

【論文】

Danshu-no-michi, "The Way of Abstinence" : Japanese cultural-spiritual model of alcohol abstinence developed by alcoholics' self-help groups

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本論文の目的は、アルコール依存症者の自助グループである断酒会において展開されてきた文化的かつスピリチュアルな断酒モデルを描写することである。まず Christensen(2010)の日本のアルコールクス・アノニマスの研究を紹介する。その研究では日本の依存症者が自己を大きく変えることなく、アルコールのない生活に耐えているかが描かれている。断酒会においても同様のことが問題になっているが、その問題は「断酒の道」の実践によって解決できるかもしれない。その断酒会は、現在、会員数、入会員数ともに長期間、減少し続けている。断酒会は「酒を断つ会」というシンプルな名前から、酒を断つことしかしない会だと誤解されている。したがって断酒会は自助グループとして核になる考え方を明確にすることが重要である。そこで、ここでは断酒会の考え方の核としての「断酒の道」をとりあげ、それを日本の伝統的な「道」および「精神」と比較して述べ、さらに断酒会と「断酒の道」がともに低迷している原因について考察する。Christensenの研究では、日本のアルコール依存症者は断酒に耐えているだけと描かれているが、その耐えることも「断酒の道」の修行であり、スピリチュアルな成長につながりうる。アルコールクス・アノニマスのスピリチュアルな部分を抜きにして形だけを導入することは、日本のスピリチュアルな伝統も崩すことにつながりかねない。

Abstract : The purpose of this paper is to describe a cultural-spiritual model of alcohol abstinence, which was developed by Japanese alcoholics' self-help groups, Danshukai. First, the results of Christensen's (2010) study on Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Japan are discussed. Christensen described how and why Japanese AA members endure their abstinence without a profound transformation of self. Danshukai also has a similar problem and has been on the decline in numbers of members and newcomers. However, it might be avoidable using "the Way of Abstinence." Due to the simple etymology of the organization's name, Danshukai is often wrongly considered as a group that merely assists with drinking cessation. Therefore, it is important for Danshukai members to clarify their ideology. "The Way of Abstinence," as Danshukai's ideology, is discussed using Hendry's analysis of dō (2003) and Rohlen's analysis of seishin (1973). Japanese alcoholics' endurance is stressed as potentially part of the spiritual training in the Way of Abstinence. Lastly, the reasons for the decline of Danshukai and the Way of Abstinence are discussed. It is stressed that introducing AA to Danshukai without AA's spiritualism can lead to the deterioration of the indigenous spiritualism present in Danshukai.

Key words : Alcoholism, Self-help groups, Japanese culture, Danshukai, spiritualism

This paper is a result of my fieldwork with Japanese self-help groups for alcoholics called Danshukai. I started the fieldwork at the end of 2006 with an Australian anthropologist, Richard Dean Chenhall (Chenhall & Oka, 2009; Oka, 2011). I have attended many local, regional and national meetings of Danshukai, and conducted conversational interviews with leaders and members of Danshukai. I have contributed to Danshukai by writing some articles for their newsletters (for example, Oka, 2010), and offering speeches and lectures in local and regional meetings. Those articles and lectures were very useful for me to examine my hypotheses on Danshukai: by observing leaders' and members' reactions to my contribution, I have tried to verify the trustworthiness of my findings. For example, if they really supported my findings, they quickly used them in their newsletters and their own speeches. If they did not support them, they simply ignored them. In April 2011, I was assigned as an official adviser of Zendanren (the National Association of Danshukai), and that formal invitation to the organization promoted my fieldwork into the deeper side of their organization and activities. The purpose of this paper is to describe a cultural-spiritual model of alcohol abstinence, the Way of Abstinence, which Danshukai members have cherished consciously or unconsciously for a long time.

1. Christensen's study on Alcoholics Anonymous in Japan

In Japan there are two sorts of self-help groups for alcoholics: Danshukai and Alcoholics Anonymous. It is said that Danshukai has twice as many members as Alcoholics Anonymous. Firstly, I would like to introduce an American anthropologist's study on Alcoholics Anonymous in Japan, because this study critically shows the difficulties of Alcoholics Anonymous in Japan, and these difficulties are partly applicable to Danshukai. AA meetings in the Japanese language were formally established in Japan in 1975 (AAJGSO, 1995), seventeen years after Danshukai was established as peer-led self-help groups. Despite the history, AA membership was still only about 5000 in 2007; admittedly, it would be much less if the number of Japanese alcoholics was considered (Noguchi, 2008). Although it is impossible for me to identify the real causes of the stagnancy in membership of Alcoholics Anonymous in Japan, an ethnographic study of Japanese AA, as shown below, would be of consideration.

Paul Christensen, an American anthropologist, conducted his fieldwork with the Japanese AA as his PhD research. He discovered a very serious ideological issue within the Japanese AA: many Japanese AA members fail to experience a "profound transformation of the self" (Christensen, 2010, p. 45). He saw "many [AA members in Japan] endure their sobriety in unhappiness and secrecy" (p. 45) and pointed out "the frequently expressed frustration and unhappiness within meetings result from Japanese AA members privately enduring sobriety instead of experiencing the profound alteration in one's life" (p. 46). From his research, he concludes:

The Big Book asserts that alcoholism is an illness with no cure but there are the rewards of sobriety in a spiritual condition maintained daily through prayer resulting in a "profound alteration" of one's

character, the outcome of a constantly cultivated relationship with God, or at least one's interpretation of a higher power. Under ideal circumstances, being in recovery is enacted through one's constantly cultivated spiritual relationship and the sobriety this enables. Yet in Japan, many AA members are not living in recovery but simply existing without alcohol. To play upon the often invoked phrase in Japanese, they ganbaru (endure or persist) the absence of alcohol in their lives. (pp. 58-59, underline added by Oka)

Christensen's AA study reminds us of three important facts or questions concerning Danshukai: first, his finding that many alcoholic members are doing nothing more than living without alcohol can be applied to Danshukai. This is the problem of limited recovery. According to Nixon (2005),

Limited recovery means that an individual may successfully focus on abstinence from alcohol or drugs, but may not address underlying issues that perpetuate addictions, such as chronic dependence on others, fear of pain, helplessness, hopelessness, self-abandonment, and mindlessness. (p. 56. See also Larsen, 1985; Nixon & Solowoniuk, 2008; Tessina, 1991).

To tackle this problem, in 2013, Zendanren (the National Association of Danshukai) began indoctrinating their members with a concept of "two types of denials" (Zendanren, 2012a). In the "first denial," alcoholics deny their alcoholism. In the "second denial," the alcoholics believe that they would have no problems if they only quit drinking. This implies that "simply existing without alcohol" is not enough, and they need to progress further by solving their inner problems. However, we should note that their "second denial" has nothing to do with spiritual recovery. That invites a question: are Danshukai members likely to fully recover without any spiritual growth? We will answer this question later.

