

**AN INITIAL VIEW OF SELF-HELP GROUPS FOR
JAPANESE ALCOHOLICS: DANSHUKAI IN ITS
HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS***

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ABSTRACT

Danshukai is Japan's largest self-help/mutual-aid group for alcoholics, with approximately 10,000 members nationwide. This article aims to examine Danshukai in the Tokyo area. While leaders of Danshukai in the 1950s were inspired by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), it was AA's general structure and not its therapeutic content that was translated into the Japanese context. For therapeutic content Danshukai turned to existing cultural understandings within Japanese society, and made the "meeting" pivotal to recovery. In Danshukai, alcoholics manage their dependence by changing their social routines by "belonging" to Danshukai and attending meetings, paying membership fees, and sharing stories about the damaging effects of alcohol among members. Recovery is not an individual journey, but is inclusive of the family in the therapeutic process. Danshukai also provides service to help alcoholics in need who are outside their membership. At the individual level, service is more local, being linked to supporting the family through recovery.

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INTRODUCTION

In Japan there are two main self-help groups for the treatment of its 0.8 million people with alcohol dependence syndrome (Higuchi, Matsushita, Maesato, & Osaki, 2007). One is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which was first introduced from the United States in the 1950s and then later revived in 1975 (AAJSO, 1995). The other is Danshukai, which was established in 1953 as Danshu-tomo-no-kai (AA Nihonshibu Danshu-tomo-no-kai, 1953), and later became known by its present name. Danshukai has been described as “Japan’s indigenous AA” (Smith, 1988). With 9,659 members (Zendanren, 2008a), it currently has almost double the members of Japanese AA (AAJSO, 2007). While both organizations share some similarities—for example, both groups hold meetings where individual participants share their stories about their problems with alcohol—there are many differences between AA and Danshukai (Enomoto, 1985; Miyasato, Ushimi, & Sano, 1991; Muraoka, 1994; Nakamura, 1982; Nakata, 2005; Smith, 1998). These differences include how the organizations are structured, how their meetings are conducted, and how therapy is believed to work. This article aims to examine the processes and structure of Danshukai, taking into account a range of socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts within Japanese society. By understanding these contexts, it is possible to come to a nuanced understanding of the different ways in which self-help groups provide mutual/self-help in different cultural contexts.

Literature on Danshukai is scarce, with much of it available in Japanese only. While there are numerous papers that take a non-academic approach and are used for educational purposes, only a few articles describe quantitative and qualitative research on Danshukai or Danshukai-related issues. These include: organizational studies of Danshukai (Matsushita, 1997; Nakamura, Tono, & Shimoda, 1975); case studies of the development of Danshukai in a community (Hirose, Kato, & Suda, 1988; Hirose, Kurokawa, & Kato, 1986); a survey of Danshukai (Ōmori & Imazu, 1979); a survey on voluntary counseling services by Danshukai members in Osaka (Tsujimoto, 1983); a report on the attendance of Danshukai meetings and abstinence (Doi, Yoshida, & Etō, 1979); qualitative research on alcoholics’ recovery processes, experiences, and life stories in Danshukai (Doi, 1987; Fukuda, 2003; Ichimaru, 1987, 1988; Inoue, Ino, Ōgoshi, Okumiya, Hanai, Kangokenkyū-gurūpu, et al., 1977; Okada, 2006; Sakai, Ochi, & Takao, 2006; Shimimitsu, 2007; Shinimitsu, 2002); quantitative research on recovery through Danshukai (Shimizu, 1978; Sugita, Suzuki, Suzuki, Funakoshi, Ohara, Hattori, et al., 1985; Sugiyama, Tanioka, Ueno, Katayama, & Ochi, 2007); and research on the individual characteristics of Danshukai members (Kato, Takeda, Miyake, Yokayama, & Ohida, 2004; Ohara & Takagi, 1972; Ōhashi, 1970, Ōhashi & Yoshikane, 1979; Takahashi, Horii, Fujimoto, Suwaki, Horii, & Nishii, 1981).

There have been few studies examining the effectiveness of Danshukai in supporting the abstinence of their members. Noda et al. (2001) conducted a long-term study of the outcomes of 306 male alcoholics who were initially diagnosed with alcoholism at a psychiatric unit in Osaka between 1972 and 1983, and follow-up studies of these 306 men were conducted on three occasions: in 1985, 1988, and 1992. Of these 306 men, 122 were known to be alive in 1992, and of them 35 (28.7%) had achieved stable abstinence, 26 (21.3%) had unstable abstinence, 15 (12.3%) had maintained controlled drinking, and 46 (37.7%) had relapsed. In the 1992 study, all of the abstinent patients—those in both the stable abstinence and unstable abstinence categories—had attended Danshukai soon after their initial treatment. Nevertheless, their rate of continuous attendance of Danshukai was low: approximately 35% of stable abstinence and unstable abstinence subjects were active members, and by the end of the study no individuals who were controlled drinkers were active members.

In 1973, Sato, Karasumi, Ogino, and Washiyama (1973) examined the post-discharge outcomes for 155 alcoholics who were hospitalized between 1968 and 1971. In 1972, 82 individuals were attending Danshukai, and of these, 61% were currently abstinent or drinking moderately. In contrast, out of the 73 individuals who did not join Danshukai, only 22% were abstinent or drinking moderately. In summary, these results appear to indicate that attending Danshukai soon after inpatient treatment is associated with an increased likelihood of a good outcome, despite the fact that continuous membership of Danshukai is fairly low.

Anthropologist Stephen R. Smith (1988) provides one of the few ethnographic works on Danshukai in the Osaka area. Smith explains that Danshukai works through a process of non-didactic education or “legitimate peripheral participation,” where much of the learning occurs in a community of shared knowledge and practice (Smith, 1998, p. 286). Newcomers move from the periphery to the center of the organization by reproducing the behavior of more experienced members. This “situated, participant learning” is achieved at first by listening to, and then replicating and modifying, the stories shared in meetings by more experienced speakers. However, Smith is fairly critical of Danshukai, particularly in Tokyo, where group meetings are generally larger than in Osaka. He argues that newcomers are often excluded by more experienced members in Tokyo Danshukai, because its groups are too large, and there is too little time for all members to speak. More experienced speakers monopolize meetings, and new entrants are not given the opportunity to learn how to tell their stories.

While there is some evidence that Danshukai can improve outcomes for alcoholics, and while we have some knowledge about the operation of Danshukai groups in the Osaka area, we still have only a very limited understanding of the details of Danshukai’s history, how different Danshukai groups operate, and how various social, cultural, and historical traditions have influenced Danshukai and its operations.

METHODS

This article is based on research that took place over 18 months during 2006-2008. Utilizing existing contacts, Oka contacted the national Danshukai organization, Zennihon Danshu Renmei (Zendanren), to discuss our research. Given the importance of *nemawashi* [laying the groundwork] this was seen as an important step in building trust and spreading information about our research project (Fetters, 1995). In Japan, there are few institutional ethics boards for social science research, and national funding bodies do not require ethics approval before the release of funds. However, researchers are guided by strong cultural frameworks related to their ethical responsibilities in conducting research (Oka & Chenhall, 2008).

Our project involved a number of methodological approaches including archival and secondary data collection, semi-structured and conversational interviews, and participant observation. Archival and secondary data were collected concerning the history of Danshukai, along with previous literature on Danshukai in Japanese and English, including academic journal papers and Danshukai newsletters and other publications. In this research, our initial focus was on the three Danshukai groups that had a common history in the Japanese Temperance Union (Danshu Shinseikai, Danshu Shūyōkai, and Danshu-tomo-no-kai). However, the majority of the research was conducted with those Danshukai groups, such as Danshu Shinseikai, who belong to Zendanren. We conducted 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 18 people, including 11 leaders, 5 wives, 1 supporter, and a member who was involved in both Danshukai and AA (two leaders were interviewed twice). These individuals belonged to different local Danshukai groups that are mainly located in Tokyo. The interviews were conducted either at the Zendanren office in Tokyo, at local civic halls, or in Oka's university office. If requested, interview questions were sent to participants before the interview took place. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed into Japanese and English.

While interviews of this kind were useful in introducing us to leaders and gaining knowledge about the formal operation, procedure, and structure of Danshukai, they revealed little about the content of meetings, how members related to each other and experienced their recovery. As a result, we attended over 20 Danshukai meetings and events and held approximately 150-200 conversational interviews with leaders and members. The length and style of conversational interviews varied. Sometimes they involved informal brief discussions either before or after a meeting with one or two individual members. In a number of cases, they occurred while walking to the train station immediately following a meeting. Other times they involved more lengthy discussions of an hour or more, especially if we attended a Danshukai weekend retreat. Conversational interviews occurred often by chance, but we also sought specific individuals out to talk to them about a subject. Conversational interviews

have been described as an important approach in illuminating and uncovering multiple, dynamic, and potentially contradictory understandings of participants (Burgess-limerick & Burgess-limerick, 1998).

We attended different types of meetings in various prefectures, including Tokyo, Kanawaga, Kōchi, Osaka, Yamaguchi, Shimane, Saitama, and Miyagi. During these meetings we spoke informally with as many members as possible, as well as closely observing and recording all events that took place. This included the formal event itself, but also the informal interactions between members. While we aimed to follow an anthropological approach (which involves gaining a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices through an intensive involvement in their natural environment; Spradley, 1980), this was often difficult, given that we were unable to fully participate in the everyday life of members outside Danshukai events. Written notes were taken by both authors and immediately after any event we collated and discussed our field notes. These were then later collated into one transcript. We were also expected to speak about our research at the meetings. Where required, Oka, who is Japanese, provided language support to Chenhall. The meetings attended included regular open meetings of various Danshukai at both the prefecture level and the ward level. With some groups, we attended more than one meeting; with other groups we visited only once. We also attended various closed meetings (such as a meeting for families of alcoholics), a general annual meeting of the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, two annual meetings of the national alliance of Danshukai (Zendanren), the inauguration meeting of a Danshukai group, the 35th anniversary meeting of a Danshukai group, the 55th anniversary of the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, two annual meetings of a Danshukai group for people with disabilities, 3-day-long open meetings, and a business meeting of the editors of the newsletter of Danshukai. Two other Danshukai groups were also contacted in Tokyo and Saitama, which were not affiliated with Zendanren, and we attended their meetings and held interviews. Data collected was entered into NVIVO and themes were coded by Chenhall and then discussed and refined with Oka.

