

The Germination of the ‘Ethic of Work Spirituality’ in Japan in Early Modern Times: ‘Work’ and ‘Character Building’ in the Thought of Shosan Suzuki¹

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Abstract

During the three decades between 1950 and 1980, Japan achieved miraculous economic growth. This phenomenon has fascinated social scientists and Japanologists, and they have explored in great detail the economic, social, educational, and historical background to this remarkable development. This paper contributes to that discussion by focusing on the meaning of ‘work,’ and attempts to set it in the context of religion or spirituality. It identifies the key factor behind Japan’s ‘economic miracle’ as the ‘ethic of work spirituality,’ a term borrowed from Kazuo Inamori, the founder of Kyocera. It argues that this ethic was formed over a long period of Japanese history, and that its roots can be traced back to the Edo period (1603-1868) and, in particular, to Shosan Suzuki (鈴木正三), a former *samurai* warrior and Zen monk who preached a vocational ethic derived from Buddhism.

Keywords: vocational ethics, Shosan Suzuki, work, Buddhism, enlightenment, character building

Introduction

For Japan, the 1970s were the last of three decades of rapid economic growth termed the “Japanese economic miracle” in the West. During this time the nation rose from the ashes of defeat in war to

become the world’s second largest economy, ushering in an era of economic stability for Japan that endured until bursting of the bubble economy in the early ‘90s.

As the ‘70s drew to a close, Ezra Vogel, the eminent American sociologist, published *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*. This widely read book (the Japanese translation of which sold 700,000 copies) argued Japan’s economic success story could not have happened without the educational progress made by its populace, imbued as it was with a zest for learning and a habit of reading (Vogel 1979).

Kazuo Inamori, the founder of Kyocera and one who contributed much to the post-war ascent of the Japanese economy, on the other hand, demonstrated in his writings that the attitude of the Japanese people towards work, and their approach to it in terms of mental attitude and character building, are the keys to deciphering the secret code behind their success story. For Inamori, diligent work and character building cannot be separated; “loving our work” and “striving to be the best” are central to learning the meaning of life, refining our “minds” and developing our “character.”² Work “plays a significant role in refining one’s soul and honing one’s character” and “people grow through their work” (Inamori 2010: 74-76).

Japan’s successful economic recovery, fueled by the diligence of her people, was clearly not an overnight story, since it combined the science and technology adopted from the West from the late 19th

¹ This paper was originally prepared as a presentation to the Academic Exchange Conference on “Morality and the Economy” involving Reitaku University and University of Malaysia at Sarawak on December 5, 2016, and has subsequently been extensively revised. It may be helpful to note that I analyzed the religious background to Shosan’s vocational ethics in “Dai Ni Sho: Kinsei Nihon no Keizai-rinri – Edoki no Shokugyo-rinri to sono Shukyotekigenryu,” [“Chapter 2: Economic Ethics in Modern Japan: Vocational Ethics in the Edo Period and their Religious Roots”], in Osamu Nakayama and Vo Van Sen (eds.), *Gendai niokeru Keizai to Dotoku, [Economics and Morality in the Present Times]*, Ho Chi Minh City: Social Sciences Press, 2014, pp. 56-109 (in Japanese and Vietnamese). The present paper can therefore be considered as an extension of this study.

² He does, however, lament that Japanese people today have lost the spirit of diligence they attained before and during the period of rapid economic growth. In the past, people in Japan found “profound meaning and value” in work and knew that “diligent effort gave value and meaning to their lives” (Inamori 2010: 76).

century on with an ethos of diligence nurtured over a long period in Japan. Indeed, Inamori cited Sontoku Ninomiya, a 19th century agricultural reformer (2010: xvi) and Baigan Ishida, an 18th century vocational ethicist and educator, as important figures in the development of this ethos of diligence (2010: 81-82). Inamori paid tribute to the "immeasurable" influence of Ishida's philosophy on his life, not least in giving him the courage to become a businessman at the outset of his career as an entrepreneur (Yoshida 2010: 137, 141). Where, though, did such an ethos of diligence originate? To what period in the history of Japan does it date?

