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Sanbōkyōdan

Zen and the Way of the New Religions

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The Sanbōkyōdan (Three Treasures Association) is a contemporary Zen movement that was founded by Yasutani Hakuun (1885–1973) in 1954. The style of Zen propagated by Sanbōkyōdan teachers, noteworthy for its single-minded emphasis on the experience of kenshō*, diverges markedly from more traditional models found in Sōtō, Rinzai, or Ōbaku training halls. In fact, the Sanbōkyōdan displays many characteristic traits of the so-called New Religions. (This is particularly noteworthy as the influence of the Sanbōkyōdan on Western conceptions of Zen has been far out of proportion to its relatively marginal status in Japan.) The article concludes with some reflections on category formation in the study of Japanese religion, arguing that there is an overtly ideological dimension to the rubric of "old" versus "new." The manner in which scholars of Japanese religion represent the disjunction between the New Religions and traditional Japanese Buddhism may owe as much to the division of labor in the field as to the nature of the phenomenon itself.*

"We are critical only of religions that perform no miracles."
A Mahikari teacher

IN 1970, WHEN I WAS STILL in my teens, a friend lent me his copy of Philip KAPLEAU's *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1967). This popular Zen

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primer, which the author styles "a manual for self-instruction" (p. xvi), was explicitly designed to allow those without access to a bona fide Zen master to begin *zazen* 坐禅 (sitting meditation) on their own. The goal of such practice, according to the author, is no more and no less than *satori,* or "Self-realization" (p. xv), and, lest the reader come to regard this goal as lying beyond the reach of the average layperson, the book includes a section entitled "Enlightenment" that reproduces the testimonials of eight contemporary practitioners. Each of these practitioners, identified by homely epithets such as "an American ex-businessman," "a Japanese insurance adjuster," and "a Canadian housewife," reports on their initial experience of *kenshō* 見性 (seeing one's true nature) in tantalizing detail.

As a teenager with an interest in mystical experience I was intrigued by the possibility of gaining Buddhist *satori*, and partial to the hands-on approach of *The Three Pillars of Zen*, especially when compared to the more theoretical writings of D. T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, Christmas Humphries, and other early popularizers. Indeed, the intellectualism of the latter authors seemed a betrayal of the oft-touted Zen emphasis on "immediate experience." As things turned out I went on to train as a scholar of East Asian Buddhism, a course of study that included periods of fieldwork in Asia. My own historical and ethnographic investigations yielded an image of traditional Zen monastic life somewhat at odds with that proffered by apologists such as Kapleau and Suzuki. Zen monasticism was and continues to be a highly ritualized tradition that emphasizes public performance and physical deportment at least as much as "inner experience." Enlightenment is not so much a "state of mind" as a form of knowledge and mode of activity, acquired through a long and arduous course of physical discipline and study. Advancement within the ecclesiastical hierarchy is not associated with fleeting moments of insight or transformative personal experiences so much as with vocational maturity—one's ability to publicly instantiate or model liberation. In short, while notions such as *satori* and *kenshō* may play an important role in the mythology and ideology of Zen, their role in the day-to-day training of Zen monks is not as central as some contemporary writings might lead one to believe.

Elsewhere I have argued that the explicit emphasis on "experience" found in the works of contemporary exegetes such as Suzuki can be traced in part to Occidental sources, notably the writings of William James.[1] Having considered the cross-cultural provenance of contemporary "Zen thought," I turned to the image of Zen practice most

[1] See Sharf 1995a, 1995b, and n.d.

familiar to students in the West, i.e., the method promulgated in the pages of *The Three Pillars of Zen*. (Kapleau's approach is modeled on the "Harada-Yasutani" method used in many Zen centers throughout North America.) I soon discovered that, just as Suzuki's "Zen" is of dubious value when it comes to the reconstruction of premodern Ch'an and Zen ideology, Kapleau's Zen can be misleading if used uncritically as a model of traditional Zen monastic training.

There is little in Kapleau's book to suggest that his teachers were anything but respected members of orthodox Zen monastic orders. Yet such was not the case, for in 1954 Yasutani Hakuun 安谷白雲 (1885–1973), the Zen priest whose teachings are featured in *The Three Pillars of Zen*, severed his formal ties to the Sōtō school in order to establish an independent Zen organization called the Sanbōkyōdan 三宝教団, or "Three Treasures Association." The influence exerted by this contemporary lay reform movement on American Zen is out of proportion to its relatively marginal status in Japan: modern Rinzai and Sōtō monks are generally unaware of, or indifferent to, the polemical attacks that Yasutani and his followers direct against the Zen priesthood. Orthodox priests are similarly unmoved by claims to the effect that the Sanbōkyōdan alone preserves the authentic teachings of Zen.

As I began to investigate this somewhat idiosyncratic Zen sect I found that it displayed many of the characteristics of a Japanese "New Religion" (*shin shūkyō* 新宗教). Yet on reflection it became apparent that the category "Japanese New Religion" was itself an artifact of the barriers, methodological and otherwise, that divide the academic disciplines charged with the study of religion in Japan. As such, while the focus of this article is on Sanbōkyōdan's role in modern Western notions about Zen, I will conclude with some reflections on category formation in the study of Japanese religion.

The Sanbōkyōdan Lineage

As with virtually all traditions that go under the banner of Zen, the Sanbōkyōdan views its history in terms of a lineage, albeit a recent one, of fully enlightened masters. Thus, before turning to the teachings and practices of this organization, a few words are in order concerning its patriarchal line.

The roots of the Sanbōkyōdan go back to Yasutani's own master, Harada Daiun 原田大雲 (or Harada Sogaku 原田祖岳, 1871–1961), a charismatic rōshi who studied under a variety of teachers from both

Sōtō and Rinzai lineages.[2] Born in Obama (Fukui Prefecture), Harada began training as a Sōtō novice at the age of seven, and was ordained at age twenty, entering the Rinzai monks' hall at Shōgen-ji 正眼寺. Seven years later he enrolled at Sōtō-affiliated Komazawa University, and later continued his Rinzai training under Dokutan Sōsan 毒湛匝三 (1840–1917) of Nanzen-ji 南禅寺, from whom he received *inka* 印可 (certification as Dharma heir).[3] Harada accepted a teaching position at Komazawa in 1911 that he held for twelve years, leaving it to serve as rōshi at Chigen-ji 智源寺 in Kyoto and Hosshin-ji 発心寺 in Obama. He established a reputation as a strict and demanding master who used the intensity of the monastic environment to drive his students toward *kenshō*. His grueling *sesshin* 接心 (intensive Zen retreats) at Hosshin-ji attracted a host of dedicated priests from both the Sōtō and Rinzai schools, as well as a number of Japanese and foreign laypersons. He also managed to publish a number of works on Zen, including several primers on Zen meditation.[4]

As both professor and Zen master, Harada actively sought to create a synthesis of Sōtō and Rinzai teachings. Thus, although his formal sectarian affiliation was Sōtō, he gave Rinzai-style *teishō* 提唱 (formal lectures) on the standard Zen kōan collections, and actively used kōans in private interviews (*sanzen* 参禅, *dokusan* 獨參).[5] Moreover, unlike many of his Sōtō contemporaries, Harada believed that *kenshō* was within the reach of any practitioner who was sufficiently motivated and diligent in his practice, whether layperson or priest. He was an uncompromising teacher, however, and the harsh regimen at Hosshin-ji proved too much for some of his foreign disciples.

Like his teacher Harada, Yasutani Hakuun saw himself as integrating the best of Sōtō and Rinzai, thus precipitating a return to the original teachings of Dōgen. Born to a poor family in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1885, Yasutani was first placed in a Rinzai temple at the age of four, and in 1896 was ordained under Yasutani Ryōgi of Teishin-ji (Shizuoka), receiving the name Yasutani Ryōkō 安谷量衡. At sixteen Yasutani began study under the well-known Sōtō master Nishiari Bokusan 西有穆山 (1821–1910), from whom he eventually received Dharma transmission, but he practiced under a number of other important Zen teachers of the time as well.[6]

[2] Brief biographies of Harada can be found in *Zengaku daijiten* (1985, p. 1,031); *Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten* (1992, p. 680); and KAPLEAU (1967, pp. 273–76).

[3] On Dokutan Sōsan see especially ZEN BUNKA HENSHŪBU ed. 1981, pp. 213–35.

[4] See, for example, HARADA 1927, 1977, and 1982.

[5] The attempt to synthesize Sōtō and Rinzai teachings was not new; it can be traced to earlier Sōtō masters such as Tenkei Denson 天桂傳尊 (1648–1735; BIELEFELDT 1988, p. 6 n. 6).

[6] Yasutani's teachers include Akino Kōdō 秋野孝道 (1857–1934), Kishizawa Ian

Like many priests of his day, Yasutani was forced to look outside the Zen institution in order to earn a livelihood. He attended Toshima Teachers' School 豊島師範学校, and upon his graduation in 1914 he took a job as a school teacher that he held for some ten years. Shortly after graduating Yasutani married and was soon father to five children. In 1924 he became resident priest at a small temple in Nakanojō 中之条 (Gunma Prefecture), and around the same time was introduced to Harada through a Buddhist magazine called *Daijōzen* 大乗禅. He first attended *sesshin* under Harada at Nippon-ji 日本寺 (Chiba Prefecture) in 1925, and attained *kenshō* two years later during his second *sesshin* at Hosshin-ji.

Yasutani published his first book in 1931, and went on to author literally dozens of works on Zen and Zen classics, including carefully annotated commentaries to each of the main kōan collections and several major works by Dōgen.[7] He finished his formal kōan study under Harada in 1938, and received *inka* on 8 April 1943. By this time his energies were increasingly devoted toward teaching Zen, primarily to laypersons, and in 1949 he started the Hakuunkai 白雲会, a lay-oriented *zazen* group in Hokkaidō that was the precursor of the Sanbōkyōdan.[8] In 1951 he began publishing the journal *Gyōshō* 暁鐘 (*Dawn Bell*), and by 1952 he was supervising some twenty-five local *zenkai* 禅会 (Zen groups), most of which were located in the Tokyo area. A Kamakura branch of the Hakuunkai was established on 23 May 1953, with the help of his student and eventual successor, Yamada Kōun 山田耕雲 (1907–1989), and on 8 January of the following year Yasutani formally established the Sanbōkyōdan as an independent government-registered religious organization.

Yasutani's break with Sōtō appears to have been motivated both by his discontent with the Zen establishment of his day, and by his desire to propagate *zazen* practice and the experience of *kenshō* outside the monastery walls. During most of his active career his suburban Tokyo home functioned as the sect's headquarters, and a growing number of foreign students began to appear at his door. In addition to monthly

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岸澤維安(1865–1955), and Nozawa Tatsugen 野澤達元. On Nishiari, Akino, and Kishizawa, see *ZENGAKU DAIJITEN* 1985, pp. 977c, 3d, and 198a respectively.

[7] See, for example, YASUTANI 1956, 1967, 1968, 1972a, 1972b, and 1973. These are, in many respects, rather traditional Zen commentaries evincing a broad familiarity with East Asian Buddhist literature. At the same time, Yasutani's writings display his single-minded concern with *satori* and *kenshō,* and are liberally scattered with polemical attacks on the more "orthodox" teachers of his time (see below). Yasutani also published five volumes of classical Chinese poetry, with a sixth planned.

[8] The first *sesshin* of the Hakuunkai was held in a temple in Hakodate, and this *sesshin* became an annual affair, continuing for some twenty-four years.

sesshin held in the Tokyo area, Yasutani traveled extensively throughout Japan holding retreats of varying length at temples, universities, factories, and even at the Self-Defense Academy. In due course a few of his more advanced foreign students returned to the West to establish meditation centers of their own, and two of them—Philip Kapleau (1912–) and Robert Aitken (1917–)—sponsored Yasutani on his first teaching tour of America in 1962. Yasutani continued to visit America annually to preach and lead *sesshin* until 1969. In time, Japanese chapters of the Sanbōkyōdan were established in Osaka, Kikuchi 菊地 (Kumamoto Prefecture), and Gobō 御坊 (Wakayama Prefecture), in addition to Kamakura and Tokyo. Each of these groups sponsors *zenkai* and *sesshin* on a regular basis, overseen by certified Sanbōkyōdan teachers.