Second, Christensen (2010) referred to "a stock cultural resource" (p. 59), which can determine how people react to the stress caused by abstinence: just persisting, or recovering with spiritual growth. He also stated: "Sobriety becomes the only alternative in AA, attainable through the often problematic position for some Japanese members, of surrender to, and ensuing guidance from, God" (p. 57). "A sobriety without the cultural apparatus to draw sustenance and significance from such a position" (p. 57) would only lead Japanese members into difficulties. What he referred to is also called "cultural stock of stories." It is defined as "the totality of narrative representations that the person hears or reads in the course of his or her life, ranging from pieces of gossip and TV advertisements to novels and sacred texts, and from fairytales to real-life stories" (Hänninen, 2004, p. 73).

To clarify the variations of cultural stock of stories that influence Japanese and non-Japanese AA members, let me focus on Americans, who initiated AA groups. In the cultural stock of stories of Americans, one of the most important ones for American alcoholics is redemptive stories. As McAdams (2006a) states:

Since [the time of Benjamin Franklin], “rags-to-riches” stories about “the American dream” have assumed a privileged position in the canon of those most cherished cultural myths for Americans along with transformative stories about being “born again,” “escaping from slavery to freedom,” and fully actualizing that good and innocent inner self. . . . Americans love redemptive stories of the self, and some Americans even believe that they live them. (p. 82)

On the other hand, in the Japanese culture, redemptive stories are not so privileged. The somewhat negative judgment by Christensen on the prospect of the Japanese AA seems to be based on the fact that such redemptive stories are not so available to Japanese alcoholics that they would experience self-transformation.

A third point that Christensen's paper evokes is the issue of Japanese endurance. Within the AA group that Christensen observed, “Self-discipline . . . is linked to notions of *gaman* (perseverance), and manifest in consistent meeting participation” (p. 48). He added that this perseverance did not necessarily lead to the alcoholics' recovery:

The importance of both alcohol and *gaman* in Japan dictates member presentations of the self and makes scant concession for those electing to remain sober. Consequently, the return to alcohol consumption remembered as normal, which members crave and express in meeting dialogue, reveals alcoholism as an enduring personal identity in Japan, devoid of the profound transformation said to accompany sobriety. (Christensen, 2010, pp. 52-53)

His conclusion on Japanese AA is very pessimistic in the sense that the members will endure their abstinent life eternally without recovery. If we can call this dead end an “endurance trap,” Danshukai members may avoid the trap through “the Way of Abstinence.” Although Christensen states: “*Ganbaru* [endurance] is a critical cultural assumption in contemporary Japan. . . . The use of *ganbaru* as a stock cultural resource pervades widely differing aspects of life in Japan, from folk song performances to sumo wrestling” (p. 59), there is little discussion on the cultural-spiritual background of “*ganbaru* as a stock cultural resource” in his paper. Before proceeding to discuss the cultural-spiritual background, let me write on Danshukai being on the decline.

2. Danshukai on the decline

“Danshukai” is the common name given to non-Alcoholic Anonymous-type self-help groups for alcoholics in Japan. The largest association of Danshukai is Zen-Nihon-Danshu-Renmei (Zendanren), the official English name of which is All Nippon Abstinence Association (Koyabashi, 2001). The first local Danshukai groups were established independently in 1958 in Tokyo and Kōchi City; subsequently, these two groups united to establish the National Association of Danshukai, Zendanren, in 1963 (Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, 2008). While Zendanren had over 11433 members in fiscal 1998 (Zendanren,

2006)^{*1}, the number of members has been decreasing since then, and it had little over 8,000 members in 2012 (Figure 1). The number of newcomers has also decreased since 2001 (Figure 2). Danshukai was established with inspiration from Alcoholics Anonymous, so meetings are similar to those of Alcoholics Anonymous: sharing alcohol-related experiences among members is considered as the most important activity of a meeting. Although they have good relations with professionals, they are completely independent from them (Chenhall & Oka, 2009).

Almost all academic papers on Danshukai, whether written in Japanese or in English, consider all Danshukai groups as those belonging to Zendanren. However, what has very seldom been reported is that there are many Danshukai groups that are independent from Zendanren. These non-Zendanren-linked Danshukai groups can be divided into three categories according to their different backgrounds.

The first type consists of groups which belong, or once belonged, to two different national associations: Danshu-tomo-no-kai ["tomo-no-kai" means "friendly society"] and Japan Temperance Union. Danshu-tomo-no-kai was established in 1953 (Kamihorinouchi, 1979), and the Japan Temperance Union was established in 1898 (Japan Temperance Union, n.d.). Danshu-tomo-no-kai was once part of the Japan Temperance Union, and the first Danshukai group in Tokyo, which co-originated Zendanren, was started by alcoholics who decided to leave Danshu-tomo-no-kai because it was led by a non-alcoholic layperson^{*2}. As a result of these complicated relations, the three groups of Danshukai have worked independently of each other for over a half-century. Although Danshu-tomo-no-kai once had groups nationwide, many of them decided to join Zendanren, and now only two groups remain in Danshu-tomo-no-kai's association. On the other hand, the Japan Temperance Union currently has three groups for alcoholics, although they should not be considered as self-help groups, because they are supported by the Union members, who are not alcoholics.

The second type of non-Zendanren-linked Danshukai includes local groups that decided to leave Zendanren. They are independent from each other and there is no "anti-Zendanren" association. It was hard for me to establish how many local Danshukai groups exist outside of Zendanren because researching them would entail probing into sensitive matters like inner conflicts of Zendanren, and no Zendanren leaders seem knowledgeable or interested in it.

The third category of non-Zendanren-linked Danshukai is groups that have never been involved with any of the larger associations mentioned above. A good example is Mitaka City Danshukai: an exceptional Danshukai in the sense that it is sponsored by Mitaka City in Tokyo. It should be considered as a support group because of this financial sponsorship from the outside. In sum, any meeting for alcoholics entailing alcohol-related experience (except for AA meetings) is called Danshukai in Japan, whether it is a self-help group or a support group led by non-alcoholics.

A reason that the term Danshukai is commonly used for various meetings is, probably, that the etymology of Danshukai is simple: it comprises three Chinese characters: "Dan(断)" "shu(酒)" and

“kai(会)” meaning “giving up and abstaining from,” “liquor” and “group or meeting” respectively. This etymology is clear to the Japanese if they see these Chinese characters. However, if they only hear the term, it is almost impossible for ordinary people to imagine the nature of the group. The Japanese language has many homophones; “danshu” coincidentally means “castration” or “sterilization,” and so, during my fieldwork, male members once jokingly talked about people’s misunderstanding of their group name. A female member said that when she had asked a janitor if there was to be a meeting of Danshukai in a public building, he had thought it was a “dance” meeting because dance (“dansu” in Japanese) and “danshu” are similar in sound. As these episodes show, Danshukai is not generally well known, although it has a 50-year history in Japan (Chenhall & Oka, 2009).

If we compare it with Alcoholics Anonymous, the fact that “Danshukai” is etymologically “a group for giving up liquor” seems interesting. While Danshukai includes its primary goal within their name, Alcoholics Anonymous does not. This gives Danshukai an asset and a limitation at the same time: it is an asset because every member can easily see the primary goal of their group, and it is a limitation because the members can hardly have any further goals once they succeed in ceasing drinking for a while. In actuality, many members tend to leave Danshukai after they cease drinking for some years, or they do not actively contribute to Danshukai while attending Danshukai meetings with the minimum frequency in order to keep their abstinence. According to many Danshukai leaders, this tendency is the very reason that Danshukai is on the decline.

