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Compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF

Andrew Barshay, Willem Boot, Albert Craig, Brett de Bary, Peter Duus, J. S. A. Elisonas, Grant Goodman, Andrew Gordon, Helen Hardacre, James Huffman, Marius Jansen, Donald Keene, Marlene Mayo, Peter Nosco, Fred G. Notehelfer, Richard Rubinger, Janine Sawada, Barry Steben, John A. Tucker

and contributions by

William Bodiford, Yŏngho Ch'ŏe, Van Gessel, Ian James McMullen, Rosemary Mercer, Tetsuo Najita, Kate Nakai, Ann Stinson, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Paul Watt, Aida Yuan Wong

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Chapter 41

NATIONALISM AND PAN-ASIANISM

Nationalism as an element in Japanese tradition had been evident since ancient times in many forms: for instance, in the hegemonic claims of the early Yamato state; in the writings of Kitabatake Chikafusa; in medieval Shinto; in the imperialist ambitions of Toyotomi Hideyoshi;[1] in the popular literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (especially Chikamatsu's *Coxinga*); and in the National Learning and Mito schools of the late Tokugawa period. We also encountered nationalism as a major component of the modernization movements in the Meiji period.

In this chapter, we address two new forms of nationalism that appeared with the rise of the modern, Western-style nation-state. One is the formal incorporation of Shinto as an adjunct of the new state administration, overriding the local and particularistic associations of traditional Shinto. Despite the reversal of many institutional arrangements identified with it, and the formal disestablishment of State Shinto in 1945, the issue of the state's endorsement of and the prime minister's engagement in religious practices at Shinto shrines remains a subject of great political controversy. It has roots in tradition but acquired a specific modern form at new shrines associated with State Shinto.

The second form is cultural nationalism, which had both internationalist

1. See de Bary et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, chaps. 11, 15, 19.

and imperialist forms. Here we see it as a Pan-Asianism, initially defined in Japanese terms. Although it sought common religious and aesthetic grounds with other Asian cultures, it also was exploited by Japanese colonialism. The protest against colonialism, recorded here by Yanagi Muneyoshi, who genuinely respected both the similarities and the differences of Asian cultures and courageously defended both, illustrates the point. Yanagi's view contrasts with the Japanese colonialists' establishment of Shinto shrines in Taiwan and Korea, where they had no local roots or native links.

STATE SHINTO

The term "State Shinto" describes the state's financial support of, and selective ideological appropriation of, Shinto in the modern period, from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912) until it was dissolved by the Allied Occupation with the "Shinto Directive" of 1945. State Shinto encompasses diverse phenomena: the government's funding and regulation of shrines and priests, the emperor's religious roles, the state's creation of Shinto doctrines and rituals, the construction of shrines in imperial Japan's colonies, the compulsory participation in shrine rites, the teaching of Shinto myth as history, and the suppression of other religions that contradicted some aspect of Shinto. Because the term designates a political use of Shinto during the formation of the modern Japanese state until the end of World War II, State Shinto is not considered a "natural" evolution of Shinto itself. In this sense, State Shinto is not strictly a religion, and many Japanese who participated in it did so under pressure rather than from personal belief.

When seen from the perspective of secular scholars taking a critical attitude toward the prewar and wartime Japanese political regime, State Shinto appears as a blueprint for the intellectual and spiritual engineering of a loyal and obedient populace. Using State Shinto as an analytic concept to show how the state's aims were presented as sacred, and opposition as traitorous, it is possible to explain why the regime encountered so little popular resistance. This perspective bears little relation, however, to that of Shinto priests and scholars, who see Shinto's modern history as a checkered picture of erratic, always insufficient, government financing; selective political adoption of some Shinto ideas, but not all; and insufficient public support for making Shinto a suprareligious ritual order that all Japanese, regardless of religious belief, would willingly embrace. For them, Shinto's most significant influence came at the beginning of the Meiji period, with the government's establishment of the Department of Divinity (Jingikan), but soon faded with the failure of the Great Promulgation Campaign (1870–1884). Shinto's influence was not regained until the reestablishment of the Bureau of Divinity (Jingiin) in 1940, and then only partially. Shinto received strong support until 1945, but it was swept aside thereafter. From this

point of view, the idea of State Shinto is largely a fiction, and its postwar treatment by the Occupation, an egregious example of victor's justice. That these two incommensurate perspectives of State Shinto cannot be reconciled even at the beginning of the twenty-first century illustrates the continuing controversy regarding questions of Shinto's modern history.