Although Yasutani was no longer formally associated with the Sōtō school, he did bestow *inka* on a number of his disciples, including Yamada Kōun and (in 1960) Satomi Myōdō 里見妙道 (1896–1978), whose "spiritual diary" would eventually be published in Japanese and English (see KING 1987). The former succeeded Yasutani as Kanchō 管長 (superintendent) of the sect upon Yasutani's retirement in 1970. At the time of Yasutani's retirement Maezumi Taizan 前角太山 (1931–1995, founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles) and Kubota Akira 窪田 晃 (1932– , future Sanbōkyōdan Kanchō) received *inka* along with several others. Yasutani died on 8 March 1973, having led over three hundred *sesshin* during a long and dynamic teaching career.[9]

Yamada Kōun, Yasutani's heir, came from a very different mold than his teacher: while his interest in Zen can be traced back to his youth, he was never ordained as a priest, nor did he spend any protracted period of time in a Zen monastery. Yamada remained a householder and businessman throughout his life, and his family residence in Kamakura would assume the role of Sanbōkyōdan headquarters during his tenure. Yamada's promotion to the position of Kanchō could only strengthen the lay orientation of the movement.

Yamada was born in Nihonmatsu 二本松 (Fukushima Prefecture) in 1907, and attended high school in Tokyo, where his roommate was the future Zen master Nakagawa Sōen 中川宗淵 (1907–1984). The two went on to attend Tokyo Imperial University, where Yamada studied law. After graduation Yamada took a position with an insurance company, and between 1941 and 1946 he served as personnel director for

[9] See the biography in *Kyōshō*, reproduced in the "Yasutani Roshi Memorial Issue" of the *ZCLA Journal* (Summer/Fall 1973), pp. 63–64; also KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 24–26; SAITŌ and NARUSE 1988, p. 410; YAMADA 1974, p. 109; YASUTANI 1969; and FIELDS 1981, pp. 231–39.

the Manchuria Mining Company. The posting was fortuitous: in Manchuria Yamada reestablished his friendship with Nakagawa Sōen, who was visiting Myōshin-ji Betsuin 妙心寺別院 as attendant to the master Yamamoto Genpō 山本玄峰 (1866–1961). As a result, in 1943 Yamada, now a married businessman with three children, began to practice Zen under Kōno Sōkan 河野宗寛, abbot of Myōshin-ji Betsuin.

Yamada took the practice seriously, and upon returning to Japan continued his study under Asahina Sōgen 朝比奈宗源 of Engaku-ji 圓覺寺 (Kamakura), and Hanamoto Kanzui 花本貫瑞 of Mokusen-ji 黙仙寺 (Ōfuna). In 1950 Yamada took the lay precepts from Harada and began to train under Yasutani. Three years later Yamada invited Yasutani to Kamakura, and together they organized a Kamakura chapter of the Hakuunkai, operating at first out of rented space. In November of that same year Yamada experienced *kenshō*, a record of which is found in *The Three Pillars of Zen* under the initials "K. Y." (KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 204–208). Yamada completed his kōan training in 1960 and received *inka* the following year. In 1967 Yamada was made Shōshike 正師家 (translated by the Sanbōkyōdan as "Authentic Zen Master"), and he took over as Kanchō in 1970.

The transition from Yasutani to Yamada went relatively smoothly. Yamada built a training hall called the San'un Zendō 三雲禅堂 adjacent to his home in Kamakura, which functioned as the movement's headquarters. In addition to overseeing the daily practice of his disciples, Yamada held bimonthly *zenkai* in which he gave *teishō* and *dokusan*, and led *sesshin* five or six times a year. All the while he continued his work as a businessman and chairman of the board of directors of the Kenbikyōin 顕微鏡院, a large medical clinic in Tokyo. Yamada authored a number of books on Zen, including an English translation of the *Mumonkan* 無門関,[10] and *teishō* on a variety of Zen texts (see YAMADA 1979 and 1988). He died of heart failure on 13 September 1989, having been seriously debilitated since a fall in October the previous year.[11]

Like his teacher, Yamada traveled extensively, and beginning in 1971 he conducted regular Zen retreats in the United States, the Philippines, Singapore, and Germany. He attracted a host of foreign students, many of whom were Catholic priests and nuns. (Yamada once remarked that he believed "Zen would become an important stream in the Catholic Church one day" [AITKEN 1990, p. 153].) While Yasutani began the focus on laypersons, Yamada went further, devel-

[10] Chin.: *Wu men kuan*, compiled in 1228 by Wu-men Hui-k'ai 無門慧開 (1183–1260).

[11] See SAITŌ and NARUSE 1988, p. 410; YAMADA 1979, pp. x–xi; AITKEN 1990; HABITO 1990; and the pages of *Kyōshō*.

oping a Zen that was accessible to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, and by the end of his life he had commissioned over a dozen Christian monastics and priests as Zen teachers.

Since Yamada's death the leadership of the Sanbōkyōdan has passed into the hands of Kubota Akira (Kubota Ji'un 窪田慈雲). Born in Tokyo in 1932, Kubota began training under Yasutani in 1949, attained *kenshō* in 1957, and finished his formal kōan study in 1970. In 1983 he was made Shōshike, and he assumed the position of Kanchō six years later. Following the lay-teacher model provided by Yamada, Kubota leads the group while continuing to serve on the executive board of the Greater Tokyo Fire and Marine Insurance Company. In conjunction with his responsibilities as Kanchō, Kubota oversees the spiritual development of students with the help of his own Dharma heir Yamada Masamichi 山田匡道 (Yamada Ryōun 山田凌雲, 1940–), son of Yamada Kōun.[12]

The Sanbōkyōdan claims (according to one 1988 source) some 3,790 registered followers and 24 instructors.[13] The organization runs regular retreats at the San'un Zendō and at the regional centers in Tokyo, Osaka, Kikuchi, and Gobō. Members keep abreast of group activities through *Kyōshō*, published every other month by the legal umbrella organization, the Sanbōkōryūkai 三宝興隆会. A sizable portion of each issue is devoted to contemporary commentaries on Zen classics by the major teachers of the sect,[14] but there are also expository essays on subjects such as "Zen and science," short appreciative pieces on Zen practice from group members, "letters to the rōshi" (*rōshi e no tegami* 老師への手紙), and so on. A few items in English translation are found in each issue, including the Kanchō's "Opening Comments" (*kantō* 巻頭). *Kyōshō* also publishes the names of new members, lists of donors, and announcements of upcoming retreats throughout Japan. In addition, each of the regional centers sends in reports on recent

[12] Yamada Masamichi, a businessman with a graduate degree from Harvard (1969), was born during his father's sojourn in Manchuria. He began study under Yasutani in 1956, and experienced *kenshō* in 1964. In 1978 he finished his formal kōan training (*hasan*) and he was appointed Shōshike in 1991, following a second major *kenshō* experience during a *sesshin* held the previous year.

[13] The figures are found in Saitō and Naruse 1988, p. 411. In comparison, the three major Japanese Zen sects (Sōtō, Rinzai, and Ōbaku) together operate some 66 monks' halls for the training of priests. As of 1984 there were a total of 23,657 ordained Zen priests in Japan who collectively staffed the 20,932 registered Zen temples scattered throughout the country (Foulk 1988, p. 158). Note that these figures refer to Zen priests, not lay parishioners.

[14] These include commentaries to the *Mumonkan* 無門関, *Hekiganroku* 碧巌録, *Denkōroku* 傳光録, *Shōyōroku* 従容録, *Eiheikōroku* 永平広録, and chapters of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏. Many of these articles are transcriptions of *teishō* by Harada, Yasutani, Yamada, and Kubota.

sesshin, listing the names of all participants. (The *sesshin* reports make special note of those who attained *kenshō*, as well as the names of foreign practitioners from abroad who came to Japan to have their *kenshō* authorized.)[15] Finally, *Kyōshō* is the vehicle for the dissemination of *kenshō* testimonials, about which more will be said below. In short, the *Kyōshō* functions as the sect's official organ, disseminating teachings, news, and matters of policy and governance.

Despite its modest size, the Sanbōkyōdan has had an inordinate influence on Zen in the West. Note for example the number of Zen teachers in America who have direct ties to this lay Zen movement, including Maezumi Taizan,[16] Philip Kapleau,[17] Robert Aitken,[18] and Eido Tai Shimano[19] (this is in addition to several teachers in the Harada-Yasutani line who lead groups in Europe, Australia, and Southeast Asia). It is true that each of these men studied under a number of Japanese masters, and that none of them currently maintains an institutional affiliation with the Sanbōkyōdan. Nevertheless,

[15] See, for example, *Kyōshō* 152 (July/August 1978), p. 32.

[16] Maezumi, the son of a Sōtō priest, ordained at age 11, and graduated from Komazawa University. He trained at the Sōtō training hall at Sōji-ji 總持寺, and in 1956 came to America to serve as priest at Zenshu-ji (Los Angeles), headquarters of the Sōtō Zen Mission in the United States. He met Yasutani in 1962, and received transmission from him some eight years later (7 Dec. 1970). He founded the Zen Center of Los Angeles in 1969, the Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values in 1976, and the Zen Mountain Center (Idyllwild, Calif.) in 1983. While Maezumi is also the Dharma successor of the Sōtō teacher Kuroda Hakujun and the Rinzai teacher Osaka Kōryū 苧坂光竜, his style of teaching owes a great deal to the Harada-Yasutani method.

[17] Kapleau was introduced to Harada by Nakagawa Sōen and spent three years studying with Harada at Hosshin-ji. Eventually health problems exacerbated by monastic austerities led Kapleau to move to the more congenial setting of Kamakura to study with Yasutani, and in August 1958 he had his first *kenshō* experience. Kapleau went on to found the Rochester Zen Center, which has since spawned a number of affiliates throughout North America. See KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 208–29; and FIELDS 1981, pp. 239–42.

[18] Robert Aitken's interest in Zen dates back to the second World War, when he found himself in a Japanese POW camp with R. H. Blyth. He studied with Nyogen Senzaki and Nakagawa Sōen before becoming a student of Yasutani (in 1957) and later Yamada. He founded the Diamond Sangha in 1959, was given permission to teach in 1974, and received *inka shōmei* from Yamada in 1985. Aitken has authored several books on Zen; for his biography see TWORKOV 1989, pp. 25–62, and *Kyōshō* 230 (July/August 1991), p. 30.

[19] Eido (1932–), a student of Nakagawa Sōen, went to Hawaii in 1960 to assist Aitken and the Diamond Sangha. While back in Japan for a visit in 1962, Nakagawa introduced Eido to Yasutani, and Eido served as assistant and translator during Yasutani's first trip to America that same year. At Nakagawa's behest, Eido continued his kōan study under Yasutani. Eido imbibed Yasutani's unorthodox style, and later credits Yasutani with teaching him "how to guide students in the *dokusan* room, and how to express the spirit of Zen during *teishō*" (NYOGEN et al. 1976, p. 186). In 1965 he went to New York and soon thereafter became president of the Zen Studies Society. Eido received Dharma transmission from Nakagawa in 1972 and became abbot of the International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji. For his autobiography see NYOGEN et al. 1976, pp. 166–223.

each studied kōans under Yasutani and/or Yamada, and each was profoundly influenced by the distinctive style of lay practice associated with the Harada-Yasutani line.[20]

Sanbōkyōdan Zen

In adapting what was essentially a monastic tradition to the needs of lay practitioners, many of whom are non-Japanese, the Sanbōkyōdan has grown increasingly distant from orthodox monastic models. For comparative purposes, a word is in order concerning the more traditional curriculum.