In other words, in Danshukai, many members do not see any goals other than ceasing drinking. My contention is that Danshukai’s decline has been caused by this kind of insufficient understanding by members of Danshukai’s ideology. “Ideology” is a set of ideas that self-help groups have developed in order to treat and change their difficult situations. Antze (1976) was one of the first scholars who studied this phenomenon. He explained it as follows:

Each [self-help group] claims a certain wisdom concerning the problem it treats. Each has a specialized system of teachings that members venerate as the secret of recovery. These are often codified in a book or recited in capsule form at the start of each meeting. I have chosen to call such teachings “ideologies.” . . . This term includes not only the group’s explicit beliefs but also its rituals, rules of behavior, slogans, and even favorite turns of phrase. (p. 324)

Zendanren-linked Danshukai (hereafter referred to as “Danshukai”) have developed an ideology on alcoholism and recovery. However, judging from my six-year-long observation of leaders and members, it seems that their ideology is becoming more confused and inconsistent despite the leaders’ persistent effort to establish it. This ideological confusion might have led to the decreasing number of members belonging to Zendanren, as outlined above. Although many leaders have tried to keep the number of members up through various measures, including increased communication among members and

improved ways to facilitate discussion meetings, I suggest that Zendanren should establish or reestablish an effective ideology as soon as possible. Otherwise, the organization is likely to fall into a more and more serious state of crisis or an anomic state. My study aims to help the organization overcome this crisis. In the next section, I will describe the Way of Abstinence as an ideology of Danshukai.

3. The Way of Abstinence (Danshu-no-michi)

"Danshu-no-michi" (the Way of Abstinence) is a slogan included in the lyrics of Zendanren's only anthem. There is no definition of "the Way of Abstinence" circulating among Danshukai members, and I have never heard them discussing it in their meetings and conferences. Some may say it is nothing but an expression for their process to achieving abstinence, while some may say they have never been aware of what is meant by the Way of Abstinence. Despite their indifference to it, the Way of Abstinence is three times praised as the only path to recovery in the words of Zendanren's anthem, which is always sung at any large meetings. It is possible that the phrase "The Way (*michi*) of Something" might be such a very common expression in Japan that people have rarely thought of the detailed meaning of it. Way (*michi*) is, if written as a Chinese character, also pronounced *dō*, so that Danshu-no-michi can be called Danshudō (the Way of Abstinence).

[*Michi* or *dō* is] used to denote the fundamental principle underlying a system of thought or belief, an art, or a skill, [and] it is also used by extension to refer to a system of thought or belief in its entirety or to the entire body of principles and skills that constitute an art. In this latter sense it is used in Japan as part of the name of a number of traditional skills or codes of behavior. (Campbell & Noble, 1993, pp. 956-957)

This sort of Japanese cultural stressing of "Ways" can be traced to an ancient Chinese philosophy, Taoism. "Taoism is based on the concept of the Tao. Most basically, Tao means 'road' or 'path' ; in a spiritual context, it refers to 'the Way' " (Davey, 2007, p. 17). Not only Taoism but also "Zen, Shinto, [and] Confucianism . . . all aided in the transformation of everyday Japanese arts and activities into viable spiritual paths" (Davey, 2007, p. 30). Examples of these Japanese activities include traditional martial arts such as *jūdō* (the Way of Softness), *kendō* (the Way of the Sword), *aikidō* (the Way of Combining Spirit), and *kyūdō* (the Way of Archery). Some Japanese arts also have this type of name: *kadō* (the Way of Flower Arrangement), *shodō* (Calligraphy, the Way of Writing), *sadō* (Tea ceremony, the Way of Making Tea), and *kodō* (the Way of Fragrance). Some careers were once denoted by a name with the suffix *dō*: *bushidō* (the Way of Samurai), *butsudō* (the Way of Buddhists), *ninkyōdō* (the Way of Chivalry or the Way of Outlaws), and *idō* (the Way of Medicine). Even these days the Japanese like to freely coin new words by combining a word with the suffix *dō*: an example is *yakyūdō* (the Way of Baseball Players), which was advocated by a manager of a university student baseball team before

World War II (Hashimoto, 2007). *Mangadō* (the Way of Cartoonists), *eigodō* (the Way of Learning English), and *sōdō* (the Way of Wearing Kimono) are also used by a famous cartoonist, an author of English learning books, and a school for wearing kimono. Under such circumstances, a newly coined term, *danshudō* was easily accepted and understood by people.

Our next question is, “What is the shared quality among these various *dō* (Ways)?” As Hendry (2003) states, “An understanding of their shared qualities [among these Ways] reveals some of the principles that underlie Japanese thinking more generally” (p. 194). Hendry summarizes the shared qualities in terms of three elements, as follows:

First of all, these are accomplishments that require a good deal of dedication and training. There is an underlying assumption that anyone could, with enough application, succeed in the pursuit of these arts. . . . Second, the method of learning is based largely on imitation and repetition, Many hours are passed in repetitive routine. Perseverance and even suffering are an integral part of the process. . . . Third, one of the characteristics of all these pursuits is that they enable the participants to develop spiritual strength, or *seishin*, and the development of *seishin*, in turn, helps them to improve their skills. In this sense, these “arts” are “paths” or “ways” through life, and they are thought to have value for helping ordinary people to cope with the demands and realities of everyday life. (p. 194)

It can be shown that *danshudō* has all three qualities of dedication, repetition, and spiritual strength. First, the importance of dedication/training is emphasized in Danshukai. In particular, Danshukai members are strongly encouraged to be dedicated to “attending Danshukai meetings.” A commonly used phrase among Danshukai members is: “Oya ga shindemo reikai e” [Attend a Danshukai meeting even at the time of the death of your parent]. There is a variation of this phrase: for example, at a Danshukai year-end party in Tokyo, a rock-and-roll group of members shouted phrases meaning, “We will attend meetings today in spite of various difficulties!” Interestingly, in the meetings there is little discussion as to why attending meetings is so important. As shown later, Danshukai members believe that it is very important to understand the importance of attending meetings, not by discussion, but because of their experience.

Second, learning by imitation and repetition seems to be a basic method used by Danshukai members. I remember how I had been disappointed when I attended Danshukai's three-day workshops, which were called “*Danshu-gakkō*” (Abstinence School), because I had expected that the “School” would offer their indigenous knowledge or theoretical frameworks to fresh members systematically, in the way that ordinary schools give knowledge to students. There were no such taught classes, of the kind we see in normal schools. What I observed at these workshops was simply an extended series of regular meetings. The structure of such workshops was very simple: members came together, and talked about their experience. In many meetings, there were no particular topics given in advance. No guidance was

provided except for very simple rules such as "Don't tell others about what you hear in this meeting." Talk and listen, talk and listen: there was nothing but a simple repetition of talking and listening. We can assume that new Danshukai members are expected to learn by imitation of other members and by repetition of their own deeds. As Singleton (1998) states, in Japan, "there is . . . a powerful pedagogy that depends upon the observational skills of a motivated learner. It is the ability to respond to 'teaching without teaching' " (p. 16), and "there is a consistent respect for persistence in practice of the seemingly simple foundational forms . . . associated with an art" (p. 17). In the case of Danshukai, talking and listening is a simple foundational form, and Danshukai members are required to attend a meeting and talk and listen there repetitively.