Between 1870 and 1884, Shinto bureaucrats attempted to make a state religion out of Shinto through the Great Promulgation Campaign. A small number in the National Learning movement, mainly from Hirata Atsutane's faction, held office in the early Meiji government. Bureaucrats composed an official creed loosely based on Shinto and authorized Shinto priests to create a network of preachers to spread it to the populace. But because the creed had no basis in popular religious life and because it was composed of platitudes about obeying authority and revering the emperor (who previously had played no role in popular religious life), the people found it incomprehensible and its priests ludicrous. As Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote,

> Shinto has not yet established a body of doctrine. While some identify "restorationism" (*fukko*) with Shinto, Shinto has always been the puppet of Buddhism, and for hundreds of years it has failed to show its true colors. . . . It is only an insignificant movement trying to make headway by taking advantage of the imperial house at a time of political change.[2]

As this passage shows, intellectuals regarded the Great Promulgation Campaign as a dismal failure and Shinto as a "puppet."

When the campaign failed, Shinto bureaucrats fell out of favor, and the state's support for Shinto declined. Meanwhile, the shrines were drawn into a national hierarchy and a unified annual ritual calendar centering on imperial rituals and on new, national holidays, with newly created national symbols, such as a flag and an anthem. This gave the shrines a national focus for the first time. In many cases, new deities with national or patriotic associations, but no historical connection to the shrines in question, were assigned to shrines, considerably altering the character of local religious life. The cult of the war dead was institutionalized with the construction in 1879 of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and an associated network of provincial shrines for the war dead. Dying in battle was upheld as the highest possible honor for a Japanese subject, since the emperor personally visited the Yasukuni Shrine to honor the spirits enshrined there. From about 1880 to 1905, the Shinto priests gradually organized themselves nationally to respond to what they regarded as a deplorable lack of state support. A national association of shrine priests was established in 1900.

Part of the Meiji debate on Shinto concerned whether it should be consid-

2. Quoted in Hardacre, "Creating State Shintō," p. 29.

ered a religion. As suggested by Fukuzawa's remarks, intellectuals regarded it as an incompletely developed religion, or a religion stunted in its intellectual development owing to centuries of being overshadowed by Buddhism. Shinto ideologues agreed that Shinto was not a religion. For them, Shinto was much more than a religion; it was "suprareligious" in that, first, it transcended the beliefs of a mortal founder and, second, it embodied the essence of the Japanese nation, its divine creation, and the divinity of imperial rule. According to this view, it was theoretically possible both to recognize the limited rights of religious freedom granted under the Meiji constitution and to require subjects to participate in shrine rites. Shrines were viewed as national facilities for the expression of patriotic sentiment, which all subjects could be expected to nurture, whatever their religious beliefs.

Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 stimulated a great expansion of Shinto's influence. The dead from this war and the preceding Sino-Japanese War of 1894/1895 were enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine, bringing many ordinary people to Tokyo to pay their respects to the spirits of their loved ones. The annexation of Korea in 1910 and the colonization of Manchuria led to a heightened mood of patriotism and to energetic shrine construction in the colonies. The state increased its support of Shinto and financed the training of shrine priests. Shrine priests of a certain rank became teachers in the public schools, where they promoted the teaching of Shinto mythology as history. Rites to revere the imperial portrait and ceremonial recitations of the Imperial Rescript on Education were established as regular school observances, along with visits to shrines by schoolchildren. The observance of shrine rites in local communities began to assume a semiobligatory character, and families were expected to keep a talisman of the Ise Shrine in their home altars for the gods (*kami*). As a part of Shinto's transformation to facilitate the unification of the populace, thousands of shrines were merged, in order to produce one shrine per village, with a patriotic meaning attached to the remaining shrine. There was considerable local opposition to this policy.