Both authors do not identify as alcoholics, but have had a longstanding association with self-help/mutual-aid groups. Oka's work on self-help groups was known to the Danshukai leaders, who often brought Oka's book to interviews (Oka, 1999). This was an important factor in establishing trust between the researchers and the groups' leaders. Chenhall was welcomed to Danshukai as a foreign visitor.

Danshukai leaders often told us that their "regular meetings" were open to anyone, including researchers. We were permitted to attend these meetings and to take notes. Leaders in one Danshukai group also offered to give us a tape recording of all their meeting speeches. This can be compared to Japanese AA where previous researchers have not been permitted to take notes during meetings (for example, Hirano, 1995; Kasai, 2007). While regular meetings and special

events in Danshukai are open to outsiders, it took us some time to be invited to “closed” meetings. As new visitors, we had to learn correct behavior within Danshukai, including who we should speak to first, where we should sit (see below), and how we should sit. At one of the first meetings we attended, Chenhall crossed his legs while sitting next to a group of leaders, who were also sitting in a casual manner. Chenhall was nervous and unconsciously imitated the more senior leaders seating style. Chenhall felt a nudge from Oka who whispered that he should uncross his legs. This was a sign of impoliteness and while senior leaders could sit however they pleased, a visitor should be as polite as possible in their presentation style. Our position as special guests brought further difficulties in conducting the research.

At large or special Danshukai events, we were treated as special guests, and as such were often secluded from informal activities before and during the proceedings. We were often relegated to a backroom where all special visitors and dignitaries would sit with the Danshukai presidents. In Japanese society, extreme care and attention is given to special guests. As Hendry (1987) states, in Japan “guests (outsiders) will be placed above members of the group responsible for organising the occasion (insiders), and the latter may de-emphasise their own hierarchical distinctions in expressing deference to the guests” (pp. 76-77). Hence, it would be viewed as a sign of extreme disrespect not to look after the needs of a visiting person, however it also meant that as “outsiders” we were only allowed to see the public face of Danshukai. To overcome our politely enforced seclusion, we often found it necessary to tactfully excuse ourselves so we could go and mix with other Danshukai members. Over time, as we became familiar with and trusted by various individuals, and we gained the confidence of the leaders of Danshukai, we were invited to attend various closed meetings.

There are many Danshukai groups throughout Japan and as there are very few official texts about Danshukai, it is very difficult to identify a unifying Danshukai approach and philosophy. As a result, this article will refer to the publications offered by the national organization, Zendanren, and on fieldwork data gathered mainly in Tokyo. Our results should therefore not be generalized to all Danshukai throughout Japan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this article, the results and discussion section is organized into six main parts: The historical precursor to Danshukai, the establishment of Danshukai, Danshukai’s organization (its goals, basic beliefs, membership, anonymity and professional engagement, service and organizational structure), types of meetings, and use of meetings as therapy (meeting sequence, personal stories) and family relationships in Danshukai.

The Historical Precursor to Danshukai: The Japanese Temperance Union

The activities of the Japan Temperance Society were to form the basis through which Danshukai emerged in the early 1950s. More specifically, the secular nature of temperance groups and their emphasis on the power of meetings and pledges to abstinence were to be important in forming the principles of Danshukai.

Temperance societies began to be established in Japan in various forms in the late 1800s, in an attempt to encourage moral reform (Yatsuke, 2006). These societies were based on the efforts of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which had become very popular in the United States as it had a broad agenda of moral reform rather than just temperance. By 1892, however, the WCTU was suffering from persistent ideological differences and personal conflicts; nevertheless it provided a model for The Japanese Temperance Union, which emerged and became dominant around 1892. At that time The Japanese Temperance Union was led by Tarō Andō, a militarist who had formed Japanese immigrant temperance groups when he served as Consulate General in Hawaii, and Shō Nemoto, a temperance activist who had come under the influence of the Methodist Episcopal home missionaries in the United States (Japan Temperance Union, 1970). Visiting speakers from the United States were also well received, given Japan's widespread concern to modernize and westernize during the Meiji era (Dorn, 2003, p. 45). While these speakers were Christian, their approach was largely non-sectarian, and they emphasized the health effects of abstinence and the importance for moral reform and good health generally rather than religion (Katō, 1995). This was partly strategic, given the conflicts during this time between Christians and Shinto/Buddhist groups. Hence, because temperance groups did not put the propagation of the Christian faith before the promotion of the temperance movements, their activities were accepted by the general public, the majority of whom were non-Christians (Katō, 1995, pp. 155-158). In order to establish an extensive network of supporters throughout Japan, the leaders of the Japanese Temperance Union would go about the community giving rousing speeches, conducting special rituals and holding meetings about the necessity to pledge abstinence. The speech was central to a meeting and its aim was to "move" others to make the pledge to abstinence.

1953: Danshukai Is Established

In the early 1950s, the Japan Temperance Union began to look overseas for ways to develop appropriate responses to the growing rate of alcoholism (Danshu undō shōshi, 1967). In February of 1952, the Japanese Temperance Union sent Kimiko Ôtuji to the United States as its first temperance envoy (Kinshu shisetsu daiichijin, 1952). Kimiko Ôtuji was the daughter of a heavy drinker, and had some English language skills so she traveled to the United States to attend an AA meeting in Washington, DC. On returning to Japan, she reported back to Japanese

temperance movement leaders about what she had witnessed in the United States (Koshio, 2002). In July of 1952, a leader of the Temperance Union, Buho Yamamuro, attended an alcoholism treatment workshop held by Yale University, as well as an AA meeting (Yamamuro, n.d.). In September of 1952, another leader of the Temperance Union, Ken Mutō, was sent to Paris to attend the 24th International Temperance Conference. In a newsletter of the Japanese Temperance Union, he mistakenly reported that Alcoholics Anonymous was founded by “Scandinavians about ten years ago” (Hirogaru AA undō, 1953). The early Temperance Union envoys to the United States returned to Japan with a limited understanding of the philosophical basis of AA. While witnessing AA meetings gave them some experience of the form of AA, there was little discussion of how AA supported an alcoholic through recovery.

In 1953, the leaders of the Temperance Union decided to form a group within their organization which would bring alcoholics together to talk about their experiences (AA Nihonshibu Danshu-tomo-no-kai, 1953). The group was named by Yamamuro as Danshu-tomo-no-kai [Abstinence Friendship Society] and participants were required to become members of the group in order to participate (Yamamuro, n.d.). In their first meeting, four couples (male alcoholics with their non-alcoholic wives) and several leaders were involved, including Yamamuro and Mutō. The Temperance Union newsletter states that at their first meeting, speeches were given by the members, followed by a dinner (AA Nihonshibu Danshu-tomo-no-kai, 1953).

There is little evidence to suggest that the participants of this first Danshukai group followed the same principles found in AA, even though they believed they were conducting AA meetings. While most of the members were alcoholics, the group was led by a non-alcoholic and a manager of the Temperance Union, Hideo Kamihorinouchi. There is little information about the content of these first meetings; however, it appears that the main similarity with AA was that individuals met at a regular time to share their stories about their experiences with alcohol.

In 1957, there were increasing conflicts between the new supporters of Danshu-tomo-no-kai and the Temperance Union leaders, who felt that Danshukai was only a part of their activities and was receiving undue support and attention (Kiuchi, Kuruma, Hayakawa, Furuyama, Teramoto, & Nakagawa, 1957; Kuruma, 1957). Subsequently, various divisions formed in the Danshukai movement with the result that Danshu-tomo-no-kai separated from the Temperance Union (Danshu-tomo-no-kai dokuritsu e, 1958). In May 1958, a new Danshukai group (Danshu Gojokai) was established within the Tokyo Temperance Union (Danshu Gojokai, 1958). This group was later renamed Danshu Shūyōkai and to this day remains part of the Tokyo Temperance Union. However, there was some resistance to the fact that Danshu-tomo-no-kai was situated within the Temperance Union and was led by a non-alcoholic, Kamihorinouchi, and so 12 alcoholics in Tokyo decided to organize a separate new group. They were encouraged to do

this when a group of alcoholics set up a Danshukai group in Kōchi, West of Japan, on November 25, 1958. The Kōchi group was led by an alcoholic, Harushige Matsumura, who initiated this move with the support of his doctor, Dr. Geshi (Kobayashi, 1990). Ten days later, on December 5, 1958, the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai group was established (Nakata, 2005, p. 76).

The Tokyo and Kōchi groups came together in 1963 to form Zennihon (or Zennippon) Danshu Renmei (shortened to Zendanren), a national organization intended to unify the growing numbers of Danshukai throughout Japan. After Matsumura became the first president of Zendanren, the organization gained incorporated status (*shadan hojin*) in 1970. There have been four Chairpersons of the Board of Trustees to date. Various Danshukai organizations have flourished since their inception in the 1950s, and while the groups are structurally similar, there are differences in meeting routines, the way organizations relate to hospitals and activities outside meetings. For all groups, meetings are the central activity of Danshukai, with members coming together to share their *taikendan* [experience story]. For AA groups in the United States, Borkman has made similar conclusions, observing that “groups are relatively autonomous within the ‘traditions’ and many local issues are decided within each group” (Borkman, 2008, p 33).