Third, in Danshukai, the importance of developing spiritual strength or *seishin* is also stressed. A term "*Danshu-seishin*" (Abstinence Spirit) has sometimes been printed in Danshukai's newsletters. However, we should notice that Japanese *seishin* is very different from what is associated with the English word "spiritual" : while *seishin* can be translated as "spirit," this word is often used in combination with business or sport. On the term *seishin*, Wierzbicka (1997) states:

The English language literature about Japan is often a meeting place of words which in other contexts would hardly ever come together. One particularly interesting example of this phenomenon involves the words *spirit*, *spiritual*, and *spiritualism*, which in books and articles on Japan (written in English or translated into English) often keep company with such unlikely (from a Western point of view) words as *military*, *police*, *business*, and *sport*. (p. 270)

The *seishin*-related spiritualism of Danshukai is thus dissimilar to the Christian concept of spiritualism, which is the spiritual foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous (Kurtz, 1979). What is then meant by "developing spiritual (*seishin*) strength" ? Rohlen's fieldwork (1973) on the *seishin* of a Japanese bank led to interesting conclusions that can be applied to my Danshukai fieldwork study. Rohlen describes the strength of *seishin* as follows:

The standard by which spiritual strength . . . is measured is performance. The outward manifestations of strength are such things as the ability to endure trouble and pain, a coolness in the face of threat, patience, dependability, persistence, self-reliance, and intense personal motivation; qualities we would associate with "strong personal character." (Rohlen, 1973, p. 1557)

When we consider this strength as persistence, we will have a different view on the scenes at meetings of Japanese AA that Christensen reported, as discussed in our first section. Although Christensen concluded that Japanese AA members might be merely enduring their lives of abstinence without a profound self-transformation, it is possible to think that the Japanese may consider their endurance more positively than the American anthropologist thought. I do not claim that Japanese AA members

are proceeding on the Way of Abstinence. However, they might be doing so without being aware of that cultural tradition.

In his fieldwork research article on a Japanese bank, Rohlen (1973) describes “characteristics of the seishin approach to education” (p. 1559), and it is interesting that many of these characteristics are also found in Danshukai's Way of Abstinence. Let me discuss them one by one in the latter half of this section. First,

In seishin education, emphasis is placed on non-verbal forms of behavior. A well behaved, but silent class, for example, is not necessarily an indication of lethargy, stupidity, or the failure of the teacher. It is likely to be interpreted as evidence that students are well disciplined, receptive, and respectful. In some instances, a seishin orientation may take a skeptical view of verbal logic and its forms of understanding, favoring experience as the basis of knowledge instead. (p. 1559)

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I have always tried to check my hypotheses on Danshukai by asking Danshukai members what they thought of my essays contributed to their newsletters or my lectures in their large meetings. Their answers were in many cases very short, or they gave me back their compliments only. Many leaders clearly avoided arguing with me, as though they considered any arguments with me to be rude to scholars. Although a small number of Danshukai members wrote theoretical or academic papers on their Danshukai groups and activities, it is surprising that very few other members knew of them or seemed to have interest in them. Danshukai leaders who were respected by their members were men or women of action, not of words: they always attended many meetings actively, and were ready to help many members. On the other hand, some leaders who were eloquent on the stage in a large meeting were often the subjects of backbiting: “His words are great, but he does not attend local meetings by excusing himself for being too busy.” Non-verbal forms of behavior are thus considered very important in Danshukai, as shown by the commonly used phrase, “Practice first.” Although in 1991 Danshukai started to use a guidebook, “*Shishin to Kihan* [Principles and Models]”, which includes rules resembling the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions of AA, they had had no guidebooks for the preceding twenty-eight years since Zendanren's genesis in 1963. This indicates how members of Danshukai had disregarded verbal logic for their recovery and agrees with a basic idea of Zen Buddhism, *furyū monji*, which means:

Literally, “not standing on words or letters.” . . . [This is] a Zen Buddhist expression warning against relying on words. In Zen belief, enlightenment (*satori*) is attained not through the study of Buddhist texts or other verbal explanations but through direct experience, either in meditation or interaction with spiritual masters. (Campbell & Noble, 1993, p. 433)

Masataka Kodama was an alcoholic and a charismatic leader of Danshukai. In 1969 he founded a therapeutic community called *Danshu-Dōjō* in Wakayama, in which alcoholics lived together to attain

abstinence. The following passage from his words shows a typical case of Danshukai leaders' emphasis on the importance of experience, not of verbal knowledge:

Nobody can know how cold the water is, without putting their hands into the water. Even if you read books on swimming and practice on the floor, you will know nothing but theories, and then you can never swim. Even if your brain is full of knowledge, it will not help you without the ability to control your body. You should learn through body and then it takes effect. . . . Learning through your body gives you power to practice. Without the power to practice, hundreds of theories are nothing. . . . Don't think of why you have to stop drinking. Stop drinking, first, and then, feel what happens to your body. By doing so, you will naturally experience what harmful effects alcohol has on yourself. We alcoholics are prone to criticize and rebuke everything on some pretext or another, and thus it is most important for you to know things through your body, and practice. You know that human beings survive by experience and thrive by experience. You should obtain knowledge not through your brain, but through your body: otherwise your knowledge will not help you in your real life. Shugyō (ascetic practice) is training yourself by your hands and feet: (in shugyō) nobody teaches you. (Shigeta, n.d., translated by Oka)

The above passage also shows that indifference to verbal expressions is a consequence of the emphasis on the importance of experiences, and that this emphasis on experience is closely related to the common philosophy of Ways, in which our bodies and minds are considered as parts of the single entity, or "body-mind oneness" in Zen Buddhism (Yuasa, Nagatomo, & Hull, 1993, p. 21). Davey, a famous author of Ways, said:

Our minds and bodies are, in the end, the sole tools we really own in life. Using the mind and body together naturally, practicably, and harmoniously allows for freedom of action and self-expression and is the most effective technique for using these tools. When the tie between mind and body is weak, novices in any art can observe a skill demonstrated by an instructor, or in a book, comprehend it intellectually, yet still fail to physically respond in the correct manner. Comprehending the mind-body relationship, founders of the different Ways seem to have envisioned their arts in part as a means to directly discover how to coordinate these two most basic tools. (Davey, 2007, p. 90)

It is thus shown that *Danshu-no-michi* (the Way of Abstinence) is a reflection of this Japanese tradition of Ways. Some critics criticize Danshukai's intellectual negligence by referring to the fact that the Japanese Alcoholics Anonymous has published many more booklets and leaflets than Danshukai groups. However, that criticism is found to be wrong when the tradition of Ways is considered. What Danshukai group members want is not words but direct experience. We can remember the attitudinal differences between Zen Buddhists and Christians, especially Protestants; while the former sit without books, the

latter read the Bible.