Zen monastic training involves a prolonged course of instruction in the elaborate ritual and ceremony of monastic life.[21] Indeed, as a prerequisite for entering a *sōdō* 僧堂 (monks' hall), a novice is expected to be familiar with the ceremonial life and etiquette of a Zen temple. (Most Zen priests are "temple sons" who grew up in a temple environment.) Thus, by the time he is ready for the *sōdō* a priest would already know how to chant, having memorized a few short sūtras, *dhāraṇī*, and other liturgical materials, most of which are written in Chinese. He would know how to wear his monastic robes and handle the ceremonial surplice (*kesa* 袈裟), as well as how to make devotional offerings to the Buddhist deities enshrined throughout the temple complex. He would also ideally know how to feed the hungry ghosts, how to perform memorial rites, how to prepare and serve food, how to minister to visiting parishioners, and so on.

This is not to say that adjustment to *sōdō* life is easy. A good deal of initiatory hazing is involved in the treatment of novice *unsui* 雲水 (*sōdō* monks in training), and punishment for infractions, including infractions of which the novice may be unaware, is immediate and often severe. The organization of a monastery is rigidly hierarchical—the *unsui* must learn to respond unquestioningly to the orders of his superiors, a category that initially includes virtually every member of the monastic community. At the same time, through close observation and imitation the novice is expected to quickly master the elaborate

[20] Mention should also be made of Enomiya-Lassalle, S. J. (1898–1990), a Jesuit who studied under Harada, Yasutani, and Yamada. Enomiya-Lassalle taught at Sophia University in Tokyo and authored several books on Zen in German. While Enomiya-Lassalle spent most of his life in Japan (he was present at the bombing of Hiroshima), he was influential in the Zen training of Catholic clergy, conducting regular *sesshin*, often in Benedictine monasteries, in Germany and Japan. Several Catholic priests have since followed in Enomiya-Lassalle's footsteps, becoming certified Zen teachers in the Sanbōkyōdan tradition while retaining their Catholic identity (see below).

[21] For a detailed account of medieval Ch'an monastic life see esp. FOULK 1993.

ritual protocol governing behavior in the meditation hall, the abbot's quarters, the Dharma hall, the kitchen, the toilet, the bathhouse, and other facilities. There is a scholastic component to Zen training as well: *unsui* are expected to become familiar with the classics of the Zen canon, whether through formal study as is done in Sōtō establishments, or in conjunction with kōan training as is more common in Rinzai. All the while the *unsui* must learn to endure the physical and emotional discomfort involved in prolonged *zazen*. For those who will become masters, the course of monastic training can last fifteen years or more.

In contrast, Sanbōkyōdan leaders consider the elaborate ceremonial and literary culture of a Zen monastery to be, at best, a mere "means" to an end, at worse, a dangerous diversion.[22] The Sanbōkyōdan insists that "true Zen" is no more and no less than the experience of *kenshō*—a personal and profound realization of the essential nonduality of all phenomenal existence. As such, Sanbōkyōdan teachers claim that Zen is not a "religion" in the common sense of the word, since it is not bound to any particular cultural form, nor is it dependent on scripture or faith.[23] One need not be a Buddhist, not to mention an ordained priest or monk, to practice Zen, and thus the robes, liturgies, devotional rites, scriptures, and so on may be set aside in the single-minded quest for *kenshō*. Of course, to the extent that traditional monastic forms help to elicit an experience of awakening they may be retained, but there is always a risk that "mere ritual" and "book learning" will come to stand in place of true insight. According to Sanbōkyōdan analysis, the sorry state of contemporary Rinzai and Sōtō training halls bears vivid testimony to the dangers of institutionalization, ritualization, and intellectualization.

Of course, such rhetoric did not originate with the Sanbōkyōdan: Zen masters throughout history have always been quick to warn of the dangers of attachment to ceremony, scripture, and doctrine. But there is a world of difference between issuing such warnings in a monastic environment where ritual and doctrinal study are *de rigueur*, and issuing such warnings to laypersons with little or no competence in such areas. In short, the Sanbōkyōdan has taken the antinomian and iconoclastic rhetoric of Zen literally, doing away with much of the disci-

[22] Yasutani's teaching style is described in KAPLEAU 1967. See also the tributes in AITKEN 1974, and YAMADA 1974.

[23] See, for example, the article by Kubota Ji'un: "Zen wa shūkyō ka ina ka 禅は宗教か否か" *Kyōshō* 231 (Sept./Oct. 1991), pp. 4–5. Kubota concludes the article with the observation that "perhaps only Zen, with its aspects of practice and realization, can be called a religion in the true sense of the word" (p. 5). On the ideological dimensions of the claim that "Zen is not a religion" see SHARF 1995a and 1995b.

plined ceremonial, liturgical, and intellectual culture of the monastery in favor of a single-minded emphasis on *zazen* and a simplified form of kōan study. Years of rigorous *sōdō* training have been replaced by participation in frequent short retreats lasting a week or less. Although some attention is paid to the rudiments of *zendō* (meditation hall) ritual and etiquette, retreats are oriented toward the speedy realization of *kenshō* and rapid advancement through the kōans. Even the study of basic Buddhist doctrine is deemed incidental to the goal of Zen training and thus not required. This reconfiguration of Zen clearly serves the interests of a lay congregation that has neither the time nor the inclination to embark on a more formal course of monastic education.

New students are initiated into Sanbōkyōdan practice through a series of six introductory lectures originally designed by Harada, and delivered over a period of six weeks.[24] These lectures instruct the student in the basics of Zen practice, covering topics such as sitting posture, concentration techniques, *shikantaza* 只管打坐 ("just sitting"), walking meditation (*kinhin* 經行), ritual protocol for *dokusan*, and the dangers of *makyō* 魔境 (visual or auditory "hallucinations"). The final lecture deals with four levels of aspiration that may motivate one to practice Zen, ranging from mere curiosity about Buddhism to the desire to realize one's true self and experience *kenshō*. After listening to the lectures and practicing various meditation exercises for a period of six weeks or so, the student is ready for his or her first formal interview with the teacher.

During the initial *dokusan* all new students are queried as to which of the four aspirations best describes their own. The vast majority confess a desire for *kenshō*, and are accordingly assigned the so-called *mu* kōan: "A monk asked Jōshū: 'Does a dog have Buddha-nature, or not?' Jōshū replied: 'No.'"[25] This kōan is, of course, one of the most frequently cited in the literature, being the first case in the *Mumonkan* collection. On the surface, Jōshū's response is an apparent repudiation of one of the most basic tenets of East Asian Buddhism, namely, that all sentient beings, including members of the canine family, possess "Buddha-nature." Nevertheless, the universality of Buddha-nature is not in doubt, and no educated priest would mistake the interlocu-

[24] An English translation, entitled "*Sōsan no hanashi*: Introductory lectures on Zen practice," is available from the Sanbōkyōdan (San'un Zendō n.d.). An earlier translation, based on Yasutani's lectures, is found in Kapleau 1967, pp. 26–62.

[25] Students with "lesser aspirations" are assigned one of the meditations on the breath. However, without working through the kōans there is little if any opportunity for students to advance within the organization.

tor's question as an expression of ignorance. Rather, the question is a bold challenge to Jōshū to respond in a fashion that does not reify, or express attachment to, the notion of Buddha-nature. In this context Jōshū's response—his simple but emphatic "no"—denotes his freedom from attachment to doctrine (i.e., his acknowledgment that no conventional formulation is ultimate), and his refusal to attempt to articulate a medial or transcendental position. Jōshū has adroitly escaped the snare, and a medieval monk trained in the classics could not fail to appreciate the consummate elegance of Jōshū's laconic response.[26]

As in contemporary Rinzai, Sanbōkyōdan teachers consider this or any other "intellectual" understanding of the *mu* kōan to be beside the point. Sanbōkyōdan students are instructed not to grapple with the kōan discursively, but rather to use the syllable *mu* as a focus for meditation and a springboard for *kenshō*. This entails repeating the syllable *mu* with each out-breath, rendering it, in effect, a *mantra*. During intensive retreats some Sanbōkyōdan teachers have been known to encourage students to utter *mu* aloud in order to intensify their practice and increase concentration. Occasionally a separate room is provided for those working on *mu*, allowing them to vocalize the kōan without disturbing others.

During *sesshin* and shorter *zenkai* gatherings students have the opportunity to consult with the master during *dokusan*. This private meeting is similar to its Rinzai counterpart, in that it is primarily an opportunity for the teacher to test the student on his or her understanding of a kōan. However, the interview is often less brusque than would be the case under a Rinzai master; in Sanbōkyōdan *dokusan* students may discuss problems that arise in their practice, and teachers will often respond with advice and encouragement.[27] (In the early stages of an *unsui*'s training a Rinzai rōshi will tend to hold his silence during such meetings, uttering at most a brief admonishment to the frustrated student before ringing his bell to terminate the interview.)

The only acceptable "solution" to the *mu* kōan in the Sanbōkyōdan is a credible report of a *kenshō* experience, and beginning students are subject to intense pressure during *sesshin*—including the generous application of the "warning stick" (*kyōsaku* or *keisaku* 警策)—in order to expedite this experience. The unrelenting emphasis on *kenshō* and

[26] For the "*mu*" kōan see T no. 2005: 48.292c22–23. This kōan is frequently the subject of unnecessary obfuscation and mystification, as seen in the concerted refusal by many modern Western exponents of Zen to translate the character *mu* into plain English. *Mu* means "no."

[27] A detailed account of Yasutani's interviews with foreign students can be found in KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 96–154; see also KAPLEAU 1988.

the vigorous tactics used to bring it about constitute the single most distinctive (and controversial) feature of the Sanbōkyōdan method. Eido Shimano, recalling Yasutani's first *sesshin* in Hawaii in 1962, writes:

> The night before sesshin started, Yasutani Roshi said to the participants, "To experience kensho is crucial, but we are so lazy. Therefore, during sesshin we have to set up a special atmosphere so that all participants can go straight ahead toward the goal. First, absolute silence should be observed. Second, you must not look around. Third, forget about the usual courtesies and etiquette" . . . He also told the participants, and later told me privately as well, of the need for frequent use of the *keisaku*. That five-day sesshin was as hysterical as it was historical. It ended with what Yasutani Roshi considered five kenshō experiences.
>
> (NYOGEN et al. 1976, pp. 184–85)[28]

While Yasutani's successors are considerably more reserved in their use of the *kyōsaku*, the emphasis on *kenshō* has not diminished, prompting one student of Yamada to refer to the San'un Zendō as a "*kenshō* machine" (LEVINE 1992, p. 72).

Students who do succeed in passing *mu*, along with a number of kōans used specifically to test the veracity of the experience (such as the "sound of one hand"), are publicly recognized in a *jahai* 謝拝 ceremony—an offering of thanks to the congregation. This rite, which is performed at the end of a *sesshin* or other group gathering, begins with everyone formally seated in the *zendō*. A senior member leads the celebrant(s) to the altar, where each is handed a stick of incense. The celebrants make individual offerings of incense and bow three times to the altar, whereupon they walk to the opposite end of the hall and bow three times to the rōshi. They then circumambulate the *zendō*, hands folded in *gasshō* 合掌 (palms pressed reverentially together), and each seated member of the assembly bows as they pass by. The celebrants make a final bow at the altar, and a group recitation of the *Heart Sūtra* concludes this otherwise silent ceremony.[29]

Upon passing *mu* the practitioner receives a booklet containing the

[28] See also Kapleau's vivid depiction of *sesshin* with Harada and Yasutani in KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 189–229.

[29] A *jahai* service, understood as an expression of thanks on behalf of the celebrants to all those who aided their practice, may also be held when a student is elevated to a teaching rank. In traditional Sōtō monasteries, *jahai* refers to a simple bow of gratitude performed by a monk to the teacher following the give and take of a *mondō* 問答 or *shōryō* 商量. It is also performed during "Dharma combat" (*hossenshiki* 法戦式) by the Chief Seat (*shuso* 首座), who bows in gratitude to the various Buddhas, patriarchs, and Zen teachers (*Zengaku daijiten*, p. 476a). Outside of the Sanbōkyōdan, *jahai* has nothing to do with the recognition of *kenshō*.

collection of "miscellaneous" kōans that immediately follow *mu*. And last but not least, the student is presented with a sort of "diploma," consisting of a *shikishi* 色紙 (a square card used for formal calligraphy) with the character *mu* brushed in the center, signed and dated by the rōshi.