Popular religious life also was influenced by state suppression and intimidation using Shinto elements. Most striking was the suppression of the new religion Ōmoto in 1921 and 1935. Other religions were suppressed on charges of lèse-majesté if their doctrines conflicted with Shinto mythology. In 1932, when Christian students at Sophia University refused to pay tribute at the Yasukuni Shrine, Christianity as a whole was accused of being unpatriotic.

In 1940 the Bureau of Divinity (Jingiin) was established within the government, marking a further expansion of Shinto's influence. State appropriations for training priests and administering shrines continued at a high level. During World War II, Shinto priests served as military chaplains, and local shrine parishes were mobilized to support the war effort.

State Shinto came to an end in 1945 with the Allied Occupation's promulgation of the Shinto Directive. Remaining in force until the end of the Occu-

pation, this directive prohibited all state support for and patronage of Shinto and ordered that all Shinto influences be removed from the public schools. All bureaucratic mechanisms for administering shrines were dismantled, and many Shinto figures were purged. The priesthood as a whole suffered an immediate loss of prestige. This document was issued "in order to free the Japanese people from direct or indirect compulsion to believe or profess to believe in a religion or cult officially designated by the state, and . . . in order to prevent a recurrence of the perversion of Shinto theory and beliefs into militaristic and ultranationalistic propaganda."[3]

Because State Shinto was not a naturally occurring religion—indeed, some of those most closely associated with it denied that Shinto was or could be a religion of personal faith—it had no sacred texts. Instead, such pronouncements as the Imperial Rescript on Education and the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors functioned as sacred writings when they were ceremonially read before an assembly of schoolchildren or military personnel standing with bowed heads and receiving the words as divine. Similarly, when ultranationalist texts like *Fundamentals of Our National Polity* (*Kokutai no hongi*) (see chap. 44) and the myths of the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) were reproduced in school textbooks as part of the national history, those nationalist sentiments and stories of the nation's creation by the gods, or the entrusting of the god's will to the first emperor, came to play a role in national life similar to the role of sacred writings in a religion.

THE UNITY OF RITES AND RULE

Central to the construction of the modern Japanese nation was the presentation of the emperor as a sacred ruler who rules through rituals for his divine ancestors. The ideal of a union of ritual and rulership was called *saisei itchi*, an idea that was expounded in various edicts. The following from 1870 is representative.

We solemnly announce: The Heavenly Deities and the Great Ancestress [Amaterasu Ōmikami] established the throne and made the succession secure. The line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession thereof and handed it on. Religious ceremonies and government were one and the same (*saisei itchi*), and the innumerable subjects were united. Government and education were clear to those above, while below them the manners and customs of the people were beautiful. Beginning with the Middle Ages, however, there were sometimes seasons of decay alternating with seasons of progress. Sometimes the Way was plain, sometimes, darkened; and the period in which government and education failed to flourish was long.

3. Quoted in Hardacre, *Shintō and the State*, p. 167.

Now in the cycle of fate, all things have become new. Polity and education must be made clear to the nation, and the Great Way of obedience to the gods must be promulgated. Therefore we newly appoint propagandists (the National Teachers of the Great Promulgation Campaign, *kyōdōshoku*) to proclaim this to the nation. Do you our subjects keep this commandment in mind?

[Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism*, p. 6]

THE IDEA OF SHINTO AS A NATIONAL TEACHING

Texts associated with State Shinto sometimes have taken the form of memorials presented to the state. The following memorial of 1874, the period of the Great Promulgation Campaign, promotes the idea of Shinto as a National Teaching and tries to distinguish it from religion.

MEMORIAL

National Teaching (*kokkyō*) is teaching the codes of national government to the people without error. Japan is called the divine land because it is ruled by the heavenly deities' descendants, who consolidate the work of the deities. The Way of such consolidation and rule by divine descendants is called Shinto. . . . The Way of humanity in the age of the gods is nothing other than Shinto in the world of humanity. Ultimately, Shinto means a unity of government and teaching. . . . The National Teaching of the imperial house is not a religion, because religions are the theories of their founders. The National Teaching consists of the traditions of the imperial house, beginning in the age of the gods and continuing throughout history. Teaching and consolidating these traditions for the masses is inseparable from government, related as the two wheels of a cart or the wings of a bird. The National Teaching is Shinto . . . and Shinto is nothing other than the national Teaching.