As the second trait, Rohlen (1973) argues that problems can be viewed positively in seishin-based education:

Rather than viewing difficulties and hardships the students face as barriers to education and therefore things to be overcome by better facilities or improved methods of instruction, seishin based education is liable to regard problems in the educational situation as valuable assets to the training process itself. (p. 1559)

Tadayoshi Murata was one of a small number of psychiatrists who advocated for Danshudō, and in his book (1983) we can find the following paragraph that corresponds to this trait of the Way:

Since ancient times, people have thought that we need to practice asceticism to reach enlightenment (*satori*). For example, we can consider *zazen*, sitting meditation, for approaching enlightenment in Zen Buddhism. We, the Japanese, have taken it for granted to practice asceticism for discovering the truth of something, and tend to think that the more severe the asceticism is, the greater the consequence is. It is very natural that if one succeeds in practicing ceaseless asceticism by resisting temptation and controlling the desire for drinking, he or she will attain peaceful enlightenment. I consider it as a reward to practitioners of abstinence. (translated by Oka, pp. 97-98)

Thinking of the common difficulties among group members positively is known as “a liberating meaning perspective” of self-help groups (Borkman, 1999). In Danshudō, addiction can be regarded as the great test for addicts' spiritual growth.

The third trait of Way-thinking that Rohlen (1973) mentioned is an emphasis on knowledge of self:

A knowledge of self and self-reflection (*jikaku and hansei*) are stressed in seishin training and the blame for difficulties or failure, individual or social, will be placed most heavily on spiritual weakness rather than on a lack of knowledge or inadequacy of social organization. The *seishin* approach to social betterment gives precedence to spiritual reform over social reform. (p. 1559)

Jikaku and *hansei* are words used very commonly in Danshukai meetings. We have to notice that the knowledge of self to which they refer is not any logical or analytical knowledge—remember that in the Way knowledge is obtained not through brains, but through bodies or experience. This self-knowledge is thus different from what is gained through analyzing their early lives, as they would do in psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. Professionals who are not aware of this difference between the seishin approach to *jikaku* [self-knowledge] and psychoanalytic self-knowledge often criticize Danshukai's approach because they allege that Danshukai members' self-knowledge is insufficient. In the seishin approach, as Rohlen pointed out, weakness in mind is focused on. In everyday conversation among the

Japanese, *jikaku* and *hansei* are often words used to denote something needed or missing in individuals. For example, in Danshukai, members often critically say, "They lack awareness [*jikaku*] as a member of Danshukai," which means that some members are too lazy to contribute to Danshukai activities. Also, in Danshukai meetings, members are required to reflect [*hansei*] on the weakness in their mind that allowed them to drink.

The fourth and fifth traits that Rohlen (1973) pointed out are conformity and "the gradual conquest of self." Because I believe these two are closely connected to each other, let me discuss them together. Rohlen states:

Rather than encouraging students to consider themselves as different from one another and thus sponsoring individualistic thought and creativity, seishin education sponsors outward conformity to teachers' examples and group standards. Nonconformity is viewed as disruptive of group unity and a sign of individual character weakness. It is thought that conformity is made from conviction, not dullness, and that to conform to the group is difficult, rather than easy. . . . *Seishin* education aims to help the individual achieve contentment through the development of an ordered and stable psyche free from confusion and frustration. This is to be attained through the gradual conquest of *waga* [*sic*] or *ga* (one's primitive self, or id in Freudian terms). The phrase expressing this process, *waga* [*sic*] o korosu (literally "kill the self"), is a common expression related to the seishin approach. (pp. 1559-1560)

"Waga" in the quotation might be a typo of "Jiga." In Danshukai, phrases including "jiga" or "ga" (assertive self) are often used when criticizing members for non-conformity. A typical phrase is *ga-ga-tsuyoi* (literally "self is strong"). *Ga-ga-tsuyoi* members include members who stick to their own ways despite Ways shown by Danshukai, or who consider their own opinions the most important. Danshukai meetings in Tokyo are often large in terms of numbers of participants, and some doctors criticize the scale of the meeting because they think that such large meetings are unlikely to have the psychotherapeutic effects of small groups. However, some leaders believe this large group is also "therapeutic," because, according to them, in large groups the members have to limit the amount of time they spend speaking so that every attendee has a chance to talk. This means that in the large groups they are trained to be able to restrain their "ga" , or selfishness.

The sixth trait is competition among subgroups. Rohlen (1973) states: "Whenever possible in *seishin* education competition is organized along group rather than individual lines and many events have no obvious competitive quality" (p. 1560). He also writes, "While competition between individuals was seldom encouraged, group competition was a major means of motivation throughout the training period" (p. 1555). A good example in Danshukai can be seen in regional and national meetings: all the seats are assigned to each local group in advance so that members in the same group can be, or have to be, seated

together. When the toastmaster introduces them, they stand up together at the same time and display their solidarity. Additionally, in the annual national meeting, while being introduced by the toastmaster and in time to Zendanren's official anthem, which sounds like a march, a representative of Danshukai in each prefecture appears on the stage holding up a placard with the name of their prefecture written on it. They parade proudly, and the audience applauds. That reminds me of the Olympic Game's opening ceremony: as athletes are proud of their sportspersonship, Danshukai members are proud of their life of abstinence.

The last trait that Rohlen (1973) pointed out is the spiritualism in the *seishin* approach. He argues:

The unchanging nature of spiritual problems and their solutions is a basic assumption of the *seishin* approach. Teachers, parents, and senior students are, by virtue of greater experience and training, spiritually more advanced and therefore worthy of respect and authority. (p. 1560)

Danshukai's regional and national meetings have a spiritual atmosphere: at the beginning of the meeting, all attendees are required to offer a silent prayer for the souls of the deceased Danshukai members while the toastmaster reads a written prayer. In these very large meetings a large portrait of the founder, Mr. Matsumura, is often put up on the stage so that the attendees can feel as if the late great leader with a gentle smile is watching over Danshukai meetings from Heaven. Although no members consider Danshukai as religious, Danshukai has a spiritual element in the sense that their ceremony links the living to the deceased.

This section has shown that Danshukai's Way of Abstinence agrees in many respects with other Ways that have been developed in Japan, especially in terms of a *seishin* approach. Next, I will discuss issues concerning the Way of Abstinence, while examining possible reasons for the decline of Danshukai.

4. Can “the Way of Abstinence” help Danshukai in crisis?

In the last section, by discussing the reasons membership of Danshukai has declined and the possible factors that impede the wide application of the Way of Abstinence, I examine its utility for Danshukai.

As stated in the first section of this paper, Danshukai is now in crisis: the number of members is decreasing, and their meetings have fewer and fewer attendees. Although there is so far no empirical research on the reasons for the decline of Danshukai, Zendanren reported on the reasons (Zendanren, 2011b) by analyzing themselves. While reading the report, I listened to leaders' discussion on the reasons and during my fieldwork I asked questions about the reasons for decline. In this paper possible reasons are classified in terms of four factors: the greater variety of members' situations, improved medical and welfare services, the shrinking social life of the Japanese people, and the confusion in the Danshukai ideology. Each of these will be discussed.