The rōshi will remind the student, both in private interviews and in public talks, that *kenshō* is only the first small step along the path to full awakening. Be that as it may, the Sanbōkyōdan treats *kenshō* as a significant achievement. Upon attaining *kenshō* students are publicly lauded in the *jahai* ceremony, and encouraged to write a report of their experience for publication in *Kyōshō*. The names of post-*kenshō* students are clearly marked with a circle on *sesshin* seating plans, and as mentioned above, a second *zendō* may be provided allowing the post-*kenshō* group to practice apart from the others. Finally, pre- and post-*kenshō* students are often listed separately in the *sesshin* reports that appear in *Kyōshō*. (Note that each of these practices are Sanbōkyōdan innovations—there are no public rites of passage marking the attainment of *kenshō* in Sōtō or Rinzai monasteries.)

Following the teacher's authentication of *kenshō*, Sanbōkyōdan students move through a program of 600 to 700 kōans following a format set by Harada based in part on traditional Rinzai models. The practitioner first tackles the "miscellaneous kōans," which consist of approximately twenty-two kōans in fifty-seven parts. He or she then moves through the *Mumonkan, Hekiganroku* 碧巌録, *Shōyōroku* 従容録, and *Denkōroku* 傳光録 kōans, followed by Tōzan's five ranks (*Tōzan goi* 洞山五位), and three sets of precepts.[30]

Whereas passage through *mu* requires nothing short of *kenshō*, passage through the remaining kōans is relatively straightforward. After formally approaching and bowing to the rōshi the Sanbōkyōdan student recites his or her kōan, and then presents (or "demonstrates") his or her understanding. If the answer is deemed satisfactory, the teacher himself may supply a more "traditional" response. All of this is more-or-less typical of Rinzai practice today. However, Sanbōkyōdan teachers do not use *jakugo* 著語 (capping phrases)—set phrases culled from classical Chinese literature used to test and refine a monk's understanding of a kōan.[31] Moreover, unlike Rinzai monks, Sanbōkyōdan

[30] According to tradition, Hakuin placed the ten precepts (*jūjūkinkai* 十重禁戒) at the culmination of the kōan curriculum. Harada, basing his exposition primarily on Dōgen's *Busso shōden bosatsukai kyōjukaimon* 佛祖正傳菩薩戒教授戒文, had students pass through the triple refuge (*sankikai* 三歸戒), and the "threefold pure precepts" (*sanjujōkai* 三聚浄戒), prior to the ten precepts, and this became standard Sanbōkyōdan practice.

[31] In contemporary Rinzai monasteries the *jakugo* are selected from the *Zenrin kushū*

practitioners are not required to compose written expositions of the kōans in the latter stages of their training.[32] The Sanbōkyōdan has, in short, sharply curtailed the explicitly "literary" aspects of kōan training.

As a result, once they have passed *mu* Sanbōkyōdan students tend to move through the remaining kōans at a relatively rapid pace, often completing one kōan per interview. With regular access to a teacher and frequent participation in *sesshin*, a practitioner can complete the entire course of post-*kenshō* kōans in approximately five years. At the same time, if the rōshi feels that there are inadequacies in the student's training, he may reassign certain kōans in *dokusan* (including *mu*), and Yamada led periodic study groups (*kenshūkai* 研修会) for advanced students in which he reviewed the kōans in a more seminar-like setting.

Once the kōans are complete, students proceed through a series of higher certifications that allow them to teach and may eventually result in Dharma transmission. There is considerable ambiguity in this regard, however, in part because the Sanbōkyōdan draws simultaneously from Sōtō and Rinzai conceptions of transmission—conceptions that are not always compatible with one another. This is responsible in part for the controversy over the teaching authority of Yamada's senior disciples that emerged following his death, an issue to which I will return below.

In general, the stages leading to *inka* are as follows: sometime after completing the five ranks and the precepts (i.e., the final stages in the curriculum), the student receives a piece of calligraphy testifying that he or she has "finished the great matter" (*daiji ryōhitsu* 大事了畢). Either in conjunction with this event, or sometime later, the rōshi holds a ceremony known as *hasansai* 罷參齋, publicly acknowledging that the disciple has finished formal Zen training.[33] The high point of the *hasansai* involves the master and disciple bowing three times toward the altar, then facing each other "as equals" and bowing thrice again. The celebrant also receives a teaching name and a document certifying his or her status as *hasan*.

禪林句集, an anthology originally compiled by Tōyō Eichō 東陽英朝 (1429–1504) under the title *Kuzōshi* 句雙紙. (The collection was edited and published in its current form by Ijūshi 已十子 in 1688.) On the use of capping phrases in Rinzai Zen see especially KRAFT 1992, pp. 130–50, 180–82.

[32] On *kakiwake* 書き分け (or 書き訳, written exposition of the kōan) and *nenrō* 拈弄 (playful manipulation of the kōan in verse) see HORI 1994, pp. 27–29, and *Zengaku daijiten*, p. 1005d.

[33] The term *hasan*, which appears in cases 89 and 96 of the *Hekiganroku*, is glossed by the Tokugawa Zen scholiast Muchaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653–1744) as "to finish the great matter and cease consultation [with the master]" 了畢大事罷休參禪也 (*Zenrin shōkisen* 禪林象器箋 fascicle 12; MUCHAKU 1979, p. 478). On *hasansai* see ibid., p. 567.

The Sanbōkyōdan leadership recognizes two levels of teaching authority, notably Junshike 準師家 (Associate Zen Master) and Shōshike (Authentic Zen Master). While those in the former category are authorized to give *dokusan*, authorize *kenshō*, and guide students through part of the kōan curriculum, only the latter can work with students on advanced kōans and perform religious services such as precept and wedding ceremonies.[34] However, the titles Junshike, Shōshike, and simply Shike (master) have not been used consistently in the tradition. *Hasansai* was sometimes considered promotion to Junshike, and sometimes viewed as a separate preparatory stage. And while promotion to Shōshike sometimes preceded full Dharma transmission, at other times the two were considered equivalent.

In any event, Dharma transmission proper involves the presentation of the *sanmotsu* 三物 (the three regalia of transmission), a Sōtō rite of passage that renders the disciple a formal Dharma heir (*shihō deshi* 嗣法弟子) of his or her master.[35] In Sōtō the *sanmotsu* are given routinely to all monks once they have finished a few years of monastic training and are ready to assume a post as temple abbot (*jūshoku* 住職). The Sanbōkyōdan, however, is not in the business of training ordained priests or certifying abbots, and both Yasutani and Yamada were critical of what they saw as a Sōtō abuse of the notion of transmission. In the Sanbōkyōdan the *sanmotsu* are thus coupled with the Rinzai notion of *inka*.[36] The latter designation has very lofty connotations: it is reserved in Rinzai for those select few who have finished the entire course of kōan training and are eligible to serve as *sōdō* rōshi. Accordingly, the *inka* transmission line running through the Sanbōkyōdan comes not from Sōtō, but rather through Harada's Rinzai master Dokutan Sōsan. Only a few in the Sanbōkyōdan have become "Dharma heirs"; to date they number around a dozen. Of course, only after receiving transmission can one confer it on another.

The one other ceremony available to Sanbōkyōdan practitioners is the lay-precept ceremony. Students who take the precepts receive a *kaimyō* 戒名 (precept name), a precept lineage certificate,[37] and a

[34] As lay practioners, Japanese Sanbōkyōdan teachers generally refrain from performing funeral services, seeking instead the services of ordained Buddhist priests.

[35] The *sanmotsu* (or *sanmyaku* 三脈, three transmissions) refer to three transmission documents, namely, the *shisho* 嗣書 (inheritance certificate), *odaiji* 御大事 (the great matter), and the *shōden kechimyaku* 正傳血脈 (bloodline of the authentic transmission); see the *Zengaku daijiten*, p. 410c–d.

[36] See "San Motsu and the Dharma Transmission," a record of Yamada's oral explication to his disciple, Roselyn Stone, dated December 1983.

[37] This certificate, entitled *Busso shōden daikai kechimyaku* 仏祖正伝大戒血脈 (the precept bloodline correctly transmitted by the Buddhas and patriarchs), is procured from the Sōtō school.

rakusu 絡子 (a small surplice worn by Buddhist laypersons). No particular Zen accomplishment is requisite for those who wish to take the precepts (i.e., the ceremony is open to those who have yet to pass *mu*, although commitment to the Sanbōkyōdan is expected). Nor is the rite required for teaching rank. The Sanbōkyōdan views the precept ceremony as more of a "religious" rite than a Zen practice—it is an affirmation of one's commitment to Buddhism. As such, Western members of the Sanbōkyōdan who belong to Christian religious orders usually refrain from taking the precepts or wearing the *rakusu*, since to do so would be seen as formal conversion from Christianity to Buddhism. The very fact that the Buddhist precept ceremony is optional for Sanbōkyōdan practitioners is seen as evidence that "Zen is not Buddhism," i.e., that those of any religious faith can practice Zen and attain the eye of *satori*.

The Sanbōkyōdan, New Buddhism, and the New Religions

The Sanbōkyōdan reforms are largely the result of a concerted effort to laicize Zen. While lay Zen practitioners were not unknown before the Meiji, for much of Japanese history the role of the layperson was primarily that of patron, supplicant, or client. As such, with few exceptions, training in kōans, regular access to a rōshi for *sanzen*, promotion to *shike* rank, and conferral of *inka shōmei* were considered the prerogative of the ordained priesthood alone. The Sanbōkyōdan effort to "democratize" Buddhism and empower the laity places it in the company of other modern religious movements that sought to reform and liberalize the Buddhist institution.

Efforts to involve the laity in practices that were once the exclusive domain of the clergy can be traced back to Meiji "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō* 新仏教).[38] The New Buddhist reforms were largely instigated by 1) the *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 persecution of the 1870s, in which the clergy was depicted as a self-serving guild of corrupt and hypocritical priests with little interest in spiritual practice; 2) economic exigencies brought about by the dissolution of the *danka* 檀家 system that previously guaranteed parishioner support; and 3) secular and scientific critiques of the antisocial and otherworldly orientation of Buddhist monasticism. In response, the New Buddhists sought to increase lay interest and participation in the religion at all levels.

In the case of Zen, such reforms were legitimized by a rhetoric that sharply distinguished between the "goal" or "essence" of Buddhism—

[38] On Meiji New Buddhism see especially KETELAAR 1990.

the experience of *kenshō* or *satori*—and various "skillful means" leading the way to the goal. Following a logic borrowed in part from the West, this "essence" was presented as a transcultural and transhistorical "religious experience" logically distinct from the "institutional trappings" and "cultural accretions" that veil that essence.[39] This logic allowed groups such as the Sanbōkyōdan to reject the "trappings" of Buddhist devotionalism and monastic ordination in order to focus on transformative personal experience alone.

The lay orientation of the tradition has only strengthened over time. While Harada taught *unsui* in a monastic setting, he welcomed the participation of temple priests, lay students, and foreigners. His disciple, Yasutani, was himself an ordained priest raised in a temple, but preferred to devote his energies to training laypersons, and he eventually broke with the Sōtō organization altogether. With Yamada's succession as Kanchō the Sanbōkyōdan passed into the hands of a lay businessman with little monastic experience, and the participation of foreigners, virtually none of whom were ordained, only grew. Today, the number of Catholic priests involved in the Sanbōkyōdan far exceeds the number of Buddhist *bōzu* 坊主!

The Sanbōkyōdan could thus be seen as a form of "lay Zen" (*kojizen* 居士禅). Of course, the notion of lay practice is as old as Buddhism itself, and reformers appeared regularly throughout Buddhist history who sought to render Buddhist monastic practice available and amenable to the laity. Zen is no exception: inspired by the figure of the lay Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, Ch'an lore gave rise to the archetype of the fully enlightened layman, exemplified by figures such as P'ang Yün 龐蘊, Han Shan 寒山, and Shih Te 拾得. While these men are more literary icons than historical personages, there have been numerous eminent masters, from Ta-hui Tsung-kao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) to Bankei Yōtaku 盤珪永琢 (1622–1693), Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1769), and Imakita Kōsen 今北洪川 (1816–1892), who did encourage lay followers to practice *zazen* and study kōans.