Before setting out to uncover the roots of this ethos, we need to define it clearly. We can begin by introducing the concept of the 'ethic of work spirituality,' based on Inamori's insights into the "spiritual aspect of work" (Inamori 2010: 76) where work functions to refine "one's soul" and hone "one's character," giving people pleasure and a sense of something to live for. The 'ethic of work spirituality' can therefore be defined as 'a work ethic based both on a sense of purpose in life in which people find intrinsic joy and value in the work they are engaged in, and on a belief that they can develop their moral character through work.' This definition allows us to reformulate our questions as follows. Where does the 'ethic of work spirituality' come from? To what period in the history of Japan does it date?

This study will seek to answer these questions by tracing the roots of the 'ethic of work spirituality' back through the history of Japan to the Edo period (1603-1868). We can identify three thinker-practitioners who preached "vocational ethics": Shosan Suzuki (1579-1655), Baigan Ishida (1685-1744) and Sontoku Ninomiya (1787-1856). We will begin our historical pilgrimage at the infant shrine of the 'spirit of work ethics,' and examine the thought of the earliest exponent of vocational ethics, Shosan Suzuki.

1. Literature Review

Hajime Nakamura, the first scholar to take Shosan Suzuki as a subject for serious study, set Shosan's writings alongside Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (*PESC*).

Nakamura argued that the roots of the development of modernity in Japan lay in the modernization of 17th century feudal Japan, and that this did not rely on a Christian ethic. Rather, Nakamura (1949: 118) emphasized the Buddhism-based vocational ethics taught by Shosan, noting, in particular, that "Shosan's view of labor was equally modern" when viewed in relation to the ascription of moral significance labored by Puritans who followed in the footsteps of Protestant theologian, John Calvin. In the first part of his paper "The Religious Reformer Spirit of Shosan Suzuki," Nakamura argued that Shosan's status as a reformer is comparable to that of Calvin. Noting how Shosan "seeks to realize Buddhist ascetic practice in the midst of secular life," Nakamura highlighted the similarity of this asceticism to that described in Weber's *PESC*, but went on to state that Shosan's core achievement was to establish a distinctively Buddhist vocational ethics in which "any vocation is Buddhist practice, and all people can become Buddhas through it" (Nakamura 1949: 94); this meant that "Shosan Suzuki is perhaps the first thinker and practitioner" in the history of Japanese Buddhism to develop thoughts of such scope about vocational ethics (Nakamura 1998: 93). Referring to Shosan's concept of agriculture as a 'calling' bestowed by Heaven, and of engagement in commerce as an official appointment by the Lord of Heaven to provide the whole country its freedom, Nakamura (1946: 157) wrote: "If we substitute 'God' for 'heaven' and 'the way of heaven' and 'God's salvation' for 'freedom,' we can find, almost as it is, the capitalist ethic (spirit) of early modernity in the West, derived from Calvinism."

Insightful as this comparison between the Western and Eastern concepts of the absolute being may be, George Elison (1974: 228-9) criticized Nakamura for seeing Shosan's vocational ethics as identical to those Calvinist ones described in *PESC*, arguing that "Shosan does not speak of business as a 'calling' or a 'vocation' from God. His Heaven's Way is simply the natural order..."³

However, in his treatment of Buddhist religious ethics in Asia, Hiromichi Serikawa, who was greatly influenced by Hajime Nakamura, argued that "the great exponent of Zen professional ethics as the 'spirit of capitalism' in Japan is Shosan Suzuki," describing

Shosan's Buddhist work ethic as "comparable in magnitude" to the ethics of ascetic Protestantism, which gave rise to the capitalist spirit of the modern West (Serikawa 1987: 263, 286), and maintaining that "We find the greatest of Buddhist economic ethics with modernity in this ethical philosophy of Shosan Suzuki" (Serikawa 1994: 283).

