohibition,
against idolatry, is echoed in many major religions; to worship the founder of the religion such as Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed, however, is regarded here as idolatry since Murukashi understands that these founders are prophets of God and human beings have elevated their status to that of God. Therefore, this prohibition criticizes human beings’ selfish assumptions about religion. The third prohibition, against preaching about morals, critiques the reliance of authority on criteria. The fourth prohibition, against comparing oneself to God, reveals the egoism of human beings who attempt to understand God according to common sense. By deconstructing these common religious strategies, Murukashi suggests two important factors of the new religion that he and Wataru are going to invent. First, the new religion must offer a deconstructive viewpoint toward meta-narratives such as discourses of legitimation, authorities, history, morality, and differentiation. This will surely confuse people, but we must destroy these meta-narratives in order to understand others as well as ourselves without prejudice. We need to become atomized so that we need not rely on labeling ourselves. Second, after deconstructing the meta-narratives which have led us to think according to certain discourses, the new religion suggests that we think and act by ourselves without depending on common sense or morality. Each individual should be free from prejudice, social labeling, and conventions in order to recognize him- or herself and others as mere individuals, which promotes respect for others and consequently, world peace.

After hearing Murukashi’s wisdom, Wataru sees bright arrows of light, then finds himself lying on a bed in the hospital. He is told that he lost consciousness for a year after he was swallowed by Murukashi. The story ends when Wataru suddenly feels hungry after drinking water. However, this is the moment at which the new, contemporary religion is born through the union of Wataru and Murukashi.

In the modern age, new religion was believed to be genuinely concerned with happiness, fairness and the peace of both individuals and society in this world. It also has the power to pursue meta-narratives such as political reformation and democracy. As we have seen, however, modern mechanisms such as governmental power have negative effects on the activities of new religion. Followers of Hinomoto cast doubt on the authorities yet their challenge cannot succeed because they cannot overcome the differentiation between those
who rule and those who are ruled. They can doubt whether the authorities are appropriate or not, yet they cannot doubt whether the legitimacy of the authorities is well grounded. Accordingly, though new religion is more flexible than traditional religions — as it comes closer to the daily lives of common people — new religion, in the modern age, cannot be free from power struggles.

Postmodern religion, on the other hand, goes beyond such power struggles, and the legitimacy of the authorities is utterly deconstructed. Wataru, who deconstructs conventional religions, and Murukashi, who experiences hyperreality, become one to create a completely new religion for the postmodern age. The religious sociologist Nakazawa Shin’ichi comments on the birth of a new prophet for a new religion: this “new prophet starts to propagate truth, deconstruct everything ‘true,’ and construct the ethics of human beings on the bottomless naught.”\textsuperscript{160} The new religion will deconstruct all the differentiating categories such as religious belief, social status, labeling, and grouping; it will atomize people who depend on such categories. Then, this new religion will spread in way that rhizomes do, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari propose. The movement of the rhizome is free: casual connections towards other points symbolize anti-authority and anti-hierarchy, while the movement of a tree consists of hierarchical oppositions and authoritative alternatives.\textsuperscript{161} The new religion, which is characterized by deconstructive thinking with regard to the legitimacy of religion, will propagate through the deconstructive movement of a rhizome. Thus, Shimada discards meta-narratives which modern religions attempt to achieve and articulates their groundlessness through Wataru’s experience. He shows that new religions in the postmodern age are universal as well as individual concerning hyperreality as well as reality. New religion, Shimada suggests, will emerge as one of the best media to spread deconstruction which challenges discourses characterized by binary oppositions.

\textsuperscript{160} Nakazawa Shin’ichi, afterword to \textit{Yogensha no Namae} by Shimada Masahiko (Tokyo: Shinchôsha, 1996), 181.
Conclusion

We have learned that new religious movements in Japan are profoundly related to the fundamental social changes through the history of new religions since the mid-nineteenth century. There exists a complex connection between new religious movements and social change, which cannot be simply explained by the influence of economic slumps. It is rapid modernization that has influenced the directions and characteristics of the new religions. In particular, we examined that three modern conditions – secularization, urbanization, and the spirit of reformation and protest – have a remarkable impact on the foundation of the new religious organizations. New religions cooperate with modernity, as people feel various anxieties in a number of previously unexperienced social changes. During such social transitions, new religions offer stability and appeal more to the family and other social groupings than to each individual. In modern societies, religion becomes one of the media which support meta-narratives such as communalism and yo-naoshi, the goals of which are to achieve a better life as a group.