Still, there is an important difference. Ta-hui, Hakuin, Bankei, and Imakita were abbots of Zen monasteries, and their lineage and institutional authority were never in doubt. Insofar as they were reformers they sought reform from within. In contrast, the Sanbōkyōdan rejects the authority of the monastic establishment altogether, and has declared its spiritual and legal independence from the mainline schools. Teachers in the Sanbōkyōdan line insist that they are the bearers of "true Zen," that their Rinzai and Sōtō rivals are fools and

[39] See the extended discussions in SHARF 1995a, 1995b, and n.d.

frauds, and that monastic Zen in Japan is all but dead. In this regard, the Sanbōkyōdan is closer to the so-called "New Religions" than it is to Meiji New Buddhism. Indeed, as should be evident from my overview above, there are numerous features of the Sanbōkyōdan reminiscent of the New Religions. Let us consider a few of these in greater detail.

THE PROMISE OF RAPID UPWARD SPIRITUAL MOBILITY

Of the thousands of priests who train in traditional Rinzai monasteries, only a handful will complete the entire kōan curriculum and become authorized masters. As mentioned above, those select few will spend fifteen to twenty years in a rigorous course of physical and mental discipline. *Sōdō* life is expected to culminate in an impeccable poise and presence of mind, as well as in the mastery of the ceremony, doctrine, and literature of Zen. Even then, there is no guarantee that a priest who has finished his training will be awarded a position as *sōdō* rōshi; the number of posts is limited, and many eminently qualified monks end up as abbots of small out-of-the-way temples.

In contrast to the orthodox schools, where certification as a master is only available to a select few with a decade or two of training, Sanbōkyōdan followers have the opportunity for, in the words of Winston Davis, "rapid upward spiritual mobility." No prior temple experience, priestly ordination, ritual training, or doctrinal study is necessary in order to gain the "true eye of Zen." The published testimonials of sect members vividly attest to the fact that ardent practice can lead to *kenshō* in the space of a year, a month, or even a single *sesshin*. Indeed, it was the rule, rather than the exception, to find one or two students experiencing their first *kenshō* during each *sesshin* conducted by Yasutani and Yamada.[40] Ceremonies such as the *jahai* following *kenshō*, and published *kenshō* diaries, continue to reiterate the message that Buddhist *satori* is available here and now to all who are sufficiently motivated.

Once *kenshō* is achieved, the completion of the kōan curriculum is usually assured, and the omission of capping phrases and the other literary aspects of kōan training facilitate rapid movement through the remaining kōans and certification as having "finished the great matter." Sanbōkyōdan leaders are notoriously generous in conferring such rank on their students; Yamada personally sanctioned at least twenty-two Western practitioners, some of whom had spent no more

[40] Reports of *sesshin* published in *Kyōshō* are occasionally defensive when there are no *kenshō* to report; see, for example, *Kyōshō* 155 (Jan./Feb. 1979), p. 34; 156 (March/April 1979), p. 33; and 160 (Nov./Dec. 1979), p. 34. *Kenshō* experiences have become far less common since Kubota became Kanchō (see below).

than six years in training (HABITO 1990, p. 233).

The Sanbōkyōdan has effectively taken the mystery of Zen, with its inscrutable kōans and tales of *satori*, out of the cloistered monks' halls and placed it within reach of the average layperson. The resulting "democratization of enlightenment" parallels efforts by other new religions to propagate religious doctrines and techniques traditionally considered the exclusive property of religious specialists, whether shamans, mountain ascetics, or monks. A particularly striking example is Agonshū 阿含宗, a burgeoning "New New Religion" that openly teaches esoteric Shugendō and Shingon *kaji* 加持 (empowerment) rites to its lay adherents, despite the fact that many of these rites are zealously guarded in the orthodox traditions. Lay followers of Shingon and Tendai are prohibited from seeing, never mind performing, some of the rites routinely taught to the throngs of Agonshū followers.[41]

SIMPLIFICATION

Like many such reform movements, particularly those geared toward a lay clientele, the Sanbōkyōdan has reduced the complex doctrinal, devotional, and ethical teachings of Buddhism to a relatively simple meditation practice involving the repetition of the syllable *mu*. (Compare this with the simplified use of the *gohonzon* 御本尊 in Sōka Gakkai, the worship of the Buddha-relics in Agonshū, the practice of purification by raising the hand [*okiyome* 御清, *tekazashi* 手かざし] in Mahikari, and so on.) The fact that doctrinal study is not requisite for advancement in the tradition renders the Sanbōkyōdan particularly attractive to foreigners who lack the linguistic and intellectual training necessary to decipher the arcana of Zen literature. Kapleau remarks in *The Three Pillars of Zen*:

> Stimulating as the theoretical approach to Zen may be for the academic-minded and the intellectually curious, for the earnest seeker aspiring to enlightenment it is worse than futile, it is downright hazardous. Anybody who has seriously

[41] For example, priests in Mikkyō lineages commonly keep their hands tucked under the sleeves of their robes when performing the *goshinbō* 護身法 (a body purification ritual), so that lay observers do not glimpse the secret *mudrā* involved. Yet this rite is taught to, and performed openly by, all Agonshū followers. In his study of Agonshū, Ian READER quotes an apologist who writes: "Nothing was known to the general public about Mikkyō apart from the word itself. The practices of Mikkyō were secret and were not let outside the temple gates; they were concealed behind the iron doors of the esoteric sects. It was Reverend Kiriyama [founder of Agonshū] who opened them up to the general public" (1988, p. 249). Winston DAVIS refers to a similar phenomenon observed in Mahikari as the "democratization of magic" (1980, p. 302).

> attempted the practice of Zen after reading such books knows not only how poorly they have prepared him for zazen, but how in fact they have hindered him by clogging his mind with splinters of kōans and irrelevant fragments of philosophy, psychology, theology, and poetry which churn about in his brain.
>
> (KAPLEAU 1967, pp. 83–84)

Such a statement is in marked contradistinction to Rinzai Zen, which continues to stress the importance of intellectual understanding and the study of classical Buddhist and Zen literature.[42]

INTERNATIONALIZATION

There are major hurdles that must be crossed before a non-Japanese is granted admission to a Zen *sōdō*; usually he or she must be ordained, have facility in spoken Japanese, and have received preliminary training from a temple priest. Even then, the cultural barriers are considerable, and to date only a handful of foreigners have managed to survive a Japanese *sōdō* for more than a year or two.

The Sanbōkyōdan gave non-Japanese students of Zen a viable alternative to the harsh rigors and intimidating alienness of *sōdō* life. After Yasutani's initial experience with students such as Kapleau, Aitken, and Enomiya-Lassalle, he became increasingly committed to spreading Zen to the West. He personally led retreats while on tour in America and Europe, and he authorized several foreign disciples to teach even before they were certified as Shike or Dharma heirs. The simplification of the kōan curriculum made knowledge of Japanese and *kanbun* (literary Chinese) unnecessary, and the Sanbōkyōdan was willing and able to provide instruction in English. (Yasutani and Yamada had a number of Western disciples who were able to translate for them when necessary, and the current leaders—Kubota and Yamada Masamichi—are both fluent in English.) In addition, efforts were made to make the non-Japanese feel welcome in their alien surroundings: Yamada's wife doted over her husband's foreign disciples, inviting them into her home for meals and hosting Western-style "dance parties" two or three times a year.

As word spread, a steady flow of foreign seekers began arriving at the door of the San'un Zendō, and the presence of the international community at the sect's headquarters could not help but influence the organization as a whole. Under Yamada there was an increased

[42] See, for example, the comments of the late Myōshin-ji master Yamada Mumon 山田無文: "If you have no understanding of Buddhism, no knowledge of the words of the Dharma, it does not matter how many years you sit, your zazen will all be futile" (cited in HORI 1994, p. 8).

emphasis on the notion that Zen was not a "religion" per se, but rather the experiential truth behind all the great faiths—a position that rendered this tradition particularly attractive to Westerners. Sanbōkyōdan teachers came to play a prominent role in "Buddhist-Christian dialogue," attending conferences and ecumenical retreats throughout the world. (Sometimes one and the same foreign disciple of Yamada would find him or herself representing Christianity one day, and Buddhism the next!) All of this contributed to a heightened sense of world mission, evident in Yamada's desire, expressed late in his life, "to build a *zendō* in Moscow and teach Zen to the world's leaders."[43]

In the 1980s the San'un Zendō itself became a locus for "Buddhist-Christian encounter," as Catholic priests and monastics began to comprise a growing proportion of the foreign population. Yamada took particular interest and pride in the Catholic clergy, whose enthusiasm for Zen was no doubt inspired by figures such as Thomas Merton and Enomiya-Lassalle. (These pioneers turned to Buddhist contemplative practice not as converts to Buddhism, but in order to deepen their own understanding of Christian spirituality.) By the end of Yamada's life approximately one quarter of the participants at his Kamakura *sesshin* were practicing Christians, and they were provided with a separate room during morning chanting in which to celebrate the Eucharist (HABITO 1990, p. 236). It is not difficult to understand the special treatment accorded to the foreign clergy: many of them already had experience as "spiritual leaders," and some had religious constituencies at home awaiting their return. This placed them in a particularly advantageous position from which to spread the Sanbōkyōdan teachings outside of Japan. Today, the majority of authorized foreign Sanbōkyōdan teachers are members of Catholic orders, and they lead affiliate Zen groups in the Philippines, Singapore, India, Europe, Australia, and Japan.[44] Indeed, some of the non-Christian disciples came to begrudge what they felt was preferential treatment reserved for the professional Christians.[45]

One should not confuse the Sanbōkyōdan interest in "Christian

[43] *Kyōshō* 225 (Sept./Oct. 1990), p. 41.

[44] These include Sister Sonia Punzalan and Mila Golez, who teach in the Philippines, Sister Ludwigis Fabian, Father Victor Löw (now deceased), Father Willigis Jäger, Father Johannes Kopp, S.A.C., and Father Peter Lengsfeld, all of whom teach in Germany, Father Niklaus Brantschen, S.J., who teaches in Switzerland, Sister Ana Maria Schlütter, who leads a center in Spain, Sister Kathleen Reiley, who teaches in Japan and Germany, Sister Elaine MacInnes, who teaches in England and Singapore, and Father Arul Maria Arokiasamy, S.J., who leads groups in India and Europe. See *Kyōshō* vols. 230 through 233 for details.

[45] There was similar grumbling when Jerry Brown, ex-Governor of California and a disciple of Yamada, received what some felt to be favored treatment during his stay in Kamakura.

Zen" with "ecumenism" as the term is commonly understood in the West. Sanbōkyōdan leaders would not place Christianity and Zen on an equal footing; as mentioned above, they claim rather that Zen is the experiential truth lying behind all religious traditions, Christianity included. In fact, the active involvement of Westerners at the Kamakura center does not appear to have tempered the cultural chauvinism of the leaders, all of whom have indulged at some point in *nihonjinron*-style polemics. In other words, they are wont to contrast the spiritually enlightened "East" (of which Japan is the preeminent example) with the spiritually benighted "West." As late as 1988, for example, Yamada wrote:

> In comparing the spirit of the East with that of the West, one characteristic readily comes [to] mind, namely, the proclivity in the East to be able to see and understand readily that the world is one. As I have often said, the fact that the world is one cannot be grasped unless it is through the world of emptiness. For some reason, of which I am not sure, Eastern peoples have an affinity for the world of emptiness and because of that they see the world is one.… For this reason, when I say that there must be a change from Western thought, I think that the only possible substitute is the Eastern approach.
>
> (*Kyōshō* 212 [July/August 1988], pp. 4–5, 41–40)[46]

While Yamada was supportive of his Christian disciples, he evinced little interest in interfaith dialogue per se. Borrowing from the theologian Gavin D'Costa, we might characterize the Sanbōkyōdan approach to Christianity as "inclusivist" (rather than ecumenical, syncretic, or exclusivist, for example), insofar as Christianity is ultimately explained in terms of Zen (D'Costa 1986, pp. 80–116). In the end, the threat of religious pluralism is countered through a rhetoric that, while seeming to embrace diversity, in fact subordinates rival traditions, thereby abrogating the need to seriously reexamine, much less alter, the dominant ideology.