Today, there are 45 prefecture-level organizations affiliated with Zendanren across Japan, under which there are approximately 650 local Danshukai groups that work with varying degrees of independence of the prefectural-level organization. In the 2007/2008 fiscal year (April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008), there were 1,749 meeting places around Japan, in which 43,352 meetings were held with 797,268 attendees in total (Zendanren, 2008a). All the members of Danshukai are alcoholics, with a total membership of 9,659 in 2008. Eight hundred and eighteen (or 8.5%) members are women. While this is a relatively small number, membership of women alcoholics has increased over the last 7 years (see Table 1). The overall membership of male alcoholics has decreased. Danshukai members are generally older in age, with 54% of members being over 60 years old (see Table 2). Thirty-two percent of current members have maintained abstinence for over 10 years, 31% between 3 and 10 years and 36% between 0 and 3 years (see Table 3; Zendanren, 2008a). These calculations were compiled by Zendanren and must be treated with some caution as there is no information about the type of survey completed and the response rate. AA also operates in Japan, having been officially established in 1976 with 470 groups and an estimated membership of 4,500 in 2006 (AAJSO, 2006, p. 4). Little is known about Japanese AA, although they have documented their own history in Japanese (AAJSO, 1995).

While Danshukai incorporated AA’s 12-Steps into their own “abstinence pledge” in 1953, these have changed over time and have differed between some Danshukai groups. Danshu-tomo-no-kai had 12 Rules (Sake ni nayamu tomo yo kitare, 1953), but later these were reduced to 10 pledges (Yamamuro, n.d.), and finally five or six pledges. These pledges were as follows:

Table 1. Danshukai Membership by Gender for Years 2002, 2005, 2008

Year	Men	Women	Total	% of women
2002	10,374	656	11,030	5.9
2005	9,657	765	10,422	7.3
2008	8,841	818	9,659	8.5

Source: Zendanren (2008a)

Table 2. Danshukai Membership by Age, 2008

Age	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	> 70	Total
Number	0	36	485	1,347	2,647	3,446	1,698	9,659
Percentage	0	0.4	5.0	13.9	27.4	35.7	17.6	100

Source: Zendanren (2008a)

Table 3. Danshukai Membership by Years of Abstinence, 2008

Year	< 1	1-3	3-5	5-10	10-20	> 20
Members	1,739	1,739	1,256	1,739	1,835	1,256
Percentage	18.3	17.8	13.3	18.5	18.9	13.1

Source: Zendanren (2008a)

1. We admit we have been bounded by magic powers of liquor and that we have had no control over it.
2. We believe that the power of Danshu-tomo-no-kai can restore us to sanity and we will attend the meetings as much as possible.
3. We will trust to deities and Buddhas, and ask them to remove our shortcomings.
4. We will always reflect on our past mistakes and make amends to all persons we have so far harmed as much as possible.
5. We will help and encourage one another, and create a new life.
6. We will redeem these pledges, develop Danshu-tomo-no-kai, save ourselves and our families, and serve many people who have the same affliction (Chikai-no-kotoba, 1959).

This is the oldest version of Danshukai's abstinence pledge and continues to be used by Danshu-tomo-no-kai today (see Danshu-tomo-no-kai, 1973). Zendanren, however, developed their own abstinence pledge which stated:

1. We acknowledge that we were enslaved by the lure of alcohol and were unable to control it through our own power.
2. We recognized our past mistakes and, as much as possible, will make amends to those people we have harmed.
3. We will help each other conquer our drinking habits and heroically construct a new life.
4. Hand in hand with all people who suffer from alcoholism, we support all who stop drinking.
5. Without any relationship to religion or philosophy, we unite as kindred spirits of Danshukai (Smith, 1988, p. 240).

This version was published in the first issue of the newsletter of Kōchi-ken Danshu Shinseikai (Danshu-no-chikai, 1961). Dr. Geshi stated that he created this version of the abstinence pledge, based on the pledges from the Japan Temperance Union (Geshi, 1987). It was later modified and states:

1. We admit that we have been powerless over alcohol, and that we have been unable to control it through our own power.
2. We will attend Danshukai, and talk about ourselves honestly.
3. We will examine our drunken experiences, and recognize our past mistakes frankly.
4. We will make effort to improve ourselves, and create a new life.
5. We will make amends to those people we have harmed as well as our families.
6. We will commend the delight of abstinence to people who suffer from alcoholism (Zendanren, 2008b, p. 45).

While there are some similarities with AA's 12-Steps (powerlessness, examination of past wrongs, making amends, and carrying the message of abstinence to other alcoholics), the Danshukai abstinence pledges, except for that of Danshu-tomo-no-kai, do not make any reference to a higher power or God as part of the recovery process. As will be discussed later in this article, Christian notions related to spiritual awakening and the role of the higher power do not correspond with Japanese understandings of recovery from alcoholism. Importantly, the Danshukai pledges emphasize that alcoholics should attend meetings and talk honestly about themselves. As this article will demonstrate, attending meetings and talking honestly is key to the concept of recovery in Danshukai.

Danshukai's Organization

Goals

In AA, the key goals have been described as recovery (abstinence), service, and unity (Borkman, 2008). As Borkman notes, recovery refers to an individual's creation of a new way of living through abstinence, service refers to helping other alcoholics, and unity refers to the fellowship between recovering alcoholics and their groups. For Danshukai members, the main goal is to recover from alcoholism and become abstinent. This is achieved primarily by attending meetings. This procedure is best viewed at large meetings held at the prefectural or national level, where two banners are often hung on the stage stating: *ichi-nichi-dan-shu* [Abstinence for a day] and *rei-kai-shus-seki* [Attend a meeting]. In the 1962 newsletter of Kōchi-ken Danshu Shinseikai (one of the leading groups that helped organize Danshukai groups throughout Japan in the 1960s), it was claimed that these two mottos were a simple, but nevertheless, effective method for attaining abstinence (Danshu-tetsugen, 1962). Following these imperatives is at the center of Danshukai's approach and reflects a certain "fondness for simple symbolic expressions" (Nakamura & Wiener, 1964, p. 564).

Various texts have been written by senior leaders concerning the goals of Danshukai, and these have been published by the national organization, Zendanren. However, these texts do not necessarily represent the official stance of Zendanren and various members often told us that they are not widely read. Enomoto (1985) states that Danshukai members often have "an optimistic way of thinking that there is a way to abstinence *a priori*: 'We should learn how to keep abstinence not by theory, but by the experience of attending meetings,' 'Through attending meetings, we will undoubtedly keep abstinence'" (p. 160). This stress on experience and intuition reflects such Japanese social norms as *ishin denshin* [communicating without words], where very little information is contained in explicit messages, but the underlying meaning lies in the setting or the people who are part of an interaction (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). While this leads to a certain amount of ambiguity in understanding how recovery from alcoholism works in Danshukai, ambiguity itself has been identified as an important cultural trait in high-context cultures such as Japan (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Basic Beliefs: The Causes of Alcoholism and Beliefs About Recovery

In AA, alcoholism is connected to the very core of a person's identity and recovery requires a significant change involving self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, working with others, and acceptance of a higher power (Borkman, 2008). In Danshukai, recovery from alcoholism also involves significant change to a person's identity, but how recovery from alcoholism is understood in Danshukai is related to culturally

specific constructions of the causes of alcoholism in Japanese society. The concept of recovery is also informed from Japanese understanding related to Zen practice.

Causes of Alcoholism

While there are no specific official Danshukai perspectives with regard to the cause of alcoholism, various leaders and members expressed their own views during interviews and at meetings during the period of this research. Some Danshukai members talked about alcoholism being caused by some external agent, using the word for “liquor devil” [*shuma*]. In this respect alcoholism, as signifying deviant behavior, may be likened to Japanese understandings of possession experiences (Eguchi, 1991). In this understanding, alcoholism is viewed as exterior to the person, capable of changing behavior, rather than something integral or interior to the person, as in AA’s emphasis on an alcoholic’s defects of character. Danshukai members also explained that alcoholism is stigmatized. As one Danshukai member pointed out: “if alcoholism is a disease, it is different from something like hay fever,” which he felt he could discuss freely with anyone without fear of being judged. He could not tell people outside Danshukai that he was an alcoholic for fear of being excluded or stigmatized. Other Danshukai leaders told us that alcoholics should not look to their past for explanations about the cause of their alcoholism. In particular, they mentioned that participants should not criticize their parents or elders for their upbringing, as this was disrespectful and shifted their own responsibility for their current problems.

Alcoholism was most commonly referred to by leaders of Danshukai in Tokyo as a “disability of human interaction.” This incorporated a view of the centrality of alcohol in Japanese male workplace culture. The drinking culture of the professional world of the ubiquitous “salary man” has been well popularized (see Borovory, 2005; Kato, 2000; Shimizu, 1979, 1984, 2002). In these male-dominated circles, the consumption of alcohol is an important part of business relations, and holds much greater significance than the American practice of attending an after-work happy hour with peers. In Japan, the tradition of “nomikai” or “drinking gathering” is much more ritualized, with colleagues of lower status pouring beverages for their superiors in a gesture of respect. This expression of the classically Japanese “*senpai/kohai*” or “superior/subordinate” relationship (and the ability to playfully challenge it with amnesty while intoxicated) is central to creating closeness within workplace relationships and the advancement of the corporate structure. Kato (2000, p. 49) has described the strategic drinking activities of junior salaried workers to gain favor, information, and prestige from their superiors or business partners. In our interviews, Danshukai members explained that it was very difficult to abstain from these activities, because it meant placing oneself outside work networks. They also explained that they had become dependent on alcohol to form close relationships with others.