First, Danshukai is now accepting a much greater variety of alcoholics than before. In the past,

many Danshukai members had similar life courses: they were almost all men who began to drink in their youth, and drank more and more according to the social norm for working men of those days. Consequently, they caused serious disruption in their families, especially to the lives of their wives and children. After joining Danshukai, they began to stop drinking, and returned to work. Finally, they enjoyed their family and business life again. In the past this story was shared among many Danshukai members; but it is no longer so universal, because there are now female alcoholics in Danshukai. In Japan, the social norm does not require women to drink a lot, and this means that alcoholic women would have had another reason to drink; they might be victims of child abuse or of sexual crimes. It would naturally be difficult for these women to talk about their sexual traumas in the usual meetings, in which the majority of attendees are men. Young people also deviate from the previously common life course of typical Danshukai members: they might be not only alcoholics, but also drug addicts. In addition, many young people have never worked, and even after attaining a state of abstinence, they would still be jobless. Old people are also another new type of drinker; they typically began to drink heavily after their retirement. They do not need to work again. Although Danshukai members are always encouraged to attend many meetings, some old people have difficulties in getting to meetings due to physical disabilities. Some old people come to meetings merely because they have nothing else to do. They are not strongly motivated in terms of the organization's aims yet can occupy important positions in Danshukai groups, and thus often discourage younger members from more actively contributing to the group. In sum, in the past, members could easily relate to one another because they had a lot in common. However, these days, members have such different backgrounds that it is more difficult for them to understand each other, and the cohesion of the group is thus decreasing.

The second reason is the greater availability of medical and welfare services to alcoholics and their families than before. Because of the availability of such services alcoholics come to believe that they do not need to depend on self-help groups anymore. That may sound gratifying, but there are negative aspects. Concerning medical services, these days many clinics offer day-care services to alcoholics at low fees, and in such day-care services, group psychotherapy is also available to alcoholics. Alcoholics often prefer group psychotherapy to self-help group meetings, because group psychotherapists do not require them to do voluntary work, such as preparing meeting places. In day-care services, the alcoholics are concerned only about their own health, and they do not need to help other alcoholics. In sum, alcoholics using these services can grow neither socially nor spiritually. On the other hand, the greater availability of public monetary assistance might hinder alcoholics from making an effort to find jobs. This means that the alcoholics do not need to transform themselves so profoundly that they can get employed. If they are satisfied with their present states, they naturally have less interest in Danshukai, in which they are strongly encouraged to change themselves.

The third reason for the decline in membership of Danshukai is that less participation in Danshukai

can be considered part of a general social trend in Japan towards a shrinking social life. According to a longitudinal survey on people's values from 1973 to 2008, Japanese have continuously less and less interest in getting involved with others in terms of their relatives, communities, and workplaces over the 35 years (NHK, 2010, p. 193). Consequently, people are becoming more indifferent to self-help groups. Also, increasing poverty in Japan (for example, see Inaba, 2011) apparently hinders alcoholics' joining Danshukai. Although Danshukai's membership fee is not high (the annual fee to the national organization is 3600 yen, and the monthly fee to a local group is from 1000 yen to 2500 yen), if the cost of transport for going to Danshukai meetings is also considered, the financial cost is by no means negligible.

The last possible factor that impedes the development of Danshukai is the confusion of Danshukai's ideology regarding alcoholism and recovery. My hypothesis is that although Danshukai once established the Way of Abstinence as their ideology for solving their problems, the ideology is losing its influence over Danshukai members so that the nature of the organization is becoming unclear to them. Since this is one of the main issues of this paper, I will talk about three possible reasons why the understanding of Danshukai's ideology is weakening: the influence of medical professional frameworks, the idealization of Alcoholics Anonymous in North America, and difficulties in transmitting the Way of Abstinence to members of the next generations.

As shown above, medical services are now more readily available to alcoholics, and in treatment settings alcoholics are given lectures on alcoholism and treatment by doctors or other professionals. Alcoholics learn these medical frameworks to firstly understand their condition. They also experience group psychotherapy in the medical settings, and this experience of group psychotherapy can lead alcoholics to consider Danshukai meetings as nothing but “group psychotherapy without professionals” and thus as lower-quality group therapy. While new members often have the latest medical knowledge on alcoholism as given by doctors, veteran Danshukai members' medical knowledge is prone to be obsolete, and their way of thinking (the Way of Abstinence) also tends to be considered as outdated by new members. Additionally professionals encourage Danshukai leaders to develop Danshukai meetings on the model of group psychotherapy—for example, they strongly stress Danshukai meetings should be so small that small group dynamics can be more therapeutic. They ignore the fact that a self-help group is a community, in which people interact with each other outside the meetings. On the other hand, Danshukai leaders also want to use medical, technical terms to appeal to doctors because they expect that the doctors will introduce more patients to Danshukai if the leaders show their appreciation of medicine. For example, Zendanren annually issues a pocket-size schedule notebook [*danshu techō* (abstinence notebook)], which has a glossary including many medical terms and very few words related to the Way of Abstinence, or their indigenous ideas. When I asked a leader in charge of the glossary about the imbalance between medical terms and indigenous terms, he said that Danshukai leaders

needed to know these medical terms when they had to talk to doctors. Since Danshukai is on the decline, it seems that leaders are more anxious to gain doctors' appreciation, with the result that leaders might be more eager to include medical ideas in their ways of thinking of alcoholism. This means that the Way of Abstinence might become less important in Danshukai.

The second factor that is invalidating the Way of Abstinence is some professionals' idealization of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), especially those in North America. Their logic is simple: "Think of the millions of members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the world. Why are they so successful? There should be something that is owned by AA, but is missing in Danshukai. Identify it and put it into Danshukai; then Danshukai will prosper as AA has done in the world." The first meeting of the professional advisers of Zendanren was held in Osaka, 1990, and at that time one piece of advice was "Create something like the 12 Traditions and the 12 Steps of AA" (Zendanren, 1990a). The advisers ignored the fact that Japanese AA had not been as successful as Danshukai. Zendanren started to discuss this advice and finally published a book, "*Shishin to Kihan* [Principles and Models]," in 1991. For over two decades, Danshukai members have been encouraged to read this book as the "Bible" of Danshukai. However, these people are not aware that the AA's Big Book is an alcoholics' version of the Bible in a Christian-based culture. While Christian churches leave copies of the Bible on seats for service attendees, or each Christian brings his or her own copy of the Bible to church, no Japanese brings any holy books to Shintō shrines or Buddhist temples. Neither Shintō nor Buddhism is a "revealed religion" (Religion, 2012). Thus, the Japanese have no culture in which a book is the basic tool for spiritual growth, so encouraging them to read the book to support their achievement of and continuation in abstinence does not fit their traditional way of learning. This can be considered as the first step in Danshukai's deviation from the Way of Abstinence, because traditionally the Way has no written words providing guidance, as discussed above. As Rohlen and LeTendre stated (1996), the Japanese learn from their experience, not from a book:

The Anglo-American inclination to separate cognitive and emotional aspects has not taken hold in Japan. Phrases like "memorizing with one's body" (*karada de oboeru*) indicate that there is less reliance on verbal transmission. Many forms of learning begin in less explicit ways than we would expect. This emphasis on experience also leads to prizing experience over theory and adds authority to the ideas of one's seniors, the group's history, and the weight of the past. (p. 373)