MODERNIZATION

Given the modernist and internationalist orientation of the Sanbōkyōdan, it is not surprising that the goal of Sanbōkyōdan practice—*kenshō* or *satori*—has been more or less severed from its classical Buddhist soteriological context. Enlightenment is rarely touted as the cessation of *saṃsāra* (the endless rounds of rebirth), nor is meditative practice discussed in terms of the traditional conception of the bodhi-

[46] On Zen and *nihonjinron* see especially Sharf 1995a.

sattva path (the aspiration to be repeatedly reborn in *saṃsāra* in order to save all beings). Rather, Zen practice is presented as a means of "personal transformation," of eradicating "ego," of achieving "clarity," or realizing psychological and spiritual well-being in the "here and now."[47] Such a presentation of Zen is particularly attractive to the Sanbōkyōdan's largely urban, educated, middle-class clientele.

Similarly, fundamental Buddhist cosmological ideas, such as the notion of the six realms inhabited by various beings and deities, may be "demythologized" (in Rudolf Bultmann's sense of the word), eliminating any potential conflict between Zen and the world of modern science. Yamada Masamichi is particularly fond of taking Buddhist and Zen ideas, such as impermanence, non-self, and the doctrine of emptiness, and juxtaposing them with notions drawn from modern science (quantum mechanics, relativity theory, and so on). According to Masamichi, while the approaches differ—science directs its gaze out to the phenomenal world, while Zen turns the mind's eye back upon itself—in their search for true reality (*shin no jijitsu* 真の事実) both have arrived at remarkably similar insights, such that ideas drawn from one may be used to explicate the other.[48] In short, the world of Zen and the world of science represent two eminently commensurable paradigms. Such an approach lends scientific legitimacy to the claims of Zen, while at the same time emphasizing the need for religious practice and spiritual insight in the modern world.

USE OF TESTIMONIALS

The Sanbōkyōdan encourages those who cross the first major hurdle (i.e., *kenshō*) to make a written record of their experience. These testimonials, called *kenshōki* 見性記 (*kenshō* records) or *kenshō taiken ki* 見性体験記 (records of *kenshō* experience), are disseminated in the sect's journal, *Kyōshō*. In 1959 Yasutani published a collection of such testimonials in a volume entitled *Gudō no tabi* 求道の旅 [Journey in search of the way], and, as mentioned above, eight testimonials appeared in English in Kapleau's *The Three Pillars of Zen*. Another interesting exam-

[47] The "Sōsan no hanashi," for example, recommends having a notebook and pencil handy while meditating since "a variety of insights and things you must not forget will flash into your mind . . . Relationships which previously were incomprehensible will suddenly be clarified and difficult problems will be abruptly solved." The text goes on to claim that *zazen* improves one's mental and physical condition—improvements that will be readily visible to family and friends (SAN'UN ZENDŌ n.d., pp. 11–12).

[48] See especially YAMADA Masamichi's essay "Zen to shizen kagaku" [Zen and the natural sciences] which appeared over seven issues of *Kyōshō* (nos. 233 [Jan./Feb. 1992] through 239 [Jan./Feb. 1993]). Here the ideas of various modern scientists, from Albert Einstein to Stephen Hawking, are discussed in relation to fundamental Buddhist concepts.

ple of this genre now available in English is the extended autobiography of Yasutani's student, Satomi Myōdō, who, prior to meeting Yasutani, had been involved in a number of New Religions in addition to working as a professional shaman (*miko* 巫).[49]

The use of testimonials (typically called *taiken* 体験, "personal experiences") of rank-and-file members is widespread among the New Religions.[50] They are commonly used to inspire and encourage members, and to proselytize the unconverted. Like *taiken*, Sanbōkyōdan *kenshōki* frequently chronicle the suffering, personal tragedy, or feelings of loneliness and anomie that led to the student's interest in Zen. They often mention the intense frustrations experienced in the course of practice, which are overcome through sheer effort and determination. Finally, there is the inevitable description of the overwhelming joy and relief of *kenshō*. The *kenshōki* invariably end with effusive offerings of gratitude toward the teacher and the lineage.

CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

Yasutani's break with the Sōtō sect, and his unremitting commitment to transmitting *kenshō* to the laity, was accompanied by a sense of personal spiritual destiny. His successor, Yamada, relates the following revealing anecdote:

> There is a mysterious story about [Yasutani's] birth which we should not forget. Beside his birthplace, there was a small temple of the Sōtō Sect. A blind nun lived there who was always reciting the *Hannya Shingyō* (Heart Sutra). It was his mother's important work to take care of her.… Hearing that her helper was pregnant, she removed a single bead from the *juzu* (rosary) she used in counting while reciting the sutra, and told the mother to swallow this bead in order to have an easy birth. The mother gratefully accepted the bead and swallowed it. Thanks to this, the birth was easy, it is said. When giving the baby his first bath, the mother discovered that his left hand somehow would not open. She was finally able to open it, and found that it had been tightly grasping the *juzu* bead which she had swallowed. [Yasutani] Hakuun Rōshi wrote: "I heard this story from my mother, and from my elder sister, when I was seven or eight years old, and I did not have any special thoughts about it. Later, in middle school, I studied biology,

[49] This autobiography, which originally appeared in YASUTANI 1959, pp. 1–143, has been translated into English by Sallie B. KING (1987).

[50] See, for example, ANDERSON 1988 and 1992; DAVIS 1980, pp. 93–94; EARHART 1989; HARDACRE 1984, pp. 155–60, 186–87; and SHIMAZONO 1986. On the ideological overtones of the term *taiken* see SHARF 1995a.

> and I felt that it was a foolish story that couldn't be true. Yet I firmly believed that my mother could not lie, so the problem of the *juzu* remained a question in my heart for a very long time." This incident was the principal factor in causing him to realize his deep Dharma affinity, and as he progressed into the depths of Buddhism he came to accept the incident without reservation. (YAMADA 1974, p. 118)

Yasutani felt a personal spiritual bond with Dōgen, and considered himself Dōgen's direct Dharma heir by virtue of his possession of the "true Dharma eye." He could thus establish his own authority without reference to the Sōtō or Rinzai patriarchal lines. At the same time, the direct appeal to the authority of *satori* had the felicitous result of rendering Yasutani's truth claims immune to critical scrutiny. In effect, this mode of legitimation is analogous to that used by the charismatic founders of many of the New Religions, founders whose authority is based not on institutional sanction—an option that is often unavailable to them—nor on their mastery of ethical, scriptural, or ritual traditions, but rather on direct personal (or "shamanic") contact with the divine.

ANTIESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC

Teachers in the Harada-Yasutani tradition often adopt a combative and even belligerent stance toward "establishment Zen." Yasutani was particularly unrestrained in his attacks:

> I hear there are fellows who are called professors and instructors in Buddhist universities who indiscriminately pour coarse tea into Dōgen's Dharma, cheating and bewildering beginners and long-practicing Zen people as well. They are an unforgivable gang of devils, great thieves of heaven and earth, and should be termed vermin in the body of the lion. They do not realize that they are pitiable people, slandering the Three Treasures, and that they must fall into hell after death.… Furthermore, how many priests are there today who have penetrated the essence of the Great Matter to the bottom? Maybe fewer than ten, I suppose…you should all reflect upon and repent your crime of neglecting Zen study. You should feel shame, and change your ways with awe and fear.
>
> (YAMADA 1974, p. 111)

Yasutani's copious commentaries are peppered with such invective. He was particularly incensed by Sōtō scholars who presumed to comment on Dōgen's writings without being possessed of the true Dharma eye, and Yasutani singled out his own teacher, Nishiari

Bokusan, for special criticism:

> Beginning with Nishiari Zenji's *Keiteki*,[51] I have examined closely the commentaries on the *Shōbōgenzō* of many modern people and, while it is rude to say so, they have failed badly in their efforts to grasp its main points.… It goes without saying that Nishiari Zenji was a priest of great learning and virtue, but even an insignificant priest like me will not endorse his eye of *satori* 悟道の眼…. The disciples of Nishiari Zenji, too, have sought to be his worthy students, and have perpetuated the evil of his teaching. (YAMADA 1974, pp. 116–17, with changes)[52]

While Yasutani's successors are less shrill, they continue to characterize Japanese Zen as decrepit and moribund. Yamada repeatedly warned that "true Zen is on the verge of disappearing in Japan," a fact that he attributed to the lack of authentic *kenshō* among the monastic leaders.[53] And after a pilgrimage to Eihei-ji in 1991, Kubota bemoaned the fact that "today the [true] Zen spirit of the great [Sōtō] school of more than 15,000 temples is everywhere defunct."[54] Kubota concludes that it is up to the Sanbōkyōdan to keep Zen alive.

The aggressive sectarian polemics of the Sanbōkyōdan are typical of many New Religions that legitimize their break with tradition by brandishing the spiritual failings of the religious establishment.[55] Such tactics attest in part to the insecurities and insularities associated with marginalized religious groups. The somewhat belligerent stance may also contribute to institutional instability, and to a marked propensity for fragmentation and schism.

INSTITUTIONAL VOLATILITY

Since the leader's authority in many of the New Religions rests on personal charisma rather than on the sanction of tradition, the transfer of power from one generation to the next is often fraught with difficulty. On the one hand, the leader might assume such a central

[51] I.e., the *Shōbōgenzō keiteki* 正法眼蔵啓迪, a major and influential piece of *Shōbōgenzō* scholarship by Nishiari published in 1930.

[52] Yasutani attacks Nishiari Bokusan again on page 23 of the same text, claiming that he and his confederate *Shōbōgenzō* scholars do not have "the experience of sudden great enlightenment" 豁然大悟の体験. Nishiari—an accomplished Dōgen scholar and Kanchō of the Sōtō school from 1902 until his death—supposedly had a *kaigo* 開悟 in his thirties while listening to *teishō* on the *Śūraṃgama-sūtra* (*Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten*, p. 602b; *Zengaku daijiten*, p. 977c). Yasutani appears to be flatly rejecting claims that Nishiari had true *satori*.

[53] *Kyōshō* 199 (May/June 1986), p. 41; see also YAMADA 1979, p. xviii.

[54] *Kyōshō* 229 (May/June 1991), p. 5.

[55] READER 1988, p. 249; see also THOMSEN 1963, pp. 18–20; and MCFARLAND 1967, pp. 5–54.

role in the sect that his death leaves a vacuum impossible to fill. But the opposite is perhaps more common—charisma can be spread too widely, and the resulting centripetal forces pull the organization apart, with new sects spinning off in several directions. Just as the founder appealed to divine inspiration or transcendental gnosis in legitimizing his own break with tradition, his or her disciples may well attempt the same thing. As a result, the New Religions suffer more than their share of schisms.

Recall that authority in the Sanbōkyōdan rests on possession of the "clear eye of the true Dharma" that emerges from the *kenshō* experience. *Kenshō* is construed as an unmediated glimpse into one's true nature; it is seeing reality "as it is," having cast aside the veil of dualistic thinking. In theory, at least, the experience of *kenshō* eliminates the distance between student and master, both because for an instant one sees with the same "eyes of the patriarchs," and because the "cognitive content" of such an experience is precisely the equality and oneness of all sentient (and non-sentient) existence. But of course, the Sanbōkyōdan would not survive long were it to elevate every student with *kenshō* to the status of master. Rather, the Sanbōkyōdan insists that *kenshō* is but a "glimpse" into true reality, and practitioners are quick to distinguish "small" or "shallow" *kenshō* experiences (including initial *kenshō*) from "big" or "deep" ones.[56] This raises a host of complex epistemological issues. It is not at all clear, for example, how one is to differentiate on quantitative, never mind qualitative, grounds two experiences whose distinguishing characteristic is that they are "nondual" or "unconditioned." Be that as it may, the formal institutional response to initial *kenshō* is that, while it is a crucial step, continued practice under the supervision of an authorized Sanbōkyōdan teacher is necessary to reach the final goal. The institution would have little chance of survival were it not to balance claims concerning the ultimacy and autonomy of *kenshō* with a course of training that inspires obedience and loyalty to the tradition.