While drinking alcohol can be a way to enhance relationships in Japanese society and in the workplace, addiction to alcohol can occur when an individual becomes overly dependent on alcohol to manage their interpersonal relationships. In Japan, *tatemae* [the official or public stance] has been contrasted with *honne* [one's true feelings], which are normally hidden from people outside their group. *Uchi* refers to individuals who are part of a group to which one belongs, where individuals can feel comfortable to express their true feelings. *Uchi* may be used to describe a family household but also, for example, the workers in an organization. In this context, one should only present a public stance [*tatemae*], rather than one's true feeling. In Kato's explanation (2000) of Japanese office workers' she states:

Since drinking, with the effect of alcohol, breaks the barrier of *tatemae* within the individual and lets one reveal one's *honne*, it consequently creates the sentiment of intimacy, which unites the group on an emotional level. In other words, drinking has a catalytic function that stimulates people's transformation into an *uchi* group. The frequent work-related drinking practice in Japan is the reaction to the rigid norm of *tatemae*, which violates the individual's desire for intimacy. (p. 70)

According to Kato (2000, p. 12), 73% of Japanese (and 81% of Japanese males) believe that drinking helps smooth people's relationships. Russell (1989) and Tanaka-Matsumi (1979) have provided extensive discussion on *taijin kyofusho*, which is a culturally specific condition concerning the fear of interpersonal relationships. While alcoholism may not necessarily be a manifestation of *taijin kyofusho*, Danshukai members did suggest that alcoholics drank in order to overcome fear of interpersonal relationships. They are also dependent on alcohol to negotiate these very same relationships.

Beliefs About Recovery

In AA, abstinence is the first step toward recovery. However, to recover from alcoholism, it is insufficient merely to stop drinking, because alcoholism is viewed as a symptom of underlying character defects. Alcoholics have to deal with their own character defects by working through the 12-Steps and by changing to become less self-centered. Many of these themes were taken from the Oxford movement, including the emphasis on confession of and restitution for sins among peers (Humphreys, 2004, p. 35).

In Danshukai, leaders did not generally use the phonetically transcribed term in Japanese for recovery, *rikabari*, instead using the term *kaifuku*. *Kaifuku* is a non-colloquial term which can be used to explain recovery from illness. Attending meetings and obtaining abstinence were viewed by many members as requirements for becoming healthy again. There was no emphasis on members having to address their "defects of character" or experience a "spiritual awakening." In describing why AA never took hold within Danshukai, Humphreys (2004) has indicated that the emphasis on God and the higher power were seen as culturally

inappropriate. While there is no mention of God or a higher power or spiritual revelation in Danshukai, members did refer to specific spiritual beliefs. Purification in Japanese society is understood within the context of Shinto beliefs (Underwood, 2007). Shintoism is a polytheistic and animistic faith involving the worship of a range of *kami* [gods] embedded in the natural world. Shinto has no texts, no binding dogma, no person or *kami* who is holiest, and no defined set of prayers. Shinto rites generally have a simple purpose, centered on purification or bringing auspiciousness. The rites are not elaborate, but simple in organization and performance. Similarities can be made with Danshukai where the rituals are simple, there are no commonly used texts, there is no one founder highly recognized by all Danshukai members throughout Japan (although Harushige Matsumura is considered the founder in many places outside of Tokyo), and the emphasis is on purification from alcoholism. Enomoto (1985) states:

Danshukai has a belief of the innate goodness of human beings, and so they have a view that human beings, who are fundamentally good by nature, are temporarily, partly or provisionally stained with an outside uncleanness of alcoholism, or that uncleanness intruded into their bodies. Therefore those people can be purified by attending Danshukai meetings . . . (p. 160)

Danshukai members' understanding of recovery is also related to specific cultural differences in the construction between what has been called a Japanese "shame culture" and an American "guilt culture" (Benedict, 1954). In describing these differences, Benedict states:

True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, not, as true guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin. Shame is a reaction to other people's criticism. . . . The primacy of shame in Japanese life means . . . that any man watches the judgment of the public upon his deeds. (Benedict, 1954, pp. 223-224)

Enomoto (1985) states that in this "shame culture," Danshukai members "come together with many people with the same afflictions and help and support one another (while) maintaining the principle of "harmony" in human relations. Then they think most highly of abstinence that can be seen by others" (p. 160). He explains the philosophy of Danshukai in terms of Zen practice:

In Zen practice, "shikantaza," which means devoting oneself wholly to just sitting without thinking of anything else, is considered the first step to spiritual awakening. . . . They think that people will be spiritually awakened and emancipated from worldly attachments by regulating the outside of oneself (the form) and meditating. In Danshukai, alcoholics firstly put on "the form of abstinence" and regulate their outside. Thereafter, they gradually get ready to cultivate the spirit of abstinence. While controlling their deviant (drinking) behaviour from the outside, they guide themselves to the life of abstinence step by step (Enomoto, 1985, p. 161).

In this comparison, a Zen monk obtaining spiritual awakening by “sitting without thinking” is similar to the way Danshukai members achieve abstinence. First, they must change their social routine by attending Danshukai and not drinking. Danshukai enables members to share their *hara* [belly]. *Hara* is symbolic of the true self, and Danshukai members are expected to share their *hara* to find the truth about themselves and others. As Lebra (1976) states, “When two people talk frankly, they ‘disclose’ or ‘split’ their *hara* (*hara o miseru* or *hara o waru*); perfect solidarity is reached by ‘attaching’ one *hara* to another” (p. 160). Introspection is an important part of Danshukai, whereby through sharing one’s true self with others, it is possible to find one’s own individuality or *jibun* [self] (p. 160).

Membership, Anonymity, and Professional Engagement

Membership

The constitution of membership in Danshukai reflects various social norms related to gender and the family. As noted earlier, men over the age of 60 constitute the majority of Danshukai membership; however, this relatively older age reflects Japan’s national statistics, where a significant proportion of heavy drinkers are men between the ages of 40-70 (Higuchi et al., 2007). The typical model for a family entering Danshukai is an alcoholic male with his supporting non-alcoholic wife. Alternatively, it might be a mother with her alcoholic son. In each case, the associated family member is viewed as central to, and even responsible for, an alcoholic’s recovery.

There are two basic requirements for membership to Danshukai. The first is that an individual is required to join their local group Danshukai in their own ward (a city district). While members are free to attend open meetings in other areas, they can only access closed meetings in their local group. Second, a member must pay a small membership fee (¥1000/month [approx. US\$11.00] in case of the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai) to their local group and a small fee ¥1000/month [approx. US\$2.00] at each meeting as a room fee.

Compared to AA, where family members do not attend meetings but might join other associated support groups such as Al-Anon, families are encouraged to participate in Danshukai. Wives, mothers, fathers, and children of alcoholics participate in meetings, but as they are not themselves paid members, they are unable to vote within the organization in Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai. Office bearers in Danshukai are almost always men. While the number of female alcoholics is relatively small (but growing), they rarely take positions of authority in Danshukai.

Danshukai leaders in Tokyo often told us that compared to Japanese AA, Danshukai members generally have some form of employment during the

daytime. The members were proud of this fact, explaining this is why most meetings were held in the evenings. However, current data does not support the view that Japanese AA members are mainly unemployed or lacking in financial resources. According to a survey conducted by Japanese AA, 26% of AA members are on welfare, 37% are in salaried employment, and 8% are self-employed (AAJSO, 2007). Additionally, there was a perception among Danshukai members that Danshukai was for married, employed couples. This perception is supported by the fact that 73% of Danshukai members have spouses (Zendanren, 2008a), while only 37% of AA members have spouses and 39% live alone (AAJSO, 2007).

Anonymity

In principle, Danshukai is based on the non-anonymity of its members. In meetings, participants state their real names, and these are listed publicly in newsletters and membership lists that are distributed to all Danshukai members. One Danshukai member stated in an interview that “a samurai used to shout his name before his enemy,” and described how their members should announce their own names in meetings like samurai once did. This samurai-modeled pronouncement of names was also discussed by the first generation of Danshukai leaders (Nakata, 2005, p. 75). This is a fairly romanticized and masculinized view, suggesting that to hide one’s true identity in Danshukai would be shameful (another reference to Benedict’s (1954) discussion of shame in Japanese culture). Moreover, when Danshukai was established in the 1950s, maintaining anonymity would have been difficult. Large cities, such as Tokyo, were still mainly village-oriented (see Bestor, 1989), and people living in one ward would have known about one other and their various problems, so anonymity in Danshukai was not a realistic goal.

Danshukai’s emphasis on the non-anonymity of its members reinforces the solidarity and trust within Danshukai. However, when dealing with the public, Danshukai prefers to maintain the anonymity of their members. Although names, contacts, and personal stories of Danshukai members are published in newsletters, these are generally distributed to members, hospitals, clinics, and public health centers. Some personal stories included in the newsletters are published on Danshukai websites but with all identifying information removed. When we asked why names did not appear on the internet, one leader stated: “There are no benefits for us even if we publish our names as alcoholics.” Other members referred to the stigma of alcoholism as an important factor in concealing their identity as a Danshukai member within the general public. However, Danshukai’s members may wear a brooch, jacket, or cap printed with the Danshukai insignia (or alternatively printed letters reading ZDR, referring to Zendanren). Nevertheless, these insignia are designed in such a way that they would only be recognized by other Danshukai members and not the general public. Danshukai members do not

want their names published outside their own group, hence the non-anonymity principle of Danshukai has been challenged by some professional supporters and Danshukai leaders, including Shimizu (1986) and Nakamoto (2007). In its official policy on anonymity, AA states that anonymity is maintained at the personal level to protect members, particularly new members, from identification as alcoholics (AA, 1981). AA states that anonymity should be maintained with the media so that individual members cannot use their AA affiliation to gain power, prestige or personal gain. Such anonymity emphasizes the equality of the fellowship of all members (AA, 1981).

Danshukai is not well known in the wider Japanese community. This is further complicated by the fact that the word *Danshu* in Japanese also means sterilization or castration. When Chenhall told non-Danshukai members that he was living in Japan to study Danshukai, he was met at first with rather worried and puzzled looks by Japanese friends and colleagues until he explained further.

