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Shinto Studies in Prewar Japan and the West



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# Introduction

## Shinto Studies and the Nonreligious-Shrine Doctrine

BERNHARD SCHEID

When I planned the symposium “Shinto Studies and Nationalism” that led to the present volume, it was my initial motivation to identify the roots of several stereotype depictions of Shinto that still pervade some specialist and many nonspecialist introductions to Japanese religion. These stereotypes include the notion of Shinto as a transhistorical entity that has existed since times immemorial but was suppressed for more than thousand years by the introduction of Buddhism, unfolding again in the modern period and thus preserving elements of prehistorical origins, in ritualistic as well as in mental respects. In this perspective, Shinto is seen as the underlying current of Japanese culture, in spite—or sometimes precisely because—of the difficulty of pinning down its religious contents. This conventional depiction has raised a number of doubts that have been voiced by earlier studies, as for instance Kuroda Toshio’s famous article “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion” (1981), as well as my own research on medieval and early modern Shinto. Not being a specialist of modern Shinto myself, I was only aware of the impact of late Edo-period *kokugaku*, the “nativist school,” on the establishment of this received image of Shinto. Therefore, my preconception was that the ubiquity of this essentialist, ahistorical picture of Shinto was due to the nationalist ideologies in the modern era that built up the concept of State Shinto on the basis of *kokugaku* ideas.

With regard to Shinto in the German-speaking world, I still adhere to this preconception, as I will try to explain below and in my own chapter in this volume. Several of the other contributions have convinced me, however, that my initial premise was probably too essentialist in itself, since it presumed the existence of “State Shinto” as a clearly identifiable ideology that was enforced on the Japanese people more or less without interruption

during the entire period from 1868 to 1945.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this volume presents a much more complex picture. We discover the existence of several competing ideologies that may all be called “nationalistic” but do not necessarily center on Shinto. Conversely, it becomes quite clear that the currency of “Shinto” as an ideological concept shifted dramatically, corresponding to the ambiguous and contradictory path of religious policies during the modernization of Japan. These policies are actually well documented even in Western studies of State Shinto, starting from D. C. Holtom’s *Political Philosophy of Modern Shintō* (1922) to Helen Hardacre’s *Shintō and the State* (1989), to cite only two of the best known examples.<sup>2</sup> Shinto policies are moreover discussed in the chapter by Kate Wildman Nakai in this volume. I will nevertheless sum up the most important institutional and judicial changes in the religious policies of modern Japan for two reasons: firstly, in many chapters these issues are referred to in passing, so it may be convenient to provide an overview of them here; and secondly, the changes in the administration of religion provide, in my present opinion, a paradigmatic image of the changes in the dominant discourse on Shinto itself. Starting from the Meiji Restoration, these administrative steps were:

- 1868: Establishment of the Jingikan 神祇官, the Department of Shrine Deities, as the highest ranking administrative body of the new government.
- 1871: The Jingikan is reorganized as Jingishō 神祇省, Ministry of Shrine Deities; definition of shrine priests as state officials; prohibition of hereditary shrine priesthood; installation of a new shrine ranking system.

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1. According to Azegami Naoki, this was indeed the prevailing concept of State Shinto after the publication of Murakami Shigeyoshi’s important study *Kokka shintō* in 1970 (Azegami 2012, pp. 65–67). Many Western works, as for instance Klaus Antoni’s study of Shinto and “national essence” (Antoni 1998), use a similar broad definition of State Shinto. The Japanese authors represented in this volume and other recent studies, however, tend to hold a more fragmented view, assuming a multitude of conflicting ideological agents, not just one nationalist ideology. On the different forms of Japanese nationalism in the modern period, see Doak 2006.

2. With regard to recent Japanese studies on State Shinto, numerous authors including Shimazono Susumu 島藺進, Sakamoto Koremaru 阪本是丸, or Isomae Jun’ichi have published widely on this subject.

1872: The Jingishō is replaced by the Kyōbushō 教部省, Ministry of Religions, responsible for Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Shinto and Buddhist clergy as well as other religious figures are requested to act as *kyōdōshoku* 教導職, “national evangelists,” in the Great Teaching Campaign (*taikyō senpu* 大教宣布), a state-coordinated movement to teach morals to the general populace.

Shrines are allowed to conduct funerals.

1873: Removal of public proscription of Christianity.

1877: The Ministry of Religions is reorganized as the Bureau of Shrines and Temples, Shaji Kyoku 社寺局, supervised by the Home Ministry.

1880: The “pantheon dispute” (*saijin ronsō* 祭神論争) between different factions of the Shinto clergy casts serious doubts on the effectiveness of Shinto as a state religion.

1882: Shrine priests may no longer engage in *kyōdōshoku* activities or conduct funerals (shrines below prefectural level are exempted from this prohibition).

Official separation of “shrines” (*jinja* 神社) and “Shinto churches” (*shintō kyōkai* 神道教会) leads to the notions of Shrine Shinto (*jinja shintō*) and Sect Shinto (*shūha* 宗派 or *kyōha shintō* 教派神道).

State-sponsored shrines are no longer seen as “religious” institutions.

1889: Promulgation of the Imperial Constitution, including “freedom of religion” (Article 28).

1890: Publication of the Imperial Rescript on Education.