Until the 1970s, Shosan was largely unknown to the general reader in Japan. However, the publication of Shichihei Yamamoto's *The Spirit of Japanese Capitalism: Why Work Hard* in 1979 changed this,⁴ drawing considerable attention both within and outside Japan to Shosan and his vocational ethics, and his popularity has not diminished in the 21st century. Yamamoto (1979: 142-211) cited Shosan and Baigan Ishida as the two thinkers who helped shape modern Japan and attempted to trace the genealogy of their ideas. Yamamoto (1979: 166) summed up Shosan's philosophy in terms similar to those used by Nakamura: "Worldly business is a religious practice, and if you do it with single-minded devotion, you will attain Buddhahood."

Masahiko Miura (2013: 47), though, criticized Nakamura and Yamamoto on two grounds. First, what Max Weber described in the *PESC* as the "spirit of capitalism" was not the ethical characteristics of hard work or thrift, but a spiritual climate, or ethos, whose ethical characteristics many people of that era shared, whereas in Shosan's case, the ethos had not yet been formed. Secondly, he denied there was any connection between Shosan and Baigan Ishida on the grounds that no evidence existed that Shosan's ideas were passed on to Baigan.

Mitsuo Kamiya (2001: 256-257) also maintained that there is "a decisively different aspect" to Shosan's view of work or labor as compared to the Protestant one, since while Shosan's view is one of "work for people's own purpose," i.e. devoting oneself to one's vocation is itself a form of Buddha's work, Calvinists "worked for the glory of God, and there was only one means of living a life pleasing to God: the fulfilment of inner-worldly ascetic duties arising from each person's position in life, and this was nothing less than a God-given 'calling'."

Taking into account the work of Nakamura, Serikawa, and Yamamoto on the spirit of capitalism in Japan, but also attending to the criticisms of Miura, Elison and Kamiya where pertinent, this study will focus on the formative period of the 'ethic of work spirituality' and analyze Shosan's work ethics so as to provide a fuller picture of it. Before exploring the period in which the 'ethic of work spirituality' germinated, however, its antecedents must be noted. The next section will therefore trace chronologically the genealogy of work ethics in relation to Japanese Buddhism, particularly the Tendai and Zen Buddhist schools in the 13th and 14th centuries.

2. Historical Overview: The Emergence of the 'Ethic of Work Spirituality' in Japanese Buddhism

The Kamakura period in medieval Japan (1185-1333) witnessed the flowering of Buddhism in the country, with the appearance of outstanding religious figures and the birth of a succession of sects that still flourish in today's Japan, including the Pure Land sect of Buddhism founded by Honen and Shinran, the Zen school of Buddhism founded by Eisai and Dogen, and the Nichiren school founded by Nichiren. The major achievement of this period was to make "Buddhism more for the Japanese people" (Earhart 2004: 130).

These uniquely Japanese Buddhist beliefs and practices owe much to the Buddhist training regime founded by Saicho on Mount Hiei. He, together with Kukai and his Shingon school, provided the leadership for Heian Buddhism. All the founders of the new Buddhism of the Kamakura period devoted themselves to Buddhist practices at Mt. Hiei's Enryaku-ji Temple. But how and why did these founders come to teach such a diverse range of Buddhism at the same Buddhist center?

The answer lies, it seems, in the intentions of Saicho, who envisaged the Enryaku-ji Temple on Mt. Hiei as a place to practice not just Tendai Buddhism, but also Esoteric Buddhism, Zen, and Ritsu (theory of the precepts), so acting as a center for the "four

³ Quoted in (King 1986: 253). Nakamura did not reply to Elison's criticism.

⁴ The book went through a series of editions and was reprinted in 1984 by Kobunsha Bunko, in 1995 by PHP Bunko, and in 1997 by Bungei Shunju's *Yamamoto Shichihei Library, Volume 9*. The book was also re-published by Bijinesusha in 2006 and later translated into English and Chinese.

schools of learning" (Umehara 2005: 216-218). I will argue here that there is a germ of economic ethics to be found in the teachings and traditions of the Tendai school of Buddhism and also in the life of the Zendo (Zen monastery).