Professional Engagement

Danshukai groups throughout Japan have differing levels of engagement with health professionals, such as doctors and nurses working in the field of alcoholism. In Osaka, relationships between Danshukai and healthcare professionals have been historically quite close (Fujii, 1986; Tsujimoto, 1983); however, in Tokyo relationships are more varied. Indeed, members' views about professional engagement reflect Danshukai's emphasis on experiential knowledge rather than scientific or professional knowledge (Borkman, 1999). For example, in Tokyo one leader suggested that professional knowledge should be viewed with some suspicion:

New members have more knowledge about alcoholism than we do, because they have participated in lectures on alcoholism in hospitals. However, it is only possible to understand how to keep abstinence by participating in meetings, not by reading books, or by learning theories.

Despite this criticism, Danshukai groups generally invite various professionals, such as doctors, nurses, government officials, and Buddhist priests, to talk about alcoholism at special events. At one particular Danshukai event, Chenhall was surprised to hear a doctor giving a lecture about alcoholism being fairly critical of Danshukai. He incorrectly surmised that there was an unconstructive relationship between this doctor and Danshukai when quite the opposite was the case. The doctor had been involved in Danshukai as an advisor for many years, and it was evidence of his trusting relationship with them that he was able to speak truthfully [*honme*] and provide some helpful criticism to Danshukai, rather than simply present a publicly approved stance [*tatema*].

Service

Service is a central part of being an AA member and can vary from helping at meetings, sponsoring a new member, or engaging in community activities. Borkman (2008) notes that third-sector research has generally viewed AA members' volunteering activities as limited to helping their own members, rather than helping others outside their organization. However, Borkman argues that this does not take into account the contribution of AA members to the public good without any cost to taxpayers (for example, by accepting mandated drunk driving offenders into AA programs). Danshukai has a similar altruistic function, providing important aftercare for alcoholics who exit specialist alcoholism treatment centers, who would otherwise have very few support networks.

Various Danshukai organizations throughout Japan provide telephone counseling. For example, the Zendanren office's two paid staff receive 30 or 40 telephone calls a month. At the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai office, six volunteers (five alcoholics and one wife of an alcoholic) work as telephone counselors from Monday to Saturday. They had 188 calls in Japan's 2006 fiscal year. Leaders in Tokyo are reported to have 649 consultations about alcoholism per year (Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, 2007). There are also sheltered workshops and a drop-in center operated by local Danshukai groups in Tokyo, and similar facilities are operated by many local Danshukai volunteers throughout Japan. In 2008, the Japanese government invited Zendanren to provide programs for drunk-driver offenders in the prison system. There is no doubt that Danshukai members reduce the costs associated with alcohol misuse, and they are making increasing efforts to help others outside their membership. However, at the level of the individual member, the notion of service to other alcoholics is not as closely linked to recovery as it is in AA in the United States. While Danshukai in Tokyo originally emerged from the Japanese Temperance Movement and was influenced by AA, AA's underlying philosophical tenets around spirituality and service appears not to have been transmitted to Danshukai.

On average, Danshukai members volunteer very little of their time to help other people in possible need who are outside their group. Individuals pay their membership and fees and attend meetings. They contribute to Danshukai by sharing their stories and by helping to arrange the room before and after their meetings, but roles with more responsibility are ascribed to specific people who carry out their duties for extended periods of time. A leader of the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai said, "Even though people say that they are members of a Danshukai, they mean that they belong to the Danshukai and think nothing of how they can contribute to the Danshukai" (Oka, Kobayashi, Tachiki, Takahashi, Sugie, & Hagiwara, 2008). On the other hand, Kobayashi, a highly respected leader of Zendanren, stressed that it was important for Danshukai to resume voluntary service to the general alcoholic population. He stated that the first generation of Danshukai members were engaged in service, and this was a guiding principle for

Danshukai: “Danshukai is a self-help group for alcoholics, by alcoholics,” and not “a self-help group for Danshukai members, by Danshukai members” (Kobayashi, 2000, p. 52). For the majority of Danshukai members though, merely “belonging” to Danshukai is the important part of their membership.

In Japanese culture, belonging to a specific group has been described as important in the development of an individual’s identity. The well known example of this is the customary Japanese introduction, which involves stating one’s organizational affiliation first, followed by one’s surname. Surnames are used for more public contexts, while first names are often reserved for use among close friends or family. In Danshukai, a member would introduce himself as *Nerima Danshukai* [organizational affiliation], *Suzuki* [surname] *desu* [is]. As Lebra (1976) points out, “the strong sense of belongingness as a stake for self-identity, reinforced by collectivism and conformism, calls for the individual’s total commitment and loyalty to the group” (p. 31). In Danshukai it is not what an individual member can do for his organization that ascribes self-worth, but rather it is the simple act of commitment to the group and the inclusivity that it entails that defines identity.

Nevertheless, Danshukai members do have a concept of service to others, but this is focused on the family unit. When alcoholics become involved in Danshukai, they will come to reflect on the harm they have caused their family. For many, this encourages them to improve their relationships with their family members and to help in the family unit. Whereas a husband and wife may not have socialized together in the past, Danshukai brings them together for meetings and facilitates communication. While much of the traditional family system has been modified in recent years, the underlying principle in Japanese life is that the needs of the family precede the needs of the individual (Hendry, 1987, pp. 21-37). An important part of the service for an alcoholic in Danshukai is therefore re-orientating their lives to the needs of their families. A further important point is that the concept of service as defined in AA (helping others to help your own recovery) has not been given much chance to develop in small non-profit organizations like Danshukai in Japan.

As Schwartz (2002) describes, the very close links between the State and business, and the over-regularization of non-profit organizational laws, have shaped the discourse on the public good. Schwartz (2002) argues that the evidence for volunteerism in Japan is ambiguous, with Japan ranking lowest among all the developed countries included in a 1996 study of volunteerism (Atoda, Amenomori, & Ohta, 1998, p. 108). This is despite the fact that the number of volunteers tripled in Japan between 1980 and 1997 (rising from 1.6 to 5.5 million).

Organizational Structure of Danshukai

Generally, AA has a flat organizational structure, which can be viewed, for example, in how meetings are operated. In AA meetings in the United States there

are generally rotating chairpersons with participants taking on different responsibilities each week. As Borkman (1999) has stated, AA creates an organizing culture that is “open-ended and unfolding” as well as “decentralized (*and*) participant led” (p. 185). Similar to other Japanese organizations, Danshukai is “top-down” and all relationships are vertically organized (Fujii, 1986; Nakamoto, 2007), with regulations being strictly adhered to and participants’ roles being prescribed and earned over time. Moreover, different roles within Danshukai do not oscillate as individual members leave the group. When a vacancy arises, the leaders will ask someone to take up that role. According to some leaders, however, social competence and skills are important in filling positions in Danshukai rather than length of service.

The overall organizational structure of Danshukai is not simple, and a full explanation is beyond the scope of this article. Danshukai is organized according to prefectures with Zendanren recognizing approximately 650 local Danshukai groups. Groups have spread throughout Japan through the efforts of individual members, through fissions caused by conflicts within groups and by the transformation of previous organizations into Danshukai groups. Zendanren has a strict policy that all Danshukai groups in a prefecture should belong to one entity. As a result, there are two ways that Danshukai are organized. One is an association of independent Danshukai groups. The second is a system whereby there is one Danshukai in a prefecture that has local branches. The prefectures of Japan are the country’s 47 sub-national jurisdictions. Established in 1871, they are governmental bodies that are larger than cities, towns, and villages. In reality, some Danshukai groups do not follow the Zendanren policy, however they are accepted by Zendanren who recognize the unique history of different Danshukai groups. As Kasai (2007) indicates, many Danshukai groups in different regions evolved from pre-existing organizations with various traditions, such as Temperance groups and hospitals. This makes it difficult to identify a unified Danshukai structure. Zendanren is controlled by a group of 20 trustees (all of whom are senior leaders), who met three or four times a year to discuss the management and direction of Zendanren (Zendanren, 2008b). Zendanren also has a group of 1,973 representatives called *Daigiin*, who represent Danshukai groups throughout Japan. While all are invited, each year approximately 200 *Daigiin* meet at a Zendanren annual general meeting.

It is important to also examine whether organizational coherence is maintained through an official set of principles or guides. In AA, organizational coherence is maintained through the 12-Traditions which are principles of group functioning and the 12-Concepts, which are principles for the relationship between the individual and the organization, or between organizational units (Borkman, 2008). In 2008, Zendanren published three textbooks: *Shishin to kihan* [Guides for alcoholics and Danshukai groups], *Kazoku no tame no kaifuku eno shihin* [Guides for the recovery of families], and a subtext for *Shishin to kihan* (Zendanren, 2008,

p. 13). The Zendanren guides set out 10 organizational norms, called “Danhukai Kihan.” Danshukai provides the following translation into English:

1. This association is a self-help group by alcoholics and for alcoholics, and also a group for citizens’ activities.
2. Whoever wants to give up drinking can join this association.
3. It’s a principle for every member of this association to give his/her name.
4. Members’ activities are voluntary in principle.
5. We must be equal on all conditions and no ruler exists at abstinent regular meetings.
6. Abstinent regular meetings consists of members’ personal experiences from beginning to end.
7. We attach importance to families’ attendance at meetings.
8. This association must make a contribution to a society through not only consultations about alcoholic poisoning but activities for enlightenment.
9. We must manage this association with membership fees. But we can get subsidies, contributions, and so on with good intentions.
10. This association should not be taken advantage of for political, religious, and commercial activities (Zendanren, 2006, p. 44).

Although the “Danshukai’s Kihan” can be compared to the 12-Traditions in AA’s *Big Book*, participants in Danshukai commonly reported that there are few Danshukai publications that are widely read at the national level. Zendanren, prefecture-level Danshukai organizations, and even local Danshukai groups all offer various newsletters and publications for members. The 10 “Kihan” are to a certain degree idealistic, with some norms being enacted by local groups more closely than others. For example, some Danshukai groups provide minimal services (such as alcoholism counseling) to the wider public, other than regular meetings who are attended by few outsiders. Other “Kihan” are strictly observed. For example, no leaders earn money through Danshukai, and Danshukai groups are not used to benefit individual members’ political, religious, or business activities.