1900: Reorganization of the Bureau of Shrines and Temples into a Bureau of Shrines (Jinja Kyoku 神社局) and a Bureau of Religions (Shūkyō Kyoku 宗教局) within the Home Ministry.

1913: Transfer of the Bureau of Religions to the Ministry of Education (the Bureau of Shrines remaining with the Home Ministry).

The Bureau of Shrines issues new “service regulations” (*hōmu kisoku* 奉務規則) specifying that the performance of state rituals is the task of priests of all shrines, including local shrines.

1920: Inauguration of Meiji Jingū, the shrine commemorating Meiji Tennō (1852–1912).

- 1937: Publication of *Kokutai no hongî* 国体の本義 (Fundamentals of the National Essence), for the use of school teachers, by the Ministry of Education.
- 1940: Redefinition and enlargement of the Bureau of Shrines as the Chamber of Shrine Deities, Jinguin 神祇院, a tribute to the 2,600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nation's founding.
- 1946: Promulgation of the Shinto Directive by the Allied Occupation forces; abolishment of "State Shinto."

The reasons for these somewhat erratic changes in the religious policies of the state are manifold and involve a range of players, including Western powers but also, as recent studies have pointed out, Buddhist denominations, above all Shin Buddhism. Moreover, the legal consequences of these changes are not always entirely clear and are still a matter of debate and research. The overall picture, however, can be interpreted as the rapid decline of the initial ideal of the Meiji Restoration to unite state and religion, or rather "ritual and government" (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致), under the "state religion" of Shinto, reaching its point zero in about 1882, and the subsequent emergence of a new official ideology that defined shrines as nonreligious institutions of national reverence to the state and to the emperor, in contradistinction to organized "religions" in the form of Buddhism, Christianity, and Shinto-centered new religions (Sect Shinto).

This "nonreligious-shrine doctrine" is actually the starting point of most essays in this volume. They deal with the ensuing definitions of religion and of Shinto, with related concepts such as "national essence" (*kokutai* 国体), and with this doctrine's impact on religious life. Naturally, the nonreligious nature of shrines is primarily addressed in the chapters dealing with Japan, but indirectly the topic is also reflected in the depictions of Western discourse on Shinto.

## NEW CONCEPTS OF RELIGION

Isomae Jun'ichi discusses the nonreligious-shrine doctrine in relation to the issue of the separation of religion and state, which is, as Isomae shows, still an object of heated debate in Japan. Isomae's main focus, however, is the

question where the boundaries between the “secular” and the “religious” can be drawn under the impact of the nonreligious-shrine doctrine or, in other words, what “religion” in contradistinction to the “secular” actually meant in prewar Japan. As indicated above, the official explanation was that shrine worship was a nonreligious act that had nothing to do with personal religious beliefs. Religion, on the other hand, was seen as a “private” matter where the state had no right to interfere. The world of shrine priests by and large accepted such a definition, since they knew that the official sponsorship of shrines was dependent on this legal construction. Scholars of religion, on the other hand, tended toward other conceptions, even if most of them supported the political status quo.

In spite of several critical voices against the official doctrine, the nonreligious-shrine doctrine certainly also had an impact on the general discourse on Shinto, in that the emphasis on “shrines” at the cost of “Shinto” disqualified the latter as an ideological key concept. Consequently, Isomae argues that the common basis of Japanese nationalism in the prewar period was not the idea of Shinto. Rather the “*tennō* system,” centering on the imaginary figure of the *tennō*, was at the core of prewar national ideology. The logical consequence would be, therefore, to regard the *tennō* system as Japan’s state religion or as “State Shinto.”<sup>3</sup> While this seems viable in retrospect, according to Isomae, before the war such an idea did not even occur to critics of the political situation. The position of the *tennō* was in effect beyond reasoning. As Isomae puts it: “Even before the war, doubts had been raised time and again whether enforced reverence of shrines was in accord with the constitutional freedom of religion, but arguments that the *tennō* system itself might violate the constitution were virtually unheard of.” In the prewar period, the legitimacy of the *tennō* was therefore something like a blind spot. It cannot be aptly described by either the term “ideology” or “state religion.” Rather, the *tennō* system was tacitly accepted without explaining or questioning all of its legal consequences. This implied that related concepts remained ambiguous, such as religion and secularity, including the relationship between religion and state, or, more concretely, the difference between patriotic obligations and private moral values, or the actual extent of religious freedom.

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3. Isomae cites Shimazono Susumu (2006), who indeed holds to this definition of State Shinto. See below, p. 26. Shimazono has recently further elaborated his views in Shimazono 2010.