(1) The Germination of Vocational Ethics in Tendai

According to Michinori Ogata (1958: 110-111), the medieval oral instruction tradition of Buddhist teachings, which was critical of the conventional Tendai school of Buddhism, had an economic aspect and provided clear statements about vocational ethics, seen especially in the *Shuyosho* and other writings from the Muromachi period (1336-1573). From the sun and moonlight to mountains, rivers, plants and trees, natural objects have the property of being used by people. Fire warms us, water quenches our thirst, and flowers delight our eyes. It is often stated that "the use of natural things is the compassion of the Buddha." Natural things do not have compassion, but like people who have compassion, they have the capacity to act altruistically, and as a result, they attain Buddhahood. Thus, goods become an auxiliary means by which we humans can benefit others.

The *Shuyosho* also states, "The work of a country bumpkin. The work of blacksmith. The work of carpenters. Everything is the teachings of the wisdom of enlightenment which is inherent in all sentient beings. Therefore, people's vocations are Buddhist teachings." Thus a person's occupation, whether as farmer or craftsman, is a gate to learning Buddhism; and devoting oneself to one's profession is the path to enlightenment, since it is a means of practicing one's faith.

(2) The Emergence of Vocational Ethics in Zen Buddhism

The Zendo system was founded by the Zen Master, Baizhang Huaihai (720-81), of the Tang dynasty in China, who defined the first principle of life in a Zendo thus: "If you don't work one day, you should not eat one day." According to Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (1987: 21-89), the six important elements that

make up the life of a Zendo include work, which means in this context physical labor.⁵

The fact that physical labor occupies a pivotal place in the life of the Zendo is noteworthy. In fact, the Zen master liked to work on the farm and in the forest. On his own initiative, he "took up the plow, swung the axe, carried water again, and pulled the wheel." Physical work in the Zendo was not labor for labor's sake, but rather a practice that involved experiencing the religious meaning of labor.

Another principle of action that governs Zendo life is the rationalization of consumption. This means that one should strive to eliminate waste by consuming everything completely and so save money. Since vegetables and rice are carelessly thrown away, economy is especially emphasized in cooking.

Zendo life, in which the value of labor and productive activities was affirmed, respected and encouraged, and where consumption was rationalized in conjunction with frugality, was therefore an extremely ascetic way of living outside the secular world. However, it was not until early modern Japanese Zen Buddhism that this external asceticism was introduced into the secular world (internal asceticism) and took on the form of a type of work ethic.

Traditionally, Japanese Buddhists had followed the royal road of Buddhist practice, either by secluding themselves in the mountains and forests and indulging in Zen meditation, or by reciting the *Nembutsu* sutras. In addition, there had been a tendency to view Buddhist thought and practice, which preached detachment from materialistic desires, as incompatible with profit-making activities. However, such ideas were overturned in the early Edo period with the appearance of Shosan Suzuki.

3. Shosan Suzuki and the 'Ethic of Work Spirituality'

As a monk of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, Shosan showed his faith in Amitabha Buddha by the practice of invoking the Buddha in the usual fashion.

⁵ The six components are: (1) Nisshu - the first time a person who aspires to become a Zen monk becomes a member of a Zen monastery; (2) Mendicant - the spirit of selflessness gained by those who beg for alms; (3) Selflessness - the spirit of selflessness acquired by the mendicant; (4) Duties - physical labor (to serve as the most respected cook in Zendo life, and to transfer the merits of that service to the general treasury of all wisdom); (5) Prayers and repayment of favors- Prayers and repayment of favors stemming from an awareness of the weight of karmic obstacles accumulated through the three types of karma: body, mouth, and mind; and (6) The practice of zazen in Zendo - the practice of zazen and the practice of Buddhahood.

As a former samurai, however, the other outstanding feature of his religious thought was a full-hearted dedication to a secular vocation within the hierarchy of *Shi-No-Ko-Sho* (samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants) as part of the practice of Buddhism (Nakamura 1998: 93). In this way, Shosan brought the “outer-worldly asceticism” of monks who practiced zazen in the Zendo into the secular world of modern Tokugawa Japan. In a further development, Shosan not only encouraged economic profit-making activities but also preached a life of “inner-worldly asceticism” through which one could attempt to achieve enlightenment as well as to perfect one’s moral character.