Pekkanen, in his examination of Japan’s civil society, suggests that non-profit organizations have been heavily influenced through regulatory frameworks and the political opportunity structure (Pekkanen, 2006). Pekkanen states that independent civil society groups have found it hard to grow large, and large groups have found it hard to remain independent. While changes to the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) laws in the 1990s and 2000s have made it easier for organizations to gain non-profit status, few Danshukai groups have done this, and furthermore the benefits of applying are often unclear (Shinohe, 2001). Although the strong historical legacy of regulatory frameworks continues to restrict the growth of non-profit organization, it must be noted that Pekkanen is discussing large civil society groups whereas Danshukai is quite small in comparison (relying

on membership fees for their operation), with only two members working full time in the office in Zendanren.

Types of Meetings

The Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai is an association of 25 independent local Danshukai, and each of the independent local groups has a different set of meetings, which can be classified into five types:

1. Regular meetings [Reikai];
2. Discussion meetings [Kondankai];
3. Family meetings [Kazokukai];
4. Women's meetings [Fujinkai]; and
5. Others, including meetings for young alcoholics.

While some local groups have all of these meeting types, other groups do not necessarily offer all five. In addition, there are some types of meetings that are held independently of local Danshukai groups but are affiliated with Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai.

Regular Meetings [Reikai]

Regular meetings are open to all members, family members, and visitors to Danshukai across Japan. Each local Danshukai group has a regular meeting once or twice a month. This is usually large in size, sometimes with over 100 participants, including alcoholics, family members, and visitors, all of whom are expected to speak. The date and place of the meetings are published on Danshukai's website and anybody is allowed to attend. Attendees are expected to listen to other member's speeches and give their own when requested by the Chairperson. Participants must be mindful of the number of participants in the room, and allow others who have not had much time in previous meetings adequate time to speak (see discussion below). Members in this meeting are often physically grouped in the room according to their group membership. This style of meeting allows members from different groups to get together, to hear one another's stories and to create a sense of unity. With so many participants, these meetings are often highly charged with various speakers giving highly motivating speeches. Cross-talk is not permitted. Long-term members' wives or mothers often take on the responsibility of serving tea and sweets during the meeting.

Discussion Meetings [Kondankai]

Discussion meetings are smaller than regular meetings. Each local Danshukai group has this type of meeting one to four times a month. The date and place of the meetings are not published, and so anyone who wants to attend has to ask the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai's main office. The meetings are open to anyone.

Because they are expected to be smaller than regular meetings, the attendees are given longer to talk, and these meetings tend to be more intimate and emotional. Cross-talk is permitted, and senior Danshukai leaders may give advice to other members.

Family Meetings [Kazokukai]

There are two types of family meetings. The first is roughly equivalent to discussion meetings, and open to anybody. The second is a family meeting that is exclusive to the members of the local group, and outsiders are not accepted. The date and place of these meetings are not known to outsiders. Some groups use this closed meeting as a business meeting in which they discuss, for example, how to prepare for annual events.

Women's Meetings [Fujinkai]

Women's meetings are specifically for the wives of alcoholics (or sometimes their mothers) of the local Danshukai group. In Nerima Danshukai, a group of women felt that they were not able to speak freely in meetings where their husbands were present. They felt pressure to support their husbands, and to present a positive view of their husband's recovery even if this was not the case, hence the need for the women's meetings, which are closed to male alcoholics. While these meetings are exclusive to female family members of the local Danshukai group, they will also accept female family members who belong to other Danshukai groups.

Other Meetings in Local Groups

A local Danshukai group will offer discussion meetings especially for young alcoholics. Another group holds meetings in hospitals and invites patients. Various meetings, including outdoor cooking and seasonal parties, are also held for recreational purposes.

Meetings Independent from Local Danshukai Groups

Some meetings are held by sub-groups of the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, and they are independent from any local Danshukai groups. The longest-running meetings of this type are held by a women's group called *Tokyo Shiragiku Fujinkai* [white chrysanthemum] which was founded by the wives of Danshukai members in 1959. Their meetings are exclusive to female family members, mainly wives. There is also a closed meeting group called *Ameshisuto* [amethyst] which is for female alcoholics only, which was started in 1979 during the national annual meeting (Dai 16 kai zenkoku taikai, 1980). *Ameshisuto* had its first group meeting in Tokyo in 1989 (Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, 2008). There is also a special meeting group called *Shinguru* [singles] for single male alcoholics,

which was started at a day-long workshop in 1991 (Sabu Gurūpu Shinguru, n.d.), and had its first meeting in 1997 in Tokyo (Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai, 2008). *Shinguru* meetings are open to anyone, married or unmarried. When Oka asked a Danshukai leader if women are allowed to attend *Shinguru*, he laughed and said, “Anyone is welcome, but there have been no female attendees so far, because it would be very strange for a woman to attend such a meeting of people who are all single men.” Further to these group meetings, the Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai holds a monthly *Honbu Reikai* [headquarters meeting] where awards are given to members on their “birthday” (the day they became a member). Additionally, Zendanren runs group meetings for alcoholics with physical disabilities. These were inaugurated in 1979, and are usually held as part of a national event, such as the annual national meeting of Zendanren, or a special annual workshop.

Meetings as “Therapy”

Therapy in Danshukai is delivered primarily through the context of the meeting. Members are encouraged to attend as many meetings as they can, to listen to others’ stories and to tell others in the meeting about their personal experiences with alcohol. Personal experience stories normally focus on the consequences of a member’s drinking, their *shugai taiken* [alcohol damage experience], and how they came to join Danshukai. This can be contrasted with stories in AA, with members discussing “what was” (consequences of their out of control drinking), “what happened” (what were the precipitating events that led the person enter AA), and “what is it like now” (what abstinence is like, how the AA program is used in their daily lives, what their recovery program is like, and how they work the 12-Steps). In Danshukai, members discuss the “what was” and “what happened” elements of their alcoholism, but focus very little on “what is it like now.” This raises the question as to how new members learn about sobriety? In order to understand this, it is important to explore a number of elements that are specific to Danshukai. This includes examining the meeting sequence, the number of different forums through which a member engages with Danshukai, the cultural scripts they use to form part of their stories, learning strategies that emphasize situated learning and personal reflection, and the development of a communal narrative thread in meetings.

The Meeting’s Sequence

Geshi (1972), the medical doctor who helped Matsumura organize the early Danshukai group in Kōchi, wrote the formal national procedures for Danshukai meetings. However, not all meetings follow these procedures, so a variety of styles and approaches are used throughout Japan. Individual Danshukai groups’ activities differ partly because of their different networks with hospitals and clinics in the community (Tsujimoto, 1983). Each Danshukai is also influenced

by the specific history and culture of the region in which its meetings take place. A Danshukai member in Osaka might claim that meetings in Tokyo are far more reserved, polite, and concerned with status, whereas a Tokyo Danshukai member might claim that in Osaka individuals in a meeting are far more emotional and the meetings have less structure and are more egalitarian. Despite these differences, a member is able to join an open meeting anywhere in Japan, and still recognize the core elements of Danshukai.

This section will describe a regular meeting [Reikai] of one local Danshukai group in Tokyo. Prior to the start of the regular meeting of the Edogawa Danshukai, there is a bustle of activity in the room where it is held in Edogawa's civic hall. Some members are busy setting up the chairs and tables and the Danshukai Flag and the Sobriety Pledge Flag, while others stand outside the room having a cigarette, and greeting those who arrive for the meeting. On arrival, participants must write their name and that of their local group in a registry book. ¥1000/month [approx. US\$2.00] must be paid by each participant to contribute to the costs associated with hiring the room. The participants gradually take their seats. Some continue to talk with those seated next to them, while others read a newspaper quietly while waiting for the meeting to start.

Similar to the arrangements in other Japanese formal ceremonial events (Hamabata, 1986, p. 360), seating is important in a Danshukai regular meeting with participants grouped roughly according to their Danshukai local group affiliation and their status in that group. Visitors and presidents often sit at a table facing the participants. If possible this table should be at the opposite side of the entrance to the room, as this is traditionally a high-status position. Members from the same local group are seated together, while wives and family members are seated together on the side of the room closest to the entrance (a lower-status position). This demonstrates that alcoholic members, and not their families, should play the main role in the Danshukai meetings, despite encouragement of family involvement in meetings. Female alcoholics sit with male alcoholics, as they are there as alcoholics, and not as wives of alcoholics. In most cases, alcoholics and their wives are seated separately. Wives (or mothers) of alcoholics, especially those of the host local Danshukai group, prepare tea and sweets which they will serve to the participants. This role is viewed as prestigious in Danshukai. Similar to the Japanese tea ceremony, the act of offering tea and sweets to all participants stresses the unity between members, rather than differences in rank and status (Kato, 2004). Once people are seated, the president of the Danshukai group will begin the meeting, either by standing at his desk and beginning to speak, or more theatrically, as the President of Edogawa Danshukai starts his group, by calling out loudly "Osssssss."

The president of Edogawa Danshukai begins the meeting by leading the participants in reading the Abstinence Pledges, although these are sometimes read before a break held at the halfway point in the meeting. The rest of the meeting is devoted to individual participants delivering their personal experience stories

[*taikendan*], which give details of their alcohol misuse and the damage and hurt they have caused others, especially their family. Wives of the members speak only after all the men have spoken. One member explained the reason for this:

An alcoholic does not remember what he did, but his wife remembers it clearly. If she tells a story that he cannot recall, he will lose face in the meeting, which leads to his absence from the next meeting. So the wife has to talk carefully about her experiences after seeing how deeply he remembers his deeds, or if he is willing to reveal them in front of other members.