In Takahashi Kazumi’s Jashūmonge, Hinomoto Kyūrei-kai is described as a new religious organization which attempts and fails to achieve such meta-narratives. Takahashi reveals not only the positive side of modernity but also the negative side of modernity – that is power struggles – by describing the ways in which governmental power and its affiliated techniques such as discipline and pastoral power function in modern society. As Michel Foucault proposes, discipline can manipulate individuals and groups in modern society by implicitly instructing them in self-discipline and compromise. Another modern techniques, pastoral power of the state, deprives religion of its role of offering this worldly salvation to each individual. Under these techniques, Hinomoto Kyūrei-kai is driven to desperation and destruction. In spite of the tragic ending of Hinomoto, Takahashi, at the same time, never gives up on the possibility that a new religion can achieve a meta-narrative of transforming the world by challenging various self-disciplines and pastoral measures. In comparison to traditional religions – which do not have close relationships with people’s daily lives – new religions are concerned genuinely with the happiness, fairness and peace of individuals and society in this world. Takahashi suggests that new religions are able to become an important
medium to seek for the truth, peace, and meta-narratives of society in the modern age because such religions possess the ideals necessary to challenge various modern problems such as the governmental power of the state. It is possible to say that Takahashi’s hope partly comes true when some of actual new religious organizations in Japan have launched into politics, world peace and environmental movements after the war.

New religions enter a new phase after Japan enters the so-called postmodern era, which usually refers to the post-industrial, super-consumption culture following the 1970’s. We have learned that the postmodern conditions such as individualism, consumerism, and the emergence of advanced information technologies have a great impact on new religious movements and perceptions of spirituality after the 1970’s. This phenomenon is deeply affected by the end of meta-narratives. Meta-narratives are the core of modern concept, as people have shared the same goals and ideals such as democracy and affluent society. “Old” new religions helped to solve a number of major problems – poverty, sickness, and conflict in human relationship – in order to come closer to the shared ideals. However, radical social changes after 1970’s destroy meta-narratives and perceptions of reality and authenticity. Instead, virtual reality and fictitious objects come to have power. “New” new religions and the “spiritual world” movement, therefore, offer case-by-case individual fulfillment, personal spiritual transformation, and visions of an ideal world through virtual reality. Furthermore, the lack of direct human communication brings about the desire of possession for another self. The sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyô is considered as a negative example in religion as it illustrates the ways in which this group seriously attempted to transform their fictitious society into the real one. New religions in the postmodern age seek ways in which to cope with drastic changes which cast doubts upon value, morality and authority.

Shimada Masahiko’s *Yogensha no Namae* well reflects the way in which postmodernity affects religion in Japan. While Takahashi carefully develops the theme of meta-narratives and religion in his work with the actual historical background of Japanese new religions, Shimada radically discards meta-narratives which modern religions attempt to achieve and articulates their groundlessness through Wataru’s hyperreal experience. By deconstructing the differentiation of religious groups, personal religious faith, and reality,
Shimada questions legitimacy of the authorities and the meta-narratives. Modern religion ends up concerning power struggles; people cannot doubt whether the legitimacy of the authorities is well grounded despite the fact that they can doubt whether the authorities are appropriate or not. Postmodern religion, on the other hand, goes beyond such a power struggles and differentiation and develops in to a different level; Wataru, who deconstructs conventional religions, and Murukashi, who experiences hyperreality, become united to create a completely new religion for the postmodern age. In this novel, Shimada shows that new religions in the postmodern age are more universal as well as individual concerning hyperreality as well as reality. He suggests that new religion will emerge as one of the best media to spread deconstruction which challenges discourses characterized by binary oppositions. Such a new religion can be a symbol of anti-authority and anti-hierarchy in the postmodern age by freeing people from modern spells.

Even though Takahashi and Shimada understand religion in totally different ways, it is clear that religion, which has always dealt with people’s desire and hope, directly reflects social and personal problems at any time. Especially, new religions are more aware of people’s daily lives and hopes; they emerge from the critique of the conventional religions which have been rather concerned with communities as a whole. By studying religious themes in literary works, it becomes clear that social and cultural problems such as power struggles, legitimacy, individualism, and hyperreality underlie the backgrounds of religious movements. Literary works of religious genre successfully analyzes these backgrounds in detail and articulates that mentality of the Japanese people have drastically changed according to social changes and movements by modern and postmodern conditions. New religion, then, will develop into a new phase whenever new social changes happen in Japan, reflecting people’s new problems and desires.
Bibliography


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