(1) The origin of the ‘Ethic of Work Spirituality’

Three factors in Shosan’s religious thought and practice in particular would seem to have given rise to the ‘ethic of work spirituality’: the first was applying religious practice to daily secular work; the second was achieving a religious goal, i.e., enlightenment, through daily work; and the third involved achieving a moral goal through character building in daily work.

The first of these, the application of religious practice to daily work is evident in *Banmin Tokuyo* (万民徳用 : *A Meritorious Way of Life for All*), Shosan’s 1632 work on vocational ethics for samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants. The book’s question and answer format involves the author responding to queries from a young person from each of the four classes. Shosan argues that diligence and a single-minded dedication to one’s daily work is part of the practice of Buddhism.

Shosan’s religious thought and practice defined and fixed itself in the twelve years between his accepting the tonsure and leaving the secular world in 1620, and his building of the Onshin-ji Temple and completing the *Banmin Tokuyo* in 1632. While engaged in writing this book, Shosan’s style of Buddhist practice had changed; he moved away from the confinement of a hermitage deep in the mountains to a life in the city where he would engage in a secular occupation (Kamiya 2001: 187) and, as a result, his “outer-world asceticism” shifted to an “inner-world asceticism” during this period.

In his *Shokunin Nichiyo* (職人日用 : *For the Daily Use of the Artisans*), Shosan (Suzuki 1962: 70) describes a vocation, that is, some form of economic activity, in the following terms:

Any and every occupation is Buddha-practice. It is on the basis of our actual work that enlightenment is to be attained. Therefore, no work can be anything other than Buddhist practice.

The argument here is that any work in which one engages can be Buddhist practice if one considers it as a means of achieving enlightenment, and so is the equivalent of reading Buddhist sutras, practicing zazen, invoking Amida Buddha through chanting sacred phrases, or going on a pilgrimage to holy places. Since all work is seen as Buddhist practice, the full range of ascetic Buddhist activities, once the preserve of those confined to monasteries or hermitages deep in the mountains, is now available to anyone who engages in daily, secular work, whether it be “blacksmithing or carpentry,” public service or farming. Enlightenment is accessible even to lay persons in their daily occupations if they are hardworking.

The second factor contributing to the formation of the ‘ethic’ is the fact that the goal of Buddhism is to obtain enlightenment. To understand the process of becoming enlightened, we need to delve into Shosan’s worldview of the subject of ‘work.’ Shosan describes his universe as one based on the Tendai School’s philosophy of *hongaku*; this derives its fundamental tenet from the *Lotus Sutra*, which expounds the belief that a Buddhist nature dwells in all beings and that every person therefore has the potential to attain enlightenment (Kato 2010: 49-50). According to Shosan, the samurai govern society, blacksmiths create tools, farmers produce food, physicians treat patients to cure sickness, and merchants create freedom through business, and that in each of these cases individuals have been given the “Buddha essence and are imbued with the Buddha nature.” Thus, when people engage in any of the “hundred million” tasks involving “the activity of one Buddha for the benefit of the world,” they are working on

behalf of the one Buddha.

This idea of Shosan's is called "*Hongaku Shinnyo no Ichifutsu*" (Suzuki 1962: 70). It implies that all people and other living things are imbued with the wisdom of enlightenment as they are, that the whole world is the body of one Buddha, and that all the Buddha, phenomena, people, their occupations and work are manifestations of this one Buddha in individual selves. The status of samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants is thereby transformed into an occupation, creating an opportunity to awaken in them the inherent nature of Buddha and to encourage them to work hard at their own professions in the awareness of this. This is the Buddhist theory of the social division of labor, through which every person engages in an occupation and takes part in collective action, thereby enriching society.

The third factor in the creation of the 'ethic' is the belief that through work one can achieve the moral goal of building one's character. Shosan's approach to this starts with the realization of the true self, i.e. "one's true Buddha nature," that can manifest itself once one understands the secret that people's consciousness, which creates phenomena, is provisional and temporary (Suzuki 1962: 71). He considered the idea of striving to do so as the path to the perfection of one's character.