[Hardacre, "The Shintō Priesthood," p. 303]

THE DIVINITY OF THE EMPEROR

The idea of the emperor's divinity was a hallmark of State Shinto. This notion inevitably followed from articles 1 and 3 of the Meiji constitution of 1889, which stated, "The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal" and "The Emperor is sacred and inviolable." The idea of the emperor's divinity was promulgated in many other forms, and while many Japanese rejected it, it pervasively influenced Japanese society and culture until the emperor renounced it in 1946.

The divinity of the emperor was understood to mean, among other things,

that the emperor was above the law, a theme taken up by Itō Hirobumi in *Commentaries on the Constitution* (1889).

FROM ARTICLE 3 OF THE MEIJI CONSTITUTION

The sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated. The Emperor is Heaven-descended, divine and sacred; He is preeminent above all his subjects. He must be reverenced and is inviolable. He has indeed to pay due respect to the law, but the law has no power to hold him accountable to it. Not only shall there be no irreverence for the Emperor's person, but also He shall not be made a topic of derogatory comment nor one of discussion.

[Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism*, p. 9]

KATŌ GENCHI: "MIKADOISM"

Katō Genchi, one of the most prominent Shinto scholars of the first half of the twentieth century, identified the divinity of the emperor as the essence of Shinto, offering the term "Mikadoism" for the idea of worshiping the emperor as a living god (*akitsukami*, literally, "manifest deity").

Shinto . . . has culminated in Mikadoism or the worship of the Mikado or Japanese Emperor as a divinity, during his lifetime as well as after his death. . . . Herein lies even at the present day, in my opinion, the essence or life of Shinto, inseparably connected with the national ideals of the Japanese people. Japanese patriotism or loyalty, as you might call it, really is not simple patriotism or mere loyalty as understood in the ordinary sense of the words, that is, in the mere ethical sense of the term. It is more—it is the lofty self-denying enthusiastic sentiment of the Japanese people toward their august Ruler, believed to be something divine, rendering them capable of offering up anything and everything, all dearest to them, willingly, that is, of their own free will; of sacrificing not only their wealth or property, but their own life itself, for the sake of their divinely gracious sovereign. . . . All this is nothing but the actual manifestation of the religious consciousness of the Japanese people.

[Katō, *Study of Shinto*, pp. 206–7]

THE PATRIOTIC MEANING OF SHRINES

Shrines provided the facilities to revere the emperor and to experience the associated sentiments of patriotism. The attribution of a patriotic significance to shrines and worship at shrines transformed them from religious institutions

with a mainly local influence to facilities of national importance. However, since the shrines originated in limited local contexts, their objects of worship ranged from natural phenomena, to deified heroes, to local tutelary spirits. In the Meiji period, other shrines were dedicated to imperial ancestors. How to unify this diversity and thus produce a national sentiment was a problem for State Shinto. The solution was to give all the shrines a patriotic meaning through a focus on the emperor. These ideas were not merely promulgated by the state, the shrines, or the Shinto priesthood but also expounded in the popular press, as in the following essay, "A Policy for the Unification of the National Faith," which appeared in a national newspaper, the *Yomiuri shinbun*, on May 26, 1940.

"A POLICY FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE NATIONAL FAITH"

At some of the shrines of our country, the ancestors of the Imperial Family are worshiped; at others, the spirits of loyal subjects who have contributed meritorious service to the state; and at still others, manifestations of nature, such as mountains, rivers, plants, and animals. The enshrined objects are exceedingly complex and diversified. Much thought has been given to the problem of how to coordinate and standardize these many deities so as to bring unity to the national faith. No matter how sound the historical origins or how exalted the personages of the enshrined deities may be, if the attitudes and motives of the people who worship them are impure and sordid and scattered in many directions, the unification of the national faith is hardly to be expected. On the other hand, if the attitudes and beliefs of the people who revere and worship these many deities are pure and noble and systematized, then the national faith attains spontaneous unification.