The transfer of power from Yasutani to Yamada was relatively straightforward. Yasutani appointed Yamada successor upon his retirement, and Yamada's credentials were beyond dispute: he had been a

[56] For example, in justifying Yamada Masamichi's promotion from Junshike to Shōshike, Kubota refers to Masamichi's "deep second *kenshō* experience" 深い再見性の体験 (*Kyōshō* 232 [Nov./Dec. 1991], p. 5). The *Sōsan no hanashi* states: "If it is true *kenshō*, its substance will always be the same for whoever experiences it…. But this does not mean that we call all experience *kenshō* to the same degree, for in the clarity, the depth, and the completeness of the experience there are great differences" (SAN'UN ZENDŌ n.d., p. 13). See also KAPLEAU 1988, p. 51.

student of Yasutani since 1950, he was cofounder of the center in Kamakura, and he commanded considerable respect throughout the organization. Nevertheless, the dangers of defection and schism were not unknown, for just three years prior to Yasutani's retirement his American disciple, Philip Kapleau, led his own affiliate group to secede from the Sanbōkyōdan.

Kapleau's training was, by Sanbōkyōdan standards, quite rigorous. As mentioned above, he spent almost three years (1953–1956) in the Hosshin-ji *sōdō* under Harada prior to his training under Yasutani. He remained with Yasutani for about ten years, serving as translator in *dokusan* for Yasutani's foreign students. He returned to America in 1965 and established a Zen Center in Rochester, New York, that was one of the first of its kind in America. Kapleau quickly set about adapting Yasutani's Zen to the American scene: students wore Western dress and used English chants in the *zendō*, they were given Western-sounding Buddhist names at ordinations, and they modified ceremonies and rituals to "accord with our Western traditions" (KAPLEAU 1979, p. 269). Apparently Kapleau took the Zen rhetoric he had been taught quite literally: he considered the outward forms of Zen mere *upāya*, to be modified in accord with the needs and abilities of his students. As long as he remained true to the experiential essence of Zen, the outward "cultural forms" were of little consequence. Yasutani, however, objected strongly to some of the reforms, notably to the use of an English translation of the *Heart Sūtra* in the *zendō*. These and other factors led to a serious falling-out, and in 1967 Kapleau formally ended his relationship with Yasutani.[57]

As an aside, I would note that Kapleau has had his own problems with renegade disciples. Toni Packer, one of his most promising students and onetime associate rōshi at his center, felt that Kapleau had not gone far enough in his efforts to adapt Zen to the West. Influenced by the teachings of Krishnamurti, Packer wanted to purge all extraneous institutional, cultural, and ritual trappings from the teaching, leaving only the experiential core. She ended up resigning from the Rochester Zen Center in 1981 to establish her own group, taking a large contingent of Kapleau's students along with her. Today there is virtually no reference to anything Buddhist or Japanese at her center in Springwater in upstate New York.

[57] See KAPLEAU 1979, p. 270, and the letter from Kapleau to Yamada dated 17 Feb. 1986. The issue of Westernization was not the only sore point in their relationship; there was also an incident involving Eido Shimano, who occasionally served as Yasutani's assistant during retreats in America. At one point Kapleau, who had no fondness for Eido, asked Yasutani not to bring Eido with him on a trip to Rochester. The request apparently angered Yasutani.

By the mid-1980s one would have thought that the rift between Yasutani and Kapleau was ancient history. But Kapleau's example continued to haunt the Sanbōkyōdan, since there was always the threat that another disciple, particularly a foreign one, would do the same thing. Thus in 1986, in response to a query from an American Zen student, Yamada wrote and circulated a letter intended to discredit Kapleau. This episode initiated efforts to formalize the process of teacher accreditation within the Sanbōkyōdan and place it under the central control of the Kanchō—a controversial project that continues to the present day.

The incident began when David Scates, an ex-student of the Rochester Zen Center, wrote to Yamada asking about Kapleau's credentials.[58] Yamada's reply, dated 16 January 1986, included a blunt public statement to the effect that Kapleau never finished his kōans and never received *inka*. This was accompanied by a long letter to Scates that detailed Kapleau's inadequacies and lack of training, and even hinted that Kapleau may be guilty of fraud (Yamada suggests that Kapleau might be proffering a precept or *kenshō* certificate as a document of transmission; since Kapleau's Western students know no Japanese, they supposedly would not know the difference).[59]

Yamada sent a copy of the letter to Kapleau, and the latter responded at length on 17 February 1986, defending himself against the allegations.[60] Yamada's letter was sent to others as well, including Robert Aitken, who penned his own reply to Scates supporting Yamada's account.[61] While the Kapleau episode might then be declared closed, the larger issue remained: Yasutani and Yamada had both given some

[58] I do not have access to the letter by Scates, dated 21 December 1985. Copies of the resulting correspondence between Yamada, Kapleau, and Aitken cited below have been circulating among the American Zen community.

[59] The letter slights Kapleau's own command of Japanese (calling it "like that of a baby child"), and adds that Kapleau took too much credit for *The Three Pillars of Zen*. According to Yamada, "almost all" of the work was actually done by Yamada and Kubota.

[60] In the letter Kapleau claims that he did in fact complete all of the kōans, and while he acknowledges that he was not a formal Dharma heir of Yasutani, he says he received Yasutani's sanction to teach. He blames the falling-out between himself and Yasutani on the incident with Eido Shimano, and admits that he "resigned" as Yasutani's disciple. Kapleau goes on to defend his authorship of *The Three Pillars of Zen*, as well as his facility in spoken Japanese.

[61] Aitken was aware from a phone conversation with Scates that Scates was considering filing a class-action suit against Kapleau. Aitken's letter attempts to dissuade Scates from such a course of action, which he feels "would be a great disaster for the Zen Buddhist movement in the West." But Aitken does endorse Yamada's position vis-à-vis Kapleau, and using himself as an example, he enumerates the many stages involved in attaining legitimate certification as Dharma heir. He notes that "the three San Motsu documents are very elaborate, and are always kept by the recipient to show anyone who might question his or her formal authority" (letter from Aitken to Scates, 29 January 1986).

of their foreign students permission to teach without clarifying their authority or granting them *inka*. Were such teachers empowered to confirm *kenshō*? to lead students through the kōan curriculum? to advance students to *hasan* or Shike rank?

On 14 January 1988 Yamada convened a meeting of the organization's officers and board members to discuss these issues directly. The ensuing "Report on an initial meeting to discuss the basic problems of the Sanbōkyōdan" warns of dire consequences to Zen should teachers err in confirming a *kenshō* experience.[62] In order to prevent such an occurrence, the document stipulates that while those who have completed the kōans may teach, only Yamada has the authority to confirm *kenshō* and bestow *inka shōmei*.[63] Moreover, all Sanbōkyōdan teachers must attend at least one kōan review seminar (*kenshūkai*) annually at the San'un Zendō. Such regulations are necessary, insists Yamada, in order to preserve the "purity" of Zen.

The attempt to concentrate control of this expanding organization in the person of the Kanchō made the question of succession that much more critical. Indeed, Yamada's unexpected death in September 1989 left the group in some disarray, for while he had given *inka* to a number of his disciples, Yamada never formally named a successor. The issue was addressed at a meeting in Kamakura on 8 October 1989, to which senior teachers (*shike-bunjō* 師家分上), Sanbōkyōdan officers, and Sanbōkōryūkai board members were invited. The official report records a straightforward transfer of power to Kubota Ji'un, who is appointed Kanchō "according to an unofficial decision (*naitei* 内定) made by the late Yamada Kōun Rōshi."[64] However, rather than a lifetime position, the Kanchō would now be elected by the board for a term of five years, with the possibility of reappointment. In addition, the document states that "those Japanese members who were appointed Junshike and above by the previous Kanchō may teach as independent Dharma successors." This would include two designated heirs of Yasutani and four heirs of Yamada (including Kubota). In effect, this allowed the local Japanese affiliate groups to function much as they had before. Meanwhile, Kubota and Yamada's son, Masamichi, would teach cooperatively at the San'un Zendō in Kamakura, with Masamichi taking primary responsibility for the instruction of foreigners.

[62] *Kyōshō* 210 (March/April 1988), pp. 6–7.

[63] Should the student reside overseas, the foreign teacher may make an initial judgment as to the legitimacy of the *kenshō*, but the student's experience must be reconfirmed by Yamada "at the earliest possible date."

[64] *Kyōshō* 220 (Nov./Dec., 1989) pp. 26–27.

The increased autonomy granted to the advanced Japanese disciples of Yamada was likely due to the fact that there was no clear hierarchy among them, and any hasty attempt to centralize control might have precipitated problems among teachers whose respect and loyalty to Yamada were not easily transferred to a younger man appointed by election. But the privileges granted to Yamada's Japanese successors did not extend to the foreign teachers; there was clear resistance to offering them a similar degree of autonomy. At the same time, there was no immediate consensus as to what to do with them.[65]

Kubota used his first official address as Kanchō of the Sanbōkyōdan to emphasize in the strongest possible terms the need for continued practice, irrespective of one's *kenshō* experience.[66] The new Kanchō was evidently concerned that some of the advanced students were becoming overly headstrong and independent, and the injunction to continue practice under the supervision of the central authorities is reiterated again and again in subsequent issues of the journal.[67] At the same time, Kubota continued the attempt to systematize the ranking and clarify the authority of teachers within the organization, and in 1990 he announced the following provisional scheme: once the kōans are complete a student will receive a piece of calligraphy that allows him or her to lead others in Zen practice, and be addressed as "Sensei." In accordance with Yamada's understanding, such persons are not authorized to validate *kenshō*—*kenshō* experiences can only be approved by a Shōshike. After the student has further eliminated "egotistical feelings" 自己心 and matured in his or her practice there would be a *hasansai*, the granting of a teaching name, and possible promotion to Junshike rank. The final step is *sanmotsu* and *inka*, given only to those who are reliable in evaluating *kenshō*. *Sanmotsu* and *inka* render the recipient a Shōshike and Dharma successor of the master, although both Junshike and Shōshike may be addressed as "rōshi."[68]

Various adjustments and refinements to this scheme are announced in subsequent issues of *Kyōshō*, always with the concern to "maintain the purity of the Zen left to us by Yamada Kōun Rōshi."[69] Thus, while the earlier report stipulated that the precept ceremony would be required for *hasansai*, a 1991 document drops this requirement—an

[65] The report says: "The policy on the *zenkai* abroad as well as on the foreign practitioners in Japan will be decided after the present situation is fully investigated and problematic issues are carefully considered" (*Kyōshō* 220 [Nov./Dec. 1989], p. 27).

[66] *Kyōshō* 221 (Jan./Feb. 1990), p. 5.

[67] *Kyōshō* 224 (July/August 1990), p. 4.

[68] *Kyōshō* 224 (July/August 1990), p. 5.

[69] *Kyōshō* 228 (March/April 1991), p. 4.

important concession to the Christian practitioners.[70] Moreover, while students are now told that they may complete their kōan study under a teacher at *hasan* rank, the decision to promote a student to Junshike or Shōshike is the prerogative of the Kanchō alone.