Regarding the field of discourse in which explicit and implicit theories of religion and the state took shape, Isomae as well as Hayashi Makoto, who focuses on the development of “humanistic studies” in the early twentieth century, point out the decisive influence of religious studies, a new academic subject pioneered by Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) and established by his student Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949) around the turn of the century. Influenced by his studies in Europe (especially in Germany under Paul Deussen), Anesaki introduced a concept of religion that looked for essential beliefs common to all religions—the “Protestant model” according to Isomae—at the expense of ritualistic idiosyncrasies that were regarded as marginal or “superstitious.” Even leading Shinto scholars like Anesaki’s fellow student Katō Genchi 加藤玄智 (1873–1965) tried to interpret Shinto from such a perspective. This resulted in a controversial position regarding the nonreligious-shrine doctrine, since these scholars emphatically interpreted “Shrine Shinto” as a religion. Yet as Isomae shows, the inherent conflict between the “Protestant model of religion” and the nonreligious-shrine doctrine did not lead to a critical distancing from nationalism. (We may remember that Inoue Tetsujirō, the teacher of Anesaki and Katō, was a famous advocate of Japanese nationalism.<sup>4</sup>) Rather, scholars of religious studies tended to look for other ways to reconcile their views with the prevailing ideologies of the state. Katō, for instance, clearly tried to establish Shinto as a state religion when, in his English study on Shinto published in 1926, he wrote:

Shintō—the State Shintō as well as the Sectarian Shintō—is in very truth a religion, i.e., the original religion of the Japanese people, or, otherwise stated the religion of the Japanese people from the very beginning down to the present time.<sup>5</sup>

While Isomae regards State Shinto as a postwar conception, this citation is one of the rare examples indicating that the term “State Shinto” was not entirely unheard of in the prewar period, even among Japanese authors.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Katō’s terms were certainly not in line with the common ter-

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4. See, for instance, Antoni 1998, pp. 218–31.

5. Katō 1926, p. 1.

6. In Japanese, Katō actually used the phrase *kokkateki shintō* 国家の神道, which may be translated as “Stately Shinto” or “Statist Shinto” (see below, p. 36).



minology that would rather speak of “Shrine Shinto” in juxtaposition to “Sect Shinto.” Insisting on Shinto’s religious nature Katō went on to define religion briefly as “one’s consciousness of being in a special relationship with the Divine,”<sup>7</sup> which is indeed very close to Anesaki’s belief-centered concepts as discussed by Isomae. Due to this “Protestant” understanding of religion, Katō’s view of Shinto exerted considerable influence on Western authors, even on critics of Japanese nationalism like the Protestant missionary D.C. Holtom, who established the term “State Shinto” in Western literature and referred to Katō already in 1922.<sup>8</sup>

While Isomae puts his emphasis on concepts of religion that were negotiated within religious studies and neighboring fields, Hayashi points to the practical political needs served by this new academic subject: religious studies became a kind of forum where policies pertaining to various competing religious denominations (Buddhism, Sect Shinto, and Christianity) could be discussed. Such a function was particularly welcomed in the 1920s, when the government, in reaction to the new “threats” of Socialism and Communism, decided to support religion in general, disregarding denomination, as long as religion served as a pillar of public morals. A consensus on anti-Socialist values was indeed reached among representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, and Sect Shinto at the Japanese Conference on Religions (Nihon Shūkyō Taikai 日本宗教大会), which was organized in 1928 by scholars of religion. Thus, even if scholars of religious studies generally tended toward a more liberal stance in regard to politics than other academic disciplines and were critical of the nonreligious-shrine doctrine, they served the practical political needs of the government and were by no means aloof from the nationalistic discourse of the time.

With regard to the definition of Shinto proper, we might expect the two Shinto universities Kokugakuin Daigaku in Tokyo and Jingū Kōgakkan in Ise, which have their roots in the late nineteenth century, to have taken a leading role. As Hayashi and Endō Jun discuss in their chapters, however, these institutions devoted most of their Shinto-specific energies to the ritual training of shrine priests. In doing so, they seem to have followed the official

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Similarly, Inoue Tetsujirō interpreted Shinto as a “statist” religion, *kokkateki shūkyō* (Inoue Tetsujirō, *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* 1912, cited from Antoni 1998, p. 228).

7. Katō 1926, p. 2.

8. See, for instance, Holtom 1922, p. 115.

guideline of 1882 that forbade the engagement of (high-ranking) priests in the propagation of religious doctrines and other “religious” activities.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and other classics, which are often seen as the “canonical texts of Shinto,” became the object of mythology studies, a new academic discipline that was more influenced by Western comparative mythology than by scholars in the *kokugaku* tradition, as Hirafuji Kikuko shows.

Of course, we should not overlook that Kokugakuin University ultimately did produce shrine priests that were at the same time ideologues of State Shinto, as for instance Kōno Seizō 河野省三 (1882–1963). Kōno graduated from Kokugakuin, acted as its president from 1935 to 1942, and became a member of the Ministry of Education’s National Spirit Culture Institute (Kokumin Seishin Bunka Kenkyūjo) founded in 1932. As briefly mentioned in my own chapter, Kōno stood in the tradition of political *kokugaku*, as can be seen from his particular interpretation of *kannagara no michi* (a synonym of Shinto) that is indebted to Motoori Norinaga. In addition to Kōno, advocates of State Shinto, as for instance Tanaka Yoshitō 田中義能 (1872–1946) and Katō Genchi, ended up at Kokugakuin after first teaching at Tokyo Imperial University. While this volume unfortunately does not contain a chapter dealing specifically with the heritage of *kokugaku* ideals of Shinto in modern Japan, these issues are mentioned in Michael Wachutka’s chapter and in my own article.<sup>10</sup>

## THE COLONIAL IMPACT

The chapters dealing with Japanese intellectual history of the first half of the twentieth century (Isomae, Hayashi, Hirafuji, and Endō) all indicate, be it directly or indirectly, that scholars who specialized in Shinto studies or else adhered to *kokugaku* ideals, constituted only a minority faction in the academic environment of their time. All in all, the topic of Shinto seems to have been deemphasized in the academic discourse of this period.