Additionally, an influence of AA that works negatively for Danshukai might be that admirers of AA implicitly impose "redemptive stories" on Danshukai members. However, as shown in the first section of this paper, Americans have a partiality for this type of story; but the Japanese do not. As McAdams (2006a) states, there is a close relationship between redemptive stories and American narratives:

Among the most influential stories in any society are those that come to be seen as canonical within

a society's distinctive heritage. Among the most compelling narratives in the American heritage are the life stories told in Puritan conversion experiences, upward-mobility narratives like Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, narratives of escaped slaves, Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches stories, immigrant stories, and the modern discourse of self-help and recovery—all quintessentially American narratives that bear striking resemblance to the redemptive self. (p. 95, underline added by Oka)

It is also stressed that these redemptive stories are related to religions, especially Christianity. McAdams (2006b) says:

Religions tell us that things are bad at the beginning (perhaps because we are bad) but that things will get better and we will be delivered to a better place. Examples of stories that encode the sequence of early suffering followed by a (promised or actual) deliverance to a better state are legion in the Judeo-Christian tradition: Abraham and Sarah suffer infertility into old age until God sends them Isaac, their son; the Israelites suffer through Egyptian captivity and 40 years of wandering until God delivers them to the Promised Land; Christ is crucified but raised up on the third day. Today, personal stories of conversion—moving suddenly from a bad and sinful state to a good and Godly one—are a staple of many Christian communities, a traditional paragon of which is the New Testament's story of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. . . . For many Christians, furthermore, it is also tied up with beliefs about sin and repentance. The general idea goes like this: While Jesus may have died to save people from their sins, people nonetheless continue sinning and need to atone for their sins by admitting their wrongdoing and receiving forgiveness, as through prayer, confession, and the like. When people repent, they move from a bad and sinful state to a good and purified, or forgiven, one, even if only for a moment. (pp. 18-19)

Conversion, sin, repentance, confession, etc. are a set of cultural concepts shared by Alcoholics Anonymous and Christianity. On the other hand, Shintoism has none of them: no conversion, so sins, no repentance and no confession. Although McAdams (2006b) mentioned “in Hinduism and Buddhism, redemption sequences take the form of liberation from perpetual reincarnation” (p. 19), the story of perpetual reincarnation is very seldom told in modern Japan. Due to “the strong sense of pragmatic functionalism manifested by the ‘do it and see’ attitude is inherent in all the relationships that the Japanese have with the religious world” (Reader, 1991, p. 20), the modern Japanese are almost never troubled by the idea of perpetual reincarnation. Then, what is the favorite story about personal growth among the Japanese? From my observation of Danshukai members, there are two stories that they live by. The first is one related to Zen Buddhism, which we can call “*shugyō* stories.”

The term *shugyo* [shugyō] has quasi-religious overtones and means roughly “austere practices.” The sometimes lengthy meditation periods found in Japanese yoga and the martial artist's special winter

training are examples of shugyo *within* the Do [Dō] forms. Shugyo is an important, inseparable part of the Do [Dō], and it also offers something important to contemporary society. (Davey, 2007, pp. 136-137)

Shugyō stories are very prevalent in Japan. If readers are unfamiliar with this aspect of Japanese culture, they could think of a Hollywood movie, "Karate Kid." A western boy began to learn karate, and in the beginning he did not understand what his teacher, a karate master, said. However, later he realized what the master meant by his own experience, not by words. The shugyō story is also very common in the Japanese business world, as De Mente (2004) states:

One of the most important words in Japan's corporate world is *shugyo* [shugyō] . . . which is usually translated as "training," but *shugyo* has far deeper and broader implications than the English word implies. *Shugyo* in its full Japanese context is better translated as "apprenticeship" in the old, traditional sense of the word, when it referred to a young person being apprenticed to a journeyman or to a master for at least ten and sometimes as many as 20 years. . . . Like apprentices of old, new employees get little or no direct feedback regarding their work performance for many years. Managers and supervisors do not stand over newcomers, instructing them about what to do and how to do it. The employees are expected to figure that out for themselves. Things are not made easy for Japanese students or apprentice workers. The Japanese believe that the harder something is to learn and the more effort that is required to learn it, the more valuable the knowledge or the skill. Furthermore, the ultimate goal in Japanese training is perfection, which cannot be achieved, so theoretically there can be no end to training or to learning, and shugyo is seen as an ongoing process. This Japanese attitude about learning is in sharp contrast to that of most Westerners, again, particularly Americans, who, after reaching a certain level, tend to either rest on their laurels or take so much pride in their learning that they do not open themselves up to learning more. (p. 271)

In Danshukai, too, the *shugyō* story is always heard. When new members begin to attend Danshukai meetings, they can hardly understand what is happening in the meetings. Detailed explanations about why these meetings can help them are not given. It is suggested to new members that they continue to attend Danshukai meetings without thinking. By degrees, they naturally realize the positive effects of Danshukai attendance through their "body," not by means of their "brain." A slogan of Danshukai, "Lifelong abstinence," seems to be based not only on the necessity of permanent abstinence, but also on the nature of the lifelong training of shugyō.

The second type of stories heard in Danshukai is what can be called "*okagemasa de* story," which means "gratitude-for-all story." As Sasaki (2006) states:

Japanese makes frequent use of the expression *okagesama de*. . . . It is difficult to find appropriate

substitutions for these greetings in other languages. *Okagesama de* conveys the meaning of thanks when someone has offered assistance or kindness. *Kage* from *okagesama de* refers to a sense of protection or shelter that we receive from great Shintoist and Buddhist deities. When people use this expression to talk about marriage or how they are, it is an expression of thanks to God—in this case, to the many different gods and deities found in animism. . . . The expression *okagesama de* has its very foundation in animism. The sense of gratitude it incorporates, despite being difficult to translate into English, is a universal expression of greeting we find throughout the world. The basis of the expression includes a feeling of gratitude for all things in nature and of co-existence with nature. (p. 119)

There are probably no Danshukai meetings in which the phrase “*okagesama de*” is not heard. In Danshukai, this phrase is very often used to express members' indebtedness to other members and Danshukai groups. While “Higher Power” helps in AA, “group power” helps in Danshukai. We should not confuse this sense of indebtedness to “group power” with the psychological effects of group dynamics. This indebtedness is deeply based on the concept of *engi* (“interdependent origination”), which is a “key Buddhist thesis that holds that all things exist through the harmonious interaction of causes . . . and conditions” (Campbell & Noble, 1993, p. 342). Therefore, when Danshukai members express their gratitude to Danshukai with the “*okagesama de*” phrase, they usually refer neither to any particular persons nor any group processes.

The third factor that hinders the Way of Abstinence is that because the Way cannot be taught with words, it takes many months or years for new members to learn the nature of the Way. The teaching method of the Way is like “teaching without teaching” in Zen Buddhism (Hori, 1994, p. 13). New members have to observe the meetings and learn the secrets of the Way by themselves, while being under their seniors for a long time. As shown above, however, today's Danshukai members tend to come from more varied social and demographic backgrounds. Except for alcoholism, there are very few things in common among various types of Danshukai members. Naturally, it is difficult for these members with different attributes to learn a great deal from veterans and old-timers.