In Shosan's *Bushi Nichiyo* (武士日用: *For the Daily Use of the Samurai*), "a samurai asked, 'though they say Buddha Dharma (Buddha's law) and world dharma (law in secular society) are like two wheels of a vehicle,' why do they compare them to two wheels of a vehicle?" In reply, Shosan said: "These dharmas are not two but one in a social domain. For both the Buddha Dharma and world dharma conform to truth and are nothing other than acting morally and putting the way of righteousness into practice here and now" (Suzuki 1962: 64). In the early Edo period, Confucian ethics (and especially their Neo-Confucian variant) began to provide the basis of a social order with the samurai at the top as the ruling class; however, Shosan also wished to introduce Buddhism as the other wheel of the vehicle, as it were.⁶

In *Bushi Nichiyo* and *Akihito Nichiyo* (商人日用:

For the Daily Use of the Merchants), Shosan emphasized the importance of moral character developed by the virtue of 'honesty,' taking 'honesty' to be the central virtue in human morality, integrating all the other virtues. He advised that "one should devote oneself and one's life to the way of Heaven and whole-heartedly study the path of honesty." If people develop the virtue of honesty, he believed, they can enjoy the "blessings of Heaven," be protected by "the Buddha and kami, the Shinto divinities," and avoid "calamity." Their "good fortune" would also naturally increase, everyone would "love and respect" them, and all their expectations would soon be fulfilled (Suzuki 1962: 71).

Having identified the origin of the 'ethic of work spirituality' in Shosan's religious thought and practice, we can now examine how he applied his vocational ethics to the circumstances of each of the main social classes. Shosan outlined his views on the relationship between work and character building in a series of writings; *Bushi Nichiyo* (武士日用: *A Meritorious Way of Life for Samurai*), *Nonin Nichiyo* (農人日用: *A Meritorious Way of Life for Farmers*), *Shokunin Nichiyo* (職人日用: *A Meritorious Way of Life for Artisans*) and *Akihito Nichiyo* (商人日用: *A Meritorious Way of Life for Merchants*). Together these constitute the *Shimin* (四民: *Four Peoples*) in *Banmin Tokuyo* (万民徳用: *A Meritorious Way of Life for All*).

(2) Work and Character Building for the Samurai

Shosan elevated 'honesty' as a very important virtue for the samurai, writing, for example, that "Both Buddhism and law based on Confucian ethics commonly teach us that one should correct the mistakes that one has made by reason and live an honest life with moral codes." As noted above, here we have a moral code in which the virtue of 'honesty' plays a central role.

Shosan uses the term 'honesty' in two senses. The first is the "honesty of the world," signifying the ordinary 'honesty' that was accepted and practiced by people in the Edo period, including being obedient to the just and righteous, upholding the Confucian bonds of the five human relationships: "(1) ruler and

⁶ One reason Shosan wanted to accord Buddhism an important social role was his desire to renovate and revitalize it, because in the Edo period, through the intervention of the government, it found its role reduced to one of simply suppressing Christianity, keeping demographic records and conducting funerals. It had lost the active duty of guiding people to enlightenment.

subject, (2) parents and children, (3) husband and wife, (4) elder and younger and (5) friend and friend" (Earhart 2004: 182) and being selfless.

The second meaning of 'honesty' that he espouses is a Buddhist one, i.e., "true honesty." This is developed by people who obediently follow their inner Buddha nature, which is one of the other selves of the "one Buddha" and which can only be developed by those who have achieved the profound insight that every phenomenon in the world is ephemeral and transient (Suzuki 1962: 64).

For Shosan, then, Buddhist practice means emancipating oneself from all worldly passions and renouncing attachment to the self. When a young samurai asked him "what is necessary in undertaking the way of the true honesty," Shosan answered: "Though there are infinite varieties of ways in Buddhist practice, most importantly, there is no other way than renouncing a desire to cling to oneself. The source of suffering is the self, to be thinking only of the self." He teaches here that one must understand that the world is transient and ephemeral, so that nothing stays the same. Unless one comprehends this profound, secret truth, one cannot be a true samurai in such a world, since one will always be concerned only with oneself, one's happiness and pleasure, prestige and promotion in samurai society, and fear of pain and death (Suzuki 1962: 66).