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9. See, for instance, the chapter by Kate Nakai, p. 110.

10. See also Wachutka 2012, for a recent study on modern *kokugaku*. On Tanaka Yoshitō, see Isomae 2000.

This is certainly due to a reluctance of the government to support the development of a consistent theology of “State Shinto.” This reluctance has often been explained as due to outside pressure and the government’s awareness of the potential conflict between a state religion and the constitutional freedom of religion. The chapters of Hayashi and Hirafuji, however, lead to the impression that the comparatively modest role of theological interpretations and/or ideologies of Shinto can also be seen in relation with Japan’s rise to colonial power. The xenophobic ideology of the *kokugaku* of the nineteenth century was no longer befitting to a country that began to see itself as a global superpower. Rather, Japan had to find a justification for the “Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere,” as Japan euphemistically referred to the occupation of its neighboring countries, and scholars in the humanities were well aware of this need.

In this respect, Hayashi draws attention to the impact of Japan’s colonial enterprises during the first half of the twentieth century. Within the humanities, not only was there no criticism of colonialism and warfare, but the different academic disciplines competed in proving their effectiveness either as ideological supporters or as practical advisers in the colonization of Asia. There were actually two different approaches, which can be clearly separated along the dividing lines of academic disciplines. Scholars of religion, who had begun to develop a strong interest in the new field of cultural anthropology from the 1930s onwards, regarded themselves as a kind of mediator between local, “primitive” cultures in Asia and the colonizing power of Japan. The main point within this “ethnologistic nationalism”—to use Hayashi’s terms—was the notion of a common cultural heritage between the Japanese people on the one hand and the indigenous (non-Chinese) cultures in the newly occupied territories on the other. “On the basis of this brotherliness, Japan of today has shouldered the mission to become the leader of these peoples,” as the scholar of religion and pioneer of Japanese ethnology Uno Enkū 宇野円空 (1885–1949) put it.

Matsumoto Nobuhiro 松本信広 (1897–1981) and Oka Masao 岡正雄 (1898–1982), who both studied for a number of years in Europe and are best known for their ethnological interpretations of Japanese myths, can be seen as further typical examples of the colonialist impact on the humanities, this time in the field of mythology studies. As Hirafuji Kikuko shows in her paper, Matsumoto took a quite similar position to that of Uno when he concluded on the basis of mythological and linguistic similarities that the Japanese and the

ethnic groups of Southeast Asia shared the same blood and that the former were therefore better suited to rule the latter than any Western power. Oka Masao, on the other hand, discarded his original interest in ancient Japanese mythology altogether when he was given the chance to establish the Ethnic Research Institute under the direct administration of the Ministry of Education in the 1940s. When this happened, he opted for practical, empiricist field studies in the colonies that would support governmental tasks. After the war, however, he returned to his studies of mythology and turned back to historical questions.

The study of Japanese mythology is of particular importance in the context of State Shinto, since the classical mythological sources—the *Kojiki* (712), the *Nihon shoki* (720), and others—have been regarded as canonical texts of *kami* worship since the ancient period and as such gained new relevance in the shrine world of the prewar period. Hirafuji's essay demonstrates that scholars took up this theme as well, but under the sway of Western comparative mythology, they distanced themselves from the world of shrine priests. This did not mean, however, that they were critical of nationalist ideologies. Rather, they ended up in the same camp as Hayashi's "ethnologicist nationalists."

More traditional disciplines that dealt with the philology of "high cultures," such as Buddhist, Indian, or Chinese studies (*tōyōgaku* 東洋学, lit. Oriental studies), on the other hand, searched for justification for the colonizing of places that had formerly been models for Japanese civilization, such as China and India, developing thereby what Hayashi calls an "Orientalistic nationalism." While these disciplines still adhered to the values embedded in the classical literature of former model cultures, they exhibited a much more aggressive ideological approach than the ethnologicist faction with regard to the contemporary Asian societies. They argued that the only place where traditional Asian (non-Western) values were still held in high esteem was Japan. China and India were socially weak and morally corrupt and therefore not capable of building on their own cultural roots. Thus, it was Japan's task to lead Asia back to its own traditions, even if this meant waging war against the other peoples of Asia. Despite their anti-Western rhetoric regarding the right to rule Asia, Japanese sinologists and buddhologists were proud of being the only scholars in the Asian world whose methods were on par with those of the West. This kind of chauvinism implied a contradictory approach to Western rationality, however. When questions of methodology were at

stake, Oriental scholars sided with Western ideas and turned against traditional knowledge, but at the same time they attacked Western rationality when moral values were being questioned. This “Japanese Orientalism”<sup>11</sup> can be seen in the writings of eminent scholars like Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), the “father of modern Buddhist studies,” or the famous sinologist Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865–1942), discussed by Hayashi, as well as in the writings of the specialist on Korean mythology Mishina Shōei 三品彰英 (1902–1971), portrayed by Hirafuji Kikuko.