For example, if when we worship before the sanctuaries where the ancestors of the Imperial Family are enshrined, we bear in mind that the sacred spirits of the great ancestors are even now living in the mighty will of the Emperor, then mediated through these shrines, we do reverence to the Emperor's will. If, again, when we worship at the shrines dedicated to national heroes, we bear in mind that the great work of the Emperor in ruling over the state is exalted by these heroes, then in the same way, mediated through these shrines, we are revering the will of the Emperor. And if, again, when we worship before the shrines dedicated to the manifestations of the natural world such as mountains, rivers, animals, and plants, we bear in mind that these various manifestations offer up their manifold power and thereby sustain the imperial destiny, then in the same way, mediated through these shrines, we worship the will of the Emperor.

In this manner, no matter what may be the nature of the enshrined deity, if mediated through them all in a single line, the great heart of the Emperor

alone is revered, then the faith of the nation is completely unified and the greater the number of deities worshiped, the more does this single faith attain depth and loftiness.

[Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism*, pp. 43–44]

STATE SHINTO IN THE COLONIES OF IMPERIAL JAPAN

Shrines were constructed in all of Japan's colonies, but their use to discipline colonial subjects was the most severe in Korea. Nearly four hundred Shinto shrines were erected in Korea as part of the effort to "Japanize" Korean colonial subjects, who were required to worship at them, a stricter obligation than existed in Japan proper. Koreans were not permitted to question the idea that Shinto was not a religion, nor could religious schools be excused from shrine worship on religious grounds. In 1936 the Japanese head of the Home Office in a Korean province issued the following statement on shrines.

ON THE REFUSAL TO WORSHIP AT SHRINES (JINJA FUSANPAI NI TSUITE)

The shrines are public agencies whereby the ancestors of the Imperial Family and people who have rendered distinguished service to the state are enshrined, and where the subjects of the state may offer true reverence and commemorate their meritorious deeds forever. Thus the fundamental idea differs from that of religion. That is to say, from ancient times down to the present the shrines have been national institutions expressive of the very center and essence of our national structure. Thus they have an existence totally distinct from religion, and worship at the shrines is an act of patriotism and loyalty, the basic moral virtues of our nation.

Schools, whether or not they are founded by governmental or private agencies, and regardless of whether or not they are supported by religious groups, all without exception have their primary significance in the cultivation of national character. It is, accordingly, entirely proper that educational institutions which are charged with the important duty of developing Japanese subjects, should carry out worship at the shrines for educational reasons. It is on no grounds permissible that school principals and teachers who unite their educational functions with those of religious propagandists, should confuse religion and education and be deficient in an understanding of the system of laws and ordinances which the state has established because of the requirements of national education, and oppose orders and fail to perform worship at the shrines.

In the matter of the national interpretation of the shrines and of national

necessity, all people, both from the point of view of their relation as subjects of the Empire and from that of the education of the people of the nation, should yield obedience. Such things as the advocacy of the individualistic and arbitrary interpretation that the shrines are religious in nature, and in particular the opposition to orders concerning educational administration, are not to be permitted.

[Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism*, p. 167]

THE EMPEROR'S RENUNCIATION OF HIS DIVINITY

Emperor Hirohito renounced the idea of his divinity in a rescript on January 1, 1946, his New Year greeting to the people for that year. This action probably had more influence on public opinion than did the Shinto Directive, which brought State Shinto to an end.

The devastation of war inflicted upon our cities, the miseries of the destitute, the stagnation of trade, shortage of food, and the great and growing number of the unemployed are indeed heart-rending. But if the nation is firmly united in its resolve to face the present ordeal and to seek civilization consistently in peace, a bright future will undoubtedly be ours, not only for our country, but for the whole humanity.

Love of the family and love of the country are especially strong in this country. With more of this devotion should we now work toward love of mankind.

We feel deeply concerned to note that consequent upon the protracted war which ended in our defeat, our people are liable to grow restless and to fall into the Slough of Despond. Radical tendencies in excess are gradually spreading and the sense of morality tends to lose its hold on the people, with the result that there are signs of confusion of thoughts.

We stand by the people and We wish always to share with them in their moments of joys and sorrows. The ties between Us and Our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine (*akitsu mikami*) and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.

[Woodward, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, p. 316]