(3) Work and Character Building for Farmers

With respect to this social class, we should note that in the early Edo period, farm work was such an extremely demanding job that there was no time for leisure. Farm work was all encompassing, and farmers considered their existence as "a miserable livelihood," and felt that they were spending their lives "in vain." One young farmer confessed to Shosan that "it is distressing that suffering will be our lot in our future existences." He asked Shosan how to attain Buddhahood. Shosan replied that "Farming is Buddhist practice. When you are not aware of this, it could be a menial occupation, but when you have deep, firm faith, then it could be a job for a bodhisattva" (Suzuki 1962: 68-69). A bodhisattva is anyone motivated by compassion and benevolence with a *bodhicitta*, meaning an "enlightenment-mind,"

one that strives toward enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, including people. Here Shosan implies that farming is a noble occupation rather than a low, mean one, and that through it one can accumulate merit, enhancing one's character with a compassionate attitude towards one's fellow human beings as well as other living things.

Shosan (Suzuki 1962: 69) also expressed his view that farming was a "calling" from Heaven for the farmer in the following terms:

For you to have been born as farmers is to have received from Heaven an official appointment to be nurturer of the world.

Shosan thinks of farming as "a public service in the righteous way of Heaven," and was clearly talking here about the lot of a farmer as something bestowed by Heaven, not God (the grounds on which Elison criticized Nakamura). Therefore he tells the young farmer that if he gave "offerings of the crops to Buddha and Shinto deities" as a thanksgiving, if he made "a great vow to sustain the life of all people and other beings including insects, if he recited "*nembutsu*: 'I put my faith in Amida Buddha' with every stroke of the mattock," then "the farm ground would become purified, producing purified crops which become a medicine" for those who consumed them, allowing them "to renounce worldly desires." Shosan maintained that the farmer is "bestowed with merit and natural holiness" even if he is not aware of it, and that the young farmer would be protected by the Heaven if he followed Shosan's directions when engaging in his farm work. Thus, selfless dedication to agriculture through Buddhist practice is the essential ingredient of the 'ethic of work spirituality' for the farmer (Suzuki 1962: 69).

(4) Work and Character Building for Artisans

The description of the work ethic for artisans in the *Banmin Tokuyo* is the briefest of those devoted to the four classes, possibly because Shosan wrote it just for the sake of completeness, or because it may have been impossible to cover the sheer number of different jobs involved here; the artisan class encompassed those in a wide variety of occupations,

including craftsmen (such as smiths, potters, sword makers), physicians, carpenters, writers, artists such as Noh dancers, and those engaged in miscellaneous jobs requiring higher skills (King 1986: 244).

Shosan begins his treatment of the subject by restating the general principles already noted above in the section on the origin of the 'ethic of work spirituality,' namely that every job serves the needs of the world, and that all work, whatever one's vocation, if done with the motivation of attaining enlightenment, will be Buddhist practice. Since everyone can possess the Buddha essence, work is done by another self of the one Buddha who is omnipresent.

As elsewhere, then, character building by way of Buddhist practice through work plays a central role in the 'ethic of work spirituality' for artisans.

(5) Work and Character Building for Merchants

According to Shosan, merchants should master the "mental attitude" needed to make "profit" through Buddhist practice. They should devote themselves and their lives to "the way of Heaven" and should single-mindedly "study the path of honesty." In this fashion Shosan develops a vocational ethics that affirms the merchants' profit-making activities and places 'honesty' at the center of their economic activities. As with the samurai, honesty is the virtue most necessary for the merchant to nurture in order to build moral character.

Shosan compares the results of honest and dishonest behavior by merchants. Honest ones will be blessed with, and protected by the mercy of the Buddha and the Shinto divinities. They will avoid calamities, experience happiness, be loved by all people, and all their wishes will be fulfilled. Dishonest merchants, by contrast, being "self-centered," "competing against and exceeding other people," and "seeking one's self-interest only," would incur "divine punishment," invite "calamities," be hated by many people, and would "never be loved or respected by others." So Shosan encourages merchants to "abandon all attachments and put away greed," so that "Heaven will protect" them and the "kami, Shinto divinities will favor [them] with a prosperous life," so that they will "excel in making

profits" (Suzuki 1962: 71).