## SHRINES, NOT SHINTO

While the “religious” aspects of Shinto were indeed marginalized in the pre-war period, this must not lead to the impression that “State Shinto” had no impact on the lives of the Japanese at that time. With regard to “shrines” or more specifically “reverence at shrines” (*jinja sanpai* 神社参拝), i.e., formalized ritual devotion, we can observe a direct relationship between external warfare and internal social and economic tensions on the one hand, and the pressure to demonstrate patriotic loyalty at shrines on the other. This pressure becomes particularly apparent in the historical process by which the Catholic Church “came to terms” with reverence at shrines, as analyzed by Kate Wildman Nakai.

Like most Christians, Catholics were quick to criticize what they considered “pagan superstitions” in the context of patriotism, although they usually regarded themselves as good Japanese patriots. Therefore they put special emphasis on the constitutional freedom of religion, which would exempt them from reverence at shrines, inasmuch as shrines were religious institutions. Christians thus rejected the nonreligious-shrine doctrine more energetically than others and emphasized the religious nature of Shrine Shinto.

Nevertheless, the obligation to do reverence at shrines was not seen as a major problem among leading Catholics until the second decade of the twentieth century. Their lenient attitude to *jinja sanpai* changed, however,

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11. The political ideologies related to Japan’s colonial rise to power, which took on a new dimension after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), are often discussed under the label of “Asianism” or “pan-Asianism,” as, for instance, by Sven Saaler and Victor Koschman (Saaler and Koschmann 2006). Hayashi’s “Japanese Orientalism” bears close connections to the concept of Asianism.

when central government agencies began to emphasize “respect for deities and reverence for ancestors” (*keishin sūso* 敬神崇祖) as a core principle of national morality (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道德) in the form of organized shrine visits by school classes. Also “reverence from afar” (*yōhai* 遙拜) to the Yasukuni Shrine, or (from 1920) to the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo became a common practice at schools. For about two decades, between 1910 and 1932, the Catholic Church reacted to the growing nationalist indoctrination of schoolchildren with an equally rigid repudiation of *jinja sanpai*, as Nakai shows in her analysis of the Japanese Catholic periodical *Koe* and other Christian documents. Eventually, the controversy culminated in the 1932 Sophia University–Yasukuni Shrine incident, a public scandal aroused by a seemingly trivial event: the refusal to do reverence at the nearby Yasukuni Shrine by three students of the Catholic Sophia University. This was actually only one of several similar incidents induced by Christian opposition against *jinja sanpai* that put the patriotism of Christians into question. Dogmatic statements by Sophia’s president against such insinuations led to a clash between the Catholic Church and government officials (above all the military) that was made public by the nationalistic press. The ensuing scandal ultimately threatened the very existence of the Catholic school system in Japan. At this point, the Church changed its official position to *jinja sanpai* radically, which finally in 1936 led to an official statement by the Vatican that Japanese shrine ceremonies had “only a purely civil value,” thus permitting *jinja sanpai* by Japanese Catholics.

Nakai’s detailed reconstruction displays these controversies, above all, as a mirror image of an emerging stress on *jinja sanpai*, especially at schools and universities. Moreover, Nakai reveals different layers of interest within the governmental administration itself when demonstrating how the frictions between Catholic schools on the one hand and the military on the other could only be settled after the Ministry of Education, an internal rival of the military, sided with the Catholics. Her case study also sheds light on the undecided legal situation surrounding the nonreligious-shrine doctrine, which was often unclear, even to the governmental representatives themselves. A further interesting side aspect can be found in the indirect means by which government agencies enforced allegiance on the *sanpai* issue: the only immediate threat for the university was the removal of the military training program that had become a customary part of academic education. Without such a program, graduates were not entitled to hold higher ranks when do-

ing their military service. This potential disadvantage was serious enough to bring about a tremendous reduction in student enrollment, which almost led to the university's collapse.

Finally, the Catholic Church's coming to terms with Shrine Shinto after the Yasukuni incident also explains the subsequent emphasis on topics related to Japanese nationalism and Shinto in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Sophia's most prestigious academic journal, founded in 1938. The specific ways in which the new journal tried to dispel the lingering mistrust in Sophia's patriotism are discussed in my own contribution to this volume.

Endō Jun's chapter provides insights into the "ideological apparatus" of State Shinto from an angle completely different than that of the Christian opposition. Endō offers a detailed analysis of the life and work of Miyaji Naokazu 宮地直一 (1886–1949), whose writings are still respected among historians of Shinto and who was probably the most knowledgeable expert on shrine history of his time. Here, however, Miyaji is portrayed not only as a scholar, but primarily as a "scholar-bureaucrat" working as an administrator of Shinto shrines. Miyaji started his career in the Bureau of Shrines of the Home Ministry and soon became a member of the commission that planned the most important memorial for Emperor Meiji, the well-known Meiji Shrine in Tokyo. Miyaji's chief task, however, was to survey historical shrine documents (*jinja kōshō* 神社考証), which were used to determine a shrine's rank in the modern ranking system of shrines. This rank had a direct impact on the prestige and the financial support by the government of the respective shrine. As the chief "scholar-bureaucrat" of the Shrine Bureau, Miyaji was the main official for deciding the ranking of shrines based on his evaluation of the historical documents presented by the respective shrines. Despite this important bureaucratic function (or perhaps because of it), Miyaji did not take part in any ideological debates, nor did he muse on the nature of Shinto in general. Rather, in his administrative duties, as well as in his function as a trainer of shrine priests and finally as a professor at various academic institutions devoted to Shinto studies, he confined himself almost exclusively to the "history of shrine deities" (*jingishi* 神祇史). Only in the 1930s, when the focus of his activities finally shifted from bureaucratic to academic work, did he begin to examine "Shinto."