This condition might restrict what a wife can talk about; however, if she wants to talk freely, she can go to another closed meeting which is exclusive to female family members (see above). When all the members have spoken, the presidents of other local Danshukai groups deliver their speeches. And, finally, the president of the host local Danshukai group gives the last speech. Once he finishes, the meeting is closed. In some meetings, all the participants stand and join hands in a large circle around the room. Then, while swinging their linked hands, they recite the following slogan in unison: “*Motto tsuyoku, motto kashikoku, motto shinkenni. Yaro, yaro, yaro*” [“We will be stronger, wiser, and more earnest. Come on, come on, come on”]. This ceremony is called *rensa akushu* [linked hands] and the slogan was created by a leader of the Japan Temperance Union in 1928 (Japan Temperance Union, 2008).

Once the meeting has finished, participants help tidy up. They put the chairs and tables away and within minutes the room is empty, everyone having gone their separate ways. At first, Chenhall was surprised at this, having seen self-help group meetings where members talk more informally after the meeting or go out for tea afterwards. The main reason why the participants of large meetings [Reikai] leave so quickly is a practical one. They have a long distance to travel home. As many of Tokyo’s residents live far from the city center, sometimes with travel times of up to 2 hours, participants have to leave the meeting promptly at around 9:00 or 9:30 in the evening, in order to make their train and bus connections home before the services close. Various Danshukai groups have recreational activities that take place on weekends, but others provide no recreational activities because they claim that in their group, members do not want to meet outside meeting times. This is partly due to the fact that there are meetings in Tokyo almost every day, and so members do not feel the need to organize extra activities.

Depending on the specific Danshukai group and where it is located, there are minor differences in some elements of a Danshukai meeting. Since 1953, Danshu-tomo-no-kai in Tokyo (unaffiliated with Zendanren) has performed a tradition at special events, whereby members and their families state their Abstinence Pledges, after which a bottle of *sake* is ceremonially smashed (AA Nihonshibu Danshu-tomo-no-kai, 1954). This ceremony might have been created as a parody of *Kagamibiraki*, which is a traditional Japanese ceremony where

the lid of a sake cask is smashed open. “‘Kagamibiraki’ is performed when a congratulatory message needs to be conveyed, such as at a wedding reception, a congratulatory ceremony, a completion ceremony, or a party. The people who are gathered drink the ‘sake’ from the same wooden cask and experience the joy together” (Hakutsuru, 2008, para 2). In Danshu-tomo-no-kai, members smash whole bottles of sake instead of just the lid, while celebrating their rebirth as a member of Danshukai. This ceremony is performed to this day.

Personal Stories: Spoken, Written and “Buyuden”

Like AA (Rappaport, 1993), Danshukai emphasizes the therapeutic nature of telling one’s story within a group setting. However, unlike AA, a Danshukai member’s personal experience story does not start with a declaration of their alcoholic status, such as “Hello my name is John and I am an alcoholic.” Rather, participants emphasize their membership affiliation stating: “*Minasan konbanwa, Koto Danshukai no Tanaka desu*” [“Good evening, everyone, I am a member of Kōtō Danshukai and my name is Tanaka”].

According to their official texts, Danshukai participants must talk about their *shugai taiken* [alcohol-damage experience] in accordance with one of the Abstinence Pledges. At the meetings we attended, the participants generally only discussed the events around their alcoholism, and few discussed its potential causes. Enomoto (1985) describes the differences between the personal stories of Japanese AA and Danshukai members as follows:

In AA meetings, personal stories are told as if they were given to confess their sin of drinking to Christian priests. The atmosphere is unruffled and strained. . . . In Danshukai meetings, they talk enthusiastically about how terrible their alcoholism has been, and relate in detail about their concrete experience of struggling to maintain their life of abstinence. Their way of talking is emotional and moving. Sometimes it draws forth tears and laughter and has a sense of “naniwa-bushi.” (p. 160)

Naniwa-bushi was originally the name of a traditional Japanese performing art and is used metaphorically by Danshukai members to humorously characterize the nature of Danshukai.

“That man is naniwa-bushi” . . . mean(s) that he possesses a strong sense of justice, has a sympathetic heart, and acts with decorum. However, it is not all praise, because the word includes the nuance “somewhat thoughtless, lacking in discretion, and apt to be influenced by sentiment.” “What he says is naniwa-bushi” means “He does not use reason to persuade but appeals only to one’s emotions.” (Mitsubishi Corporation, 1988, p. 100)

Members rarely mentioned that telling their story had a direct therapeutic effect, although in both large and small meetings, the speakers and other members would become visibly upset during a specific story. Participants always referred to the

supportive nature of being among other Danshukai members, rather than the specific content of individual stories.

The process of sharing stories about the damage caused to members by alcohol is based on a “study and develop method,” in which participants learn from other members’ stories. In regular meetings [Reikai], very few questions should be asked, but the emphasis is on learning through participation in meetings. In fact, new members are not given any verbal instructions as to the content of their speeches. This process is very similar to other forms of “situated learning” that have been discussed regarding a variety of Japanese places of learning, from calligraphy and music to baseball and mechanics (Singleton, 1998). The phrase “*iippanashi kikippanashi*” [one-way talking, one-way listening], commonly used in Japanese self-help groups (Oka, 1999, pp. 15-16), was explained by leaders to be a basic rule for participants in Danshukai. Accordingly, participants have to refrain from asking questions or making comments about members’ personal stories. As one leader asserted: “Personal experience stories are not to be evaluated.” Of course, these meetings are supplemented by more interactive meeting groups, such as discussion meetings [Kondankai], where members can freely ask questions and engage in discussions (see above).

In regular meetings [Reikai], members have a range of thematic styles. For example, an alcoholic might tell a serious, heartfelt story about losing his job, abusing his family with cycles of alcohol misuse, and family tragedy ending in a traffic accident. Wives’ speeches might tell of the anguish of supporting their husband’s alcoholism, and mothers of their disbelief that they could do nothing to help their sons or daughters give up alcohol. Humorous stories are also told about the various exploits and difficult situations in which an alcoholic finds himself or herself after too many drinking parties. Similar to Enomoto (1985), we also found that humor was a common tool, utilized by more senior members to enliven the meeting, but also to convey shocking or sad events safely.

Some Danshukai members referred to personal stories as *buyuden*. A *buyuden* originally referred to an epic tale of a brave samurai. It is highly formulaic, and is stylized to present a specific structure. In Danshukai, a *buyuden* refers to a humorous story where the speaker gives a somewhat glorified account of his drinking deeds, but emphasizes that he has no control over his actions. The use of the term *buyuden* is meant to be ironic, and a *buyuden* should make people laugh and enjoy the story, but at the same time it should reveal the speaker’s inability to control his behavior. These stories are also viewed as admirable, because the protagonists have survived such terrible troubles. However, some senior leaders were critical of this formulaic style of presentation. As one leader (who gave his personal story at an event where a professional psychologist was in attendance) pointed out:

In the workshop, I told my personal story including my childhood. Then the guest psychologist said to me, “Oh, I see that Danshukai is developing.

A Danshukai leader told such a story. I am surprised. I thought that the stories of Danshukai were always nothing but *buyuden*." I realized he was familiar with only the old-type Danshukai.

When comparing Danshukai with AA, or other forms of "talk as therapy groups" in the United States, it is important to view Danshukai personal stories in light of other Japanese psychological approaches. Importantly, Danshukai is also viewed as a tool for personal reflection, and this has references to other forms of Japanese therapy such as Morita and Naikan therapies, which emphasize an acceptance of one's present and past situation, and that recovery should be made through personal meditation and reflection (Suwaki, 1979). Danshukai meetings are equally about listening to other people's stories in order to reflect on one's own position. Introspection has been identified in previous Japanese research as an important part of members' recovery in Danshukai (Ochi, Sakai, & Takao, 2007).

In addition to the various meetings through which members can tell their personal stories, members are also encouraged to publish their stories in Danshukai newsletters. While members often commented that people do not necessarily read Danshukai publications, the organization regularly prints members' personal stories in newsletters and special editions. The emphasis was not only on the therapeutic effect of reading personal stories, but also on the therapeutic effect of writing one's own story, which is believed to be beneficial. This has reflections in Japanese culture more generally, where there is an important history of written narratives by ordinary people about everyday experiences (Saeki & Craig, 1985).

Personal Stories: Developing A Communal Narrative Thread

Smith's (1988) description of Danshukai in the Osaka region describes a process whereby newer members to Danshukai move from the margin to the center of Danshukai participation through a process of listening to more experienced participants and incorporating Danshukai sayings, ideas, and concepts into their own speeches. This "legitimate peripheral" style of learning enables members to create new selves that conform to Danshukai standards. Smith is critical of the larger Danshukai groups in urban regions such as Tokyo, where new members are excluded from participating in this process by limiting speeches to older Danshukai members. However, in this research we did not find that new and more junior members were being excluded from speaking at meetings.

In Danshukai, many leaders stressed the importance of requiring all attendees to speak at meetings, and stated this differentiated Danshukai from Japanese AA, where this is not the case. However, due to the large size of *regular meetings* [Reikai], the participants cannot all speak for very long periods. So how does Danshukai in Tokyo get around this problem? There are three important findings related to this point. The first is that regular meetings are only one of the many types of meetings that members can attend. Through membership to a local

Danshukai group, all members have access to much smaller meetings, such as *discussion meetings* [Kondankai], where they are able to talk for greater lengths of time. While these meetings are able to provide much more intimate support for a participant, the larger meetings also have important functions. These have generally not been acknowledged by previous research, which has often focused on the benefits of small Danshukai groups (for example, Hirose et al., 1986, 1988; Saito & Hada, 1983). Large Danshukai meetings bring members together from many different groups. Their more formal style creates the feeling of a special event, something beyond the norm that is aimed to inspire, unite, and invigorate members. Moreover, for members from smaller local Danshukai groups (the smallest local Danshukai group in Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai has only three members), large regular meetings enable them to hear other members' personal stories.

Danshukai leaders in Tokyo also emphasized that managing over 100 attendees, all of whom must give their personal stories, requires great skill and experience. The president of a Danshukai group criticized a veteran member for speaking too long, despite the shortage of time: "We alcoholics are prone to be self-centered. That man, despite his long period of abstinence, did not consider others, who were waiting for their own turn." Another president emphasized that learning to speak in large regular meetings provided training for alcoholics to develop their social skills and sensitivity to others.