Can the Way of Abstinence help Danshukai despite these difficulties? My answer is yes. First, the Way of Abstinence fits Japanese culture. Remember the results of Christensen's (2010) study on AA in Japan: according to his observation, Japanese AA members seem to be unhappy during their abstinent lives. Christensen attributed this to a problem of their “stock cultural resource.” In fact, among the Japanese, redemptive stories are not given any status. When Christensen says, “In Japan, many AA members are not living in recovery but simply existing without alcohol. . . . They *ganbaru* (endure or persist) the absence of alcohol in their lives” (p. 59), from his point of view these Japanese could show no spiritual growth. However, if we suppose they were to take the Way of Abstinence, enduring can also include a spiritual element, as Rohlen and LeTendre state:

Gambaru (effort), *kuro* (suffering), and *gaman* (persistence) are words that are widely used in the spiritual or character building contexts ubiquitous to Japanese learning. These terms are used in a specifically physical sense—we must note just how physical learning actually is—and often when endurance or exhausting repetition are involved. Exertion is necessary for progress, and to progress in the form, to gain the experience it embodies, it is crucial that one persist and not give up; and that one experience the pain of such a struggle. The new monk, the new potter, or the aspiring third-year middle school student persist through painful repetitions because they fully believe that without experiencing these hardships or trials, nothing can be achieved. (pp. 374-375)

For members to go to meetings every day or every week to talk about their experience is a very important repetitive process in the Way of Abstinence. This is part of their *shugyō* (training and apprenticeship), and the Way to spiritual growth. As a result of the lack of redemptive stories in which sinful people reach the holy entity, Japanese alcoholics would have serious difficulties in enhancing self-esteem after admitting the wrongdoings committed during intoxication. However, the Way of Abstinence will help them to grow their self-esteem by providing them with a chance to take *shugyō* for their spiritual growth.

To conclude, let me point out that this issue is relevant not only to Danshukai, but also to different forms of spiritualism in different cultures and to the question of how to transmit seemingly scientific knowledge from one culture to another. The Japanese professionals supporting alcoholics might have to understand that some rehabilitation programs are so deeply embedded in one culture that they cannot be transmitted to people with different cultures. What Enomiya-Lassalle (1973) stated 40 years ago is not yet obsolete:

Ninety years ago Japan began to assimilate European culture. Today practically ninety per cent of the teaching at Japanese universities is bound up with the culture of Europe and America. The study of Japanese culture is almost entirely neglected. Students swallow whole chunks of Western culture, but they are unable to digest spiritually what has been offered them. . . . Studies very often do not become a means for cultural enrichment. The Japanese have accepted only the material side of Western culture and even that imperfectly. Because they lack the spiritual culture (*Geisteskultur*) on which Western material culture is built, the little they have adopted of that spiritual culture is confined to a materialistic sceptical philosophy which will, in the long run, prove fatal to the development of traditional Japanese culture, for it is not conducive to a positive spiritual reconstruction of culture. For this reason Japanese spiritual life is at present undergoing a severe crisis. (pp. 65-66)

Danshukai's crisis might be related to this crisis of Japanese spiritual life. Any psychiatry or psychotherapeutic theory is not culturally neutral. The Way of Abstinence offers a profound suggestion to a long-standing issue on the relationship between culture and the science of mental health.

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Footnotes

1. Data on the number of members before fiscal 1998 were not available in their newsletter. However, a Zendanren newsletter article in 1990 said that “the number has stopped growing at around 10,000 for these four or five years” (Zendanren, 1990b) and so we can suppose “around 10,000” was the peak of the number of their members. On the other hand, two issues of their newsletter included an announcement that their membership was around 50,000 (Geshi, 1993; Zendanren, 1990c). This number seems to be an exaggerated one including the members' families.
2. The fact that the leader, Mr. Horio Kamihorinouchi, was neither an alcoholic nor a professional is not documented as far as I know. I learned it from a current leader of Danshu-tomo-no-kai in 2008. While Mr. Kamihorinouchi was employed by Japan Temperance Union, he was assigned to lead a support group for alcoholics. After the support group grew, he decided to leave Japan Temperance Union with some members of the support group. After his demise, Danshu-tomo-no-kai has been led by alcoholics.

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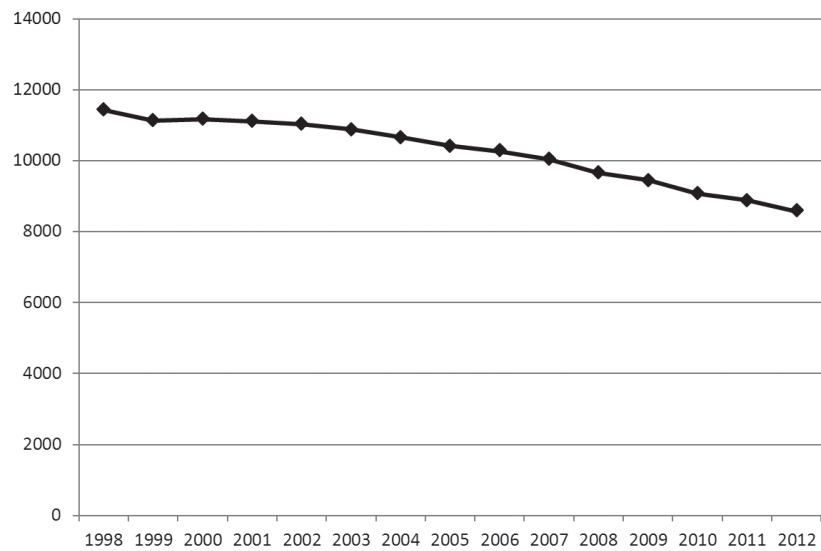
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Figure 1

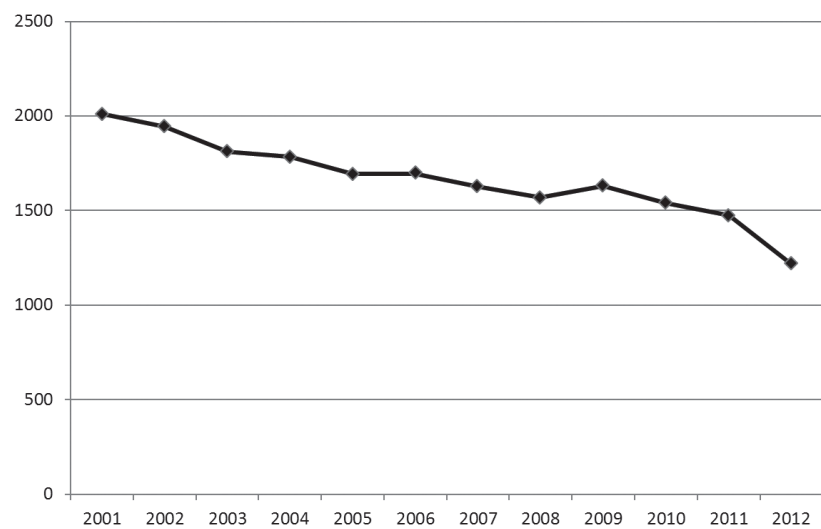
Decreasing number of members of Danshukai



Data sources: Zendanren (2006, 2011a, 2012b)

Figure 2

Decreasing number of newcomers



Data sources: Zendanren (2011a, 2012b)