Miyaji's case illustrates a tendency also mentioned in Isomae's chapter, namely that the bureaucratization of shrines that went hand in hand with

the official nonreligious-shrine doctrine did not foster devotion to shrines by the general populace, who continued to approach shrines for (this-wordly) religious benefits. Miyaji and other shrine bureaucrats therefore engaged in reconstructing so-called exceptional shrine rituals (*tokushu shinji* 特殊神事), a euphemism for local shrine customs that did not fit into the standardized patterns of reverence at shrines centering on the tennō and the nation.

## SHINTO, NOT SHRINES

As we have seen above, scholars of religious studies were generally critical of the nonreligious-shrine doctrine, and thus were probably those who were the most active in advancing alternative conceptions of (Shrine/State) Shinto which did not focus on rituals as acts of patriotism. As Hayashi and Isomae emphasize, this approach to Shinto is closely related to the fact that religious studies scholars were familiar with Western concepts of religion and interpreted Shinto from such a point of view. On the other side, most Western scholars interested in Shinto tended primarily to pay attention to Japanese scholars of religion, as for instance Katō Genchi, and thus tended to ignore the nonreligious-shrine doctrine. Thus, in Western depictions of Japanese religion, the existence of Shinto at the same level of Buddhism is either presented as a *fait accompli*, or the Japanese culture is criticized for not paying adequate attention to Shinto as its original religion. In both cases, Shinto is interpreted as representing a certain step in the general evolution of religion with Christianity and Buddhism at its peak.

This tendency is well illustrated in Jean-Pierre Berthon's chapter, which presents a typology of the pioneers of Japanese studies in France in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Berthon singles out the "travel-ethnographer," the "scholar," and the "missionary," and analyzes their discourse on Shinto. This discourse is certainly representative for many other Western observers of Meiji- and Taishō-period Japan as well.

Berthon chooses George Bousquet (1846–1937), whose travelogue of 1877 became one of the most popular reports on Japan in the francophone world, as a model for the "travel-ethnographer." Bousquet's often subjective narration of his personal experiences provides a much more immediate insight into Japan of his day than do later, more organized depictions, even though his observations are interrupted by general value statements that



are bound to his time. With regard to Shinto, his most notable observations concern the “primitive” state of Shinto that will “[n]ever take the place of the ‘great religion’ [Buddhism].” Thus, in Bousquet’s depictions of the early Meiji period, there is hardly any sign of “State Shinto” being part of the life of ordinary people.

Some twenty years later, Michel Revon (1867–1943), the “scholar,” began to study ancient Japanese mythology on the basis of original texts. He was familiar with Japanese scholarship on Shinto and exchanged his views with contemporary pioneers of Japanese studies, as for instance Ernest Satow (1843–1929), William George Aston (1841–1911), and Karl Florenz (1865–1939). The latter was his colleague at the Imperial University in Tokyo, where Revon was engaged as a professor of law. Like Aston and Florenz, Revon’s initial work in Japan studies was an attempt to recover Shinto’s original character as a “natural religion.” They shared a similar conception of the evolution of religions, according to which Shinto had to sooner or later give way to more “advanced religions” like Buddhism or Christianity: “As soon as Buddhism appears, Shinto is lost,” as Revon put it. Similar conceptions can already be found with “travelers” such as Bousquet—or even Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716),<sup>12</sup> for that matter—but “scholars” like Revon developed an active interest in Shinto as a window into the Japanese past and, still further, into the history of mankind. At the same time they planned to reconstruct ancient Shinto by separating it from the historical “forgeries” and “sophistications” of Buddhism and Confucianism, even if Revon’s methods were slightly different from the merely philological approach of his British and German colleagues. Like the latter, Revon did not question the historical steps of ancient (pure), syncretic (vulgar), and restored Shinto. As I point out in my discussion of German Shinto studies, in this respect there seems to be a direct influence by *kokugaku* scholars on Western Shinto studies. Regarding the prospects of restoring Shinto as a living religion, Revon criticized the Meiji government for its pragmatic disregard of Shinto as he saw it and speaks with sympathy and a kind of heroic pathos about the “spirit of the [Shinto] religion,” even if this went against his evolutionist preconceptions. The same can be said about Florenz, whereas Aston’s attitude seems more detached; Aston talks about Shinto as if it were an objective specimen of

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12. See, for instance, Antoni 1997.

primitive religion, keeping it at a certain distance.<sup>13</sup> However, none of these “scholar” types among the pioneers of Japanese studies around the turn of the century concerned themselves with reverence at shrines, not to mention the nonreligious-shrine doctrine.