A further important finding related to the speeches of members in large regular meetings is that there is a specific structure to the selection of who speaks when. The chairperson's role is central to this process. He not only selects speakers in order to develop a narrative thread through the meeting, but also uses his knowledge of who has spoken where and when, in all regular meetings across all the 25 groups in Tokyo.

We were first made aware of this when attending the opening of a new Danshukai group in a ward in Tokyo. This group had been formed by two senior Danshukai members who lived in the ward, but did not have their own local Danshukai group. While there were only three members in this Danshukai group, there were over 300 participants at the opening event, as well as a representative from the local government, a journalist, and two academics (Chenhall & Oka). At the end of the meeting, the Chairperson told us that he had not had much previous experience in this position, and specifically that he had little experience in the method of choosing speakers. As mentioned above, in regular meetings attendees give their speech only when requested by the Chairperson. Because choosing speakers was reliant on a chairperson's knowledge about which members had spoken (and for what time period) at different meetings throughout Tokyo, it was important that a chairperson traveled to as many regular meetings as possible throughout Tokyo. This could mean that he had to visit a different local Danshukai group meeting almost every night of the month in different parts of Tokyo.

A committed Danshukai member will try to attend as many regular meetings in different wards throughout Tokyo each month. Importantly, members from different local Danshukai groups attending each other's regular meetings establish a system of reciprocity. In this system, if a group of members attend my own regular meeting, I am obliged to return this favor and attend their regular meetings. Moreover, a chairperson must attend as many meetings as possible and must make notes of who has spoken a lot, who did not speak much, and who was absent, for use when deciding the order of speakers at his own regular meeting. At the meetings we attended, veteran members carefully documented what was happening, using a sheet of paper on which were listed all the surnames of the 600 Tokyo Danshu Shinseikai members according to their local group and their length of membership. This list is updated monthly and copies of it are informally given to veteran members and chairpersons.

Some chairpersons of regular meetings described how they could create a narrative thread running through the meeting. Perhaps one individual raised an issue which resonated with the members. The chairperson could build on this and create a story across the members' speeches, leaving the president with the task of pulling the narrative threads together at the end. This meant that the chairperson needed to be aware of the content of various participants' personal experience stories, and also to be able to choose certain speakers above others. Speakers, who had in a previous meeting been given time to expand on their story, were expected just to say one of the stock Danshukai phrases (which are also useful for new members who are unsure what to say). Stock phrases, such as "*Ichinichi danshu de ganbarimasu*" [I will do my best to keep to the pledge of abstinence for a day], allow members to say something in a meeting and demonstrate their affiliation with the group, while conceding to others and allowing them enough time to speak.

At the conclusion of a meeting, a successful chairperson should have ideally created a narrative that transcended individual speeches, facilitating a common understanding or theme across the group. In addition, the chairperson must be fair in the time allotted to each speaker, based on their previous speeches in other meeting places. This is not a semi-random process of selecting names from a list, or of older members dominating meeting times. Rather, it indicates a very complex engagement in developing commonalities across participants' personal experience stories, as well as distributing time fairly and equally among all members.

These "linked speeches" can be likened to the Japanese tradition of *renga*. *Renga*, meaning "linked poem," began over 700 years ago in Japan to encourage the collaborative composition of poems. Poets worked in pairs or small groups, taking turns at composing the alternating 3-line and 2-line stanzas. The texts themselves were based on an "oral and performative composition process" (Horton, 1993, p. 444; see also Renga, 2008). *Renga* continues to be popular in Japan and is used by professionals in the field of mental health as "*renga* therapy" (Horiuchi, 2000). While Danshukai members are not explicitly involved

in *renga* therapy, the thematic continuities that are built through the speeches of participants' personal experience stories aim to provide insight, growth, and shared unity. However, we have to add that although some veteran members supported this hypothesis, they stressed that it is very difficult to create such linked speeches. Furthermore, attendees would not approve of a chairman being overly manipulative. Interestingly, there are no manuals or written rules about how a chairperson should facilitate the meetings.

Family Relationships in Danshukai

Danshukai works by providing an alternative environment through which alcoholics can devote their time away from the temptations of alcohol. The inclusion of the family in Danshukai meetings ensures that the whole family is involved, and responsible for the recovery of an alcoholic, although there were far fewer family participants than alcoholics in all the regular meetings we visited. We observed that fewer wives of veteran members attended, and that some of the women stated that their husbands were still drinking or were in hospital.

Danshukai members often stated that during their drinking days they felt constantly criticized by their wives, leading to self-denial, avoidance, and low self-esteem. These emotional states could be further expressed through violence, but equally by not participating in home life and by staying away from the home environment. When entering Danshukai, husbands hear similar stories from other wives, and it is then that they gain insight into their own behavior (Kobayashi, 2000, p. 49). Married couples also explained that they did not often talk about each other's problems at home, and that Danshukai gave them an opportunity to talk to each other in a safe and supportive environment. We often heard in Danshukai meetings, a woman speaker expressing her thoughts after remarking, "I cannot say this sort of things to him at home, but. . . ." One wife of an alcoholic jokingly cursed her husband in a meeting, adding that she could curse him in a Danshukai meeting because he could not interrupt her there. In this light, Danshukai clearly enables improved communications between alcoholic husbands and their wives.

While Borovory (2005) has extensively discussed Japanese women's roles as "good wives" in managing and supporting drunken husbands, some critics could argue that Danshukai fosters what Al-Anon would call an "enabling" relationship between husband and wife. That is, through her supportive behavior a wife may be reinforcing her husband's alcoholism. Danshukai leaders are aware of this, with Zendanren having published in 1994 a book entitled *Guiding Principles for the Recovery of Families* [Kazoku no tameno "Kaifuku eno shishin"]. On the other side to this, once in Danshukai, men often stated that if it were not for their wife pestering them to come to meetings, they would never have made it at all. Thus, for some men, their alcoholism was supported by their wives before coming to Danshukai (by accepting their behavior, by covering up for their misdeeds), and once in Danshukai, wives continued to manage

their husband's participation in Danshukai. A male's dependency on his wife, extending from his life during alcoholism to his life during sobriety, may reinforce a "traditional" spousal relationship in Japan. Relationships of dependency between the family members involved in Danshukai is reflected in Japanese discourses about the family, characterized by the landscape of parent-child relations and shaped by norms of selflessness and communalism (see Borovory, 2005; Doi, 1973). The emphasis on the family, with wives as the providers of maternal indulgence, protection, and nurturance, has been described as entrenched in modern reconstitutions of the family (Borovory, 2005, p. 77). Nakamura (1982, p. 192) observed that an alcoholic (as dependent husband) and his wife (as provider of nurturance and motherly love) is symbolic of the relationship between mother and son.

However, some women felt uncomfortable in this nurturing role, stating that if their husbands were unable to maintain their abstinence, they were criticized by Danshukai for not adequately supporting them. They stressed the importance of Danshukai's family member groups, where wives of alcoholics can talk freely without fear of criticism from male Danshukai members. The fact that Danshukai offers a range of different meetings exclusively for specific groups is important in the provision of care for the whole family. It also recognizes the pivotal role that the family has in recovery, but at the same time addresses problems an individual spouse may have in relationship to their partner and their alcoholism.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the Japanese self-help groups for alcoholics called Danshukai, and has focused on a number of issues related to the historical, cultural, regional, and political frameworks within which these groups are situated. While leaders of Danshukai in the 1950s were inspired by Alcoholics Anonymous, it was AA's general structure and not its therapeutic content that was translated into the Japanese context. For therapeutic content, Danshukai turned to existing cultural understandings and group structures within Japanese society, and made the "meeting" pivotal to recovery. Danshukai also drew on both existing activities within the Temperance Union and specific cultural understandings related to the nature of group membership.

In Danshukai, the individual is not one who experiences a spiritual awakening, through reading the *Big Book*, attending meetings, and working on the 12-Steps, in turn becoming part of a fellowship that provides service to others. Rather, an alcoholic in Danshukai becomes a member of an organization by taking on a prescribed role, and through identifying with the group, learns to maintain abstinence. Recovery is not an individual journey but one that is closely related to the inclusion of the family in the therapeutic process. Alcoholism in Danshukai is managed by changing one's social routines and "belonging" to Danshukai by attending meetings, paying membership fees, and sharing stories among

members about the damaging effects of alcohol. The structure of Danshukai closely resembles some aspects of Japanese society with all the hierarchies and gendered divisions entailed within. Societal norms are not challenged, although family members attempt to engage in a process of healing within these structures in a variety of meeting contexts. As such, the concept of service is not tied to volunteering to a range of disadvantaged others, but more closely to supporting family recovery.

Limitations of Our Research

One of the major limitations to this research is that we focused our examination of Danshukai on the Tokyo region and so conclusions reached in this article may not apply to Danshukai groups in other parts of Japan. When future research investigates Danshukai in different regions, we will get a clearer understanding of the specific historical and local influences that have produced a rich tapestry of Danshukai activities throughout Japan.

Secondly, although we conducted semi-structured interviews and many conversational interviews with male alcoholics and female family members, there were no female alcoholic members among our interviewees. This is partly because Chenhall and Oka are both men, and it would have been inappropriate for us to speak at length with female alcoholics. Furthermore, female alcoholics were hesitant to engage with us, whereas many female family members approached us without hesitation. Although we recognize that the involvement of female alcoholics in Danshukai is very important, we do not think that we are eligible to discuss this issue.

This research was based on a limited set of themes in one time and place and so there are a number of areas for further research required. This includes: in-depth analyses of Danshukai's organizational structure and their relationships with other organizations; the differences and commonalities in how different members experience therapy; a full investigation of the range of activities and meetings offered by all Danshukai; and investigation of young people's experiences in Danshukai. Importantly, further research is required to follow-up on those members who have left Danshukai, to understand the reason for their departure as well as assess their current health status.

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