Kubota's "Opening Comments" in *Kyōshō* repeatedly warn that facility with kōans alone does not make one a teacher, and that even sanctioned teachers must continue their practice. These admonishments appear to be directed toward some of the foreign students sanctioned as missionaries by Yamada whose precise status remained unclear. In an attempt to manage the situation, the organization began publishing lists of those foreigners "officially commissioned to be in charge of their respective *zenkai* abroad as Sanbō Zenkai."[71] And in a further attempt to monitor the foreign teachers, the organization instituted an annual "international Zen teachers' *sesshin*" (*sekai zen shidōsha sesshin* 世界禅指導者接心). All non-Japanese teachers were henceforth required to attend these *sesshin* on a regular basis if they wished to retain their authority to confirm *kenshō*.[72] Following the second such retreat, held in Germany, Kubota once again issued a report articulating in even greater detail the rankings in the organization.[73]

Kubota also made it clear that foreigners with *inka* could not confer Dharma transmission in the Sanbōkyōdan line without the approval of Kubota and/or Masamichi. This would have serious repercussions for Robert Aitken—the only foreign Dharma heir of Yamada—as it meant that his own Dharma heirs would now have to be reexamined by one of the Japanese leaders. Aitken found Kubota's position "untenable"—Why should his students be forced to submit to an examination by persons with whom they had no prior relationship, one of whom (Masamichi) was clearly Aitken's junior? Aitken chose to ignore the situation, and for several years the relationship between the two organizations was ambiguous at best. The Japanese wanted

[70] *Kyōshō* 228 (March/April 1991), p. 4.

[71] The first such list is found in *Kyōshō* 225 (Sept./Oct. 1990), p. 36, which names sixteen persons in all. One of them, Robert Aitken, is declared a Shōshike, while the others are listed as *hasan*. For modifications and additions to the list see also *Kyōshō* 234 (March/April 1992), p. 40, and *Kyōshō* 238 (Nov./Dec. 1992), p. 4. Even then, Kubota appears to have been reluctant to accord full authorization to some of the foreigners appointed Shike by Yamada, despite the fact that they possessed a signed document to that effect.

[72] *Kyōshō* 229 (May/June 1991), p. 32.

[73] In this report Kubota uses *junzenkyōshi* 準禅教師 to refer to a student who has officially finished the kōans; after *hasansai* they are promoted to *zenkyōshi*. Junshike rank is now formally de-coupled from *hasansai*, and the document makes it clear that only with *inka shōmei* and *sanmotsu* is one considered a Shōshike and a Dharma successor (*shihōsha* 嗣法者) (*Kyōshō* 232 [Nov./Dec. 1991], pp. 4–5). The latter provision appears to be an attempt to downgrade some who were appointed Shōshike by Yamada but who had never received *inka*.

the matter resolved, however, and eventually summoned Aitken to Kamakura. The result of the meeting was a formal separation between Aitken's Diamond Sangha and the Sanbōkyōdan.[74] Most recently, some of the German teachers have begun expressing similar concerns over Kubota's policies, leaving open the possibility that they too will go their own way.

It should now be evident that Yamada's death initiated a period of considerable insecurity among the Japanese leaders of the movement, who were intent to constrain the proliferation of teaching authority, particularly among the foreign disciples. The attitude toward the foreigners may be due in part to envy or resentment. Some of the Japanese apparently considered Yamada "soft" on foreigners, allowing them to rise through the ranks faster than their Japanese counterparts. There may well be some truth to this: movement through the kōans and elevation to teaching rank might be accelerated for a foreigner about to return home, whereas, in the absence of similar exigencies, the promotion of a Japanese might take considerably longer. (This situation was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike many of the Japanese, the foreigners were often eager to assume the role of teacher.) There was the cultural problem as well: the Japanese viewed the distinctly "Western" behavior of some of the foreign teachers as unbecoming of a Zen master.

By the time of Yamada's death, Sanbōkyōdan Zen was in many respects more influential outside of Japan than within the country, making the issue of foreign control all that more pressing. But even within Japan, the increase in the number of fully authorized "heirs" was bound to lead to institutional problems sooner or later. One way to control the proliferation of charisma was to simply curtail the number of approved *kenshō* experiences, for without *kenshō* no advancement in the organization is possible. And indeed, following Yamada's death reports of *kenshō* in *Kyōshō* drop off dramatically.[75] An interesting parallel can be found in the Pentecostal movement, which has had a chronic problem managing schism. The Apostolic Church in Villahermosa, Mexico, for example, was unable to prevent a number of churches in the Yucatán from seceding to form their own independent congregation. Felicitas Goodman reports that the central administration of the Apostolic Church in Mexico City blamed the secession on "undesirable doctrinal independence produced by the ecstatic

[74] See MILLER 1991, and the *Newsletter* of the Honolulu Diamond Sangha, May 1995.

[75] While the number of students attending *sesshin* may have decreased slightly following Yamada's death, the decrease is not sufficient to account for the sharp decline in numbers of *kenshō*.

behavior. To put a stop to further defections, Bishop Gajiola sent out a pastoral letter to all congregations directing them to deemphasize speaking in tongues. After all, the Holy Spirit had manifested itself sufficiently; there was no need for any more manifestations" (GOODMAN 1988, p. 60). Similar forces might be responsible for the sharp decline in *kenshō* in the Sanbōkyōdan—there were already enough Zen masters running around, and efforts were clearly required in order to avoid further diluting the charisma of enlightenment.

Japanese New Religions and the Academy

The above list should be sufficient to draw attention to certain distinctly contemporary features of the Sanbōkyōdan—features reminiscent of the Japanese New Religions. Nevertheless, I would resist jumping to the conclusion that the Sanbōkyōdan should be classified as such. Rather, in raising the issue of the New Religions in connection with the Sanbōkyōdan, I first want to draw attention to certain methodological problems that continue to hamper the study of Japanese religious phenomena.

The manner in which scholars of Japanese religion represent the disjunction between the New Religions of Japan and traditional Japanese Buddhism may owe as much to the division of labor in the field as to the nature of the phenomenon under study. Buddhologists—trained as they are in philology, textual criticism, and doctrinal history—are predisposed to see change as arising from within the tradition. They are thus led by their largely textual body of data to assume continuity rather than disjunction, with the attendant assumption that where traditional Buddhism survives in modern Japan it may be used as a "window to the past." At the same time, Buddhologists tend to dismiss the new religious movements as degenerate popularizations utterly devoid of doctrinal sophistication or subtlety.

Scholars of modern Japanese religion, on the other hand, tend to be trained in sociology, anthropology, and comparative religion. This predisposes them toward a social scientific perspective that privileges synchronic over diachronic analyses. As such, they are understandably drawn to the study of the New Religions, for which a knowledge of Japanese religious history would seem of less importance than an appreciation of the dramatic social, political, and economic changes that followed the Meiji Restoration. The tacit assumption of these scholars is that change arises not through the internal doctrinal dynamic of a tradition, but rather in response to external social, political, or economic stimuli.

One result of this unfortunate division of labor is the noticeable lack of ethnographically textured and anthropologically sophisticated studies of the older Buddhist schools and practices as they survive in the modern period. The other side of the coin is the paucity of "theologically" nuanced studies of the Buddhist New Religions, or studies sensitive to the historical and scriptural precedents for modern reforms.

Clearly, there is a need to rethink the normative and stipulative categories that circumscribe areas considered appropriate for research by scholars of Japanese religion. But my immediate goal is more modest: I want to draw attention to the specific ways in which these categories affect our perception of Zen. For nowhere is continuity more widely assumed than in the study of Zen, and this presumed continuity may be little more than a reflection of the degree to which Western scholars have been shaped by traditional Zen apologetics with its rhetoric of an "unbroken mind-to-mind transmission outside the scriptures." (Note the widespread tendency to treat Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen as if they constituted a single Buddhist school spanning some thirteen hundred years, or the corollary practice of using contemporary Japanese Zen masters as authorities on the explication of T'ang and Sung Ch'an literature.) As such, the rubric of "new religions" can indeed be useful in drawing attention to the contemporary provenance of "Zen" as it has come to be known in the West.

The Sanbōkyōdan would, no doubt, strongly resist the "New Religion" classification. And with some justification: Harada, Yasutani, and Yamada were all skilled at scriptural exegesis, lecturing and writing on the classics of Zen literature. In their synthesis of Sōtō and Rinzai they plausibly claimed to be returning to the Zen of Dōgen, whose interest in kōan study had been systematically suppressed in medieval Sōtō. The strident polemics of Yasutani and his successors has a long precedent in the Zen tradition—indeed, the kōan and *goroku* 語録 (recorded sayings) materials are replete with masters castigating their rivals as villains and frauds.[76] Moreover, the specific charge that contemporary Zen monasticism is bankrupt, lifeless, and lacking in authentic *kenshō* had been made as early as 1916 in the notorious work *Gendai sōjizen hyōron* 現代相似禅評論 [A critique of modern ersatz-Zen].[77]

[76] Even the Buddha does not escape insult. In Mumon's comments to case 6 of the *Mumonkan* he accuses Śākyamuni of deceiving his followers, "selling dog meat and labeling it sheep's head" (T 48.293c17–18). Yasutani's favorite patriarch, Dōgen, was particularly prone to harsh invective, the best of which was reserved for Ta-hui and his disciples. Such shows of independence and aplomb were simply part of the Zen master's rhetorical stock-in-trade.

[77] This work, published under the pseudonym Hauhōō 破有法王, attempted to discredit the Rinzai institution by making public the traditional "answers" to the kōans (see HAUHŌŌ 1970).

There is also nothing new in the attempt to simplify Buddhist practice for a lay clientele; as is well known, this was done by the medieval Jōdoshin and Nichiren schools, to mention only the two best-known examples. Charismatic authority has always been an important component of Buddhism in Japan, and many of the so-called "schools" of Japanese Buddhism are better thought of as ancestral cults centered on the worship of charismatic Buddhist saints.[78] Finally, as mentioned above, the attempt to bring Zen to the laity has precedents in Ta-hui, Bankei, and Hakuin, to name just a few. In short, the Sanbōkyōdan claim to be an authentic Zen reform movement, rather than a new religion, cannot be dismissed as mere hubris.

What surely is new in the Yasutani-Yamada style of Zen is the degree to which Buddhist enlightenment has been packaged for lay consumption. The teachings of Buddhism and Zen—the sophisticated literature, philosophy, ritual, and liturgy—have been reduced to a single momentary "experience" that can be acquired by anyone in a matter of months or even weeks given proper supervision and sufficient motivation. It is here that comparison with other contemporary religious developments in Japan and elsewhere would seem most fruitful.

As mentioned above, many of the New Religions flourish by offering the masses an unmediated experience of the "sacred other" previously reserved for an initiated guild of priests, ascetics, or shamans. Whether this experience entails spirit possession, ecstatic trance, experiences of the nondual, or miraculous powers (such as glossolalia, automatic writing, prophecy, and healing), there are certain structural and functional parallels. In each case the individual is empowered not through the eradication of defilement, through vanquishing evil, or through the mastery of a hallowed tradition. Rather, spiritual authority flows from one's immediate contact with that which transcends "self," or "ego." In rendering the sanction of the transcendent available to rank-and-file members a sect can realize tremendous short-term growth, but at the same time it incurs considerable long-term risk. If it wants to survive it must find some means of maintaining centralized control over the dissemination and application of sacred power. From this perspective we can begin to understand Sanbōkyōdan's relentless concern over who has and who does not have *kenshō*, over who is and who is not allowed to authorize it, over who is and who is not permitted to commission heirs, and so on.

[78] On the importance of the Zen master, both living and dead, as the central object of worship in medieval Zen see FOULK and SHARF 1993–94. Shingon, Jōdoshin, and Nichiren Buddhism (to pick only the most obvious examples) evolved in large part as devotional cults centered around an apotheosized founder.

To conclude, while there are methodological problems attendant on the use of the category "Japanese New Religion," I would not want to argue that there is nothing distinctly novel about the particular constellation of features that characterize the plethora of cults commonly classified as such. Such novelty must be examined in the light of a critical reconstruction of premodern religious forms, a reconstruction that is sensitive to the ideological nuances of the rhetoric of "old" versus "new." In situating the Sanbōkyōdan alongside the so-called New Religions, I hope to have underscored the need to rethink the terms in which Western scholarship approaches the study of Japanese religion in general, and Zen Buddhism in particular.

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