The disregard of shrines changes radically with Berthon’s third figure, the “missionary,” embodied by Jean-Marie Martin (1886–1975), who spent most of his adult life as a Catholic missionary in Japan and wrote a two-volume study of Shinto published in 1924 and 1927, respectively. According to Berthon, a key motivation for Martin’s investigation into Shinto was to repudiate the nonreligious-shrine doctrine. “Since pagan Japanese are not qualified to decide whether Shinto is a religion or not,” Martin took the task upon himself of demonstrating Shinto’s religious nature by reconstructing Shinto history up to the Meiji period. In spite of Martin’s Catholic point of view, Berthon does not describe his work as inherently different from that of Revon. In particular, we find the same salient anti-Buddhist attitude when Martin speaks of “the invasion of Buddhism” in the course of Japanese history, or the “liberation of Shinto” when it comes to the Meiji Restoration. Thus, despite his original desire to criticize State Shinto, Martin reaffirms certain *kokugaku*-like preconceptions of Shinto history, as did Revon and others, and follows a similar, quasi-evolutionist pattern in order to categorize Shinto as a religion.<sup>14</sup>

In this regard, other Christian missionaries were more consistent in their criticism of the nonreligious-shrine doctrine. The above-mentioned American missionary D. C. Holtom, for example, discusses this directly in several of his works, starting with his dissertation in 1922. Similar to Holtom, the German Protestant missionary Emil Schiller (1865–1945) wrote a series of reports about the contemporary problems of reverence at shrines that were published between 1923 and 1931 in the *Ostasien-Jahrbuch* of the German Protestant Ostasienmission.<sup>15</sup> In his focus on premodern Shinto, Martin is

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13. See especially Aston’s theoretical work on Shinto (Aston 1905).

14. In the end, Martin arrives at a distinct evolutionist model according to which “Shinto polytheism” is more advanced than the “polydemonism” (shamanism) of North Asian peoples. Even if Martin does not mention it, Berthon surmises that this concept has been adopted from Katō Genchi’s already mentioned English essay of 1926 where Katō postulates Shinto having developed from “pandemonistic” origins to polytheism. See Katō 1926, p. 62ff.

15. Antoni 1998, pp. 307–16.

therefore rather of Berthon's "scholar"-type, when we compare his work with that of other contemporary Christian missionaries. In any event, Martin's case illustrates the growing concern of missionaries regarding the issue of Shinto, which supports Nakai's point that in the 1920s Shrine Shinto took on a new dimension that threatened the daily work of these people.

## MERGING JAPANESE AND GERMAN NATIONALISM

Hermann Bohner (1884–1963), the main protagonist of Michael Wachutka's chapter, was a contemporary of Martin and Holtom and was also trained as a missionary. However, his religious background did not prevent him from becoming a supporter of State Shinto or, at least, of Japanese nationalism.<sup>16</sup> Wachutka portrays Bohner as a kind of romanticist who believed in his nationalist ideals to an extent that he ended up at odds with politicians who used the same nationalist ideologies for immediate political gain. In this respect, Bohner was not so different from Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925), the author of *The Third Reich* (1923), a book that had a great impact on the early Nazi movement, including Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1926). Bohner admired Moeller's book and regarded it as a counterpart to the *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (1339) by Kitabatake Chikafusa, or rather, as Wachutka shows, to modern nationalist interpretations of this medieval text. Bohner therefore set out to elucidate the inner affinity between the two works by translating the *Jinnō shōtōki* into German and adding a huge body of annotations that exceeded the original text by far. In his commentaries, Bohner finds the essence of Shinto as well as the idea of "national essence" (*kokutai*) embodied in Chikafusa's actually quite simple emphasis on the "unbroken line of our emperors." While this is in accordance with contemporary Japanese depictions, Bohner goes on to construct a kind of nationalist religion or "Shinto theodicy," claiming that both the *Jinnō shōtōki* as well as the *Third Reich* were "conversations with God," "self-dialogues," and "conversations with the eminent Us." At the same time "each author is faced by the personal-

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16. Other German missionaries like Wilhelm Gundert (1880–1971) and Gerhard Rosenkranz (1896–1983) were equally sympathetic to Japanese nationalism and Shinto. However, while the activities of these people were influenced by the growing National Socialism in Germany, Bohner spent most of his life in Japan and seems to have had second thoughts about the political realities in Nazi Germany.

ity of his own nation,” “a personality, which like every Ego is real and yet not tangible.” Thus, Bohner literally regards the nation as a living personality whose character is embodied in its past.

In these mysticist conceptions, Bohner became the pioneer of a discourse that differs strikingly from the positivist rationalism of Revon’s and Florenz’s generation. This discourse grew even stronger among the next generation of German scholars of Japanese studies, who clearly felt it their mission to “translate” Japanese nationalist ideals into a German nationalist idiom. My own chapter explores this German Shinto scholarship on the basis of the early volumes of *Monumenta Nipponica* (1938–1943), where it occupies an unexpectedly large share of the journal’s thematic scope.

In addition to Bohner, the most ambitious authors in this new nationalist vein were Horst Hammitzsch (1909–1991) and, somewhat surprisingly, the Catholic priest Heinrich Dumoulin (1905–1995). With regard to Shinto studies proper, Dumoulin was certainly the most prolific writer. While Dumoulin’s main topic, *kokugaku*, was covered by Hammitzsch as well, Dumoulin’s articles are much more substantial. Nonetheless, the general interpretation of *kokugaku* of both authors is quite similar: They regard *kokugaku* as a kind of emancipation movement towards true Japaneseness. The prevailing nationalist ideology in Japan is seen as the outcome of a long cultural evolution of Shinto, in which *kokugaku* played a key role. This evolution is regarded with particular favor, and is also compared to the rise of nationalism, or rather the “*völkisch*” consciousness, in Germany.