But according to Shosan, business success and accumulated wealth does not mean that merchants should become over-confident and proud, nor should they be attached to wealth, using it simply for the indulgence of pleasure. Believing that every phenomenon is transient and ephemeral, Shosan warns merchants not to conduct their business with attachment to self and worldly affairs. He also admonishes them not to waste the fruits of their toil on selfish purposes, nor to indulge in the pleasures of the senses because, he says, present success is for the most part due to one's past karma, while the future consequences of immoral behavior will be disastrous. So he reiterates that merchants should not be preoccupied with chasing a life of hedonistic pleasure, but should devote themselves entirely to business with complete reliance on the way of Heaven, renouncing selfishness and attachment to profit in favor of acting "for the sake of the land and for the people" (Suzuki 1962: 71-72). In this way merchants will be protected by Buddha and the Shinto deities, thus increasing their profits.

4. The Protestant Ethic and Shosan's 'Ethic of Work Spirituality'

As noted above, there has been a tendency to link Shosan's view of vocational ethics with the Calvinistic view on the matter; both Nakamura and Yamamoto unequivocally see Shosan's views of calling and hard work in secular world as identical to Calvinistic ones.

When discussing the germination of the 'ethic,' we noted that Shosan's idea of work was given by Heaven, not by God (the grounds on which Elison criticized Nakamura). Nakamura and Yamamoto were also criticized over whether Shosan's teachings gave rise to a social movement and were shared by a majority of the people of his time. It is clear that Shosan's thinking on vocational ethics did not spread sufficiently to create an ethos in which the ethic of work could flourish, since he attracted only a small group of disciples during his life, despite his unremitting and ardent preaching to promulgate his teachings, mainly in the Kansai and Tokai areas.

After he passed away on June 25, 1655, at the age of 77, only 44 disciples attended his funeral (Suzuki 1962: 13).

But less than half a century after his death, an individual who had not been his student did begin to advocate a vocational ethics similar to his 'ethic of work spirituality.' Baigan Ishida, who established the Shingaku movement that would spread throughout Japan, creating an ethos of diligence, is the key figure here (Bellah 1957). There is, unfortunately, no evidence to show that Baigan read Shosan's books. It is known that Toan Teshima, one of Baigan's students, did write a preface to Shosan's *Moanjo* (Yamamoto 1979: 113-114; Takenaka 1998: 699; Miura 2013: 47), but *Moanjo* does not discuss the 'ethic of work spirituality' and there is no evidence to link *Banmin Tokuyo*, which fully discusses the 'ethic,' with the thinking of Baigan Ishida or with the Shingaku movement.

5. Conclusion

Our pilgrimage to locate the roots of the 'ethic of work spirituality' nears its end. We have seen that the origin of the 'ethic' we defined on the basis of the modern insights of Kazuo Inamori can be traced to the thought, teaching, and practice of the Zen monk, Shosan Suzuki, who preached the Amida faith, invoking Amida Buddha's name, in the early Edo period. Shosan viewed all members of the four classes, samurai, peasants, artisans or merchants, as equal in terms of their role as other selves of the one Buddha. In other words, he did not deal with people based on their social status but rather on their vocational or occupational abilities that allowed them to contribute to society at large.

Most importantly for our purposes here, though, is that the fact that Shosan preached that when people exert their ability to the fullest in any walk of life, they need to consider their work as a means of building their character based on Buddhist practice, and as a way of seeking the goal of enlightenment by trying to follow the Buddha nature inherent in their character. He also preached that people should think of work as a means, given by Heaven, to improve their character, selflessly working for the sake of the

land and people. Work in the secular world can thus function as Buddhist practice in the same way as reading the sutras, undergoing ascetic practices, or invoking Amida Buddha's name many times in a hermitage or monastery deep in the mountains.

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