Despite their identification with the nationalist agenda, it is difficult to dismiss the intellectual merits of these authors’ work as entirely worthless. Especially in the cases of Dumoulin and Bohner—who both left numerous well-annotated translations—we get the impression that the need to echo the zeitgeist moved them to do quite substantial amounts of research with considerable scholarly meticulousness. Even if it is hard to admit, we must acknowledge that nationalism became a kind of fuel for their research. The political realities of their time, however, be it the enforced reverence at shrines, the nonreligious-shrine doctrine, or the failure of Restoration Shinto in the early Meiji period, are hardly ever mentioned by these German Shinto authors.

## CONCLUSION

In a sense, the academic discourse on religion and Shinto can be regarded as a canvas upon which the theatre of the state has cast its shadows. While this may not permit us to construct a three-dimensional picture of the historical reality, it does reflect the political trends quite accurately in that each generation of scholars had a tendency to explain what they considered important as the necessary result of a logical, unilinear sequence of events. Seeking such a logical sequence, these scholars usually followed—consciously or unconsciously—the prevailing ideologies, or shaped these ideologies in accordance with political interests. Some of the case studies in the present volume testify to this truism with disturbing clarity.

In the conceptions of Shinto discussed in the chapters of this volume, we have encountered the pragmatic historiographical discourse by Miyaji Naokazu that could be brought in line with the bureaucratic nonreligious-shrine doctrine; a discourse based on a universalist conception of religion that borders—in the case of Anesaki and Katō—on a kind of nonconfessional theology; the “ethnologicistic” and “Orientalistic” forms of nationalism that hardly mention Shinto at all; the early Western interest in Shinto as a case of “primitive nature religion”; the Christian insistence that Shinto was religious in character; and finally, the attempt to identify “Kokutai Shinto” with *völkisch* German nationalist concepts.

It seems possible to divide these various concepts into essentialist and pragmatic depictions of Shinto. According to my understanding, most Japanese discourses on Shinto-related topics follow the pragmatic form. I call them pragmatic because they usually deal with the nonreligious-shrine doctrine by not mentioning Shinto at all, or by setting up ad hoc definitions of different forms of Shinto without questioning whether these definitions ultimately contradict one another or not. On the other hand, Japanese scholars of religion and many Western scholars shared an essentialist approach to Shinto. There seems to be even a kind of coalition between Western interpretations and the religious studies approach, especially with Katō Genchi’s views of Shinto, which are cited by numerous different authors in the West. A common feature of these essentialist approaches is an attempt to establish Shinto as a single coherent religion, often in opposition to Buddhism or as a more “primitive” stage in an evolutionary concept of religious development.

As hinted by Hayashi Makoto, such concepts became the mainstream depictions of Shinto in the postwar period and are therefore the probable source of the initially mentioned stereotype depictions of Shinto.

The prewar essentialist conceptions of Shinto, which reached their peak among German sympathizers of Japanese nationalism, tended to interpret Shinto as the quintessence of a premodern, traditionalist Japanese culture. Concerning the modern period, they either ignored or idealized the role of Shinto, but rarely went into the details of shrine politics. On the other hand, the essentialist emphasis on Shinto as a religion tended to overlook the importance of ritualism as a traditional form of legitimacy in Japan, as observed by Isomae. From a Western point of view, it is indeed hard to imagine that ritualism without any additional explanation would suffice to create a national consciousness. Thus, Western observers have long looked for a quasi-religious message (be it fabricated or real) at the core of State Shinto. This is also true for the postwar critics of State Shinto. At least when reflecting on my own initial conceptions, I realize that I regarded State Shinto as a kind of corrupt theology like that preached from the pulpit in Germany, where Hitler and Goebbels ultimately followed a role model created by Christian clerics. In the Japanese case, however, theology was not the dominant form of nationalist agitation. As Isomae argues, Japanese nationalism was rather based on patterns of reverence and taboo towards the tennō that defied verbal explanation.

The question of whether (State) Shinto should be regarded as a religion or not was, and still is, directly related to our respective concept of religion. As we have seen, concepts of religion are actually in constant flux both among different contemporary discourses and in the diachronic development of religious discussions. Postwar religious studies tend to broaden this concept so that all kinds of religion (with or without a founder, a doctrine, etc.) can be compared to one another. When it comes to State Shinto, however, there is still a tendency to regard it as a kind of “false religion” or “false theology.” Such a view can be traced back not only to the critical definitions of State Shinto by Christian missionaries or the Shinto Directive of 1945; it can also be seen as the simple reversal of the affirmative visions of Shinto by prewar German scholars who were seeking for the true national faith of Japan. The chapters of this volume, however, lead to the conclusion that we cannot consider State Shinto a perversion of an existing religious faith. Rather, it

was a series of attempts to establish Shinto itself. In this process, the nonreligious-shrine doctrine was only one among several contenders. While this doctrine had an enormous influence, in and of itself it was used for different purposes and was never left uncontested. State Shinto can be probably used as an umbrella term for all practical and ideological uses of this doctrine, as well as for other concepts that tried to replace it in the name of nationalist Shinto. However, State Shinto did not exist as one clearly defined ideology. To fully understand its multivocal currents, it is necessary to broaden our understanding of “false religion” or “ideology” in the same way that we have broadened our concept of religion, putting the emphasis less on the doctrinal and more on the performative aspects of nationalist agitation.

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